



PRELIMINARY STATEMENT - PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Banjul, The Gambia, December 4, 2021

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. In the exercise of its mandate under Section 46 of the Constitution of The Gambia and Section 40 of the Elections Act, the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), on 1st October 2021, informed the general public that election to the Office of President of the Republic of The Gambia will be conducted on Saturday, 4th December 2021.
2. Pursuant to the provisions of the ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (2001), **His Excellency 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 in the Gambia, as part of ECOWAS support to the democratic process in the country.
3. The EOM team was led by **His Excellency Ernest Bai KOROMA**, former President of Sierra Leone and comprised of officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the ECOWAS Member States, Electoral Experts from the Electoral Commissions of the ECOWAS Member States, Members of the ECOWAS Parliament, ECOWAS Court, as well as Ambassadors accredited to ECOWAS, Journalists and Members of the Civil Society.
4. The Mission was supported by the Office of the Permanent Representative of the ECOWAS Commission in the Gambia, **H.E. Mrs. Vabah Gayflor** and the Technical Team from the ECOWAS Commission led by **General Francis Awagbe BEHANZIN**, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security.

II. COMMITMENTS AND SUPPORT TO THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

5. Since the last election in 2016, ECOWAS remained in the forefront of supporting the democratic stabilisation process and national cohesion in The Gambia through the instrumentality of ECOWAS Mission in The



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- Gambia (ECOMIG). The Mission which was first deployed on 26th January 2017 has continue its mandate of securing the State and protecting the citizenry in collaboration with the country's security forces.
6. Subsequently in March 2017, the ECOWAS Permanent Mission was established, and a new Special Representative of the President of ECOWAS appointed. This is with the objective of engaging with relevant stakeholders in promoting institutional reform processes with specific reference to Security Sector Reform (SSR), with the recruitment and deployment of a Senior Defence and Security Adviser to support to the preparation of the Security Sector Reform Strategy and National Defence Strategy.
 7. Furthermore, ECOWAS has continued to implement high impact programmes in tandem with the Gambia's National Development Plan (2018 -2021). Funds from the ECOWAS EU Peace and Stability Mandate Programme were utilised to achieve this objective.
 8. The 4th December 2021 Presidential Election is a historical moment in consolidating democracy and social cohesion in The Gambia. In this context and keeping with the provisions of Articles 42(2) and 44(b) of the 1999 ECOWAS Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, Article 12 of the 2001 Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, and Article 53(c) of the 2008 ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework, the ECOWAS Commission deployed a *Pre-election Fact-finding Mission to The Gambia from 1st to 7th August 2021*.
 9. Moreover, in keeping with its tradition of supporting Member states organising elections, ECOWAS demonstrated its commitment to support the Government and People of The Gambia by organising training and consultative engagements for relevant stakeholders **from the 13th to 16th**



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September 2021. The training which held at two regions of the country, namely, the West Coast and Upper River Regions, focused on the use of dialogue and mediation as tools for preventing and mitigating electoral-related conflicts and disputations.

10. As part of its preventive diplomacy activities in support of peaceful presidential election, the ECOWAS Commission launched a National Peace Campaign and Dialogue on Democratic Reforms aimed at promoting Youth Participation in Political Processes in The Gambia from 25th to 27th October 2021, in collaboration with the African Union Secretariat of the African Governance Architecture (AU-AGA) and the National Youth Council of The Gambia (NYC).
11. ECOWAS also followed up on most of the recommendations made by the Pre-Electoral Fact-Finding Mission to ensure their implementation by the concerned institutions and stakeholders.
12. **H. E. Jean Claude Kassi Brou**, President of ECOWAS Commission was present at National Stakeholders' Forum on 26th October 2021 where political contestants for the office of the President in The Gambia committed, in the Presence of National and International Stakeholders, to the conduct of peaceful and violent free election.
13. To effectively monitor and observe the presidential election of 4th December 2021, the ECOWAS Commission deployed a Core Team of four (4) Experts as well as 12 (twelve) Long-Term and 62 (sixty-two) Short-Term Observers.

III. ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN, SECURITY AND THE MEDIA

14. The Mission took note of the signing of the Janjanbureh Peace Pledge that was signed by the Political Parties in the period leading up to the election and displayed exceptional commitments to the code. The



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campaign took place in all the regions of the country in a peaceful and conducive atmosphere. Political parties and their candidates actively carried out their campaign and had the opportunity to disseminate their manifestoes and programmes to the electorate.

15. The main method of campaign was through street rallies based on an agreed schedule among the political parties and candidates. The Mission notes that security protection was provided for all the presidential candidates during the election campaigns and throughout the electoral process.
16. The Mission notes the high level of citizen mobilization, advocacy and sensitization carried out by the Civil Society in promoting a conducive environment for credible, inclusive and violence-free election.

IV. ELECTION LITIGATION

17. The pre-election litigations were concluded in a manner that encouraged litigants and the Independent Electoral Commission to acknowledge and respect the independence of the judiciary in electoral dispute adjudication. This development reinforced the role of the judiciary in the resolution of electoral disputes in marked difference to the previous election.

V. PRE-ELECTORAL CONSULTATIONS, DEPLOYMENT & OBSERVATIONS

a) Consultations

18. Upon his arrival in The Gambia on 1st December 2021, the Head of the ECOWAS Election Observation Mission, H.E. Ernest Bai KOROMA, the former President of Sierra Leone met with H.E. Adama



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Barrow, Gambian President, who is also a candidate in the presidential election during which he was briefed on the state of preparedness for the election.

19. President Koroma also held consultations with Honourable Mariam Jack-Denton, the Speaker of the Parliament, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Gambia Hassan Bubacar Jallow, as well as the Minister and officials of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice and the Chairman of the Independent Electoral Commission.
20. The Head of Mission also met with the candidates and representative of the political parties competing in the election. He also held consultations before and after the election with the Heads of Observation Mission of African Union (AU) H.E. Ngalema MOTLANTHE (former President of the Republic of South Africa), Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) H.E. John D. MAHAMA (former President of the Republic of Ghana); the Commonwealth, H.E. Olusegun OBASANJO (former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; Representatives of West African Elders Forum, H.E. Goodluck E. JONATHAN (former President of Nigeria) and H.E. Kadré Désiré Ouédraogo (former President, ECOWAS Commission), as well as the Head of Observation Mission of European Union and ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commissions (ECONEC). The Head of Mission also met with H.E Annadif Khatir Mahamat Saleh, the Special Representative of the Secretary General and Head of United Nations for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS).
21. Following these various consultations, the Head of Mission encouraged the Electoral Management Body to ensure the conduct of a free, fair and credible election and urged the political parties and candidates to enhance their voter sensitization and mobilisation campaign and admonished the Gambian citizens to come out on Election Day to fulfil their civic duty.



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b) Deployment

22. Consequent upon a pre-deployment briefing session organised by the ECOWAS Technical Team, 74 (seventy-four) Observers in 48 (forty-eight) teams were deployed to the seven (7) regions of the Gambia, namely: ***Banjul, Kanifing, Brikama, Kerevan, Mansakonko, Janjanbureh and Basse.***

c) Opening, Conduct of the Election and Vote Counting

23. After careful analysis of the information received from the observers deployed in the field, the Mission noted the following:
- (i) The early arrival of polling officials at polling stations, which enabled voting to commence at the stipulated time of 8:00 a.m. in most of the polling centres visited;*
 - (ii) The presence, in sufficient quantities, of electoral materials in all the polling stations across the country;*
 - (iii) The visible presence of security agents (two security personnel per polling station) discharging their duties in accordance with the provisions of the law;*
 - (iv) The efficient and professional conduct of the polling officials, who demonstrated adequate knowledge of their duties;*
 - (v) Except for IEC Staff, COVID Health Protocols were not observed in over 70% of polling stations visited although, provisions were made by the IEC for hand sanitizers and masks.*
 - (vi) There was a gender mix with women well represented as polling officials and party agents and as security officers in some polling stations;*
 - (vii) The agents of National People Party (NPP), Gambia Democratic Congress (GDC), United Democratic Party (UDP) and Peoples Democratic Organization for Independence and Socialism (PDOIS) were present at almost all the polling stations*



