



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION - SIERRA LEONE 2012**

**PRESIDENTIAL, PARLIAMENTARY AND LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS**

**EU EOM CHIEF OBSERVER FOLLOWS CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES IN WESTERN RURAL AND KENEMA**

*Freetown, 22 October 2012*

Following its mandate to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the entire electoral process, the Chief Observer of the European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) to Sierra Leone, Mr. Richard Howitt, has today observed campaign activities in Freetown Western Rural district. *“Voters have today had the opportunity to listen to their candidates. It is crucial for a democratic election process that all political parties are given the opportunity to present their programmes to the people of Sierra Leone”*, the Chief Observer said. The programme of Mr. Howitt also included meetings with six presidential candidates, the Independent Media Commission and the National Elections Watch (NEW).

The Chief Observer will tomorrow be traveling to Kenema to observe campaign activities and preparations for the 17 November elections in the district. Mr. Howitt will be meeting the EU long-term observers based permanently in Kenema and will conduct meetings with representatives of political parties, the regional Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC), the Kenema District Monitoring Committee (DMC) and Paramount Chiefs from the district, all of whom will share their views on the electoral process. The Chief Observer will also attend a voter education session and campaign activities being carried out in the district, according to the calendar established by the NEC.

The EU EOM was established in Sierra Leone on 27 September 2012. As part of its methodology, the EU EOM also includes an extensive media monitoring exercise to assess the performance of the public and private media during the electoral process. Particular attention is paid by the EU EOM to the participation of women and persons with disabilities in the electoral process. The EU EOM recognises the importance of the role of the national election observers in the process and the EU EOM works in close cooperation with them.

The EU EOM has deployed 28 long-term observers (LTOs) who have been based in the 14 districts of the country since 14 October. For the 17 November polls the mission will comprise a total of 100 observers deployed throughout the country.

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