



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

DELEGATION OF OBSERVERS

MUNICIPAL AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN MAURITANIA

(19 November 2006)

**Report by Alain Hutchinson,
Head of Delegation**

**Annexes: I. Programme
II. Joint press release
III Preliminary statement by the EU Election Observation Mission**

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On 28 September 2006 the European Parliament's Conference of Presidents decided on the basis of a recommendation by the election coordination group to send a delegation to Mauritania for the municipal and parliamentary elections on 19 and 26 November 2006.

Parliament's political groups followed their internal rules in appointing the following Members for the first round of elections:

- Alain Hutchinson (PSE, Belgium)
- Milan Horáček (Verts, Germany)
- Ryszard Czarnecki (Europe des Nations, Poland)

After some hesitation, the second round of elections was set for 3 December. The political groups had not appointed enough Members to send a delegation for the second round.

The delegation met for the first time on 18 October 2006 in Brussels and appointed Alain Hutchinson as its head. It discussed the mission programme and had a meeting with a Commission representative and the Mauritanian ambassador in Brussels.

The delegation visited Mauritania from 16 to 22 November 2006. It worked closely with the EU Election Observation Mission (EOM), particularly the Chief of Mission, Marie Anne Isler Béguin. The delegation met Mrs Isler Béguin on several occasions and her suggestions were duly incorporated into the preliminary statement. At the press conference after the first round of elections, the Head of Delegation published a **joint press release with the EOM (Annex II)**.

The delegation held meetings before and after election day with party representatives, candidates, representatives of civil society, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the Ministry of the Interior. There were also meetings with the German, French and Spanish ambassadors. The Head of Delegation also met the President of Mauritania.

On the basis of these meetings, this report begins with a brief analysis of the political situation in Mauritania from the viewpoint of the elections and then gives the details of meetings held there and election observation on the day. It concludes with a political analysis of the situation after the first round of elections and a recommendation to the European Parliament.

1. Brief analysis of the political situation in Mauritania

After the coup d'état on 3 August 2005, the Military Council for Justice and Democracy (MCJD) headed by Colonel Ely Ould Mohamed Vall gave an undertaking to the Mauritanian people to create favourable conditions for an open and transparent democracy on which civil society and political players would be able to comment freely.

Following this, the MCJD held national consultation days in Nouakchott from 25 to 29 October 2006. Nearly 600 people from various political, social and professional backgrounds took part: representatives of the public authorities, political parties, NGOs, the associative sector, trade union and professional organisations. The aim was to highlight the democratic transition process and the consensus needed to achieve it. Election deadlines were then set, with particular consideration as to when in the election calendar the presidential elections should be held. Most participants thought they should be held after all the other elections to prevent an automatic rallying to the President's party, which could hinder the formation of a pluralist parliament. It was also decided to set up an independent electoral commission (INEC).

A constitutional charter had been promulgated three days after the coup d'état. It set out the organisation and operation of the public authorities' constitutional powers during the transition period. The powers of the parliament elected in October 2001 were terminated.

The EU took the view that the coup d'état represented a fundamental violation of democratic principles and the rule of law as set out in Article 9 of the Cotonou Agreement and entered into consultations under Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement. During the consultations, the transition government gave 23 undertakings for a return to democracy, including holding elections within a fixed period, the neutrality of members of the MCJD during the transition period, respect for fundamental rights and freedoms, respect for the rule of law and good management of public affairs.

A constitutional referendum was approved by 96.96% of the votes on 25 June 2006. The key measure was limitation of the presidential mandate to five years, renewable only once. Membership of the National Assembly was increased from 81 to 95.

The municipal and parliamentary elections in November 2006 form the second stage in the democratic transition process that began after the coup d'état. As the first electoral exercise after the opening up of political pluralism, the elections will probably help structure the political landscape before the presidential elections in March 2007, which will have a decisive influence on the political direction followed by Mauritania in the next few years.

In October the pre-election period was disturbed by a sudden increase in the number of independent candidates, which cast doubts on the transition authority's real intentions as regards political neutrality. The MCJD was accused of encouraging independent election candidates with no apparent political connections. The political parties suspected the military power of trying to weaken them. The day after the ballot, the aims of the independent candidates still appeared vague, and their real political affiliations will emerge in the coming months.

