



## I- INTRODUCTION

1. By presidential decree issued on Friday 16 December 2022, **His Excellency General Umaro Sissoco Embaló**, President of the Republic of Guinea Bissau and Chair of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, called for the legislative elections to be held on Sunday 4 June 2023.
2. Pursuant to Article 12 and other relevant provisions of the 2001 Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, and other relevant regional and international instruments, the President of the ECOWAS Commission, **His Excellency Omar Alieu Touray**, deployed an Election Observation Mission (EOM) to Guinea Bissau, led by the former President of the Republic of Cabo Verde, **His Excellency Jorge Carlos Fonseca**, and the former President of the ECOWAS Court of Justice, Mediator of the Togolese Republic, **Her Excellency Awa Amadou Aboudou Nana**, Deputy Head of Mission, and supported by the ECOWAS Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Ambassador **Abdel-Fatau Musah** and the ECOWAS Resident Representative to Guinea Bissau, Professor **Hamidou Boly**.
3. The main objective of the Mission is to monitor all stages of the electoral process and to support the institutions and other stakeholders involved in the elections in their efforts to ensure free, transparent and peaceful elections. The Election Observation Mission comprises 13 experts in election-related matters, audit of voters' register, security and legal issues, as well as conflict prevention, and 62 observers, including representatives of Member States accredited to the ECOWAS Commission, representatives of Electoral Commissions and Member States' Ministries of Foreign Affairs, representatives of the ECOWAS Parliament, the Court of Justice and the Council of the Wise, members of civil society, as well as a technical team from the ECOWAS Commission.



## II- GENERAL CONTEXT OF THE ELECTIONS

4. Twenty-two (22) political parties and coalitions of political parties took part in the elections.
5. Overall, the stakes are high for the elections to the new legislative term for the period 2023-2027, as they will, on the one hand, restore constitutional legality and, on the other, clarify the country's political landscape and ensure its stabilisation.
6. Furthermore, it is important to recall that these elections have been organised following the 10 March 2019 elections, after which Guinea-Bissau experienced a tense socio-political situation that led to the dissolution of the People's National Assembly (ANP) by the President of the Republic on 16 May 2022.
7. The legislative elections were also held in an economic context where cashew nut producers experienced a crisis in the cashew nut market (the failure of the cashew nut marketing campaign), which is an important source of income for rural producers and for the country.
8. It is in this socio-political and economic context, coupled with the impact of managing COVID-19 and the worrisome international relations that the Technical Support Office for the Electoral Process (GTAPE), in application of Law 10 / 2013 of 25 September 2013 governing the Electoral Law for election to the Office of President of the Republic and to the People's National Assembly, Law N° 11/2013 of 25 September 2013 on the Electoral Census and Law N° 12 / 2013 of 27 December 2013 on the National Electoral Commission, transmitted the finalised voters' register to the National Electoral Commission (CNE) before the deadline of 4 May 2023 as stipulated in the electoral law.
9. A total of 893,618 voters (434,009 male voters and 459,609 female voters), including 35,816 (22,181 men and 13,635 women) from the diaspora, were enrolled on the voters' register to take part in the elections.



These voters were distributed among 3,516 polling units nationwide. The polling units are made up of (approximately) 400 voters per unit.

10. Furthermore, to accompany the electoral process, ECOWAS deployed a pre-electoral fact-finding mission to Guinea-Bissau from 24 to 30 April 2023, led by the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security. The purpose of the mission was to gather information and update the President of the Commission on the state of preparations for the elections and the pre-electoral socio-political situation in Guinea-Bissau ahead of 4 June 2023. Following the mission, three experts were placed at the disposal of the National Electoral Commission (CNE) from 17 May to 11 June 2023.
11. Similarly, ECOWAS has kept its promise to cover the unpaid bills for the last legislative elections owed to election officials, which amounted to \$60,000, and the amount for the current elections (\$60,000) to be paid to election officials to avoid any boycott of the elections by the officials. This totalled \$120,000.
12. In addition, ECOWAS provided financial support of \$500,000 to CNE to ensure the proper conduct of electoral operations and \$92,000 to the ECOWAS Stabilisation Force to secure the electoral process. All in all, ECOWAS provided \$712,000 in financial support for the electoral process. With regard to electoral technical assistance, ECOWAS provided GTAPE and CNE with experts in the audit of voters' register, election matters and electoral operations.
13. In the discharge of his mandate, the Head of the Electoral Mission and his entourage paid a courtesy call on His Excellency, General Umaro Sissoco Embaló, President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of the Interior, the Chairman of CNE and the Commander of the Joint Command for the Security of Elections. The Head of the Electoral Mission also held working sessions with the election management bodies, the Chief of Defence Staff, the Heads of Mission of the African Union (AU), the Organisation Internationale de la



