



PRESS RELEASES

EU deploys Election Observation Mission to Sierra Leone

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In response to an invitation by the Sierra Leonean authorities, the European Union has decided to deploy an Election Observation Mission (EOM) to Sierra Leone to observe the general elections scheduled for 7 March. This is the fourth time that the European Union is observing general elections in Sierra Leone, which reflects the EU's long-term commitment to supporting credible, transparent and inclusive elections in the country.

Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, has appointed Ms. Jean Lambert, Member of the European Parliament, as Chief Observer

The High Representative/ Vice President Federica Mogherini stated: "*The elections of 7 March 2008 are a milestone for the democratic process of Sierra Leone. It's a great opportunity for the government, the National Election Commission and political parties to foster transparent, credible and peaceful elections. This year's general elections are very competitive and the rule of law should prevail. Under the leadership of Chief Observer Lambert the EU EOM will make an important contribution to this electoral process*".

The Chief Observer, Ms. Lambert, declared: "*I am honoured to lead the EU EOM to Sierra Leone. The forthcoming general elections will be another defining*

moment in the country's democratic process as a peaceful transition of power will take place for the second time after the end of the civil war. Sierra Leone has achieved progress in terms of democratisation and governance since the end of the civil war, and this election should further consolidate stable democratic institutions. I trust that all institutions and political parties will work together to ensure that voters will be able to express their choice in a free, peaceful and calm environment, with all sides refraining from any actions or statements that may incite violence."

The EOM Core Team of nine EU election analysts arrived in Freetown on 25 January, and will stay in the country until the completion of the electoral process to prepare a comprehensive assessment.

On 7 February, an additional group of 28 long-term observers will be deployed to Sierra Leone's counties, *'In this respect, the work of our long-term observers will be essential for our assessment. They all have substantial experience in observing elections around the world'* - declared Ms. Lambert.

In early March additional 40 short-term observers will be deployed across the country. A delegation of the European Parliament and diplomats from EU Member States will also reinforce the mission on election day. The EU EOM looks forward to cooperate with other international elections observation missions that have endorsed the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation.

The deployment of an EU EOM aims to contribute to enhancing the transparency of the process, the respect for fundamental freedoms and will submit to the consideration of the authorities a set of recommendations to further improve the election framework for future elections.

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