EU Election Assessment Team calls for more transparency in second round - Fraud in first round was sizeable without affecting order of candidates none

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The EU Election Assessment Team (EU EAT) in Afghanistan welcomes the publication of the final results of the 5 April Presidential Election announced today by the Independent Election Commission (IEC).

Although the overall organisation of these elections went well in many respects, EU EAT Chief Observer Thijs Berman underlines that “the lack of information provided to candidates and observers by the IEC during tallying, audits and recounts has significantly limited the level of transparency that should have been respected by the election administration”.

Candidates and observers have not been granted the necessary information to be able to crosscheck results announced by the IEC against those of polling stations before the end of the complaints period. This significantly limited the candidates’ possibilities to file complaints. Online results per polling station, in a format that would facilitate further analysis, have been absent until shortly before the announcement of final results, and information on female polling stations as well as on invalid votes and spoilt ballots has still not been provided by the IEC. The EU EAT has repeatedly insisted on the need to respect this transparency, as have candidates and other stakeholders.

The EU EAT welcomes the commitment by IEC Chairman Yusuf Nuristani in his communication today to show more openness in the second round. Chief Observer Thijs Berman insists: "transparency will need to improve decisively, in the interest of candidates and all Afghan citizens who are entitled to receive accurate and fast information. It is vital that, following the second round the IEC takes the necessary steps to ensure timely online publication of individual polling station results."

Furthermore, the EU EAT urges the IEC to clarify its criteria for the recounting and auditing of votes. Most importantly, it needs to ensure the consistent application of those criteria and to quarantine questionable results before publishing them.

Fraud, which has still been important, did not modify the ranking of the leading candidates, nor did any candidate win more than 50%

In the analysis of the results by the experts of EU EAT, fraud has still been important in the first round of the Presidential Election 2014, but less massive than in previous elections. Attempts to influence the outcome by fraud did however not modify the ranking of the leading candidates. As announced by the IEC, and corroborated by the analysis of the EU EAT, no candidate obtained more than 50% of the votes in the first round.

Regarding the challenges encountered in the first round, the EU EAT strongly encourages the electoral administration to provide sufficient ballot papers for the second round, and to overcome the shortages suffered in some regions.

The EU Team will remain vigilant on the electoral campaign for the presidential run-off, including on its tone and its balance, and calls upon both contenders and all stakeholders to respect democratic standards.

“Afghan voters have shown a remarkable democratic will to choose their leadership in freedom. Despite the threat of violence, voters have cast their ballots, and this was also a courageous vote for a democratic, peaceful Afghanistan. This choice needs to be respected in the second round, not undermined by fraud or violence", Thijs Berman stresses.

“The EU EAT will remain in the country until the very end of the second round, and will continue assessing the compliance of these elections with the Afghan legislation and with international standards”, concludes Chief Observer Berman.

The EU Election Assessment Team, led by Chief Observer Thijs Berman, Dutch member of the European Parliament, consists of 16 international experts from 13 European countries based in Kabul since March 15, 2014, among them a Deputy Chief Observer, five analysts (electoral, legal, political, media, data) and eight regional experts. EU observers adhere to a Code of Conduct imposing strict neutrality, impartiality and independence in the course of their work. The EU EAT operates in accordance

with the UN Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation adopted in 2005.

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