



PRELIMINARY STATEMENT OF THE AFRICAN UNION OBSERVER MISSION TO THE PRESIDENTIAL AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN UGANDA FEBRUARY 18TH 2011.

In response to an invitation from the Government of the Republic of Uganda, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, His Excellency Jean Ping, appointed and sent an Observer Mission to Uganda to observe the Presidential and Parliamentary elections held on February 18th 2011.

The AU Observer Mission is led by Hon. Gitobu Imanyara, Member of Kenyan and Pan-African Parliaments. Other members are drawn from the Pan-African Parliament, Ambassadors / the Permanent Representatives Committee, Election Management Bodies, prominent individuals and members of Civil Society Organizations drawn from various African Countries. The Mission consists of 29 members with a support team of the African Union.

The Mission arrived in Uganda on February 14th 2011, and in accordance with the African Union Election Observation Guidelines, proceeded to meet and consult with various stakeholders of the election process, such as the Election Commission of Uganda (ECU), officials of the competing political parties, civil society, academics, media and members of other national and international election observer groups.

The AU Observer Mission is privileged to have within its composition individuals who observed the 2006 General Elections in Uganda and have noted considerable improvement in the conduct of the current elections.

COMMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS

The AU Observer Mission was deployed to all regions of Uganda and observed the following:

- The elections were preceded by robust campaigns by candidates across the nation;
- The people of Uganda were enthusiastic about exercising their democratic right and indeed, there was a reasonable voter turnout;
- The Electoral Commission deployed human and material resources to Polling Stations in all the regions, and
- Voting was conducted in a generally peaceful and orderly manner compared to previous elections;

- Counting of votes at Polling Stations was done in full view of the voting populace and other stakeholders;

However, there were several shortcomings:

- Many Polling Stations did not receive voting materials on time, therefore, voting did not start at 7AM as stipulated in the Electoral Law;
- Many voters with voters' cards were turned away from Polling Stations because their names could not be found on the Voters' Register;
- A good number of Polling officials did not seem to have adequate training or confidence to perform their responsibilities and as a result procedures were not properly followed;
- The elderly, people with disabilities, expectant mothers and mothers with children were not given priority during the voting process as specified in the Electoral Law;
- Voters' comprehension of the voting procedure was inadequate, especially in the rural areas;
- The open air setting, the marking of ballot paper in an open bowl as against an enclosure and the exposure of ballot boxes without appropriate lids and seals in some cases opened the materials to the vagaries of the weather and limited the secrecy of the voter;
- The deployment of the armed forces, the police and militias for security was intimidating and could have impacted negatively on the process of the election;
- The general dissatisfaction expressed by different stakeholders on the composition of the Electoral Commission of Uganda undermined the credibility of the process;
- The use of inflammatory language by politicians created unnecessary tension and fear;
- The national electronic and print media fell short of living up to its responsibility of providing access and level playing field to all contesting parties, and
- Allegations of vote buying and open material promises to electorates have undermined the integrity of the electoral process;

It is our considered opinion that there is need to review the Electoral Laws including the appointment of the Electoral Commission of Uganda with the involvement of all stakeholders.

There is need for effective and well resourced civic and voter education in future elections.

The capacities of Polling officials and political party agents could be greatly enhanced with regular and adequate training.

The Mission noted significant improvement in the conduct of the 2011 Elections compared to 2006. We congratulate the people of Uganda for a conclusive and generally peaceful election.

This election highlighted the areas of improvement for future General Elections.

Hon. Gitobu Imanyara
Issued at the AU Observer Mission Office,
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