



**AFRICAN UNION OBSERVATION MISSION FOR THE
THE SECOND ROUND OF PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS
REPUBLIC OF CONGO - 30 JULY 2017**

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

Introduction

1. In accordance with the relevant provisions of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance 2012, the OAU / AU Declaration on Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa 2002, the EU Directives African Union for the Observation and Monitoring Missions of the 2002 elections, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC), His Excellency Moussa Faki Mahamat, deployed for the second round of Parliamentary Elections scheduled for the 30 July 2017, an Electoral Observation Mission (AUEOM) in the Republic of Congo. This follows that of the first round of the Legislative Elections coupled with the Locals held on 16 July 2017.
2. The Mission, as in the first round, is headed by **His Excellency Mr Diango Cissoko, Former Prime Minister of Mali**, is composed of thirty-five (35) observers, including Ambassadors accredited to the African Union, Parliamentarians from the Pan African Parliament, members of the Economic and Social Council of the African Union, electoral commissioners and members of African civil society organizations.

These observers come from twenty (20) countries, representing Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Gabon, Guinea, Mauritius, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Senegal, Chad, Togo and Tunisia.

3. The AUEOM has received technical and logistical support from experts from the African Union Commission, the Pan-African Parliament and the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA).
4. Present in the Republic of the Congo since 26 July 2017, the Mission will remain there until 6 August 2017 in order to monitor and evaluate the end of the electoral campaign, the conduct of voting operations and all operations of resumption, and publication of provisional results by the Ministry in charge of elections.

5. This statement, which follows the various exchanges with stakeholders in the electoral process and the observation of the above-mentioned phases of the electoral process, contains the preliminary conclusions and recommendations of the AUEOM.

II. Objectives and methodology

6. The objective of the AUEOM was to provide an independent, objective and impartial assessment of the electoral process in the Republic of Congo in accordance with the relevant provisions of the 2012 African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, OAU Assembly on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa in 2002 and the African Union Guidelines for Election Observation and Monitoring Missions in 2002. The AUEOM also assessed the electoral process in the light of the national legal framework applicable to the organization of parliamentary elections in the Republic of Congo.
7. Upon arrival, while paying particular attention to the conduct and environment of the end of the electoral campaign, the Mission met with:
 - the political and administrative authorities of the country;
 - institutions involved in the conduct of the electoral process: the Independent National Electoral Commission (CNEI) and the General Directorate of Electoral Affairs (DGAE);
 - leaders of civil society organizations;
 - the diplomatic corps.
8. On 28 July 2017, two days before the polls, 17 teams were deployed in the following nine departments for the second round: Brazzaville, Bouenza, Kouilou, Lekoumou, Likouala, Niari, Les Plateaux, Pointe Noire and Sangha.
9. The observers of the AUEOM followed the opening of the polling stations, the voting and counting operations in two hundred and eight (208) polling stations distributed among several districts and communes of the above-mentioned departments.

III. Pre-election observations

10. The AUEOM, having submitted its analysis of certain points of the pre-election framework, in its declaration of 18 July 2017 on the first round, the evaluation of the second round concerns the overall framework for the holding of the Election day and the conduct of the campaign election.

A. The general context of the elections of 30 July 2017

11. The Mission welcomes the publication on 21 July 2017 of the results of the first round of parliamentary elections, which devoted a second round to forty-seven (47) constituencies in the country.
12. It noted with satisfaction, as it had recommended, the willingness expressed and implemented by the political actors to resort to legal channels for the settlement of disputes arising from the combined vote of 16 July 2017.
13. The mission is pleased to note that the vote was resumed on 24 July 2017 in the constituencies where it was marked by violence during the first round. However, the mission also noted that the elections had not yet been scheduled in the Pool districts where it had been postponed due to insecurity.

B. The conduct of the electoral campaign

14. Opened on 22 July and ended on 28 July 2017 at midnight, the campaign for the second round of legislative elections took place between ninety-four (94) candidates in a ballot for forty-seven (47) seats.
15. The Mission noted that the campaign proceeded peacefully, but more timidly than in the first round, in all the constituencies concerned. The period of silence imposed by the law was respected by the candidates running as candidates.

IV. Observation of the ballot and counting

16. The observation of the elections day covered the opening of the offices, the electoral material, the conduct of the vote and the closing and counting. It also includes the evaluation of election staff, participation in voting as well as the role of delegates of political parties and security forces.

A. Opening of polling stations

17. The AUEOM noted, as in the first round, that all the polling stations actually visited have generally opened more than one hour late due to the late arrival of certain polling station members, Unavailability of the equipment at the opening or the delay in the layout of the offices.
18. Polling stations, generally located in schools, were easily accessible to people with disabilities and the elderly. The atmosphere outside was

peaceful and quiet. The offices have benefited from a discreet presence of the police.

