



EISA Election Observation Mission to the 10 October 2018 Municipal Elections in Mozambique

Preliminary Statement

Mozambicans turned out on 10 October to perform their civic duty and the election administration institutions set in place effective structures to ensure smooth electoral operations. While the mission notes that there are gaps in the legal framework that impacted on the level playing field and inclusiveness of the process for some contestants, it also notes that the framework allowed for a largely competitive process, where citizens were able to freely express their will at the ballot. However, the counting process was marred by irregularities, violence and excessive use of force by the security forces in some municipalities, and the intermediate results aggregation, whilst largely regular in most municipalities, are alleged to have serious discrepancies in some municipalities. The EISA EOM urges all parties and institutions to act within the confines of the law whilst awaiting the outcome of complaints and appeals and the results validation process.

Introduction

The Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) deployed an Election Observation Mission (EOM) to assess the 2018 municipal elections in the Republic of Mozambique. The EOM comprised of 17 medium team observers (MTOs) who arrived in Mozambique on 25 September and remained in the country until 16 October 2018. The MTOs were deployed in seven teams to selected municipalities, namely: Maputo, Beira, Marromeu, Quelimane, Gurue, Ilha de Mocambique, and Angoche. During the campaign period these teams also observed limited campaign activities in Matola, Gorongosa, Mocuba, Alto Molócue and Nacala-Porto.

The deployment of this EOM is part of EISA's broader election assessment and support programme in Mozambique. Earlier in the year, the Institute deployed a technical team to assess the voter registration process.¹ The EOM to the municipal election was deployed to assess the elections and make recommendations to contribute to improvement of future elections, especially the national elections that are scheduled to take place in October 2019.

The EISA EOM's assessment methodology for these elections is guided by its commitments within the framework of the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation. As part of its methodology, the MTOs met with Mozambican stakeholders, including: the National Elections Commission (CNE) and Technical Secretariat for Electoral Administration (STAE), the Constitutional Council, political parties, the Police, civil society organisations (CSOs), the media and independent experts. The EISA EOM actively observed pre-election activities including: the second week of campaigning, training of polling station personnel, and distribution of election materials. The EISA EOM also

¹ The mission was deployed in March and May 2018 to assess the voter registration and voter register display exercise.

coordinated with other international EOMs, observers from diplomatic missions in Mozambique, and citizen observer platforms.

The EOM's assessment of the electoral process is based on the principles and obligations for democratic elections stipulated in the following international benchmarks:² the African Union (AU) Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections; the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG); the Principles for Election Management, Monitoring and Observation (PEMMO); the Constitution of Mozambique and the Municipal Elections Law; and the National Election Commission Law, and other relevant national legislation.

This statement presents the EISA EOM's preliminary findings on the process as of 15 October 2018, and is primarily based on the EISA EOM's direct observations and interactions with different stakeholders and media reports. The EOM recognises that the process is still ongoing, and will not be completed until the resolution of any complaints and appeals, and a validation of results by the Constitutional Council.

A final report presenting the EOM's overall assessment of the 2018 electoral process will be issued after the validation of results by the Constitutional Council. The report will be presented to the CNE and other stakeholders, and published on the EISA website.

Preliminary Findings

1. The Political Environment

The 2018 municipal elections are the fifth since the adoption of multi-party elections in Mozambique after the 1992 Peace Agreement. The 2018 elections were conducted within the context of political negotiations between the Government and RENAMO on issues of decentralisation, and demilitarisation and reintegration. The negotiations culminated so far in amendments to the Constitution and other relevant laws pertaining to local governance and local elections. The legal reforms implemented because of the negotiations introduced significant changes to the decentralised system of government in Mozambique, and to the electoral system of decentralised governments. A more detailed assessment of these legal changes will be included in the EOM's final report.

The 2018 elections also take place within the context of economic and security challenges. The country has been affected by a foreign debt scandal that impacted on its economy as international lenders and donors have withdrawn financial support. The political context was also shaped by the growing concerns about armed activities in northern Mozambique, by unknown groups, that launched attacks on citizens, government authorities and property in the northern province of Cabo Delgado.

