

Brussels 10 February 2010

EurAc calls for European observers for the presidential elections in Rwanda

On 9 August 2010, Rwanda will hold presidential elections. In recent years the European Union has sent a number of observation missions to the region – including those for the presidential, legislative and provincial elections in Congo in 2006, for the presidential and legislative elections in Uganda in 2006 and for the legislative elections in Rwanda in 2008. The European Union is preparing to send an observation mission to Burundi for the electoral cycle which consists of several elections between May and September 2010.

EurAc, the network of European NGOs concerned with Central Africa has great respect for the European Union's observation missions. Based on principles of impartiality, transparency, professionalism and a presence throughout the country these missions contribute greatly to freedom and electoral transparency. They reinforce the legitimacy of the electoral process and the confidence of citizens in it.

EurAc is surprised and concerned that the EU is not planning to send an observation mission for the forthcoming presidential elections in Rwanda, in spite of the fact that worrying developments have been noticed there. The democratic space is very limited and every day, opposition activists and candidates undergo and denounce different sorts of aggression.

EurAc is aware that the decision to send or not to send a mission is influenced by different factors and that hard choices have to be made. The funds that the EU has available for such missions around the world do not allow every request to be satisfied each year. Nevertheless EurAc strongly believes that it is essential to send an observation mission to Rwanda: the conclusions and recommendations in the final report of the 2008 mission, even though its range and remit had been weakened, justify and make necessary a thorough examination of the forthcoming elections. Establishing true democracy in Rwanda is not just a tool for building peace and social cohesion in the country but it is also a determining factor for stability in the whole region. For these reasons the European Union would be very unwise to miss the chance to monitor this year's presidential elections in Rwanda.

For further details:

Kris Berwouts

Rue des Tanneurs, 165 B - 1000 Brussels, Belgium

Tel: +32 (0)2 213 04 000

@: kris.berwouts@eurac-network.org

www.eurac-network.org