



European Union Election Observation Mission Bangladesh 2008

Press release

The European Union Election Observation Mission to Bangladesh presents its final report on the 2008 Jatiya Sangsad elections

Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, Chief Observer and Member of the European Parliament, is back in Bangladesh to present the final report of the EU Election Observation Mission to Bangladesh. This is the last event of the Election Observation Mission that was in-country from 7 November 2008 until 16 January 2009, by invitation of the Caretaker Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the Bangladesh Election Commission. The EU EOM's final report is based on long term observation across the country and 150 observers on election day.

Mr Lambsdorff comments that *"this election showed both the strong will of the people of Bangladesh to determine their future and the commitment of the Bangladeshi authorities, especially the then Caretaker Government and the Bangladesh Election Commission, to conduct and manage these elections in a professional, transparent and credible way."*

Leading both the suspended election observation mission in 2007 and the mission last year, I was happy to see the significant developments in many areas of the electoral process. However, I can reiterate what I said earlier: The high democratic standard set by this election must be sustained when the country returns to democratic governance. I hope that our final report and recommendations will help Bangladesh to strengthen its institutions, to which the European Union is ready to contribute."

In addition to the findings of the EOM, the final report contains almost 30 recommendations to improve future elections. Key recommendations include:

1. The Voter List should be organised in alphabetical order at the Polling Centres and Polling Booths so as to facilitate the information to voters for them to know in which Polling Booths they should vote. A second copy of the Voter List should be available at the Polling Centre for voters to check by themselves or with the help of some Bangladesh Election Commission official which is their Polling Booth rather than with party representatives.
2. The annual update of voter registration conducted in the month of January should include citizens of 17 years of age but who will become 18 years of age before the next annual update, to ensure that those turning 18 between the registration cut-off date and the date of elections will be registered and allowed to vote.
3. Political Parties and the BEC should achieve a minimum of one third of their leadership and decision making positions occupied by women by 2020, meeting the targets set in the 2008 National Women Development Policy.
4. The BEC should undergo a review of its activities during the 2008 elections with a particular view to maintaining and increasing confidence in its activities. It should review the structure of its organization in order to strengthen and develop the capacity of its middle management and its secretariat.
5. In view of the problems with the postal ballot, the Bangladesh Election Commission is advised to remove it as a polling option for security agents, displaced electoral personnel, polling staff and persons in legal detention and replace it with alternative mechanisms for the groups concerned.
6. A Broadcasting Law should be drafted to ensure clear legal provisions for the media sector. Furthermore, a new instrument should be introduced setting out the mandate and responsibilities of state owned broadcasters, and guaranteeing their independence from the authorities.

The EU EOM wishes to express its warmest appreciation to the people and the authorities of Bangladesh for their cooperation, assistance and welcome during the course of the election observation mission.

The final report is available on the mission's website: www.eueombangladesh.org