



**AFRICAN UNION ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION (AUEOM) PRELIMINARY
STATEMENT ON LIBERIA'S PRESIDENTIAL RUNOFF ELECTION, 26 DECEMBER 2017**

***AUEOM reports a generally well-administered voting process; urges accurate and
timely tabulation and announcement of final results.***

27 December 2017, Monrovia, Liberia

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. On 26 December 2017, Liberians went to the polls for the second time to elect their President. Following the announcement of the date of the presidential runoff election, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC), H.E Moussa Faki Mahamat deployed a Short Term Observation (STO) mission comprising of twenty one (21) observers and three (3) core team members who arrived on 24 December 2017, to observe the conduct of the runoff election and the immediate post-election developments, including the result management process. The STO Mission is led by H.E. Erastus Mwencha, former Deputy Chairperson of the AUC and includes high profile personalities and experts drawn from the Pan-African Parliament (PAP), independent electoral and governance experts and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) from 18 African countries.
2. The AUEOM recalls its statement issued on 11 October 2017 covering the first round elections, in which it reported a generally peaceful and transparent elections, and offered key recommendations including, enhanced training of polling staff for efficient administration of all electoral processes, particularly on proper crowd management and identification of voters, improved access to polling places for persons with disabilities, allocation of sufficient time for the exhibition and verification of the voters' register, and calling on Liberian stakeholders to continue to strive for peace in the remaining phases of the electoral process to ensure a smooth democratic transition in almost seventy years.
3. While the 10 October 2007 elections were generally peaceful and credible, the AUEOM notes the delay in the conduct of presidential run-off election initially scheduled for 7 November 2017, as a result of the complaints filed, particularly by the Liberty Party (LP) and the ruling Unity Party (UP), alleging violation of the Constitution and Elections Law, fraudulent acts and gross irregularities during the 10 October 2017 elections. The Mission commends the Liberian stakeholders, particularly the NEC and the Supreme Court for hearing and disposing all electoral disputes in an expeditious manner. The Mission also applauds the Liberian people in particular the political actors for seeking legal redress rather than resorting to unlawful means, and allowing the institutions mandated to arbitrate all election disputes to execute their functions without undue interference.
4. The AUEOM further notes the efforts of NEC to implement the 7 December 2017 Liberian Supreme Court decision, which among other things ordered the NEC to conduct a full clean-up of the Final Registration Register (FRR) to ensure that duplicate names and identification numbers were removed. Subsequently, NEC in partnership with Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) audited the FRR and shared their findings with stakeholders in the electoral process. In cleaning up the FRR, the NEC assured that no voter will be disenfranchised in the process. The underlining guide was to guarantee that there are no more instances of voters having the same identification number in the FRR.

5. This statement presents the preliminary findings and conclusions of the AUEOM on the conduct of the 26 December 2017 Presidential Runoff election between the opposition Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC) Party and the ruling Unity Party (UP). The findings and conclusion are limited to Election Day operations only. The AUEOM will continue to monitor the tallying process, and other post-election related developments. A comprehensive final AUEOM report will be published within three (3) months after the announcement of final result.

II. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

6. On Election Day, the AUEOM observed opening and closing in 10 polling precincts in urban areas, and voting in 154 polling places, 91 of which are in urban and 63 in rural areas in Monsterrado, Margibi and Bong Counties. Below is a summary of the Mission's observations on Election Day:
 - The AUEOM noted that the campaign for the presidential runoff was carried out peacefully without any major incident of violence reported.
 - Polling started on time at all of the polling places where the AUEOM observed opening and all essential election materials were available in adequate quantities.
 - The atmosphere inside and outside the polling precincts visited during opening, voting and closing was generally peaceful, and the secrecy of the vote was guaranteed.
 - The AUEOM observed few isolated cases where people were turned away in polling places such as in Philadelphia Church in Monsterrado and Scheiffelin Commissioner's Office in Margibi County because their names were not found in the voters' register.
 - AUEOM observed marked improvement and efficiency in the management of the voting process, particularly queue control, identification of voters, and adherence to the NEC's polling and counting procedures.
 - Security personnel were visibly present outside most of the polling places visited during opening, voting and closing, and their presence was mostly discreet, non-intrusive and professional.
 - Most polling precincts visited were accessible to voters, including persons with disabilities, except in a few polling precincts that were inaccessible.
 - The AUEOM notes with satisfaction that priority was accorded to persons with disabilities, the elderly, expectant women and nursing mothers in all the polling stations visited, which demonstrated an inclusive electoral process.

- In all polling places observed, the two political parties in the runoff were adequately represented by their agents who performed their duties without hindrance or restriction.
- At Mother Sarah School in District 4 in Monsterrado, the AUEOM noted an isolated incident where a voter was discovered with two ballot papers marked for one of the candidates. Both the voter and the polling official who issued the ballot papers were subsequently arrested for further investigation.
- All polling places observed by AUEOM observers closed on time. There were no voters in the queues by end of polling. Polling officials largely adhered to closing and counting procedures.

III. CONCLUSION

7. The Mission concludes that despite the legal challenges faced by NEC, compounded by the limited timeframe to prepare, the 26 December 2017 Presidential runoff election was conducted in an orderly and efficient manner, within a calm and peaceful environment.
8. The Mission commends all Liberians for demonstrating restraints and patience throughout the post-election legal disputes, which demonstrated their strong commitment to peace and adherence to the rule of law.
9. This preliminary statement is issued before the conclusion of the entire runoff election process. The AUEOM will issue a comprehensive report on the 2017 electoral process in Liberia within three (3) months after the announcement of final result.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

10. The AUEOM offers the following preliminary recommendations for consideration by the Liberian electoral stakeholders for further improvement on their electoral processes in future:
 - Urges the NEC to timely and accurately tabulate and announce the final results to ease anxiety.
 - Calls on the political contestants to refrain from making any statement that may undermine the credibility of the election process or upend the prevailing peaceful environment. The Mission urges any stakeholder that may be dissatisfied with the electoral outcome to seek legal redress through the established institutional mechanisms.
 - Calls on all Liberian stakeholders to continue to maintain peace, and ensure peaceful transition and democratic consolidation.

Monrovia, Liberia