

Brussels, 16 June 2009

European Union deploys Election Observation Mission to Guinea Bissau

The European Commission will deploy an EU Election Observation Mission (EOM) for the next presidential elections in Guinea Bissau scheduled for 28 June 2009. This mission will consist of some 20 observers and will be led by Mr Johan Van Hecke, former Member of the European Parliament, who also led the two previous EU EOMs to Guinea Bissau in 2005 and 2008. The European Commission fully supports the democratisation process in Guinea Bissau and the EOM is another contribution to this.

Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, says:

"I am hopeful that the forthcoming Presidential elections, following the assassination of President Viera in March 2009 and which take place in a delicate political context of the recent killings, will bring more stability to Guinea Bissau. I would like to underline that this can only be achieved through democratic means and that all acts of violence are to be fully condemned. Therefore, I am particularly pleased to announce the deployment of an EU EOM for these elections and trust that the presence of European observers can contribute to ensuring that elections take place in a peaceful, transparent and credible manner in full accordance with international standards. Like the legislative elections last November, the presidential elections are an important step in the consolidation of the democratisation process of the country."

Louis Michel, European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid says:

"Guinea-Bissau is currently facing a crucial phase in terms of peace building, democracy and political stability. Recent dramatic developments and violence are particularly worrying but we hope that the forthcoming Presidential elections could represent an opportunity to bring together the positive political forces of Guinea Bissau around the ambitious agenda of reforms urgently needed in the country. The EU will continue to support national efforts and will remain totally committed to sustain this country in its structural reform process and sustained development goals".

The EOM Core Team consisting of the Chief Observer and four experts arrived in Guinea Bissau on 6 June. Six Long Term Observers (LTOs) will be deployed to assess the campaign period and pre-election preparations around the country. Ten Short Term Observers (STOs) will be deployed over the election period to observe voting, counting and the tabulation of results. The EU EOM will remain in the country to observe the possible second round and to assess the post-election period. .

In addition to deploying an EU EOM the European Commission has granted a contribution of € 1, 5 mio to directly support the organisation of these elections.

The European Union and Guinea Bissau enjoy very good bilateral relations. The main goal of the long standing EU-Guinea Bissau partnership is to fight against poverty and promote development, peace and security among the citizens of Guinea Bissau. For this purpose, significant cooperation programmes have been set up aimed at supporting the country's efforts to reform its key national sectors such as security (Security Sector Reform), rule of law, public administration, road infrastructures, water and energy.

For additional information, see also:

http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/human_rights/eu_election_ass_observ/index.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/development/geographical/regionscountries/countries/country_profile.cfm?cid=gw&type=short&lng=en