



EUROPEAN UNION

ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION - SIERRA LEONE 2012

PRESIDENTIAL, PARLIAMENTARY AND LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS

**EU EOM PRESENTS ITS FINAL REPORT INCLUDING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE
ELECTIONS IN SIERRA LEONE**

Freetown, 20 February 2013

Providing financial support for political parties on an annual basis, enhancing transparency and stakeholder's confidence in future electoral processes and reinforcing public campaigns for non-violence as well as confidence-building measures between political parties and security forces are among the main recommendations included in the Final Report of the European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) to Sierra Leone, presented today by the Chief Observer, Mr Richard Howitt, in a press conference.

"The challenge remains for elections here to be more open and inclusive, and to win greater confidence amongst the political parties but also within the wider population. Most of all the future for democracy in this country is in the hands of organisations and the people of Sierra Leone. We hope our suggestions will be of service to you to build a peaceful and democratic future to all", Mr Howitt said.

The EU EOM's Final Report offers a comprehensive analysis of all aspects of the Sierra Leonean electoral process, namely the legal framework, the work of the electoral administration, voter registration, candidates' nomination, the electoral campaign, the role of the media, voting, counting and tallying processes and the resolution of electoral complaints and appeals. The report also includes recommendations to improve future electoral processes in Sierra Leone. Some of the key recommendations presented by the EU EOM are:

- to end discrimination in the rules of candidacy for election in line with international commitments and to promote wider participation in public life, enabling, for example, the candidacy of independent candidates for the office of president.
- revision of the time-frames in the electoral law, particularly in relation to objections to nominations and petitions challenging the validity of results offering more timely and effective remedies to those aggrieved in the electoral process.
- strengthening civic and voter education with special focus on illiterate voters in areas with no or limited access to electronic media, and with greater involvement of civil society organisations.
- adoption and publication of the detailed tally centre procedures, clearly stipulating the steps to be taken in the case of quarantined results, at least six months in advance of any electoral event.
- introduction of financial support by government for political parties can be considered on an annual basis, using proportionality criteria. The amount could be based on the number of votes received at general elections.
- promotion of the participation of women in public life through adoption of legislation requiring affirmative action gender policies within parties and

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- SLBC to make all efforts in order to fulfil its obligations as a public service broadcaster and abide by the provisions on the SLBC Act and the Media Code of Practice regarding fair and balanced electoral coverage.

The EU EOM concludes in its Final Report that the elections were overall credible and conducive to the consolidation of democracy and that the NEC acted independently and impartially throughout the whole electoral process. Nevertheless, the report underlines some shortcomings as use of state resources by the ruling party and an unbalanced electoral coverage by the public broadcaster resulting in an unequal playing field throughout the campaign period. Shortcomings were also detected during the tallying process, mainly in relation to unclear procedures for clearing RRFs from quarantine and for polling stations results to be recounted. However, the EU EOM concludes that the integrity of the tallying process was sufficiently protected in the vast majority of cases.

The EU EOM was present in Sierra Leone from 27 September to 14 December 2012 and deployed 100 observers across the country to assess the entire electoral process in accordance with international and regional commitments for elections as well as the laws of Sierra Leone.

The Final Report is available in the EU EOM's web-site www.eueom.eu/sierraleone2012