



PRELIMINARY STATEMENT OF THE IGAD ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION TO THE LEGISLATIVE ELECTION OF DJIBOUTI

Djibouti, 26th February 2023

The IGAD Election Observation Mission commends the people of Djibouti for coming out to exercise their right to vote on 24th of February 2023 and doing so in an orderly, peaceful and non-violent manner.

This is a Preliminary Report of the IGAD Election Observation Mission (IGAD-EOM), a short-term observation mission to the 2023 Legislative Elections of the Republic of Djibouti. The Preliminary Report summarizes the Mission's observation findings of the legislative election conducted on the 24th of February 2023.

This Preliminary Report reflects the IGAD-EOM observers' assessment of the 2023 legislative election from the Opening to the Closing of 67 polling stations that the observers managed to assess on the day of the election in the city of Djibouti and Arta.

The IGAD-EOM is a short-term mission and, therefore, it did not observe the pre-election and post-election processes such as voter registration, campaign, and tallying. For this reason, the Mission cannot provide a report on the pre-election and post-election activities.

1. Background

Upon invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation of the Republic of Djibouti to IGAD to observe the 2023 legislative election, IGAD Executive Secretary H.E. Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu authorized the deployment of a short-term Election Observation Mission (EOM) to observe the vote in the



Republic of Djibouti. This was in cognizance of the importance of election observation as a fundamental principle of promoting transparency in electoral processes, good governance and democracy in the Republic of Djibouti.

The IGAD – EOM comprised a lean team of 10 short-term observers (STOs). Prior to deployment, the Mission met with the officials of National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI), and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Djibouti to consult on key aspects of the election.

The main objective of the IGAD-EOM was to conduct an impartial and independent assessment of the Djibouti's 2023 Legislative Election and determine whether the vote was conducted in accordance with the Constitution, legal and institutional frameworks of the Republic of Djibouti and principles of democratic elections.

2. Findings and Recommendations

On 24th of February, 2023, the people of the Republic of Djibouti took to the polls to exercise their civic rights in a legislative election. Candidates of two political parties, namely, the ruling **Union for Presidential Majority (UMP)**, and **Union for Democracy and Justice (UDJ)** contested for a five-year term of the National Assembly of 65 seats in 586 polling stations.



The Mission noted the presence of, and made consultations with, other international observers, namely, the African Union, the Arab League, and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation.

Election Management:

Necessary polling materials were in place in the polling stations that the mission observed, and the security environment was satisfactory. In the vote casting process, the election management officials demonstrated transparency and competence in carrying out their responsibilities and were cordial and responsive to both voters and observers. In most of the polling stations observed, the number of women officials in the election management process was commendable.

The Mission noted that representatives of the contesting political parties were present in all polling stations observed.

Opening and Closing of Polling Stations:

All polling stations observed, save for one, opened on time – at 6:00 AM. Closing time was extended by one-hour nationwide. All polls, therefore, closed at 7:00 PM.



Voter Turnout:

Although the Mission is unable to immediately determine the percentage of voter turnout, it was observed that most voters cast their votes in the afternoon hours. Voter turnout in the morning was low. The Mission notably was encouraged by the high turnout of women voters. However, we did not observe significant participation of the youth in the process.

Security:

The Mission observed that the election was conducted in a peaceful, incident-free environment.

3. Recommendations:

The mission wishes to make the following recommendations:

1. In Djibouti, as is in any other Muslim nation, Friday is largely observed as a day of prayer as well as the first day of the weekend. It is our observation that given that the election day fell on a Friday, it affected voter turnout adversely. It is the Mission's suggestion to the Government of Djibouti to consider a different day for holding elections in future.



2. The participation of the youth both in the management of election and actual voting was not adequate enough, especially considering that this group contributes over half of the population. The IGAD-EOM recommends the need to put in place frameworks to encourage the youth to take an active role in strengthening democracy in the Republic of Djibouti.

4. Conclusions:

The IGAD-EOM commends the great people of Djibouti for coming out to exercise their right to vote on the 24th February of 2023 and doing so in a peaceful and orderly manner.

The Mission would also like to commend the National Independent Electoral Commission for executing a smooth electoral process. We would also like to appreciate the law enforcement agencies for discharging their responsibilities dutifully.

Finally, the Mission would like to take this opportunity to thank the people and government of the Republic of Djibouti for their warm hospitality and cooperation, and peaceful conclusion of the legislative election.

Thank you!