Joint statement by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton and EU Commissioner Andris Piebalgs on the elections in Niger

Catherine Ashton, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission, and Andris Piebalgs, Commissioner responsible for Development, made the following statement today:

"We welcome the great sense of responsibility shown by the Nigerien electorate who have gone to the polls peacefully to vote in the first round of the presidential election and in the parliamentary election and we commend the transition authorities for their efforts to respect the roadmap to which they were committed since April 2010.

Following the constitutional referendum of 31 October 2010, these elections mark a milestone in the process of transition to democracy and a major step towards the restoration of full cooperation between Niger and the European Union, as agreed during consultations held in the framework of the article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement.

The European Union is very closely monitoring the electoral process in Niger, to which it contributed technically and financially with over €20 million.

As part of its firm commitment to supporting the elections, the European Union also sent an independent Electoral Observation Mission led by the MEP Santiago Fisas Ayxela, which will make specific proposals for improving future ballots.

We urge the candidates, the authorities and the Independent National Electoral Commission to continue to ensure the highest possible level of transparency in the process and to respect the will of the electorate in Niger and invite the Transitional Constitutional Council to do everything possible to ensure that the detailed final results are soon published."

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