



**EUROPEAN UNION
ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION**



SIERRA LEONE 2018
PRESIDENTIAL, PARLIAMENTARY AND LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS

PRESS RELEASE

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for immediate release

European Observers release their final report and make 29 recommendations for reforms to improve future elections in Sierra Leone

The European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) in Sierra Leone today issued its Final Report on the 7 and 31 March Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Council elections.

Chief Observer Jean Lambert, a Member of the European Parliament from the United-Kingdom, commented: “The 2018 elections marked the second peaceful transition from one elected leader to another. It is a milestone for the consolidation of democracy in Sierra Leone. Our mission observed the whole electoral process and our final report contains 29 recommendations to improve future elections. I hope that the new government, all political parties, election management bodies and civil society will choose to implement them. It is an important time and opportunity for the people of Sierra Leone to seize this chance to further strengthen their democracy.”

The final report notes that despite political pressure from parties and state intimidation, the National Electoral Commission proved its commitment to transparent and inclusive elections. However, the run-off election was marred by a period of legal uncertainty and divisive discourse fuelled by some politicians. In this context, civil society played an important role in supporting the democratic process and calming the campaign.

Jean Lambert added: “Our recommendations concern all aspects and stages of the electoral process. We believe that if the reforms are successfully implemented they can help consolidate the rule of law and improve the conduct of the next elections. I am also keen to see greater and deeper participation of women in all aspects of political life, which in addition to being a fundamental human right, is in keeping with Sierra Leone’s regional, African and global commitments and would further enliven democracy in Sierra Leone.”

All of the recommendations are based on the observations made in around 800 polling stations across the two election days by the EU EOM and extensive consultations with a broad range of stakeholders by the Mission’s electoral experts who were in Sierra Leone for nearly three months. Priority recommendations include providing sufficient financial resources to the NEC in a timely manner, clarifying the conduct of voter registration, amending the constitution regarding the right to stand for elections, increasing transparency of the income and expenditure of parties and candidates, and implementing mechanisms to increase the number of women in parliament and local councils.

Discussions between the EU EOM and the government, the NEC, political parties, civil society representatives and other stakeholders will continue in the days after the presentation of the Final Report.

**For further information, please contact: Peggy Corlin, EU EOM Press Officer
Mobile: +232(0)30911583 Email: peggy.corlin@eomsierraleone2018.eu
www.eomsierraleone2018.eu**