

**Speech of Ambassador Angelina Eichhorst
Head of Delegation of the European Union to Lebanon**

First Implementation Meeting of the Declaration of Global Principles
for Nonpartisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen
Organizations

**WHY INTERNATIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR
NON-PARTISAN CITIZEN ELECTION OBSERVATION MATTER**

Gefinor Rotana Hotel, Beirut, Lebanon
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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Dear friends,

I am pleased to be here today among electoral experts with such a broad experience of observing elections worldwide.

Let me start by thanking the efforts of all civil society organisations and their international partners in setting up this event, allowing for a unique opportunity to share experience and best practices on election observation; and for jointly coming together in Beirut to enhance citizens' election monitoring through the development of a global network.

The **European Union is a strong supporter of citizens' direct involvement** in all walks of life, not least in the field of political participation and human rights. **Elections are a key moment of democratic life and citizens are the first concerned** when it comes to choosing their own representatives— well, provided citizens are granted a genuine choice, provided candidates enjoy equal chances, provided

voters are given a free and secret vote (not least through pre-printed ballot papers), and all votes have an equal weight in determining the balance of power. **International standards in elections exist to enforce the equality of all citizens, a core universal value, as enshrined in key international conventions** from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

International standards are thus the benchmarks that guide the path of all players in the democratic process. The election administration and the courts should provide a genuine process, which is effective, fair to all contestants and which is sufficiently transparent to generate public confidence (e.g. through granting adequate access to observers throughout the process). The political forces should abide by the law, not least when it comes to non-violent campaigning and clean campaign finance, but also aiming at best practices (for instance through promoting women candidates in electable positions, above and beyond the basic legal requirements). But voters also should fulfil their obligations: participate (not least the youth), express their true preference, demand a secret vote and refuse to engage in dubious electoral practices.

In addition to the role played by these various actors in the democratic process, the EU firmly believe that **elections can also benefit from the presence of observers and from an independent and impartial assessment made of the process.** Election observation can promote transparency and accountability, as well as enhance public confidence. With these objectives in mind, the European Union has become a leading force in international election observation, deploying world-wide 78 EU EOMs since 2000!

Observers however are also bound by the widely accepted principles of independence, impartiality and professionalism. These are the responsibilities which come from being granted privileged access to the election process. Monitoring is about holding to account; international principles in election monitoring are the criteria against which observers stand up for scrutiny themselves, and certify that their assessment reflects their findings. This is true for international observers as for domestic observers.

The EU was at the forefront of the efforts to clarify the role of international observers, incl. the drafting of an international declaration of principles and a code of conduct. These remain at the core of the EU methodology for election observation, which seeks to assess all aspects of an election against international standards. And we use the recommendations from EU EOMs in our political dialogue as well as in our cooperation to support electoral reform, to ensure a continuum between the various stages of the "election cycle". This is the case here in Lebanon where we follow a dual-track approach to promote an improved electoral process, on the basis of international standards and observers' recommendations, by engaging with the authorities as well as with civil society.

The European Union has always stressed the **importance of fully involving civil society and citizen observers in all stages of the electoral cycle**, from advocacy on legislation to mobilizing political participation and monitoring electoral operations. They know the country, they know the language, they know the culture. But it is important to demonstrate that their work follows the same key principles of independence, impartiality and professionalism, to avoid accusations of

political bias and personal preferences. This is why we were **keen to support the Declaration of Global Principles for Non-partisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations.**

In this context, allow me to recognise here the work of LADE in Lebanon and in the region, in promoting citizens' participation, in tirelessly thriving for the better and advocating for change and in mobilising observers in all parts of the country to follow and report on the process as well as to Minister Baroud and his team for supporting their initiatives.

I wish you all a success conference.