



ECOWAS NETWORK OF ELECTORAL COMMISSIONS

ECONEC PEER SUPPORT AND LEARNING MISSION

LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS COUPLED WITH THE 1st ROUND OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN NIGER
REPUBLIC

MISSION REPORT

December 2020

ABOUT ECONEC

The ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commissions (ECONEC) was created in February 2008 to serve as a forum for sharing of experience and electoral best practices among West African Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) with the aim of improving the quality of elections in the region and ultimately reducing the incidence of conflicts arising from poorly managed elections.

The objectives of ECONEC as contained in article 4 of its statute adopted in Conakry on 7 February 2008 include the following:

- The promotion of free and credible elections in West Africa;
- The promotion of independent and impartial election organisations and administrators;
- Strengthening public confidence in the electoral process through free and credible electoral procedures;
- The development of professional election officials with the integrity, a strong sense of public service and a commitment to democracy;
- The predictability of the framework for election;
- Commitment to the promotion and consolidation of democratic culture to create a conducive environment to the peaceful organization of elections;
- The sharing of experiences, information, technology and election documents;
- Cooperation for the improvement of electoral laws and practices;
- The gradual harmonization of electoral laws and practices, as appropriate, capitalizing on good practice in electoral matters;
- The rationalization and pooling of resources to reduce the cost of conducting elections;
- Improving the working conditions of its members in the fulfilment of their mandates.

In order to achieve its objectives, ECONEC:

- Organises or supports the holding of activities such as workshops, seminars, symposia, meetings, exchanges of personnel funding relevant research, election observation, dissemination of information and experience in electoral matters.
- Offers its expertise and receive consultant services and information as well as publications if possible to address its members.
- Establishes and maintains relationships with the other regional and international electoral organizations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The ECONEC peer support and learning mission is grateful for the support it received from a number of individuals and organisations that helped in ensuring that its mission was a success.

The Mission expresses all its gratitude to the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) of Niger and to its President, Maître Issaka Souna, for providing the necessary accreditation for the accomplishment of the mission and for his cooperation during the mission. This is a testament to the CENI's openness to peer support and its willingness to subject the Nigerien electoral process to close peer review, while sharing its experience to enable the promotion of more credible electoral processes in the sub-region.

The Mission wishes to express its gratitude to Professor Mahmood Yakubu, President of the Independent National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (INEC-Nigeria) and to Mr. Kabinet Cissé, President of the Independent National Electoral Commission of Guinea (CENI-Guinea) for their presence next to their peer from Niger. Their huge experiences and knowledge considerably strengthened the support to the CENI-Niger and their interactions with the other missions contributed to the visibility of ECONEC.

The Mission also recognizes the dedication and commitment of its technical team comprised of Mr. Raouf Salami, Program Officer at the Permanent Secretariat of ECONEC and Mr. Goré Justin Doua, Program Manager at the Department of Elections and Political Processes of the Electoral Institute for sustainable democracy in Africa (EISA).

The ECONEC mission to the 2020 Legislative elections coupled with the 1st round of the 2020 presidential election in the Republic of Niger would not have been possible without the financial support of the German Agency for International Cooperation (GiZ). ECONEC expresses its sincere gratitude to GiZ for its contribution to strengthening democracy in West Africa and in other sub-regions of the continent.

ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
CND	Conseil National du Développement
CNDP	Conseil National de Dialogue Politique
COCEN	Coalition pour l'Observation Citoyenne des Elections au Niger
COSEF	Centre Coordonné d'Observation de la Sécurité Electorale des Femmes
CSRD	Conseil Suprême pour la Restauration de la Démocratie
EISA	Electoral Institute for Sustainable democracy in Africa/
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
MODEN/FA	Mouvement Démocratique Nigérien
EOM	Election Observation Mission
EMB	Election Management Body
OIF	Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie
OSIWA	Open Society Initiative for West Africa
PNDS	Parti Nigérien pour la Démocratie et le Socialisme
RDR	Renouveau Démocratique et Républicain
ECONEC	ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commissions
WANEP	West Africa Network for Peacebuilding

SUMMARY

The Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) has made commendable efforts to organize legislative elections coupled with the first round of the 2020 presidential election in the Republic of Niger in a deleterious security context, and against the backdrop of a health crisis due to the coronavirus. A few localized incidents disrupted the voting process and impacted the turnout, but this did not affect the credibility of the polls. Procedural flaws were noted at certain polling stations, in particular during the sorting and counting processes.

