



African Union Commends Preparations for the 2014 Elections and Calls for Peaceful Elections in the Republic of Malawi

PRESS STATEMENT

Blantyre, 15 May 2014: The African Union deployed ten (10) Long Term Observers (LTO) on 12 April 2014 to observe the pre-election environment. The LTOs will remain in the country to observe the post-election period until 7 June 2014. This press release is an assessment by the African Union Election Observation Mission (AUEOM) based on the observations of these LTOs.

The AUEOM commends the efforts made by the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) in the preparation for the presidential, parliamentary and local government elections taking place on 20 May 2014. The AUEOM expresses the hope that the improved legal and institutional framework will be able to deliver democratic, credible and transparent elections and will offer Malawians a reliable mechanism to exercise their sovereign right of choosing their leaders.

The AUEOM notes that in keeping with the international, continental and regional principles, norms and practices that guide the conduct of elections, the MEC has put in place structures, institutions and measures with the view to ensuring democratic, credible and transparent elections. The AUEOM stresses the importance for Malawian political parties, candidates and their supporters to complement the efforts made by the MEC by abiding by the code of conduct regulating the use of public resources, considerate use of language, adequate media coverage and promoting peaceful resolution of electoral disputes.

The AUEOM urges local, district and national stakeholders to scale up civic and voter education, especially in remote areas, in order to ensure that the electorate is well prepared for the voting exercise.

The AUEOM commends all political and electoral stakeholders as well as civil society organizations for the general calm and conducive atmosphere that has so far prevailed during the campaign period and stresses that it is a significant improvement on the political environment that preceded the previous elections of 2009. We also wish to underline the importance for security agencies to

discharge their duties in a professional and impartial manner throughout the entire electoral process. The AUEOM notes that these and other conditions have created an atmosphere conducive to both international and local election observers to play their role in an effective manner.

The AUEOM notes with appreciation the positive and extensive media coverage of the preparation phase of the elections. We note that more efforts should be made to correct any imbalance and inequitable media coverage. The AUEOM wishes to underline that the media have been peaceful and cordial in their coverage, and that this predisposition is inspired by adherence to the Malawi Media Code of Conduct and the Communications Act; and forebodes well for a peaceful outcome of the elections.

In this regard, the AUEOM wishes to recommend as follows:

1. The MEC needs to step-up efforts in ensuring quality-control and cleaning up the significant errors noted in the voters roll during the voter verification process, particularly as pertains to the omitted names and erroneously captured particulars, to avoid the possibility of a very significant number of voters being disenfranchised. It is equally of critical importance for MEC to ensure that the voters' roll has an accurate number of registered voters;
2. The MEC should continue with its confidence-building measures to increase public trust in the electoral process;
3. The MEC should put in place adequate logistical and administrative measures and contingencies to avoid any challenges that may arise from administering multiple elections on the same day;
4. The security agencies should be professional and impartial in the discharge of their duties throughout the entire electoral process;
5. The leaders of political parties and candidates should continue to urge their supporters to abide by the Electoral Code of Conduct and to refrain from any acts that could mar the peaceful conduct of the elections, before, during and after the elections;
6. The MPLCs should continue their efforts aimed at ensuring peaceful resolution of electoral disputes by all stakeholders;
7. The electoral stakeholders, particularly political parties, MEC and civil society should step up civic and voter education; and

8. In the remaining few days to the elections, it will be important for the media, particularly the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation, to be balanced and equitable in the coverage of all political parties and candidates in keeping with the provisions under the Malawi Media Code of Conduct and the Communications Act.

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