2. The delegation's main political meetings

2.1 Coalition of Forces for Democratic Change (CFCD)

The Chairman and members of the coalition were very worried about the attitude of those in power in promoting independent candidates as opposed to those standing for political parties. By encouraging independents to stand, the authorities want to influence the future composition of the new Assembly. There is a risk that the national consensus on which the elections and the democratisation process have been built will be undermined. They fear that the state's involvement in rebuilding the old Party by means of independent candidates will give them a 'new virginity'. They fear fraudulent practice by the authorities in encouraging businessmen to support their 'independent' list. They have expressed fears that the President's manoeuvre has been supported by the EU. Here, they have referred to statements by Louis Michel, Member of the Commission, to the effect that the political parties do not have a monopoly of democracy – which has provoked a strong reaction. Letters have been sent to the Presidents of the Commission and the European Parliament requesting a clarification, which so far have remained unanswered.

The coalition comprises about 10 parties. They have an electoral agreement to support each other in the second ballot and form a government if they obtain a majority in the Assembly and to present a single candidate for the presidential election. The coalition also has agreements with Islamic groups that are said to be moderate.

Its political priorities include: founding a truly democratic system; settling humanitarian cases; totally eradicating slavery; promoting relations with the EU and applying a moderate economic liberalism in which the state would be present to some extent.

2.2 National Union for Democratic Change (UNAD)

This comprises four new parties including the National Development Party (PND). Its Chairman has defined his party as centrist – no fundamentalism or racism – tolerant to all tendencies and favourable to economic liberalism. He has also condemned the Ministry of the Interior's refusal to allow UNAD representatives to stand in several wilayas; this may be as a reprisal to the fact that they turned down an invitation to stand as independents. He also expressed concern that the transition government has favoured the return of the former political class but he recognises it as positive that President Vall has kept his promise on the democratic process.

2.3 Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)

This meeting allowed the delegation to convey to the Chairman of the INEC – which is responsible for implementation of the electoral process – the concerns expressed by the political parties about the transferral of voters to election registration offices away from their usual place of residence, unequal access by candidates to radio and television, and the administration's real or supposed support for independent candidates. The financing of the election campaign has revealed a lack of machinery to limit and control campaign expenses. There have also been delays in aid and subsidies offered by the State and the international community.

3. The election and observation on the day

Members of the delegation undertook to visit several polling stations in the company of representatives of the EU Election Mission (EU EOM). Milan Horáček and Ryszard Czarnecki concentrated on observing in various districts of the capital Nouakchott. They were also present for counting operations.

Alain Hutchinson arranged to observe the opening of the polling stations in Rosso, a town in the south of the country on the Senegalese border, and then visited polling stations along the road back to Nouakchott, where he observed the count at a polling station where there had been some problems on opening because of mistakes in the electoral rolls.

The observers' delegation was well received. The polling station presiding officers provided all the information and the voters and political parties expressed confidence in the proceedings.

The count took place in transparent conditions in the presence of political party representatives. There were a large number of invalid papers mainly due to the complexity of the ballot papers and over-restrictive interpretation by the polling clerks. It would be appropriate to take steps to redress this situation at the next elections. Election records were drawn up but often were not posted on the door or given to the parties.

In general, procedures were respected in an election characterised by a particularly complex ballot paper and a high degree of illiteracy. The assessment is satisfactory. The campaign and election day passed off quietly and in a festive atmosphere. The polling station presiding officers were well prepared and the delegation had anticipated many more calamities from the voters' point of view. There was a good level of attendance by the political parties, the members of the IEC and international observers. Their presence no doubt ensured transparency in the conduct of voting and counting. But it should be noted that not many national observers were present (civil society was absent).

4. The results

The first results published confirmed that the independent candidates – from all parts of the political spectrum – did well with 38.39% of the vote. They were followed by the Rally of Democratic Forces (RFD) with 16.65 %; the PRDR – the former governing party – with 9.17%; the APP with 6.58% and the UFP with 3%: these two parties are in the same coalition as the RFD. If the results of the first parliamentary elections are confirmed by the second round, the parties for democratic change will need the independents to govern.

The number of invalid papers was around 10% of the vote. This result might lead some parties to ask whether the vote should not be cancelled. The turn-out was around 55%.

The municipal election results were fairly similar to the parliamentary election results (see next section).

5. Political analysis

Politically it seems that the problem in these elections lies in the number of independent candidates, following President Vall's actions last September. The problem is not the principle of independent candidates but the clear bias shown by the Head of State, who tried to convince certain leading figures to leave their parties and stand as independents. Of the 11 groupings in the CFCF (Coalition of Forces for Democratic Change), 'six have been victims of defections

encouraged by the Head of State'. The former presidential majority was the most severely affected.

