



**THE AFRICAN UNION OBSERVER MISSION TO THE 10 MAY 2012 LEGISLATIVE
ELECTIONS IN ALGERIA
PRELIMINARY STATEMENT**

In response to an invitation from the Government of Algeria and upon recommendation of the pre-election assessment mission deployed in Algiers from 13th to 18th February 2012, **H.E. Dr Jean Ping**, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission constituted and dispatched an Election Observer Mission to the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria in order to observe Legislative elections held on Thursday, the 10th May, 2012.

The African Union (AU) Election Observer Mission is led by **His Excellency Joaquim Alberto Chissano**, former President of the Republic of Mozambique.

The Mission comprised members drawn from the Pan African Parliament and national parliaments, African Ambassadors accredited to the African Union in Addis Ababa, Elections Management Bodies (EMBs), and members of Human Rights and Civil Society Organisations. The Mission Observers were drawn from 41 African countries namely: Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Botswana, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo-Brazzaville, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Saharawi Arab Republic, Senegal, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The Mission is assisted by a team of technical staff from the AU Commission, the Pan African Parliament and the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA).

I. Meetings

The AU Observer Mission arrived on 1 May 2012 and will remain in the country until 16 May 2012.

In accordance with the African Union Guidelines for Election Observation and Monitoring, the Mission met and consulted with various stakeholders involved in the electoral process. These included representatives of Political Parties, international organisations, African Ambassadors accredited to Algeria, as well as other international observer missions. The Mission will continue to meet with other

stakeholders and forces of the Algerian society in order to gain insights into their perspective on the ongoing process.

The following views emerged from these meetings:

- The new legal framework marks a turning point within the process of democratisation in Algeria. This framework is the expression of a political vision and will for the credibility of the electoral process. It is equally designed to promote multipartyism.
- Political and legal reforms initiated by the people and government of Algeria, are the result of large-scale consultations led by the authorities faced with new aspiration and demands for freedom and dignity.
- The Organic Law of 12 January 2012 relating to the electoral system; the organic law relating to the municipality; the organic law relating to political parties; the law relating to organizations'; the law defining modalities promoting women's access to elected assemblies; the law relating to the incompatibilities over the mandate of the parliament constitute the pillars of the Algerian democratic process.

II. Deployment

The Mission deployed 75 teams of observers who virtually covered all the administrative constituencies of the country. Before deployment to various regions in the country, AU Observers attended a briefing on the political context of Algeria and underwent an induction on benchmarks for the conduct of election observation missions.

III. Observation methodology

The AU Observer Mission assessed the Legislative elections of 10 May 2012 in Algeria within the spirit and letter of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance which entered into force on 15 February, 2012 ; the Durban Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa, as adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in July 2002 ; African Union Guidelines for Election Observation and Monitoring, and the Constitution and Laws of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria.

The AU Observer Mission sought to focus on the transparency, equality and conduct of the Legislatives elections in:

- Assessing whether conditions existed for the conduct of free, transparent and inclusive elections;

- Assessing and determining whether the elections were conducted in accordance with the constitutional, legal and institutional framework for elections in Algeria, on one hand, and on the other hand, international and African Union benchmarks for elections.

IV. Preliminary findings

This statement presents the preliminary findings and recommendations of the Mission. The Mission will offer an in-depth and comprehensive analysis of its observations and recommendations on the entire electoral process in a final report which will be submitted to the President of the AU Commission who will in turn share it with the Algerian authorities.

1. The voters' roll

Prior to the elections, voter registration took place. Based on the views of stakeholders and political parties, the voter registration drive was overall well conducted across Algeria. Mechanisms created to ensure registration of the highest number of voters produced results. The existing civil registry served as the basis for the updated voters' list. Nevertheless, a few political parties have cast doubts over the accuracy of the new voters' roll.

2. Electoral campaign process

Generally, the election campaign was conducted in a peaceful manner. There were no reports of any major incident of violence. The Algerian people should be hailed for their sense of civic duty and ability to freely express their divergent political views. The Mission encourages the free expression of political views but also noted people's lack of interest in the electoral campaign.

