ECOWAS COMMISSION
COMMISSION DE LA CEDEAO
COMISSÃO DA CEDEAO

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN THE REPUBLIC OF CABO VERDE 15th NOVEMBER 2026

PRELIMINARY DECLARATION

I- INTRODUCTION

1. The Republic of Cabo Verde held its 8th presidential election on 15th November 2026. The election took place within the country's longstanding constitutional and multiparty democratic framework, established since the transition to multiparty democracy in 1991. Cabo Verde has steadfastly maintained a record of competitive elections, peaceful political alternation and respect for constitutional institutions.

2. In accordance with the Economic Community of West African States' (ECOWAS) Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (2001), and the Community's mandate to support credible, transparent, inclusive and peaceful electoral processes in its Member States, the President of the ECOWAS Commission, **H.E. General Birame Diop**, deployed an Election Observation Mission (EOM), to observe the Cabo Verde presidential election. The team comprised a 19 member Long-Term Election Observation Mission (LTEOM) deployed from 3rd to 19th November 2026, and a 73-member Short-Term Election Observation Mission (STEOM) comprising Representatives of ECOWAS Electoral Management Bodies, Member States' Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Permanent Representatives' Committee (PRC) of ECOWAS, Members of the ECOWAS Parliament, the Community Court of Justice, Electoral Experts, and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), deployed from 10th to 18th November 2026. ECOWAS' Long-term and Short-term Observers were deployed in all nine inhabited islands of Cabo Verde. The Mission observed the pre-election environment, engaged relevant stakeholders, assessed preparations for the presidential election, and continues to monitor post-election activities in the country.

3. The Observation Mission is led by **H.E. Fatoumatta Jallow-Tambajang**, former Vice-President of the Republic of The Gambia and supported by a Technical Team, headed by **Madam Francess Piagie Alghali**, the ECOWAS Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, **H.E. Ambassador João Ribeiro Butiam Có**, the ECOWAS Resident Representative in Cabo Verde, and **Dr. Babatunde Afolabi**, Director of Political Affairs. In addition, the Mission is supported by **Ambassador Kalilou Traoré**, representing the

Permanent Representatives' Committee (PRC), and **Honorable Réné Konan Koumoin**, representing the ECOWAS Parliament.

4. In the discharge of its mandate, the Mission worked in a spirit of cooperation and coordination with other international Observer Missions and partners deployed in Cabo Verde, notably the African Union (AU), the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP), the Network of Electoral Bodies of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (ROJAE-CPLP), the ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commissions (ECONEC), the International Organisation of La Francophonie (OIF), and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS). The Mission welcomes the constructive collaboration among these institutions in support of democratic governance and credible electoral processes in Cabo Verde.

5. The Mission's methodology is based on direct observation of the electoral process, consultations with relevant national stakeholders, official information provided by competent authorities, and reports submitted by its observers deployed throughout the country. This Preliminary Declaration presents the Mission's interim assessment of the electoral process and its key findings as of the date of publication.

I- CONTEXT OF THE 15th NOVEMBER 2026 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

6. The country has a hybrid presidential and parliamentary system in which the directly elected President exercises constitutionally defined responsibilities distinct from those of the Prime Minister and his/her Government. The effective functioning of this system depends on respect for constitutional competences and constructive institutional cooperation.

7. The presidential election took place in a political context, shaped by the legislative elections of 17th May 2026, in which the African Party for the Independence of Cabo Verde (PAICV) secured 37 of the 72 seats in the National Assembly, the Movement for Democracy (MpD) 33 seats, and the Democratic and Independent Cape Verdean Union (UCID) 2 seats.

8. The National Electoral Commission (CNE) confirmed six candidates for the Presidential Election: **José Maria Pereira Neves**, supported by the African Party for the Independence of Cabo Verde (PAICV); **Joana Gomes Rosa Amado**, supported by the Movement for Democracy (MpD); and four independent candidates, namely **Antero Lúcio Lopes Francês Tavares**, **Casimiro Jesus Lopes de Pina**, **Gilson João dos Santos Alves**, and **Loisito Tavares de Sousa**. The candidacy of **Ms. Joana Gomes Rosa Amado** was particularly significant, marking the first time a woman contested for the Presidency of the Republic of Cabo Verde and representing an important milestone in the advancement of women's political participation and representation in the country.

