

**AFRICAN UNION ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION TO THE SECOND
ROUND OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION ON 29 DECEMBER 2019
IN THE REPUBLIC OF GUINEA BISSAU**

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

This second round of the presidential election on 29 December 2019 marks a decisive milestone in the country's political history. Bissau Guineans voted in calm and serenity. They demonstrated democratic maturity.

Following an invitation from the Government of Guinea Bissau, the President of the African Union Commission (AU), **His Excellency Moussa Faki Mahamat** deployed an African Union Election Observation Mission (AUEOM), to assess and report on the conduct of the election. The AUEOM is led by **His Excellency Dr. Joaquim Rafael BRANCO, former Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe**. The Mission comprises 13 Long Term Observers (LTO) and 40 Short Term Observers (STO) divided into 28 teams. The LTO were deployed since 19 November 2019 and will remain till 5 January 2020 while the STO, who arrived Bissau on 22 December will stay in the country until 3rd January 2020.

The Mission is composed of an Ambassador accredited to the African Union, Pan-African Parliamentarians, Officials of Election Management Bodies, members of African civil society, African election experts, Human Rights specialists, Experts on Gender and Media Experts. The observers are drawn from thirty-two (32) countries, which are representative of the geographical diversity of the continent and include the following: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape-Verde, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, São Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sudan, Togo, Tunisia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The Mission deployed observers to all nine (9) regions of the country which are: The Autonomous Sector of Bissau, Biombo, Bafata, Gabu, Oio, Quinara, Tombali, Cacheu and Bolama-Bijagos. The AUEOM was divided into 28 teams and on election day, visited 334 polling stations amongst which 189 (56.58 %) were in the urban milieu and 145 (43.42 %), in the rural area.

2. OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE MISSION

The objective of the AUEOM is to assess in an honest, positive, independent, professional and impartial manner, the integrity, credibility, regularity and transparency of the second round of the presidential election. The methodology of the Mission is enshrined within the framework of principles set out in key provisions of international instruments on democratic elections notably the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2012), the OAU/AU Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa, (2002), the AU Guidelines for Election Observation and Monitoring Missions (2002), and the United Nations Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation (2005). The Mission also takes into consideration regional instruments and particular attention is paid to the national legal framework for the conduct of elections. The AUEOM met with stakeholders in

the electoral process notably the two candidates, the president of the National Electoral Commission (CNE) and the other Election Observation Missions.

This Preliminary Statement is based on the reports of LTO, information gathered from the different meetings with interlocutors and on the reports of the 28 Observer teams deployed on the field on Election Day. A final report with a detailed assessment of the entire process shall be published at the end of the Mission.

3. PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS AND FINDINGS

3.1 Political context of the election

The second round, of the presidential runoff opposed Domingos Simões PEREIRA and Umaro Sissoco EMBALO. Most of the candidates who lost in the first round rallied behind either of the two who qualified for the runoff. The formation of alliances generated internal crises in the political parties concerned, without significantly affecting the voting instructions given by the leaders. The overall political atmosphere was peaceful. However, the election was conducted under social tension within the ranks of the Public Administration owing to delays in salaries strikes by teachers. Meanwhile, the mission noted in some cases, the manipulation of the ethnic and religious factors within political circles. To these is added the contradictory use of the nation-state and popular sovereignty narratives as factors for political identification and partisan division. On the other hand, the seizure of the campaign materials of the candidate EMBALO at the borders of the country almost degenerated into confrontation between the political actors. However, the situation came to a positive end thanks to the intervention of the international community notably ECOWAS.

3.2. Legal Framework

The second round of the presidential election is governed by Articles 109 to 112 of Law N° 10/2013 of 25 September 2013, regulating the election for the Presidency of the Republic and the National Popular Assembly. By virtue of Article 111, “the CNE fixes the date for the second round of election, to hold within 21 days from the date of publication of the results of the first round while Article 112 provides that “the campaign for the second round of the election shall last for 15 days”. Also applicable are the provisions of Articles 28 to 45 of the same law, on election campaign. In addition, the provisions of Articles 50 to 97 relating in particular to early voting, voting operations, and tabulation as well as the announcement of election results.

3.3. Electoral Administration

The National Electoral Commission (CNE) deployed sensitive election materials to the Regional Electoral Commissions (CRE) on 21 and 22 December 2019. Indelible ink which posed problems and drew a lot of attention during the first round was changed. Non sensitive election materials were conserved to be used in the second round.

