

EP OFFICE OF
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Election observation is a mechanism that aims at ensuring election integrity and strengthening confidence in elections. It is the cornerstone of the EU's policy for supporting the transition to democracy in developing countries. Election observation consists of multiple layers: observation missions, electoral assistance projects and financial contribution to elections. The European Union's Elections Observer Missions (EU EOMs) seek to support good governance and make a positive contribution without interfering in the conduct of the election. The longer-term objective is to strengthen independence and accountability in the host country. Improving the overall framework of elections can be crucial in deepening democracy.

The EOMs are made up of a core team (including the Chief Observer and experts), long-term and short-term observers. In 2016, Tamás Meszerics has been deployed to Ghana as Chief Observer of the EOM. The EU has been invited by Ghanaian authorities to assess all aspects of the entire electoral process. During the process, the legal framework of the elections, performance of administration, voter registration, respect for fundamental freedoms and the post-election process have been observed. Tamás has been present at all key moments of the mission. The EOM to Ghana's Presidential and Parliamentary elections has deployed 32 short-term observers and 24 long-term observers. Prior to the elections, a peace accord has been signed by all Presidential candidates in Accra. Mr Meszerics and the observers welcomed this commitment to conduct peaceful and democratic elections.

In its preliminary statement after the elections, the Mission concluded that competitive and well-prepared parliamentary elections took place. Fundamental freedoms, the right to vote and freedom of expression were respected throughout the conduct of the

election, as the observers noted. However, they raised concerns in relation to the registration of voters and election security, as well as misuse of incumbency.

As Mr Meszerics noted, “there are many aspects of the electoral process which Ghanaians should be proud of, but at the same time it is important to build on what has been achieved to ensure that future elections can avoid some of the tension and uncertainty which characterised the 2016 polls and which elections in Ghana are still prone to.” Although the right to vote was guaranteed, integrity measures for registration are advised to be taken. According to Mr. Meszerics, “our recommendations seek to make the electoral process in Ghana fairer and more transparent, thereby enjoying higher levels of public and political confidence among all stakeholders. This is the challenge facing future elections in Ghana.” The Electoral Commission (EC) of Ghana is established as an independent body and organizes credible elections. Nevertheless, “the EC could focus on further enhancing its transparency and communications, by making sure all decisions and key information, notably on results, are readily available and by making increased use of the Inter-Party Advisory Committee to build improved relations with parties.”

Concerns regarding the nomination of presidential candidates were raised. The increased fee of registration and party registration questions the equal treatment of the candidates. Tamás Meszerics also noted the low level of women’s participation in the elections. In 2016, only one woman ran for presidency and 136 (11,8%) women for parliament seats. As Mr Meszerics said, “women play an active role in many aspects of life in Ghana, yet the level of women’s representation as candidates and elected members remains relatively low. This needs to be addressed, and enactment of the Affirmative Action Bill promoting women in governance and decision-making positions could help in this regard.”