



*Press Release – For immediate release*

## **Generally peaceful and well-organised elections with an improved legal framework but further reform needed**

**Beirut, 8 June 2009** – The Chief Observer of the European Union Election Observation Mission to Lebanon today praised Lebanese citizens for showing a strong commitment to their country's democratic process.

“I would like to commend citizens who turned out to vote in significant numbers yesterday and I applaud their patience in the face of lengthy queues in many polling centres,” said Mr José Ignacio Salafranca MEP.

“The considerable turnout at the polls shows a growing level of engagement by the electorate in the country's democratic process, and this is very encouraging.”

The mission concludes that the parliamentary elections were contested in a polarised but generally peaceful environment within an improved legal framework which nevertheless needs further reform.

Election day was mostly calm and peaceful, with a well-maintained security environment and a strong voter turnout. Polling was administered satisfactorily, with no shortages of election material. Transparency of the process was strengthened with a high participation of candidate representatives.

“Lebanon is a country of great diversity and complexity and the political landscape which has emerged today reflects this. I hope that all political parties will put aside the disputes of the past to build a common future for all citizens based on compromise and consensus,” Mr Salafranca added.

The EU mission fielded almost 100 observers on election day. The mission has been present in Lebanon since 19<sup>th</sup> April. A delegation of Members of the European Parliament joined the mission ahead of election day, led by Mr José Javier Pomes Ruiz.

“I stress the continued interest of the European Parliament in the democratic process in Lebanon. I call on the Lebanese political groups to join hands in co-operation, and I also call on the newly elected Lebanese parliament to work towards reforming the electoral law,” said Mr Pomes Ruiz.

The mission assessed the entire electoral process against regional and international standards for elections as well as the laws of Lebanon. The EUEOM wishes to express its appreciation to the government of the republic of Lebanon and the Ministry of Interior for their co-operation and assistance in the course of the observation.

The EUEOM will continue to observe the post-electoral period and Mr Salafranca will return to Lebanon in the coming months to present a detailed final report including recommendations for future elections.

***For further information, contact: Nuala Haughey, Press Officer. Mob + 961 71-265749***