



**Press Release: For Immediate Release**

## **EU election observers call for rapid reforms to eliminate fraud in Afghan elections**

**Kabul, 16 December 2009** - The European Union's Election Observation Mission to Afghanistan's 2009 Presidential and Provincial Council Elections today published recommendations to assist Afghanistan's reform process. The intention is to enhance the transparency of the electoral process and minimise the scope for fraud in future polls. These build upon the EOM's preliminary findings on 22 August and 8 September, which inter alia expressed serious concerns about the scope of fraud, based on its analysis of the statistics provided by IEC.

The Chief Observer of the EU EOM, Mr Thijs Berman (52), a member of the European parliament from the Netherlands, returned to Kabul this week to present his final report to the government, electoral officials, political parties and civil society groups. Mr Berman took up his post as Chief Observer in November, succeeding Mr Philippe Morillon (France), who led the mission before and during the first round of the presidential elections.

The two main recommendations in the mission's final report concern the Independent Election Commission (IEC) and the voter register. The capacity of the IEC to act and be perceived as a neutral and independent Election Administration must be strengthened, primarily by ensuring that proper checks and balances are in place in the appointment process. In particular, the IEC members should not be appointed solely by the President.

Secondly, it is necessary to urgently establish a proper voters' register. No further elections should take place without significant improvement in the accuracy and reliability of the registration of voters. In the short term, processing of data on the Voter Register Update should be completed. An update should also be carried out to register citizens who reach the age of majority between the last update and the next elections.

Among other recommendations, the report states that the candidate vetting (selection) process needs to be thoroughly reformed and measures to prevent fraud improved. Vetting of candidates must exclude those who have committed human rights abuses as well as are involved with illegal armed groups. If the credibility of electoral bodies is to be restored, those found to have engaged in fraudulent activities should face legal consequences. In addition, the participation of women needs to be facilitated.

The report also strongly calls on the international community to renew its support for Afghan institutions and electoral bodies.

Speaking at the publication of the report today, Mr Berman said: *"The presidential and provincial elections have, in the view of the EU EOM, been marred by massive fraud. It is essential to find better procedures to prevent this happening in future elections."*



EUROPEAN UNION ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION TO AFGHANISTAN  
Presidential and Provincial Council Elections 2009

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*It is now up to the Afghan president, the Afghan government and the international community to support the democratic institutions in Afghanistan. This needs to be followed up without delay. What is at stake here is the legitimacy of the democratic institutions of Afghanistan, not only in the eyes of the Afghan population, but in those of people in donor countries who need to be sure that development aid is well spent and that their troops are doing a good job.*

*Only through efficient and accountable institutions can Afghanistan succeed in regaining control of its own destiny, as all Afghans wish”.*

In total, the final report makes 37 recommendations for consideration by the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the election administration, political parties, civil society and the international community.

The report is published in English, Dari and Pashtu. It is available to download on the EU Election Observation Mission website, [www.eueom-afghanistan.org](http://www.eueom-afghanistan.org)

**Note to editors:**

The EU Election Observation Mission was invited by the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to observe all aspects of the 2009 electoral process and assess compliance with international standards and domestic law. The mission was present in Afghanistan from 2 July 2009 to 6 November 2009 and a total of 120 observers were deployed on election day.

Although deployment was affected by general security limitations and an upsurge in violence on election day, EU EOM observers were present at the opening, polling and counting in 268 polling stations in 17 of the country's 34 provinces.

Election observation is a key component of the EU's broader foreign policy agenda of promoting democratic development and respect for human rights and the rule of law. The EU has observed some 80 elections in three continents, using a standardised methodology in accordance with international standards and the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation commemorated under the auspices of the United Nations in October 2005.

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