Political dissensions created a tense pre-election environment which was well mastered by the CENI. The environment of the electoral campaign was very competitive with thirty (30) candidates in the first round of the presidential election and 4,205 candidates from eighty-four (84) lists of political parties competing for legislative elections. The Mission notes that despite the security, health and logistical challenges, the elections went generally well and were in accordance with the law and established rules.

Key recommendations:

The Mission recommends the following:

- The implementation and scrupulous compliance with adequate measures against Covid-19;
- Strengthening the interaction between the CENI and citizens;
- The establishment of a real monitoring room on polling day;
- Strengthening the training of polling agents with particular emphasis on closing procedures and counting of votes;
- The creation of a division in charge of gender and the adoption of a disaggregated data capture mechanism in order to measure the effective participation of women in governance choices and guide mobilization efforts for inclusive elections;
- Strengthening dialogue with all stakeholders, especially with political parties;
- Strengthening the security of the ballot.

I. INTRODUCTION

In accordance with its mandate, the ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commissions (ECONEC) organized and deployed a peer support and learning mission for the 2020 legislative elections coupled with the 1st round of the presidential election in the Republic of Niger.

The mission was composed of Professor Mahmood Yakubu, President of the Independent National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (INEC-Nigeria) and of Mr. Kabinet Cissé, President of the Independent National Electoral Commission of Guinea (CENI-Guinea).

The mission was technically assisted by Mr. Raouf Salami, Program Officer at the Permanent Secretariat of ECONEC and Mr. Goré Justin Doua, Program Manager at the Department of Elections and Political Processes of the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA).

The mission took place from December 23 to 30, 2020. This mission follows a needs assessment mission requested by the CENI- Niger and deployed from November 11 to 15, 2019 by ECONEC in collaboration with the Commission of the African Union. The technical support in electoral logistics, institutional communication, civic and electoral education planned at the end of the joint needs assessment could unfortunately not be implemented due to the restrictions linked to the Covid-19 pandemic.

This report presents all the support and peer learning activities carried out by the mission during its stay in Niamey, and contains detailed information on the lessons learned and good practices identified by the mission, as well as its analysis and recommendations. The analysis and recommendations of ECONEC mission are based on the principles and standards governing the conduct of democratic, credible and transparent elections in the host country as well as those enshrined in ECOWAS instruments.

II. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

1. Objectives

Opportunity for Chairpersons of ECONEC member Commissions to:

- witness and assess the conduct of elections by their peer;
- learn and draw lessons from elections managed by their peer;
- advise, assist and support their peer conducting elections;
- identify best practices; learn from each other and share experiences;
- make recommendations for the improvement of elections management and legal framework for elections in ECOWAS member States.

2. Methodology

Before arriving in the country, the technical team carried out documentary research and conducted virtual exchanges with the main actors involved in the electoral process, in order to have a better understanding of the standards and principles established for the electoral processes in the country as well as the political context of the 2020 elections.

Upon its arrival, the Mission interacted with CENI, civil society organizations, the ECOWAS long-term observation mission and other international observation missions.

During their stay, the presidents of member commissions of ECONEC had the opportunity to meet continuously with the leaders of CENI Niger and offered advice to their peer organizing the elections. Interactions between the Mission and the CENI were made easier and more convenient by the granting of an office to the Mission at the CENI headquarters.

The Mission monitored the voting at polling stations level on election day as well as the management of the results at the convention center transformed for the occasion into a compilation center for the dissemination of provisional results. The Mission also visited the situation rooms of the ECOWAS Election Observation Mission and the West African Peacebuilding Network (WANEP) during the vote. The members of the mission had the privilege to take part in the meeting of the heads of the various international missions, the day after the vote.

The Mission also attended press conferences of national and foreign observation missions during which preliminary statements were issued.

