



**AFRICAN UNION ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION  
TO THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA**



**07 DECEMBER GENERAL ELECTIONS**

**PRELIMINARY STATEMENT**

**GHANA, 09 DECEMBER 2024**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The people of the Republic of Ghana went to the polls on the 7<sup>th</sup> of December 2024 to elect their President and Members of Parliament. At the invitation of the Government of Ghana and the Electoral Commission (EC), the chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC) deployed an African Union Election Observation Mission (AUEOM) to observe the election. The Mission represents AU's efforts to promote transparent and credible elections and deepen democratic governance in Africa within the context of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG).

The Mission was led by H.E. Sahle-Work Zewde, Former President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, and supported by H.E. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Member of the Panel of the Wise and Former Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa. It comprised of 60 short-term observers (STOs) and technical electoral experts drawn from 27 African countries. This deployment was preceded by the deployment of a Pre-election assessment Mission in Ghana from 28 October to 2 November 2024.

The AUEOM commends the people of Ghana for their commitment to democratic principles, as evidenced by the peaceful conduct of the 7 December 2024 general elections. The AUEOM witnessed a spirit collaboration and patriotism among the electoral officials, the political party agents, the voters and the security personnel deployed to the polling stations as they worked together, respecting their different roles but ensuring a seamless and transparent voting and counting processes with the necessary checks and balances in place.

The AUEOM commends the Government of the Republic of Ghana for the creating conditions that enabled the EC to effectively deliver on its mandate, political parties to engage with supporters, and the media and civil society to perform their roles without hindrance, allowing citizens to exercise their right to vote.

As part of its methodology, the Mission met with representatives of government officials, political parties and independent candidates, EC, civil society organisations, the Inspector General of Police (IGP), diplomatic community, citizens observer groups, academia, and other observer missions.

Through this preliminary statement, the Mission offers a summary of its key findings and recommendations on the electoral process up to the closing and counting of the polls. This statement is issued while the election results process is still ongoing. The Mission will issue the final report at a later date.

## **PRELIMINARY FINDINGS**

The AUEOM makes the following preliminary observations:

### **(a) Political Context of the Elections**

Ghana's December 2024 general elections mark the country's eighth presidential transition since the return to multi-party democracy in 1992. This reinforces its democratic reputation for predictable and rules-based presidential transitions, aligning with the African Union's election standards and international best practices.

However, the elections took place against the backdrop of heightened political polarisation, economic challenges, currency devaluation, corruption, high youth unemployment, disinformation and misinformation, regional insecurity, and illegal small-scale gold mining (*galamsey*).

### **(b) Legal Framework**

Ghana's legal framework for elections provides for and guarantees fundamental human rights and freedoms, including the right to political participation and freedom of expression, association, and assembly, which is in line with the AU and regional standards and international best practices for democratic elections.

Nevertheless, the mission noted some limitations in the legal framework regarding the use of public resources, campaign regulations, and campaign financing. These gaps could lead to the misuse of state resources and the creation of an uneven playfield for the electoral process participants.

### **(c) Election Administration**

The Electoral Commission (EC) of Ghana, an independent constitutional body established under the Electoral Commission Act (Act 451 of 1993), is mandated to oversee and manage all public elections and referenda in the country.

The EC implemented all activities on its electoral calendar as scheduled though there were some delays in some of the processes. Notably, the mission acknowledges the EC's efforts to enhance transparency in the process by having regular consultations with the civil society and invited the media to participate in one Inter-Party Advisory Committee (IPAC) meeting.

The AUEOM commends the EC for the timeous deployment of materials to all regions and the efficiency of the biometric verification devices (BVD).

The mission also acknowledges that the EC communicated timeously on the printing and reprinting of ballot papers which contributed to the postponing of special voting to 05 December 2024 in the Eastern and Central regions respectively.

It is however regrettable that there were reports of ballot papers that were alleged to be distributed outside the formal polling processes. However, the people of Ghana are commended for their vigilance in intercepting the said ballots, which could have tainted the integrity of the process.

The mission commends the vigilance of voters, citizen observers, and political party and candidate's agents in the observation and monitoring of the polling process, counting of ballots and the tallying processes.

### **(d) Voter Registration**

Voter registration was conducted for 21 days between 7 May and 27 May 2024. In addition to the standard registration sites at the district offices, the EC deployed mobile teams to register voters in difficult to access areas.

A total of 1,746,518 new voters were registered out of which 708,280 are first time voters aged between 18 to 21 years. A final register of 18,774,159 voters was published by the EC of which 18,640,811 voters with biometric data, 131,478 special Voters, and 1,870 voters without biometric data. All presidential candidates and political parties received a copy of the final register, further enhancing transparency and access to information in the process.

#### **(e) Political Party and Candidate Nominations**

The EC conducted the candidate nomination exercise between 9 to 13 September 2024.

