



PRELIMINARY DECLARATION

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In pursuant to the provisions of the ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (2001), and within the framework of the support to Member States organizing elections, the President of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), **H.E. Jean-Claude Kassi Brou**, deployed an Election Observation Mission (EOM) to observe the general elections in the Republic of Ghana on 7 December, 2020.
2. The Mission, which is made up of a total of 125 Observers, comprises 12 Long Term Observers (LTOs) and 113 Short term Observers (STOs), including delegations drawn from the West African Ambassadors accredited to ECOWAS, the ECOWAS Court of Justice and the ECOWAS Community Parliament. It also includes experts drawn from the relevant Ministries and Electoral Management Bodies of Member States, Civil Society Organizations, experts trained by the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) and the Media.
3. The Mission is led by **Her Excellency Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf**, former President of the Republic of Liberia, and supported by the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the ECOWAS Commission, **General Francis A. Behanzin**, and a technical team from the Commission.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'F. Behanzin', written over a horizontal line.

II. BACKGROUND TO THE GENERAL ELECTIONS

4. The 7 December, 2020 general elections is the eighth consecutive time in Ghana's Fourth Republic, since the return to multi-party democracy in 1992. This election represents another milestone in the consolidation of Ghana's enviable democracy.
5. The keenly contested polls has the incumbent Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and former President John Dramani Mahama, candidate of the main opposition National Democratic Congress, (NDC) as the key contenders.
6. In line with the ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance; the African Charter on Democracy and Governance; the International Declaration on the Principles of Election Observation and the relevant legal texts guiding electoral processes in the Republic of Ghana, the main objective of the 2020 ECOWAS Election Observation Mission is to observe and assess the electoral processes – before, during and after the election day - in support of credible, free, fair, transparent and peaceful elections.

III. PRE-ELECTORAL ENGAGEMENTS AND ECOWAS SUPPORT TO THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

7. Prior to the deployment of the ECOWAS Election Observation Mission, as provided for under Section III of the 2001 Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, ECOWAS systematically deployed a number of missions, in the face of the daunting restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.
8. Thus, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the 2001 ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, and the 2002 OAU/AU Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections in



Africa, a joint high-level mission of ECOWAS Commission and African Union Commission visited Ghana from 16 to 17 November, 2020. The purpose of the joint mission was to engage key stakeholders in the electoral process, particularly the key institutions involved in the preparation towards the 7 December, 2020 general elections, such as representatives of political parties, the Electoral Commission and civil society organisations. Equally as part of its electoral assistance extended to member States conducting elections, ECOWAS provided the necessary financial support upon the request by the Electoral Commission of Ghana. This was further complemented with a two-day virtual workshop on the theme, 'Encounter with Media Practitioners and Political Parties Communication Officers and NGOs in the promotion of participatory democracy in Ghana', which took place from 26 to 27 November 2020.

IV. ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS

9. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and its restrictive protocols, most of the political campaigns were limited to “retail campaigning” in which political parties and their supporters resorted to the use of door-to-door and street campaigns, rather than the normal mass rallies which were often the case in the past electoral campaigns. The campaigns were largely based on issues and presentations of the manifestoes of the political parties to the populace. Consequently, the electoral campaigns were peaceful and without any major incidents, apart from some vehicular accidents which occurred when party supporters attended mini rallies organized by their political parties. At this juncture, the ECOWAS Mission would wish to extend its condolences to the families of those who lost their lives to these vehicular accidents and speedy recoveries to the injured.

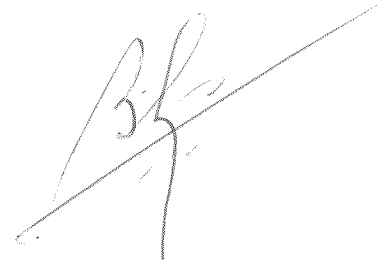
10. Except in some few cases, the media were largely non-partisan and provided level-playing field to the parties to propagate their messages. In addition, the traditional media, particularly the electronic media, were very civil in their discourse, and where possible the moderators of political shows and discussions showed maturity and ensured that discussants did not use



incendiary languages. The role of the Media Foundation of West Africa (MFWA) must be mentioned for instituting a program aimed at naming and shaming individuals, groups and political parties found to be using foul and incendiary languages on radio and television stations. This largely contributed to the civil space that the media presented during the period of political campaigns.

