



**LEVY MWANAWASA REGIONAL CENTRE FOR
DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE**

SHORT-TERM ELECTIONS OBSERVATION HANDBOOK

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INTRODUCTION

The ICGLR-Short Term Election Observation Handbook is drafted in line with the ICGLR Pact on Security, Stability and Development particularly the Protocol on Democracy and Governance and other relevant Regional , Continental and International Instruments governing universal principles of observing democratic elections.

The Handbook is to guide ICGLR-Short Term Election Observers on how to conduct themselves during ICGLR election observation missions in Member States holding elections.

1. ICGLR- SHORT TERM ELECTION OBSERVATION HANDBOOK

This Handbook provides the minimal conditions and code of conduct that ICGLR Short Term Election Observer must follow and adhere to while on ICGLR Election Observation Mission.

1.1. Conditions for Effective Observation

In order to observe effectively, the ICGLR expects assurances from the Host Government that an Election Observation Mission will be able to carry out its duties in a timely manner, and specifically to:

- Establish a mission within a time frame that permits observation of all phases of the election process;
- Decide at its own discretion the number of observers necessary to mount a viable observation mission;
- Receive accreditation for all its observers through a simple and non-discriminatory procedure;
- Obtain all necessary information regarding the electoral process from Election Commission Management Bodies, and other relevant authorities at all levels in a timely manner;
- Meet with candidates, members of all political parties, representatives of civil society, and with all other key stakeholders;
- Have the freedom to travel in all regions of the country during the election process and on election day, without any restriction;



- Have access to all polling sites, counting and tabulation centres throughout the country; and
- Be able to issue public statements.

These conditions are essential for effective election observation

1.2. The Observer Code of Conduct

The Observer Code of Conduct was developed to ensure that all members of the ICGLR Election Observation Mission conduct themselves according to high professional and personal standards and behave in a manner consistent with the role of an independent and impartial observer. The role of an observer is limited to observing and reporting, and observers have no authority to instruct, assist, or to interfere in the voting, counting, tabulation, or other aspects of the electoral process. The Observer Code of Conduct is binding on all ICGLR observers; any serious violation of the stipulated code of conduct will lead to withdrawal of observation accreditation.

1.3. Code of Conduct for ICGLR Observers

- Observers will maintain strict impartiality in the conduct of their duties and will, at no time, publicly express or exhibit any bias or preference in relation to national authorities, parties, candidates, or with reference to any issues in contention in the election process.
- Observers will undertake their duties in an unobtrusive manner and will not interfere in the electoral process. Observers may raise questions with election officials and bring irregularities to their attention, but they must not give instructions or countermand their decisions.
- Observers will remain on duty throughout Election Day, including observation of the vote count and tabulation or as per instruction.
- Observers will base all conclusions on their personal observations or on clear and convincing facts or evidence.
- Observers apart from the Head of Mission will not make any comments to the media on the electoral process or on the substance of their observations, and any comment to the media will be limited to general information about the observation mission and the role of the observers.



- Observers will not take any unnecessary or undue risks. Each observer's personal safety overrides all other considerations.
- Observers will carry any prescribed identification issued by the Host Government or Election Management Body and will identify themselves to any authority upon request.
- Observers will comply with all national laws and regulations.
- Observers will exhibit the highest levels of personal discretion and professional behaviour at all times.
- Observers will attend all required Mission Briefings and Debriefings and adhere to the deployment plan and all other instructions provided by the ICGLR Election Observation Mission.

In addition to the Observer Code of Conduct, all observers are expected to adhere to ICGLR guidelines on a professional working environment, which prohibit discrimination or sexual harassment. Election Observation Missions (EOM) in some countries may issue additional rules or guidance binding on all ICGLR observers.

2. SHORT-TERM OBSERVERS

Short-Term Observers (STOs) are requested by Note Verbale, conveyed to all 12 ICGLR participating States, in which the ICGLR requests the secondment of persons with relevant election administration and/or comparative observation experience to serve as STOs. The sending state incurs all costs for STOs.

