



**European Union
Election Observation Mission to Ethiopia 2010
House of Peoples' Representatives and State Council Elections**



For immediate release

PRESS RELEASE

Well organized vote but lack of level playing field in Ethiopia' election

Addis Ababa, 25 May 2010- The European Union Election Observation Mission to Ethiopia (EU EOM) assessed the election day as peaceful, calm, with high voter turnout for Ethiopia's fourth elections to the House of Peoples' Representatives and State Councils.

"I commend the Ethiopian people's commitment to democracy, as the massive turnout and the peaceful vote is a big achievement for all citizens, demonstrating their desire to exercise their democratic rights fully". – said the Chief Observer, Thijs Berman.

NEBE organized the elections in a competent and professional manner, however, with some technical difficulties. NEBE has failed to gain the confidence of opposition political parties, as in many regions NEBE officials were perceived to have links with local government authorities.

The EU EOM found that the elections fell short of certain international commitments, notably the lack of level playing field for all parties and the transparency of the process.

The political atmosphere during the weeks leading up to the election was generally calm and peaceful. Nevertheless, the EU EOM observed a climate of apprehension and insecurity, during which the quantity of complaints gradually increased.

The election campaign was peaceful overall and somewhat low-key until the last days of campaigning. The EU EOM observed that the ruling party, EPRDF, had at times used state resources for campaign purposes, contributing to an unlevel playing field leaning in favour of the ruling party in many areas.

The EU EOM observed that the media generally ensured a neutral tone when covering main campaign events; however, more than 50 % of campaign coverage was given to the ruling party in the state-owned media. The media were cautious in their reporting. A generous amount of free airtime was allocated by NEBE to all 63 political parties, but the limited outreach of print and broadcast media around the country weakened voters' ability to make an informed choice.

The EU EOM will stay in country to observe the tabulation of the results and the announcement of the final results. It will issue its final report within two months of the completion of the entire electoral process.

For media enquiries, please contact:

Agnes Doka, Press Officer

Tel: +251 (0)920 537 623

E-mail: agnes.doka@eueom-ethiopia.org