Furthermore, (Islamic) Centre Reform candidates, who were not allowed to form a party based on religious belief, stood as independents and the vote indicates that they are not just a grouping but a genuine political force. The question now is 'who is who' and what is going to happen to the independents? Will they form a parliamentary group? Or will they join existing groups and parties? In that case, the moderate Islamic representatives will certainly benefit from the CFCD's election agreements.

In his speech on election night, President Vall added a further dimension to this debate by saying that he does not represent the independents.

The political involvement of women was encouraged by the introduction of a 20% quota on lists of candidates. This represents remarkable progress in the Mauritanian context where women's political involvement is traditionally low. However, the turn-out of women at the polling stations was very hesitant and among the political parties their presence was almost non-existent. In future, use should be made of the possibilities offered by the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly and the parliamentary delegations (Maghreb, ACP) to help women's associations and invite Mauritanian women MPs to training meetings.

The presidential elections in March 2007 are an essential part of the democratic process in Mauritania. This election is of prime importance for the military, as they consider Mauritania to be a presidential republic. Thus the EU must continue to exercise pressure. **The members of the delegation wish to stress the importance of sending a similar observation delegation (larger if possible) to the presidential elections.**

ANNEX I: Programme

Friday 17 November 2006

- 15.30 Arrival in Nouakchott and transfer to hotel
NOVOTEL TFEILA
Tel. (222) 525.74.00
Fax (222) 525.74.29
Rue Charles De Gaulle
BP 40157
- 17.30 Nouakchott
Briefing with Marie-Anne Isler-Béguin, Chief Observer in the European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM), EU EOM Core team, the Deputy Head of the Commission delegation and the representatives of three Member States (France, Germany, Spain)
- 19.30 Place: Commission delegation office
Reception at the French embassy

Saturday 18 November 2006

- 9.00 Meeting with the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)
- 10.15 Meeting with the CFCD coalition at the UFP's offices
- 11.15 Meeting with the CFP coalition at the USD's offices
- 12.15 Meeting with the UNAD coalition at the PND's offices
- 13.00 (lunch break); meeting with the German Foreign Minister, Mr Steinmeier
- 14.00 (Mr Horáček)
- 16.00 Meeting at the Ministry of the Interior
- 18.00 Leave for Rosso (Mr Hutchinson, Mrs Molerés, Mr Krauss)
- 19.00 Briefing with the EU EOM representative for Mr Czarnecki
Local briefing with the EU EOM in Rosso (Mr Hutchinson, Mrs Molerés, Mr Krauss)

Sunday 19 November 2006

- 7.00 Polling stations open; election observation
Two teams in Nouakchott: Mr Czarnecki, Mrs Staub and a local guide;
Mr Horáček and a local guide
Team in Rosso and along the route back to Nouakchott:
Mr Hutchinson, Mrs Molerés, Mr Krauss and a local guide
- 13.00 – 15.30 The Rosso team returns to Nouakchott

19.00 Polling stations close

Monday 20 November 2006

11.00 Debriefing of the delegation on the teams' observation of elections
17.30 Delegation to exchange views with the EU EOM on the preliminary statement and
 with the Member States' representatives
 Place: Commission delegation
20.00 Dinner hosted by the Parliament delegation with the EU EOM, the Commission
 delegation and the ambassadors
 Place: Novotel restaurant

Tuesday 21 November 2006

 Gathering impressions after the vote:
11.00 UNAD coalition at the PND offices
11.30 CFCO coalition at the UFP offices
12.00 Reception by the Head of State (Mr Hutchinson, Mrs Isler Béguin)
17.00 Debriefing at the German Embassy

Wednesday 22 November 2006

11.00 Joint press conference: presentation of the preliminary statement
 End of the work in Mauritania
16.25 Return via Dakar (Mr Hutchinson, Mrs Molerés, Mrs Staub, Mr Krauss)

ANNEX II: Joint press release



JOINT PRESS RELEASE BY THE EUROPEAN UNION'S ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION IN MAURITANIA AND THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DELEGATION FOR OBSERVATION OF THE ELECTIONS IN MAURITANIA ON 19 NOVEMBER 2006

Nouakchott, 22 November 2006

The European Union's Election Observation Mission in Mauritania (EU EOM), headed by Marie Anne Isler Béguin MEP, and the European Parliament delegation for observation of the elections in Mauritania on 19 November 2006, headed by Alain Hutchinson MEP, notes that the municipal elections and the first round of the parliamentary elections were conducted in a calm atmosphere without major irregularities.