The return of RENAMO to the electoral space after its boycott of the 2013 municipal elections has changed electoral dynamics. The 2018 municipal elections were keenly contested by the three major parties (FRELIMO, RENAMO and MDM) in all the 53 municipalities while other parties and citizen groups contested in selected municipalities.

The EISA EOM is of the view that the political context, although still fraught with tension and changes, was conducive for open political contest and provided Mozambicans an opportunity to freely campaign and elect their municipal authorities.

²Mozambique is a State Party to the following Instruments: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, UN Convention on Political Rights of Women, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disability, African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, African Charter on Human and People's Rights, and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa

1.2 Constitutional and Legal Framework for municipal elections

The constitutional and legal framework for elections in Mozambique consists of the Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique, the National Elections Law, the Voter Registration Law, the Municipal Elections Law, as well as ancillary legislation such as the political parties law, laws regulating the functioning of municipal governments, the media law, and the law regulating public assembly and demonstrations.

Based on the outcome of the negotiations between the Government and RENAMO, legal reforms were undertaken that significantly changed decentralised governance and the electoral system for the election of decentralised governments. The legal framework continues to provide for the election of the Municipal Assembly by proportional representation, but now requires the direct election of Mayors to be conducted through the 'head of list' system. This system requires that the head of the most voted list for the Assembly becomes the elected Mayor, without the requirement of obtaining 50%+1 as in previous elections. This means that voters receive and cast a single ballot paper for both elections, as opposed to two in previous municipal elections.

Whereas the legal framework for municipal elections has undergone recent reforms, several issues may require attention:

- The architecture of election management as provided in the legal framework calls into question the principle of equality among political parties and among election contestants as only three electoral contestants are represented in election management, and their representation therein is unequal. Furthermore, as parties represented in the election management bodies have a direct interest in the outcome of their decisions, it creates a situation of conflicts of interest, and impacts the perception of impartiality and credibility of the process.
- Furthermore the EISA EOM noted that whilst the current model of decentralised election administration may provide for more effective and efficient delivery of electoral operations at the local level, it does not provide for strong enough supervision and oversight mechanisms by the National Commission over its support bodies at provincial and district level, which exercise excessive discretion and independence.
- The EISA EOM also took note of the use of non-electoral legislation to determine the eligibility of candidates by the CNE. The requirements for candidate eligibility should belong solely to the Constitution and electoral laws, and should respect the principles of maximum inclusion and participation.
- The EISA EOM also noted concerns raised about the legal provisions that prohibits the replacement of candidates after the deadline for submission of candidates' lists, if candidate(s) withdraw from the list after that deadline. In some cases, this provision caused one list to be completely excluded from the election although it still contained a sufficient number of effective eligible candidates.³ This legal provision subtracts from the desired inclusivity and fairness of the process. Furthermore, the exclusion of a list based on this legal provision compromises the fundamental right of the remaining candidates to stand.
- Several stakeholders consulted by the EISA EOM expressed dissatisfaction with the new system of electing the municipal bodies, particularly with the single ballot paper, which reduces voters' choices, and because the mayoral candidates (head of lists) are not identified on the ballot paper, it is difficult for voters to be fully aware that they are voting for two different organs. The EISA EOM wishes to emphasise that a voter's clarity of choice is an important aspect of the integrity and transparency of an electoral process.

³ This was the case in Maputo where the AJUDEM list was rejected because 4 candidates withdrew 47 days before the election.

- Whilst the removal of a legal provision requiring the review of null ballots reduces the CNE's burden of responsibility,⁴ the EISA EOM noted that the review of null ballots in the past was an important element in guaranteeing the fairness of the electoral process. It is important to note that up to a third of null ballots were requalified as valid upon review by the CNE in previous elections. It would therefore be important to retain this system of review to ensure that voters are not disenfranchised based on undue nullification of ballots at the polling station level, as it appears to have happened in these elections⁵.

The new law on municipal elections also introduced the prohibition of the use of mobile phones and cameras in the polling booths. The EISA EOM notes that this amendment strengthens the secrecy of the ballot and could address complaints of intimidation recorded in previous elections when voters were asked to show how they voted by showing pictures of their marked ballot papers. However, a uniform procedure is needed on how to implement effectively this norm.

1.3 Party and Campaign Finance

The EOM notes that the Municipal Elections Law does not provide for the public funding of electoral campaigns for municipal elections. Public funding is only available to parties represented in Parliament, and for national elections campaigns.