V. **ARRIVAL, COMMENCEMENT OF CONSULTATIONS & DEPLOYMENT**

11. Upon arrival in the country on 3 December 2020, the Head of Mission, **Her Excellency Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf**, held extensive consultations with various stakeholders, including the President of the Republic and candidate of the New Patriotic Party (NPP); the Candidate of the National Democratic Congress (NDC); Minister of Foreign Affairs; the National Peace Council (NPC); the National Electoral Commission; the ECOWAS Ambassadors based in Accra; the Director of the Joint Security Operations Centre (JSOC) and his team; the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General and Head of UNOWAS; the West Africa Network for Peace (WANEP) Situation Room, Representatives of the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) and Women's Situation Room.
12. In addition, the Head of Mission attended the Signing of the Peace Pact by the two leading candidates which took place on 4 December 2020 at the Movenpick Hotel and a briefing by the Electoral Commission on its preparation towards the conduct of the elections. The Head of Mission also had consultations before and after the elections with other Heads of International Election Observer Missions (IEOMs), which were attended by other stakeholders, including the Special Representative of the UN and Head of UNOWAS.
13. The various consultations enabled the ECOWAS Mission to note some concerns including;
 - The challenges experienced during the voters' registration and exhibition exercises, particularly regarding the non-acceptance of birth certificates as



eligible for registration and the missing of names of some duly registered voters;

- The strict application of COVID-19 protocol measures, particularly the wearing of face masks during the voting process;
- The doubts about the EC's ability to declare the Presidential results within 24 hours after the close of the polls.

14. Following a briefing and orientation session held on 5 December 2020, the 125 members of the ECOWAS Observers were grouped into 48 teams and dispatched to the 16 regions, spreading across constituencies in Ghana. While in the field, observers maintained constant contact with the Mission's Situation Room based in Accra and with other international and local observer missions to collect and consolidate information related to the polls.

VI. PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

15. Having analyzed available information and reports from the various teams in the field, and after a Debriefing Session with returning observers, the ECOWAS Election Observation Mission to the 2020 General Elections in Ghana wishes to make the following Preliminary Declaration on the developments on Election Day, 7 December 2020:

A- Opening: Conduct of the Election and Vote Counting

- i. **On Election Day**, across the about 85% observed polling stations, voters turned up early and the voting started at the official opening time of 7:00 am.
- ii. There was a high presence of women and youth as voters and polling/party agents.
- iii. There was visible presence of security agents in 91% of the polling stations that the observers visited. Security was provided by the Joint Election Security Task Force comprising the Ghana Police Service, the Ghana Immigration Service, Ghana National Fire Service, the Customs Division of the Ghana Revenue Authority, the Prisons Service and the Ghana Armed Forces. Our observers also noted that whereas there was at least one static security



officer at most polling stations, in other polling centers the security officers were on mobile patrol moving from one center to another.

- iv. Overall, the political parties and their followers respected the prohibition of the display of party colors and symbols in and around polling stations on the Election Day.*
- v. The COVID-19 protocols, including the availability of hand sanitizers, social distancing and the wearing of face masks were adhered to at the polling centers and by the voters.*
- vi. Party agents, particularly of the NPP and NDC, were equally present at most polling stations observed. In addition, some few party agents of other political parties were present in some of the polling stations, in particular the Convention People's Party, and the People's National Convention (PNC).*
- vii. Essential electoral materials were in place in most of the polling centers observed, and the polls opened within 30 minutes of the official opening time of 7:00 am.*
- viii. At the stations visited during the opening of polls, Polling Officials largely maintained order, particularly with the support of the security on duty. Voters in queues comported themselves and stayed calm until they had their turn, except in few places that experienced initial chaos, but the situation stabilized gradually with time.*
- ix. Also, arrangements were made in polling stations to facilitate and ease the voting by vulnerable individuals such as the physically challenged, the aged, pregnant women and mothers with infants and young children.*
- x. Despite the few challenges observed, voters exhibited maximum patience and perseverance in their determination to exercise their civic rights and responsibilities.*
- xi. The polling officials demonstrated adequate professionalism in carrying out their duties and responsibilities while party agents ably watched over their party and candidates' interests.*
- xii. International and local observers were present in most polling centers visited. These included, besides ECOWAS observers, African Union (AU), the Commonwealth and the European Union. There was effective presence of Local Observers, particularly CODEO and WANEP.*



