



EU Election Observation Mission Republic of Rwanda 2008



EU Chief Observer's statement at the launch of the Election Observation Mission

Kigali 29 July 2008

Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me to welcome you all to this press conference on occasion of the launching of the EU Election Observation mission to the Republic of Rwanda.

First of all, I would like to thank the Rwandan authorities for inviting this Mission to observe the parliamentary elections scheduled for 15-18 September 2008. The fact that the European Commission is deploying a mission of some 80 observers, the largest single group of international observers to the upcoming elections, shows the keen interest of the EU in the process of democratic transformation in this country.

A delegation of my colleagues from the European Parliament will also be joining us shortly before the elections.

This mission follows, as you may be aware, a set methodology that we apply in our work in all countries in which we observe elections. We apply the same standards and methods as in any other EU election Observation Mission. Our methodology is in full accordance with "the Declaration of principles for International Election Observation" and its accompanying Code of Conduct. This document, commemorated at the United Nations in New York in October 2005, is the foundation of credible international election observation.

That means that we focus on the process and not on the eventual results of an election. We have no party political allegiances or preferences, we address all relevant issues with regard to the entire election process, including the campaign, performance of the election administration, role of the judiciary and general environment in which the elections take place. We are here to observe not to interfere.

We will analyse the election environment both at a central and local level in all four provinces through our long term observers. In this respect we welcome contact from all stakeholders. Our assessment is based on international standards for elections. In addition, we will refer to best practice for democratic elections.



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As you may know, the EU previously sent an Election Observation Mission to the parliamentary elections in 2003. In the Final report of that mission, a number of recommendations were made. We will be analysing to what extent these previous recommendations have been adopted.

In line with standard EU EOM practice, following the elections, the mission will issue a Preliminary Statement within 48 hours of the close of polls. This will provide our assessment of the electoral process up until that stage – hence its preliminary nature. Clearly, important elements of the process take place after this time, for example, finalization of results, and complaints, which may arise, and appeals procedures. Thus, a final report will be issued 1 - 2 months later. This will provide a comprehensive assessment of the entire electoral process and will include a thorough set of recommendations, where necessary.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is my second visit to Rwanda. I was here in 2007 with the ACP Joint Parliamentary Assembly. I am happy to be back and it remains only for me to say that it has given us great pleasure to be so warmly welcomed and we look forward to making a positive contribution to the democratic development of Rwanda.