Apart from the interviews granted by the members of the mission to certain media, the Mission made no public statement since it is a technical support and study mission.

This report examines the conduct of the electoral process by the CENI, confirms its credibility, draws lessons, records best practices and provides recommendations for future elections.

III. HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS COUPLED WITH THE 1ST ROUND OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

The intervention of the military in politics has been for a long time one of the characteristics of the political history of Niger since its accession to independence on August 3, 1960. Indeed, faced with several difficulties at the internal level, namely the agitations at schools, the conflicting relations with France over the price of uranium, the refusal of the then president to support the secession of Biafra in Nigeria and the famine which raged in the rural world area between 1973 and 1974, the first president of the Republic, Hamani Diori will be the victim of a military coup d'état perpetrated on April 15, 1974, by the army chief of staff, Lieutenant-Colonel Seyni Kountché. General Kountché's presidency was marked by a number of major reforms. In August 1983 he created the National Development Council (CND), a consultative body of the government in matters of national policy, then had the National Charter adopted in 1987.

Thanks to the democratic wind which blew on the African continent in the 90s, Niger has experienced demands and other protests from political actors, schoolchildren, students and workers for more space of freedom, better governance and democracy. This is how the country embarked on the path of a multiparty system from November 15, 1990. The 1993 elections were organized just after the sovereign national conference which was held from July 29 to November 3, 1991. The latter had suspended the Constitution and the National Assembly to engage the country in a democratic transition which lasted from 1991 to 1993. After the early legislative elections of January 12, 1995, Niger then organized other presidential and legislative elections in 1996, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2010-2011 and 2016 and the local ones in 2004, 2009 and 2011. These elections were organized in the context of military transitions.

The presidential poll organized by the transitional authorities will be won in the second round, on March 13, 2011, by Mahamadou Issoufou, president and candidate of the Nigerian Party for Democracy and Socialism (PNDS). President Mahamadou Issoufou was re-elected following the presidential election on February 21, 2016.

The legislative elections coupled with the first round of the presidential election took place on December 27, 2020. This was the third time that Niger has organized elections since the military coup perpetrated by the Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy (CSRD) led by

squadron leader Salou Djibo. It was during the transition led by the CSRD that the Constitution of the 7th Republic which is in force was adopted by referendum on October 31, 2010 and promulgated on November 25, 2010. President Mahamadou Issoufou, President of the Republic and President of the PNDS -Tarayya did not run for office as the constitution limits the number of presidential terms to two. The Party invested in March 2019 the Minister of the Interior, Mohamed Bazoum.

Political dialogue is formalized in Niger. Since 2004, Niger has had a National Council for Political Dialogue (CNDP). This body is responsible for dealing with all issues of national interest, especially electoral issues, including the establishment of the CENI. It is chaired by the Prime Minister. The National Council for Political Dialogue (CNDP) is governed by Decree No2019-500 / PRN / PM of September 10, 2019 amending and supplementing Decree No2004-030 / PRN / PM of January 30, 2004 establishing a National Council for Political Dialogue (CNDP). According to Article 2 (new) of the decree, "the National Council for Political Dialogue (CNDP) is a permanent framework for consultation and dialogue in a bid to preventing and resolving political conflicts. It advises on any other matter of national interest that comes before it.

The National Council for Political Dialogue is chaired by the Prime Minister, Head of Government. All changes to electoral texts go through the CNDP.

The pre-electoral political context was essentially marked by a crisis of confidence between political actors. Since 2017, the opposition has refused to sit on the central commission of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) which it considers subservient to the regime of President Issoufou and not likely to guarantee a peaceful, transparent and democratic election. However, presidential candidates sent representatives to the CENI.

In addition, the CNDP has not worked as planned for a while. The sessions are boycotted by the political opposition, which accuses the ruling PNDS-Tarayya party of having "misguided the spirit and the letter". The opposition believes that the principle of consensus specific to the CNDP was violated when it was transformed into an advisory body by the decree of 2019 above.

The elections took place in a worrying security context caused by the incursions of Boko Haram in the East (Diffa region), the threat of terrorists in the North-West (Tahoua and Tillaberi regions) and a large center of migrants in the North. (Agadez region).

