



ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP FOR GUINEA-BISSAU

UNITED KINGDOM ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, REPUBLIC OF GUINEA-BISSAU HELD ON 18 MARCH 2012

INTERIM STATEMENT 28 MARCH 2012

Following a formal invitation from the National Commission of Elections (CNE) of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau and from the National Popular Assembly of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, the United Kingdom Parliament's All-Party Parliamentary Group for Guinea-Bissau deployed a mission of eight observers and eleven support staff to monitor the first round of the presidential elections that took place on Sunday, 18 March 2012. The Mission was approved by Minister for Africa, Henry Bellingham MP, Her Britannic Majesty's Ambassador, H.E. John Marshall, and was funded by the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). The United Kingdom also made a financial contribution to the organisation of the electoral process.

It is the intention of the Mission to hold a full press conference on the conclusion of the electoral process. This Interim Statement serves as a communiqué on the first round of the process, and has been released in conjunction with the Formal Declaration of Results by the CNE today.

Peter R. Thompson, Head of Mission, was assisted in the preparation of the deployment by two Strategic Advisers: Lord Teverson of Tregony, Chair of the House of Lords EU/Foreign Affairs Committee; and David Stephen, former Special Representative to Kofi Annan in Guinea-Bissau. The Mission was deployed on 4 March 2012 and will remain active until the conclusion of the electoral process.

The Mission would like to congratulate the Interim President of the Republic, H.E. Raimundo Pereira, for the timely and constitutionally adherent organisation of the electoral process and would also like to commend political stakeholders for their consensus on the timing of elections.

In advance of the vote, the Mission met with the Interim President of the Republic, Interim Speaker of Parliament, CNE President, Minister of Interior, Chief of Police, Secretary of State for Communities, all major political parties, leaders of all major religious faiths, various human rights organizations and civil society groups. Meetings were held with Ambassadors of European Union Member States and with the European Union Head of Delegation. The Mission would like to place on record its gratitude to the European Union Delegation for its technical assistance.

The Head of Mission participated in the two meetings of International Observer Missions organized by H.E. Joseph Mutaboba, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General and Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Support Office (UNIOGBIS).



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The Head of Mission has also consulted regularly with the Heads of Mission of the observation missions of the African Union, CPLP, ECOWAS, Republic of Nigeria and United States of America.

The Mission visited four Regional Election Commissions (CREs) to observe the preparation of the electoral process in the interior regions, and observed the campaigns of all major political parties in the urban and rural contexts. **The depth of preparation undertaken by Regional Election Commissions was highly satisfactory given the short timeframe, and the conduct of political parties during the campaigning period was mature and good-natured. In the preparatory phase, all stakeholders were welcoming and transparent in allowing the Mission to observe their work.**

The Mission was deployed in six regions of Guinea-Bissau (Bissau Autonomous Region, Biombo, Cacheu, Oio, Bafata, Gabu) on the day of the vote. The Mission observed the opening of polling stations, monitored the voting process throughout the day, and then observed the closure and counting of votes. **During the course of the day, no major discrepancies or irregularities were either observed by the Mission or reported to the Mission.**

Minor material and logistical problems included issues with the punctuality of mobile ballot boxes, a widespread shortage of ballot box seals and peripheral materials such as adhesive tape. However, it is the view of the Mission that these matters did not affect the integrity or fairness of the voting process. The transparency of the counting process was particularly noteworthy and is to be commended.

It is the conclusion of the Mission that the first round of the electoral process was conducted in a free, fair and transparent manner.

The Mission is hopeful of a timely second round of the electoral process. Candidates are encouraged to respect the legal processes that are in place to deal with grievances and appeals. Above all, the Mission implores the people of Guinea-Bissau and their political leaders to abstain from the justification and use of violence or extra-judicial action to resolve disputes stemming from the electoral process.

**Peter R. Thompson
Head of Mission
Bissau, 28 March 2012**