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Elections législatives partielles. Côte d'Ivoire 2011. Urne. ©UN

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Seminar on lessons learned from the 2015-16 electoral cycle in West Africa, Guinea. ©UNOWAS

From 25 to 26 July 2017, a seminar on lessons learned from the 2015-16 electoral cycle in West Africa took place in Conakry, Guinea. It gathered 59 participants. This meeting on experience capitalization...[Read more P.18](#)

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Steering Committee of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS), 27 October 2017 in Dakar, Senegal. ©UNOWAS

## EDITORIAL

### Free, credible elections, a major tool for consolidating democracy and development in West Africa and the Sahel

By Mohamed Ibn Chambas

For a few years, the West African region and the Sahel have undeniably made huge progress in terms of organization and conduct of electoral processes. Various and important elections have been held in a peaceful context and allowed thousands of citizens to exercise their right to vote and to choose their candidates. The time when the outcomes of the elections were known in advance or imposed by the public authorities is over today! Youths and women want to get further engaged in political life. And the vote is the major instrument they have to change and improve their living conditions.

The Gambian example reflects on the increasing determination of the populations to own the elections process in order to achieve a political change and bring about a change likely to meet their expectations.

Except few technical problems and minor acts of violence, countries like Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Guinea, The Gambia, Benin, Cabo Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Niger, have all held peaceful elections.

In addition to people's determination, national and regional institutions are committed to initiating a dynamic for change across the region, with good governance and development being the driving forces

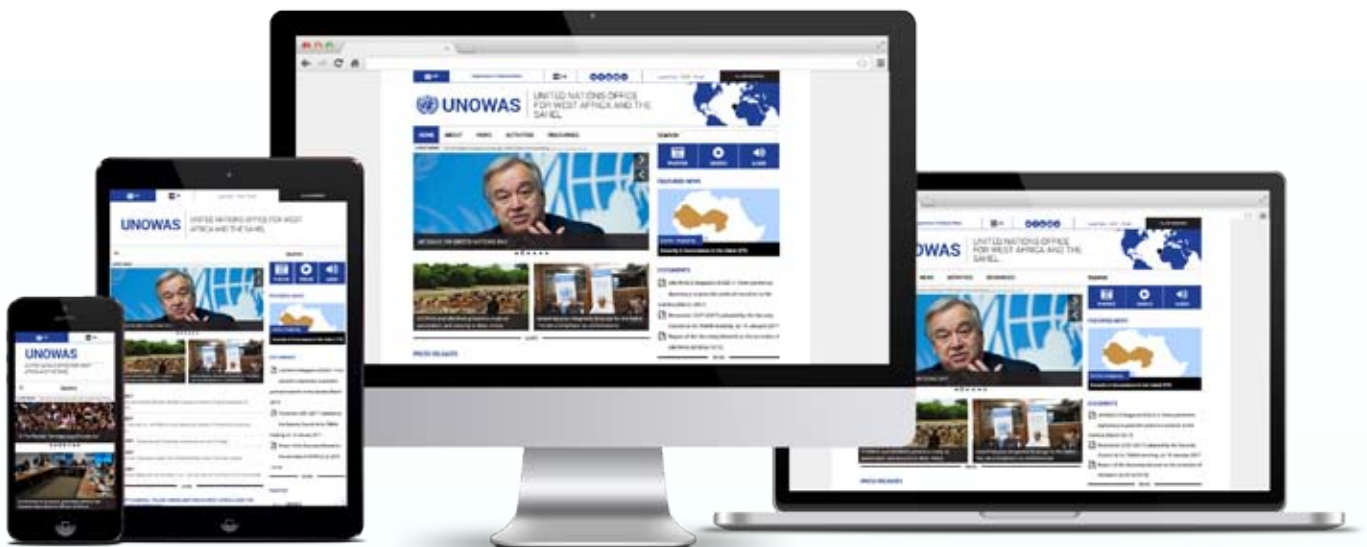


# UNOWAS *E-Magazine*

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**Mohamed Ibn Chambas**

Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

«The time when the outcomes of the elections were known in advance or imposed by the public authorities is over today»

## Free, credible elections, a major tool for consolidating democracy and development in West Africa and the Sahel

**F**or a few years, the West African region and the Sahel have undeniably made huge progress in terms of organization and conduct of electoral processes. Various and important elections have been held in a peaceful context and allowed thousands of citizens to exercise their right to vote and to choose their candidates. The time when the outcomes of the elections were known in advance or imposed by the public authorities is over today! Youths and women want to get further engaged in political life. And the vote is the major instrument they have to change and improve their living conditions.

The Gambian example reflects on the increasing determination of the populations to own the elections process in order to achieve a political change and bring about a change likely to meet their expectations.

Except few technical problems and minor acts of violence, countries like Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Guinea, The Gambia, Benin, Cabo Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Niger, have all held peaceful elections.

In addition to people's determination, national and regional institutions are committed to initiating a dynamic for change across the region, with good governance and development being the driving forces.

The countries of the region have made commendable efforts to improve their legal environments, invest in training and civic education, further engage women and youths in political life, and improve logistics and operational tools. At the same time, at the regional le-

**The regional countries have made commendable efforts to improve their legal environments, invest in training and civic education, further engage women and youths in political life, and improve logistics and operational tools**

vel, institutions have put in place several mechanisms and instruments to support their members and help them implement the necessary changes.

Faithful to its mandate to "maintain international peace and security," the UN has always worked for peace and human rights in the world, in close collaboration with the national stakeholders and regional or international organizations.

In West Africa and the Sahel, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) will continue to play a leading role in promoting good governance and building peace and security.

The organization and conduct of peaceful elections in the region are both a success to promote and a challenge to meet. The elected representatives have the huge responsibility for honoring their commitment and meeting people's expectations. They have also the challenging task to do better than their predecessors in order to achieve of the political changeover wanted by the peoples of the region ■

25%

**Elections in Africa are violent**

Elections should not signify periods of divisions, pain, suffering and anger, but in much of Africa, elections are perilous times characterized by violence and disruption. Although these challenges are not unique to Africa and even developed economies are vulnerable to the same challenges, elections in Africa are violent about 25% of the time.<sup>10</sup> Electoral violence tends to recur in the same regions of affected countries. Electoral violence slows economic growth, undermines durable peace and stability, and the consolidation of a democratic culture.

Countries with strong authoritarian legacies and/or deep ethnic cleavages find it difficult to manage multi-party politics, and as social, political and economic tensions increase during elections, they become vulnerable to violence. South Africa and Ghana are shining examples of electoral management and peaceful leadership transitions, and offer many useful lessons for the rest of Africa. Indeed, many admire and applaud Ghana for the successful election and aims to emulate its election management in future elections.

**Source:** *Deepening Democracy: Election Management and Stability in Africa's divided societies*, UNDP, 2017.

**Link:** <http://bit.ly/2jKqPZ2>



**Erastus Mwencha**  
Head of the African Union  
Observer Mission in  
Liberia

“  
*Having witnessed the election of 2005, the election of 2011, and now that of 2017, we have seen democracy being entrenched and Liberians taking this process as their own. The first election was done with a lot on international support, but this election was largely an exercise conducted by the people of Liberia.*”



**Mrs. Charlotte Osei**  
Chairperson of the  
Electoral Commission of  
Ghana

“  
*Achieving free, fair, credible and transparent elections is never and cannot be the responsibility of the Electoral Commission alone. It is equally the responsibility of the candidates and their appointed agents, the media, as well as the general public. As a result, the Commission is hopeful that, candidates and polling agents would play their respective roles dutifully and in good faith to ensure a peaceful electoral process.*”



**Aliou Momar Njie**  
Chairman of the Electoral  
Commission of Gambia

“  
*Many African leaders do not want to leave power when their constitutional mandates expire and when contesting an election, they use their powers to control the electoral process in their favor. That it is also incumbent upon the chairperson and members of the election commission to conduct the process in line with their consciences to establish their own credibility and build public trust.*”



**Prof. Mahmood Yakubu**  
Chairman of the  
Independent National  
Electoral Commission of  
Nigeria

“  
*I wish to reiterate our commitment to Nigerians that the 2019 General Elections will be a remarkable improvement on the acclaimed success of the last General Elections. Going by the outcome of recent elections conducted by INEC, it is clear that votes count and will continue to be the sole determinant of the outcome of elections. We shall continue to uphold the sanctity of citizens' choice as the only basis for determining elective representation in Nigeria.*”

## Peaceful and credible elections: A case of UNOWAS' holistic coordination

In coordination with national, regional and international actors, UNOWAS works to ensure that elections are peaceful and credible.