IV. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The legal framework that governs the electoral process in Niger is mainly composed of the Constitution, the Electoral Code and specific laws relating to the Independent National Electoral Commission.

1. Constitutional and legal framework

In the Republic of Niger, elections are mainly governed by the Constitution of November 25, 2010 establishing the 7th Republic, promulgated by Decree No2010-754 / PCSRD of November 25, 2010 and published in Special JORN No19 of November 29, 2010 as well as by the Organic Law No. 2017-64 of August 14, 2017 on the Electoral Code of Niger, amended and supplemented by No. 2019-38 of July 18, 2019 on the Electoral Code. These provisions are supplemented by a series of texts dealing with different aspects of the electoral process, ranging from organization to litigation. These are mainly:

- Organic Law No. 2012-35 of June 19, 2012 determining the organization, functioning of the Constitutional Court and the procedure followed before it, in particular chapters 5 and 6 conferring on the Court specific powers over the control of elections: presidential and legislative as well as electoral disputes;
- Organic Law n ° 2014-03 of April 15, 2014 on the creation, attributions, organization and functioning of the Independent National Electoral Commission.

The legal framework for elections in Niger complies with international principles and standards relating to the protection and promotion of human rights.

2. The electoral system

The voting system for the presidential election

Article 46 of the constitution of the Republic of Niger makes the President of the Republic the guarantor of the country's independence, national unity, territorial integrity, respect for the Constitution, international treaties and agreements. Article 47 of the Constitution and Article 133 of the Electoral Code establish the principle of limiting the number and duration of presidential terms. The President of the Republic of Niger is elected by universal, free, direct, equal and secret suffrage for a five (5) years term, renewable once (1) only.

In accordance with article 48 of the Constitution, the election of the President of the Republic of Niger takes place by majority vote in two (2) rounds. The first round of the presidential ballot is held, ninety (90) days at least, and one hundred and twenty days (120) days at most, before the end of the mandate of the President in office.

Is declared elected, the candidate having obtained the absolute majority of the votes cast in the first round. In the absence of an absolute majority of the votes cast in the first round, a second round is organized no later than twenty-one (21) days after the publication of the final results by the Constitutional Court. Only the two (2) candidates who won in the first round take part in the second and the candidate having obtained the greatest number of votes is declared elected.

The voting method for legislative elections

Niger has two types of ballot for legislative elections. There is a first past the post for the eight (8) special constituencies (Bilma, N'Gourti, Bermo, Tassara, Bankilaré, Banibangou, Makolandi and Tesker). For these constituencies, the candidate having obtained the relative majority of votes is declared elected. In the event of a tie, a second round is held within ten (10) days of the announcement of the results by the Constitutional Court.

For the eight (8) ordinary regions - constituencies and the geographic area of the rest of the world, the voting system is proportional. It is an open list system with proportional representation, without mixing or preferential voting, according to the rule of the highest average (article 140 of the Electoral Code).

The Nigerien parliament is unicameral and has 171 member of parliament including 5 from the diaspora (9th region).

Electoral disputes

In special formation, the high courts rule on the eligibility of candidates, control the regularity, transparency and sincerity of local elections. They announce the results. Appeals against decisions in electoral matters of the high courts are lodged with the Council of State which decides in the last resort.

The litigation of legislative and presidential elections is the responsibility of the Constitutional Court. The CENI is in charge of the centralization of the results, the publication of the provisional results and their transmission to the Constitutional Court which is responsible for announcing the final results.

During the pre-election period, the main point of disagreement between the political actors revolved around article 8 of the Electoral Code according to which, cannot be registered on the electoral list: those convicted for crime or misdemeanor to a term of imprisonment equal to or greater than one (1) year. Opposition political actors felt that this article was directed against opposition leader Hama Amadou, president of the Nigerian Democratic Movement (MODEN / FA Lumana-Africa), who was sentenced to one year in an baby trafficking case. The rejection of his candidacy was strongly criticized and finally he decided to support the candidate Mahamane Ousmane of the Democratic and Republican

Renewal (RDR-Tchanji). On the other hand, several appeals have been lodged with the Constitutional Court, questioning the eligibility of candidate Mohamed Bazoum of the ruling party, on the basis of his original nationality. These various appeals were rejected after careful examination by the Constitutional Court.

