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Press release: EU deploys Election Observation Mission to Kenya

In response to an invitation by the Kenyan authorities, the European Union has decided to deploy an Election Observation Mission (EOM) to Kenya to observe the general elections scheduled for 8 August. Former EU EOM recommendations have played a role in promoting political dialogue and the consolidation of democracy in Kenya.

Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, has appointed Ms. Marietje Schaake Member of the European Parliament, as Chief Observer.

The High Representative stated:

“The EU and Kenya are long standing partners, with 2017 marking 40 years of our cooperation. This is the fourth time that the European Union observes general elections in Kenya, reflecting our common work to credible, transparent and inclusive elections in the country, since our political dialogue and cooperation strategy focusses on supporting good governance. This year’s general elections are foreseen to be very competitive and we are committed to give an important contribution to the electoral process through the Electoral Observation Mission led by Chief Observer Schaake. We expect the rule of law will prevail with all parties resolving any possible election disputes through dialogue and available legal remedies”.

The Chief Observer, Ms. Schaake, declared: *“I am honoured to lead the EU EOM to Kenya. The forthcoming general elections will be another defining moment in Kenya’s democratic development. Kenya has already achieved impressive progress in terms of democratisation and good governance. I trust the Kenyan people will express their political choices in a peaceful and calm environment, thus confirming the significance of democratic institutions. The August polls can further consolidate the democratic record through well-run, transparent, inclusive and peaceful elections, with all sides refraining from any actions or statements that may incite violence.”*

Background

Building on the assessment work done by an Election Expert Team sent out in April to assess the political parties' primaries, the EOM Core Team of ten EU election analysts will arrive in Nairobi on 13 June, and will stay in the country until the completion of the elections, to prepare a comprehensive assessment of the electoral process. As from late June the Core Team will be joined by 30 long-term observers, and later in early August by additional 32 short-term observers who will be deployed across the country. A delegation of the European Parliament and Kenya-based diplomats from EU Member States will also reinforce the mission on election day. The EU EOM looks forward to cooperate with other international observation missions that have endorsed the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation.

At the request of the Kenyan authorities, the deployment of an EU EOM aims to contribute to enhancing the transparency of the election process, the respect for fundamental freedoms and will submit to the consideration of the authorities a set of recommendations to further improve the election framework for future elections. The EU supports African efforts to strengthen the democratisation process across the continent.