The EU EOM and the European Parliament delegation have observed that the transition authorities' undertakings concerning the administration's neutrality and impartiality seem to have been generally respected with regard to pre-election activities and the elections themselves.

Voting was generally conducted in a transparent manner and in accordance with procedures. The Ministry of the Interior has shown considerable efficiency in managing the logistics of a complex electoral operation. Nevertheless the EU EOM and the European Parliament delegation note that certain electoral procedures could be improved before the next round. This also applies to over-restrictive procedures concerning the filling in of voting papers. The high number of papers said to have been invalid is also of concern. The EU EOM and the European Parliament delegation also propose corrective measures in this connection.

The conditions in which counting took place were satisfactory as regards transparency but they were often laborious and disorganised. Instructions were imprecise and not well understood by the polling clerks. The EU EOM and the European Parliament delegation would like training for polling clerks to be increased at all levels.

The EU EOM and the European Parliament delegation think that the INEC should fulfil its role as election supervisor more actively on election day. The two missions welcome the strong representation of political parties in polling stations throughout the country, which helped ensure the transparency of voting and counting. Nevertheless they regret that there were not many observers from civil society.

The European Union Election Observation mission has been in Mauritania since 3 October. It has fielded 82 observers in Mauritania's 13 wilayas, who visited 312 polling stations on election day, a significant sample of 13%. They will also be present during the second round of parliamentary elections.

The members of the European Parliament delegation have observed the final preparations for voting and the actual election procedure, from the opening of the polling stations to the last counting operations, between Rosso and Nouakchott.

The EU EOM and the European Parliament delegation have been very well received by the authorities and have enjoyed a good working relationship with them. The people and the political parties have expressed their confidence in the procedure.

The EU EOM will continue to observe attentively the procedures for collecting, consolidating and announcing the results of these elections and the way in which any election disputes are handled.

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**EUROPEAN UNION
ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION
MAURITANIA 2006**

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

The elections of 19 November represent a further stage in moving out of the transition period. They have been held in an atmosphere of calm and freedom. There is a need to improve some faulty procedures and for polling clerks to carry out procedures more effectively.

Nouakchott, 22 November 2006

At the invitation of the Mauritanian authorities and because of the importance of these elections in the democratic transition process, the Commission decided to send an Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) to observe the parliamentary and municipal elections on 19 November and 3 December 2006. The EU EOM is headed by Marie Anne Isler Béguin MEP.

The EU EOM arrived in Mauritania on 3 October and will remain there until 15 December 2006. The mission is working in accordance with the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation of 27 October 2005. The long observation period covers all stages of the electoral process and is intended to help strengthen the transparency and credibility of the election and to encourage confidence in the process by those involved.

At the municipal elections and the first round of parliamentary elections on 19 November, the EU EOM fielded 82 observers from the EU Member States and Switzerland in Mauritania's 13 wilayas. A three-member delegation from the European Parliament, headed by Alain Hutchinson, has joined forces with the EU EOM and has shared in the issuing of this statement.

On election day, the EOM observers visited 312 polling stations, representing more than 13% of all polling stations. The mission is continuing its observations and will cover the consolidation of the results, election disputes and the second round of the parliamentary elections on 3 December.

Summary

- Election day passed off calmly. The elections were complex (three simultaneous ballots) but good organisation helped. Voters were given an opportunity to express a valid choice.
- The election represents the second stage of emerging from the transition period and it is taking place in accordance with the authorities' undertakings and the original timetable.
- The election's legal and regulatory framework offers the main guarantees for a ballot in accordance with international standards but there are still a number of imperfections. Despite acknowledged progress in certain areas such as the setting up of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the adoption of a single ballot paper, some procedures are still defined imprecisely or inadequately or are subject to contradictory instructions.
- Political participation by women encouraged by the setting up of a quota on the list of candidates represents remarkable progress.
- The Ministry of the Interior, which is responsible for organising the elections, has shown its experience and efficiency in electoral administration. It has taken significant steps to increase the transparency of the process. Efforts still have to be made to clarify procedures and improve the training of polling clerks. The administration's neutrality has generally been respected. The INEC has taken certain useful initiatives but is still too timorous in exercising its supervisory and inspection role.
- The electoral roll is technically reliable. However, its completeness has been only partially improved, following a further census.
- The numerous election candidates have been able to stand freely. Administrative and judicial disputes about candidates have been very limited and have been dealt with in accordance with current law.
- The two-week election campaign proceeded calmly in a festive atmosphere. It was, however, marked by a lack of debate on ideas and unequal resources available to the candidates.
- Consultations between the authorities and the political parties on the conduct of the elections was organised late but in a satisfactory manner.
- Voting was conducted in a satisfactory way in the presence of a large number of candidates' representatives. It was, however, characterised by the slowness of procedures and an abnormally high number of invalid voting papers.
- Despite the late setting up of the media regulation authority, the candidates were given fair access to the public media without dispute. The regulatory authority, however, had no control over campaign activities or media coverage during this period.
- Measures to raise the voters' awareness of what was at stake and practical information about voting were insufficient.
- This is the first time that long-term international observation has been permitted in Mauritania. National observation, however, has been recognised and organised very late and ineffectively.