STOs usually stay in-country for approximately one week. STOs are deployed in teams of two and observe voting and counting on Election Day. They are deployed according to a plan that provides a broad and balanced presence throughout the country on Election Day. Due to the complexity of deployment planning, it is not possible to consider STO requests to be deployed to particular locations or teamed with certain partners.

STOs usually arrive in-country approximately four days before an election; the precise schedule is established by the Core Team on the basis of local circumstances and is communicated to delegations of participating States in a timely manner. The Core Team provides a one day briefing session on the day after the scheduled arrival of STOs. The next day, STOs are deployed to their regions; they then normally have one day to familiarize themselves with their assigned areas of responsibility before Election Day.



STOs begin work very early on Election Day by observing the opening of polling stations. In the course of the day, STOs usually visit some 10 polling stations. They then select one polling station at which to observe closing procedures and the vote count. In some cases, STOs may be required to remain at a single polling station, or they may be assigned to observe tabulation at a mid-level election commission and/or to perform other duties, such as observing special voting procedures (military or prison voting or following a mobile ballot box).

Attendance at the pre-election briefing is mandatory for all STOs; individuals who cannot arrive in-country in time for the briefing will not be accepted as members of the respective ICGLR-EOM. Even experienced observers need to be briefed on issues and procedures specific to a particular election.

The briefing covers:

- ICGLR Methodology and the Observer Code of Conduct;
- A political overview;
- The election system;
- The election law and its practical implementation;
- The election administration;
- Polling and counting procedures;
- Gender and minority issues;
- A media overview;
- How to respond to media enquiries;
- The pre-election period based on long-term observation;
- Any special issues or procedures to be observed;
- How to fill out and submit reporting forms;
- Logistical, deployment, and financial information; and
- Security issues.



STOs are provided with accreditation and with written briefing materials, including an STO briefing book designed specifically for each election, a translation of the national election law and relevant regulations, general logistical information and emergency contact numbers, a map of the country or area of responsibility, the ICGLR Election Observation Handbook, and reporting forms. Whenever possible, the STO briefing book is e-mailed to STOs before Election Day.

3. OBSERVING THE PRE-ELECTION PERIOD

3.1. The Political Campaign

ICGLR-Short Term Election Observers are expected to observe some political parties campaigns. Possible issues to look for include:

- Forms of campaign violence;
- Disruption of campaign meetings or rallies;
- Reports of intimidation or harassment; and
- Systematic efforts to remove or deface campaign posters.

4. OBSERVING ELECTION DAY

ICGLR-STOs are the mission's primary resource for observing and assessing Election Day procedures at polling stations and at intermediate levels of the election administration. STOs are deployed around the country on Election Day, in international teams of two or more, to observe polling stations and counting centres.

Election-day observation can be a very individual experience, depending on the area of deployment and the set of circumstances confronted by each observer team in the polling stations they visit. Some observers may encounter significant problems, others may find no problems, and still others may see a mixed picture. The ICGLR Election Observation Methodology, which provides for a contribution by each observer team, is designed to achieve an overall picture of election-day proceedings. Observers fill in forms at each polling station and counting centre visited, which provides detailed information on the voting and



counting process, and which in turn provides the Election Observation Mission with an overall profile of polling-station activity throughout the country, upon which it can draw conclusions based upon a collective experience.

The ICGLR methodology for election-day observation is therefore both qualitative and quantitative. Completing the forms in polling stations provides a basis for a countrywide statistical analysis of the implementation of key election-day procedures. While there is a standard form designed as a checklist for procedures in polling stations and counting centres, forms do vary depending on country-specific procedures. The forms ensure that all important aspects of the election-day process are properly focused on and reported and that key tendencies are identified correctly.

