



## Press Release

For immediate release  
Dili, 28 September 2012

### **Chief Observer Fiona Hall presented today the EU Election Observation Mission's final report at a press conference in Dili**

Fiona Hall, member of the European Parliament and Chief Observer of the European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM), who observed the legislative elections on the 7 July 2012, has returned to Timor-Leste to present the mission's final report.

During her return visit to Timor-Leste, Ms Fiona Hall met with Mr Taur Matan Ruak, President of the Republic, the National Electoral Commission (CNE), key government ministers, political parties' representatives and other stakeholders, including civil society. The Mission's Chief Observer presented the final report to the Timor-Leste authorities, as well as a series of recommendations, included in the report, and designed to improve the electoral process.

The report, which was publicly released this morning at a press conference in Dili, brings together the findings of the EU observations over the two month period that the mission was in Timor-Leste. It contains a comprehensive analysis of the legislative elections and an assessment of a number of aspects such as the legal framework, the work of the election administration, the role of state institutions, the campaign environment, the conduct of the media, the role of civil society, as well as voting, counting and tabulation and the complaints and appeals process.

The report's main findings are that the 7 July 2012 legislative elections took place in conditions of overall stability and with the Timorese electoral bodies taking the lead in their administration and supervision. Election day was very well administered, the language and tone of the electoral campaign remained generally constrained, and complaints were few and for the most part relatively minor. The general atmosphere of calm surrounding the campaign was attributed to a more favourable political context than in 2007 in which a consensus among the political elite that a peaceful election was necessary to ensure the withdrawal of the UN and the International Stabilization Force played a part, but also to the way that the election was administered and supervised, including the implementation of well-established routines to allay fears of electoral violence. An improved legal framework for elections incorporates now a substantial part of the 2007 EU EOM's recommendations. Also in line with the 2007 EU EOM recommendations, the two election management bodies (EMB) in Timor-Leste, the National Electoral Commission (CNE) and the Technical Secretariat for Electoral Administration (STAE), have been considerably strengthened since the 2007 elections. The neutrality of both CNE and STAE was not seriously challenged by the candidates running in the parliamentary election; and despite a somewhat difficult working relation, CNE and STAE were able to perform their complementary duties.

Nevertheless, a number of weaknesses and challenges have been identified and a series of improvements are advisable to ensure that Timor-Leste will continue to succeed in its path towards the consolidation of



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the democratic process through which the Timorese institutions have been gaining in strength and in self-reliance.

A set of recommendations to improve the electoral process are set out in the report for consideration by the Government of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, the CNE and the STAE, as well as other national and international stakeholders. Their implementation could, in EU EOM's opinion, contribute to the improvement of future elections. Among those, the most relevant are the following:

- The advisability of introducing legally-binding provisions on party funding and spending during election campaigns, including ones establishing ceilings on donations and expenditure and sanctions for breaches of the law that are severe enough to act as a deterrent to illegal funding.
- The EU EOM recommends that the National Parliament amend existing legislation so as to extend the authority of STAE, which already maintains the most comprehensive inventory of the voting age population, to allow it to assume the additional responsibility of maintaining a permanent civil register. This measure would not only simplify the current practice of maintaining two parallel databases and two different types of identification document, but would also, after an initial quite costly registration drive, provide a more reliable and cost-effective system for maintaining a register of Timorese citizens.
- The EU EOM considers of the highest importance for the quality of the democracy. that the government of Timor-Leste and donors continue to organize and support training programmes for journalists so as to bring their level of competence into line with journalistic best practice.

The EU EOM was present in Timor-Leste between the 26 May and the 24 July 2012 following an invitation from the Government of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste. The mission deployed about 70 observers from 25 EU member states, as well as Switzerland and Norway to all 13 districts of the country to assess the electoral process against international and regional commitments and the laws of Timor-Leste. The EU EOM is independent in its findings and conclusions of any other European Union institution. In organising its election observation activities, the European Union adheres to the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation commemorated at the United Nations in October 2005.

*[Download the final report at: http://www.eueom.eu/timorleste2012](http://www.eueom.eu/timorleste2012)*

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