Elections législatives partielles. Côte d'Ivoire 2011. Urne. ©UN

**F**or the first time since the creation of the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS) in 1975, there is no sitting West African Head of State who came to power through a coup d'état. They all came to power through due processes of democratic elections. The electoral defeat of the former President of The Gambia, Yahya Jammeh, in December 2016 was significant also for the fact that the people in the region, as in other part of the world, they don't want to have self-appointed leadership and gun-governments. This has established in West Africa a beacon of democratic dispensation in which the ballot has gained roots and has overpowered the bullet to become the maker and keeper of democracy.

Many years ago, the phenomenon of governments which initially came to power through coup d'état existed in Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Guinea Bissau. The insensitivity of bellicose power seekers coupled with the heavy destruction of lives and property, and the ten-

sion and violence that, in some instances, characterized elections, undermine confidence in the democratic system. They allowed rabble rousers and relativists to insinuate that democratic practice and its institutions are ill-suited to the reality of the African situation.

### The conduct of successful elections attenuate the threats to peace and security in the sub-region

National actors, regional organizations, various UN actors and UNOWAS identified the root causes of electoral challenges and determined how to address them in order to uplift the importance of democratic process and fight the scourge of election-related violence.

In conformity with UN General Assembly Resolution 62/150, UNOWAS liaises with the appropriate stakeholders to harmonize their efforts in issues including how best to establish early warning mechanisms to monitor the situation before, during, and after the elections. This also requires the effective mainstreaming of conflict prevention into electoral preparations, especially regarding the role

of the media, the youth, and civil society and women's groups.

UNOWAS considers these efforts important because it believes that in the wider regional context, the conduct of successful elections attenuate the threats to peace and security in a sub-region grappling with terrorism and trans-national organized crime, illicit drug trafficking, challenges related to security sector reform, as well as the proliferation of arms and ammunitions. For this reason, UNOWAS always appeals to stakeholders and candidates to approach elections with the same spirit of tolerance and urges Electoral Commissions to ensure impartiality, transparency and fairness, through inclusivity in order to guarantee the legitimacy and consensual acceptance of the outcome of the electoral process. In doing this it has always referred to the statutes of the ECOWAS, the UN as well as the 2007 African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.

### Ample support

It is, therefore, not surprising that the ten presidential elections held in the West African region in 2015 and 2016 were largely peaceful. A significant aspect of the success is that in six of these elections power changed hands from the ruling to the opposition parties. They are Ghana, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Benin, and Cape Verde. Where there were disputes, they were settled through legal means and not by violence.

Despite these successes, there is still the risk of new possibilities of instability as one can see in the current political situation in the Republic of Togo in recent months. Needless to say that the region needs to receive ample support from the United Nations and the wider international community especially for the promotion of human rights and good governance in order to reinforce the efforts towards good governance



and transparent, fair and credible elections.

As we are aware, the region narrowly escaped a peace and security crisis of regional dimensions with the situation in The Gambia at the beginning of 2017. UNOWAS continues to collaborate with stakeholders, both local and international, to support initiatives aimed at consolidating democratic gains by measures including addressing cross-cutting and cross-border challenges which can exacerbate the security situation when combined with electoral malpractices and election-related violence.

### Consolidating the gains practice

As an example, in The Gambia, UNOWAS' involvement in the 2016 elections spans from efforts which indirectly affected the electoral process to meetings with representatives of the government, opposition parties, civil society and women and youth organizations. Thus, prior to the 2016 elections in The Gambia, UNOWAS undertook three different missions to consult with various UN Agencies with the view to assessing the situation and evaluation appropriate measures to ensure that the impending election are held in conditions that will ensure a peaceful outcome. In close col-

laboration with the UN Country Team and the UNDP, the Head of UNOWAS urged stakeholders to eschew the resort to violence and seek redress through peaceful means.

The way forward to consolidating the gains of peaceful electoral practice and its concomitant democratic advances is essentially one of sustained commitment and capacity building for the mainstreaming of conflict prevention and development into democratic process. It will best be achieved through a collaborative effort of stakeholders enjoying the support of the UNOWAS and the assistance of the ECOWAS and African Union in the observance of the relevant national codes and instruments as well as the respect of the statutes of international organization, and the vigilance of civil society and the private sector. The primacy of early warning and prevention should equally be stressed to underline national leadership and ownership, partnership and international collaboration as essential elements of conflict prevention. This will ensure a healthy functioning of the peace and development nexus in a region with causal linkages between a multiplicity of threats to peace and security need to be addressed holistically ■

# Understanding electoral violence to better prevent it

While most elections in West Africa have been held in a peaceful environment in recent years, various acts of violence have been recorded. What is the nature of this violence and how to eradicate it for good?

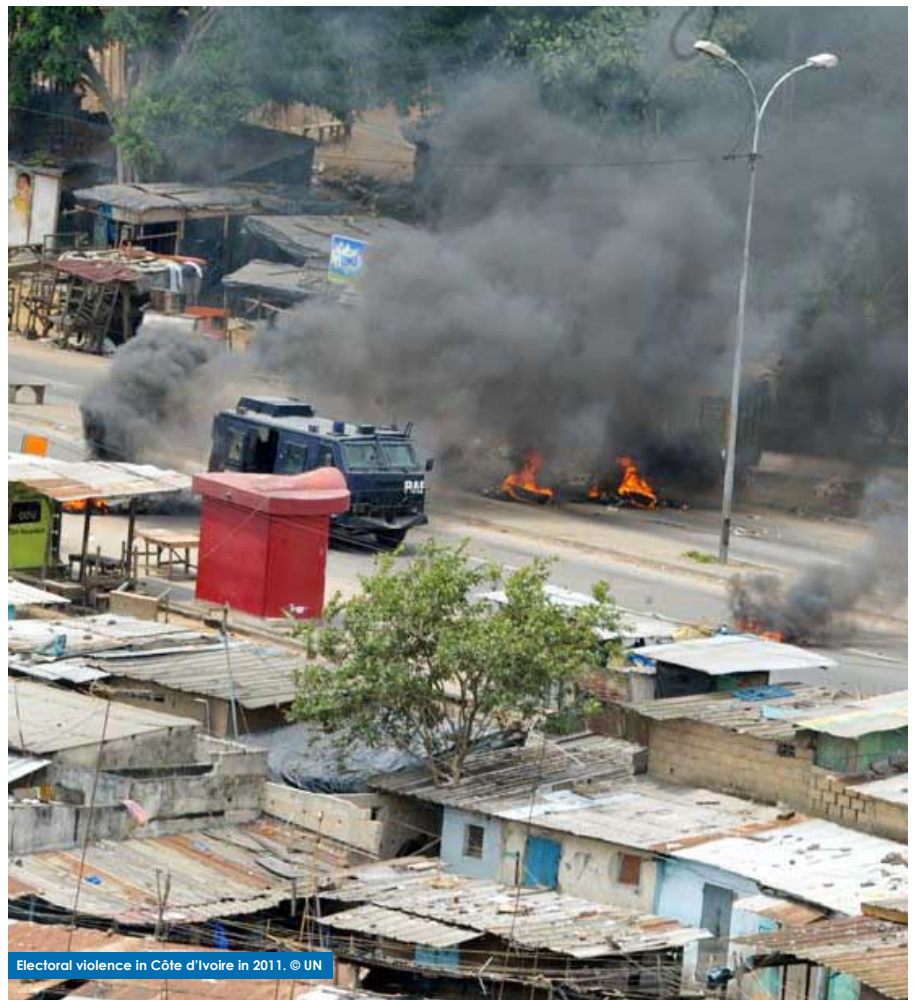
Since the 1990s, the elections in West Africa have often been a strong opportunity to express violence. Togo in 2005, Nigeria in 2007, Côte d'Ivoire in 2010-2011, Guinea in 2010, to mention only a few countries, experienced mixed fortunes. This violence, which is experienced by the populations, political actors, leaders, and the international community, takes root from the historical, political, and socio-economic parameters. Understanding these parameters would allow to take a proactive approach and prevent violence.