3. Political context

The peaceful conduct of the campaign is indicative of the political climate prevailing in Algeria prior to the legislative elections. The country embarked on a series of reforms in response to political transformation on the national and regional plan. The political space has been opened up to a more significant number of political parties except for a few. The Mission notes the boycott of some political parties.

4. Security

The presence of security officials was observed in all the stations visited. Their presence was unobstructive and non-intimidating. It contributed to the peaceful environment before and after the elections.

5. Opening of polls

Most polling stations visited by AU observers across the country opened on time.

6. Election materials

Election materials were readily available in polling stations visited. Voting booths, ballot boxes and ballot boxes were in sufficient quantity on Election Day.

Observer teams noted that the good position of the voting booths safeguarded the secrecy of vote. However, unused ballots disposed of in the bins were open and indicative of the choice of voters. Such practice could potentially influence the choice of undecided voters.

7. Layout of the polling stations

Polling stations visited had a good layout. Voters could easily move around the polling station.

The election management bodies have improved on the management of the flow of voters in the polling station through the establishment of a minimum and a maximum number of registered voters per polling station.

AU observers noted the location of some polling stations in three or four-storied buildings. This poses a problem of access of the elderly, the sick and physically challenged voters to the polling station. The creation of “information and orientation desks” facilitated the management of voters, especially with voters who required assistance.

8. Women participation

AU observers noted the relatively strong presence of women among the polling personnel and party agents in several Wilayas. Such positive aspect should be encouraged and reflected in the composition of the party lists for future processes.

9. Voter turnout

The turnout was relatively low at midday standing at 15%. A slight increase in voter turnout was noted at the end of voting day, although, the national turnout did not exceed 50%.

10. Polling personnel

Polling personnel performed their Election-Day duties with competence and enthusiasm. Due to the relatively good understanding of voting procedures and the good mood observed in the polling stations visited voting was not suspended at any moment of the day.

11. Party agents

There was a weak presence of party agents in polling stations visited. Their weak presence could be attributed to the limited organisational capacity of political parties. There is also a legal provision that stipulates that five parties selected from a draw be the only parties allowed to have representatives in polling stations in each of the constituencies. This legal provision might have contributed to the low representation of parties in the polling stations.

12. Ballot papers

A large number of party lists were noted in some constituencies.

The need to put the party lists at the same playing field led to the use of the same specifications and colour (white) of the ballot papers. However, this confused some voters and resulted in a rather important percentage of the null and void ballot papers in certain polling stations. Furthermore, the political parties couldn't give to their sympathisers a particular description of their lists.

The single ballot could be a solution to the problem of multiple balloting. The single ballot is counter measure to vote buying and to prevent voters from being confused.

13. Closing of the polls

The closing of the polls was peaceful. But the polling staff will need more training on the closing procedures.

14. Election observation

The Mission noted the weak presence of domestic observers who strengthen the credibility of the electoral process.

V. Recommendations

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

- The conduct of large-scale voter education campaigns prior to every election ;
- Consider the use of a single ballot ; and
- Set up a mechanism for permanent dialogue between political parties;
- The strengthening of domestic election observation and a deeper involvement of civil society organisations in the electoral process.

VI. Conclusion

In view of the discussions with various electoral stakeholders and observations made thus far on the field, the AU Observer Mission would like to declare that the legislative elections of 10 Mai 2012 were conducted peacefully.

The Mission concludes that the legislative elections of 10 May 2012 to be free, transparent and fair.

The African Union Observer Mission urges all the Political actors in the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria to respect the will of the people expressed through the ballots and to use the legally established mechanisms to voice any dispute or electoral grievances they may have in relation to the on-going electoral process. The Mission calls upon every political actor to cooperate with one another in order to strengthen democracy, and to promote the rule of law, peace and stability.

The Mission congratulates the people of Algeria and political actors for their maturity they demonstrated during these elections.

Issued in Algiers on 11 May 2012

His Excellency Joaquim Alberto Chissano