



PRESS RELEASE

Lesotho National Assembly elections well run despite financial shortcomings, legal uncertainty and uneven playing field for contestants

Maseru, 9 October – *"Opening, voting and counting took place in a calm and peaceful atmosphere and was conducted in a transparent manner"*, Mr Ignazio Corrao, Chief Observer of the European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) to Lesotho, said when presenting the Mission's Preliminary Statement at a press conference today in Maseru. *"Although preparations were marred by limited financial resources for the Independent Electoral Commission and uncertainty regarding the applicable legal framework, the IEC carried out most of its activities according to the election calendar, and its staff managed election day professionally displaying strong dedication to their duties"*, Mr Corrao also stated.

On election day, the EU EOM deployed 87 international observers to all ten districts covering all 80 constituencies of Lesotho. Overall, the EU EOM visited 371 out of 3,149 polling stations. Mr Corrao said *"We observed a peaceful campaign period. Nevertheless, unlimited campaign spending and biased radio coverage contributed to an uneven playing field among contestants, disadvantaging smaller parties and independent candidates"*.

Mr Leopoldo López Gil, Head of the European Parliament Delegation, which observed the polls as part of the EU EOM, declared *"I would like to express my respect for the staff of the election administration, who did all they could to fulfil their responsibilities despite budgetary constraints, as well as for the people of Lesotho, in particular the party agents, for their commitment on election day. I trust that the officially declared election results will be accepted and that any potential grievances will be resolved in the courts."*

Chief Observer Mr Corrao furthermore stated *"I would like to congratulate the future members of the National Assembly for their election and encourage them to take over the reform process, which is essential to further strengthen democracy and stability in the Kingdom of Lesotho and for the future of the country"*.

Following an invitation by the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho, the EU EOM has been present in Lesotho since 27 August 2022. The Mission will observe post-election developments and will remain in the country until the completion of the electoral process. The EU EOM will present and publish its final report offering recommendations for future elections in the next few months.

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