



PRESS RELEASE – 8th May 2015

EU ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION TO BURUNDI EMPHASISES THE CONDITIONS NECESSARY FOR HOLDING CREDIBLE AND TRANSPARENT ELECTIONS

Bujumbura, 08/05/2015 – The Head of the European Union Election Observation Mission to Burundi (EU EOM Burundi), David MARTIN, has expressed his strong concern about the levels of violence in Burundi since the start, on 26th April, of demonstrations against the President Nkurunziza's candidacy for a third mandate.

'I take note of the presidential decree opening the election campaign on 10th of May. In my view, current conditions do not allow candidates to campaign in a peaceful environment. I also take note of the statements made to the media today by the President of the Republic, when he submitted his candidacy for the presidential election, stating that demonstrations would soon be stopping,' David MARTIN stated.

'If this means that the response to the current protest movement will be through dialogue, the release of detained demonstrators, the re-opening of radios and broadcasters closed by the authorities, and renewed access to social networks on mobile telephones, then this would constitute a step in the right direction, towards ensuring the minimum conditions needed for the holding of elections,' the EU EOM Head said.

'If, however, this means the prohibition and repression of peaceful demonstrations expressing legitimate concerns, in breach of international conventions on freedoms of expression, assembly and demonstration, this would be unacceptable and would contribute to worsening tensions in the country and the region, and would make it extremely difficult to meet the necessary conditions for a credible and transparent election process,' David MARTIN emphasised.

The decision to deploy a European Union Election Observation Mission to Burundi (EU EOM Burundi 2015) was made following the invitation received by the Government of the Republic of Burundi on 18th February 2015. This is the third European Union Election Observation Mission deployed since 2005. The Mission is independent of Member States, the European Commission and the European Parliament. The EU EOM Burundi 2015 arrived in Bujumbura on 24th April to observe the parliamentary and presidential elections. The Mission's presence remains linked to the restoral of the necessary conditions for inclusive, transparent and credible elections.

EU Election Observation Missions abide by the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation commemorated at the UN in 2005, as well as the Code of Conduct for international election observers.

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