Electoral violence is a variant of political violence. However, electoral violence can be distinguished from the political violence family through its particular objective. Indeed, it is aimed at influencing the behavior of the voters, candidates or distorting the results of the elections. For this purpose, it attempts to delay, prevent the vote or compilation of votes, in order to obtain results, which do not reflect the verdict of the ballot box.

As observed, electoral violence can take place in any stage of the electoral process. It can happen before or on the polling day, as it was the case in the Guinean elections in 2010. It can also break out just after the elections as in the 2005 presidential election in Togo and in Côte d'Ivoire in 2010.

## The origins and causes of electoral violence

According to many analysts, the elections are not the root cause of violence. Indeed, the elections are perceived as a catalyst or accelerator of violence. However, the elections may escalate existing tensions, especially when they are not credible. The remote causes of electoral violence are often related



Electoral violence in Côte d'Ivoire in 2011. © UN

## Catalyst of violence

Elections are perceived as a catalyst or accelerator of violence. However, the elections may escalate existing tensions, especially when they are not credible. The remote causes of electoral violence are often related to the poorly managed, ill-managed, or unmanaged crises

to the poorly managed, ill-managed, or unmanaged crises.

Electoral violence takes place more frequently in countries emerging from political instability, civil war, or coup. In such contexts, the elections stiffen the positions of formerly conflicting parties, who use violence as the only means to express themselves. It should be also noted that electoral violence takes place more often in a context of democratic transition or disarmament and demobilization following civil war; real or alleged rigging of elections; major challenges involving ethnic groups, clans, economic powers, and political actors; a minor difference between the candidates' results; unclear or disputed legal framework; non-impartial management bodies; lack of transparency, including electoral data management, proven or alleged fraud in the electoral pro-



cess; first-past-the-post system; exclusion of specific communities during the electoral process.

### Triggers and expressions

Electoral violence is triggered during the electoral period, when the party in a strong or weak position finds that the other party is unilaterally setting the rules of the game for its own benefit. The most common trigger events are the following: registration in voters' lists, establishment of the electoral administration, and electoral results. Electoral violence is expressed through the following actions: violation of the legal framework; offensive or indecent words; murders; injury between rival supporters; intimidation of opponents, voters, or electoral officials; ballot stuffing; exclusion of communities. Therefore the targets of acts of violence include: persons, either individuals or communities, or even candidates; equipment, e.g. electoral campaign equipment, vehicles, offices, polling stations. Electoral violence includes: verbal and symbolic electoral violence, psychological electoral violence, and physical electoral violence, structural or institutional violence. The voters can be prevented from participating in the poll, forced to choose a candidate against their will. As a result, the elections are either disrupted or cancelled straightaway.

### Which approach to prevent electoral violence?

Preventing electoral violence requires undoubtedly working in the periods when it is expressed: before,

## Prevention requires working before, during, and after the elections

during, and after the elections.

Before the elections, trust should be built between all stakeholders to set the rules of the competition, meaning the legal framework, which ensures integrity of the electoral process. The actions to be taken in this stage include also the consensual establishment of a body responsible for organizing the election. The electoral administration, including few or no political actors, should guarantee all parties involved a sound, equitable, and fair competition. The consensual registration in the voters' lists, the transparent production and actual distribution of voters' cards also mitigate the potential sources of conflict.

During the electoral period, which runs from the electoral campaign to the announcement of the results, transparency should prevail in all electoral operations. The electoral administration has a great role to play in this task, which is incumbent on them in the first place. They should not only take actions after consultations with the parties, but also publish them in a timely manner. Therefore they should make sure that the detailed results of the elections are diligently displayed, published from the lowest level (polling station) to the highest level of the electoral chain (electoral constituency, which may be the neighborhood, the municipality, the department, or the whole country, according to the circumstances). In a practical way, protection measures must be taken to prevent fraud on the polling day, in order to reduce violence potential. These measures include maintaining secrecy, numbering ballot papers, and providing secure handling of the electoral materials.



1st round of the 2013 presidential elections in Bamako. ©UN



A woman signs a document certifying her vote in Côte d'Ivoire's legislative elections, at a polling station in Bondoukou in 2011. ©UN

The management of the post-electoral period follows the announcement of the results. It is a little bit more delicate when the results are disputed by one of the parties. This period requires an impartial judiciary system as it has the greatest responsibility. In fact, when the electoral dispute starts, the institution responsible for settling litigations, must not take or give the impression of taking the side of any party.

After the inventory of the various actions, which are appropriate to each stage of the electoral process and intended to prevent electoral violence, there are other actions, the implementation of which is not limited to only one stage of the process. They are crucial and remain cross-cutting. These include: assessing the existence and seriousness of long-standing political and social problems and claims; considering and implementing dispute settlement policies; improving the electoral process for more transparency; working to build and maintain trust. Political

parties and republican institutions must also educate their people, especially potential voters, in good electoral practices.

**When the electoral dispute starts, the institution responsible for settling litigations, must not take or give the impression of taking the side of any party**

#### **Contributions of regional and international instruments**

To reinforce the exercise of democracy, maintain peace, and eliminate violence, including electoral violence, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has put in place a number of mechanisms, including the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance. The Protocol provides for strict compliance with constitutional

provisions in electoral practices. Consequently, it forbids obtaining or maintaining power through unconstitutional means and defines the parameters for the conduct of peaceful, credible, free, fair, and transparent elections.

The African Union (AU) also contributes to reducing electoral violence through its 2012 Memorandum of Understanding on Stability, Development, and Cooperation. This Memorandum indicates that transparent and credible elections are a key element, which promotes respect for the fundamental and universal right to participatory and democratic governance. It forbids also unconstitutional changes of government.

In collaboration with the various regional organizations, the United Nations, through the UNOWAS and different agencies, makes every effort and provides support to contribute to eradicating electoral violence and improving good governance in West Africa ■

# Respect of human rights in electoral processes is fundamental for the consolidation of democracy in West Africa and the Sahel

UNOWAS is making a significant contribution to consolidating democracy in West Africa and the Sahel by advocating for credible, transparent, inclusive, free and fair electoral processes that are consistent with national, regional and international human rights standards.

UNOWAS is expending considerable political capital in advocacy and through the good offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, to ensure the centrality of human rights in electoral processes.

As citizens of member states in West Africa and the Sahel increasingly express their demands and interests for a meaningful participation in political processes that can allow them choose their national and regional/local leaders in national and local elections. The stakes are getting higher with a corresponding demand for the respect of human rights throughout the electoral process. Failure to respect human rights in these processes will not only delegitimise the entire process and its outcome, but could potentially lead to instability with the likelihood of ultimately resulting to conflict.

In several respects, UNOWAS has been and remains a key player in advocating for, mobilising and engaging relevant stakeholders to respect human rights before, during and after the elections as illustrated by its role in the recent presidential elections organised in the region in 2016 including, Niger (21 February), Benin (6 March), Cape Verde (2 October), Gambia (1 December) and Ghana (7 December).