Furthermore, the absence of a regulatory framework on party and campaign finance imposing limits on private contributions and campaign expenditures leaves the electoral process open to the undue influence of private money which may impact on the level playing field, especially in the absence of public campaign funding for municipal elections.

The Pre-Election Phase

2.1. Voter Registration

The eligibility criteria for registration in Mozambique effectively upholds the principle of inclusion and universal adult suffrage. A voter registration exercise was conducted between 19 March and 17 May 2018 ahead of the 10 October 2018 municipal elections. The EISA technical assessment team deployed during the registration noted a high turnout during the registration but minimal turnout during the voter register display period. The EISA EOM commends the CNE/STAE for the introduction of the online and SMS⁶ voter registration verification and polling station identification system, which made the process more accessible to the voters.

The final register for the municipal elections captured 3,910,712 voters of whom 51.54% were women. The EISA EOM commends the CNE and STAE for providing gender-disaggregated voter registration data for the first time.

The EOM noted that the episodic registration of voters ahead of each election cycle contributes to the high cost of elections in Mozambique. A more continuous system of registration and update should therefore be considered.

In its consultation with political parties, the EOM noted concerns expressed about the credibility of the final register as they were not satisfied with the enforcement of the age and residency requirements for the registration of voters. In the absence of strict proof of residency requirements for registration of voters, the EISA EOM noted that voters from outside the municipalities were able to register inside the municipalities, and later on returned to

⁴ In the past all null ballots were reviewed and requalified by the National Electoral Commission

⁵ Both observer reports and aggregated election figures show that in municipalities such as Moatize, Chiure, Ulongue, Nhamayabue, and Gurue the percentage of null votes was double of the national average, and in some polling stations it reached double digits.

⁶ The SMS system was introduced in Maputo and Matola municipalities only for 2018 on a pilot basis, and will be rolled out for the entire country in 2019.

municipalities on election day to vote because they were in possession of legitimate voter's cards for those municipalities. Such cases were observed for example in Gurue.

2.2. Contestants' Registration and Candidate Nomination

Within the framework of the list proportional representative systems, political parties, coalitions of political parties and civil society groups, as long as duly registered, are entitled by law to lodge candidate lists once an election date is proclaimed and the nomination process is declared open. The provision for civil society lists is a commendable measure to promote inclusivity and political participation.

The EOM noted that some lists and candidates were rejected for non-compliance with the legal framework. Concerns were raised over these provisions, which the EISA EOM noted are ambiguous and disperse in different pieces of legislation, and impacts on the right to stand, and the fairness of the process.

In its interaction with different party structures at the district level, the EISA EOM noted concerns raised about that the list system tended to be opaque and concentrated power at party headquarters, as it was not a legal requirement that party lists should be validated by the parties at district level. The EOM is of the opinion that this trend could lead to alienation of the party grassroots structures who may consider the lists as impositions from the party headquarters.

2.3 Civic and Voter Education

The EOM noted that the electoral management body and other stakeholders provided civic and voter education (CVE). STAE suspended street CVE outreach on 24 of September 2018 as the campaign period would officially commence on 25 September 2018. The EOM was advised that henceforth it would continue its civic and voter education via the media.

Some stakeholders argued that the amount of education rolled out may have been inadequate. Based on its election day observations, the EISA EOM considers that there is room for improved voter education because there were instances where voters were still not familiar with the voting procedures.

Both the CNE and political parties and other contestants did little to disseminate to the public the lists of candidates competing in different municipalities. Given that voters are asked to vote not for parties and groups in abstract, but rather for nominal lists, awareness of the names of those lists is important information required for voters to make informed choices.

2.4 Election Campaigns

The EISA EOM observed the campaign process from 30 September until its conclusion on 7 October 2018. It observed that political parties were generally free to conduct their campaigning without hindrance. Parties and other contestants privileged the approach of going to the voters rather than bringing the voters to the contestants. For instance, door to door campaigns, caravans and the use of posters, amongst others, were some of the favoured campaign methods as opposed to reliance on political rallies.

