



**EASTERN AFRICA STANDBY FORCE (EASF) ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION (EOM)
6th General Election June 21 2021 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia**

Preliminary Report

Addis Ababa

EASF- Mission Coordination Center 22nd June 2021

Introduction

The Eastern Africa Standby Force (EASF) deployed an Election Observation Mission (EOM) to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia following the invitation by the Government. A total of 28 observers were accredited by the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE). The main objective of the EASF-EOM was to observe and assess the conduct of the 6th general election in line with the EASF mission plan for the election in Ethiopia.

The EASF Election Observer Mission is led by H.E. Ambassador ABDILLAH AOULED ALI from the Republic Djibouti. The Deputy Head of Mission is Ms. Lina Hoareau from Seychelles, the first time for a female Deputy HoM to lead an EASF mission. The Eastern Africa Standby Force Election Observation Mission (EASF EOM) consists of 26 observers from EASF Member States namely; Burundi, Djibouti, Kenya, Somalia, Seychelles, Uganda, Rwanda and Comoros.

The Mission Coordination Centre (MCC) comprised of an Election Coordinator, Media officer, two logisticians, IT officer and support staff from both the EASF Secretariat and the Logistics' Base.

The assessment of the EASF Mission was based on the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR 1966), the African Union Declaration on the Principles of Democratic Elections (2005), African Union Guidelines for Election Observations and Monitoring Missions (2002), the African Charter on Democracy, Election and Governance (ACDEG 2007), Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers as well as the current legal framework governing elections in Ethiopia.

Objectives of EASF EOM

1. To conduct an objective and impartial assessment of the electoral process.
2. To provide a timely and independent report of the process

3. To promote the conduct of credible elections and contribute to the consolidation of democracy, good governance, peace and stability in the country.

Methodology of the EASF EOM

The mission leadership met with several key partners both from the government and non-state actors.

- Interaction with stakeholders involved in the electoral process, notably the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, National Election Board (NEBE), Media, Women Federation of Ethiopia, Ethiopian Ambassador to AU, National Democratic Institute (NDI) and International Republican Institute (IRI) Danish and Swedish Ambassadors and the Head of the AU Election Observer Mission.
- A comprehensive pre deployment training programme was conducted in Addis Ababa for all EASF observers prior to deployment.

This preliminary statement is based on the data collected from the field, on the overall environment within which the vote was conducted, the opening of polling stations, voting process and counting.

Preliminary Findings and Observations

● Political Context

The government of Ethiopia is organized in the form of a Federal Parliamentary Republic with 10 regional states and two administrative towns. The Prime Minister is the head of government; the executive power is exercised by the government while legislative power is vested in the Parliament. Members of parliament are elected for a 5-year term. General elections were supposed to be held in Ethiopia in August 2020 to elect officials to the House of Peoples' Representatives, but the election was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Regional and municipal council elections were also planned to be held at the same time around the country.

The election date was pushed for a second time from 5th of June to 21st of June 2021.

- **Legal Framework**

The election was conducted under the provisions of the Election Act and Political Parties Act. The provisions of the law also stipulate: the use of transparent ballot boxes, voting booths, new voter list books and cards. There are five types of elections in Ethiopia: general elections, local elections, by-elections, re-elections, and referenda. General elections are elections for members of the HoPR and State Councils conducted every five years and Local elections are elections for council members of a nationality zone, city, sub-city and woreda. The number of representatives for local elections is determined by regional laws.

- **Election Administration**

The National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) is an autonomous government agency mandated to run national elections of Ethiopia. NEBE was established by Proclamation number 1133/2011, and answers to the House of Peoples' Representatives. The board members of NEBE are relatively new and NEBE is going through various reforms. NEBE is strongly supported by their regional offices, Constituency Offices, Zonal Coordinators and Deputies.

- **Voting Operations**

The voting operation included more than 670 constituencies, 100 Zonal Coordination Offices and 130 Officers. A total of 639 ICT Team Leads, over 1050 data encoders. Many volunteers also helped with the voting operation.

A total of over 44,000 polling stations were set up to cater for over 37.5 million registered voters of which 45.6% were female voters.

Over 9,505 candidates were registered and September 6th has been set for remaining constituencies where voting did not take place on 21st June. The Southwest referendum will also be held on 6th September, 2021.

- **Media**

Both local and international media houses have been actively engaged in covering this election from the pre voting phase. Some of these media outlets are; BBC, VOA, DW, Oromia Broadcasting Network (OBN), Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate (EBC), Fana Broadcasting Corporate (FBC), Walta, Addis Media Network (ADM), Ethiopian News Agency and Ethiopian Press Agency. Social media is also a key player in information sharing, shaping opinion and allowing citizens to share their views.