In addition to filling out forms, STOs are asked to provide comments on noteworthy observations or impressions, both on their forms and in oral debriefings. They may sometimes be asked to prepare separate written reports on particular incidents or observations. Careful commentary from STOs can be particularly important in establishing whether specific election-day violations took place and in discerning trends within the country. It is extremely important for STOs to specify in their forms and reports whether they themselves witnessed any reported irregularities or whether these were reported to them by others, such as proxies, polling-station officials, or domestic observers.

Observers should exhibit the highest levels of personal discretion and professional behaviour at all times during the conduct of their observation duties. They should remember that they have been invited to observe the national election proceedings of the respective host country and that, in this process, they are representing neither themselves individually nor their country of origin but the ICGLR. As such, their conduct will reflect upon the ICGLR. Observers should wear their identification and present their accreditation upon request.

While observers should refrain from giving advice or instructions to election officials, they may draw problems or irregularities to their attention and observe if and how these officials address any problem themselves. Observers should record all violations and irregularities. The observer forms and debriefings will eventually disclose the extent and seriousness of such problems.



4.1. Deployment

The Core Team prepares an STO deployment plan intended to ensure that teams of observers cover a balanced sample of the country on Election Day and that observer teams do not duplicate each other's work. In order for election observation to be effective, an element of unexpected visits to polling stations and counting centres is necessary; thus, deployment plans are not made public prior to deployment.

The deployment plan covers both urban and rural areas and takes into account a country's social diversity. The deployment plan should also ensure that some observers are designated to visit Regional Election Commissions. In instances where voting is conducted in military barracks, prisons or hospitals, or by mobile ballot box, the deployment plan should also take into account these types of special voting procedures.

Observers should be deployed in teams of two. Diversity of experience within an observer team, which includes citizens of different ICGLR participating States, helps ensure a broader and more balanced view of operations at each polling station. Each team should fill out only one form per polling station; this requires the STOs on each team to reach an agreement on their findings. This requirement provides an extra check on the accuracy of the particular observer team's findings.

Normally, STOs are deployed to their area of responsibility at least one full day before Election Day. This is done to ensure that STOs have time to familiarize themselves with their areas of observation and to receive local briefings before Election Day.

Depending on geographic conditions and circumstances encountered at polling stations, a team of observers may visit approximately 10 polling stations or as agreed during the day. Each team of STOs is assigned a specific list of polling stations, and the observers themselves determine the order in which they will visit the polling stations. However, they may not have time to visit all of these in the course of the day. They should stay for at least between fifteen minutes to half an hour at each station they visit. They may choose to return to the same station more than once, particularly if they believe there are problems that merit close attention. In such cases, the team will fill in a separate form for each visit. Observers should keep in mind that election observation is not a race to visit the greatest number of polling stations, and sometimes it can be more beneficial to visit fewer polling stations for a longer period of time.



It is important for STOs to abide by the deployment plan and by any instructions on when and how to submit their forms and to attend debriefings. Failure to visit the assigned polling stations or visiting polling stations not on their list may result in duplication with other observers and in disrupting the balance built into the countrywide deployment plan. Failure to report according to the instructed timetable may result in forms being received too late to be taken into account when the ICGLR-EOM Preliminary Statement is prepared.

4.2. Polling-Station Activities

The basic aim of observing elections at the polling-station level is to assess whether voting and counting are implemented in a correct and orderly manner and in accordance with electoral regulations, ICGLR Protocols and commitments, and other universal principles. Observers should be aware that some mistakes made by election officials may be due to inexperience or lack of training rather than due to any deliberate intention to compromise the integrity of the process. On the other hand, wilful and systematic irregularities do have the potential to distort the process, and the sum total of STO reports will readily reveal such systematic irregularities.

In the event of irregularities, observers should bring them to the attention of election officials, but they should not give their advice or instructions or attempt to countermand decisions of election officials. They should, however, observe how and whether election officials address any reported irregularities and include this information in their reporting. In the event of serious irregularities, such as ballot-box stuffing or tampering with results protocols at any level of election administration, observers should bring them promptly to the attention of the Core Team.

