



**EUROPEAN UNION
ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION
MEXICO 2006**

**A competitive, transparent and generally well administered electoral process,
although some aspects can be strengthened in the future**

**PRELIMINARY STATEMENT
Mexico City, 3 July 2006**

The European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) has been in Mexico since 10 June 2006, following an invitation from the Federal Electoral Institute (Instituto Federal Electoral – IFE, in its Spanish acronym). The Mission is headed by Jose Ignacio Salafranca Sanchez-Neyra, from Spain, member of the European Parliament (MEP). Around 80 observers from 21 member states of the European Union, accredited as foreign visitors, were deployed throughout the country and, on election day, visited 136 of the 300 districts. The Mission will observe the preliminary and official counting and tabulations, and will remain in the country to observe all remaining aspects of the election.

Preliminary Conclusions

The 2 July 2006 presidential and parliamentary elections were generally competitive and transparent, demonstrating a firm commitment of the Mexican citizens to the strengthening and consolidation of democracy. The political forces, as stressed in meetings with the Mission, and the majority of citizens expressed their trust in the electoral authorities, responsible for the organization of an electoral process characterized by high levels of transparency, impartiality and professionalism.

In a highly competitive electoral process and some imbalances and preferences notwithstanding, candidates as well as citizens enjoyed the benefits of a free and active media. The media's exhaustive coverage of all aspects of the electoral process ensured a high level of transparency, to which the electoral administration also contributed. Civil society also contributed towards transparency of the process and awareness of electoral issues and promoting voter participation.

Although the electoral campaign developed in a generally calm and orderly atmosphere, the political debate reached a level of intensity in which candidates concentrated on an exchange of accusations and personal attacks, during political rallies and through the press, in detriment of informing on their programs and election issues.

Election Day proceeded satisfactorily. Voters turned out in significant numbers and could freely cast their vote without intimidation in a calm and orderly manner, culminating a campaign process closely followed by the citizenry.

However, some significant aspects of the electoral process were observed or reported to the Mission: the overlapping of times to install and to open the polling stations, both at 8:00 am, led to some delays and to long lines at many regular and special polling stations; secrecy of the vote was observed in most polling stations, however in some of them privacy was not respected; the Mission also observed some other problems in the polling stations like the small size of the ballot boxes and the lack of security seals to guarantee their inviolability.

A positive feature was the presence of representatives of the main political parties in most of the polling stations, as well as domestic observers in approximately 30 per cent of the voting centers visited. The Mission did not receive any complaints from voters, political parties or observers despite the fact that many voters and political parties' representatives complained about delays during polling.

However, the aspects mentioned above and others which will be evaluated and presented in the final report do not invalidate the positive assessment of the electoral process.

Considering the projections of a very tight race and results, the Mission regards as a very positive contribution for the safeguarding of transparency and credibility of the process, the decision by Instituto Federal Electoral (IFE) – the only competent institution to announce the results - to provide statistical information and the processed data of the “quick-count” to the political parties and the public.

The Mission would also like to recall the commitment by the political parties to abide by the terms of the *Acuerdo Democrático por la Equidad, la Legalidad y la Gobernabilidad*, signed on 13 June 2006, in which they recognize IFE and the Electoral Court as the only competent authorities to conduct the electoral process and to solve possible disputes, and also to accept the election results, legally sustained and supported on the will of the people.

The final assessment of the electoral process will partly depend on the announcement of the final results and the conclusion of other procedures. The Mission will remain in the country until 20 July 2006, and will issue a final report, containing detailed recommendations and suggestions to improve the election process, after the completion of the entire process.

The Mission wishes to express its appreciation to the Instituto Federal Electoral (IFE), the Electoral Tribunal, the Special Prosecutor for Electoral Offenses (FEPAD), the President of Mexico and other Mexican authorities, the Ambassadors of the Member States of the European Union, the political parties and candidates, the media, civil society and, especially, the Mexican people for the warmth and hospitality extended to the members of the Missions.

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