## Concrete steps

In furtherance to the exercise of his good offices role, the SRSG acting in his individual capacity and/or jointly with regional and international partners is engaging with national authorities, political



Presidential and Legislatives elections in Ghana, 7 December 2016. ©UNOWAS

**UNOWAS has been and remains a key player in advocating for, mobilising and engaging relevant stakeholders to respect human rights before, during and after the elections**

actors, civil society organisations, and other relevant stakeholders towards ensuring that concrete steps are taken for elections to be held in an environment that would guarantee the respect of international human rights standards.

At several stages in the electoral processes in the aforementioned countries, UNOWAS was able to raise specific human rights concerns when they arose with the relevant authorities for an appropriate response.

Furthermore UNOWAS has been working jointly with stakeholders

and regional actors such as ECOWAS and the African Union, to ensure that leaders of political parties accept the results of elections and contest if need be, through established judicial mechanisms instead of resorting to violence which further creates an environment for human rights violations and abuses.

UNOWAS through a long term approach, has also been focussing on improving the overall legislative and structural framework within which elections are organised with a view to ensuring that restrictive and discriminatory measures that undermine inclusivity and the meaningful participation of all segments of the population particularly women, are addressed. Advocacy is also targeted towards policies and frameworks that constitute structural and/or operational impediments for political actors to participate in the process through the full exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and association. Political actors have

Ensuring the respect of human rights in the electoral process promotes meaningful participation, legitimises the process and its outcome, provides a solid basis for good governance and peace consolidation

been engaged on the need to create the enabling environment for each one of them to hold rallies, meetings and groupings in the course of the electoral process. Through preventive diplomacy, UNOWAS has been able to immediately raise instances wherein the exercise of these rights have been restricted. Furthermore, UNOWAS has collaborated with OHCHR to develop a matrix of intervention and partnership during electoral processes which details the scope and nature of actions to be undertaken by the United Nations in ensuring the respect of human rights.

Meanwhile, the Human Rights Section in UNOWAS through its support to regional and country networks of civil society organisations is able to receive and analyse information on potential flashpoints in the electoral process which may lead to violence. Such information constitutes part of the early warning material which is used to support the good offices of the SRS in engaging with the relevant actors with the aim of addressing potential risks to violence and threats that could lead to human rights violations and abuses.

Ensuring the respect of human rights in the electoral process promotes meaningful participation, legitimises the process and its outcome, provides a solid basis for good governance and peace consolidation, while building trust between the population and their elected representatives and institutions ■

## More than two million Liberians register to vote, almost half are women



Photo: UNDP Liberia

Approximately 2.1 million Liberians have registered to vote in general elections in Liberia on 10 October 2017, to elect the President and House of Representatives.

In this presidential and legislative elections, almost half of those registered are women. Voter registration was conducted between 1 February and 14 March 2017. Incumbent President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has reached the two-term limit for presidential office, which means a new president will be elected, as well as members of the House of Representatives by the end of 2017.

“That 48 percent of registered voters in Liberia are women is a good sign of progress,” said Pa Lamin Beyai, Country Director at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Liberia.

“The role of women is crucial in post-conflict situations. They make a huge difference as leaders, voters and administrators. Too often they face obstacles in participating in public life and we need to remain committed to breaking down those barriers.”

### Partnership

As part of its partnership with the Liberian people, UNDP is supporting the National Elections Commission (NEC) to help deliver peaceful and democratic elections, in coordination with other UN agencies.

The Support to the 2015-2018 Liberia

Elections Cycle project provides advisory, technical and financial assistance to the NEC through a USD 14.7 million pooled basket fund that has contributions from the European Union, Sweden and UNDP.

**“That 48 percent of registered voters in Liberia are women is a good sign of progress”**



Voting in Liberia. © ECOWAS

The European Union and Sweden’s support has been particularly instrumental in building the NEC’s capacity, and in voter registration, civic education and in expanding the space for women’s participation in the electoral process.

In advance of the voter registration exercise, 1,350 voter registration kits with cameras were supplied to the NEC. Voter identity cards issued included individuals’ photographs helping increase security of the electoral process. The kits were also supported with environmentally-friendly solar power energy sources.

Voter registration staff also received 9,000 copies of voter registration manuals designed with UNDP support. The manuals include NEC guidelines on how to register voters and how to run polling centres.

Analyses on boundary demarcation, voting rights of prisoners, candidate nomination and residency requirements helped increase legal certainty, and 19 ma-

gistrates were trained to improve their skills in dealing with electoral complaints.

**Civic and voter education activities through door-to-door canvassing, town hall meetings and theatre performances reached nearly 700,000 people - 54 percent women and 46 percent men – nationally**

#### Education

Civic and voter education activities through door-to-door canvassing, town hall meetings and theatre performances reached nearly 700,000 people - 54 percent women and 46 percent men – nationally. 13 percent were first time voters. Radio stations that aired civic education content produced by the outreach campaign reached more than half a million listeners.

In addition, the NEC Board of Commissioners recently endorsed a gender mainstreaming policy that aims to promote women in its administration, in political parties and as voters. The policy, for instance, calls on political parties to ensure 30 percent of candidates they put forward are female.

UNDP also provided advisory support to the Inter-Party Consultative Committee, which includes all 22 political parties and the NEC, to develop a memorandum of understanding to promote dialogue and agree how to address any upcoming issues.

At the request of the political parties, UNDP also provided expertise to help craft a resolution that all 22 parties signed, committing them to promote peaceful elections ■

*<http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2017/04/12/more-than-two-million-liberians-register-to-vote-almost-half-are-women.html>*

## Simon-Pierre Nanitelamio, Deputy Director, UN Electoral Assistance Division (EAD) *“Electoral assistance provided by the UN is the outcome of the mobilization of the whole system”*

The UN plays an important role in the organization of various elections throughout the world. Simon-Pierre Nanitelamio is, since February 2017, the Deputy Director of the Electoral Assistance Division (EAD/DAE) of the United Nations Department of Political Affairs (DPA/DAP). In this interview, Nanitelamio explains how and what types of assistance the UN provides to Member States organizing elections.



M. Simon-Pierre Nanitelamio, Deputy Director, UN Electoral Assistance Division (EAD)

### What is the role of the UN Electoral Assistance Division (EAD)?

The EAD was set up in 1992 with a view to ensuring coherence and coordination among UN electoral assistance providers on the ground. The Division works on ensuring coherence of activities related to the processing of electoral assistance requests made by the member states; coordinating and considering electoral assistance requests with all due care and transmitting them to the relevant office or the appropriate program; building on the already gained experience to build an institutional memory; maintaining an updated database of international

experts able to provide technical assistance; and finally maintaining the relations and developing partnerships with regional organizations and other intergovernmental entities, in order to establish appropriate working arrangements with them.

### In concrete terms, how can a country benefit from UN assistance? Are there any conditions?

Before the UN provides any technical assistance to a member state, two conditions need to be met. First, this assistance must be fully based either on a mandate from the Security Council or the General Assembly, or on an official request from the country or terri-

tory. Second, a needs assessment must be conducted by the Deputy Secretary-General in charge of the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), who is, under his mandate, the Focal Point of the whole United Nations system for electoral issues, in consultation with the relevant UN entities.

### Which are the UN bodies involved in providing electoral assistance?

The electoral assistance provided by the UN is the outcome of the mobilization of the whole system, which builds on the specialized knowledge and complementary capacities of many UN family members. These include the following: Department of Political Affairs (DPA/DAP), Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO/DOMP), United Nations Development Program (UNDP/PNUD), Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR/HCDH), United Nations Volunteers (UNV/VNU), United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), and International Organization for Migration (IOM).

More and more countries are requesting the United Nations assistance in organizing elections. What are the major changes in this assistance?

