



JOINT STATEMENT OF THE 2011 ZAMBIA PRESIDENTIAL, PARLIAMENTARY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION OF COMESA / ICGLR

Background

In response to an invitation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Zambia, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the International Conference for the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), launched a joint Mission to observe the Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Government elections held on 20th September, 2011.

Composition of the Mission

The COMESA Observer Mission is led by Honorable Mrs Immaculee Nahayo, Minister of National Solidarity, Human Rights and Gender of the Republic of Burundi, who is also

a Member of the COMESA Committee of Elders. The ICGLR Observer Mission is led by Mr Raphael Tuju, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kenya.

The joint mission is composed of observers from the following COMESA and ICGLR Member States namely: Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Mauritius, Libya, Rwanda, Sudan, Uganda, Malawi, Tanzania and Zimbabwe; Accredited Civil Society and Private Sector Organizations to COMESA and ICGLR Civil Society Forum; COMESA Inter Parliamentary Forum and the Committee of Elders. The total number of observers is fifty-two (52).

Meetings with Stakeholders

Prior to the polling day, COMESA and ICGLR observers held meetings with a cross section of stakeholders such as the political parties, the Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ), local civil society, faith based organizations and the Zambian Police.

Deployment

The Joint Observer Mission deployed observers in all the nine (9) provinces of Zambia in order to maximize coverage of the electoral process.

In their deployment areas the teams covered several voting centers, where they were able to witness rallies by political parties, the management by ECZ of the voting process including the opening of polling centers, the casting of ballots and the counting of votes and the interaction of all those involved in the process.

General Observations on pre-election period

The joint mission made the following observations:

- (a) The registration process was conducted in time and in accordance with the electoral laws of Zambia
- (b) The receiving of the nomination papers of candidates was professionally conducted
- (c) The campaigns were generally peaceful although there were isolated incidents of reported violence
- (d) The election officials received professional training to allow them to conduct efficient voter education for the smooth running of the election.

Evaluation of the Polling Day

The joint Mission made the following observations:

- (a) generally, the election was held in a calm and peaceful environment despite isolated incidents of violence
- (b) poll officials worked well and efficiently
- (c) there was a systematic presence of local monitors and observers
- (d) the presence of political party agents was significant

Voting Process

a) Observation of the Opening of Polling Stations

Polling stations were generally opened on time however there were some delays observed in the opening of some of them. The joint Mission observed that the electoral officials followed the opening procedures and further noted that extra time was allocated where there were delays.

b) Observation of Polling Operations

The joint Mission observed the following:

- (a) In some polling stations the ballots were not clearly marked
- (b) The color codes confused some of the voters
- (c) Allegations of presence of pre-marked ballots papers caused tension and in some cases resulted in sporadic incidents of violence

c) Observation of the Closing of the Voting Process and Counting of Ballot Papers

The joint Mission observed the following

- (a) that closing of the voting process followed the requisite procedures
- (b) the counting was generally transparent and done in a professional manner
- (c) this notwithstanding the counting process was relatively slow in some stations

d) Participation of Women

The joint Mission observed the following in regard to the election process:

- a) The paucity of women candidate for presidential, legislative and local elections
- b) Remarkable participation of women in the management of the whole electoral process

e) Media Coverage

The joint observer Mission observed the following

- (a) There was a high level of polarization of the media coverage of issues in the run up to the elections
- (b) Some tended to focus on personal attributes of candidates to the detriment of substantive issues

f) Assisted Voters

The mission noted that voters who needed assistance received the necessary support from the polling staff.

There were no reports of influencing such voters in the polling stations visited.

Recommendations

The experience of the joint Observer Mission leads to the following recommendations:

- (a) Need for a high media council to enhance professionalism
- (b) The public media should accord equitable coverage to all actors and stakeholders in the electoral process
- (c) Women and youth be given adequate space in the political parties so that they can fully participate as candidates

Overall Assessment and Conclusions

The joint Observer Mission wishes to conclude that the elections were in conformity with international and regional laws, norms and standards.

In our opinion the people of Zambia freely expressed their will through the ballot