V. MANAGEMENT OF ELECTIONS

Article 6 of the Constitution enshrines the principle of the independence of the electoral administration in Niger. According to this article, “An Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) is responsible for the organization, conduct and supervision of voting operations. It proclaims the results”. The CENI of Niger in its current format of permanent commission is relatively new because it was created and is governed by Organic Law No2017-64 of August 14, 2017 on the Electoral Code of Niger (Special OG No19 of September 14, 2017), modified and supplemented by Law No2019-38 of July 18, 2019 (Special OJ No13 of August 15, 2019).

Permanent, independent of any power, authority or organization, and enjoying legal personality and autonomy in management, organization and operation (Article 9), the CENI is responsible, on the one hand, with the electoral census, the development and management of the biometric electoral register, and on the other hand the organization, conduct and supervision of electoral and referendum operations (Article 10).

Under Article 12 of the Electoral Code, the commission comprises nineteen (19) permanent members appointed by decree of the President of the Republic, who are:

- one (1) President;
- one (1) Vice-president;
- five (5) members from the majority political parties;
- five (5) members from opposition political parties;
- two (2) members from unaffiliated political parties;
- two (2) representatives of civil society appointed by their peers as follows: one (1) representative of the collectives of legally recognized associations for the defense of human rights and the promotion of democracy; one (1) representative of the collectives of legally recognized women's associations;
- three (3) senior level executives with proven skills in statistics, public finance and administration, appointed by the public administration, without voting rights.

VI. INTERACTIONS WITH STAKEHOLDERS

1. National stakeholders

The Mission met the following national stakeholders:

- The "Coalition for Citizen Election Observation in Niger"

As part of the “Support project for citizen observation of elections for a credible, transparent and peaceful process in Niger”, EISA set up the “Coalition for citizen observation of elections in Niger”, COCEN in acronym, which brings together five (05) networks and civil society organizations in Niger.

Led by a coordination made up of the five leaders of the member structures under the direction of a spokesperson, COCEN deployed to all eight regions of the country, 160 long-term observers and 750 short-term observers on election day. COCEN organized an electoral monitoring chamber equipped with a server which received in real time, thanks to an application installed in advance, the information sent by the observers from their phones or tablets.

- **The mission of WANEP-Niger**

In addition to various pre-election contributions, WANEP set up an Election Watch Unit (350 observers deployed, 10 data collectors, 06 analysts) and the Coordinated Center for the Observation of Electoral Security for Women (COSEF) with the support from ECOWAS and UNDP, with a view to contributing to the mitigation of electoral gender-based violence.

2. International stakeholders

The Mission met the following international actors and missions:

- The core team of the ECOWAS observation mission. The core team briefed the ECONEC mission on the political context leading up to the elections and the legal framework that governs the elections as well as the controversies and disagreements relating to this framework. The core team also informed the mission of the various activities it has carried out since its arrival in the country.
- Mr. BILE Bouah Mathieu, Resident Director of EISA-Niger, who took stock of the support his organization provides to the electoral process in Niger and presented the pre-electoral context. EISA operates in Niger through the “Support Project for the Independent National Electoral Commission and the Higher Communication Council” funded by the European Union (EU).
- Mr. Theophilus DOWETIN, Election Systems Adviser of IFES, who also supports the CENI. Mr. Dowetin made a presentation on an overview of the "local and general elections 2020-2021 in Niger".

VII. COURTESY VISITS

To discuss electoral issues in Niger and in the ECOWAS region, the Mission met:

- General Francis A. Béhanzin, ECOWAS Commissioner in charge of political affairs, peace and security.
- H.E. Mohamed Namadi SAMBO, Former Vice-President of the Republic of Nigeria and Head of the ECOWAS Election Observation Mission in Niger.