Francophonie (OIF) and the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP). The Head of Mission also held working sessions with the ECOWAS Long-Term Observers to better assess the context in which the elections are being organised, in order to provide appropriate solutions for a peaceful election. He also held a working session with the ECOWAS Short-Term Observers.

14. The ECOWAS Head of Mission also met with some leaders of political parties and coalitions of political parties. He also facilitated the signing by the majority of political stakeholders (13/22) of a commitment to respect the announcement of the election results by the interim Chairman of CNE.

### III- ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

15. The election campaigns began on Saturday 13 May 2023 and ended on Friday 2 June 2023. The strategies for mobilising and convincing voters were clearly evident in the country's urban and rural areas through posters displayed by the different candidates and political parties, the use of communication media and the organisation of political meetings and rallies.
16. A Code of Good Conduct was prepared and signed under the aegis of the United Nations by the political parties involved in the electoral contest. Out of 22 political parties, 18 have signed this Agreement in which the political parties demonstrated their commitment to take part in the elections. However, PAIGC deplored the interference of the President of the Republic in the election campaigns. On Saturday 27 May 2023, PAIGC also notified ECOWAS of the refusal of the airport authorities to allow the plane chartered by the party and carrying all their campaign material to land at Bissau airport. This incident did not hinder the smooth continuation of the process.



17. Regarding the participation of women, only 25.98% were registered on political parties' candidate lists. This percentage is below the 36% stipulated by law 48/2018 on parity in Guinea Bissau.
18. With respect to the work of the media during the electoral period, a National Media Commission worked on and regulated the coverage of campaign activities of all parties involved in the elections.
19. On 2 June, the last day of the election campaigns, the Head of Mission witnessed the campaigns of two political forces.

#### **IV- ECOWAS OBSERVATION METHODOLOGY**

20. After training in the use of tablets and a briefing session, ECOWAS observers were deployed in pairs to the eight (08) regions (Biombo, Quinara, Oio, Bafata, Cacheu, Gabu and Tombali) and the district of Bissau.
21. Each pair has a tablet to send the report of each stage of the process (opening, conduct and closing) on polling day to the ECOWAS coordination team in the Situation Room in Bissau.
22. The technical team in the Situation Room compiles the reports received from the polling units visited by the short-term observers. The observations made form the basis of the subsequent session.

#### **V. OBSERVATION ON POLLING DAY**

23. Observers visited 361 polling units, 68% in urban areas and 32% in rural areas, and made the following reports:



## ***A- Opening***

### **Respect for the opening of polling**

24.72% of polling units monitored opened at the prescribed time of 7:00 am. 24% opened with a slight delay of between 15 minutes and 1 hour. In polling unit D-27 M-01 Casa Tata in Buba (Quinara region), voting began 45 minutes late because polling officers were sorting the ballot papers from the advance poll held on 2 June 2023. However, this procedure gave rise to some disagreements between polling officers and political party agents.

25. In general, members of gender-balanced polling units were present at their booths before opening time. The majority of polling officers showed a good understanding of the procedures for opening the poll.

### **Respect for the secrecy of the ballot**

26. Generally speaking, polling units were easy to identify and were arranged in such a way as to allow the secrecy of the ballot. Nevertheless, the mission observed three polling units where this was not the case, namely: Polling Unit No. 2 in Nsalma (Biombo region); Polling Unit No. 1 in Praca Jardim Titina in Bairro Setembro (Autonomous District of Bissau); and Polling Unit Tchada in Canchungo (Cacheu region), where the layout of the polling unit did not guarantee the secrecy of the ballot. Electoral material was generally available and in sufficient quantity.