Of the 39 candidates who indicated their intention to contest the 2024 presidential election, only 13 candidates made it to the final list for the presidential election, 9 from political parties and 4 as independent candidates, and for the parliamentary election, 801 candidates composed of 111 independent candidates and 690 from political parties were nominated to contest for the 276 seats.

#### **(f) Election campaign regulations and finance framework**

The Mission noted that the presidential candidates committed to a peaceful electoral process through signing the 4<sup>th</sup> Presidential Election Peace Pact on 28 November 2024.

The campaign period was generally peaceful, and campaigns messaging focused on key issues such as public service delivery, anti-corruption efforts, economic development, civic education, and mining sector improvements.

While acknowledging the existence of the Political Parties Law Act 574 of 2000, the mission noted the absence of a comprehensive legal framework to regulate campaign timeline and funding.

#### **(g) Gender Equality and Inclusion in the Electoral Process**

The majority for this general election is women with a total number of 9,689,980 register voters. However, women are considerably under-represented in all the elective positions.

There was only one female candidate out of the 12 presidential candidates while in the parliamentary ballot, there were 119 female candidates (17%) compared to the 682 males. The Mission also notes that youth and persons with disabilities (PWDs) are under-represented as candidates.

The Mission commends the 25% reduction in filing fees to 75,000 Ghanaian cedis for women and PWDs and the EC's provision of tactile ballots for visually impaired voters.

#### **(h) The Media Environment**

The AUEOM acknowledges the role played by the media in disseminating information throughout the election period.

The EC also provided regular media briefings on election day and responded to reports emanating from around the country.

The Mission noted the access of journalists to tallying centers, resulting in timely dissemination of information.

### **(i) The Role of Civil Society Organisations**

The AUEOM acknowledges the active role of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) played in Ghana's electoral process which aligned with ACDEG.

The CSOs in Ghana organised themselves into networks for purposes of observing to improve transparency and credibility of the elections, primarily through the deployment of a large number of election observers and conduct of Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT).

The Mission also interacted with various situation rooms set by CSOs to monitor electoral process and offer mediation and rapid response initiatives.

## **VOTING**

### **i. Special Voting**

Ghana provides one of the growing instances of special voting which accommodates persons who will be on official duty on Election Day to exercise their right to vote.

The AUEOM observed special voting in Greater Accra on 2 December 2024, and in Eastern Region on 5 December 2024, where polling was conducted in a largely compliant, peaceful, and orderly manner.

There was consistency between how polling was conducted for special voting and on Election Day. The counting and tabulation process that was done together on 7 December 2024.

### **ii. Election Day Observation**

On election day, the AUEOM deployed 60 short-term observers (STOs) to 14 of the 16 regions across Ghana. They observed opening and closing procedures in 13<sup>1</sup> regions and visited a total of 442 polling units to observe voting. In most polling stations, the atmosphere was generally calm and peaceful.

#### **A. Opening of polling**

The AUEOM noted that all the polling stations visited opened on time apart from two stations, one in the Eastern region and another in Oti, which opened late due to the late arrival of materials and polling staff and the failure of the BVDs.

#### **B. Voting process**

The Mission noted that the EC maintained a maximum threshold of 749 voters per polling station, improving efficiency in voter management and counting procedures.

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<sup>1</sup> Mobile teams to Volta, Eastern and Ashanti opened in Greater Accra before proceeding to their regions.

Voting proceeded uninterrupted throughout the day at the polling stations observed; however, reports emerged of voting being interrupted in some areas in Greater Accra due to heavy rainfalls, but this did not affect the election process.

### **C. Election materials**

Despite the isolated case of delay in opening witnessed, election materials were available in sufficient quantities throughout the day, and the voter verification devices also performed as intended at the stations observed by the AUEOM.

### **D. Polling stations**

While all polling units were generally accessible to voters, only 6% of the stations observed were located on uneven ground where Persons with Disabilities would face challenges. The secrecy of the vote was guaranteed by the appropriate lay-out of all polling stations.

At most of the polling stations visited, images of candidates and political parties were posted very close to the polling stations, despite the requirement of having these no less than 100M within the polling stations.

### **E. Election personnel and polling Procedures**

The Mission noted that there was general uniformity in implementing prescribed procedures by polling officials, who exhibited a high level of professionalism.

A large percentage of polling personnel were women, and this is commendable.

The voters needing assistance in 80% of the polling stations visited, were provided necessary assistance by a person of their choice or a polling officer.

### **F. Party agents and election observers**

Authorized personnel including political parties and candidates' agents as well as observers, were present in majority of the stations, and were allowed to conduct their duties without restrictions.

The Mission noted that all party agents received a copy of the voter register and result sheets, further enhancing the transparency of the process.

### **G. Security**

Security personnel were present throughout the day and conducted themselves professionally. There were short queues outside most polling stations, and these remained generally peaceful and orderly.

However, the Mission noted some security incidents reported by the Ghana Police Service and commends their timely interventions. Additionally, some election officials in the Bono region were arrested for various electoral offences.