The Mission welcomes the efforts devoted to improve on the organisation of the election within a very short timeframe. However, the mission noted delays in the payment of honorariums to members of the CRE and the non provision of telephone chips and cards notably in the islands and the peripheries, to enable the better coordination of the deployment of election material and personnel. Finally, the early voting process was better understood thanks to sensitizations of stakeholders carried out by CNE and the delegates of candidates.

3.4. Voter Register

The Voter register was not changed during the two rounds of the election. It comprises **761 676** voters following voter registration carried out from 2018 to 2019. Meanwhile, the voters who had lost their voter cards were unable to have duplicates. Whereas Article 26 (3) of law No 10/2013 of 25 September 2013 on voter registration obliges the Commission in charge of voter registration, to issue a new card not later than 10 days to the election, which shall bear the inscription of a duplicate". This provision of the law was not respected by GTAPE owing to lack of political consensus between the stakeholders.

3.5. Coalition of Candidates

Driven by the urge to win the election, the candidates concluded alliances for the runoff. Domingos Simões PEREIRA was supported by Baçiru DJA, Mamadu Iaia DJALO and Idrissa DJALO while Umaro Sissoco EMBALO was supported notably by Nuno NABIAM, José Mario Vaz, Carlos DOMINGOS Gomes. These coalitions were often contested within the political parties for diverse reasons. At the end, they were supported by most of the officials of the parties concerned.

3.6. Campaign

Campaign for the second round took place from 13 to 27 December 2019. The candidates published their respective campaign programs and itineraries. The CNE urged the candidates to abide by the Code of Conduct and ethics and to avoid hate speech and violence. The Mission also noted certain cases where supporters of Umaro Sissoco EMBALO approached it with respect to logistics problems with the Administration.

3.7. Media

Article 37 of law N°10/2013 of 25 September 2013, provides that candidates are entitled to daily broadcast of their activities for 10 minutes on the radio and 5 minutes on Television of Guinea Bissau (TGB). However, the candidates did not accept to grant interviews on the television on 18 and 19 December 2019. Nevertheless, they took part in the Televised Presidential debate on 26 December 2019. The CNE and the other stakeholders made recourse to the services of the local private media, which used the national languages to disseminate their messages to citizens in the interior parts of the country.

3.8. Civil Society

Civil Society played a non negligible role in the inclusive follow up of the electoral process. Amongst the active members during this election, we can cite the: Political platform for Women in Guinea Bissau, comprising of over 600 organizations and the National Movement of Civil Society. These organizations alongside others took part in monitoring the electoral process and the vote. They established their situation room on the eve of the election at AZALAI Hotel as was the case during the first round of the election. This initiative deserves to be supported and promoted to reinforce the education and participation of the population in elections. The Mission noted however, that civil society is still not authorized to observe elections in the country.

3.9. Sensitization

The CNE, the candidates and their allies as well as civil society were mobilised to effectively sensitize the population to come out and vote on Election Day. The national media distinguished itself as a powerful vector for education, capable of raising the awareness and conscience of the people towards partisan affiliation. The social media equally played an

innovative role in sensitisation. Other classical mediums used included spots, flyers, sensitization meetings and caravans.

3.10. Security

The security component of the electoral process was carried out through the framework of a strategic operational plan initiated in common accord by the National Joint Command Defence and Security Forces and the ECOMIB forces of ECOWAS. Regular patrols carried out within this framework contributed to the maintenance of social peace and created conducive conditions for the success of the electoral process.

4. FINDINGS ON ELECTION DAY

Overall, the vote was properly conducted without any major incidents.

4.1. Early Voting

Early voting concerned notably the national defence and security forces. It took place on 26 December 2019 in line with the provisions of Articles 52 and 53 of the electoral law on 26 December 2019.

The AUEOM teams noted lateness in the effective start of the operations. In certain areas, such as Biombo, the list of voters was not available. Generally, early voting was lower compared to the first round of election. In effect, the Mission noted that in 20% of the polling stations visited ballot papers for early voting were received.

4.2. Opening of Polling Stations

The Mission notes with satisfaction that the prescribed time for opening (7:00 am) was respected in almost the totality of polling stations visited. The polling personnel were present ahead of the opening time. Each polling station had between 3 and 4 members. Procedures for opening were well respected by the polling station members. The empty ballot boxes were displayed to voters and delegates of candidates before being sealed. Election materials and ballot papers were available and in sufficient quantities.

4.3. Election Material

Election materials were available in all the polling in sufficient quantities and on time in polling stations observed. Conversely, the quality of indelible ink was better than that of the first round. The Mission noted that in some very few exceptional cases voting booths were devised through local methods.

