



PRELIMINARY DECLARATION

I- INTRODUCTION

- 1- *In line with the provisions of the ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance on support to Member States organizing elections, the President of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), **H.E. Jean-Claude Kassi Brou** deployed an Election Observation Mission (EOM) for the first-round of the presidential election in the Republic of Benin which held on 11th April 2021.*
2. *The Mission comprised of a total of 105 election observers, with 13 Long Term Observers (LTOs) and 92 Short term Observers (STOs). The election observers included individuals and organisations with wide ranging expertise on election matters. These were drawn from relevant Ministries and Electoral Management Bodies of Member States, Civil Society Organizations, individual experts who trained at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC), African Ambassadors accredited to ECOWAS, Judges and officials from ECOWAS Court of Justice, Honourable Members of the ECOWAS Community Parliament and the Media.*
3. *The Mission was led by **His Excellency Ernest Bai KOROMA**, former President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, who was supported by **H.E. Mrs. Halima Ahmed**, the Commissioner for Finance (Acting as Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security) of the ECOWAS Commission, **Ambassador Blaise DIPLO-DJOMAND**, Resident*

 **Representative of ECOWAS in Benin Republic** and a technical team from the ECOWAS Commission.

II- PRE-ELECTION ENGAGEMENTS & SUPPORT TO THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

4. *In the period leading to the polls, the Beninese political and legal landscape was marked by tension, particularly over political reforms undertaken in the country, where about 4,959,850 voters were duly registered and called to cast their votes on Sunday 11th April 2021.*
5. *In the spirit of solidarity and compliance with relevant protocols of ECOWAS, H.E. Jean-Claude Kassi BROU, President of the ECOWAS Commission led a pre-election fact-finding mission to Benin and engaged with key stakeholders on the electoral process. These included the representatives of political parties, the Electoral Commission, the Constitutional Court, some members of the diplomatic corps and civil society organisations.*
6. *Moreover, as part of its electoral assistance to member States conducting elections, and upon the request by the Authority in Benin, ECOWAS provided financial support for the deployment of COVID -19 agents and civic education campaign. This was further complemented with a two-day virtual workshop which took place in March, 2021 on the theme, **“Experience sharing to enhance the role of the police in participatory Governance and elections processes and media and civil society organization engagement in participatory processes”**.*
7. *In addition, the ECOWAS Commission deployed a Long Term Observer Mission from 20th March 2021 to 16th April 2021, which was to observe all the critical phases of the electoral process and provide regular analyses on the political and security situation in the country. The LTOs also prepared the ground for the arrival of the Head of Mission and the short-term Observers’ Mission covering 6th to 16th April 2021.*



III- ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN

8. *The electoral campaigns began on 23rd March 2021 with the parties making efforts to adhere to the COVID-19 protocols. They were largely peaceful, enthusiastic and without any major incidents. All candidates were able to campaign freely in the country under the vigilance of the security forces. The media also largely provided level-playing field to the parties to propagate their messages. The off day of 9th April 2021 was also generally accepted.*
9. *The Mission observed some polarization of support for candidates, along regional strongholds in the country, especially in the middle belt where tensions was very high in **Bantè, Tchaourou, Savè** and some areas in **Parakou**.*

IV- ARRIVAL & COMMENCEMENT OF CONSULTATIONS

10. *The long-term observers held consultations on the election process with the stakeholders involved in the electoral process, before the arrival of the Head of Mission and short term observers. Upon his arrival, the ECOWAS Head of Mission also proceeded to hold similar consultations and working sessions, including with other international and local election observers. These consultations included the Permanent Representative of the President of the ECOWAS Commission in Benin Republic, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the staff of the Minister of Interior, the President of the Constitutional Court, the High Authority of Audiovisual and Communication (HAAC), Autonomous National Electoral Commission (CENA), the Republican Police, the ECOWAS observers, the diplomatic corps in Benin.*
11. *The ECOWAS Head of Mission also held consultations on the campaign process and its challenges with H.E. President Patrice TALON, President*

of Benin Republic, as candidate in the elections. He also had working session with Kohoue- leader of the RLC party and his running mate Agossa as well as Abdoulaye Bio Tchane, the Coordinator of the campaign of (Talon-Talata).

12. Thereafter, the Head of ECOWAS Observer Mission and that of the African Union co-hosted a coordination and information sharing session with the Heads of other International Observation Missions, namely, CENSAD, la Francophonie, le Conseil de l'Entente. The session was also attended by the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS).

V- DEPLOYMENT, OPENING, VOTING PROCESS AND VOTE COUNTING.

13. Following a briefing and orientation session held on 9th April 2021, the 105 members of the ECOWAS Observers were grouped into 42 teams and deployed to eight (8) out of 12 regions in the country. While in the field, observers maintained constant contact with the Mission's Situation Room based in Cotonou and with other international and local observer missions to collect and consolidate information related to the conduct of the polls.