The mission notes with concern the reported shooting incident, which claimed the life of one citizen and encourages the security agencies to continue to put in place measures to avert such incidents during such an important national process.

The AUEOM acknowledges the level of professionalism exhibited by the security personnel deployed to the polling stations visited. No armed security was seen at the polling stations, and the police are commended for their swift response where they were called in to restore order.

## **H. Closing of the polls**

There were no queues at most polling stations at the time of closing, however, voters who were on the queue at some of the stations were allowed to vote.

Closing and counting took place in a peaceful, open, and transparent atmosphere in the presence of voters, observers, party and candidate's agents and media. Polling staff were generally competent in carrying out their duties and demonstrated a sense of commitment to the process.

### **COMMENDABLE PRACTICES**

- Establishing a maximum threshold of 749 voters per polling station, ensuring the efficiency of the election administration, ensuring adequate electoral materials and limiting the possibility of long queues
- Allowing political party agents to put their own seal on ballot boxes to secure the vote.
- Inclusive vote-counting processes conducted transparently at polling stations, fostering public trust in the electoral process.
- Access to the voter register for party agents at each polling station, which enabled verification of the voters by the political party agents.
- Reduction of candidate nomination fees for women and persons with disabilities, promoting greater inclusivity in candidate participation.
- Regular press conference by the Ghana Police Service on security matters to enhancing public awareness of polling day security.
- The active involvement of the Anti-Corruption Commission in policing corrupt practices such as vote buying, which can corrupt the electoral process.
- Publishing election petitioning and litigation procedures to enhance understanding and use by election stakeholders in the event of election disputes.
- Granting of media access to tallying centres and allowing them to publish declared results to limit information gaps in the electoral process.
- Use of multiple options to verify voters using the BVDs which limits chances of registered voters being turned away.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **(a) Conclusion**

The AUEOM commends the people of Ghana for their commitment to democratic principles, as evidenced by the peaceful conduct of the 7 December 2024 general elections.

The overall electoral process adhered to regional and international standards, reinforcing Ghana's democratic credentials.

While the Government and people of Ghana and, the Electoral Commission set high standards in management of electoral processes that other African Union Member

States should emulate, the AUEOM offers some recommendations on areas that could be improved.

### **(b) Recommendations**

#### ***To the Government and Parliament of Ghana:***

- i. **Gender Equality:** Strengthen its commitment to gender equality by implementing measures that align with the ACDEG, the AU Agenda 2063, and international benchmarks such as CEDAW.
- ii. **Affirmative Action:** Enact affirmative action legislation to enhance the participation of underrepresented groups, including women, youth, and PWDs, in elective offices.
- iii. **Campaign Finance:** Develop comprehensive campaign finance legislation to regulate political financing, limit the misuse of state resources, and ensure a level playing field.

#### ***Political Parties***

- i. **Inclusivity:** Adopt a more inclusive approach through internal capacity building and civic education to nominate and support candidates from underrepresented groups, particularly women, youth, and PWDs.
- ii. **Youth Participation:** Put in place measures to ensure the effective participation of youth who constitute most of the registered voters in order to encourage them to exercise their right to vote and select leaders of their choice.

#### ***Civil Society Organisations:***

- i. **Election Observation:** Continue with efforts towards ensuring peaceful, inclusive, transparent, and credible election in Ghana by monitoring electoral processes and consider ways of their deployment.
- ii. **Civic Education:** Design civic education methodologies targeted at the youth to improve their participation.

#### ***The Electoral Commission***

- i. **Stakeholder Consultations:** Maintain and enhance regular stakeholder consultations to promote transparency and inclusivity in the electoral process.
- ii. **Ballot Security:** Consider measures to mitigate the production of counterfeit ballot papers by improving the securing features of the ballot papers
- iii. **Polling Stations:** Increase the number of polling stations in sparsely populated areas in order to reduce the distances between polling stations, particularly in rural areas.
- iv. **Signage:** Improve the directional signage of polling stations to ensure easy identification and access

The mission lauds the National Patriotic Party Presidential Candidate, Dr Mahamudu Bawumia, for demonstrating statesmanship by accepting the results of the election according to the party's tally and conceding defeat prior to the official declaration of presidential results. Indeed, Ghana remains the beacon of democracy and the home of Pan-Africanism, as it upholds the values set by our forefathers in putting the country



and people first. The AUEOM further commends Dr Bawumia for going further to congratulate President-Elect John Dramani Mahama for his election victory. Thank you, Ghana, for continuing to exhibit exemplary leadership for the region and the continent of Africa.

The mission takes this opportunity to congratulate H.E. John Dramani Mahama the President Elect of the Republic of Ghana and wishes him success as he continues on the path to enhance democracy, governance and development in Ghana.

**Issued in Accra, Ghana, on 09 December 2024**

**Her Excellency Sahle-Work Zewde,  
Head of African Union Election Observation Mission  
(Former President of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia)**

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