



Press release

EU EOM presents final report on the general elections, with recommendations for reform

Islamabad, 26 October 2018

The European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) to Pakistan today released its final report on the 25 July general elections, which contains 30 recommendations to improve future electoral processes.

The Chief Observer of the EU EOM, Michael Gahler, Member of the European Parliament from Germany, returned to Pakistan to present the final report. *“Our final report brings together the findings and analysis of our observations over the period the mission was in Pakistan, as well as comprehensive recommendations for future elections,”* said Mr Gahler at a press conference in Islamabad. *“The recommendations in the report are addressed to the relevant institutions – the Election Commission of Pakistan, the government, the National Assembly, political parties, civil society and other key stakeholders.”*

The report notes the inclusive and consultative reform process undertaken after the 2013 elections, resulting in the partial or complete implementation of 38 of the 50 recommendations made by the EU EOM in 2013.

However, key concerns remain, including: a lack of oversight of political party campaign finance; vague and subjective candidacy registration criteria; incomplete access for observers to all stages of the electoral process; the absence of a unified electoral roll; and limitations on media and freedom of expression.

On the work of the Election Commission of Pakistan, the EU EOM concludes that, while the technical aspects of the elections were largely well administered, the ECP failed to provide timely information to voters and stakeholders on its decisions, procedures and other information of public interest. The report also highlights inadequate voter education, flawed postal voting, and a lack of transparency in the delimitation of constituencies and the transmission of results.

Other important issues mentioned in the report include: the undue restrictions on freedom of expression which led to considerable media self-censorship; constraints on freedom of assembly; the presence of the armed forces inside polling stations; and the underrepresentation of women as voters and assembly members.

The report makes 30 recommendations for consideration, but suggests priority attention is given to the following eight:

1. Review the Constitution and Elections Act so that any restrictions imposed on the right to stand as a candidate are not subject to vague, moral and arbitrary criteria.
2. Revise the Elections Act, Election Rules and Codes of Conduct to ensure robust mechanisms for transparency of the ECP. These would include specific timeframes for, and the manner of, dissemination of information of public interest, including online.
3. To contribute to public confidence in the ECP, the Commission should introduce a range of measures to increase transparency, such as the holding of regular meetings with election stakeholders.
4. Guarantee civilian ownership of the conduct of elections by limiting the presence of security

- forces to outside polling stations only.
5. Review the legal framework for media, including for online content, to ensure compliance with international standards for freedom of expression.
 6. Introduce affirmative measures to foster the representation of women contesting general seats.
 7. Adopt a unified electoral roll by removing the requirement for any supplementary list of voters, so that all citizens can be registered to vote on an equal basis in accordance with international standards.
 8. Establish in law the right to national and international observation, ensuring full access for observers, including media, to all stages of the electoral process.

“Following the elections of 2018, various stakeholders informed the EU EOM of the need to revisit the Elections Act and to engage a new parliamentary committee for additional electoral reforms. We encourage such action to ensure further progress,” said Mr Gahler.

The EU EOM was present in Pakistan between 24 June and 23 August 2018. It was deployed after the ECP welcomed the presence of an observation mission for the general elections. It was the largest international observation mission, comprising 122 observers from all 28 EU member states.

The mission’s mandate was to observe all aspects of the electoral process and assess the extent to which the elections complied with international commitments for elections, as well as with national legislation. Unlike previous election observation missions to Pakistan, the EU EOM faced unprecedented delay in the deployment of its observers.

*The final report is available in English and Urdu; only the English version is official.
It is available at: www.eueompakistan2018.eu*

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