14. Having analyzed the reports from the various teams deployed in the field, other available information, and notes for the debriefing session with returning observers, the ECOWAS Election Observation Mission hereby makes the following Preliminary Declaration on the developments on Election Day, 11th April 2021:

- (i) Across the 81% polling posts observed, the voting started between the official time of 7:00 am to 8:30 AM ;
- (ii) A low turn out of voters was observed from the early hours of the polls and with slight improvement during the day in some places;
- (iii) There was a visible presence of police in 63% of polling post visited. Our observers noted one or two security officers at most polling stations, while in other polling centers mobile security patrols were seen moving from one center to another;

- (iv) Overall, the political parties and their followers respected the prohibition of the display of party colors and symbols in and around polling stations on the Election Day;
- (v) Voters were given the opportunity to vote with any of the identification documents listed by the electoral commission and relevant electoral legal documents;
- (vi) The COVID-19 protocols were respected. Hand sanitizers, physical distancing and the wearing of face masks were adhered to at the polling centers and by the voters. Face masks were also provided by the polling officials to voters who came without face masks;
- (vii) Party agents, particularly of the ruling party, were present at most polling stations observed;
- (viii) The polling officials demonstrated adequate professionalism in carrying out their duties and responsibilities in the presence of party representatives;
- (ix) International and local observers were present in some of the polling stations visited. These include the African Union (AU), Francophone International Organisation (OIF), CENSAD, OSIWA, UNESCO and the Embassy of Nigeria. And the local observers include (CENA – WANEP – CBDH- Coalition NGO’s-ACA-Changement pour le Benin -COSEC);
- (x) There was average participation of women as agents, security officers and as voters as well.
- (xi) In most polling stations observed, the polls closed at the official time of 4:00 pm or 4:30 pm in compliance with the 9 hours legal voting timeframe .
- (xii) The sorting, counting, tallying, and reconciliation of the ballots, as well as the declaration and certification of results at the polling stations covered by the Mission were carried out in a professional, transparent, and credible manner, and under the watchful eyes of party agents and observers.

❖ **Preliminary Conclusions and Recommendations**

15. On the whole, in the areas covered by the ECOWAS Observers, the voting process took place in an orderly, transparent and professional manner, and secrecy of the ballot was generally observed. Taking into cognizance that election could not hold in some places in the country due to difficulty of access occasioned by the tensions and disruptions caused by some



disgruntled stakeholders. CENA made seamless efforts to deploy electoral materials to enable every citizen to enjoy his/her right to vote. It is the view of the ECOWAS Observation Mission that this challenge observed did not undermine the professionalism of CENA and the transparency, and fairness of the overall electoral process at this point in time.

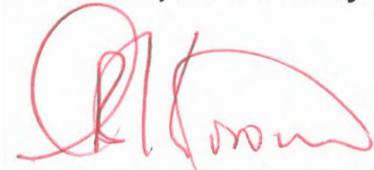
- 16. In the conduct of the electioneering campaigns, the voting, and the release of the results by the responsible officials at the polling stations, were generally transparent and credible in the polling units covered. The qualified population, who wished to do so, were provided the required space to exercise their constitutional rights to vote.*
- 17. The ECOWAS Election Observation Mission will continue to closely monitor the concluding phases of the electoral process, in particular the declaration of results by the Electoral Commission and will make further declarations where and when appropriate.*
- 18. The ECOWAS Observation Mission warmly congratulates the Beninese for their resilience, and applauds the leadership of the political parties, candidates and their followers for their sense of moderation demonstrated throughout the electoral process. The Mission wishes to commend the Autonomous National Electoral Commission (CENA), the security agencies and all stakeholders for their invaluable contribution to the process and urges them to pursue the process to its logical conclusion with the same attitude.*
- 19. At this juncture, the ECOWAS Election Observation Mission would like to caution individuals and groups, in particular political parties, the media and civil society organizations, to refrain from speculating on, or declaring unofficial results, besides the official results declared or to be declared by the CENA.*
- 20. ECOWAS urges all stakeholders to resort only to legal means to seek redress of any grievances emanating from the electoral process.*



21. ECOWAS urges all political stakeholders, namely the government, parliament, ruling parties, oppositions, CSO's, to take necessary measures to accept dialogue on the areas of disagreements on the reforms.

22. Once again, ECOWAS wishes to congratulate the entire people of Benin for their contribution to the process up to this point and urges them to exhibit patience in the post-election phase for the sake of peace and stability of the country and the ECOWAS region.

Done at Cotonou, this 13th Day of April 2021



H.E Ernest Bai KOROMA

The Head of the ECOWAS Election Observer Mission