



EUROPEAN UNION
ELECTION FOLLOW-UP MISSION

THE GAMBIA 2024

EU Election Follow-up Mission encourages constitutional and legal reform to improve the electoral process in line with regional & international standards for democratic elections

Banjul, 14 November 2024

The European Union has deployed an Election Follow-up Mission (EU EFM) to The Gambia to assess progress towards electoral reform. This EU EFM is led by Mr. Norbert Neuser, former Chief Observer of the EU Election Observation Mission 2021 and former Member of the European Parliament.

The mission has met a wide range of Gambian electoral stakeholders, including members of the Government, National Assembly Members, the Independent Electoral Commission, the National Human Rights Commission and representatives of political parties and civil society. The mission organised a round-table meeting of electoral stakeholders, on 14 November, where participants had the opportunity to discuss the current status of electoral reform.

The Chief of Mission, Norbert Neuser, when opening the round-table meeting, identified the present opportunity for reform: *“It is now mid-way through the electoral cycle leading to the presidential election in 2026. Constitutional reform has been initiated, with the gazetting of the Draft Constitution of the Republic of the Gambia (Promulgation) Bill, 2024, in August this year, due to be tabled before the National Assembly before the end of this month.”* Mr. Neuser added: *“The Elections Bill, 2022, remains on the legislative agenda. There is now an important opportunity for the renewal of the social contract between the people of the Gambia and their elected leaders, through these parallel reform processes, which can enhance the conduct of future elections.”*

The EU Election Observation Mission in 2021 made 20 recommendations, which addressed diverse aspects of presidential elections, including the legal framework, election administration and voter registration, the campaign and campaign finance, and the political participation of women. Implementation of fifteen of these recommendations would require legal change, amongst which three require constitutional change. Seven recommendations were identified as being of priority, as they could have the most positive impact on future elections if implemented.

In a press conference held today, Chief of Mission Neuser commented on the implementation status of the recommendations: *“While none of the recommendations has yet been implemented in full, it is positive to note there are several legal instruments on the legislative agenda which, if enacted and enforced, could represent progress in the advancement of the rights of political participation. In addition to the draft constitutional and electoral reform bills, these include the Personal Data Protection and Privacy Bill, 2024.”* Mr. Neuser highlighted: *“It is important that progress on these measures be undertaken in a transparent and consultative manner. Two years still remain in which electoral reforms can be undertaken in advance of the next presidential election. Implementation of the recommendations offered by the EU EOM, particularly the seven priority ones, would greatly enhance the integrity, legitimacy and credibility of the electoral process.”*

Mr. Neuser went on to say that: *The EU supports continued democracy and good governance in The Gambia including by actively supporting stakeholders in their efforts to promote all related reforms”*

The EU Election Follow-up Mission will publish a Final Report, at a later stage, which will offer a detailed analysis of the existing arrangements for elections in The Gambia, as well as of the extent to which the EU EOM recommendations have been addressed.

The Final Report of the EU Election Observation Mission 2021 is available at:

https://www.eas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eu_eom_gam_2021_fr_1.pdf