VIII. PEER SUPPORT AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

The Mission participated in the activities below:

- Briefing of accredited observers (national and foreign) by the CENI
- Orientation and information session for ECOWAS short-term observers
- Participation in the meeting of heads of missions. During this meeting held on December 28, the day after the polls, Professor Mahmood Yakubu indicated that the Mission will make its observations directly to the CENI while specifying the nature of the mission which is not an observation mission but rather a support and learning mission.
- Several meetings of information, exchanges and sharing of experience with the president of the CENI surrounded by the vice-president and the rapporteur. The CENI granted a meeting room to the mission at the headquarters of the commission.

- On election day, the Mission attended the opening of the polling stations, the conduct of the vote, the closing of the polling stations, the sorting and counting of the ballots. The Mission noted that the counting procedure varied from polling station to another. The Mission also noted the non-compliance, or even the absence of anti-Covid-19 barrier measures in all the polling stations it visited.
- On election day, the Mission visited the situation rooms of the EOM-ECOWAS and the WANEP-Niger Election Watch Unit in order to monitor in real time the evolution of the vote in the zones of deployment of these two missions.
- On December 28 and 29, 2020, the Mission visited the Palais des Congrès in Niamey, transformed into a center for the compilation and dissemination of provisional results in order to monitor the transmission of results from the different regions and municipalities and their proclamation. It was also an opportunity for the presidents of INEC-Nigeria and CENI-Guinea to support their peer of CENI-Niger and share with him their experience of results management.

IX. LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

The Mission noted the following:

- The CENI published a detailed calendar of activities a year before the election and respected it entirely.
- The CENI carried out an audit of the electoral register in order to reassure the stakeholders on its reliability. The audit was carried out by experts from the International Organization of the Francophonie (OIF) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).
- The CENI organized mobile hearings in order to facilitate the obtaining of civil status documents among underprivileged populations. This action made it possible to increase the number of registered voters on the biometric electoral register, which ultimately counts 4,093,291 women against 3,353,265 men, or a registration rate of 55% of women.
- For a better involvement of young people in the electoral process, CENI organized a series of activities called "Youth Forum" in different regions of the country.
- The polling stations visited had sufficient electoral material.
- The CENI opened access to the center for the proclamation and dissemination of results to all stakeholders. The CENI involved members of political parties from different sides and electoral experts by making them responsible for receiving the results from the municipalities.
- Provisional results were published continuously, in French and local languages, as they were confirmed and consolidated in the presence of candidates' representatives.

X. ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

For the second round of the presidential election and for the next electoral processes, the Mission makes the following recommendations:

1. Anti-Covid-19 measures

The implementation of anti-Covid-19 barrier measures, equipment and social distancing. It could be done either by the appointment of a Covid-19 ambassador in each polling station, responsible for enforcing the barrier measures (according to the Ghanaian model for the 2020 elections) or the assignment of this task to an electoral officer who will be responsible for it in addition to its traditional task (according to the Nigerian model for example). The experience of Guinea could also be useful. During the 2020 presidential election, CENI-Guinea, in addition to

traditional barrier measures, carried out systematic Covid-19 testing beforehand for any agent deployed inside the country and disinfection of polling stations.

The CENI could also design a Covid-19 guide in the form of guidelines for election officials. The Advisory for conducting elections in the context of the Covid-19 Pandemic that ECONEC developed and published with the support of OSIWA is a good basis for the preparation of a guide for election officials at the national level.

2. Interaction between CENI and citizens

For a better interaction between CENI and citizens, it should consider the creation of a citizen contact center to improve transparency and participation in the electoral process. The center will provide the public with permanent access to the Commission for inquiries and information exchange.

3. A monitoring center

The CENI will have to set up a support and monitoring center (Situation Room) accessible to all stakeholders on polling day.

4. Securing the ballots

The Mission notes that, despite the civic and voter education activities organized at the national level by the CENI and other stakeholders, electoral violence remains a concern in the Nigerien political landscape, as on polling day in the form of threats, vandalism, attacks targeting electoral material. The mission suggests that, when securing the second round of the presidential election and the upcoming elections, special attention be paid to border regions that are under threat of terrorist attacks.

Military cooperation could be envisaged between Nigeria and Niger in terms of overflight of Nigerien territory during polling day by the Nigerian Air Force in order to monitor and deter terrorist groups who wish to disrupt the vote.