Police guaranteed the security of campaign events when requested, but EISA observers noted that security provided to opposition parties had less police presence. Although the EISA observers did not directly observe violence during the campaigns, it noted that there were some reported security incidents especially on the last days of campaigns. Violence was particularly reported in Tete City where party supporters clashed. The EISA EOM also noted reports of partisan behaviour of members of the security agencies based on differential treatment of complaints by the parties.

While the electoral law of Mozambique prohibits the use of public resources for campaigning, the EISA EOM received several complaints of instances whereby public resources were used for campaigning, for instance the use of government vehicles to ferry party supporters to campaigns.

The Mission observed the placing of campaign posters on prohibited sites, but also noted efforts by those parties to rectify the situation upon notification by the electoral authorities.

The EISA EOM noted with satisfaction the role of the reconciliation committees that served as alternative dispute resolution mechanisms at district level during campaign period to address disputes arising⁷.

2.5 Preparedness of the CNE-STAE

CNE was not provided with the full budget it had requested from Government, but was able to deliver, with limited resources and time constraints imposed by the late approval of the amendments to the legal framework governing elections, a largely well-organised process, albeit with some operational weaknesses.

In the days before the elections, EISA observers visited CDE offices and warehouses in their areas of deployment. Observers were able to attend and observe the training of election personnel, and the arrival and distribution of election materials. However, the Mission noted the late allocation of polling stations to polling staff in Beira.

In its interaction with interlocutors at district level, specifically in Nacala-Porto, it was reported that the CNE/STAE had not shared the approved lists of contestants with the CDE and the police in that municipality. As a result the local authorities were caught by surprise by the campaign of the CEANA group, which they were not aware was competing in the elections.

Cross-cutting Issues

3.1. Women, Youth and Vulnerable Groups Representation and Participation

The Mission notes that the legal framework does not provide for a quota for women, youth and other vulnerable groups in the contestants' lists. Women constituted 51.54% of the registered voters for the elections, and the EOM also noted their wide participation in the campaign phase. However, although women comprised 37% of candidates on the contesting lists, only 18 of the 198 lists (9%) had a female head of list.

The EOM observed with satisfaction that 42.7% of polling officials encountered at the 122 polling stations visited where women, 40% of the citizen observers encountered at stations were women, but only 24.6% of the party and candidate agents were women.

3.2 The Role of Security Forces

The security forces to a large extent played a professional role during the campaign period. However the EISA EOM noted a tendency of heavy handedness in dealing with situations that required crowd control. Specifically, after the close of polls on election day and in the days after, the tendency for heavy-handedness became more prevalent. The EISA teams witnessed incidents involving the use of live ammunition and tear gas by security forces in Gurué and Marromeu⁸. The EISA EOM is of the view that the use of live ammunition and tear gas to disperse crowds should be avoided and use only as a last resort.

3.3. The Role of Civil Society

The EISA EOM noted the important role played by civil society groups in the electoral process. Several citizen observation networks deployed electoral conflict monitors during the campaign, and observers on election day. The EOM was informed that many citizen observers were not accredited in a timely manner in Nampula province, Maputo province and Maputo city. The EISA EOM wishes to emphasise the importance of citizen observers as an indicator

⁷ These committees were the initiative of the Votar Moçambique platform (a civil society group), and was rolled out in 20 municipalities.

⁸ In Gurué, the EISA observer team was directly affected by the tear gas at the polling station where they were observing the counting process.

of transparent elections and effective citizen participation. The EISA Mission wishes to emphasise that the unimpeded access of citizen observers to all stages of the electoral process is an important indicator of transparent elections and effective citizen participation.

The Election and Post-election Phases

4.1. Polling Day

On election day, EISA observer teams visited a total of 122 polling stations in eight municipalities.⁹ EISA observers were granted unrestricted access to all stations visited. The CNE/STAE effectively deployed materials across the country to ensure smooth election day operations.

It was observed that the process commenced and closed at the stipulated time. It proceeded in an orderly manner with a high turnout of voters during the day. Observed interruptions of the process were due to unrest in few isolated instances (4.2% of stations visited). The secrecy of the ballot was guaranteed throughout the process, and the EOM did not observe any direct intimidation or coercion of voters.

The stipulated voting procedures were observed as efficient and user-friendly, as each voter was processed on average in less than three minutes in the observed polling stations.

