



**EUROPEAN UNION
ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION
KINGDOM OF BHUTAN, NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, MARCH 2008**

Press Release: For Immediate Release

EU Opens Mission to Observe National Assembly Election

Thimphu, 4 March 2008. At the invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the European Union opened a mission to observe the 24 March 2008 National Assembly elections in the Kingdom of Bhutan. The EU Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) is headed by Mr. Javier Pomés, Member of the European Parliament. Mr. Pomés, from Spain, is a member of the EP Committee on Budgetary Control, the Committee on Development and the Delegation for relations with the countries of Southeast Asia and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The mandate of the EU EOM is to observe all aspects of the election process and to assess the extent to which the election complies with international standards for elections, as well as with domestic law. The EU considers election observation to be a key component of its policy of promoting human rights and democracy. It undertakes this mission in a spirit of cooperation with the Kingdom of Bhutan. The EU EOM will observe the campaign environment, the role of the media, the work of the election administration, the participation of women and a range of other issues.

The EU EOM office opened on 22 February and is comprised of a core team of 6 electoral experts who are based in Thimphu. On 29 February, the core team has been joined by 9 long-term observers, who will be deployed in teams of two throughout the whole country. The core team and long-term observers come from 13 different EU countries. On Election Day, the EU EOM will observe polling and counting procedures around the country. All EU EOM observers will be impartial and will operate under an internationally accepted code of conduct.

The EU EOM has already started meeting with government officials, election administrators, candidates, political parties, the media, civil society organizations and others involved in the elections. The EOM invites these groups to contact it at any time to share information, views or concerns.

Following Election Day, the Chief Observer will issue a preliminary statement with the EOM's preliminary assessment of the process. Later, a more comprehensive final report will be issued, including any recommendations to improve the electoral process.

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