



PRESS STATEMENT

‘AU commends the people of Mozambique on their peaceful conduct during the electoral process; calls on stakeholders to remain calm and exercise restraint whilst awaiting announcement of Final Results’

1. At the invitation of the Government of the Republic of Mozambique and the Mozambique Electoral Commission (CNE), the African Union Commission deployed an African Union Election Observation Mission (AUEOM) to the 15 October 2014 Presidential, Parliamentary and Provincial Assembly elections in Mozambique.
2. The AUEOM comprised of 45 Observers, including 10 Long Term Observers (LTOs) and 35 Short Term Observers (STOs). The observers are drawn from the Pan-African Parliament, Permanent Representatives’ Committee/African Ambassadors accredited to the African Union (AU), Election Management Bodies (EMBs), and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).
3. The cessation of hostilities and the signing of the peace accord in August and September between the Government of Mozambique and RENAMO improved confidence amongst all stakeholders that the 2014 Elections would take place in a more open and conducive environment.
4. On Election Day, the AUEOM observers were able to reach 236 polling stations to observe the opening, voting and counting processes. This statement is the preliminary assessment of the AUEOM. A final detailed report of the AUEOM will be compiled and released in due course.
5. The AUEOM acknowledges that the atmosphere in the polling stations where AU observers were present was largely peaceful, and voting proceeded smoothly.
6. The AUEOM noted the high turnout of women voters as well as significant participation of women in all aspects of the process.

7. While there were some challenges such as the late arrival of electoral materials in some polling stations, this did not significantly delay the opening in most of those districts, and the materials were delivered later.
8. In polling stations which opened late, the primary reason appeared to be delays caused by the polling staff in setting up the polling stations.
9. Security personnel were visible in almost all polling stations observed by AU observers and were deemed to be discreet and unobtrusive in the majority of these. In a small number of stations where security was reportedly insufficient, the major concern was the management of the voter queues.
10. At all polling stations where voting was observed, the AU teams noted that the layout of the stations promoted an easy flow of the process and the secrecy of the ballot was protected.
11. The AU observer teams reported that 20% of the polling stations visited were not easily accessible to persons with disabilities. According to Section 7.9 of the SADC Principles and Guidelines for Democratic Elections, women, youth and persons with disabilities should be empowered to participate in all aspects of electoral activities.
12. The AUEOM notes the strict adherence to laid down procedures for closing and counting by election personnel. Voters in the queue at 6.00 pm were allowed to cast their votes. Polling officials meticulously followed procedures for ballot reconciliation, sorting and verification before the count. In several districts, this meant that the count did not begin until several hours after the close of polling stations.
13. In 94% of the polling stations, the AU observer teams reported that all stakeholders were able to clearly view the reconciliation and counting process. There were no problems reported about observers or party agents being prevented from observing the count. However, lighting was a problem in 17% of the stations, predominantly rural stations.

(A). Conclusions

1. The AUEOM observed that the pre-election period, including campaigning, and the Election Day itself were largely peaceful and free from intimidation.
2. The CNE and the Technical Secretariat for Electoral Administration (STAE) have made significant efforts to conduct the elections with openness, transparency and responsiveness to all stakeholders. Whilst there have inevitably been some technical and logistical difficulties during the electoral process, on the overall, CNE and STAE have implemented their mandate in a satisfactory manner.
3. The AUEOM notes that the conduct of the 2014 Presidential, Parliamentary and Provincial Assembly elections has up to this point provided an opportunity for the Mozambican electorate to freely express their will at the ballot.

(B). Recommendations

4. Cognisant of the fact that the tabulation process is still ongoing, AU long term observers will remain on the ground to follow the process as it unfolds. This statement as already noted is preliminary in its findings and the mission's final report will be completed once the results of the 2014 Presidential, Parliamentary and Provincial Assembly elections have been finalised.
5. Based on its findings, the AUEOM offers the following recommendations:
 - The restriction on voter education during the campaigning period should be reviewed.
 - Considering the challenges that parties faced in mobilising the required number of election officials in addition to their polling agents, the AUEOM recommends that stakeholders reflect on the viability of these provisions in future.
 - In light of the challenges faced by some stakeholders in securing accreditation, the management of the accreditation process should be streamlined, and where appropriate simplified to facilitate the participation of all stakeholders.
 - Counting procedures should be reviewed to make the process simpler and less time consuming for the polling officials.
 - Polling stations locations should be reviewed in light of the difficulties experienced by persons with disabilities and the elderly in gaining access to these stations.