



## EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

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### PRESS RELEASE

The European Union Delegation to Sierra Leone has taken note of an intervention of the Hon. Member of Parliament, Emerson Lamina, in the framework of a meeting of Parliamentarians of the EU-ACP group in Brussels on 1 March 2023.

The European Union Delegation was surprised about the content of the petition of Hon. Emerson Lamina, mainly focusing on allegations against the European Union which do not correspond with facts.

On 13 February, H.E. President Bio visited Brussels and had fruitful meetings with the Commissioner for International Partnership, Jutta Urpilainen, the High Representative for Foreign and Security Affairs and Vice President of the EU Commission, Josep Borrell, as well as with the President of the Council of the European Union, H.E. Charles Michel who invited H.E. President Bio to a private dinner.

The tone and content of the statement of Hon. Emerson Lamina does not correspond with the strong partnership and good relations between Sierra Leone and the European Union as confirmed during the recent meetings that H. E. President Bio held in Brussels, which showed a clear alignment in principles, values and interests between the EU and Sierra Leone.

The European Union Delegation considers the statement of Hon. Emerson Lamina an unfortunate and unnecessary incident which does not reflect the longstanding good relations between the European Union and Sierra Leone.

Concerning the allegations of Hon. Emerson Lamina, the European Union Delegation to Sierra Leone wishes to issue the following clarifications:

1. The European Union has participated in diplomatic watch exercises coordinated with other international partners in recent by-elections, including in constituency 056 in Tonkolili district. All staff of EU Delegation and other partners who participated in the electoral watch, including the EU Ambassador, were officially accredited at the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone as “International Observer” and followed the usual code of conduct for observers. No statements were made in that context. The EU Ambassador and other watchers of the EU Delegation behaved with full respect towards all electoral stakeholders and citizens and discretion. The presence of the international watchers was recognised and appreciated by stakeholders and citizens in the field. After the by-elections, the European Union Delegation and other international partners briefed the Chief Electoral Commissioner on their observations.
2. The quote that Hon. Emerson Lamina has attributed to the EU Ambassador with regard to voter registration does not correspond with facts.

The European Union is a longstanding and strong partner of Sierra Leone in the area of electoral support. The European Union Delegation has an excellent working relation with the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone including on election observation and in the framework of projects the European Union is financing to support Electoral Management Bodies to conduct peaceful, inclusive, transparent and credible electoral processes, with integrity and effectiveness. The European Union provides technical assistance to the Commission and has supported its communication and gender and inclusion strategies. Within this framework, an amicable dialogue takes place regularly between

the EU Delegation and the Electoral Commission. In that regard, the European Union Delegation commends the open door policy of the ECSL Chairperson.

3. As a question of principle, the European Union Delegation has no position on the electoral system that the Sierra Leonean authorities have decided to use for the conduct of 2023 elections and the EU Ambassador has never made any statement on the electoral system.

4. The allegations made by Hon. Emerson Lamina concerning statements of the EU Ambassador on the 10 August events do not correspond with facts.

In general, the European Union Delegation wishes to underline the following:

- The European Union believes that a strong democracy, with free, transparent, peaceful, credible, multi-party and multi-candidate elections, which give a chance to all voters to express their will and to all candidates to contest without impediment, greatly contributes to long-term peace and stability.
- The EU does not favour specific political parties or candidates. The EU worldwide supports processes which allow that at the end of the day, elections are free, transparent, credible and inclusive, so that the people's will is fully taken into consideration.
- The EU therefore since 1996 has been supporting Sierra Leone Electoral Management Bodies' work for peaceful, inclusive, transparent, multi-party and multi-candidate elections. EU Electoral Observation Missions were deployed in Sierra Leone in the last 3 general elections, in 2007, 2012 and 2018.
- The EU and its Member States have committed over 7 million Euro to support transparent, inclusive, credible and peaceful elections in Sierra Leone in 2023. Team Europe supports the project "Fostering Peaceful, Credible and Inclusive Elections in Sierra Leone 2022-2023" implemented by UNDP (contributions from Ireland and from the EU) and the ECOWAS Regional Programme "Peace and Security Architecture and Operations" (contributions from Germany and from the EU).
- EU's electoral support is strictly non-partisan and aimed at building the institutional capacity of electoral management bodies and civil society organisations to effective, inclusive and peaceful electoral operations. The Electoral Commission (ECSL), Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC), Police and the Judiciary are amongst the beneficiaries of EU funded technical assistance implemented by ECOWAS, UNDP, International IDEA and DAI.
- EU supports Civil Society Organisations as good governance and development actors, and therefore promotes domestic observation and citizens' engagement in support to the inclusion of youth, women and people living with disability in electoral processes, as well as community-based conflict prevention and mediation.

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