



EU Election Observation Mission to Sri Lanka - 2005

For the 17 November Presidential Elections

Colombo, 11 November 2005

During a visit to Jaffna today (Friday) EU Chief Observer, John Cushnahan stressed that the European Election Observation Mission would assess the impact of the supreme court judgement on voting in the cluster polling stations in the North and the East.

Mr. Cushnahan said:

“Following the Supreme Court Judgement, we had a meeting with the Election Commissioner to seek clarification on the implication of this decision on the election process.

In response to our queries, he assured us that the same procedure relating to identification and exercising the right to vote would apply throughout the whole country. He also said that he would in consultation with his senior officials ensure that sufficient transport was available to bring voters to the cluster polling stations.

However, concerns remain that some aspects of the Supreme Court Judgement may have the effect of discouraging people from voting or delaying the process. We will monitor polling day activity to see if such fears are realized.

On 27th October 2005, twenty one international organizations involved in election observation (including the European Commission) at a meeting in New York held under the auspices of the United Nations agreed on a *Declaration of Principles for Election Observation*. In deciding to become a co-signatory to these, the EU has confirmed that its Election Observation Missions will assess election processes in accordance with these international principles for genuine democratic elections.

Paragraph 3 of this declaration of principles states:

The will of the people of a country is the basis for the authority of government, and that will must be determined through genuine periodic elections, which guarantee the right and opportunity to vote freely and to be elected fairly through universal and equal suffrage by secret balloting or equivalent free voting procedures, the results of which are accurately counted, announced and respected. A significant number of rights and freedoms, processes, laws and institutions are therefore involved in achieving genuine democratic elections.

At the end of this election process we will consider if the Supreme Court Judgment has affected this principle in any way and, if it has, we will consider to what extent it has impacted on the final outcome of this election.

Additionally it should be stressed that this election is not only about what happens in the North and East. The strategy of our mission will be to observe the entire country. In the past malpractice has occurred in many parts of the country and although we are conscious of the particular problems in the North and East, we will not neglect other parts of the country”.