



The European Union Election Observation Mission presented its final report, offering 20 recommendations intended to consolidate multi-party democracy

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The European Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) to Maldives published its final report today on the 2023 presidential election that took place on 9 and 30 September. Following an eleven-week-long observation in the country, upon the invitation of national authorities, the report presents the findings and recommendations of the EU EOM.

The Chief Observer, Mr. Nacho Sánchez Amor, Member of the European Parliament, stated that: *“The presidential election was technically well-administered and professionally delivered by the Elections Commission of Maldives (ECM). The legal framework provides for genuine elections; voter and candidate registration were inclusive processes; and a record number of eight candidates was registered. Women, however, were largely absent from the political competition and significantly underrepresented in the administration of the election. Other flaws in the process were the widely acknowledged practices of vote-buying and instrumentalisation of public office, elements which undermined equity and fairness in campaigning.”*

The mission noted that political and campaign fund-raising and financial expenditure lack transparency and effective oversight. The EU EOM also recorded the political partisanship of the media, including public service media, while there were some indications of information manipulation in social media. With the aim of contributing to the improvement of future elections, the EU EOM offers 20 recommendations for consideration by the authorities, including in seven priority areas, as follows:

1. improve civic and voter education to strengthen political rights and curb vote-buying;
2. restrain the instrumentalisation of state resources during election campaigns;
3. reform campaign finance law and improve enforcement of the rules;
4. provide professional training for journalists to promote more ethical election coverage;
5. support fact-checking initiatives to combat misinformation;
6. introduce measures to promote women to more leadership positions in public and political life;
7. ensure that ballot papers are not invalidated where the intention of the voter is clear.

Chief Observer, Mr. Nacho Sánchez Amor concluded: *“We hope that the recommendations which we offer for the consideration of the national authorities and all local electoral stakeholders will be useful in the context of the next presidential election in Maldives. The up-coming parliamentary elections represent an opportunity for the spirit of some recommendations to be reflected in better practices. The recommendations offer a framework for improving electoral processes. Fundamental principles such as fairness and equity in elections, and respect for political rights, are at the heart of many of these recommendations. The European Union is ready to support electoral stakeholders in Maldives in their implementation, through political dialogue and other engagement.”*

Upon the invitation of the Elections Commission of Maldives and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the EU EOM carried out its work between 31 July and 15 October 2023. The mission accredited a total of 40 observers from 18 EU Member States, as well as from partner countries Canada, Norway and Switzerland.

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