Political background

The legislative and municipal elections of 19 November were held in a new political environment after the coup d'état of 3 August 2005, in accordance with the transition authorities' undertakings to the European Union and the timetable originally set out. These

elections represent the second stage of moving out of the transition period after the constitutional referendum of 25 June 2006.

The arrangements for the municipal, legislative and presidential elections, the limitation of the number of presidential candidates and the fact that the transition authorities could not stand guarantee a freer, more open and fairer electoral contest.

The 20% quota for women on the list of candidates represents a remarkable advance in the Mauritanian context, in view of the traditionally low level of political involvement by women. On the other hand, women's participation in the organisation and supervision of the elections and in the political parties remains low.

The Mauritanian political landscape has moved towards real pluralism and a climate of greater freedom. Thirty-five political parties have been officially recognised, most of which took part in the elections. Nevertheless, the refusal to recognise some political parties is not legally justified. Moreover, the sudden entry into the contest of a large number of independent candidates aroused a lively debate in political circles.

The necessary consultation on electoral matters between the administrative authorities and the competing political parties took place late but in a satisfactory manner.

The administration's undertakings to take a neutral and impartial attitude seem to have been generally respected.

Freedom to observe was generally respected but restricted on two occasions when the EOM was refused access to consultation meetings to clarify the content of election procedures.

National observers were eventually authorised to observe despite problems concerning their organisation and the late adoption of rules applicable to them.

Legal and regulatory framework

In general, the Mauritanian judicial framework makes it possible to organise elections according to international standards.

There have been significant improvements in fundamental aspects of the process (e.g. the setting up of the INEC, the single ballot paper). The fact that legislation concerning the media, party funding and national observation was adopted is estimable, even though it was put into effect late in the present election procedure.

The legal framework generally offers guarantees of a fair election but is characterised by an absence of real codification of the applicable rules. The multiplicity of information sources makes it difficult to access them and restricts their distribution. Numerous provisions remain imprecise and there is uncertainty about procedures for applying certain rules. This is the case for voting procedures for soldiers, the evidence value of the record of results, the practical arrangements for delivering voting papers to voters, voting with a duplicate of the identity card, the transparency and publicising of the process of consolidating the results, the question whether papers placed in the wrong ballot box should be invalid, the requirement to match the number of ballot papers with the number of people who signed against their names on the electoral roll.

In several areas rules were adopted late (setting up of the media regulation authority, rules on national observers, election campaign funding, voting procedures) and sometimes varied; in some cases contradictory instructions were issued.

Concerning election campaign financing, there was no machinery to limit and control expenditure. Aid and subsidies offered by the State and the international community were allocated late.

Despite the transition authorities' undertakings, the electoral constituencies were not modified so distortions in national representation have continued.

Election administration

The Ministry of the Interior, which is responsible for organising the elections, has the necessary experience and managed election logistics efficiently. Measures were taken to ensure transparency at certain stages (publication of the electoral roll and the list of polling clerks). More still needs to be done with regard to drawing up more precise and detailed procedures, providing full, adequate election equipment and training polling clerks.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), which is responsible for controlling and supervising the elections, took steps to deal with certain problems encountered during the electoral process (drafting ballot papers to international standards, facilitating consultation between the authorities and the political parties). However, limitations were revealed in other areas, notably in increasing voter awareness. Its supervision on the day of the election was not up to expectations.

Electoral rolls: The methodology used to enrol voters (administrative census for electoral purposes) produced a reliable list of 1 069 375 voters, but one that was not comprehensive. A further electoral census carried out in September went some way to redressing this (84 952 additional voters) without completely remedying it. The electoral roll was publicised adequately. Lists were posted throughout the territory without giving rise to a significant number of complaints.

