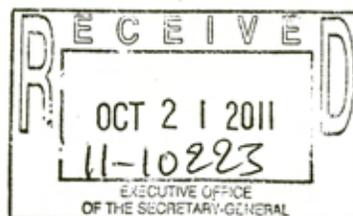


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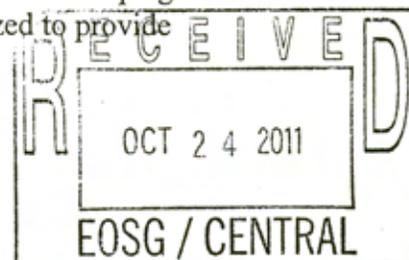


Immediate  
Unclassified

Note to the Secretary-General

**TUNISIA: PREPARATIONS FOR THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS** *2010000*

1. Tunisia will conduct its Constituent Assembly elections on 23 October (out of country voting will take place during a three-day period, starting on 20 October). This will be a key step in the political transition of the country and a significant development in the overall democratic transformation in the MENA region. Preparations for the elections are in the final stage; the election commission (*Instance Supérieure Indépendante pour les Elections- ISIE*) has finalized its preparations for polling and counting, and electoral materials are being deployed to polling stations both inside and outside the country.
2. Of 111 registered parties, 81 are participating in the elections. There are over 1,500 lists registered, containing more than 11,000 candidates competing for 217 seats in 27 in-country and 6 out-of-country (OCV) constituencies.
3. There are an estimated 7.2 million eligible voters in Tunisia. Over 7,000 polling stations will be set up for the 4.1 million voters who took part in the voter registration update. The election commission is also establishing an additional 1,600 stations for voters who did not take part in the voter registration update. Up to 10,000 domestic and international observers will be monitoring the elections.
4. While the necessary conditions for ensuring a smooth-running ballot process seem to exist, there remain some possible risks/challenges due to the country's lack of experience in conducting a transparent electoral process. For instance, establishing special polling centers for those voters who did not take part in the voter registration update may create confusion or even frustration on the Election Day. Being aware of these risks, ISIE, with the support of international electoral experts, including from the UN, is trying its utmost to address these concerns.
5. Gender parity provisions have been respected by the political parties in preparing their lists, but only approximately seven percent of the lists have female candidates at the top of the lists. In the event that many of the lists win only one seat, the gender parity on the lists will not guarantee adequate representation of women, and as a result the number of elected women in the Assembly may be disappointingly low.
6. Tensions along the secular-religious fundamentalist line continue on the eve of the elections. Despite these tensions and some clashes in recent days, the electoral campaign has continued without any major incident, and the army and police are mobilized to provide security for the elections.



*POL/08/001; POL/09/001*

7. Latest opinion polls indicate that the most popular party in the elections is the En-Nahda party, an Islamic, centre-right party with the support of 25 per cent of the electorate in recent polling; followed by Parti Démocratique Progressiste, a socialist party with 16 percent; Ettakatol, a centre-left party with 14 percent support; and Parti du Congrès pour la République, also a centre-left party with eight percent support. Only seven of the remaining parties had higher than two per cent in the opinion poll.

8. Results of the elections will largely depend on the turn out, especially inside the country. A high turn-out will benefit independent lists and small parties while a lower turn out will possibly benefit larger parties, primarily En-Nahda. The former scenario will make consensus building longer and more painful, but bears the chance of more inclusiveness of civil society groups and small parties in the constitution drafting process.

9. The United Nations has a comprehensive electoral support program in Tunisia and has been supporting the process from its early stages. Our electoral team, with nine international electoral experts, under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator/UNDP Resident Representative and in close collaboration with DPA and UNDP/HQ, continues to assist the ISIE in its efforts to ensure a smooth, transparent and credible electoral process. The UN team is also working closely with other international experts on the ground particularly the electoral teams from EU and International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). The technical assistance provided by international partners, including the UN, has proved to be very useful in bridging the gap of institutional and operational knowledge and in assisting Tunisian authorities to conduct the process, so far, in a professional manner. Close cooperation and joint planning between UN bodies particularly DPA and UNDP has been vital in ensuring effective and timely support on the part of the entire UN system.



B. Lynn Pascoe  
20 October 2011