Notwithstanding that the UN electoral assistance has actually changed over the years to adapt to ▶



Presidential election in Guinea, 2015

► changes in the needs and the situation of member states, it is still based on the principle established by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which provides that *the will of the people, expressed through periodic and genuine elections, shall be the basis of the authority of government.*

In the past, the UN used to provide various types of assistance it has abandoned for many years and considers now only in a very few cases. Two types of assistance, including supervision and observation of elections require a mandate from the General Assembly or the Security Council. The UN currently provides electoral assistance mainly in six forms, with the first two ones requiring a mandate from the General Assembly or the Security Council: organization and conduct of elections, validation, technical assistance, deployment of groups (panels) of experts, operational support to international observers' missions. The technical assistance provided to election stakeholders, including national electoral commissions, is currently the most widespread type of assistance.

#### **What is the impact of the UN electoral assistance?**

The UN electoral assistance, which is based on compliance with international law and applicable international standards, is guided by a number of principles, including national sovereignty and promotion of na-

*The will of the people, expressed through periodic and genuine elections, shall be the basis of the public authorities*

tional ownership, objectivity, impartiality, neutrality, independence. It contributes to increasing public trust in the electoral administration and the process itself, by emphasizing that the elections are only one part of larger and more inclusive political processes. **In many cases, the UN assistance has also helped the member states create an environment conducive to peaceful and credible elections, including through good offices, facilitation of the political dialogue between national actors,** often in collaboration with regional organizations or other actors, or even through increased transparency in the conduct of electoral operations. The UN assistance is provided in a long-term perspective, stressing the need to put in place sustainable and credible institutions and processes at national level and for the future electoral operations to be fully administered by the requesting state. It facilitates and fosters understanding by both electoral authorities and other stakeholders of the more general nature of electoral operations, including all their components and phases, the relations between political, social, and economic issues, the role of all stakeholders, and both short-term and long-term considerations and objectives. By also focusing on the development of national capacities and institutional and political stability, the UN assistance has gradually reduced dependence on foreign assistance.

#### **What do you think about good offices or conflict prevention missions in electoral processes?**

Good offices contribute to creating a climate conducive to holding elections or even calming down conflicts arising from disputed electoral processes. In particular contexts, including countries in transition or where the risk of violence is high, the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), under its preventive diplomacy approach, can provide assistance in the form of mediation, conflict prevention, and good offices, through regional political offices like UNOWAS or UNOCA. As stressed by the Secretary-General in his first address to the Security Council on 10 January 2017, in a debate on international peace and security, conflict prevention "is not merely a priority, but the priority." Anywhere the "good offices" of the Secretary-General and his



With Beatrice Atallah, President of the CENI-T of Madagascar, 5 January 2014

representatives or special envoys are used in diplomatic actions undertaken to contribute to bringing the parties to a conflict back to peace or to prevent political and armed conflicts from escalating, the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) is generally working behind the scenes to prepare and plan missions as deemed appropriate to provide guidance and support to the mediators.

**A great number of elections have been recently held in West Africa. How do you assess the Division's support for these processes?**

The period 2015-2017 has been very rich in terms of elections on the African continent, with about fifteen (presidential and legislative) elections held every year in 2015 and 2016. In West Africa, 11 countries held major elections in 2015 and 2016, some of which, including elections in Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Nigeria, or even Togo, were major challenges to national and sub-regional stability. In

comparison, 2017 is a rather calm year, with only three countries holding elections: The Gambia, Senegal, and Liberia.

**The Department of Political Affairs, under its preventive diplomacy approach, can provide assistance in the form of mediation, conflict prevention, and good offices, through regional political offices like UNOWAS or UNOCA**

The United Nations have provided technical assistance in organizing most elections in 2015-2017. The Electoral Assistance Division (EAD) has been directly involved in the preparation of these elections at many levels: by conducting needs assessment missions to some of these countries, which have led to

the determination of parameters, type, and duration of the support to be provided by the UN, and also by identifying the appropriate expertise to provide to the member states and their election management bodies, then by supporting the UN entities in charge of implementing the assistance on the ground. **The support provided by the United Nations, including the Electoral Assistance Division, has certainly contributed to improving the quality of these elections and, therefore, to holding them in a peaceful climate.**

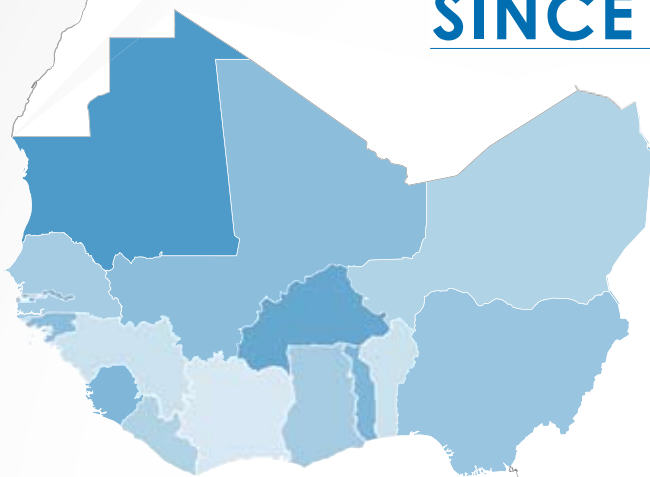
**What are the potential challenges for the next cycle?**

The next electoral cycle (2017-2022) represents a great opportunity for sub-regional countries to show the entire world that they are democratically mature and, with very few exceptions, the region is a model in this regard at the continent level. In West Africa, as almost everywhere on the continent, the main challenges, which are not new, are related to weak national institutions and the perception of their partiality and lack of independence, political interference with the work of election management bodies, restrictions of fundamental freedoms, the use of security forces by the governments to intimidate and muzzle the opponents, the public authorities' attempts to remain in power through rather unorthodox political or legal tricks (including controversial attempts to modify term limits), refusal by contestants of outcomes that are generally considered to be legitimate. **The greatest risk in irregular elections is that they can lead to violence, especially if the possibilities to use legal means to resolve the disputes are very limited.** As the UN Secretary-General has consistently noted, a genuine election is one in which the result reflects the freely expressed choice or choices of electors and is therefore broadly accepted ■






**ELECTIONS**  
IN WEST AFRICA AND THE SAHEL  
**SINCE 2015**



**14 | 12**  
Presidential | Legislative


**6**  
**POLITICAL**  
**ALTERNANCES**

**Bénin**




National Assembly: 2015-04-26  
President: 2016-03-06  
President: 2016-03-20

**Togo**




President: 2015-04-25  
National Assembly: 2013-07-25

**Ghana**




Parliament: 2016-12-07  
President: 2016-12-07

**Burkina Faso**




President: 2015-11-29  
National Assembly: 2015-11-29

**Mali**



National Assembly: 2013-12-15  
President: 2013-08-11

**Cabo Verde**




President: 2016-10-02  
National Assembly: 2016-03-20

**Mauritania**




Referendum: 2017-08-05

**Côte-d'Ivoire**




National Assembly: 2016-12-18  
Referendum: 2016-10-30  
President: 2015-10-25

**Gambia**



National Assembly: 2017-04-06  
President: 2016-12-01

**Guinea**




President: 2015-10-11

**Guinea Bissau**




Nil

**Liberia**




President: 2017-10-10  
House of Repr.: 2017-10-10

**Niger**




President: 2016-03-20  
President: 2016-02-21  
National Assembly: 2016-02-21

**Nigeria**




Senate: 2015-03-28  
President: 2015-03-28  
House of Repr.: 2015-03-28

**Senegal**



National Assembly: 2017-07-02  
Referendum: 2016-03-20

**Sierra Leone**



Nil

## A seminar to learn from 2015/16 elections in West Africa

From 25 to 26 July 2017, a seminar on lessons learned from the 2015-16 electoral cycle in West Africa took place in Conakry, Guinea. It gathered 59 participants. This meeting on experience capitalization was jointly organized by the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division (EAD), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the United Nations Office of the United Nations West and the Sahel (UNOWAS).



Seminar on lessons learned from the 2015-16 electoral cycle in West Africa, Guinea. ©UNOWAS

The seminar was very rich in exchanges between West Africa electoral system actors. Participants discussed five core themes through 16 presentations ranging from the building of the electoral register, the management of the results to the voting organization, the dialogue with political parties, the participation of youth and women. In the discussion, participants forgot neither new challenges nor a step in the electoral process. After the presentations, the floor was open to the debates and then for recommendations.

