



**PRELIMINARY STATEMENT OF THE IGAD ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION
TO THE PRESIDENTIAL AND GENERAL ELECTIONS OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE SUDAN
(Press Statement)**

17th April 2015, Khartoum

The IGAD Election Observation Mission deployed to observe the Presidential and General Elections held in the Republic of the Sudan from 13 to 16 April 2015, has concluded its mission successfully. IGAD deployed the mission following an invitation extended by the National Election Commission (NEC) of the Republic of the Sudan.

The Mission was led by Dr. Mohammud Abdulahi Hussien, Commissioner at the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia who also represented the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia that is holding the current chairmanship of IGAD. Other 30 members of the Observer Mission included Ambassador Yusuf Abdulrahman Nzibo, Commissioner of the Kenyan Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission as well as Commissioners of Electoral Commissions, Ambassadors, Member of Parliaments, Representatives of Member States' focal Ministries, representatives of Civil Society Organizations and members of the IGAD Secretariat.

The overall objective of the Mission was to assist the Republic of the Sudan, a founding member of IGAD, in its efforts to conduct free, fair and credible elections by providing positive and constructive feedback. It is also part of IGAD's broader efforts to facilitate the development of a democratic culture in the region that helps avert conflicts related to election disputes.

Members of the IGAD Election Observation Mission were deployed to eight sites, namely: Khartoum 1 (Centre and Omdurman); Khartoum Bahri; El-Gezira State (Wad Madani); White Nile State (Kosti); River Nile State (Shandi); Gedarif State (Gedarif); North Kordofan State (El-Obeid) and the Northern State (Dongola). The teams observed the poll opening, closing and early stages of counting of the election process from 13-17th April 2015.

In each of the deployment sites, the mission was able to visit a substantial number of polling stations and observed the following:

- Most polling centers opened as scheduled at 8.00 am but it noted few instances of late opening.
- Election materials were adequately distributed on time and in sufficient quantity throughout the four days with the exception of some instances of late delivery. For instance, late delivery of election materials to Wad Madani on first day of polling.

- Electoral officials demonstrated good understanding of their roles and responsibilities in the above-mentioned sites covered by the observation mission.
- There was sufficient number of local observers, but participation by international observers was limited both in number and global representation.
- There was slow and gradual turn-out of voters across the four days.
- The secrecy of the vote was generally upheld with the exception of isolated cases of limited space in some polling stations that compromised it.
- Every voter had the same number of votes (one person one vote) and all votes carried the same weight.
- The Mission observed the early stages of the counting process. Although it started on a slow pace, the same picked up as time went on and no incidents of disruption were observed.
- The observer team has noted a remarkably high level of participation and inclusion of women in the voting process.
- Women were engaged as polling officials, party agents and election observers. They also turned out in large numbers as compared to men to vote during the four days of polling.
- The observer mission noted that the overall environment during the election was peaceful with no major incidents recorded by IGAD observers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To NEC:

- Some voters were not asked to produce identification documents by presiding officials. NEC officials should be strict and firm on I.D. issues. (Training of poll officials needs to be enhanced).
- Where voters have lost I.D. the temporary document given should have a photograph of the bearer and be retained by the NEC.
- NEC, Political Parties and Civil Societies need to enhance Civic Education especially among the youth and marginalized groups to increase awareness of the election process and its significance.
- The secrecy of voting needs to be respected especially for assisted voters where those assisting needs to sign an oath of secrecy and be marked with an ineligible ink on the opposite hand so as not to abuse the right to assist.
- Observers and party agents identification badges issued by NEC should carry the photograph of the bearer. This will prevent imposters misusing the cards by purport to be observers.
- There is need for NEC to conduct intensive training of its personnel on electoral process to enhance the capacity and competence of the temporary recruited polling officers.
- There is need to further improve the management and application of the Voter's Register to minimize the incidence of "missing" names and problems of some voters not identifying or accessing their respective polling stations on polling days.

- The NEC should verify and make sure that the zoning numbers and codes of the polling centers are consistent to those reflected in the booklets and other distributed lists to avoid locations' confusions.

CONCLUSIONS

IGAD Election Observation Mission was limited to a short term observation mission that covered only polling and vote counting period. Therefore, the Mission will not be in a position to provide complete and comprehensive conclusions on the entire election process. However, based on what it has been able to observe, the Mission concludes as follows:

1. Taking into account that this is the second Presidential and General Elections being held Sudan during the last two decades, the vast size of the country and the challenges of infrastructure, our preliminary assessment is that the election process was credible. The IGAD Observer Mission noted major improvement in the performance of the electoral body from the last Presidential and General Election held in 2010.
2. The Mission appeals to all political players and independent candidates to accept the outcome of the elections and the final results. In the event that there is reason to challenge the results of the outcome, the Mission urges concerned parties to adhere to the legal channels to resolve the disputes.
3. The Mission encourages all Sudanese parties including those that boycotted the elections to continue to engage in the national dialogue under the auspices of the African Union High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) in which IGAD is an active member.
4. NEC should ensure that elections are conducted in the areas where they were postponed as soon as the circumstances allow so as not to disenfranchise citizens of those affected regions.
5. Apart from the above stated issues, it can be concluded that the 2015 Presidential and General Elections of Sudan were conducted in conformity with international benchmarks for free, fair and credible elections and were conducted in a transparent manner.
6. The IGAD Observation Mission wishes to thank the National Election Commission, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Sudan, the Sudanese media, other international and local observers for the assistance rendered to the IGAD Observer Mission.

Done on 17th April 2015, in Khartoum, the Sudan