In the event of violence or serious threats of violence, STOs should leave the area immediately. They should not risk putting themselves, their interpreter, or their driver in danger. Such incidents should also be reported immediately to the Core Team. Customarily, observers should arrive at their first polling station in time to observe opening procedures. Important points to observe at the opening are whether polling stations open on schedule, whether the Polling-Station Commission is familiar with procedures, and whether voting in the respective polling station commences efficiently and according to regulations. It is important to note whether ballot boxes are empty at the start of the process; whether they are properly sealed; and whether the polling station has received, and can account for, blank ballots and all other necessary materials. STOs are provided with a special form to complete with their impressions and comments on polling-station opening procedures.



4.2.1. Observations Outside and Upon Entering Polling Stations

STOs should observe the general conditions outside and around the polling station. A number of issues to be aware of are:

- Is there any sign of campaign materials or campaign activity in, or in close proximity to, the polling station?
- Are there crowds around the polling station? If voters are waiting outside for their turn to vote, are they doing so in an orderly manner? If the crowds are not voters, is there any indication of who they are?
- Is there any evidence of intimidation or disturbance?
- Are voters being offered any inducements to vote in a particular manner?
- Are security personnel present, and, if so, are they behaving in an appropriate manner?
- Is access to the polling station difficult? Could a disabled person enter the station unassisted?

Observers should be aware of any unusual tension that appears to exist when they enter the polling station, either because of their presence or for other reasons. It may be those first few minutes that are crucial for an immediate and realistic impression of the situation in a polling station. However, more time may be required to assess the situation in more detail, and observers should spend as long as necessary to form an accurate impression.

4.2.2. Questions for Polling-Station Officials

Once inside a polling station, STOs should first introduce themselves as accredited observers to the Chief Polling-Station Official and then briefly explain the nature of their visit. If the official objects to their presence or their activities, they should calmly explain that they have been invited by the Government and that they are officially accredited to observe. However, they should not argue with the official in charge and should abide by his or her instructions. If the instructions make it impossible for the STOs to fulfil their responsibilities, the circumstances should be noted in detail in the Comments section of the form and reported as soon as possible to the Core Team.



Whenever possible, observers should speak with a number of different Polling-Station Officials, particularly when they represent different political parties. There are a number of questions STOs may usefully pose to Polling-Station Officials. Many of these will appear on the observer forms. Other questions may not appear on the forms but will enable STOs to gain a clearer impression and understanding of election procedures.

Possible questions for Polling-station officials include:

- How were Polling-Station Officials selected? Do they represent political parties?
- How are the duties of the polling-station commission divided to provide for efficient and secure processing of voters?
- Did Polling-Station Officials receive formal training?
- When were the ballots and other voting materials received, and how were they secured prior to Election Day?
- Are there sufficient ballots and other polling materials?
- What is the total number of voters on the voter list at the polling station, and how many voters have actually voted? (This should give the observers some idea of the turnout trends).
- Is there a supplementary voter list for sick and elderly voters voting at home by mobile ballot box and, if so, is there an unusually high number of names on the supplementary voter list?
- Have any voters been turned away because their name did not appear on the list for this polling station? If some voters did not have the appropriate identification, how was this problem addressed?
- Did any disturbances, irregularities, or complaints occur, and how were they addressed?

Observers should also try to assess whether Polling-Station Officials appear to be well trained and familiar with voting procedures. They should assess whether officials appear to be free to talk about their duties. Most importantly, observers should be alert to whether officials appear to be performing their duties impartially.



4.2.3. Observation of Polling-Station Procedures

Beyond their conversations with Polling-Station Officials, STOs should carefully observe all procedures at the polling station. They should be guided by the form provided to them, which will include the questions most relevant to a particular election. However, STOs should use their judgement to assess whether any other issues or procedures not mentioned on their forms are a cause for concern, and they should note these on the comments section of their forms.

