



COMISSÃO DA CEDEAO

**ECOWAS OBSERVATION MISSION
FOR THE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS OF 11 DECEMBER 2011
IN COTE D'IVOIRE**

PRELIMINARY DECLARATION

1. Upon special request of the Ivorian Government and in pursuance of the relevant provisions of the ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, the President of the ECOWAS Commission, **H.E. James Victor GBEHO** deployed an Observation Mission of sixty experts to observe the legislative elections of 11 December, 2011 in Côte d'Ivoire.
2. Led by **Professor Theodore Holo**, President of the High Court of Justice of Benin, this Mission is part of the continuing efforts being made by ECOWAS to support Côte d'Ivoire in resolving definitively its internal crisis and restoring socio-political stability. It is primarily to ensure the proper conduct of the electoral process for free, transparent and credible elections in the country.
3. During his activities, the Head of Mission, in compliance with his mandate, met with the different stakeholders involved in the electoral process namely: the officials of the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI), the Constitutional Council, the High Authority of Audiovisual Communication (HACA), the National Press Council (NPC), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Chairman of the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CDVR), and the representatives of civil society as well as some political parties involved in the elections (LIDER, PDCI-RDA, UDCY). He also consulted with the Representative of the Facilitator of the Inter-Ivorian Dialogue, UNOCI, UNDP, the European Union, the African Union and also attended the consultation meeting of the Heads of the electoral observation mission deployed in the context of these elections.
4. These various consultations enabled the Mission to be assured of the arrangements made to ensure favorable conditions for the effective holding of a credible election. In particular, the Mission has taken positive note of :
 - the arrangements made to ensure peaceful elections through various awareness and information campaigns organized for all socio-political groups in the country;
 - the consultation framework and mechanisms established between the various stakeholders including the CEI, the Constitutional Council and UNOCI to ensure the holding of consensual elections;

- the steps to ensure expeditious deployment of logistics pertaining to the elections in the various voting places;
- the capacity building measures for election officials and representatives of political parties in order to improve the conduct of the process;
- the commitment by all stakeholders to maintain democratic values and electoral fair play according to the code of good conduct signed by the political parties;
- the steps taken to strengthen security of the electoral process countrywide especially through the complementary security measures made by the Government and UNOCI;
- the arrangements made to ensure a fair and balanced reporting of the activities of the candidates in accordance with the current legislation.

5. The Mission also took note of the withdrawal of FPI from the elections and welcomed the subsequent decision by some members of the Congrès National de la Résistance pour la Démocratie (CNRD) to participate in the legislative elections.

6. The Mission regrets some localized incidents, which claimed some casualties particularly in localities such as Grand Lahou and Dabou, thus undermining the overall peaceful environment of the electoral campaign.

7. Based on the information gathered by observer teams deployed throughout the various regions of Abidjan, Haut Sassandra Tonkpi, Gbeke, and Poro, the Mission noted the following about the process:

- The generally peaceful atmosphere and good order that prevailed throughout the process;
- The delay in the opening of some polling stations mainly due to the late dispatch of electoral materials;
- the relative mastery of voting operations by the election officials though the voting procedures were widely respected;
- The satisfactory manner in which the counting and tallying of votes were done in accordance with electoral provisions;
- The effective presence of security forces mainly in the polling stations of urban areas as well as the enhanced patrols of UNOCI around most of the voting areas.

8. However, the low turnout deserves mention. This lack of enthusiasm could among others, be explained by the lack or insufficiency of awareness campaigns and civic education of the people concerning the significance of the poll. Furthermore, some cases of inversions in the transmission of ballot papers were noted in a particular polling station in the locality of Kapokro. In addition to the insufficient ballot papers in some polling stations namely at Bodono, some mislocations of polling stations were observed (at Sakassou) without the voters being duly informed. These shortcomings, though corrected along the process, significantly delayed the conduct of the voting process in these polling stations and also evidencing organizational shortcomings.

9. Despite these shortcomings, the Mission did not find any major irregularity. Therefore, the ECOWAS Mission is of the overall opinion that the legislative elections of 11 December 2011 were generally conducted under acceptable free, fair and transparent conditions.

10. The Mission commends the sense of civic responsibility demonstrated by Ivorians in freely exercising their right to vote. It appreciates the efforts made by the Ivorian authorities and all other stakeholders to ensure the good conduct of the election in a calm and peaceful atmosphere. The Mission particularly commends the CEI for its commitment demonstrated in organizing and conducting operations.

11. In the view of the Mission, these elections are milestones towards the final exit from the Ivorian crisis and an important step towards the political and institutional normalization in Côte d'Ivoire. It therefore behoves on all Ivorians, leaders of political parties, their activists and supporters, to refrain from any act of violence, all forms of intimidation or provocation in this crucial phase of peace consolidation. The Mission urges them to maintain, at all times, order and discipline along the process. In particular, it encourages all the candidates, in compliance with democratic rules, to resort to legal channels for the settlement of any electoral dispute.

12. Moreover, the Mission reiterates that these elections represent an opportunity to establish a parliament whose role will be critical for the strengthening of democracy and good governance, national reconciliation and economic recovery of the country. To seize this opportunity and preserve the national cohesion, the Mission calls on all stakeholders to work relentlessly to restore confidence among all Ivorians. It urges them to keep on with the required political, economic and security reforms, by especially promoting an inclusive and republican dialogue between and among the driving forces of the nation.

13. The Mission would like to take this opportunity to express its appreciation to UNOCI for its critical role and support which contributed, to a large extent, in creating a conducive environment for the effective holding of the elections. It would also like to express its gratitude to all development partners for the technical and financial support, which proved instrumental for the success of these elections.

14. The ECOWAS Observation Mission thanks the Ivorian authorities, the CEI and UNOCI for their collaboration and comprehensive logistical measures taken to facilitate the effective performance of the duties of observers.

Done at Abidjan, 12 December 2011

The Head of Mission