



**AFRICAN UNION ELECTION OBSERVER MISSION TO THE
16-18 SEPTEMBER 2013 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN
THE REPUBLIC OF RWANDA**

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

At the invitation of the Government of the Republic of Rwanda and the National Electoral Commission of Rwanda (NEC), the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, deployed a 30 member African Union Election Observer Mission to the 16-18 September 2013 Parliamentary Elections to the Republic of Rwanda in accordance with the African charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007) and the OAU/AU Declaration on the Principles Governing democratic elections in Africa (2002).

Led by Honourable Justice Rita Makarau, Chairperson of Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, the Mission is comprised of 30 observers drawn from the Pan-African Parliament, African Ambassadors to the African Union in Addis Ababa, Election Management Bodies and African Civil Society Organisations from the following countries: Algeria, Burundi, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Gabon, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Nigeria, Sahrawi, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, and Zimbabwe. The Mission is supported by a team of experts from the African Union Commission, the Pan-African Parliament and the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA).

II. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY OF THE MISSION

In line with the mandate provided in the AU instruments, the objective of the AU Mission is to make an independent, objective and impartial assessment of the 16th and 17th September 2013 General Elections in Rwanda.

As part of the methodology and to realise its stated objectives, the Mission adopted a short term election observation methodology, which undertook the following activities in accordance with the Guidelines of the African Union Election Observation Missions and Election Monitoring:

- a. The Mission consulted with key sectors of the Rwanda government and key electoral stakeholders including the National Electoral Commission of Rwanda,

Police Department, Political Parties representatives (FPR and Liberal Party) and the local Civil Society Organisations. In addition, the Mission also met with other international election observation missions in Rwanda among them the East African Community (EAC) and Comesa Joint Mission, and the Commonwealth Observer Group. The Mission further held consultative meeting with representatives of the Diplomatic community in Rwanda. In attendance were representatives from the Nigerian Embassy, European Union, United States Embassy, Embassy of the United Kingdom, French Embassy among others. The Mission will hold further consultations with relevant stakeholders throughout the remainder of the election process.

- b. To enhance understanding of the political and electoral process in Rwanda among the observers, the Mission conducted a two day briefing session for its observers, where key electoral stakeholders from Rwanda, gave presentations and briefing on the political, security and electoral environment in Rwanda preceding the 2013 elections.
- c. Members of the Mission observed the final stages of the campaigns in the various regions where they were deployed and held further consultations with key stakeholders in the respective regions.
- d. The AU Mission deployed ten (10) teams of observers to all 4 provinces across the country and Kigali city to observe the final stages of the campaigns, pre-polling activities. On Election Day the teams visited 110 polling centers that constituted 326 polling stations in their areas of deployment.

III. PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

ELECTION DAY OBSERVATIONS

The Mission's assessment of the Election Day is based on the actual findings and reports by the AU observer teams who were deployed in the various regions and the observations made in the polling stations on Election Day.

Opening the poll

The Mission is satisfied that most of the polling stations opened within the stipulated time of 7a.m. In certain instances, there were slight variations and delays which did not compromise the opening of the poll or the overall time allocated for voting.

Polling stations and election materials

- a. Most of the polling stations were conveniently located with easy access to the voters. Polling stations were clearly marked and easily identifiable. For the most part, the polling stations were located in public places and voting done in the open.
- b. The Mission was satisfied that the layout of the polling stations was sufficient to guarantee the secrecy of the vote and the open voting enhanced transparency in the process.
- c. Most of the polling stations visited had an almost equal number of registered voters, and the Mission noted that the registered voters per polling station was manageable enough for the electoral commission personnel.
- d. In all the polling stations visited, the Mission noted the adequacy of election materials and there was no incident reported of insufficient materials at the polling station. The Mission however, notes that the security of the electoral materials was not full proof as the ballot papers lacked serial numbers.

Voter turnout

While the close of the poll recorded an overwhelming turn out as evidenced by the number of votes counted, the high turnout was not consistently observed in the course of voting. At the close of the poll, majority of the polling stations observed recorded a turnout of about 99%. The number was comparatively higher in the rural areas than in Kigali city.

Voting procedures

The Mission notes that the electoral commission personnel demonstrated adequate familiarity with the voting procedures in most of the polling stations visited. Procedures and tasks related to the opening of the poll, voting process and closure of the poll were generally well complied with. In certain cases however, the Mission noted inconsistency in the manner in which some aspect of voting was conducted. In some polling stations, inconsistencies were noted in the manner in which the electoral staff applied the indelible ink to voters who had voted. In other polling stations, the indelible ink was not used altogether.

Election personnel

- a. The presence of the polling officials was noted in all the polling stations visited. Polling officials arrived on time and conducted themselves well throughout the voting process. At the commencement of their work, the polling officials took the oath as prescribed in the election regulations. There were however isolated cases where the polling officials did not demonstrate sufficient understanding with the electoral process.

- b. Overall, the Mission was satisfied with the conduct of the electoral officials on polling day.

Women's participation on Election Day

Consistent with Rwanda policy on affirmative action, women were well represented on Election Day. The Mission noted the impressive participation of women in the process on Election Day as polling officials, security officials and voters. In all the polling stations visited, remarkable attempt was made to satisfy gender balance in the composition of the NEC officials.

Party agents and independent observers

- a. The Mission noted that the 2013 parliamentary elections in Rwanda did not attract many international observers. Specifically, AU observers noted the presence of the following groups: East African Community EAC/COMESA, Diplomatic Missions represented in Rwanda, Commonwealth Observers, and others.
- b. The Mission further observed that the domestic observers were few and in some polling stations completely unrepresented.
- c. Political party agents were also very few and in most polling stations visited as only representatives of Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) were present. The Mission notes the significant role of party agents in enhancing transparency of the electoral process. The Mission therefore urges all stakeholders to explore mechanisms within which political parties and their agents can be encouraged to actively participate in the entire electoral process.
- d. On the whole, the Mission notes the relationship between the polling staff, observers and party agents in the polling stations was cordial.

Security

- a. The Mission notes the provision of adequate security on Election Day and the generally calm and peaceful election environment with no major security incident reported. In all the polling stations visited, the AU observer teams observed the presence of security personnel in the polling precincts and were satisfied with their role in maintaining order within the polling centres.
- b. The Mission therefore commends the security personnel for the coordinated and structured manner in which election security was provided.

Closing and counting procedures

- a. The Mission noted that all the polling stations visited closed on time and the procedures regarding the closure of the poll was adhered to by the electoral officials in most polling stations.
- b. However, while counting process was generally transparent, the process was not very transparent in some polling stations. For instance, in some polling stations,

polling staff failed to display the ballot paper to the few party agents and observers making it difficult to verify the choices of the voters. In other polling stations no audit or reconciliation of the election materials used during voting was conducted and this made it difficult to reconcile the total votes cast against the spoiled ballots.

- c. The transmission of the results was fairly fast as evidenced by the quick announcement of the provisional results by NEC.

IV. CONCLUSION

The 2013 elections in Rwanda present an opportunity for the country to continue along the path of democratic consolidation. The African Union Election Observer Mission highly commends the people of Rwanda and all the stakeholders in the manner in which they conducted themselves throughout the electoral process. The Political and electoral environment before, during and after the election was calm and peaceful. The Mission calls on the people of Rwanda to maintain the peaceful atmosphere of the elections even as they await the announcement of final results.

The African Union Mission hereby clarifies that this is a preliminary statement based on observations and consultations undertaken until the end of polls. The Mission will release a more detailed final report with recommendations that will be shared with the Rwandese authorities and availed to the general public through the African Union Commission's website within a month timeframe.