

# **AFRICAN UNION**



## **AFRICAN UNION ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION TO THE 26 – 28 MARCH 2018 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF THE ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT**

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**CAIRO, EGYPT**

**30 MARCH 2018**

## **PRELIMINARY STATEMENT**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. On 26-28 March 2018, Egyptians went to the polls to elect a President in the Third Presidential Election since the 2011 popular uprising. The election was contested by two candidates – current President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi and Moussa Mostafa Moussa, chairperson of the Ghad Party, and managed by the National Election Authority (NEA) - a new permanent and independent body established in January 2017 in accordance with the 2014 Constitution. The election took place within the context of a state of emergency to address the militant insurgency.
2. Following an invitation from the Government and NEA of the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission authorized the deployment of a Short Term Election Observation Mission to the Presidential Election in Egypt. The Mission arrived in Cairo, Egypt on 17 March 2018, and is headed by H.E. Abdoulaye Diop, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mali. It consists of 40 short-term observers who were deployed on 26 March 2018 to cover 10 of the 27 Governorates. The observers are drawn from the Pan-African Parliament, African Ambassadors accredited to the African Union, African Election Management Bodies, Civil Society Organizations, and Independent Electoral and Governance experts from 25 African states.
3. The Mission was established with a mandate to conduct an impartial, independent and objective assessment of the election in line with the AU and international principles for democratic elections, and the legal framework for elections in Egypt. Given its limited size and scope, the Mission's assessment is focused on voting and counting processes.
4. Following its arrival, the Mission interacted with several stakeholders notably the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the NEA, the campaign teams of the two candidates, the League of Arab States Election Observation Mission and the Regional Deans of African Ambassadors in Cairo. Some of these interactions were held jointly with Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa International Election Observation Mission.
5. This statement presents the preliminary findings and conclusions of the Mission. It is issued before the conclusion of the entire election process. A comprehensive final report on the election will be published on the AU's website and shared with all relevant stakeholders in Egypt within three (3) months after the announcement of final result.

## **SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS**

6. The Mission observed the opening process in 11 polling stations, the voting in 462 (176 in rural and 286 in urban areas) and closing in 15 polling stations. Below is a summary of the Mission's findings on the Election Days:
  - a) Voting started on time at 9 am in all polling stations visited. In all, essential election materials were available in sufficient quantities throughout the voting process.
  - b) The election took place in a peaceful, orderly and secure environment. There was a significantly visible presence of security personnel in all polling stations visited. While in most cases the presence of the security personnel was reassuring, there was, in some cases, elements of intrusion observed.
  - c) Voter turnout was generally slow without significant build-up in queues throughout the three days of voting. There was a high turnout for women as voters as well as the participation of women as polling officials. However, there was low turnout on the part of the youth.
  - d) There was no instance observed where eligible voters were prevented from exercising their franchise. Particular notice was taken that assistance and priority were accorded to voters with disabilities, the elderly and others requiring help which enhanced their participation.
  - e) Most of the polling stations visited were accessible to voters, and laid out in a manner that allowed easy flow of voters.
  - f) Voting procedures were largely followed in most of the polling stations visited with voters' fingers checked for ink, their identification and ballot papers authenticated before being issued. The polling officials demonstrated good understanding of voting procedures and were generally assessed to be competent. However, there were discrepancies observed in the application of voting and counting procedures. There was equally a varied understanding of the role of Election Observers.
  - g) The secrecy of the vote was ensured in most of the polling stations visited. However, there were instances where this was compromised notably due to the improper positioning of the polling booth, proximity of security personnel to the booth and generally limited space in the polling station.
  - h) No electoral fraud, manipulation or vote rigging was observed in all polling stations visited. Campaign related activities were, however, observed throughout the period of voting including within the vicinity of the majority of the polling stations visited.

- i) There was no identification for polling officials and the candidates' agents which made it difficult for observers to determine the authorized persons in the polling stations.
- j) Candidates' agents were present in most polling stations observed. These were mainly agents of one candidate. The agents were allowed to perform their duties without interference and restrictions.
- k) Domestic and international observers were seen in very few of the polling stations visited.
- l) The Decree No. 31/2018 of the National Election Authority on Accepting the Applications of Egyptian, Foreign and International Organizations to observe the 2018 Presidential Election did not include the African Union on the list of accepted organizations. Notwithstanding the accreditation of the Mission, this affected the ready acceptance of AU observers by some polling officials who were presumably guided by this Decree.
- m) The Mission noted the institution of an electronic accreditation process to facilitate the processing of observer applications. While this is commendable, the administration of the service led to delays in the issuance of accreditation, which negatively impacted on the deployment of observers.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

7. In the spirit of cooperation and commitment to strengthening of democratic processes in Egypt, the Mission offers the following preliminary recommendations for improvement in the conduct of future elections:

### *A) To the Government and its Security Agencies*

- i. The Mission encourages the Egyptian Government and people to continue to maintain peace and stability for the democratic development of the country.
- ii. Consider strengthening the engagement with the youth for a more active involvement in the electoral process to deepen the country's democratic culture.
- iii. In collaboration with NEA and other stakeholders, undertake civic education initiatives to improve upon the voter turnout in future elections.
- iv. The Mission encourages the Security Agencies to continue to maintain professionalism and a high level of security at the polling stations.

- v. Security personnel deployed to polling stations need to be properly briefed on their roles and responsibilities to avoid possible interference in the voting process.

*B) To the National Election Authority*

- i. Consider further and continuous training of polling officials to maintain and improve upon their proficiency as well as to harmonise standards.
- ii. There is need to improve upon the layout of the polling stations with adequate space to enhance the secrecy of the vote.
- iii. The Mission encourages NEA to continue with measures to enhance participation of persons with disabilities and others with special needs.
- iv. Ensure compliance with the rules and regulations governing campaign activities during the voting period.
- v. Ensure a clear and easy identification of all polling officials and any other authorized agents in the polling stations.
- vi. Consider reviewing the Decree No 31/2018 to expressly include Inter-Governmental Organizations like the African Union to observe the election.
- vii. Urged NEA to speed up the accreditation process for International Observers.
- viii. Ensure that polling officials are conversant with the role of accredited Election Observers.

*B) To Civil Society*

- i. Encouraged to take a more active role in the electoral process to enhance its credibility.

*C) To Political Parties / Candidates*

- i. All candidates are urged to have polling agents at all polling stations to increase the transparency and credibility of the voting process.

## **CONCLUSION**

8. Based on its overall assessment, the Mission concludes that the voting process was conducted in a peaceful, orderly and transparent manner.
9. The Mission takes cognizance of the strides made since the last presidential election, in 2014, including the establishment, in 2017, of a permanent Independent National Election Authority, and commends its remarkable performance in the conduct of the 2018 presidential election.
10. The Mission extends its profound gratitude to the Government and people of the Arab Republic of Egypt and other stakeholders especially the NEA for facilitating its work.

**H.E Abdoulaye DIOP**

**Head of AUEOM, Egypt 2018 Presidential Election**

**Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mali**