9. The figures confirmed by the CNE for the Presidential Election indicate a total of **419,448** registered voters, comprising **343,065** voters within Cabo Verde and **76,383** voters in the diaspora. A total of **1,061** polling stations were established across the

country, with an additional **281** polling stations serving voters abroad. The CNE also outlined a range of measures to enhance electoral participation, including provisions for early voting, accessibility arrangements for people with disabilities, Braille voting materials for people who are visually impaired, and voter education initiatives. The Mission welcomes these measures and underscores the importance of ensuring that all eligible citizens can exercise their constitutional right to vote.

10. However, the pre-election assessment identified a number of issues that warrant continued attention, including voter participation rates, particularly among young people and women; the administration of early voting and diaspora voting arrangements; logistical coordination and the accessibility of polling facilities across the islands and in overseas voting locations; as well as efforts to prevent and mitigate misinformation, disinformation, hate speech and online harassment. Addressing these challenges will further strengthen the inclusiveness, integrity and resilience of future electoral processes.

III-PRE-ELECTORAL ENGAGEMENTS WITH STAKEHOLDERS

11. Upon arrival in Cabo Verde on 12th November 2026, the Head of Mission and her delegation held consultations with relevant national stakeholders, including the interim President of the Republic, **H.E. Janira Hopffer Almada**, Government and public authorities, the National Electoral Commission (CNE), presidential candidates and their representatives, political parties, civil society organisations, the media, youth groups, security agencies and human rights institutions. These consultations provided an opportunity to exchange information on electoral preparations, hear concerns and encourage all actors to contribute to a peaceful, inclusive and transparent electoral process.

IV- BRIEFING AND DEPLOYMENT

12. Prior to the deployment of Short Term Observers (STOs), the 19 Long-Term Observers were deployed to **Santiago, São Vicente, Santo Antão, São Nicolau, Sal, Boa Vista, Maio, Fogo and Brava**, while the 73 STOs were briefed on the political situation in the country and taken through a pre-deployment training, orientation session and deployed within Santiago. In total, the Mission deployed 92 observers in 35 teams across the nine inhabited islands of Cabo Verde.

V- ELECTION DAY

13. On Election Day, 15th November 2026, ECOWAS deployed **92** observers to the nine inhabited Islands of the country to observe the voting process, including the opening of polling stations, casting of votes, closing of polls, counting of the votes and immediate transmission and publication of results. The Mission observed the opening at 35 polling stations and received 470 voting reports and 35 closing reports. On the basis of their report, the Mission notes the following:

Opening of the Polls

14. Observers covered 35 polling stations at opening. In 31 reports, observers indicated that polling stations opened on schedule, and in 27 reports, they indicated that voting began on time. Observers noticed the early arrival of essential materials at the polling stations, voters conducted themselves in a respectful and orderly manner, the ballot boxes were placed in public view, and the secrecy of votes was respected, enhancing the transparency and confidence in the process. The Mission's assessment of the opening of polling stations was generally peaceful and orderly, with polling agents present. Candidate agents were present at 31 of the 35 polling stations observed at opening (88.6%). At 34 of the 35 polling stations observed (97.1%), officials displayed the empty ballot box before sealing it.

15. Women were represented among polling officials in all 35 polling stations, demonstrating full participation in polling administration. Furthermore, in the 31 stations where candidate agents were present, 28 stations (90.3%) reported the presence of female agents.

16. Young polling officials aged 18 to 35 years were observed in 30 polling stations (85.7%), reflecting notable youth participation in the electoral process. Observers reported a generally inclusive polling environment. No incident of intimidation, harassment, or discriminatory restrictions affecting female voters' access to polling stations was observed. Likewise, no difference was reported in the allocation of responsibilities or treatment of women and men serving as polling officials, suggesting that electoral procedures were implemented in a gender-inclusive and non-discriminatory manner.