The CNE/STAE also took commendable steps to ensure that voters were directed to their assigned polling stations within polling centres by providing e-copies of the voter register on laptops to assist voters identify their assigned polling stations, although laptops were not available as widely as initially planned. The Mission also noted discrepancies between printed voters' rolls and voters' rolls on laptops in one polling centre in Ilha de Moçambique, as well as discrepancies between copies of the voters' rolls in possession of party agents and those with polling officials in Quelimane.

Most polling stations visited by EISA observers were generally accessible to persons with disability, however 13.6% of them were completely inaccessible. The stipulated layout of the polling stations which requires that the ballot box should be placed close to the officials made the effective flow of voters more difficult in smaller polling stations.

The EOM also observed that polling officials were familiar with and complied with stipulated voting procedures to a large extent, but their understanding and application of stipulated closing and counting procedures was limited. The delegation of responsibilities amongst the seven election officials laid a lot of responsibility on the Presiding Officer and Deputy Presiding Officer in comparison to the five other staff who were present at the station.

Citizen observers were present at 39.8% of the polling stations visited and polling agents were present at all polling stations visited. It was observed that polling agents from the three big parties were represented at all stations, while smaller parties had polling agents in much fewer polling stations. The presence of security officials was also observed in all the stations visited. Their conduct was assessed as discreet and professional.

All polling stations visited closed on time the procedures took place in the presence of party agents and citizen observers. However, the EISA EOM received reports of citizen observers being turned away from the counting process in three polling centres in Mocuba. The Mission also noted that polling officials, whilst familiar with voting procedures, had limited knowledge of the closing and counting process.

EISA teams also noted lack of priority given to the elderly and mothers with infants in several polling stations.

The EISA EOM noted the following further incidents and irregularities on election day:

⁹ Maputo, Matola, Beira, Dondo, Marromeu, Quelimane, Gurue, Ilha de Moçambique, and Angoche

- The team in Angoche observed that the CDE made a decision to allow voters in possession of voters cards but whose names were not on the register to vote. This decision is contrary to the provisions of the law.
- In Ilha de Moçambique, it was observed that some presiding officers were denied the right to cast special votes as mandated by law, thus compelling them to abandon their assigned polling stations to go and cast their vote in the polling stations where they were registered.
- The arrest of a Presiding Officer at a polling station in Ilha de Moçambique where the official attempted to hand out multiple ballots to voters from a batch of unofficial ballots found on his person.
- Other forms of irregularities observed on election was the differential application of ballot reconciliation and counting procedures in some polling stations. For instance, there was a case in Maputo where 16 ballots were nullified, because a voter used a tick instead of an 'X' to specify their preferred candidate.
- While there was no widespread violence on election day, the turn of events during the vote counting in municipalities like Gurue, Marromeu and Ilha de Moçambique is however regrettable as police fired shots and tear gas to disperse a crowd of protesters which led to injuries and at last one reported fatality.¹⁰

4.4. The Post-Election Phase

The aggregation process commenced on 11 October after the close of polls. The EISA mission visited the district aggregation centres in Maputo¹¹, Quelimane, Ilha, Marromeu, Beira and Angoche. EISA observers were unable to observe the aggregation process in Gurue due to unrest and further threats of violence, following the fracas that ensued during the counting processes.

The EISA EOM also observed the differential treatment of observer access to the district aggregation centres in the different municipalities. While in some municipalities such as Beira, Marromeu and Maputo, observers were informed that the process was not open to observation, in other municipalities, such as Quelimane, they were asked to wait to be invited, but observers were eventually not invited to observe the process. This was a clear contravention of article 192 of law 7/2018 that sets the rights of observers to observe all phases of the electoral process, including the intermediate aggregation of results at district level. In the districts where EISA observers were granted access to the aggregations centres, it was difficult for observers to follow the process as entry of results was done on a single computer.

The EISA EOM commends the CNE/STAE for the initiative taken to publish the provisional district tally results on its website on an ongoing basis to promote the openness of the process. The EOM however noted that the interruption of the publication of the provisional results mid-way through the process caused some public concern.