5. Training of election officials

The Mission encourages the CENI to strengthen the training of electoral staff for better adherence to electoral directives and greater consistency of closure and counting procedures.

6. Dialogue with stakeholders

The Mission encourages the CENI to strengthen dialogue with all stakeholders, especially political parties, and make it an ongoing process.

7. Taking into account the gender dimension in the management of the electoral process

The Mission urges the CENI to set up a real division in charge of gender issues and to adopt a mechanism for capturing disaggregated participation data in order to have reliable statistical data on female candidates and the results of legislative elections for example, as well as data on the numerical participation of women in the various elections.

8. For all electoral commissions in West Africa

The Mission has put forward the idea of organizing a sub-regional seminar on the procedures for processing and reporting electoral results in the ECOWAS region. ECONEC Secretariat and EISA are responsible for reflecting on the practical arrangements for organizing such a seminar on the harmonization of practices.

XI. CONCLUSION

The 2020 legislative elections coupled with the first round of the presidential election in Niger are historic for two reasons: they will give rise to the first civil and democratic alternation in the country's history; they are the first elections to use a biometric voter register in Niger.

They were therefore an opportunity for ECONEC to show its commitment to transparent and credible elections and its commitment to peer support and learning within the ECOWAS region.

The Mission congratulates President Issaka Souma and the CENI for their courage and resilience in the management of these generally peaceful and participatory elections. The Support and Learning Mission commends the CENI for the measures taken to strengthen the integrity and credibility of the electoral process in the face of security challenges in some regions of the country.

Despite the few logistical and security difficulties, the transparency demonstrated by the CENI during the vote as well as in the management of results is commendable.

The Mission appreciated the professionalism, leadership, calm and openness shown by Maitre Issaka Souma, President of CENI Niger, in leading the electoral process. His permanent interaction with his peers during the mission deserves to be noted as a good practice which gives all its relevance to ECONEC.

XII. ANNEXES

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR CHAIRPERSONS

Project Title:

ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commissions (ECONEC) Peer Support and Learning Mission to the 2020 Presidential and Legislative Elections in the Republic of Niger.

Objectives:

- Provide an opportunity for Chairpersons of Electoral Commissions within ECONEC region:
 - To witness and assess the conduct of elections by their peer
 - To advise, assist and support their peer conducting elections
 - To learn and draw lessons from elections managed by their peer
- Identify best practices and share experiences in administration of elections.
- Make recommendations for the improvement of elections management and legal framework for elections in ECOWAS member States.

Expected Outcomes:

- Enhanced collaboration between ECONEC member Commissions
- Enhanced adherence to regional and international standards
- Promotion of best practices and experience sharing at regional level
- Promotion of peaceful, transparent and credible elections
- Enhanced atmosphere of trust among the stakeholders

Dates / Place / Intended Participants

The mission composed of three (03) Chairpersons of member Commissions from Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau and Nigeria assisted by one Election Expert from EISA will be deployed to Niamey (Niger) from 23 to 30 December 2020. The mission funded by the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) will be coordinated by one staff of ECONEC Permanent Secretariat.

Methodological considerations and Role of the Chairpersons

In line with the following ECONEC specific objectives:

- Cooperation for the improvement of the quality of elections in the region and ultimately the reduction of incidence of conflicts arising from poorly managed elections,
- Gradual harmonization of electoral laws and practices, as appropriate, capitalizing on best practices in electoral matters,
- Sharing of experiences, information, technology and election documents,
- Improving the working conditions of its members in the fulfilment of their mandates,

- Rationalization and pooling of resources to reduce the cost of conducting elections,

Chairpersons participating in this assignment are expected to assess the overall organization and conduct of the elections against the host country legislation and international standards, and also offer assistance, advice and support, in any possible form, to their peer managing the elections.

During the assignment, participating chairpersons are advised to consult the documentation provided and take active part in briefing sessions, interactions with electoral stakeholders (Political Parties, Civil Society Organizations, Youth and Women Organisations, National Authorities, Security Agencies, Media Regulation Authorities, Traditional and Religious Leaders, ECOWAS Long Term Observation Mission, other International Observation Missions, Donors Community and Members of the Diplomatic Missions accredited to the host country) and meetings with the host Election Management Body (EMB).

