



JOINT PRELIMINARY DECLARATION

I- INTRODUCTION

1. The Heads of the Election Observation Missions of the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Conseil de l'Entente (CE), and the International Organization of the Francophonie (OIF) held a meeting to exchange information and harmonize views on the conduct of the second round of the presidential election in Niger on 20th March 2016.

II- PRE-ELECTION CONSULTATIONS

2. In order to ascertain the status of preparations for the run-off elections, the Heads of Mission held consultations with officials of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), the President of the Supreme Council on Communication (CSC), the political stakeholders of the ruling party, the coalition of opposition parties (COPA 2016), as well as the non-affiliated parties. The Heads of Mission also paid a courtesy call on the President of the Republic of Niger.

3. These consultations enabled the Missions to receive relevant information on the efforts made by the election management bodies to improve the conditions for the material organization of the second round of the Presidential election. The following are some of the key issues arising from the consultations:

A. CENI

The Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) briefed the observers on measures it had taken to correct the inadequacies observed during the first round of the presidential elections, including:

- (i) The setting up of situation rooms at local and national levels to address communication and logistical challenges ;
- (ii) The improvement of the electoral process through enhanced training and education programmes for electoral officials;
- (iii) The strengthening and enhancement of the security of the electoral process.

B. CSC

The Superior Council for Communication also briefed the Missions on measures it had taken to ensure equal access to public media for the parties in competition as well as equitable access to private media.

C. Political Parties

- (i) The Missions were availed of a declaration made by COPA 2016, which among others called on their supporters and Niger citizens in general to refrain from taking part in the elections of 20th March 2016, due to certain reservations.
- (ii) The leadership of the political parties, the ruling party, the non-affiliated parties and the COPA 2016, all unanimously stressed the importance of dialogue among the stakeholders and national cohesion.

4. The Missions urged all Niger citizens to abide by the Constitution of the country and the electoral laws and to work towards holding peaceful elections.

III. JOINT COMMUNIQUE BY THE OBSERVER MISSIONS

5. The Heads of the International Observation and Information Missions present in Niger to follow the electoral process issued a joint communiqué on 19th March 2016 calling on all political stakeholders to maintain peaceful and conducive environment for the election. They further appealed to Niger citizens to demonstrate the same behaviour and commitment as they did during the first round and exercise their franchise in a calm and orderly manner.

IV- OBSERVATION OF THE POLLS

Deployment, Opening, Voting process and vote counting

6. After joint discussion among the Observer Missions, they noted the following:

- (i) Voting started in most polling stations between 8:00 and 8:30 am in most of the stations visited. The delay observed was due to the late composition of members of the bureau of the polling stations, late delivery of election materials or absence of agents;
- (ii) Election materials were available in most polling stations;
- (iii) There was general improvement in the handling of the electoral process by electoral officers.
- (iv) There was large turnout of women both as electoral officials and as voters.
- (v) Measures were put in place to give priority to the aged and disabled to exercise their franchise.
- (vi) The polling stations were fully secured. There was noticeable presence of security personnel around the polling stations.
- (vii) There was generally low voter turnout;
- (viii) Notable absence of representatives of the Niger Democratic Movement for an African Federation (MODEN FA) in all polling stations and the presence of representatives of the Party for Democracy and Socialism of Niger (PNDS) in almost all polling stations;

7. While awaiting completion of the collation of results, the Observer Missions commend the efforts made by the CENI and all stakeholders to ensure the smooth conduct of the election and further urge CENI to enhance the training programme of electoral agents.

8. In line with the critical need for the consolidation of peace in Niger and the region, the Missions urge all Nigerien citizens to desist from any act of violence. While recognizing their sense of patriotism and responsibility, the Missions further appeal to Nigerien citizens to respect at all times the rule of law and resort exclusively to legal channels for the resolution of any electoral dispute.

9. The Missions seize this opportunity to appeal to all stakeholders to work relentlessly for peace and national unity, through inclusive dialogue so as to promote the general interest and development of the country.

10. The Missions wish to extend appreciation to the UN system and other partners for their collaboration.

11. The Missions also express sincere gratitude to the relevant authorities of Niger for the steps taken to facilitate the deployment of observers for the election held on 20th March 2016.

12. The Missions commend the People of Niger for their peaceful participation in the election.

13. The Missions will continue to monitor the post-election developments.

Done at Niamey, this 21st March 2016

Heads of International Observation and Information Missions