

PRESS RELEASE

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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
on the outcome of the Kenyan elections**

The EU pays tribute to the people of Kenya for the manner in which they exercised their right to vote. Their patience and fortitude, often in difficult conditions, was an impressive feature of the elections, as was the conduct of election officials, party agents and domestic observers in the great majority of constituencies.

The EU welcomed the IPPG reforms in November as an important step towards the creation of conditions for free and fair elections. The reforms helped to reduce tension, and to create a more level playing field for the official campaign period. During the campaign, freedom of assembly was widely exercised and in general respected. Political parties were generally free to organise their activities, including nominations, without the official harassment or interference experienced before. The security forces generally maintained neutrality. Despite logistical and other problems which were a serious flaw on polling day, the voting process and the count in the great majority of constituencies was conscientiously conducted.

Nonetheless, in several respects, the process fell short of normal democratic standards. Voter registration was incomplete. The IPPG reforms were introduced with inadequate time to take full effect before the election, particularly with regard to the registration of parties and equal access to the media. The TV and radio controlled by the state did not provide balanced coverage, depriving many voters of satisfactory access to information. Though much less than in the past, incidents of violence within and between parties marred the process. Malpractice, such as bribing and intimidation of voters, has been reported. There have been serious

incidents in certain constituencies which may have affected the process and results. These incidents should be subject to prompt, independent and public investigation, and appropriate action taken to ensure a demonstrably fair result.

The 1997 elections, despite the shortcomings, may be seen as a further step in Kenya's development towards greater democracy. It is clear that despite positive developments in recent years, that process still has far to go. A democratic culture has yet to take root across the country. Poverty and illiteracy are major obstacles.

It is up to the Kenyan people, and their leaders and representatives, to determine whether the election outcome provides an acceptable basis for further progress. The EU looks forward to the prospect of a parliament in which the full spectrum of political views is represented and respected. We would urge all participants once more to put their faith in ongoing dialogue and compromise, to avoid confrontation and violence, and to ensure the involvement of all stakeholders, in a spirit of reconciliation.

Looking to the future, the process of constitutional review is of central significance and should be set in hand without undue delay. It is important that this process, including the appointment of commissioners, should be genuinely inclusive, consultative and open, so as to achieve the broadest possible consensus on the country's future political institutions. Measures agreed in the IPPG package should be fully implemented. In the meantime, governance and poverty issues need to be addressed, with serious commitment to achieve greater transparency and accountability, to combat corruption, and to improve economic management and the delivery of public services.

The EU wants to see a democratic, stable, and prosperous Kenya. To this end, the process of democratisation should be continued and expanded as rapidly as possible, with the participation of all parts of Kenyan society.

The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union and the EFTA countries, Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area align themselves with this declaration.