### Minor weaknesses

Each participants of the Conakry seminar identified individually for their country and collectively for the sub region some areas to improve, especially in the elections organization and management for evident results. During the debates, following points were highlighted: the inadequate legal framework, non-exhaustive and non-consensual electoral lists, the improper use of information technology tools and the issue of personal data management. They also pointed out the weak level of electoral teams, the high cost of electoral operation and their financing, the low level of security of

## The seminar was very rich in exchanges between West Africa electoral system actors

elections vulnerable to intrinsic and extrinsic factors, the politicization of the some electoral bodies ; fraud attempts, low involvement of religious authorities and traditional leaders.

### Commitments to do better

The 59 participants including 9 women after several exchanges declared that trust remains a transversal value to establish, to feed, and to maintain; with it, institutional dialogue and consensus as a way of deliberating decisions. Regarding the system of organizing the elections, the participants were indeed eager to discuss and find solutions to explore to solve the problems they face. Reflections led to the need to hold a social dialogue on the electoral process as a mechanism to ensure the involvement of all stakeholders.

For the pre-electoral phase, the participants recommended to establish in time the electoral division before entering the electoral operations proper; to proceed with the consensual establishment of the electoral register in accordance with the existing legal framework and international standards. It was stated that the maintenance of an effective register of births and deaths is an important step for the regular updating of this list; to promote the systematic training of electoral agents as well as civil society actors for a better appropriation of the electoral

For a proper organization of the elections, the participants considered that it is essential for all West African countries to have permanent, functional, effective, well-endowed and above all depoliticized electoral management bodies. According to them, technical, institutional and financial independence would offer interesting results. It was agreed that there is a need for independent security mechanisms that include the training of security officers to effectively coordinate electoral security.

The Conakry seminar has also formulated serious recommendations to encourage and support more women candidates for various elective positions in the countries. To this end, legislation to increase the active participation of women is advocated. Where existing laws exist, the quotas provided for candidates should be respected. It was pointed out that a greater role must be given to youth in the electoral process in order to work for a sustainable democracy and avoid the manipulation of young people.

#### Looking Towards the future

***“It must be ensured that elections are credible and that institutions have the confidence of citizens and that candidates / parties accept the results of elections.”***

The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-general for West Africa and the Sahel, at the closing ceremony, summarized the recommendations of the seminar: “In order to work towards conflict prevention, it must be ensured that elections are credible and that institutions have the confidence of citizens and that candidates / parties accept the results of elections. In this way, societies can move towards building peace, stability and democracy.” The SRSRG stressed the need for governments, ECOWAS and civil society organizations to support election commissions. He reassured that the good offices missions will be optimized in the region, in collaboration with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to engage with all stakeholders in the efforts for peaceful elections and credible political transitions in West Africa.

The discussions ended on a note of full satisfaction of all, the eyes are now turned to the next electoral cycle where, certainly, the impact of the exchanges will lead to better results ■



A voter receives his ballot for the national list and is directed toward the appropriate voting booth.

## UN determined to support Sahel countries

The Steering Committee of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS) held its meeting in Dakar, Senegal, on 27 October 2017 to mobilize the UN actors to better support the Sahel countries.



Steering Committee of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS), 27 October 2017 in Dakar, Senegal. ©UNOWAS

**T**he participation of UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohamed, and that of the Secretary-General's Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), Mohamed Ibn Chambas, reflects the determination of the whole UN system to support the Sahel countries.

**More than ever, the United Nations action has to be and will have to be coherent and effective**

process of change for sustainable development. This shows the urgent need to reinforce the United Nations support to the Sahel countries through consideration of national priorities and increased coordination with the various regional and international partners.

More than ever, the United Nations action has to be and will have to be coherent and effective. While the Uni-

However, despite the mobilization of regional and international partners, the Sahel countries continue to face complex and multiple challenges which are preventing the region from embarking in a

ted Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS) has drawn the international community's attention to the Sahel for a few years, it is now crucial that it is the driver of change in the Sahel region. This is the strong message which was adopted by the participants.

**The determination and commitment of the UN is evidenced by the establishment of the Executive Committee of the Sahel's Working Group chaired by Amina Mohamed**

"This particular Steering Committee meeting is a unique opportunity: we have here all levels of responsibility and the national and regional perspectives represented, from the highest authority at Headquarters, Resident Coordinators, Regional Directors, and our UNISS working groups. I trust we will be able to draw on all our combined experience to have fruitful discussions," said Ibn Chambas, at the opening of the meeting.

The participation of UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohamed reflects not only the United Nations system's continuous commitment, but also the United Nations leadership's determination to place the region as top priority in its action plan and work in collabora-



Steering Committee of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS), 27 October 2017 in Dakar, Senegal. ©UNOWAS

tion with the concerned countries to improve people’s living conditions.

This determination and commitment is evidenced by the establishment by the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres of the Executive Committee on the Sahel’s Working Group chaired by Amina Mohamed, in July.

Echoing this UN mobilization, Amina Mohamed underlined that achieving sustaining peace and sustainable development in the region can only be done by sup-

porting the governments of the Sahel countries in their efforts towards addressing the root causes of conflict, and the multi-dimensional challenges facing the region.

While placing the Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement at the heart of the United Nations action, Amina Mohamed stressed that the United Nations “will align its action with the needs and priorities identified by the Sahel States through an integrated and comprehensive approach.”

She also noted that the international community should give priority to investment in medium- and long-term development to meet the needs of the Sahel region.

During the meeting, representatives of the United Nations system had the opportunity to discuss and identify the most effective approaches to improve the United Nations system and provide support likely to meet the expectations of the governments of the Sahel countries ■

**T**he Steering Committee of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS) is the United Nations internal coordination and oversight mechanism for the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS). The Steering Committee is chaired by UNOWAS. Its membership includes Dakar-based regional directors/representatives of UN entities and UN Resident Coordinators in Sahel countries. The Steering Committee provides strategic guidance for the implementation of the UNISS, ensures coherence across the three pillars of the UNISS and between regional and

national implementation efforts, and promotes strategic partnerships and engagement with key regional and international stakeholders. The Steering Committee oversees the activities of the three Regional Inter-Agency Working Groups (one on each pillar of the UNISS: Governance, Security and Governance). The Regional Inter-Agency Working Groups are tasked with formulating and monitoring the implementation of regional projects under their respective pillars of the UNISS. They also serve as a platform for information sharing among UN entities participating in the implementation of the UNISS.

## Maria do Rosário Lopes Pereira Gonçalves: “Engaged to serve”



**M**aria do Rosário Lopes Pereira Gonçalves did not aim to climb the judiciary ladder in her country, Cabo Verde. She only wanted “to be different from the women who were part of her daily life” in her native Santiago Island, where cultural and social contingencies often confine women to the roles of wives and home-makers. Indeed, Maria do Rosário Lopes has been different. She has become the second woman chairperson of the National Electoral Commission (CNE) in Cabo Verde. In the land of Césaria Evora, women have voices and convictions. And Maria Rosario is fully aware of that.

As the fourth of seven children (four girls and three boys), she successfully attended Morro Branco primary school, Santa Cruz Municipality, Santiago Island/Pedra Badejo, Cónego Jacinto secondary school, Praia, Santiago Island, and finally the Law Faculty, Lisbon University, Portugal, in 2005. Education and training played a key role in the career of this young woman, who, as she was studying law, was convinced that not only “the studies change people and break barriers, but also bring about positive changes for future generations.”

This conviction, combined with strong determination to contribute to the development of her country and its institutions, will accompany Maria do Rosário through

out her professional life. She served as teacher of French in Alfredo da Cruz Silva high school, law teacher in Pedra Badejo secondary education center, Santa Cruz Municipality, Santiago Island, trainee in a law firm for two years, before getting admitted as Barrister in Cabo Verde on 23 March 2007. A few months later, Maria do Rosário was appointed as a Judge in São Felipe, Fogo Island, after she graduated top of the class in the national examination for the recruitment of judges.

