EU ELECTION ASSESSMENT TEAM PRELIMINARY STATEMENT ON 5 APRIL 2014 PRESIDENTIAL AND PROVINCIAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS

“The Afghan people resolutely engaged with the democratic process, despite security threats”

Kabul, 7 April 2014 – Thijs BERMAN, EU Election Assessment Team (EU EAT) Chief Observer, presented the EU EAT Preliminary Statement on 5 April Presidential and Provincial Council Elections at a press conference held today in Kabul. The Preliminary Statement, which outlines the Mission’s preliminary findings, analysis and conclusions of the electoral process so far, constitutes the first post-election assessment by the EU EAT.

The Presidential election was held on 5 April, as per the Constitutional timeline. “Afghan voters have shown a remarkable, impressive determination to choose their leadership in freedom, by voting peacefully, in unexpectedly high numbers “, stated Thijs BERMAN. “Afghan voters showed their radical choice for the democratic constitution of Afghanistan and the universal rights enshrined in it”, he added.

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Violent and deadly incidents took place, both before and during Election Day, however the electoral timetable remained unchanged and on 5 April, most polling centres were open. “We were impressed and moved by the determination, the will of Afghan voters. We don’t know who has won. We know that the Taliban have lost “, underlined Chief Observer Berman. “Their threats to disrupt the elections with violence have led to loss of lives, of citizens, journalists, Independent Election Commission (IEC) staff, policemen, and also one international observer”.

Women remain underrepresented within the electorate, both active and passive, particularly in provinces affected by security threats. Social limitations and an absence of local infrastructure also decreased participation of women. “I sincerely hope that the pride with which many women voters took part in these elections will prove to be highly contagious in the future”, emphasized Chief Observer BERMAN.

“The legal framework has improved remarkably “, noticed Thijs BERMAN. The Afghan Parliament adopted two key laws in 2013 establishing a clearly defined legal structure for the conduct of all elections in Afghanistan.
“The IEC has shown many improvements in the organizational structure, technical capacity and communication necessary for this vast and complex operation”, observed Thijs BERMAN. The absence of a comprehensive, sustainable and centralized voter roll impacted the IEC’s ability to conduct electoral preparations based on a detailed knowledge of the size and distribution of the electorate. The current system of population estimates makes planning for the correct number of ballot papers per polling station challenging. “There have been some reports and observations on a lack of ballot papers in some districts. We will support further investigations by the competent authorities and other relevant stakeholders on the reasons, the extent and the consequences of this phenomenon”, commented Thijs BERMAN.

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“The aggregation of results is on-going. The EU Election Assessment Team encourages the IEC to continue carrying out their duties and count the votes with the maximum of transparency”, according to Thijs BERMAN.

“The EU EAT will remain until the very end of this electoral process and will continue assessing the compliance of these elections with Afghan legislation and with international standards”, concluded Chief Observer BERMAN.

Mainstream media offered the electorate a broad range of viewpoints and the ability to scrutinise the candidates. However, the level playing field in the media was weakened by the IEC Media Commission’s reluctance to take resolute action against outlets which violated campaign regulations, despite collecting comprehensive data on the broadcasters’ performance. Freedom of speech was affected by a number of attacks on journalist.

The EU EAT is led by Chief Observer Thijs BERMAN, Dutch member of the European Parliament. It consists of 16 international experts from 13 European countries based in Kabul since March 15, 2014, among them a Deputy Chief Observer, five analysts (electoral, legal, political, media, data) and eight regional experts. On Election Day and during tallying of the votes, several dozen of locally based European diplomats reinforced the Team for electoral observation activities carried out in Kabul, Balkh and Samangan provinces.

EU observers adhere to a Code of Conduct imposing strict neutrality, impartiality and independence in the course of their work. The EU EAT operates in accordance with the UN Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation adopted in 2005.

The Preliminary Statement, in its original English version, is available online on the EAT website at the following http://www.eueom.eu/eu-eat-afghanistan-2014/home?LANG=en

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