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For immediate release

Historic elections lay foundation for democratic development of Libya

The European Union Election Assessment Team (EU EAT) concludes that the 7 July 2012 General National Congress election was efficiently administered, pluralistic and overall peaceful, despite a few incidents which occurred on the eve of and during the election day. While these were intended to disrupt the election process in Benghazi, Tobrouk, and Ajdabiya districts, the High National Election Commission (HNEC) showed competence and determination in responding quickly to the security challenges, and was able to secure the polling in the affected areas. Election day, as such, unfolded in a festive atmosphere.

"This historic election lays the foundation for the future democratic development of Libya. It builds on the sacrifice of many who liberated the country after four decades of oppression. This election is not the endpoint of Libya's transition process, however. On the contrary, it should be the starting point for the consolidation of Libya's democracy, particularly in the light of many important decisions that need be taken in the next months." said Alexander Lambsdorff, Head of the EU EAT. *"The HNEC administered the election in a professional and resolute manner demonstrating high levels of confidence and openness during election preparations"*, he said. The performance of the local election administration was also assessed positively.

Following more than four decades of dictatorial regime forbidding all forms of independent political activity, a total of 2501 individual candidates and 1206 candidates on the political entities' lists were registered for the election. Fundamental freedoms were respected and the campaign environment was calm and free of confrontational speech. The media were promoting voters' participation in polls and the state broadcasters overall adhered to the legal framework, though their coverage of the election itself was limited.

The legal framework is conducive to democratic elections. The courts have so far given due consideration to the complaints and appeals and despite the very short deadlines adjudicated them in an overall impartial, although non-systematic manner. *"While the law provides a sound basis for the participation of women in the electoral process, societal, religious, economic and cultural factors compromise women's ability to run as candidates on an equal footing with men"*, said Alexander Lambsdorff.

The Head of the EU EAT stated that the Team will remain in the country to assess the remaining aspects of the process and is presently continuing to observe the tabulation of the results as well as the complaints and appeals. It will issue its final assessment in a report to be produced within two months after the completion of the electoral process with recommendations for future elections.

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