### **Presence of political party agents**

27. Agents from political parties and coalitions of political parties were present at polling units and were able to exercise their rights of scrutiny without restriction, including: MADEM G-15 and PAI Terra Ranka (in 93% of polling units visited); PRS (in 88% of polling units); and to a lesser extent APU and PTG (in 40% of polling units). Election observers from the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP), WANEP and the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) were also present.



## ***B- Conduct***

### **Atmosphere**

28. The atmosphere around the polling units visited was calm and conducive to a peaceful vote. Security guards were present in 76% of the polling units visited and mobile patrols were professional, which contributed to the peaceful atmosphere. Ballot boxes were generally positioned in a way that was visible to the public.

29. Voters were required to show their voters' cards before casting their ballots. Party and coalition agents had copies of the voters' register to check voters. In 2% of the polling units visited, some voters were prevented from voting because their names were not on the voters' register. Nevertheless, voters who had voted were systematically marked with indelible ink.

30. In addition, 89% of the polling units visited were accessible to people with reduced mobility. In 5% of polling units, observers saw people with disabilities who were given assistance to cast their votes. There were no tactile ballot papers.

## ***C- Closing***

### **Respect for the closing of polling**

31. In 70% of the polling units visited, there were still voters in the queues at the statutory closing time. As required by law, these voters were allowed to vote. Only 29% of polling units actually closed at 5.00 pm.

### **Counting**

32. On the whole, counting took place in a calm and serene manner in the polling units visited, in the presence of agents from political parties and party coalitions. ECOWAS observers noted that lighting was inadequate in 11% of polling units and that ballot box seals were checked before counting began in 93% of cases.



33. In 89% of polling units, the number of ballot papers in the ballot boxes was equal to the number of ballot papers issued. In the remaining 11%, there were discrepancies that could be explained by advance poll ballots cast by polling unit staff.
34. Counting took place without incident in the vast majority of polling units. In 93% of cases, the returning officers showed the invalid ballot papers to the voters present during counting. Some invalid ballots were contested in 22% of polling units visited.
35. After counting, the results sheets were compiled and signed by the agents of political parties and coalitions of political parties.

## VI. CONCLUSION

36. The ECOWAS Observation Mission commends the Government and election management bodies for adhering to the election timetable despite financial and technical difficulties.
37. The ECOWAS Observation Mission to the 2023 Legislative Elections in Guinea-Bissau has reached the following provisional conclusions.
38. The Mission noted a relatively high turnout. The Mission noted the peaceful and participatory nature of the poll and the good handling of voting procedures.
39. The Mission commends the sense of civic duty shown by the population during the electoral process, in particular their discipline and outstanding participation, which contributed to the peaceful conduct of the poll.
40. The Mission wishes to congratulate all stakeholders and urge them to continue to work in synergy to consolidate political stability and promote the country's development. The Mission encourages the institutions to work to improve the country's legal framework for elections.





The Mission urges all stakeholders in the electoral process to respect the official channels for the publication of results and the agreements signed, and to refrain from any proclamation of results outside the official channels. In the event of a dispute, it encourages the parties to have recourse exclusively to legal means.

41. The Mission encourages political parties and coalitions of political parties to make greater efforts to promote the candidacy of women.
42. The Mission invites the National Electoral Commission (CNE) to make every effort to publish the results within the legal deadlines.
43. ECOWAS remains seized of the ongoing process to continue to lend its full support to Guinea Bissau. ECOWAS long-term observers will continue to work with the ECOWAS Resident Representative in Guinea Bissau to manage the period after the publication of the results.
44. A detailed report of this Mission will be finalised and the recommendations will be used to improve future electoral processes in Guinea Bissau.

**Done in Bissau on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2023**

**H.E. Jorge Carlos Fonseca**  
Head of the Observation Mission