EU to observe elections in Pakistan

The European Union, in response to an invitation by the Pakistani authorities, is deploying an election observation mission to observe the General Elections of 11 May.

Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission, has nominated Michael Gahler MEP as Chief Observer for this mission. Mr Gahler was also the EU’s Chief Observer for the 2008 elections in Pakistan and has participated in a number of other observation missions.

Catherine Ashton said: “The forthcoming parliamentary elections in Pakistan will be a historic moment for the democratic development of the country as they mark, for the first time, the transition of power from one elected government to the next. I hope that all those involved will engage in the process in a peaceful and democratic way. As part of our long-standing support to the democratic process in Pakistan, and following an invitation from the authorities, I have decided to deploy an EU Election Observation Mission. I am confident that, under the leadership of MEP Michael Gahler, this EOM will enhance the confidence of Pakistani voters in the process.”

Mr Gahler will arrive in Islamabad on 7 April. A core team of eleven EU election analysts has been deployed in Pakistan from 2 April. They will gradually be joined by 52 long-term observers and 46 short-term observers from 27 EU member states, as well as from Norway, Switzerland and Canada. Altogether, about a hundred EU observers will be in the country for the forthcoming elections.

Shortly after Election Day, the mission will issue a preliminary statement of its initial findings at a press conference in Islamabad. The mission will remain in Pakistan to observe the final counting of votes and any complaint procedures, and to prepare a full report including recommendations to improve the electoral process.