

HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE

THE FUTURE OF INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION

Organised by the European Parliament's Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group (DEG)
and the European External Action Service

Brussels, 10-11 October 2018

Venue: European Parliament

CONCEPT NOTE

Background

Election observation is a highly visible demonstration of international commitment to supporting democracy and promoting respect for human rights around the world. It can contribute to strengthening democratic institutions, build public confidence in electoral processes and help deter fraud, intimidation and violence. Observers work closely in the framework of the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation (DoP), launched in 2005 under the auspices of the UN.

The European Union (EU), since the adoption of a standard election observation methodology in 2000, has deployed more than 140 Election Observation Missions (EOMs) in more than 60 countries around the globe. EU EOMs are the result of a very effective and successful inter-institutional cooperation between the European External Action Service (EEAS), European Parliament (EP), European Commission (EC) and Member States.

There is a growing demand from partner countries for the EU, and other international and regional organisations, to deploy EOMs but these missions are also increasingly exposed to public scrutiny. There are new challenges that need to be addressed jointly by DoP partners, such as the impact of the use of ICT and social media. The EU and the UN is also starting to develop operational tools to address specific problems related to the prevention of election related violence.

The European Parliament and the European External Action Service are therefore inviting DoP endorsers, partner countries (government and parliamentarians), EU national Parliaments, civil society and media to discuss the challenges ahead.

A focus on Africa

A particular focus of the conference will be the EU-AU partnership and existing cooperation in election observation and the impact of EOMs on the democratisation process in a number of African countries. In line with the overarching objectives of Agenda 2063¹, the conference could be seen as part of the implementation of the EU Global Strategy through strengthening multilateral partnership on peace and security. In this context, synergies should be sought between EU-AU-UN, notably within the framework of the Joint UN-AU Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security (signed in April 2017). The conference would also contribute to the 2030 Agenda, in particular Sustainable Development Goal 16 related commitments and follow on from the AU-UN Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (signed in January 2018).

A focus on parliamentary observation

Parliamentarians (and former political leaders) are increasingly involved in election observation. Elected politicians have particular expertise in political campaigns and electoral processes, bringing added credibility and visibility to the conclusions of long-term technical observation missions. While taking into account parliamentarians' freedom of speech and right to carry out their political activity throughout their mandates, parliamentarian-observers have to maintain strict political impartiality and neutrality in their assessment of election processes. An exchange of best practices between parliamentarian-observers, including on a Parliamentary Code of Conduct for election observation, will be another focus of the conference.

A focus on Conflict Prevention

Both the EU's Global Strategy and the UN's Sustaining Peace Agenda reflect conflict prevention as a policy priority. Elections constitute a critical stress-test for the peaceful management of political, economic and social divisions. These issues and practical ways to address them will be considered in a dedicated session of the conference. In addition, the conference is preceded (8-10/10) by an EU-UNDP Joint Task Force on Electoral Assistance event on "Sustaining Peace through Elections".

¹ AU strategic framework for the socio-economic transformation of the African continent over the next 50 years, adopted in January 2015

Wednesday 10 October 2018

15:00 -16:15 Opening of the High-Level Conference

Mr Antonio Tajani, President of the European Parliament (tbc)

Mrs Federica Mogherini, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission (tbc)

Mrs Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations (tbc)

H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission (tbc)

16:15 - 16:30 Coffee break

16:30 – 18:30 Topic 1: Organisation of credible elections, conflict prevention / security, and peaceful transition

18:30 – 19:30 Welcome cocktail hosted by Mrs Mairead McGuinness, First Vice-President of the European Parliament (*By invitation*)

Thursday 11 October 2018

09:00 -11:00 Topic 2: Chief Observers' Forum: "Challenges and opportunities of election observation: ICT, tackling disinformation, and the use of social media"

11:00 - 11:15 Coffee break

11:15 – 12:45 *Running in parallel*

Topic 3: Role and best practices of parliamentary observation, including a Code of Conduct

Topic 4: Enhancing EU-AU-UN cooperation on Electoral Processes and Electoral Observation, including methodology of Election Observation Missions

13:00 - 13:15 Closing of the Conference

13:30-15:00 Buffet lunch hosted by the Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group (*By invitation*)