Candidates. Candidates registered within the legal deadlines. The number of rejections was very limited. There were also a very small number of administrative and judicial disputes concerning people standing for municipal and parliamentary elections. These were dealt with by the relevant tribunals within the deadlines and in accordance with the current law.

Election campaign. The election campaign passed off quietly and in a generally festive atmosphere. Very few incidents were reported. However, local festivities took the place of debates on ideas. Formalities for submitting campaign manifestos beforehand and rules on posters were not widely applied although this did not lead to disputes.

The administration took no action to rectify differences in candidates' resources

Public awareness. Not enough was done to increase voters' awareness. The administration, the INEC, the political parties and donors share responsibility for this.

Media

Mauritian radio and television continue to enjoy a monopoly. Liberalisation in the audiovisual sector has not yet taken place, despite undertakings by the Mauritian authorities in November 2005. In view of the high number of election candidates, even partial liberalisation would have helped to give them access to the media and thus increase voters' political awareness.

The Press and Audiovisual High Authority, whose mission includes defining and controlling conditions of equal access to the public media by parties and candidates, was set up less than a week before the beginning of the election campaign. Because it was set up late, it did not have time to allocate free air time to independent candidates during the first half of the election

campaign. The public media fully complied with the provisions laid down by the media regulation body, which recorded few complaints by candidates.

The Press and Audiovisual High Authority did not make any specific provision for media coverage of the political parties' election activities. The EOM's monitoring work clearly shows that the public media primarily covered the festive aspects of the campaign and the distribution of information by the election organising institutions (the Ministry of the Interior, INEC, the Press and Audiovisual High Authority) to the detriment of the political parties' and independent candidates' activities.

The public media generally offered an uncritical reflection of the optimistic view taken by the authorities from the beginning of the campaign on the efficient conduct of the election campaign and polling.

There was an absence of debate between political parties highlighting contrary views, content of political messages was weak, and limited broadcasting time was devoted to the elections in the national languages.

The main French or Arabic private press publications have not reflected particular political trends. They have been more critical during the election campaign than the public media in recording complaints, irregularities or things that have gone wrong. However, they only rarely have the investigative resources to check information and counter rumours.

National observation

The difficulties encountered in setting up a national coordination structure reduced the impact of national observation. Rules on the rights and responsibilities of national observers were adopted late and this also limited their activities. In the end national observation was of short duration and not very significant. National observers were not present at most of the polling stations visited by EOM observers.

Conduct of the elections

Voting was generally carried out in a transparent way and in accordance with the rules. Most polling stations were opened at the place that had been announced. However, there were numerous changes in the appointment of polling clerks. Our observations indicate that a quarter of polling stations opened late.

Some procedures seem unjustified. These include over-restrictive procedures for filling in ballot papers and the filling in of ballot papers by polling clerks rather than voters.

Voting procedures tended to be slow. Also, in too many cases, people who fulfilled the legal conditions (presentation of their identity card) were not allowed to vote. Insufficient efforts were made to distribute remaining polling cards.

The quality and quantity of equipment provided was sometimes unsatisfactory, in the case of voting booths and ink stamps for example.

Voting forms were of good quality and came with good technical guarantees as regards to traceability and the possibility of falsification. Nevertheless some candidates justifiably complained about changes in the colours that had been allocated to them. The difficulty of using these forms arose from the large number of candidates, late and inadequate distribution of specimen papers and lack of voter awareness.

In some cases, election propaganda continued on the day of the election, next to the polling stations. Measures to stop this proved inadequate.

Candidates' representatives were strongly represented in polling stations throughout the country. The administration's undertaking to ensure they would have transport was not always fulfilled in a satisfactory way.

Counting the votes and processing the results

Counting procedures were too often laborious and disorganised. Instructions were imprecise and not well understood by the polling clerks, which confirms the need for considerable further training. Counting, however, took place in satisfactory conditions of transparency.

There is concern about the high number of papers declared invalid. The reasons are the complexity of the forms, the lack of voter preparation, the lack of ink stamps in certain areas and over-restrictive interpretation by the polling clerks. Steps should be taken to remedy this for future elections.

Polling records were generally drawn up in accordance with the law. On the other hand, they were not always posted publicly and extracts were not always sent to the candidates' representatives.

The EOM attaches considerable importance to compliance with the authorities' undertaking to announce and publish the results polling station by polling station. It hopes that the second round of parliamentary elections will provide an opportunity to remedy the errors and inadequacies noted.

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