

AU and COMESA High Level Officials Wrap up Mission to Kenya

The joint high-level delegation of the African Union (AU) Panel of the Wise, and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Committee of Elders, working closely with IGAD, end a week-long pre-election assessment mission to Kenya ahead of its March 4th, General Elections.

The mission was conducted within the framework of the implementation of the Decision on the Report of the Panel of the Wise on Strengthening the Role of the African Union in the Prevention, Management and Resolution of Election-Related Disputes and Violent Conflicts in Africa, adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, held in Sirte, Libya, in July 2009.

The main goal of the Kenya mission that ran from January 16th – 22nd, 2013, was to express the AU, COMESA and IGAD's solidarity with the Kenyan people, as well as these institutions' continued support to the efforts of the Government of Kenya, and all political actors and civil society working to create conducive environment for the holding of free, transparent, credible and peaceful elections.

During its mission in the country, the delegation was briefed on election scenarios by the IGAD Conflict Early and Response Mechanism (CEWARN), met with several stakeholders both in Nairobi and in Nakuru, in the Rift Valley Province, epicentre of the 2007-08 post-elections violence, to assess the political context and level of preparedness for the elections. In Nairobi, the delegation had frank and useful conversations with four Presidential candidates, the Chief Justice, the Chairperson and officials of Independent Electoral Commission (IEBC), the Inspector General of Police, the private sector, media groups, UN Director General and Representatives of UN Agencies, national and international Civil Society Organisations and both African and Western Diplomats. While in Nakuru, the delegation met with the County Commissioner, as well as County representatives of the IEBC, the National Integration and Cohesion Commission, and the Peace and Security Committee.

After exchanging views with these diverse groups of stakeholders, and witnessing political party nominations, the delegation hails the people of Kenya for the huge strides made within the last five years to address some structural causes of the post-elections violence. The delegation noted the positive impact of the new constitution and the growing confidence in key institutions that have undergone reforms, notably the judiciary and security sectors and urge for urgent and comprehensive reforms.

The delegation reiterates the need for closer attention around issues of security, the media's role and responsibilities, civic and voter education, and the management of the post-election phase including transparency in tallying, professionalism in reporting and management of electoral victory and failure. The delegation's detailed report, including recommendations, will be submitted to the Peace and Security Council of the AU, the COMESA policy organs, the IGAD Executive Secretary, as well as the Government of Kenya through the appropriate channels of the AU.

Both the AU Panel of the Wise, and the COMESA Committee of Elders would like to express their sincere gratitude to the Government and people of Kenya, for the very warm reception, collaboration and hospitality toward this delegation. Once again, the delegation reassures the people of Kenya of their constant support now, during and after the elections.

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