

Dated 9th December 2008

AFRICAN UNION
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**STATEMENT OF THE AFRICAN UNION OBSERVER MISSION TO THE
PRESIDENTIAL AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN GHANA
CONDUCTED ON 7 DECEMBER 2008**

At the invitation by the Government of Ghana and in pursuance of the Agenda of the African Union; with regard to the basic principles of democracy, good governance, popular participation and the promotion and protection of human and peoples rights in the continent as well as in the implementation of the Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa, adopted by the Assembly of the Union, in July 2002, in Durban, South Africa, the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union, Mr. Jean Ping, sent a Multidisciplinary Team of AU Observers to participate in the Presidential and Parliamentary elections held country-wide on 7th December 2008 in Ghana.

The AU Observer Team, led by Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim, Former Prime Minister of Tanzania, Former OAU Secretary General comprised of Pan-African Parliamentarians, members of Election Management Bodies and Civil Society Organizations, drawn from various countries in Africa.

The delegation commenced its mission with the arrival of the AU Coordination Team on 26th November 2008 followed by the observer team on 1st December 2008. Consultations were made with the Independent Electoral Commission, leaders of Political Parties, Independent Media, International and Regional Observers Groups.

THE DEPLOYMENT OF MEMBERS OF THE AU OBSERVER TEAM

The AU Observer Team was deployed on 5th December 2008 to cover the ten Provinces namely,

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|-----------------|------------------|
| • Greater Accra | • Volta Region |
| • Ashanti | • Brong Ahafo |
| • Central | • Upper East |
| • Western | • Upper West and |
| • Eastern | • Northern |

The choice of locations was made in order to cover urban and rural areas taking into consideration the density of voters. In carrying out their duties, the observers met with Regional Directors of the Electoral Commission of Ghana, District Election Security Task Force, Constituency Presiding Officers, local/international observers, village chiefs, presiding officers and their assistants, party agents and electors.

GENERAL COMMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS

The AU Observer Team applauds the people of Ghana for turning up in large numbers to vote, and particularly for the patience and orderliness exhibited. The mission further commends the Electoral Commission personnel involved in polling exercise.

In summary, we observed that

- Turn out was generally high in a majority of the areas.
- Voting started at 7.00 am or shortly thereafter at most of the polling stations.
- Voting was commendably peaceful and orderly.
- Voters were enthusiastic and patient in spite of some logistical problems.
- There were hardly any cases of voters being turned away on account of registration.

Some of the shortcomings observed were

- Long queues after 5:00 p.m. in the case of polling stations that had over 3,000 registered voters.
- Logistical problems in a number of polling stations, particularly where there were large numbers of registered voters. Some polling stations did not have adequate material. A case in point is a polling station in Ablekuma Constituency where at 6:00 p.m. all the ballot boxes at the station were full and there were still a large number of people who had not cast their votes and the Presiding Officer had not received additional boxes. At the same station, there was lack of adequate lighting to support night voting and vote-counting.
- Some polling stations in the Greater Accra did not have adequate staff to cope with the number of voters in their stations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Long queues: the Electoral Commission should create additional polling stations with a view to ensuring that the number of registered voters at all polling stations is reduced to a size that is reasonably manageable.

Electoral materials: the Commission should further ensure that polling stations are well supplied with sufficient materials both for the conduct of elections, and for incidental purposes should voting and counting continue after night fall.

Dated 9th December 2008

Essential voting materials such as polling booths should be adaptable to the environment, such as ability to withstand strong wind or rain, etc.

Voters Register:

- The Commission should improve on the process of transfer of voters and ensure that the lists are availed to all polling stations.
- The Commission should consider listing the names alphabetically for ease of reference.

Announcement of the results, the Commission should constantly inform the public of its constitutional role as the only body that has authority to announce the results.

Political party agents: Political Party agents should be less intrusive at polling stations, and in particular be restrained from being involved with the Electoral Officers in locating voters names from the voters register.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the AU Observer Mission considers the conduct of the Ghana election as a consolidation of democracy in the country and a good example to the region and the continent as a whole.

We urge the people of Ghana as well as political parties and their leadership to uphold the peace, orderliness and discipline that characterized this election and continue to respect the rule of law.

In the final analysis, the outcome of the election coupled with the manner in which the citizenry of Ghana voted should be seen as a victory for Ghana and not for any individual or political party.

This is a preliminary report. The full report shall be submitted in the coming days to all stakeholders including the Electoral Commission of Ghana, political parties and local and international observers.

Thank You.