

Brussels, 27 November 2001

The European Commission has adopted a decision to fund the sending of an EU Election Observation Mission (EOM) to monitor the forthcoming commune elections in Cambodia. These elections scheduled for 3 February 2002 are the first direct elections of commune councils in the modern history of Cambodia. Mr. Carlos COSTA NEVES MEP has been appointed as Chief Observer of the Election Observation Mission.

The 2002 commune elections in Cambodia are also a first for the European Union, since this is the first time the EU has observed local elections only. Chris Patten commented: "Local-level democracy is important. When it comes to promoting sustainable development, grass roots participation matters. A farmer in a Cambodian village may well have stronger views on the man or woman making local decisions on his behalf than he does on a politician in distant Phnom Penh.. I am also very pleased that Carlos Costa Neves MEP has agreed to act as EU Chief Observer, in view of his work in promoting the EU's parliamentary relations with Cambodia and ASEAN more widely".

The 2002 commune elections are expected to be an important landmark in Cambodia's commitment to the political and democratic development, as commune councils will be directly elected for the first time since the 1980s. These elections are part of the general decentralisation policy adopted by the Cambodian Government and supported by the Commission. The decentralisation programme is aimed at promoting poverty reduction and stability, through the elaboration of commune development plans and enhanced political accountability. The commune elections also come after the national ballots held in 1993 and 1998, and ahead of the parliamentary elections scheduled for 2003. The purpose is to increase the transparency of and confidence in the election process through the presence and reporting of international observers. The Commission also hopes that an EU Election Observation Mission can help defuse tension and deter possible election-related malpractice and violence.

Mr. Carlos COSTA NEVES MEP, Chief Observer of the Mission, is Deputy Chairman of the European Parliament's Delegation for relations with the Member States of ASEAN, South-east Asia and the Republic of Korea. The EU mission will have a strong component of Long Term Observers to concentrate on observing the election campaign and administrative preparations at local level as well as the post-electoral period. The EOM will be composed of a Core Team of seven experts based in Phnom Penh, including media monitoring and statistical activities, and a total of 90 observers: 30 Long Term Observers and 60 Short Term Observers. In-country representatives from EU member states and Members of the European Parliament may also wish to participate in the EU Election observation Mission.

The funding decision represents a commitment of €1,250,000 from the EC budget. The Commission has also decided to support the elections through technical assistance, including the provision of experts already in Cambodia to assist the National Election Committee. This election assistance comes in addition to the on-going co-operation programmes with Cambodia.

See also:

[The EU's Human rights and Democratisation Policy: EU Election Assistance & Observation](#)

http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/cambodia/intro/index.htm