



PRESS RELEASE

The holding of elections is a victory for the Afghan people, despite security constraints and intimidation

Kabul, 22 August 2009: The European Union Election Observation Mission welcomes the holding of the elections as a victory against those who wanted to prevent the Afghan people from deciding their own future. It praises the courage of the Afghans who turned out to vote, defying intimidation and threats. The Mission also commends the Afghan authorities and security forces for ensuring these elections, in such a dangerous environment.

The EU EOM has observed all aspects of the process around the country for the past two months.

Despite operational shortcomings and some institutional flaws, the Independent Election Commission generally functioned efficiently, adhering to its tight timeline in implementing electoral operations. The legal framework provided a reasonable basis for the conduct of elections. Despite being established late in the process, the Electoral Complaints Commission was able to improve the regulatory and operational framework in adjudicating complaints.

Most candidates were able to campaign round the country, sparking a genuine countrywide debate about key issues such as insecurity, reconciliation and corruption. However, the campaign was marred by several attacks on campaign staff and candidates and some unequal access to resources. The exercise of women's civil and political rights, both as voters and as candidates, was severely limited in the elections, despite being enshrined in the Constitution. Civil society organisations contributed to the democratic process, and the large numbers of domestic observers and candidate agents at polling centres enabled Afghans themselves to contribute to a system of transparency.

These were the first Afghan-led elections, and the process seems at this stage to have been largely positive. The Afghan people now need to build on the democratic foundations which have been laid.

The Mission will continue to observe the post-electoral period, including the tallying of the results, intake procedures, audits, the complaints and appeals process, and any run-off election. The EU EOM has been present in Afghanistan since 3rd July, with some 250 dedicated staff deployed around the country.

Note: The EU EOM Preliminary Statement contains these findings in detail and is available at www.eueom-afghanistan.org

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