- **Civil Society**

The Mission noted a very active Civil Society with presence of domestic observers in most areas across the country. Over 47,000 domestic observers were involved in the electoral process.

Election Day Observations

The EASF EOM deployed twelve (12) observer in teams in 5 regions and two city administration to observe Election-Day activities. The teams observed the opening, polling, closing and counting processes. In addition, they observed the general environment within which polling was taking place.

A total number 190 of polling stations were visited by the EASF EOM.

- **Opening of Polling Stations**

In the polling stations observed, the Mission noted that 19% opened late. This late opening was attributed to delays in organising, delivering and arranging of electoral materials at polling stations.

- **Election Materials**

The Mission observed that election materials were available in sufficient quantities in most polling stations visited. However, in some polling stations, there were insufficient ballot papers. Ballot boxes were observed to be generally well sealed and in all polling stations visited the polling booths used guaranteed the secrecy of ballot.

- **Turnout**

EASF EOM observed that the election turnout was generally high in most polling stations visited with very few turn away voters.

- **Gender Participation**

EASF EOM observed a satisfactory gender presence and high turnout of women voters in most of polling stations visited.

The EASF EOM noted 34% of women as electoral personnel and 82% as domestic observers at the Polling stations visited.

There was also a large number of young people working as polling officials.

- **Election Personnel**

The EASF EOM observed that in 87% of the polling stations visited, the required number of 5 polling personnel was met.

In most of the polling stations visited, the Presiding Officers looked overwhelmed as they were part of the polling staff and EASF EOM observed that 89% of the polling stations visited, the layout did not allow smooth movement of voters.

- **Voting**

The EASF EOM observed that voting was generally conducted in a calm and peaceful atmosphere in most parts of the country.

In most of the polling stations observed, priority was given to persons with disabilities, the elderly and security officers. The EASF EOM notes that assistance was given to persons unable to vote. EASF EOM notes with satisfaction the onsite voting briefing given to voters by the polling officers.

- **Party Agents**

The EASF EOM noted high presence of candidates' representatives in polling stations visited. In most of the polling stations visited, the party agents were discreet, however, in some polling stations, some party agents were interfering with the voters.

- **Security**

Security and law enforcement agencies are key stakeholders in an election process. The presence of Federal, Regional Police and Military were highly visible in most areas of deployment. EASF observer team witnessed a commotion of voters in Bishoftu causing panic and uncontrolled crowd ran into the polling station. The security personnel were quick to restore order.

- **Closing and Counting**

In most of the polling stations visited, EASF mission observed voters still in the queue at closing time and it was a rational decision that NEBE took to extend the voting hours. However, the decision was communicated late to many stations, they were informed about the extension of voting after they had already closed the station.

EASF EOM notes with satisfaction that Election Day operations were generally administered in a manner that allowed the free expression of the will of the voters, however, EASF EOM notes that a large number of voters were not able to vote due to cancelation of polling in 2 regions and some other constituencies.

- **COVID 19 Protocols**

In some polling stations visited, there were no handwashing facilities. However, sanitizers were available and voters were wearing masks. In all polling stations visited, social distancing was not observed at all.

Conclusion

Based on the information collected, the EASF Election Observer Mission concludes that the 6th general election held on 21st June, 2021 in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia was conducted in calm and peaceful manner.

The EASF EOM wishes to express its appreciation and gratitude to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the relevant authorities including NEBE for supporting and facilitating our mission. EASF EOM would like to share the following important recommendations to further improve the election process in the country.

Recommendations

To the Government:

- Give priority to the creation of a conducive environment for dialogue between all political actors
- Enhance the existing structures for the promotion and adherence of rule of law
- Consider a new national population census

To National Election Board of Ethiopia

- Engage with relevant stakeholders to strengthen voter education
- Engage with government for the conduct of a national census to update the voter register and build public confidence in the process
- Strengthen the mechanisms in place to make political parties more accountable to the Electoral Code of Conduct

To Political Actors:

- Meaningfully engage to the permanent framework for political dialogue and use the JCPP as the common platform to enhance peace and mutual respect
- Use the established legal framework to seek redress and address electoral disputes
- Place the interest of national cohesion above all partisan considerations
- Refrain from violence, hate speech and intimidation.
- Political actors should call for peace, tolerance and reconciliation.

To Civil Society:

- Advocate for respect of human rights and civil liberties
- To continue participating in a non-partisan and impartial election observation.

To Media and Communication:

The main stream media should ensure that election coverage is done in a fair and objective manner.

- Ensure balanced and objective reporting
- Journalists should promote responsible reporting and respect to the journalistic ethical standard

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