

**P R E S S   R E L E A S E**

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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union  
following the parliamentary elections in Sri Lanka on 10 October 2000**

Parliamentary elections were held in Sri Lanka on 10 October 2000, except for areas affected by fighting or under *de facto* LTTE control.

The European Union pays tribute to the Sri Lankan people, who, by massively turning out to vote, have demonstrated their deep commitment to democracy.

In order to show its support for the democratic process in Sri Lanka, the European Union sent a mission of European observers, drawn from fourteen of its Member States. During voting, observers were deployed at 400 polling stations located in 22 districts, including the town of Jaffna.

The European Union welcomes the fact that the observer mission, led by John Cushnahan, MEP, received excellent cooperation from its Sri Lankan partners (the authorities, the political parties, the election commissioner, NGOs, etc.) both during the campaign and on polling day.

It deplores the violence stemming mainly from the bloody attacks perpetrated by the LTTE but also, to a lesser extent, from supporters of parties contesting the elections, near various polling stations, particularly in the Kandy district. It can therefore understand the annulment of some results by the election commissioner, in view of the acts of intimidation seen to have taken place.

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The European Union commends the first-rate job done by the election commissioner and his team, who did their utmost to make the poll open and fair. In accordance with the mission report, it considers the counting of votes to have been carried out in an efficient, professional manner.

Despite the finding of a number of anomalies during the campaign and on election day (misuse of government resources by People's Alliance candidates and unfair access to government media during the election campaign, failure to observe the deadline for the end of campaigning, etc.), which the European Union regrets, the poll has enabled Sri Lanka's citizens to cast their votes in a reasonably acceptable manner.

The Union calls on the Sri Lankan Government to implement the 16 recommendations made by the observer mission after the poll, so as to ensure that the next elections are fully open and fair.

The European Union would reiterate its willingness for dialogue and cooperation with the Sri Lankan authorities on matters relating to the protection and development of democracy, at a time when the country faces a particularly difficult internal situation.

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

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