



**PRE-ELECTION STATEMENT OF THE AUEOM TO THE 2015 PARLIAMENTARY  
ELECTIONS IN THE FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA**

**“African Union calls for peaceful election in Ethiopia”**

***DELIVERED BY***

***H. E HIFIKEPUNYE POHAMBAMBA, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
NAMIBIA AND HEAD OF MISSION OF THE AUEOM TO 24 MAY, 2015  
PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN ETHIOPIA***

**20 MAY 2015**

## **I. Introduction**

1. The African Union (AU) deployed 9 Long-Term Observers (LTOs) on 19 April 2015 to observe key elements of the electoral cycle of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia's parliamentary elections scheduled for 24 May 2015 in accordance with the OAU/AU Declaration On the Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa AHG/Decl.1 (XXXVIII) (2002), the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007), other relevant international instruments and the Constitution and National Law of Ethiopia. The Mission deployed four teams of LTOs to Addis Ababa, Ahamara, Dire Dawa, Harari, Oromia, SNNPR, Somali and Tigray. The LTOs will remain in the country until 7 June 2015. The LTOs have so far visited 20 districts in 8 regions and consulted with 104 interlocutors.

## **II. Political context**

2. The Mission commends the nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia for maintaining peace and stability in the country situated in a volatile region (Horn of Africa) plagued by various security challenges, including terrorist insurgence from Al-Shabab and notes with satisfaction that the political atmosphere has been thus far calm and stable.

## **III. Constitutional and Legal Frameworks**

3. Elections in Ethiopia are governed by the 1994 Constitution and a number of other proclamations including: the Amended Electoral Law (532/2007), the Political Parties Registration Proclamation (573/2008), the Electoral Code of Conduct for Political Parties (662/2009), the Proclamation to Establish the Procedure for Peaceful Demonstration and Public Political Meeting (3/1991), the Registration and Regulation of Charities and Societies Proclamation (621/2009), the Anti-Terrorism Law Proclamation (652/2009) and the Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation (590/2008) and other provisions of the 2004 Criminal Code.

4. The Mission notes that some interlocutors raised concerns regarding some sections of the Media law, the Anti-Terrorism law and the Civil Society Law, which they argue limit the rights to effective citizens' participation in political activities. The interlocutors also pointed to Articles 12, 14, 17, 18 and 22 of the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation 2009, which could potentially undermine freedom of expressions and the media's fundamental rights to protection of their sources of information. The Mission is of the view that some of the sections of the laws that are perceived to restrict fundamental freedoms provided for under Article 29 (2) of the Constitution, Article 19 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Article 9 African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) could be considered for review.

#### **IV. Electoral Administration and Election Preparedness**

5. The AU LTO noted that the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) seemed adequately resourced to manage the 24 May 2015 elections. The total number of registered voters rose from **31 million in 2010** to **36.8 million** in 2015. The Mission commends the NEBE for embarking on voter registration exercise and for registering new voters for 2015. The Mission is also encouraged that 48% of the registered voters are women.
6. The NEBE is appointed by the Prime Minister and approval by Parliament. The AU LTOs noted that some interlocutors expressed concern in the manner of the appointment of NEBE, and urged that more political stakeholders be consulted in order for the process to be more transparent and inclusive.

#### **V. Civic and Voter Education**

7. The AU LTOs noted that while legislative provisions exist enabling the transmission of knowledge to the electorate by NEBE or by persons it so designated, the civil society stakeholders consulted, felt excluded from the voter

education process. Civil society organisations play an important role in strengthening democracy and could also support effort of the electoral board in reaching out to voters.

8. The LTOs were further informed by NEBE that at least 45,000 domestic observers representing different civil society organisations would be deployed throughout the country. The Mission notes that this would support NEBE in identifying areas of improvement in future elections.

## **VI. Political Parties and Candidates**

9. The AU LTOs were informed by NEBE that there are 78 registered political parties in the country out of which 58 are participating in the 2015 general elections at the federal and regional levels. The Mission was further informed that there are 5,819 candidates contesting the 24 May 2015 elections out of whom 4,549 are males and 1,270 are females. At the federal level, 3,991 candidates are contesting while 1,828 candidates are participating at the regional levels.
10. The Mission further noted that the limited participation of women candidates in the forthcoming elections were due to numerous challenges that women face. Some of the challenges noted by the LTOs include lack of resources, cultural perception and responsibilities as well as lack of affirmative action among political parties to encourage women participation.

## **VII. The Media Environment**

11. The Mission commends NEBE in collaboration with the Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority for allocating 600 hours of free electronic media airtime and 700 columns in the state owned print media for all political parties contesting in the elections. However, the Mission noted that the criterion for allocation of free media time is based on proportional representation the Peoples House of Assembly.

12. Whereas, the Mission recognises the independence of the media to editorially determine the content of their broadcast or other communication as provided for in the electoral law, some of the political parties alleged that the media were unable to air their campaign messages in their original forms and that the content of their campaign were distorted.

### **VIII. Election Security**

13. In all the regions the LTOs visited, the regional representatives of the NEBE confirmed receiving electoral materials that are ready to be dispatched to all the polling stations before Election Day. The Mission, urges NEBE to ensure security of election materials.

### **IX. Participation of Women**

14. The Mission commends Ethiopia for ratifying the Convention for the Eradication for Discrimination Against Women but also noted that it has not yet ratified the Maputo Protocol. The Mission encourages the government of Ethiopian to consider ratifying the Maputo Protocol on the rights of women in Africa and also urges for more participation of women in political process.

### **X. Electoral Dispute Resolution**

15. The AUEOM LTOs noted that the legal framework in Ethiopia provides for election dispute resolution. The Mission further notes that some political parties have been following the legal procedures for ensuring that their election related grievances were handled and commends those actors for complying with the law. Some political parties informed the LTOs that whilst some formal complaints filed with the relevant authorities, such as licencing of political parties, etc. were addressed, there were also other concerns regarding the lengthy process for legal redress. The Mission urges responsible institutions to expedite the process of resolving elections related complaints.

## **XI. Recommendations**

16. The AUEOM implores all the nations, nationalities and the peoples of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, particularly political parties and candidates to exercise utmost restraint to ensure a peaceful conduct of the elections.
17. The AUEOM notes the assurances by the NEBE to deliver credible, free and fair elections and therefore urges the Board to stick to its professional commitment. The Board is also implored to ensure that the security of all electoral materials is guaranteed before, during and after elections.
18. The AUEOM further urges the media to step up voter education awareness campaign with a view to mobilising and encouraging registered voters to turn up in large numbers to participate in the voting on 24 May 2015.