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- visited, while the agents of Essa Faal and National Unity Party (NUP) were only present in some polling stations;*
- (viii) There was the use of indelible ink to indicate that voters had cast their ballot;*
- (ix) All voters were requested to present their voter's cards before they were allowed to vote at all the polling stations observed;*
- (x) Priority was given to vulnerable persons including the elderly, pregnant women, nursing mothers and necessary assistances were afforded to persons with disability to enable them cast their ballot;*
- (xi) The set-up of most of polling stations visited (98,95%) ensured secrecy of the ballot;*
- (xii) International Observers from AU, EU, EISA, Red Cross, Commonwealth, NDI and observers including Gambia Participate, Gambia Peace Ambassadors, WANEP were met on the field;*
- (xiii) There was an impressive turnout of voters at the opening of poll in most all the polling stations; Polls closed in all the polling stations visited at the stipulated time of 5 p.m. The vote counting and tallying processes were carried out in a transparent, very simple and professional manner, in full view of party agents, observers, and security agents.*
- (xiv) There was cooperation and non-adversary relationship between the electoral officials and party agents which facilitated easy and efficient conduct of the election.*

VI. Conclusion

24. The Mission is impressed with the simple but effective voting system, based on the use of marbles being dropped in each candidate's ballot drum thereby preventing spoiled ballots or invalid votes.
25. The Mission is appreciative on the conditions in which the election was organized as well as the speed and transparency in the collation, transmission and declaration of the provisional results by the IEC.



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26. Consequently, the ECOWAS Mission congratulates the Government and People of The Gambia and all stakeholders for their efforts made so far in ensuring that the election was conducted in a peaceful atmosphere.
27. The Mission congratulates and invites the incoming President to increase efforts to meet the challenges of social stability, economic recovery, democratic governance and consolidation, peace and security in an inclusive manner.
28. The Mission congratulates the IEC, the security forces and all stakeholders involved in the management of the electoral process and salutes the great political maturity that Gambians has displayed throughout this process.
29. The Mission takes note of the declaration made by the Gambia's Independent Electoral Commission on Sunday 5th December 2021 by announcing in the public media, the final results of the election.
30. Despite the controversies, accusations and counteraccusations and the rejection on early Sunday 5th December 2021, of the results announced, by three Gambia presidential candidates, ECOWAS Mission confirms that the electoral process has been calm and peaceful with no major incident reported.
31. The Mission will provide a comprehensive report at the end of the entire process. However, at this stage, the Mission would like to proffer the following recommendations:

To IEC

- *The IEC should continue to communicate developments regarding the electoral process to the general public and promptly share information in order to discourage misinformation through social media and other means;*



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- *The capacity of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) should be reinforced by establishing a Legal Unit and the appointment of a Communication and Database Management Expert.*

To the Government

- *The Constitutional and Electoral Review Processes should be revitalized to promote democracy and consolidate democratic governance in the country.*
32. 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 dispute.
33. Lastly, the ECOWAS Observer Mission, through the Long-Term Observers and the Office of the Resident Representative of the President of the ECOWAS Commission in The Gambia, will continue to monitor the post-electoral developments and expresses appreciation to the competent authorities of The Gambia for the measures taken to facilitate the deployment of observers for the election of 4th December 2021.

Done at Banjul, this 6th December 2021

H.E. Ernest Bai Koroma
Former President of the Republic of Sierra Leone
Head of ECOWAS Electoral Observation Mission in The Gambia