

Brussels, 15 September 2008

European Union sends Election Observation Mission to Ecuador

Following invitations from the Ecuadorian state and electoral authorities, the European Commission has decided to deploy a European Union Election Observation Mission (EOM) to Ecuador to observe the Referendum on a new Constitution, scheduled for 28 September. The EU EOM will be led by José Ribeiro e Castro, Member of the European Parliament.

Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, said: "This referendum is an important event, as the Ecuadorian people will have the opportunity to express themselves on a new constitution for their country. I have decided to deploy an EU EOM to the referendum, as I am convinced that its presence will contribute to enhancing transparency and public confidence at this important time when Ecuador is shaping its future".

The EOM Core team will consist of the Chief Observer Mr. Ribeiro e Castro and five experts. The chief observer will arrive in the country on 15 September to officially launch the EOM. During his stay Mr Ribeiro e Castro, who was also Chief Observer for last year's EOM for the Constituent Assembly Elections, will meet with the country's national electoral authority (the Tribunal Supremo Electoral), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and all key players in the election process.

The core team will be joined by 16 long-term observers, who will be deployed throughout the country to follow the campaign period and pre-referendum preparations, as well as the day of the referendum and the immediate post-referendum period. On the 28 September, the day of the referendum, the EU EOM will be strengthened by a handful of short-term observers coming from the EU diplomatic community as well as from the European Parliament.

The European Commission has made available €750,000 from the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) for this EOM mission.

EU EOMs are an important instrument for building confidence in the democratic processes of a country and are deployed in line with the EU's commitment to promote democracy, human rights and the respect for the rule of law. EU election observation missions are independent and professional, and for this reason their findings are widely seen as credible and trustworthy.

For additional information, see also:

EU Election Assistance & Observation:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/human_rights/eu_election_ass_observ/index.htm

European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/projects/eidhr/index_en.htm

The EU's relations with Ecuador:

http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/ecuador/intro/index.htm