



Press Release: For Immediate Release

Chief Observer of EU Election Observation Mission Proposes Further Electoral Reforms

Beirut, 25 September 2009 - The European Union's Election Observation Mission to Lebanon's 2009 parliamentary polls today published proposals for reforms to improve the electoral process and boost voter confidence in future elections.

The recommendations in the mission's Final Report include the creation of an independent election management body, enhanced measures to monitor candidates' campaign spending and the introduction of officially pre-printed ballots to help protect the secrecy of the vote.

Mr José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra, who led the mission to observe last June's election, returned to Beirut this week to present its Final Report to officials, politicians and civil society groups.

"While June's parliamentary elections benefited from legal improvements introduced last year, work still remains to be done to bring Lebanon's electoral system into line with the country's international commitments," Mr Salafranca said at the publication of the report today.

"The high voter turn-out at the parliamentary polls showed a sincere engagement by the electorate in the political process. I encourage all citizens to take an active interest in further electoral reforms which have the support of a wide spectrum of civil society and political leaders.

"The European Union remains deeply committed to strengthening the democratic process in Lebanon and will continue to take a keen interest in ongoing electoral reform."

Mr Salafranca, a Spanish Member of the European Parliament, also led the EU Election Observation Mission to Lebanon for the 2005 parliamentary elections. This mission made a series of recommendations for electoral reforms, some of which were adopted in the 2008 Election Law.

For June's parliamentary polls, Mr Salafranca led a mission of 100 observers from 26 EU member states to assess electoral preparations as well as voting, counting, and the tabulation processes.

The report makes 36 recommendations for consideration by legislators. They include the following:

- As a matter of priority, officially printed ballot papers should be introduced.



EUROPEAN UNION ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION
Republic Of Lebanon Parliamentary Elections 2009

بعثة الاتحاد الاوروبي لمراقبة الانتخابات النيابية اللبنانية ٢٠٠٩



- An independent election management body should be established, with financial and administrative autonomy.
- The capacity of any independent election management body to monitor candidates' spending during the campaign period should be enhanced.
- The Constitution should be amended to reduce the minimum age of suffrage to 18 years.
- Military personnel should be allowed to vote.
- Out-of-country voting should be permitted for the next parliamentary election.
- Campaign spending regulations should be further detailed.
- Regulations should be introduced to mitigate the extent to which the work of charities, foundations and networks can be used to achieve electoral support.
- A clearer and more comprehensive complaints framework should be introduced to enhance transparency and accountability.
- The election law should be clarified to ensure an unambiguous regulatory framework for the media.
- The automatic transfer of women's voter registration to their husbands' place of birth should be changed as a matter of priority, as it is discriminatory.
- The law which prevents Lebanese women from passing on citizenship to children if they marry a foreign national should be amended as it denies the offspring the right to vote.
- Steps should be taken to ensure that physically disabled voters can access polling stations.
- Consideration should be given to gradually reducing the emphasis on confessionalism in the electoral system, provided that this is achieved with significant consensus and maintains protection for all Lebanese communities.
- The electoral system should be reformed to introduce a degree of proportionality, provided that this is achieved with significant consensus.

The Final Report is published in Arabic, French and English. It is available to download on the mission website, www.eueomlebanon.org

For further information, please contact:

Ms Nuala Haughey, EU EOM Press Officer. Mobile: +961 71 265749
Email: nuala.haughey@eueomlebanon.org