17. ECOWAS Observers identified the presence of other international election observers from the African Union (AU), the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP), the Network of Electoral Bodies of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (ROJAE-CPLP), the ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commissions (ECONEC), the International Organisation of La Francophonie (OIF) and the Nigerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Voting Process

18. The voting process was conducted in a largely peaceful, orderly, and transparent manner in the **470** voting observation reports received. All 470 reports (100%) described the polling atmosphere as peaceful and orderly, suggesting strong procedural compliance and public confidence in the electoral process. Women were present among polling officials in 327 of the 470 voting observation reports (69.6%). Observers reported women serving as candidate agents in 288 of the 470 voting reports (61.3%).

i. During the voting process, observers assessed the conduct of electoral officials, the orderliness of queues, the verification of voters' identities, the secrecy of the ballot, the presence and conduct of candidate agents, and the freedom of voters to cast their ballots without intimidation or undue influence.

ii. Women accounted for **50.7%** of voters recorded across **245** observed polling stations. Observers also paid particular attention to the participation of persons with disabilities, older people and voters requiring assistance. Observers reported physical access barriers in **82 of 461** valid responses **(17.8%)**. At **Escola Secundária de Palmarejo** in **Praia**, two polling stations were located on an upper floor without accessible access. In other locations, such as Assomada (Santa Catarina) and Colhe Bicho (Tarrafal), the Mission observed a lack of ramps to enable easy access to the polling stations.

iii. The voting process was efficient overall. In 457 reports (99.6% of responses), observers indicated that voters completed the voting process in under five minutes.

iv. Observers reported queues at some polling stations, with no apparent disruption to voting. In 463 of 465 valid responses (99.6%), observers reported that the polling station layout allowed voters to mark their ballots in private. However, the single report from **Clube Palmeira, Sal**, where the voting booth reportedly faced polling staff, appears to be an isolated concern rather than evidence of a broader shortcoming.

v. Security arrangements were appropriate and non-intrusive. Security personnel were present in more than half of the polling stations observed, and their conduct was overwhelmingly assessed as either professional or passive.
No report indicated intimidation, interference, or undue influence by the security personnel.

vi. Observers reported the presence of candidate agents in 428 reports. Agents representing **José Maria Pereira Neves** were recorded in 408 reports (88.3%), and those representing **Joana Gomes Rosa Amado** in 389 reports (84.2%).

vii. The Mission notes a relatively lower voter turnout in the presidential election compared to the 17th May 2026 Parliamentary elections.

Closing and Counting

19. The observation data indicate that the closing, counting, and results reconciliation processes were conducted in a largely orderly, transparent, and credible manner, with only minor procedural issues noted.

1. Closing of Polls

Observed polling stations generally complied with the official closing time of 18:00.

- **24 of 35 stations (68.8%)** closed exactly at 18:00; and
- **9 stations (28.1%)** closed between 18:01 and 18:09

2. Transparency and Conduct of the Count

The count was characterised by a high degree of openness and adherence to procedures. In 33 of the 35 closing reports (94.3%), observers indicated that counting began immediately after voting closed. Observers reported unrestricted visibility of ballot sorting and vote tabulation at all observed stations. In 34 of the 35 closing reports (97.1%), observers

indicated that candidate agents remained present throughout the count. These findings demonstrate strong transparency measures and stakeholder oversight during tabulation.

3. Compliance with Counting Procedures: Observers reported full compliance with key counting requirements across all observed polling stations. Ballot-box seals were checked before opening and were properly sorted and classified. Results for candidates, blank ballots, and invalid ballots were accurately recorded.

4. Results Management and Candidate Agents: Measures promoting transparency in results management were generally respected. Candidate agents were given the opportunity to approve the polling station results in 33 of 35 closing reports (94.3%). In 31 of the 34 reports that answered the question on certified copies (91.2%), observers indicated that candidate agents received a certified copy of the results.

5. Operational Challenges and Inclusion: Only limited operational difficulties were reported, such as inadequate lighting, which affected counting in two polling stations at **Órgãos Pequeno 2** and **Escola Adelina da Veiga**, both in Santiago, and slow counting at **MA-AA-01, Maio**. These isolated incidents did not in any way affect the integrity of the counting process but indicate areas for logistical improvement.