19. However, AU observers noted that, while electoral staff generally ensured that the ballot boxes were empty, they were not generally sealed as required by law. Moreover, the opening of the offices was, in the majority of cases, without genuine affluence of the voters.

B. Electoral material

20. Observers noted a clear improvement in the availability of election materials in the polling stations visited. However, in some cases, they pointed to the lack of seals, stamps, minutes, inadequate ballots and inadequate ballot boxes.

C. Electoral staff

21. The AUEOM noted that there were generally six electoral staffs per polling station. Nevertheless, many electoral staffs did not have any distinctive signs to identify them and to distinguish them from other persons present in the polling stations.
22. Overall, observers noted a clear improvement in the control of voting procedures by electoral staff, who interacted well with the political parties, candidates and observers.
23. As in the first round, the electoral staff included a small number of women.

D. Operations

24. Overall, there has been significant progress in the procedures concerning the control of documents submitted by voters (voter or identity card). These were systematically matched against electoral rolls and the few unregistered or multi-card holders were turned away. In some cases, especially in rural areas, voters were allowed to vote on evidence when their names were on the list. However, the mission found some confusion in the management of the voters' lists at the level of the centers and polling stations.
25. The secrecy of the vote was ensured throughout the course of the operation, although there were some alterations in the voting of persons needing assistance. Indeed, assistance was provided to persons who generally desired it by electoral staff or an elector designated by them.

26. The Mission, however, noted a differentiated application of the seal procedure from one polling station to another. In most cases, this equipment was not available or the ballot box was not suitable.
27. The mission also reported violence in the offices of Iloupanga 2, Abila 1 and Ouenze (Brazzaville), resulting in the intervention of the police and the temporary interruption of the vote. In the first two cases, the violence involved the delegates of the candidates and in the latter case involved the vote of the defense forces.

E. Electoral Participation

28. The AUEOM observed a smaller influx of voters in the second round.

F. Delegates/ Representatives of political parties / candidates and observers

29. The Mission noted a systematic presence of delegates of candidates or parties in all polling stations visited. These delegates, comprised of a small number of women, performed satisfactorily on the whole.
30. The AUEOM observed the presence of national observers and diplomatic missions in the polling stations visited.

G. Security

31. Overall, the Mission found an effective and discreet presence of law enforcement personnel in the visited polling stations.
32. In order to ensure the smooth running of the operations, the administrative authorities renewed measures restricting traffic and certain economic activities in the constituencies concerned and in Brazzaville.

H. Closing and ballot count

33. Observers noted that many polling stations closed prior to the scheduled time. The counting took place in situ, was generally and without discontinuity, in the presence of observers and party delegates or candidates.
34. As was the case in the first round, the members of the polling stations directly counted the votes without taking into account the legal provisions in this respect. The resulting minutes were not signed by the delegates in some cases even though they were generally copied.

35. Although the results were proclaimed at all polling stations, their display was not systematic.

V. Conclusion and recommendations

36. The Mission welcomes the fact that in spite of the stakes of the second round, the electoral process has generally taken place in a calm climate. However, it deplores the acts of violence happened in certain polling stations and urges all parties to always favor peaceful means of settling any disputes.

37. In the light of the findings made on the ground during this second round of the parliamentary elections, the AU Mission recommends the following :

To the Government

- Take the necessary measures to organize, as soon as possible, the elections in the constituencies where they could not take place in order to guarantee an inclusive national representation;
- Strengthen the training of law enforcement officials in their roles during the election period.
- Continue its support to electoral management bodies in the accomplishment of their mission, including the consolidation of electoral rolls.

To the Electoral Administration

- Continue to strengthen the capacities of electoral staff on all stages of voting;
- Arrange for the timely deployment of electoral materials in the dismemberments and polling stations;
- Take steps to facilitate the identification of election staff at polling stations;
- Ensure the systematic use of seals in polling stations;
- Intensify civic and electoral education activities, especially in rural areas;
- Improve the voting conditions of the defense and security forces and communicate sufficiently around its modalities;
- Strengthen the participation of women at all levels of the electoral process, in particular as members of the polling stations;

To Political Parties

- Use legal channels for resolving electoral disputes;
- Integrate and train their delegates;

- Strengthen women's participation in the electoral process;

To civil society

- Take a more active role in the electoral process through citizen vigilance, awareness-raising and peace education.

Done at Brazzaville, 1 August 2017

The Head of Mission

H.E.Mr. Diango Cissoko