

FIRST ROUND OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN GUINEA – 18th OCTOBER 2020



PRELIMINARY DECLARATION

I- INTRODUCTION

- 1- The Republic of Guinea held its first round of presidential election on Sunday 18th October 2020.
- 2- In accordance with the provisions of the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (2001), His Excellency Mr. Jean-Claude Kassi BROU, President of the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), deployed an Electoral Observation Mission (EOM) to observe the presidential election. The Electoral Observation Mission is part of the continuous efforts of ECOWAS to support the people of Guinea towards the holding of a credible, transparent, inclusive and violence-free election.
- 3- The EOM was headed by His Excellency Jose Maria NEVES, former Prime Minister of the Republic of Cabo Verde. The Mission was composed of officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Member States, Electoral Experts from the electoral commissions of the Member States, the ECOWAS Parliament, Ambassadors accredited to ECOWAS, journalists and members of Civil Society.
- 4- The Mission also received support from the ECOWAS Commission' Resident Representative in Guinea, H.E. Mr. Mario Gomes FERNANDES and the technical assistance of the ECOWAS Commission's team led by General Francis A. BEHANZIN, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security.

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II- COMMITMENTS AND SUPPORT TO THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

- 5- The 18thOctober 2020 Presidential election was held against a background of deep mistrust among the Guinean political stakeholders on the overall electoral process. In keeping with our regional solidarity tradition, ECOWAS demonstrated its commitment to supporting the government, stakeholders and people of Guinea in creating a conducive environment leading to the holding of the presidential election of 18thOctober 2020.
- 6- In pursuit of these efforts, a joint ECOWAS-African Union- United Nations High- Level Solidarity Mission was undertaken in Guinea from 1st to 2ndOctober 2020. The Mission was a follow-up to:
 - The joint ECOWAS-AU-UNOWAS virtual pre-dialogue consultations and the Virtual Ministerial Consultative meeting held with Guinean stakeholders from 2ndto 7thJuly and on 15thAugust 2020, respectively;
 - The completion of the audit of the voters register in March and in August-September 2020 by ECOWAS experts; and
 - The public presentation of the outcomes of the audit of the voters' register, in the presence of the Diplomatic Corps, the political parties and the national and international media on 21st September 2020.
- 7- It would be recalled that ECOWAS had in March 2020 dispatched technical experts to support the CENI in auditing the electoral register used during the legislative election and referendum held on 22ndMarch 2020. Furthermore, to strengthen stakeholders' confidence in the credibility of the voter register in the lead-up to the 18thOctober 2020 presidential election, ECOWAS deployed experts to address outstanding concerns in the voter register, including the removal of close to 2.4 million voters due to double registrations, under-aged (minors), death and identity issues.
- 8- On 7thOctober 2020, ECOWAS deployed a Long-Term Observation Mission (LTOM) to Guinea composed of 16 experts, reinforced by Short-Term Observation Mission (STOM) of 116 Observers, deployed across the various regions and districts of the Republic of Guinea, to observe the pre-election, Election Day and immediate post-election phases. This is in addition to the financial assistance given by ECOWAS to support the electoral process.

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III- ELECTION AND MEDIA CAMPAIGN

- 9- The ECOWAS Observation Mission notes that the electoral campaign took place throughout the country. However, the political climate was tense. Some incidents of verbal violence and use of language with ethnic undertones occurred during the campaign. Not all candidates had access to certain regions and prefectures, which obstructed their ability to present their programme to the public.
- 10- In conformity with the law, the High Authority for Communication (HAC) created the equitable conditions for access to the public media by the candidates in the election.

IV- Pre-election consultations and deployment

a- Pre-election consultations

- 11- In order to ascertain the state of preparations of the elections, the Head of Mission, H.E. JOSE MARIA NEVES, former Prime Minister of the Republic of Cabo Verde, paid upon his travel a courtesy visit to H.E. Professor Alpha CONDE, President of the Republic of Guinea, also a candidate in the presidential election of 18th October 2020.
- 12- Prime Minister Neves also held a meeting with the President of the Constitutional Court and a working session with the President of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI). The Head of mission also held meetings with the representatives and candidates of the political parties involved in the election and civil society organisations that observed the election throughout the national territory. He further held consultations with all his collaborators and the Heads of International Observation Missions before and after the election.
- 13- Following these meetings, the Head of Mission encouraged the election management bodies and urged the political actors to increase awareness campaigns among Guinean citizens to encourage them to turn out in large numbers on election day to fulfil their civic duty with serenity, tolerance and peace.

b- Deployment

- 14- Subsequent to a pre-deployment briefing session conducted by the ECOWAS technical team, the Observers were deployed in the 8 regions of

Guinea, namely: Kindia, Boké, Mamou, Labé, Faranah, Kankan, Nzérékoré and in the 5 Municipalities of the Conakry region.

V- Opening, voting process and vote counting

15- After a cautious assessment of the information transmitted to the ECOWAS Situation Room by the observers deployed in the field , and following a debriefing session with the observers upon their return from the field, the Mission noted that:

Positive points

- a) A peaceful atmosphere prevailed generally throughout the electoral process;
- b) Voting operations commenced between 07:00 and 08:45 and ended between 19:00 and 20:00;
- c) The electoral material was available in all polling stations visited;
- d) The voters were highly mobilised throughout the election process;
- e) The security forces were effectively but discreetly present;
- f) The representatives of the UFDG and RPG were present in most of the polling stations observed and RGD-PACT-FAN-PAIDES-MND-PLP in some polling stations;
- g) The vote counting and compilation process was conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Electoral Code and related texts;

Areas for improvement

- a) free access and campaigning should be guaranteed to all candidates throughout the Guinean territory;
- b) there was lighting deficiency in most of the polling stations visited;
- c) some of the Polling agents lacked sufficient professionalism, characterised by a lack of expertise in polling procedures;
- d) polling agents did not interpret the laws in a consistent manner;

VI- **Conclusion**

16- Overall, the electoral process leading up to the presidential election of 18th October 2020 took place without any major incident. The ECOWAS Observer Mission on the Presidential Election in Guinea came to the following provisional conclusions based on its assessment of the entire electoral process from the beginning to the vote count at the various polling stations.

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- 17- This Presidential election constitutes a crucial step in the consolidation of peace and the promotion of democracy in Guinea. It was made possible by the determination of the Guinean people and all stakeholders. In this regard, the Mission congratulates the Guinean people and the Government for the arrangements made to ensure the holding of the election.
- 18- The Mission particularly commends the patience and civil behaviour displayed by the voters during the election. ECOWAS encourages voters to maintain their exemplary behaviour until the final proclamation of the provisional results. It urges them to maintain this high sense of responsibility and preserve the values of tolerance and peace. The electoral process was conducted peacefully in accordance with the laws prevailing in Guinea.
- 19- Furthermore, the Mission appeals to the candidates in the presidential election to respect the results of the election and urges them to resort, if the need arises, to legal channels to resolve any electoral disputes to safeguard peace, stability and democracy.
- 20- Lastly, the ECOWAS Observer Mission, through the Long Term Observers and the Office of the Resident Representative of the President of the ECOWAS Commission, will monitor the post-electoral developments until the final proclamation of the results. It thanks the competent Guinean authorities for the measures they have taken to facilitate the deployment of observers for the elections of 18 October 2020.

Done at Conakry, this 18th October 2020



H.E. Jose Maria NEVES

Former Prime Minister of the Republic of Cabo Verde