Niger: EU to observe the presidential and legislative elections

The European Union is deploying an Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) for the presidential and legislative elections in Niger, scheduled to take place on 31 January 2011. The EU EOM is led by a Chief Observer, Santiago Fisas Ayxela, Member of the European Parliament. It will comprise 38 observers who currently assess pre-election preparations and the electoral campaign. They will particularly focus on voting, counting and tabulation of the results. The EU EOM will also stay for the post-election period.

A first team of experts arrived in the country on 5 January. These experts were joined by Long Term Observers (LTOs) on 17 January.

The Chief Observer will issue a preliminary statement after the polling day. After the completion of the electoral sequence, he will eventually issue a comprehensive assessment of the electoral process as well as a set of recommendations for the benefit of Nigerien authorities.

The EU EOM will be one of the largest international observation groups in Niger for these elections. The EU also contributed to the technical preparation of the elections and provided financial support of around € 20 million.

Catherine Ashton, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission, said:

“The forthcoming elections are an essential step in the transitional process towards democracy in Niger. The EU has been strongly committed to facilitate Niger’s return to democracy since 2009.

I have no doubt that the electoral environment will be conducive to peaceful elections and will not be hampered by recent dramatic events, and that Nigerien voters will be able to express themselves in a serene atmosphere. I also believe that the presence of observers can contribute to building confidence in these elections. I want to stress that the EU EOM role is not to validate candidacies and results but to assess the election process against international standards for genuine and democratic elections.”

For additional information, see also the internet site of the EU EOM:

www.moe-eu-niger.eu