

## **Joint local statement from the Partners for Democracy and Governance Group (PDG) on the 2021 elections in Uganda**

*The following PDG Group members and Canada issue this statement: Denmark (PDG Chair), Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, UK, USA and the EU.*

On 14 January 2021, Ugandans will exercise one of their most important rights: to choose their leaders at various levels. It is a moment of great significance and another important step in Uganda's democratic process.

As longstanding partners, we have for many years supported Uganda in moving towards peace, development, and prosperity, and we are committed to continue doing so. Therefore, we urge all Ugandans to work for an election process that is peaceful and credible, reinforcing international confidence in the future of Uganda.

Democratic elections require a free and vibrant media and civil society, with a level playing field underpinned by rights to freedom of assembly and expression. All democratic nations must support an electoral process free from all acts of intimidation, arrests, and targeting of journalists and civil society.

Various events during the campaign period undermine the progress made in the democratic process in Uganda. Any electoral process should be free from violence and all acts of intimidation, arrests and the targeting of journalists and civil society.

We call on all parties to work to prevent conflict and to reject violence, inflammatory statements and hate speech in this election.

Moreover, the Ugandan government should ensure law enforcement and security agencies exercise restraint when safeguarding the security of all citizens, including electoral candidates and their supporters, in line with national laws, Uganda's international human rights commitments and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, while at the same time ensuring the protection of democracy, the robustness of its institutions and rule of law.

Finally, we also call upon all political parties, candidates and their supporters to ensure full implementation of the COVID-19 Standard Operating Procedures designed to curb further spread of the virus. Exercising democratic rights must go hand in hand with protecting the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities.