



**EASTERN AFRICA STANDBY FORCE (EASF) ELECTION OBSERVATION
MISSION (EOM)**

**FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS OF
15TH JULY, 2024
IN THE REPUBLIC OF RWANDA**

**PRELIMINARY REPORT
DELIVERED BY THE HEAD OF MISSION H.E. AMB KENNEDY MOKAYA**

KIGALI, RWANDA

17th July, 2024

INTRODUCTION

1. At the invitation of the National Electoral Commission of Rwanda, the Chairperson of the Council of Ministers of Defence and Security of EASF Region, in accordance with the EASF Guidelines on Election Observer Mission, approved the deployment of a Short-Term EASF Election Observation Mission, to observe the Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in the Republic of Rwanda.

2. The Mission was led by Amb Kennedy Mokaya from the Republic of Kenya as the Head of Mission, assisted by Hon Moinaecha Mroudjae, the Vice chairperson of the EASF Panel of Elders, from the Union of Comoros, and, Mr. Ali Said Bacar from Comoros as the Deputy Head of Mission.

3. The EASF-EOM derived its mandate to observe the election from the principles and standards for the conduct of democratic elections in Africa and the relevant normative frameworks such as the OAU/AU Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections, the principles of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance and the International Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation.

4. This preliminary statement gives an overview on assessment of the general Election, and provides details of its observations, findings and recommendations. In view of its late deployment to Rwanda, the EASF Mission focused its observation work mainly on the management of Election Day operations and including counting of ballots, EASF EOM was not in a position to comprehensively assess the election process.

Objectives of EASF EOM Mission

5. EASF EOM undertook the following objectives;

- (i) To enhance public confidence in the electoral process.**
- (ii) To promote the fundamental freedoms and political rights of the local population in Rwanda.**
- (iii) To support the democratic process of Rwanda.**
- (iv) To uphold EASF's mandate in promotion of democracy, peace and security and national unity.**

6. This preliminary statement is mainly based on the objective, neutral, independent, and impartial empirical observations made by the STOs at the end of the electoral campaign and on polling day. It also takes into account the discussions that the mission had with internal and external stakeholders as well as information and statistics collected by our observer teams on voting day. These important elements serve as the basis for the drafting of this Statement.

POLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE ELECTIONS

7. Rwanda is a multiparty republic and is defined by the constitution as “an independent, sovereign, democratic, social and secular Republic”. In 2015, the constitution was amended to allow the president at the time, Paul Kagame, to run for a third consecutive seven-year term in 2017 and thereafter, for presidents to serve a five-year term renewable once. The president selects a prime minister, who serves as the head of government. According to the Rwanda National Electoral Commission, Rwanda held its diaspora election day on July 14, 2024 and in country elections on 15th and 16th July 2024. The candidates approved for the presidential candidacy include incumbent President Paul Kagame, representing the ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), Frank Habineza, founder of the opposition Democratic Green Party of Rwanda, and Philippe Mpayimana, an independent candidate.

ELECTORAL SYSTEM JULES

RELEVANT FINDINGS ON VOTING DAY

- ✓ the voting process was smooth in all the polling stations and opening and closing ed the casting of votes at the stipulated time, i.e. at 07:00 and 15.00 respectively, in accordance with the Electoral Law;
- ✓ of all the polling stations covered during the day of the vote, the EASF-EOM noted that:
 - At least 65% of the Electoral Officials were female;
 - There were party agents in at least 70% of the Polling Stations:
 - Voters who were on duty were allowed to vote wherever they were as long as they had their identification cards;
- ✓ the electoral staff were competent and the electoral material available in sufficient quantity in all the polling stations visited by the Mission;
- ✓ the National Electoral Officials demonstrated professionalism and discretion without any interference into the electoral process;
- ✓ Other accredited International Electoral Observation Missions included the African Union, Common Market for East and South Africa (COMESA), East African Community (EAC), International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), European Union, among others.
- ✓ Finally, the counting procedures were also respected and verification of the votes was done in the presence of all the stakeholder.

VOTING PROCEDURES IN POLLING STATIONS

8. The Election Observer mission was conducted in accordance with the legal. The secrecy of the vote was ensured in the polling stations visited. The prior verification of

voters in the polling station's lists was systematically observed by electoral staff and observed by the Mission's STOs. Also, the use of indelible ink to mark fingers after voting was observed in the polling stations, as well as the presence of the delegates of the candidates mostly from FPR who were able to freely exercise their rights throughout the voting process. The voting booths were separated for presidential and parliamentary ballot casting. According to the statistics resulting from the observation of the poll, 98% of the ballot boxes were very well sealed; on average, there were between two (02) and six (06) sealed depending on the polling stations visited by the mission. The existence of stairs without access ramps was noted in seven (7) polling stations, and other cases of access difficulties were noted in three (3) polling stations visited by the Mission.

9. It was also observed in one (1) Polling station that the one NEC officials was not aware of the role of International Observers and it took the intervention of a Senior NEC official to allow our observers.

SECURITY

10. The Rwandan National Police demonstrated discretion and professionalism on Election Day. They contributed to the peaceful and orderly conduct of the ballot without any hindrance or interference to the process. EASF observers recorded sufficient number of policemen in the polling centers visited with no major incidences of insecurity observed.

ASSISTANCE TO PEOPLE LIVING WITH A DISABILITY, PREGNANT OR BREASTFEEDING WOMEN AND THE ELDERLY

11. Election staff or a person of their choice provided assistance to voters living with a disability or reduced mobility, as well as to the elderly, pregnant, or breastfeeding women who voted in priority in the polling stations observed by the Mission.

12. In most of the polling stations observed were accessible to voters, it turns out that

all of them and the ballot boxes were placed in a visible way to the public. However, the EASF-EOM could not ascertain the existence of bulletins in Braille for the visually impaired.

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN AND YOUTH IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

13. Women and youth were well mobilized on the day of the vote. Given that they constitute the majority of the electorate, they were very dynamic both in the holding of the polling stations and in the exercise of their civil and political rights. The Mission noted that there were no delegates (women) representing candidates, parties, and coalitions contesting at the Presidential level and 65% of women among the electoral staff in the polling stations visited.

CIVIL SOCIETY

14. The Civil Society played an important role throughout the electoral process however, EASF-EOM did not observe the presence of domestic observers in most of the polling stations visited.

MEDIAS mead

15. Media in Rwanda is regulated by specific regulation which describes the rights, obligations, organization and functioning of the media. Access to information is regulated by a specific Law, the media landscape in Rwanda is diverse with over 40 radio stations, 12 TV channels, 50 newspapers and magazines and over 80 web-based media houses representing both the private and public sector which covered the election extensively. Exchanges and interactions on social media also enlivened the electoral campaigns.

CONCLUSION

16. Based on its overall observations and findings, the EASF-EOM concluded that the electoral process took place in an orderly, calm and transparent manner with respect for the rule of law.

RECOMMENDATIONS

17. Based on its observations and findings, the EASF-EOM offers the following recommendations to improve future electoral processes in Rwanda:

a. To National Electoral Commission:

i. To review the practice of persons with official duties being allowed to vote in any polling station, to reflect on the need for regulations to address challenges related to reconciliation of ballots as a result of persons with official duties voting outside their originally registered station

ii. To consider a more robust system for validating ballots papers to ensure its authenticity, thus mitigating the risk of possible counterfeit ballots papers being used; and

iii. Consider to implement specific regulations for the use of biometric kits for accurate identification of voters.

b. Political Parties:

Encourage more women to stand for the highest office in the land

c. The Government and Parliament:

i. To consider reviewing and adjustments of the legislation to provide campaign funding for candidates to allow for equitable playing field; and

ii. Consider the introduction of legislation that provides avenues for disqualified potential candidates to seek timely legal redress

Done at Kigali 17 July 2024

For the Mission,

HE Kenya

Head of Mission