*“The studies change people and break barriers, but also bring about positive changes for future generations”*

For this young mother, it is not enough to hold high positions to show her success, she has to meet the challenges she has been selected for. And there are a lot of challenges in Cabo Verde!

Despite economic and political stability, Cabo Verde, like other West African countries, will have to make changes to consolidate development and good governance. However, changes will be effective only in the long run and will depend on strong policies and investments in education and training as much as on building



Maria do Rosário Lopes Pereira Gonçalves, Chairperson of the National Electoral Commission (CNE) in Cabo Verde

and changing mentalities. It is crucial to invest in education and training, especially for girls, she stresses.

Mario do Rosário wanted to be different from the other women to better serve them and serve her country. After serving at the civil court of first instance in the region of Santa Catarina, Santiago Island, in 2008, the Judge was appointed in 2014 to the court of first instance of Praia, capital of Cabo Verde, where she remained until May 2015, when she was appointed as Chairperson of the National Electoral Commission (CNE) on 7 May 2015. Was it a recognition or a challenge for this woman who loves to make effort and work?

Maria de Rosario's response was unequivocal. Two years after her appointment, the Chairperson of Cabo Verde's CNE took up the challenge.

"It is very difficult to dream of something, which was not even part of my imagination as a child," she said after her election. The young girl from Ponta Achada, Santa Cruz

municipality, Santiago Island/Pedra Badejo, took another important step in her life.

*"It is very difficult to dream of something, which was not even part of my imagination as a child,"*

With her experience and her determination, Maria do Rosário Lopes Pereira Gonçalves and her team succeeded, within six months, in organizing three transparent and peaceful elections in 2016 (legislative elections on 20 March, local/municipal elections on 4 September, and presidential election on 2 October). Such a performance sets her country as a model for democracy in the sub-region and even in the world.

However, this was not a piece of cake. "I am very resilient to rivalry. I try to see myself as the main responsible for both good and bad things, which may happen. I try

also not to complain when things do not work as expected. In any circumstances, I stick to the principles, values, and laws."

From now on, with her gained experience, the Chairperson of Cabo Verde's CNE intends to share her know-how and even her social skills with the other counterparts in the sub-region and the world. "I learned and I acquired knowledge of electoral organization and management. At the international level, I took significant steps in improving my emotional intelligence. It would be an honor to share my experience, because, ultimately, the most important thing is to learn from diverse, successful and unsuccessful experiences."

"I have come a difficult way and I think that I still have a long way to go. I know that along this way, there will be both good and bad things. And it only depends on me to achieve them." That is how Maria do Rosário Lopes Pereira Gonçalves sums up her professional life, which started about forty years earlier ■

## Ms. Ruby Sandhu-Rojon, new Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel

**O**n Friday 13 October 2017, Mrs. Ruby Sandhu-Rojon, officially took office as Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel.

Appointed on 14 August 2017 by the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, Mrs. Sandhu-Rojon replaces Hiroute Guebre Sellassie. She brings with her a solid background in the areas of development, strategic planning and program.

Mrs. Sandhu-Rojon has held senior positions with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Since

2014, she had been Deputy Administrator of UNDP and Regional Deputy Director of the Regional Office for Africa. She held the position of UN Resident Coordinator in Ghana from 2010 to 2014 and was Director of UNDP Country in Burkina Faso, where she also served as the Acting Resident Coordinator. Previously, Ms. Sandhu-Rojon was Head of the United Nations Volunteers Africa Section (UNV) in Germany, and Deputy Resident Representative of UNDP in Madagascar from 1999 to 2002. She began her career at the United Nations as Program Officer in the African section of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNFEMMES).

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## Visit of ECOWAS, AU and UNOWAS to Sierra Leone

**A**s part of a regional effort to support the preparations of the presidential, parliamentary and local councils elections, scheduled to take place on 7 March 2018 in Sierra Leone, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for West Africa and the Sahel, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, participated in a High-Level mission from 19 to 23 November 2017. The delegation was comprised of the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the Economic Community of West African Countries (ECOWAS), Mrs. Halima Ahmed; the Commissioner for Political Affairs of the African Union (AU), Ambassador Minata Samate Cessouma.

The High-Level delegation met with His Excellency, President Ernest Bai Koroma, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the Minister of Internal Affairs, the Attorney General and Minister of Justice, the Chief Justice, the leadership of Parliament, the Inspec-

tor General of Police, the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff and representatives of the Office of National Security, members of the Diplomatic Corps, and the United Nations Country Team. In addition, the delegation met with the National Electoral Commission, the Political Parties Registration Commission, the National Commission for Democracy, and the Human Rights Commission.

In the discussions, Mr. Ibn Chambas, Mrs. Halima Ahmed, and Ambassador Minata Samate Cessouma underlined their confidence in Sierra Leone's democratic system, and its capacity to organize peaceful and credible elections. They encouraged further outreach and dialogue efforts amongst political actors and other stakeholders and urged civil society, the private sector as well as the media to be aware of their important roles. They also called upon youth and women to engage and participate actively in the entire process.

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## Regional Seminar on Preventing Violent Extremism in Central Africa and the Lake Chad Basin

**T**he Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, participated, on 27 November 2017, in a Regional Seminar on the Prevention of Violent Extremism in Central Africa and in the Lake Chad Basin.

Organized by the Government of Cameroon, in partnership with the African Center for International, Diplomatic Economic and Strategic Studies of Cameroon, the Federal Department of International Affairs of Switzerland, the United Nations Offices for Central Africa (UNOCA) and for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), this seminar is subsequent to the conversations initiated in Dakar in 2016, and in N'Djamena last May on the need to invest in peace and the prevention of violent extremism.

As a reminder, these conversations were followed by two seminars on the role of the media and the role of security forces in the prevention of violent extremism.

In his opening address, Mr. Ibn Chambas emphasized that violent extremism and its consequences cannot be only contained through security measures. «A comprehensive and holistic approach, integrating security and socio-economic, governance and development aspects, is needed for a lasting solution in the countries of the region,» he said.

SRSR Ibn Chambas also emphasized the need for a multidimensional response that links development progress to address the root causes of extremism and create the conditions for lasting peace.



## The New Scramble for Africa



By: Pádraig Carmody  
 Publication date: 2017  
 Pages: 326

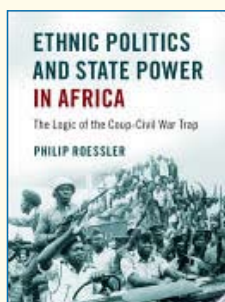
Once marginalized in the world economy, Africa today is a major global supplier of crucial raw materials like oil, uranium and coltan. China's part in this story has loomed particularly large in recent years, and the American military footprint on the continent has also expanded. But a new scramble for resources, markets and territory is now taking place in Africa involving not just state, but non state-actors, including Islamic fundamentalist and other rebel groups.

The second edition of Pádraig Carmody's popular book explores the dynamics of

the new scramble for African resources, markets, and territory and the impact of current investment and competition on people, the environment, and political and economic development on the continent. Fully revised and updated throughout, its chapters explore old and new economic power interests in Africa; oil, minerals, timber, biofuels, land, food and fisheries; and the nature and impacts of Asian and South African investment in manufacturing and other sectors...

**For more information :** [bit.ly/2BlqAe1](http://bit.ly/2BlqAe1)

## Ethnic Politics and State Power in Africa



By: Philip Roessler  
 Publication date: 2016  
 Price: \$99.99

Why are some African countries trapped in vicious cycles of ethnic exclusion and civil war, while others experience relative peace? In this groundbreaking book, Philip Roessler addresses this question. Roessler models Africa's weak, ethnically-divided states as confronting rulers with a coup-civil war trap - sharing power with ethnic rivals is necessary to underwrite societal peace and prevent civil war, but increases rivals' capabilities to seize sovereign power in a coup d'état. How rulers respond to this strategic trade-off is shown to be a

function of their country's ethnic geography and the distribution of threat capabilities it produces. Moving between in-depth case studies of Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo based on years of field work and statistical analyses of powersharing, coups and civil war across sub-Saharan Africa, the book serves as an exemplar of the benefits of mixed methods research for theory-building and testing in comparative politics.