Issues and procedures to observe include:

- Are there indications of disorganization, such as unusually long lines of people or excessive delays?
- Is there any sign of partisan campaign materials or campaign activity in the polling station?
- Is there any attempt to solicit people to vote in a particular manner, or is any pressure being applied to voters? Is there any sign of intimidation?
- Are there police, security forces, or government officials in polling stations?
- Are there other persons in the polling station with no apparent official function?
- Is anyone other than a Polling-Station Official administering the polling process or giving directions to polling-station officials?
- How are voters identified, and do they produce the correct documents?
- How are voters processed, e.g., by crossing names off the voter list, by signing the list, or by stamping identity cards? Is indelible ink used?
- If voters sign the voter list, are there any apparently identical signatures?
- Are voters being turned away because they are not on the voter list?
- Do ballot papers bear an official stamp specific to the polling station and/or the signature of a polling-station official(s)?
- Are voters given more ballot papers than they are entitled to, or are there any other indications of multiple voting?
- Is there any evidence of ballot-box stuffing?
- Do voters appear to understand the process, or do large numbers of voters require assistance? Are the ballots simple and easy to use?



- Could the layout of a polling station potentially breach the secrecy of a person's vote?
- Are voters being allowed to enter the voting booth together?
- Are any voters voting outside the booth?
- Are the facilities suitable for disabled persons to use independently?
- Are voters who need assistance provided with appropriate help?
- Are ballot boxes located in full view of election officials and observers?
- Are the boxes properly sealed?
- Are all required voting procedures being properly and efficiently followed?

4.2.4. Other Contacts at Polling Stations

In addition to discussions with Polling-Station Officials and independent observations, STOs should try to speak with domestic observers. This may include party-affiliated observers, candidate representatives, and non-partisan civic observers.

STOs should note whether domestic observers are present at polling stations and whether they have been restricted or hindered in any way from carrying out their observation duties. STOs should speak to a cross section of people from each respective category of domestic observers wherever possible. Their comments may offer additional information with regard to the voting environment at the polling station and the performance of election officials.

While international observers can greatly benefit from the insight of domestic observer networks, it is important to note that ICGLR Election Observation Missions remain entirely separate from any domestic observation effort. STOs should make clear in their conversations that they have no authority to remedy violations or irregularities, only to report the complaints to their headquarters. STOs should inform those who have witnessed violations or irregularities that it is their right to pursue complaints through official domestic procedures.



4.2.5. Special Voting Procedures

In some ICGLR countries, there are provisions for special voting procedures that are intended to facilitate voting or to make voting available to citizens who, for whatever reason, may not be able to visit the polls. Special voting procedures may include the use of mobile ballot boxes intended for the sick and elderly, voting in hospitals and prisons, early voting, voting by post, voting in embassies, and special provisions for military voting.

Special voting has the advantage of extending the franchise to voters who might not otherwise be able to vote. However, special voting procedures may also be much more difficult to regulate securely without appropriate safeguards and are therefore open to potential abuse. Ensuring the secrecy of the ballot can also be more problematic. Therefore, an assessment of the advantages of special voting provisions must be weighed against the ability to regulate them properly, securely, and transparently, as well as the degree of confidence in the overall election process.

STOs may be instructed to observe some forms of special voting as part of their duties. If so, they should try to assess the extent to which such voting is sufficiently regulated, secure, and transparent. If supplementary voter lists are used for sick and elderly voters voting at home, for example, is there an unusually high number of names on these lists? Has sufficient campaign material been provided to soldiers, prisoners, hospital patients, or other voters using special voting procedures in order for them to make an informed choice?

Military voting: While there are distinct advantages with regard to confidence and transparency for the military to be able to vote with the civilian population, military personnel may still be required, in some countries, to vote in their barracks or on their bases. In such circumstances, the military voting process should be observed by some STOs, as soldiers can be especially vulnerable to intimidation. For example, troops may be ordered to vote in front of their officers, and, in some cases, officers may even instruct their troops on how to vote.

Hospitals and prisons: When special polling facilities are established in hospitals or prisons and other places of detention, some observers should be assigned to visit these special polling stations. In a number of countries, convicts are disqualified from voting, but detained individuals who have not been convicted retain the right to vote. Hospital patients and prisoners also constitute a segment of the electorate that may be particularly vulnerable to intimidation.



Mobile ballot boxes: Some countries provide mobile boxes at the request of voters who may be elderly, ill, or otherwise unable to visit a polling station. Usually, the mobile boxes are taken on their rounds by at least two polling officials, ideally representing different political interests where applicable. Applying all polling-station controls to mobile ballot boxes is not possible. Voters using mobile ballot boxes may also not have all the privacy afforded by a polling booth. Some STOs should try to follow mobile ballot boxes on their rounds and to assess the process.

Early voting and postal voting: In general, STOs will not always be able to monitor early voting or postal voting, where these are permitted. It is useful, however, for observers to ascertain how early and postal ballots have been secured prior to Election Day, to attend the opening and counting of these ballots, and to form a general impression of the process. In the case of early voting, it is also important for observers to ascertain how the daily records of voter turnout are accounted for in the polling-station results protocol.

Voting abroad: Some countries permit their citizens to cast ballots in embassies or specially designated voting centres outside of the country. In general, only a very small portion of the population votes in this manner. Only under exceptional circumstances, e.g., in the case of large numbers of displaced persons, are special arrangements made for STOs to observe such voting.

4.3. Contacts with the Media

Media representatives often approach observers on Election Day for a comment on the election process. The Observer Code of Conduct prohibits observers from making personal comments about their observations to the media. Observers are strictly forbidden from speaking to the media regarding the substance of their observations and findings. In the event that any observers were to discuss the substance of their findings with the media, their observer accreditations could be immediately withdrawn.

Observers should also refrain from comparing the election to any other election they may have observed in the same country or elsewhere.

General comments to the media may include:



- That it would be inappropriate to comment on their impressions or findings because they are witnessing only a very small part of the overall national voting picture; their reports will be factored in with a great many others, so that the ICGLR-EOM can draw overall conclusions based on a large number of observer reports; and
- That a press conference will be held in the capital the day after the election to announce the ICGLR-EOM's preliminary conclusions and that all media representatives are welcome to attend.

If a media representative persists in requesting information or comments beyond the types of points listed above, they should be referred to the Head of Mission. According to ICGLR guidelines, only the Head of Mission or responsible ICGLR officials may make substantive comments to the media.

Possible problems to be aware of:

- Violence or disturbances;
- Intimidation of voters;
- Confusion or disorganization at polling stations;
- Presence of unauthorized persons at polling stations;
- Presence of uniformed police or local-government officials inside the voting area of polling stations or close to it;
- Other inappropriate activities by police and/or security forces, such as taking notes and reporting turnout figures or results by telephone;
- Campaigning during an electoral-silence period;
- Campaign material in polling stations;
- Delayed opening of polling stations;
- Failure by polling officials to follow required procedures;
- Restricting the right of eligible voters to cast a ballot;
- Failure to check voters' identity;
- Failure to ensure the secrecy of the vote by inappropriate booths, screens, or supply of light;
- Inaccuracies in the voter lists;
- Group (family) voting;



- Proxy voting (unless specified by law);
- Multiple voting;
- Ballot-box stuffing;
- Unscreened voting booths;
- Unsealed ballot box;
- Presence of pre-marked ballots;
- Unregulated use of mobile ballot boxes;
- Absence of necessary voting materials;
- Excessive delays in administering the voting;
- Inappropriate activity by political-party or candidate representatives; and
- Interference with the work of election commissions or observers.

5. OBSERVING THE VOTE COUNT

The vote count is an important stage in the election process, and it should be closely followed and thoroughly observed. As the voting draws to a close, and the vote count commences, all STOs are required to observe the counting process. The vote count normally takes place at the polling-station level, and STOs should select one of their assigned polling stations at which to observe the closing procedures and then remain there for the vote count. In some instances, STOs may be asked to attend the count at a particular polling station. STOs are provided with special forms to complete that contain a number of specific questions about polling-station closing procedures and counting procedures.

Observing the count provides an opportunity to assess whether ballots are counted accurately, reflecting the choices expressed by the voters. STOs should therefore be particularly vigilant during the vote count and tabulation of results. In general, there is a detailed standard procedure for closing a polling station and counting the ballots. The counting process usually begins with the sealing of the ballot-box slot once voting has ended; it should remain sealed while polling officials complete forms accounting for all ballot papers and other polling materials and verify that the number of ballots distributed to voters matches the number of voters recorded as having voted. This material should be sealed separately. Often, unused ballot papers are invalidated before the opening of the ballot box. The ballot box is then opened and the ballots counted according to the designated procedure.



Should there be a mobile ballot box in the same polling station, however, the counting of the votes should start only after determining separately the number of ballots in the mobile box and the number in the stationary box. After this calculation has been made, the mobile-box ballots should be mixed with the rest of the ballots that were cast, and only then should the vote count commence. These precautionary steps are needed in order to prevent a violation of the secrecy of the votes in the mobile box.

The results of voting should be made publicly available at the polling-station level. It is a good practice for the results to be posted outside of each polling station. The transparency and integrity of the process are enhanced when all party and candidate representatives are given official copies of the result sheets, or protocol, for the polling station and have the possibility to sign it or register complaints. Non-partisan domestic observers and international observers should also be able to receive a copy of the results in polling stations. If provided, the official protocol or copy of the results should be forwarded promptly to the Core Team, together with the completed observer form for the count. If it is not possible to obtain an official protocol of polling-station results, STOs should nevertheless carefully note the full results of the polling station at which they observed the count.

Issues for the Vote Count may include:

- Is the count performed by Polling-Station Officials, or are other persons involved?
- Do election officials appear to understand and adhere to the required procedures?
- Are ballots counted in an orderly and secure manner?
- Is the count conducted in a transparent environment, with adequate arrangements for domestic observers?
- Does the number of registered voters recorded as having voted correspond with the number of ballots cast?
- Are unused ballots secured, cancelled, or destroyed after being counted?
- Are invalid ballots properly identified in a uniform manner? Are invalid ballots appropriately segregated and preserved for review?
- Do the ballots contain any unusual markings intended to violate the secrecy of the vote?
- Are ballots for each party or candidate separated correctly and counted individually?
- Are any disputes or complaints resolved in a satisfactory manner?
- Are official counting records correctly completed at the end of the count and signed by all authorized persons?



- Are domestic observers and poll watchers from political parties able to obtain official copies of the protocol for the polling station?
- Are the results publicly posted at the polling station?
- Are there inappropriate activities by police and/or security forces, such as taking notes and reporting figures or results by telephone?
- Did polling-station officials agree on the vote-count procedures and results, and, if not, what action was taken in case of disagreement?

5.1. Tabulation

Ultimately, it is necessary to assess whether the results were tabulated accurately. After the ballots are counted, the results of the polling-station count are usually transmitted to a Regional Election Commission, where the regional results are tabulated and transmitted to the national level. The tabulation process is another important step in the election process that should be observed. STOs are often asked to accompany the official results and other polling material as they are transported from the polling station to the tabulation centre and then to observe that the results from their polling station are properly included in the tabulation. STOs should assess whether the transport of ballots and other voting material is direct, secure, and transparent (i.e., are STOs and others allowed to accompany the results during transport?).

In other cases, special teams of STOs may be assigned to observe procedures at tabulation centres. The goal is for observers to monitor each level of the tabulation process and to be able to follow the results of individual polling stations up to the national level as a spot check that the tabulation process has been properly administered. The ICGLR-EOM may organize its work in shifts or deploy special teams to ensure that this goal is met. If STOs are assigned to special teams to observe the tabulation of results, they will be given specific instructions on how to conduct the observation.

In some cases, electoral authorities may use computer networks to transmit preliminary results. In order to ensure transparency of the tabulation exercise, observers should become familiar with the technical procedures to be followed. If the election observation mission has the requisite expertise available, it could request access to the software to assess its performance. In addition, in such cases, observers should monitor the process and, if possible, receive copies of a printout signed and stamped by the relevant authority as the information is sent.



The tabulation of results should be verifiable and transparent at all levels of the election administration. In the interest of transparency and promoting confidence in the electoral process, results for each level of the tabulation should be made publicly available immediately, at each stage of the tabulation process. The results from particular polling stations constitute a sample of verified results that can be checked against results at the district or regional level and later checked one by one against the overall published results. This task is normally carried out by the Core Team.

Possible problems to be aware of include:

- Ballot-box stuffing;
- Ballot-box switching;
- Adding marked ballots after the opening of the box;
- Disorderly counting procedures;
- Involvement of unauthorized persons, such as local-government officials, uniformed or plain-clothes security personnel or other unidentified individuals, in the count;
- Inadequate number of counting staff and supervisors;
- Exclusion of polling-station officials or observers;
- Arbitrary or inconsistent invalidation of ballots cast;
- Loss of ballot papers or ballot boxes;
- Dishonest counting or reporting of the ballots;
- Insecure storage of unused ballots;
- Results protocol not completed in the polling station;
- Polling-station results protocol filled in by pencil instead of pen;
- Failure to post official results at the polling station;
- Refusal to supply official copies of results to candidate representatives or observers;
- Insecure transport of polling materials to tabulation centres;
- Falsifying or switching result protocols; and
- Lack of transparency or irregular procedures at tabulation centres.



6. REPORTING, DEBRIEFING, AND STATEMENTS

6.1. STO Reporting

STOs report throughout Election Day and election night by completing forms at each polling station. The forms should be returned at designated drop-off points during Election Day or faxed back to the EOM Headquarters, depending on the specific instructions provided by the Core Team. It is important for STOs to adhere to their assigned schedule in order to ensure that their reports can be processed in time for their assessments to be included in the observation mission's statement of preliminary findings and conclusions.

In addition to forms, STOs should report immediately to the Core Team any significant problems or major irregularities that occur on Election Day, such as incidents of violence, ballot box stuffing or other election fraud, or refusal to admit observers to polling stations.

STOs are also usually required to participate in a debriefing. Debriefing is an important opportunity for all observers to share and compare their findings on the election process. These findings will contribute to the observation mission's conclusion on how the elections were conducted in relation to domestic laws, ICGLR protocols and commitments and other universal principles. The debriefings are closed to the press and to the general public.

6.2. The Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions

The election observation mission usually releases its statement of preliminary findings and conclusions at a press conference held on the afternoon following Election Day. The statement is based on all of the work of the ICGLR-EOM, including both the pre-election analysis and the election-day reports provided by STOs; this reflects the reality that elections are a process, not a one-day event.

The statement is a summary of key findings and conclusions on the legal framework, the election administration, the campaign and the media, as well as the election-day voting and counting processes. The statement provides a preliminary assessment of the degree to which ICGLR Protocols and commitments, and other universal principles were upheld and how



well the domestic election law and regulations were implemented.

The statement is called preliminary because it is issued before the entire election process has been completed. In some cases, the vote count and tabulation may not be complete when the preliminary statement is issued. In almost all cases, the statement is issued before the election results are final and official and before election-day complaints and appeals have been resolved. On occasion, the ICGLR may need to issue a subsequent statement covering post-election developments prior to the release of the final report.

Recommendations are normally reserved for the ICGLR final report. However, in cases of a second round of voting or other special circumstances, issuing recommendations in the preliminary statement may help improve the quality of the remaining stage of the process.

7. CLOSING DOWN AN ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION

Following Election Day, all STOs return as soon as possible to the capital to complete any necessary debriefing processes before their departure. STOs usually depart on the second day following the election.



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