



EUROPEAN UNION

ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION - SIERRA LEONE 2012

PRESIDENTIAL, PARLIAMENTARY AND LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS

EU ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION LAUNCHED IN SIERRA LEONE

Freetown, 5 October 2012

Following an invitation by the Government of Sierra Leone and the National Electoral Commission (NEC), the European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) has officially been launched in Sierra Leone to observe the Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Council Elections scheduled for 17 November. The EU EOM, the largest long-term international observation mission in Sierra Leone, is led by Chief Observer Richard Howitt, Member of the European Parliament.

On his arrival in Freetown, the Chief Observer expressed his satisfaction at being in Sierra Leone leading the EU EOM. *"I hope the presence of the European Observers will contribute to a successful and peaceful set of elections. As someone born in the very same year as the Independence was declared for Sierra Leone, it is a deep honour to support the country at an important moment in its history and for its future."* Mr. Howitt said.

On his first visit to the country, the Chief Observer of the EU EOM has already met the President of Sierra Leone, the NEC and representatives of political parties contesting the elections. *"In undertaking initial meetings with all the political parties, I hope to have built trust in our work, as we hope our presence will help to build trust more widely in this country in the electoral process itself"*, said Howitt. Chief Observer's programme for the coming days includes also a field trip to Bo and Makeni where Mr. Howitt will be meeting representatives of the electoral administration, political parties and civil society groups present in the regions.

Six international experts of the EU EOM, with a mandate to look into the electoral, legal, political, gender, human rights and media aspects of the electoral process, arrived in Freetown on 27 September. They will be followed by 28 long-term observers who will be deployed to the 14 districts of the country on 14 October. Closer to election day 50 short-term observers, along with a delegation of members of the European Parliament, will join the mission. In total, 100 observers from 26 EU member States, as well as from Norway, will be observing November 17 polls all around the country.

The mandate of the EU EOM is to observe all aspects of the electoral process and whether it complies with the laws of the country and regional and international commitments for democratic elections agreed upon by Sierra Leone. EU observers will assess respect for political rights and fundamental freedoms of citizens, the legal framework and its implementation, the administration of the electoral process, the electoral campaign, the conduct of the media, voting, counting, tabulation of results and post-election activities including the mechanisms for complaints and appeals.

A preliminary assessment of the electoral process will be issued by Mr. Howitt shortly after elections at a press conference in Freetown. A more comprehensive final report, including recommendations for future elections, will be published within two months of the end of the electoral process.

European Union Election Observation Mission – Sierra Leone 2012

Bintumani Hotel, Bloc A

Freetown

www.eueom.eu/sierraleone2012

Election observation is an important component of the European Union’s policy of promoting human rights and supporting democracy throughout the world. The EU EOM has an established methodology to observe elections in a neutral and impartial manner. It operates in accordance with Memoranda of Understanding signed with the Government of Sierra Leone and the NEC. The EU EOM also adheres to the “Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation” adopted by a number of international bodies involved in election observation and the Code of Conduct for European Observers.

*For further information, please contact **Javier Gutierrez, EU EOM’s Press and Public Outreach Officer**
Mobile: +232 (0)79 250 959 E-mail: javier.gutierrez@eueomsierraleone.eu*