



Transcript of opening address at the press conference of the EU EOM Kenya 2017 Chief Observer, Marietje Schaake, on 3 July, Nairobi

Marietje Schaake, EU EOM Kenya 2017 Chief Observer

Welcome, everybody. Good morning, thank you very much for joining us.

It is really a pleasure to officially launch the European Union's Election Observation Mission to the 2017 elections here in Kenya.

We have felt very welcome everywhere. We, being myself and everybody on the mission, we have heard 'Karibu' a lot so I would like to thank you for this warm welcome and say Asante.

We could not have been here in Kenya if it wasn't for the invitation of the IEBC and we are grateful for their inviting us.

During the last couple of days, I have already had the pleasure of meeting a variety of stakeholders here in Nairobi including representatives of the political parties and coalitions, of the acting government, of the IEBC, and several civil society organisations.

And of course, I also had the pleasure of meeting with the EU mission. And I would like to thank everybody for their availability and their time. There will be many more meetings, because the goal is to get an as inclusive as possible picture of these elections from all angles.

We as the European Union in our missions use very clear guidelines and strict methodologies when observing elections. They are constantly being improved, and they can be found on the internet, online for everyone to have a look at the details if you are interested. We also make recommendations after elections which will be widely shared because in every country and in every election, there is room for improvement.

Our assessment will look at the way in which Kenyan laws and international law are upheld and respected in practice during the entire election process: during the campaign, on election day as well as afterwards.

We deploy a strong mission of experts, long-term, short-term observers, which operates strictly impartially and independently. Long-term observers are not only here in Nairobi, but in many places across Kenya. An advance team arrived in April already, to also have an impression of the primaries.

We will deploy a total of 30 long-term observers, 32 short-term observers that include people from different EU Member States, Norway and Switzerland. They will be joined by local observers from the diplomatic community as well as a delegation of Members of the European Parliament.

We observe, but the organization, the safety and the integrity of these elections are the responsibility of the relevant state bodies here.

It is evident how much the campaign is already leading to lively discussions in Kenya, civil society, in the media, online, and at kitchen tables. Kenyans are very much aware of the significance of their right to vote.

A lot has changed since previous elections, that have left scars. The new constitution seeks to ensure a balance of power, the inclusion of minorities, and it sees public participation as a value, and includes important provisions on the inclusion of women. It will be a key moment to see how the provisions foreseen in the constitution will play out in practice.

I would like to end by saying that it is no secret there are concerns about the possible outbreak of violence. This is not inevitable, and it is clear that this would create a situation where everyone loses. There is a responsibility for each and everybody to grant each other the right and safety to vote according to his or her conscience but this responsibility grows in proportion to the influence different actors have over the 2017 elections.

It is in turn our responsibility, as the EU Election Observation Mission, to make an honest and impartial assessment of the integrity of the process, and the extent to which people's political rights are upheld.

The fact that the EU has sought to deploy such a large mission is testimony to the significance of the August 8th elections.

Our findings will be first presented in a preliminary statement that we expect to be able to present a few days after the elections. But our team will then stay on in Kenya to monitor the results and possible appeals as part of our entire monitoring process.

We are here, we are open to your questions today, but also going forward. And we will share our work on social media, to make sure we can show the people of Kenya in a transparent way who we are and what we are working on.

Thank you.