So as to follow the process at polling unit level and compilation centres, field visits in small groups will be organised in the period before, during and after election(s) which will require accreditation by the host EMB.

Leveraging on their vast experience, participating chairpersons will also offer, where necessary, support and advice to their peer faced with the complex and ungrateful task of managing elections in the African context, so as to safeguard integrity, strong sense of public service and commitment to democracy and by so doing help in strengthening public confidence in the electoral process.

The mission will not make any public statement but will issue a final report on the quality of the management of the electoral process. The report will look at the procedures and the conduct the electoral operations including logistics, polling, counting, tallying, mechanism for results transmission and management of electoral disputes. The mission, based on accepted regional and international standards will confirm the credibility of the process, draw lessons, record best practices and make recommendations for future elections.

Working Documents

The ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commissions (ECONEC) will provide the following background documents:

- Countries Constitutions and Electoral Acts
- Elections Procedures Manual for Polling and Counting
- ECONEC NAMs report
- ECOWAS Fact finding and LTEOM Mission Reports as well as previous EOM Reports (AU/ECOWAS/EU).

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Name	Institution/Country	Provenance	Arrival	Departure	Email	Tel.
Kabinet CISSE	President CENI Guinea	Conakry	Air Cote D'Ivoire HF740 23 Dec/14:50	Asky KP47 31 Dec/08:35	kabinetcisse@yahoo.fr	+224 620 596 473
Justin Doua Gore	EISA Cote d'Ivoire	Abidjan	Air Cote D'Ivoire HF740 23 Dec/14:50	Air Cote D'Ivoire HF741 30 Dec. / 16:55	justin@eisa.org	+225 07112010
Abdoul Raouf Salami	ECONEC Nigeria	Abuja	Asky KP 046 23 Dec/17:50	Asky KP 047 30 Dec /08:35	raouf.salami@yahoo.com	+234 814 034 1214
Prof. Mahmood YAKUBU	Chairman INEC Nigeria	Abuja			amyakubu@yahoo.com	(234) 809 530 2012

MISSION AGENDA

Date	Time	Activity	Responsibility
Wednesday 23 Dec.		Arrival of the members of the PSLM Mission Preparation of arrival of Chairpersons	Protocol CENI Election expert (EISA)
Thursday 24 Dec.		Meeting with ECOWAS Long Term EOM Debriefing with Chairpersons Courtesy call on the President of CENI Niger	Coordinator Coordinator Election expert (EISA)
Friday 25 Dec.		Briefing of all observation missions by CENI Niger Courtesy call on the Head of ECOWAS EOM and ECOWAS Commissioner of Political Affairs Peace and Security	CENI Niger Coordinator
Saturday 26 Dec.		Courtesy call on the Head of AU EOM and AU Commissioner of Political Affairs. Meeting CSO Coalition and EISA Country Office Route planning for Election-Day	Coordinator All participants
Election Day			
Sunday 27 Dec.		Field visit on e-day (Opening & Closing of Polls, Counting, Collation, CENI Monitoring/Situation Room) Visit to Niger CSO Situation Room Visit to ECOWAS Situation Room WANEP Election Situation Room	Coordinator & Election expert (EISA)
Monday 28 Dec.		All Head of Missions Post Election Meeting Visit to CENI Niger Chairperson (Debriefing after E-day)	Coordinator
Tuesday 29 Dec.		Visit to CENI Niger collation centre ECOWAS / AU/ Preliminary declaration	Coordinator
Wednesday 30 Dec.		Departure of members of the mission	Coordinator



The mission during a working session with the core team of the ECOWAS EOM in Niger.



The President of the CENI Niger with his peers from Nigeria and Guinea.



The mission visiting the headquarters of the CENI in Niger



Professor Mahmood Yakubu (President of INEC Nigeria) giving an interview in Hausa language on election day.



The mission in consultation with the leadership of CENI Niger at the national results compilation center in Niamey.



Professor Mahmood Yakubu (President of INEC Nigeria) giving an interview.



The members of the mission with Me Issaka Souana (President CENI Niger) at the Niamey City Hall.