



PRESS RELEASE

European Union Election Follow-Up Mission Urges Continued Progress in Electoral Reforms

6 October 2022, Lilongwe, Malawi

As part of the European Union's (EU) ongoing support for democracy in Malawi, the EU deployed an Election Follow-Up Mission to Malawi on 20 September 2022. The Mission is led by Chief of Mission Mr Miroslav Poche, who was Chief Observer of the EU Election Observation Mission (EOM) to Malawi 2019 and Member of the European Parliament.

The purpose of the Follow-up Mission is to assess and report on the degree to which the 24 recommendations that the EU EOM made have been implemented and other electoral reform initiatives undertaken. The implementation of the recommendations would enhance the credibility, inclusiveness and transparency of Malawi's 2025 elections. The Mission has been meeting with electoral stakeholders, including the Electoral Commission (MEC), the Parliament, relevant state institutions, judiciary, political parties, citizen observers and other civil society organisations and donor partners. The Mission organised a roundtable on 5 October with electoral stakeholders to encourage an open discussion on the progress made so far in implementing the EU EOM's recommendations, stakeholders' current priorities and suggestions about how to overcome obstacles and make further progress.

In a press conference held today, Mr Poche said, *“One important conclusion of the roundtable is the need to keep up momentum on the progress of the draft electoral reform Bills through Parliament. In that regard, the Mission welcomes the gazetting of the Bills yesterday, which allows for the process of parliamentary consideration to begin. The Bills came about as a result of an inclusive and consultative process and there is a broad consensus that the sooner the reforms are approved and in place the better. Experience shows that the closer to election day we get, the more contentious the reforms become.”*

The Chief of Mission emphasized that legal reforms alone are not the full picture – there is also a need for procedural and other changes. For example, one of the EU EOM's priority recommendations is for the MEC to make improvements to the processes for counting, tabulation and transmission of results, which is recognised by the MEC as a key concern, particularly in the light of the Constitutional Court judgment, and the MEC are working on it. Mr Poche said, *“There is still time for this and for other administrative and procedural changes.”*

The Chief of Mission further said, *“I am pleased to note that some recommendations have been implemented, for example, improving the independence of polling station presiding officers, entry into force of the Access to Information Act, and clarifying that anyone who is aged 18 by election day may vote. Several others are underway, including the review of constituency boundaries and the harmonization of the electoral laws. There remain some recommendations where political will is needed to move the process forward, such as increasing transparency in party finances, and making party primaries more transparent and inclusive of women.*

This follow up mission is not the end of the EU's engagement with Malawi's electoral reform process. The EU and Member States will continue to support the implementation of the electoral reforms.”

In addition to the Chief of Mission, the Mission comprises two election experts and a member of the European External Action Service. The Chief of Mission is in Malawi during the first week of October, and the experts will remain in Malawi until mid-October. The Mission's final report will be published in November.

The full archive of EU election mission reports can be found at <http://database.eueom.eu>

The EU delegation to Malawi: <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/malawi-en>