



Chief Observer Barry Andrews launches the European Union Election Observation Mission to Nigeria 2023 and encourages cooperation for peaceful elections

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For Immediate Release

The Chief Observer of the European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) to Nigeria 2023, Barry Andrews, Member of the European Parliament, officially launched the mission today. At a press conference in Abuja, the Chief Observer stated: *"This is the seventh EU Election Observation Mission to Nigeria since 1999. The EU attaches great significance to these elections."*

The EU EOM Chief Observer urged authorities, candidates and political parties in Nigeria to ensure that the upcoming general elections are peaceful and further election-related violence is prevented. Every voter has the right to cast their ballot in a safe environment free from intimidation and undue influence. *"We encourage the authorities, candidates, and political parties to commit to peaceful conduct prior to, during and after election day. Cooperation between all institutions and parties participating in the elections is crucial. The presence of a level playing field, freedom of expression, assembly and association, respect for human rights and a neutral and independent election management body at all levels are all essential for democratic elections."* said Barry Andrews.

During his four-day visit to Nigeria, the Chief Observer has met with a wide range of interlocutors including state authorities, the Independent National Electoral Commission, political contestants, members of the judiciary, media stakeholders, citizen observers as well as other civil society representatives to discuss the ongoing electoral process.

The Electoral Act 2022 has introduced new measures aimed at enhancing various aspects of the conduct of elections. As part of its overall analysis, the EU EOM will closely follow its implementation. For the first time in Nigeria, the mission has a dedicated Election Technology Analyst who is assessing the use of technologies, especially the verification of voters and the transmission of results. A Media Analyst and a Social Media Analyst are also undertaking an assessment of the role of the traditional media, as well as social media and digital communication during the process.

The EU EOM started its work nearly three weeks ago with the arrival of a core team of 11 experts with competencies in various aspects of elections. Since 29 January 40 long-term observers in teams of two follow the electoral process in all the states of Nigeria. Seven Members of the European Parliament, together with some 40 locally recruited observers from 25 EU Member States, Switzerland, Norway, and Canada's representatives in Nigeria will join the mission shortly before election day. In total, around 100 observers will observe the voting, counting, and tabulation procedures on 25 February and 11 March. The EU EOM will issue a preliminary statement two days after each election day and will remain in Nigeria until the completion of the entire electoral process including complaints and appeals processes, and any possible second round of the presidential election.

The EU EOM has been deployed by the EU following an invitation from the Independent National Electoral Commission of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. All mission members are bound by a code of conduct, which requires strict impartiality and non-interference in the elections. The EU EOM undertakes its work in accordance with the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, commemorated at the United Nations.

The EU EOM operates under a separate and distinct mandate from the EU Delegation in Nigeria, and it is independent in its findings from EU Member States and all EU institutions.

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