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International IDEA

Joint Training on
Effective Electoral Assistance
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Opening Speech

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I am delighted to be here today at the start of what is now the third Joint EC-UNDP Training Session on Electoral Assistance, after Brussels and Dar es Salaam in 2006;

This is admittedly the second time that it's been held in Brussels but it has to be said that Brussels is a convenient crossing point for those who come from the various continents and also ensures maximum EC participation. This aside it is an honour and pleasure to welcome all of those who have travelled near and far to be here today;

I want to thank everyone involved in the organisation of this event, largely supported by EuropeAid, International IDEA and the various parts of the UN/UNDP including the Bureau for Development Policy, the Electoral Assistance Division of DPA, members of my own office, all pulled together by the Joint EC-UNDP Task Force. There are even people from our Country Offices and local Election Management Bodies who will be presenting case studies, and the effort of making it to this event is highly appreciated by all sides;

The favourable reactions received through the evaluations of the last two events makes it clear that these training sessions have a real added value in terms of better understanding electoral processes as well as each other. And as each new training takes on the lessons learned of the past, we can comfortably predict that this one will be the best yet ☺;

I see these sessions as not only an opportunity to get better acquainted with the theoretical and technical aspects of electoral assistance, but particularly an opportunity to get to know one another much better – with all our qualities, faults, constraints and eccentricities with which we have to work in order to serve the beneficiary countries. It is often personal contacts and relations that can really bring about results;

The breadth and depth of the EC-UN/UNDP relationship in this field is truly exceptional and groundbreaking and every effort should be made to ensure that this partnership continues to provide real added value to the recipient countries; these training sessions certainly go a long way in helping that objective;

These sessions are also increasingly becoming a type of global platform for electoral training within the context of the training for development which is the group of the key donors

included in the Joint Donors' Competence Development Network which has the overall objective to promote improved aid effectiveness for poverty reduction through enhanced donor co-operation in the field of competence development and training

Alongside such activities as joint trainings, joint formulation missions and joint mission reports, we also work together on publications and election user guides and I even believe that there is now a joint website on electoral assistance which will be presented this week. The sky seems to be the limit on this partnership and this is all very encouraging for the future;

We have been able to witness the fruits of our collaboration in such countries as DRC, Nigeria, Togo, East Timor, Mauritania, etc and it's gratifying to read about these elections in front page news and know that we participated in something so important for the population of such countries and possibly helped democracy go that little bit further. There have also been some frustrations which will be discussed in more depth during the training.

We are in the process of reviewing the Operational Guidelines - which as most of you know anchors our partnership. The review takes on board the lessons learned and feedback received from projects implemented over the last year and the training this week reflects the revised guidelines..

As you all have much to get through in the next five days, I will now finish off by wishing you all a very interesting, useful and fruitful week and wish you all the very best in maintaining this unique relationship and every success in your future assignments.