

Brussels, 24 April 2009

European Union deploys Election Observation Mission to Lebanon

An EU Election Observation Mission (EOM) is being deployed for the next legislative elections in Lebanon scheduled to take place on 7 June 2009. The EU EOM will consist of some 90 observers and will be led by Mr José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra, Member of the European Parliament, who also led the previous EU EOM to Lebanon in 2005. This mission represents a further contribution by the European Commission to strengthening democracy in Lebanon.

Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, said: *"I am confident that the forthcoming parliamentary elections will result in the formation of a stable government. During my recent visit to the country I have offered to President Michel Sleimane, Prime Minister Fouad Siniora and Speaker Nabih Berri to deploy an EU EOM for these elections. I hope that the presence of European observers can contribute to ensuring that elections will take place in a transparent and credible manner and in accordance with international standards. They will represent yet another milestone in the strengthening of Lebanon's democratic institutions."*

Benita Ferrero-Waldner added: *"We want to build upon our long standing support to reforming the electoral framework in Lebanon and we stand ready to provide further assistance after these elections."*

The EOM Core Team consisting of the Chief Observer and nine experts, arrived in Lebanon on 18 April. Thirty Long Term Observers (LTOs) will be deployed to assess the campaign period and pre-election preparations around the country. Approximately fifty Short Term Observers (STOs) along with a delegation of Members of the European Parliament will be deployed over the election period to observe voting, counting and the tabulation of results. Some additional STOs will be recruited locally from diplomatic missions of EU Member States in the country. The EU EOM will stay in the country after the elections in order to assess the post-election period.

For this mission the EU has made available some € 4.7 million from the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). The European Commission is also working closely with Lebanon on the issue of the electoral reform and has provided € 4 million to support implementation of changes in the electoral law.

The main goal of the long standing EU–Lebanon partnership is to promote the development of Lebanon as a democratic, politically open and economically strong neighbour of the EU. Today, the legal basis for this relation is laid down in the EU–Lebanon Association Agreement, which entered into force on 1 April 2006. The EU–Lebanon Action Plan from 19 January 2007 gave a new impetus to bilateral relations in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy.

For additional information, see also:

http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/human_rights/eu_election_ass_observ/index.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/lebanon/index_en.htm