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## Press Release

### **European Union Election Observation Mission: 2011 General Elections - foundation for further democratic development**

**ABUJA, 31 May 2011** - “The legal framework, the general performance of the Independent National Electoral Commission INEC and of other stakeholders provided for the 2011 General Elections an overall democratic foundation for further democratic development in accordance with international principles and with international instruments ratified by the Federal Republic of Nigeria” said the Chief Observer of the European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM), Alojz Peterle, during the presentation of the Mission’s Final Report in Abuja on Tuesday.

“Hence, overall the 2011 elections marked an important improvement compared to all polls observed previously by the European Union in Nigeria. However, short comings were noticed and elements identified which need to be enhanced”, added Peterle. In total the EU EOM has presented 50 recommendations to further improve the Legal Framework, Election Administration, Voter Registration, Political Parties, Voter Education, the Media, Human Rights, Women Participation in the Electoral Process, Petition and Appeals, Polling and Collation, and Follow-up and Public Support.

“Positively the EU EOM noted that Nigeria has implemented several recommendations suggested by the 2007 EU EOM and the 2008 Electoral Reform Committee’s (ERC) report. The Constitution as well as relevant laws were amended and issues addressed that had affected the quality and credibility of the 2007 General Elections. Regrettably, the amendments failed to introduce some of the ERC’s recommendations, such as the independent appointment of the Chair of INEC and the Resident Electoral Commissioners (REC), the establishment of an Electoral Offences Commission, a Political Parties Registration and Regulatory Commission, and provisions for independent candidates to run for office. It is recommended that these issues are addressed in future reforms of the legislative framework”, said Peterle.

“Although INEC considered a credible voter register crucial to building elector confidence and to delivering transparent and genuine elections, the administration admitted widespread problems with this key document”, stated the Chief Observer. Peterle: “For example the high number of underage registered voters was a phenomenon that became clearly visible during the election days, particularly in the northern areas of Nigeria. There is no doubt that some communities made certain to include non-eligible citizens on the roll, contrary to the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended) and INEC instructions. Furthermore, in many instances National Youth Service Corps members conducting the registration exercise were put under pressure to allow the inclusion of underage registrants. INEC’s Chairman repeated calls for traditional leaders to help curb this problem were to no avail.”

“In general, the EU EOM noted inconsistent application of regulations and procedures by INEC structures in the field, contrary to INEC instructions. Examples include the inadequate display of result sheets at all levels and simultaneous accreditation and voting in numerous polling units throughout the country on all election days. This confirmed a lack of control by INEC Headquarters in their efforts to implement electoral procedures consistently and could be improved by timely,



## European Union Election Observation Mission to Nigeria 2011



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adequate training and coherent effective communication by INEC Headquarters”, said the Chief Observer.

Addressing the high number of rejected votes the Chief Observer noted the few public outreach activities to educate voters. “Deficits were observed especially in rural areas and in regard of groups which might be least likely to participate such as first time voters, minority groups and women. An extensive and timely voter education campaign is needed for future elections.”

“While the EU EOM observed that 40 percent of the staff and 36 percent of the presiding officers were female, the proportion of women was substantially lower among collation officers. Women are consistently under-represented in the legislature and within the leadership structure. So far, no woman has been elected as Governor in Nigeria. The expressed commitment by the government to implement the National Gender Policy which provides for a minimum of 35 percent representation of women at all levels of political participation, is positive and should be further strengthened”, said Peterle.

“The role of Civil Society Organisations, which played an important role in promoting the rule of law, the adherence to election regulations and encouragement of an overall orderly and transparent electoral process must be considered positive”, added the Chief Observer.

“Although the elections days were generally peaceful, the violence in the North and Middle-Belt following the presidential polls must be condemned and all perpetrators must be brought to justice”, emphasized Peterle.

### **Note to Editors:**

*The European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) was deployed in Nigeria from 1 March to 21 May 2011 following an invitation of INEC. The EU EOM was led by Chief Observer Alojz Peterle, a Member of the European Parliament and comprised 141 observers who were deployed to all the States and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The observers originated from the 27 EU Member States, as well as from Norway and Switzerland. The EU EOM observed the entire electoral process and in its findings was independent from any EU institutions or Member State. The Mission abided by the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and the Code of Conduct, as well as Nigerian law.*