



DECLARATION BY ROBERT GOEBBELS, HEAD OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

DELEGATION TO THE EU ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION FOR THE

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN EGYPT

CAIRO, 29 MAY 2014

As Chair of the European Parliament's election observation delegation to Egypt, I have the honour of speaking on behalf of my colleagues to fully support and endorse the findings of the European Union Election Observation Mission, as presented by our colleague and Chief Observer Mario David.

The European Parliament is the only directly elected body of the European Union representing 500 million European citizens. A key pillar of its parliamentary diplomacy is the observations of elections around the world and in particular in our shared Neighbourhood.

During our stay in the country, we met the electoral and governmental authorities, representatives of political parties, the media, civil society organisations, and on the Election Days we observed in Cairo and Giza.

First of all, I would like to state that these elections follow on from a long period of political instability that has made the context of these elections a subject of enduring debate inside the country and around the world.

Strong concerns have been expressed to us about the overall political and media climate in the period leading up to the Presidential elections. There is a fundamental need to re-establish a political and social space for all Egyptians committed to pluralism, tolerance and a common democratic vision for the future of Egypt in order to fulfil the hopes expressed to us by many people. In this context, the media has an important responsibility to ensure that all those committed to the democratic process have the space to express their ideas peacefully.

Civil society should be allowed to play its full and key role in the democratic process in particular in creating a pluralistic debate as well in ensuring a system of governance that is fully accountable to the people of Egypt.

In the roadmap to a full democracy, the presidential elections represent an important step that must lead to parliamentary

elections. As the new institutional framework of Egypt comes into place we are concerned about the limited political and media space which characterised these elections and a climate that was not conducive to universal participation, pluralism and tolerance.

On Election Day we have been struck by those Egyptians, participating in the elections, and their belief that the elections could deliver a stable and democratic society which is essential for their desire for a more peaceful and prosperous Egypt. It is only fair that these aspirations should be taken seriously and to recognise that there is an urgent need to reach out to those that have not participated at this stage of the transition.

According to our observations, the Election Days were well organised and the atmosphere inside the polling stations was calm. The staff in the polling stations were warm and welcoming and came across as professional and well organised. The voters appeared familiar and comfortable with the process.

We noted that women were well represented in the polling stations, including as Presiding Officers. The good example set during the elections should be extended to improving the participation of women in all levels of government in Egypt and in particular looking forward to their full representation in the new Parliament and Government. We stress that this is very important for the future of Egypt.

Looking to the future, we cannot emphasise enough the importance of all stakeholders to commit to a legal framework promoting and encouraging broad participation and representation in the parliamentary elections. For this reason it is crucial that the electoral law, currently being discussed, ensures that all segments of society are given a fair and equal opportunity to be elected to the Parliament and thereby empower Parliament to fully deliver for all citizens.

This is particularly important considering that the newly elected President must work closely with the new Parliament to fully achieve

the potential of the Constitution and improve the political, economic and social lives of the Egyptian people.

What is clear is that the new President has all the means, as well as the responsibility, to work with all Egyptians and in particular the new Parliament in order to enhance the democratic and social rights of the people and engage in a new phase of dialogue, tolerance and national reconciliation. We express our strong hopes that the new President will take important steps to implement this vision.

Finally, on behalf of the European Parliament let me stress our desire to continue our engagement and constructive dialogue with all Egyptians on their journey to a tolerant, pluralistic and inclusive democracy respecting human rights. We are certainly prepared to support Egypt with all the means available to the European Union and we look forward to working closely in view of the upcoming parliamentary elections and with the new parliament itself.