

# Ethiopia: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union



On June 21, a majority of Ethiopian voters will be invited to participate in elections. Some constituencies will vote at a later stage, in part due to security and logistical challenges. The European Union (EU) takes note of this important step and recalls the fundamental democratic right of all Ethiopian citizens to be able to vote, everywhere in the country.

Aware of the importance of these elections for the political transition in Ethiopia, the EU has supported the electoral process and the work of the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE). The EU commends the efforts deployed by NEBE personnel around the country, and welcomes the public commitment of the Ethiopian government to hold democratic and peaceful elections. Yet, the EU regrets the impossibility of sending an election observation mission.

Ethiopia remains in a complex domestic situation. Concerned with ongoing violence across the country, human rights violations and political tensions, harassment of media workers and detained opposition members, the EU calls upon the government and local and regional authorities to ensure a transparent and safe process, to guarantee the free and equal participation of all political parties and candidates who are running, to facilitate the participation of all citizens, to ensure freedom of the press and of expression as well as the safety of journalists, other media workers and election observers and to provide full logistical and administrative support to NEBE. The EU also calls on all actors to refrain from spreading hate speech and from calling for acts of violence.

The elections could be an important step in Ethiopia's democratic process. The EU also recalls the importance to engage in and foster a comprehensive, inclusive and transparent national dialogue with the participation of women and youth and all relevant stakeholders, including civil society organisations, political parties and regional authorities, in order to strengthen democracy and to support conflicts resolution as well as reconciliation. The EU will stand by Ethiopia in the implementation of democratic reforms as well as reconciliation efforts that would emerge from an inclusive and transparent dialogue.