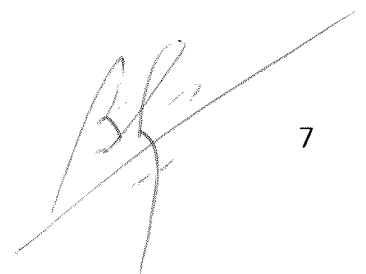
- xiii. In most polling stations observed, the polls closed at the official time of 5:00 pm, because most voters had finished casting their votes.*
- xiv. The sorting, counting, tallying, and reconciliation of the ballots, as well as the declaration and certification of results at the polling stations, were carried out in a professional, transparent and credible manner, and under the watchful eyes of party agents and observers.*

B-Challenges Observed

16. The ECOWAS Observation Mission noted few isolated incidents that could have marred the smooth and peaceful conduct of the polls. They include the following:

- i. Issues around the strict respect for secrecy of vote in some few polling stations visited;
- ii. There was case of double voting at Standards Education Centre Polling Centre at Asylum Down, Accra which was timely resolved by the Electoral Commission;
- iii. The arrest of two (2) Electoral Commission Officers, who tampered with presidential ballot at Awutu Senya West and Bawku Central;
- iv. The isolated case of shooting recorded outside the Step to Christ Polling station in Kasoa, Awutu Senya East Constituency in the Central Region;
- v. There was a commotion at the Collation Centre in Techiman Municipal Office that serves as the Regional Collation Center. This was triggered by agitations by the population observing the declaration of results by the polling officials who had delayed in projecting certified results.

17. On the whole, the voting process took place in an orderly, transparent and professional manner, and secrecy of the ballot was generally observed. It is the view of the ECOWAS Observation Mission that the afore-mentioned challenges observed did not undermine the transparency, fairness and the credibility of the electoral process at this point in time.



C. Preliminary Conclusions and Recommendations

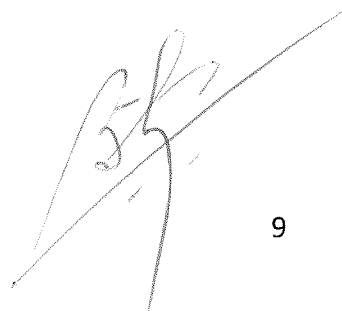
18. In light of the preceding observations and analysis, the ECOWAS Election Observation Mission to the 2020 General Elections in Ghana wishes to make the following preliminary conclusions:

- i. The preparation of the 2020 elections, the conduct of the electioneering campaigns, as well as the processes on Election Day, up until the release of the results by the responsible officials at the polling stations, were generally free, fair, transparent and credible. The vast majority of the qualified population, who wished to do so, were provided the required space to exercise their constitutional rights to vote.
- ii. The ECOWAS Election Observation Mission will continue to closely monitor the concluding phases of the electoral process, in particular the declaration of results by the Electoral Commission on the presidential election, and will make further declarations where and when appropriate.
- iii. The ECOWAS Observation Mission warmly congratulates the peace-loving people of Ghana, particularly the leadership of the political parties, their followers, and the electorates in general, for the tenacity, determination, sense of moderation and patriotism demonstrated in their quest to deepen Ghana's enviable democratic credentials. The Mission wishes to commend the National Electoral Commission, the security agencies and all stakeholders for their invaluable contribution to the success so far achieved, and urges them to pursue the process to its logical conclusion with the same determination, zeal and commitment.
- iv. At this juncture, the ECOWAS Election Observation Mission would like to caution individuals and groups, in particular political parties, the media and civil society organizations, to refrain from speculating on or declaring unofficial results, besides the official results declared or to be declared by the EC.

- v. The Mission calls on all candidates and their supporters to continue to respect due processes and the rule of law at all times. Given the individual and collective responsibility for the success of the process, the Mission urges all stakeholders to resort only to legal means to seek redress of any grievances emanating from the electoral process.

- vi. ECOWAS wishes to congratulate the people of Ghana for their exemplary comportment up to this point and urges them to exhibit same in the post-election phase in order to keep the peace and stability which have become a characteristic feature of the Ghanaian polity.

Done at Accra, this 9th Day of December 2020
The Head of the ECOWAS Election Observer Mission

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized initials and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.