



EU Election Observation Mission: Southern Sudan Referendum voting process credible, well organised and with overwhelming participation by Southern Sudanese voters

Khartoum, 17 January 2011 - The European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) assesses the voting process of the Southern Sudan Referendum credible and well organised in a mostly peaceful environment. During a press conference today in Khartoum to announce the Mission's Preliminary Statement, Chief Observer Veronique de Keyser congratulated both the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission and the Southern Sudan Referendum Bureau for a well organised Referendum. "Holding the Referendum on time is a remarkable achievement and a major milestone in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, to which the European Union is also a witness."

Echoing the European Union High Representative for Foreign Policy Catherine Ashton's statement of 15 January, she commended both Sudanese parties to the CPA for their political courage in implementing the Referendum. Although final turnout figures will only be released by the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission at the conclusion of the results processing phase, it is clear that the Southern Sudanese voters participated in the Referendum in an overwhelming manner, well in excess of the 60 per cent required to validate the Referendum. Ms. De Keyser appealed to all parties for patience and to allow the Referendum bodies to complete the work of processing and announcing the results, stressing that completion of polling and counting is just the latest phase of the process. She called on the Sudanese authorities and people to respect the outcome of the Referendum.

In its preliminary conclusions, the EU Election Observation Mission found the process to date to be efficient and well organised, with polling officials well trained. Voter registration was carried out effectively and according to procedures.

Numerous challenges, such as the delays in passing the Southern Sudan Referendum Act and the establishing the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission, were overcome. The Referendum bodies, on the whole, implemented their mandate professionally, with substantial assistance from the UN Integrated Referendum and Electoral Division.

A climate of uncertainty about post-Referendum issues, and the ongoing question of the future status of Abyei, has contributed to an environment in which isolated violent incidents resulted in loss of life, in Abyei, South Kordofan and Unity states. "As Sudan enters the wait for results, protection of the fundamental rights of all Sudanese citizens, regardless of their origin, ethnicity



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and perceived affiliations, is essential,” said Ms. Mariya Nedelcheva, the head of the six member delegation from the European Parliament, which endorses this statement.

The Mission’s 110 observers and experts submitted 1261 reports between the polling days of 9-15 January, following visits to 800 separate Referendum Centres in all states in Southern Sudan and 8 of the northern states. The EU Election Observation Mission has been present in Sudan since 12 December 2010, following a Voter Registration Assessment Mission that deployed on 8 November 2010.

The mission will remain in the country to observe the appeals process and the final announcement of results. Within two months of the conclusion of the process, the Chief Observer will return to Sudan to issue a Final Report, offering a detailed evaluation and recommendations. The EU EOM is independent in its findings and conclusions.

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