4.4. Turnout in the election

The Observers of the AUEOM noted with satisfaction that, there was high turnout of voters in the morning. The two camps mobilised their supporters and ensured the effective presence of their delegates at polling stations.

4.5. Female participation

The Mission noted that women turned out massively to vote. Conversely, women only constituted 28.65% of the total number of delegates of candidates at the polling stations visited compared to 28.33%, during the first round of the election. Meanwhile, as members of polling stations visited, they made up 43.83% down from 56.46% in the polling stations observed in the first round.

4.6. Participation of aged persons, vulnerable persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant and lactating women.

The AUEOM noted with satisfaction the efforts put in place to give priority to aged persons, vulnerable persons the physically challenged, pregnant and lactating mothers. were assisted either by voters of their choice or by members of the polling station. . In some places observed, stairways were created and voting booths adapted to facilitate voting by persons with disabilities. This category of persons received assistance from persons of their choice.

4.7. Election Personnel

The number of election personnel ranged from 3 to 4 in the polling stations visited. In the majority of polling stations observed, they displayed a better understanding of procedures at polling stations. Their relationship with the delegates of candidates was full of cordiality, which created a favourable working milieu.

4.8. Voting

The vote went on in a peaceful and serene manner in the polling stations visited on the entire national territory. There were no major incidents observed by the AU observer teams.

4.9. Secrecy of the vote

Ballot boxes were sealed in most of the polling stations observed. The placement of voting booths in polling stations was better done during the second round. The results sheets were placed in sealed envelopes. This contributed in reinforcing the secrecy of the vote, the sincerity and regularity of the election.

4.10. Candidate Representatives

The Mission notes with satisfaction, that the delegates of candidates who were mostly youths, were present in all the polling stations visited. They displayed a proper mastery of procedures. They were in possession of voter lists which permitted them to better follow-up and verify the voting.

4.11. Security of voting operations

The security of the electoral process was carried out by the defence and security forces assisted by ECOMIB, in conformity with the Common Action Plan inscribed within the framework of the Joint Command. This operation permitted the ensuring of security on the national territory. The presence of these forces was dissuasive and discrete. On the other hand, the agents of the CNE contributed to secure the polling stations

4.12. Closing and counting

The polling stations observed closed at the prescribed closing time (5 p.m). Counting operations were conducted with serenity and transparency, in the presence of delegates of candidates and the public. The results were posted at polling stations. After the counting, the delegates of candidates signed the result sheets and received copies..

4.13. Participation of the International community.

The Mission notes with satisfaction the efforts by the international community notably the P5 Group, the Joint Mission ECOWAS-AU-UNO and the other technical and financial partners who assisted Guinea Bissau in the organisation of this election. The Mission commends the technical support of ECOWAS and the security of ECOMIB. It equally welcomes the financial and logistics support of the UNDP and the other partners. Finally, it recognises the efforts of

coordination initiated to harmonise the positions of the international community in order to sustainably stabilise the country.

5. CONCLUSION

The AUEOM congratulates the Bissau Guinean people for their political maturity and for taking ownership of the electoral process. It noted that the vote was conducted in peace and security, necessary for the free expression of suffrage. Notwithstanding the few rare incidents, the election campaign and the vote went on hitch-free over the entire national territory. Overall, the election was free, regular and transparent.

The AUEOM welcomes the spirit of patriotism and fair play of the candidates in the election. It calls for calm and restraint while they await the announcement of the results.

The AUEOM thanks all the state authorities, the CNE, the CRE, the candidates, members of civil society and the technical and financial partners for having accepted to interact with the Mission.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The AUEOM recommends,

To the Government and the National Popular Assembly:

- Work towards the preservation of social peace and national unity;
- Reinforce the means of CNE to enable it, to better accomplish its missions;
- Improve the voter registration system;
- Ensure more involvement of civil society in the electoral process notably in election observation;
- Provide voters with duplicates when they misplace their voter cards.

To the CNE:

- Reinforce and harmonise the monitoring of electoral personnel in the polling stations on the entire national territory.

To Candidates:

- Resort to legal means in the case of election contests;
- Promote gender balance and youth involvement in politics;
- Give priority to consensus and the competition of ideas;
- Endeavour to avoid conflicts of identity;
- Contribute to the preservation of social peace and national unity.

To the International Community:

- Continue its support to Guinea Bissau in its effort to consolidate the achievements of democracy in order to engender peace, stability, the rule of law and sustainable development.

Done at Bissau, 30 December 2019

**For the Mission, His Excellency Dr. Joaquim
Rafael BRANCO**