The EISA EOM notes with concern that the formula for calculation of percentages of provisional results was not standardised in all districts. Specifically, it was observed that the percentages in Ilha de Moçambique, Gurue and Quelimane were calculated based on the total votes cast in the district rather than the total valid votes as is the rule and was the case in other districts. Such disparity in the aggregation process could contribute to non-acceptance of the results and heightened post-election tensions. The EISA EOM noted however that STAE promptly corrected these mistakes when the intermediate results were posted on its website.

¹⁰ At EPC Gurue polling station, counting was interrupted by a twenty-minute electricity outage and a subsequent clash between security officials and MDM supporters which resulted in the use of gun fire and tear gas. Similarly in Ilha de Moçambique and Marromeu, the MTO teams observing at EPC 16 de Junho and EPC 12 de Outubro polling station were unable to fully observe the counting process following signs of unrest in neighbouring polling stations

¹¹ Kampfummo and Kamubukwane districts

The post-election context has been characterised so far by disputes over the integrity of results announced by some CDE, and accusations of results manipulation. In some municipalities, such as Marromeu, parties have threatened to resort to violence should the results not go according to their expectations. The violence in the post-election phase was not widespread, however tensions persist in some municipalities.

Some political parties contacted by the Mission allege that in some municipalities they were yet to receive copies of the official results which are needed to enable them file appeals. In other municipalities, such as Tete, Matola, Mocuba, Maganja da Costa, and Gurue, appeals have already been filed.

Conclusion and recommendations

The conduct of the 2018 municipal elections in Mozambique is another important step in the country's democratic development. These elections also mark a transition into the new system of decentralised governance in the country, and a new system to elect decentralised governments.

The EISA EOM commends Mozambicans for turning out to perform their civic duty in increased numbers compared to previous local elections¹², and the election administration structures for their efforts to ensure smooth electoral operations. While the mission notes that there are gaps in the legal framework that impacted on the level playing field and inclusiveness of the process for some parties, it also notes that the framework allowed for a largely competitive process. Election day procedures allowed citizens to freely express their will at the ballot, and the vote tally process has proceeded without observed irregularities, except for three municipalities (Gurue, Marromeu and Ilha de Moçambique). The Mission also noted that the district aggregation was problematic in some municipalities, notably in Marromeu, Monapo, Alto Molocue, Moatize and Matola.

EISA will continue to follow the complaints and appeals and validation process, and will issue a final report of its overall assessment after the completion of these processes.

Based on its findings and observations, the EISA EOM offers the following recommendations in view of national elections scheduled to take place within a year:

- To address the observed gaps and dispersion within the different pieces of legislations that have bearing on municipal elections, the EISA EOM recommends that further legal reforms should be undertaken to harmonise the legal framework to provide all laws within a single legislation that clearly stipulates eligibility criteria, among other factors.
- To address the concerns raised about the lack of clarity of the voter's choice under the new single-ballot system, the EISA EOM recommends deliberate steps to enhance clarity of choice, for instance by including the pictures and names of the 'heads of list' alongside party logos and names.
- To further promote the integrity and fairness of the voting process, the EISA EOM recommends that the review and requalification of null ballots should be reintroduced, but at the district level, together with the review of protested ballots.
- To reduce the cost of elections, a more continuous voter registration system should be considered.
- The EOM urges the authorities in Mozambique to ensure that all phases of the electoral cycle are covered by civic and voter education initiatives.
- The EISA EOM strongly recommends the strengthening of the alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, such as the reconciliation committees, to further reduce election-related conflicts.

¹² At 60%, the 2018 turnout has been the highest in the history of local elections in Mozambique.

- The EOM urges all stakeholders in Mozambique, including the political parties, to review their internal policies to guarantee equity in the participation of women, youth and other vulnerable groups not just as voters and campaign participants, but also as candidates themselves, in all elective positions.
- The EISA EOM urges political parties in Mozambique to take further steps to recruit more women as party agents in future elections.
- The EISA EOM recommends more investment in better training of election officials at CDE and polling station level, and district STAE officials.
- The Mission strongly recommends improved training of the police to deal with crowd control and avoid excessive use of force.
- The EISA EOM urges the CNE and all political parties to make a stronger effort to publicise to all voters the composition of their candidates' lists after their approval.
- The EISA EOM urges the CNE to take strong steps to ensure timely accreditation of citizen observers, and unhindered observer and media access to the intermediate results aggregation process in accordance with the law.