



PRELIMINARY STATEMENT OF THE AFRICAN UNION
OBSERVER MISSION ON THE TRIPARTITE ZAMBIA
ELECTIONS

22 SEPTEMBER 2011

A. INTRODUCTION

In response to the invitation from Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ), H. E. Jean Ping, Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission, dispatched an Election Observer Mission to Zambia to the tripartite elections that were held on 20 September, 2011.

The AU Election Observer Mission to the tripartite election was led by H. E. Vijay Makhan, Former OAU Assistant Secretary General. The Mission comprised 30 members drawn from Elections Management Bodies (EMBs), National Parliaments, the Pan African Parliament, Ambassadors, eminent persons and members of civil society from various African countries. The Mission is assisted by a team of technical staff from the AU Commission Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; and the Electoral Institute for the Sustainability of Democracy in Africa (EISA).

The Mission Observers are from: Botswana, Cameroun, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Saharawi Arab Republic, South Africa, Swaziland, Tunisia, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

The Mission arrived in Zambia on the 16th of September, 2011 and will remain in the country until the 24th of September, 2011. During its stay in Zambia, the Mission received briefings from the Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ), the Patriotic Front (PF), the United National Independence Party (UNIP) and the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD).

Eleven teams of observers consisting of two observers each were deployed to observe the elections in the different provinces of Zambia. The teams were based in the following towns: Lusaka, Kabwe, Kitwe, Ndola, Livingstone, Chipata, Petauke and Choma and were deployed in the Provinces from the 19th to the 21st of September, 2011.

B. OBSERVATIONS

I. PREPAREDNESS OF THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF ZAMBIA (ECZ)

Mistakes discovered in the ballot at the last minute led to the postponement and cancellation of the polls in a few wards.

However, the efforts of the Commission to ensure the peaceful conduct of the elections with efficient logistics are highly commendable.

Polling stations were located in public places like schools and markets and were generally easily accessible to voters, but in certain areas they were located in uncondusive structures normally used as taverns and bars, and in certain cases were outdoors..

While the layout within the stations facilitated the easy flow of voters, the Mission observed that there was no standard procedure for demarcation and identification of streams within the voting centers and this made it difficult for some voters to identify their polling streams and stations.

II. OPENING OF THE POLLS

Most of the polling stations visited by AU observers across the country were opened on time. However, in some areas, there were delays for various reasons especially the late delivery of election materials. In some stations the opening was delayed by more than a couple of hours.

The opening of the polls was generally peaceful, except in Lusaka and Solwezi where there were a few disturbances that were effectively addressed by the ECZ and security agencies.

III. VOTER TURN-OUT

The turn-out of voters was generally high at the opening of the polls and quite orderly in many of the stations observed.

IV. BALLOTING

The balloting process was generally peaceful and the procedures were simple and comprehensible for voters.

The processing time per voter was generally short and voters were not kept in the queue for long periods of time.

In some of the polling stations, expectant and nursing mothers and persons with physical disability and the elderly were observed standing in the normal queues.

Security personnel on election duty had to wait for the close of polling before they could vote. Generally, no specific arrangements had been made for special consideration to this category of voters.

It was observed that voter identification numbers were written on the counterfoil of the ballot paper. This raises concerns about the secrecy of the ballot which could be compromised by such a procedure because votes could eventually be traced to voters.

V. VOTER REGISTER AND ELECTION MATERIALS

The register of voters was available to both polling officials and party agents at all the stations visited. The register was properly organized with the names and photographs of registered voters in each polling station.

Upon arrival at the polling station, voters were identified through three means – the voter's card, the national ID card and the details of the voter as they appeared in the register. The Mission observed that some voters were turned back at the polling stations because they could not be identified using all 3 means. Some voters whose details were not updated in the register were also unable to vote. Some voters that went to the wrong polling stations were redirected accordingly.

At the University Polling Center, the picture of the MMD candidate was missing from the Local Government ballot paper. The Local Government election for this Ward was reported to have been cancelled but this was done only after the polls.

VI. CLOSING OF THE POLLS AND COUNTING PROCEDURES

The polls closed on time having due regard to the opening hour in the respective stations. However the counting process encountered certain challenges. Such as the cancellation of the Local Government election at the University Campus polling center led to controversies that delayed the counting process for the Presidential and National Assembly elections.

The process commenced with the reconciliation and tallying of the used and unused ballot. In some instances however, it was observed that the standard procedures for reconciling the ballot before counting was not complied with.

VII. POLLING OFFICIALS

Polling officials performed competently in their election-day duties. The level of competence observed by the AU mission is indicative of the fact that election personnel were provided extensive training prior to the the elections. However,

there was some difference in procedures followed by officials in some polling stations.

VIII. SECURITY, INDEPENDENT OBSERVERS AND PARTY AGENTS

The presence of security officials was observed in all the stations visited. Their presence at the stations was unobstructive and non-intimidating.

Party agents and civil society observers were also present in all the polling stations visited.

IX. ANNOUNCEMENT OF RESULTS

While the elections were conducted in a peaceful environment, the AU Observer Mission notes that continued delayed announcement of results could contribute to heightened tensions and suspicions

C. PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the observations and findings made by its different teams, the African Union Observer Mission recommends that:

- The identification procedures for voters at polling stations should be made more flexible to allow voters with one of the identification cards with their names and photographs on the register to vote.
- ECZ should develop a standard means of demarcation and identification of polling streams
- ECZ should streamline and implement the procedure of special voting for to pregnant and nursing mothers, the elderly, persons with physical disability and personnel on election duty to make the process more user-friendly for them
- The ECZ and political parties should give more focus to voter education.

- The Mission recommends that the requirement for recording of voters numbers on the counterfoil of a ballot paper may be reconsidered through possible amendment to ensure complete secrecy of the ballot.

D. CONCLUSION:

The AU Mission having observed the elections in the different Provinces of Zambia, commends the people of Zambia for the peaceful conduct of the elections at the time of issuing this statement.

The Mission commends the efforts of the ECZ to implement the continuous registration of voters. It further commends the Commission for the success of the

process with the registration of over a million first time voters. The overall organization and conduct of the election is highly commendable.

The Mission's general observation of the elections is that the elections were conducted in adherence with the set regulations as provided in the legal framework.

Despite the minor administrative setbacks experienced in the electoral process, the AU Mission considers that these were not of a nature to impact on the free expression of the will of the people of Zambia.

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Mission Leader, AU Observer Mission**

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