6. Turnout in the visited polling stations at the close of polls: Among the **31** polling stations for which data were available, **4,128 of 11,315** registered voters cast ballots. These figures relate only to the observed sample and cannot be extrapolated to national turnout; however, they suggest relatively moderate participation within the stations covered by the Mission at the close of the counting process.

The evidence from observed polling stations indicates that the closing and counting phases of the election were conducted in a professional, transparent, and largely compliant manner. Procedures were consistently followed, observers and candidate agents enjoyed meaningful access, reconciliation measures were applied effectively, and reported irregularities were isolated and non-systemic.

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

20. The ECOWAS Election Observation Mission notes that the Presidential Election held on 15th November 2026 was conducted in a peaceful, orderly, transparent manner and generally complied with the national legal framework and relevant regional and international standards governing democratic elections. The professionalism demonstrated by the Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs), polling officials, candidates' agents, and security personnel contributed significantly to an electoral environment in which voters could freely and secretly exercise their democratic rights in conditions of safety and confidence. The arrangements put in place for people with disabilities, including visually impaired voters, further enhanced the inclusiveness of the electoral process by enabling them to cast their ballots independently.

21. The Mission commends the high level of professionalism exhibited by polling officials and security personnel, as well as the civic responsibility and patriotism demonstrated by the electorate, which collectively contributed to the peaceful conduct of the 2026 Presidential Election.

22. Based on its preliminary findings, the ECOWAS Election Observation Mission makes the following recommendations:

    a) **To the National Electoral Commission (CNE) and Directorate-General for Support to the Electoral Process (DGAPE)**:

        i. Continue to build on Cabo Verde's positive electoral legacy by sustaining efforts to ensure elections remain inclusive, participatory, peaceful, transparent and credible.

    b) **To the Constitutional Court:** Ensure that all electoral complaints and disputes are handled expeditiously and in accordance with the law, and that all electoral materials and records are securely preserved for purposes of audit, review or appeal.

    c) **To the Government and relevant public institutions**:

        i. Continue to uphold institutional neutrality, protect the rights and security of all citizens.

        ii. Promote programmes and initiatives that encourage greater participation of young people in governance and national development processes.

        iii. Facilitate the effective participation of civil society organisations in election observation across all phases of the electoral cycle, in addition to their role in civic and voter education.

        iv. Encourage Government to comply with all international human rights instruments with a view to fostering equality, peace, justice and national cohesion, especially among the vulnerable groups, notably women and youths.

    d) **To the Media:** Strengthen collaboration with electoral authorities and other relevant stakeholders in promoting accurate, balanced and responsible public information, voter education, peaceful participation and the rejection of misinformation, disinformation, hate speech and incitement

    e) **To all stakeholders**: Sustain efforts aimed at enhancing the participation and representation of women, youth, people with disabilities and diaspora communities, while addressing the structural and operational challenges identified during the electoral process

f) **To** the **ECOWAS Commission:**

i. Commend the Republic of Cabo Verde for the successful conduct of the Legislative Election of 17th May 2026 and the Presidential Election of 15th November 2026, both of which were conducted in a peaceful, inclusive, transparent and credible manner.

ii. Continue to engage with the Government of Cabo Verde, political parties, civil society organisations and other stakeholders in supporting initiatives that promote post-election dialogue, peacebuilding, national cohesion, inclusive participation and sustainable development

23. The Mission commends the people of Cabo Verde for their continued commitment to democratic governance and encourages all stakeholders to preserve the country's longstanding tradition of peaceful political competition, respect for constitutional order and democratic values.

24. The Mission calls upon all candidates and their supporters to remain calm and exercise restraint throughout the post-election period, refrain from actions that could undermine public order, and pursue any grievances exclusively through the legally established mechanisms.

25. The Mission expresses sincere appreciation to the Government and people of Cabo Verde, the CNE, DGAPE, civil society organisations, the media and all other stakeholders for their cooperation and support, which facilitated the successful execution of its mandate.

Done in Praia on 17th November 2026

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H.E. Fatoumatta Jallow-Tambajang
Head of the ECOWAS Election Observation Mission