



COMISSÃO DA CEDEAO

**THE ECOWAS OBSERVATION MISSION
TO THE GENERAL ELECTIONS IN LIBERIA
OCTOBER 11, 2011**

PRELIMINARY DECLARATION

1. Pursuant to the relevant provisions of the ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, the President of the ECOWAS Commission, His Excellency James Victor Gbeho deployed an observer mission of one Hundred and Fifty (150) members to observe the Presidential and Legislative elections of October 11, 2011 in Liberia.
2. The mission led by Professor Attahiru Jega, Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) of Nigeria, is part of the effort to support ECOWAS Member States in the process of consolidating democracy and good governance. It aims primarily at ensuring the proper conduct of free, fair and credible elections in Liberia.
3. In carrying out his mandate, the Head of Mission met with various stakeholders in the electoral process including: the President of the Republic of Liberia, Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the Chairman of the National Elections Commission (NEC) and some Presidential candidates namely Mr. Charles Walker Brumskine of the Liberty Party (LP), Mr. Prince Yormie Johnson of the National Union for Democratic Progress (NUDP) and Mr. Winston A. Tubman of the Congress for Democratic Change (CDC). He also held consultations with the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations in Liberia (UNMIL), the Special Envoy of the President of the ECOWAS Commission and the heads of some election observation missions to Liberia, in particular those of African Union and Carter Center.
4. After these consultations, the ECOWAS Observation Mission was reassured by the efforts made by the various stakeholders to create a conducive environment for the holding of the general elections in a peaceful atmosphere. In particular, the Mission took positive note of:

- The corrective measures taken to respond to the administrative and logistical challenges encountered during the referendum in order to ensure an expeditious deployment of election materials in all counties;
- The steps taken to ensure the security of the electoral process;
- The commitment of all stakeholders to preserve democratic values and national cohesion, as well as working towards peaceful elections in accordance with the code of conduct for political parties;
- The commitment of the UNMIL to support the electoral process and strengthening democracy in Liberia;
- The substantial assistance provided by the international community for the success of the election;
- The reduction in political tension and the peaceful environment during the electoral campaign;

5. After a preliminary assessment of the reports submitted by the observer teams deployed in all counties, the Mission noted:

- The orderliness that prevailed throughout the voting process;
- The high voters turnout to exercise their civic responsibilities;
- The timely commencement of polls throughout the country
- The availability of adequate election materials in most polling stations;
- The professional conduct of electoral officers in supervising the voting process;
- The presence of representatives of political parties at most polling centers;
- The smooth process of counting and collation of votes in accordance with electoral standards;
- The effective and unobtrusive presence of law enforcement officers and patrol teams in most polling areas;
- The commendable participation of the youth and women in the electoral process and their positive contribution towards the successful conduct of the elections.

6. Despite these positive aspects, the Mission noted as follows:

- The slow pace in the conduct of the voting process, especially in areas with high density of registered voters. This situation occurred as a result of the simultaneous conduct of the three different elections, and insufficient voting knowledge by some voters.
- The closure of some polling centers after the authorized time, which was said to be caused by poor climatic conditions that delayed timely commencement in these centers.
- Evidence of insufficient voter education, which needs to be remedied for the future.

7. Arising from these preliminary observations, the Mission is of the view that there were no major irregularities and incidents of violence. It estimated that on the whole, the elections of October 11, 2011 were conducted under acceptable conditions of freedom of voters and transparency of the process.

8. Consequently, the ECOWAS Mission wishes to express its appreciation to the Liberian authorities and all stakeholders for ensuring a peaceful conduct of the elections. It also acknowledges the remarkable improvement in the organization of the polls, which shows that lessons have been learnt from the shortcomings observed during the holding of the referendum of August 23, 2011.

9. The Mission also commends the professionalism displayed by the field staff of the National Elections Commission (NEC) in the conduct of elections. It also acknowledges in particular the courage, determination and patience of voters who, despite the heavy downpour of rain in some areas, demonstrated a high sense of civic responsibility by turning out in large numbers to participate in the electoral process.

10. This political maturity and good patriotic conduct should be encouraged, given the need to preserve the values of tolerance at this historic moment of democratic consolidation and national reconstruction. Thus, the Mission urges all stakeholders, especially the Liberian people, to continue to respect the process in the same atmosphere of peace and tolerance, until the announcement of final results by the relevant authority. In particular, it requests the media to adhere to its moral and professional obligations required in this regard.

11. Considering the challenges related to the consolidation of peace and national reconciliation in Liberia, the Mission calls on all candidates and their supporters to continue to respect due process and the rule of law at all times. Given the individual and collective responsibility for the success of the process, the Mission urges all to resort to legal channels, where necessary, for the resolution of any electoral disputes.

12. ECOWAS takes this opportunity to commend the important role played by the UNMIL, which helped to a large extent in creating a conducive environment for the conduct of peaceful elections in Liberia. The Mission also acknowledges the support given by the international community for the success of the elections.

13. The ECOWAS Mission expresses its gratitude to the Liberian authorities, the various institutions involved in the organization of elections and UNMIL for their cooperation, logistical and security measures taken to facilitate the deployment and effective functioning of observers.

Done in Monrovia, October 12, 2011

The Head of Mission