**For more information :** [bit.ly/2Bv6zCQ](http://bit.ly/2Bv6zCQ)

## Forging African Communities: Mobility, Integration and Belonging



By: Oliver Bakewell  
 Publication date: 2017  
 Pages: 321

This book draws renewed attention to migration into and within Africa, and to the socio-political consequences of these movements. In doing so, it complements vibrant scholarly and political discussions of migrant integration globally with innovative, interdisciplinary perspectives focused on migration within Africa. It sheds new light on how human mobility redefines the meaning of home, community, citizenship and belonging. The authors ask how people's movements within the continent are forging novel forms of membership while catalysing social change within the communities and countries to which they

move and which they have left behind. Original case studies from across Africa question the concepts, actors, and social trajectories dominant in the contemporary literature. Moreover, it speaks to and challenges sociological debates over the nature of migrant integration, debates largely shaped by research in the world's wealthy regions. The text, in part or as a whole, will appeal to students and scholars of migration, development, urban and rural transformation, African studies and displacement.

**For more information :** [amzn.to/2iibZMr](http://amzn.to/2iibZMr)

# UNOWAS

at the 4th Dakar  
Forum on Peace  
and Security in  
Africa

13/14 November 2017 in Dakar







# Role of the United Nations in Electoral Processes



## Types of United Nations assistance in elections

### Organization and conduct of an electoral process

- When it is responsible for organizing and successfully conducting an election or a referendum, the UN plays a role, which is normally taken by the country's electoral authorities. Therefore it has full authority on the process. As the national ownership principle prevails, this type of assistance is provided in a very few cases, generally in post-conflict or decolonization contexts, characterized by a lack of national institutional capacities. This type of mandate can be delivered only through a General Assembly or Security Council Resolution.

### Certification/Verification

- In an electoral context, the term "certification" refers to the legal procedure through which a national authority approves or "certifies" the results of the election. However, in a very few cases, the Security Council or the General Assembly can ask the Secretary-General to deal with this "certification." In such a case, the UN is required to confirm the credibility of the whole

or part of an electoral process conducted by the public authority responsible for national elections. It is expected to make a final declaration confirming the validity of the election. The terms and conditions change depending on the context. The certification of an electoral process by the UN requires a mandate from the Security Council or the General Assembly.

### Electoral Observation

- Electoral observation includes systematic collection of information on an electoral process through direct observation conducted in compliance with the established methods, often by analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data. Most of the time, the observation process ends with a public declaration on the evaluation of the general conduct of the electoral process. The UN's electoral observation activities include the deployment of a mission responsible for observing each stage of the electoral process and submitting its conclusions to the Secretary-General, who will make a public declaration on the conduct of the election. These activities require a

mandate from the Security Council or the General Assembly.

### Supervision of elections

- In election supervision, the UN is required to support and approve each stage of the electoral process in order to confirm the credibility of the election as a whole. Supervision may involve the UN's direct participation in the various stages of the election, including the setting of the date, enactment of regulations, formulation of the proposed ballot papers, monitoring of polling stations, and counting of votes. The UN can also assist in settling disputes. When it is not satisfied with the conduct of the electoral process or the implementation of one of its stages, the electoral management body, which is responsible for the process, is required to consider its recommendations and make the necessary adjustments.

### Technical Assistance

- Technical assistance is by far the most common form of electoral assistance provided by the UN. It can be defined as legal, operational, and legis-



tical assistance provided to a country to establish or improve electoral laws, operations, and institutions. It can cover all or only some aspects of electoral operations. It can be provided for a single election or extended on a long period to cover a number of polls, depending on the delivered mandate, the request made by the country, and the needs assessment. Although the UN's technical assistance focuses mainly on the administration of elections and institutions responsible for elections, other stakeholders and institutions can also benefit from it.

### UN Groups of Political or Electoral Experts

- The UN groups of experts are small teams deployed to monitor and report on an electoral process. They can be teams of electoral experts specializing in electoral processes or mediation or a high-level group composed of eminent persons specializing in political affairs, electoral processes, or mediation. Based on its own observations and those of other national and international stakeholders, the expert group will provide an independent

evaluation of the political and technical conduct of the elections. This evaluation is generally submitted to the Secretary-General or the United Nations Coordinator for electoral assistance activities.

### Coordination of electoral observers

- The United Nations provides two types of support to international observers: i) operational support; and ii) coordination. Coordination of international observers can involve logistical and administrative support for elections observation, briefings, assistance to the deployment of observers, debriefings, etc. Several observer groups benefit generally from this support, which can be provided upon request of Member States. In particular circumstances, (e.g. transition of a country or risks or violence), the Department of Field Support (DFS), as leader of the United Nations system for peace restoration and preventive diplomacy, can also provide assistance through mediation, conflict prevention actions, or good offices.

### Support for the creation of an environment conducive to elections

- The mandates of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Department of Field Support (DFS) often include provisions on the creation of an environment conducive to the implementation of various tasks generally listed in their mandates. In countries, where they implement such mandates, they can use their good offices and play a political role to contribute to creating a climate conducive to elections. Through their military, police, and civilian presence, the DPKO missions can also stabilize the security situation, which is crucial to establishing a climate conducive to elections. Besides, under their mandates, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and UN Women can decide to monitor the human rights situation and women's engagement in the life of a country, before, during, and after an election, in order to ensure its credibility and compliance with international electoral standards.

# Conditions for UN Electoral Assistance

## REQUIRING MANDATE FROM THE SECURITY COUNCIL (SC) OR THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (GA)



- Organization and implementation (Cambodia- 1993, Timor-Leste- 1999, 2001)
- Verification/Certification (Cote d'Ivoire- 2010/2011, Timor-Leste 2007)
- Observation (Fiji 2001, Burundi 2015)
- Supervision (Namibia 1989)

## WIHOUT MANDATE FROM THE SECURITY COUNCIL BUT REQUEST FROM MEMBER STATE

- Technical Assistance
- Expert Group (Nepal- 2008, Salomon Island- 2006 and 2010)
- Support for creating enabling environment

## WHAT IS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE?



- Provide guidance and support for developing planning and electoral process management capacities
- Operational or material support
- Support for financial management and field operations (including mobilization and coordination of financial resources)
- Support to security forces
- Media training/monitoring/compliance with rules
- Registration of political bodies
- Empowering CSOs
- Interaction with political parties

# Main stages of the electoral process

01

## PRE-ELECTORAL PERIOD

\*Establishment of voters' lists

- The most complex and costly operation of the electoral process
- Election management bodies can select one of the three following options (or a combination of options) as basis for the establishment of the voters' lists:
  - Periodic lists (Malawi, Indonesia)
  - Continuous lists or registers (Argentina, Canada, France, Benin)
  - Civil registry (Belgium, Spain, Peru, Mali)
  - The voters' lists contribute to legitimating the electoral process
- Many people support the use of biometric census of voters and other high-tech solutions to avoid integrity-related problems and possible political problems related to elections
- Biometry is not a panacea as it does not increase trust in the voters' registration process
- Election management bodies need to be aware of the costs of technological solutions, including maintenance and updating
- Election management bodies need also to know who will access the information collected and the software used

02

## ELECTORAL PERIOD

\*Electoral campaign

- One of the most sensitive periods of the electoral calendar
- Period when the political parties present their programs to the voters
- Procedures and guidelines to ensure equal treatment of candidates
- Distribution of electoral supplies and materials
- Opening of polling stations
- Voting and counting of votes
- Transmission of results
- Compilation and announcement of results
- Disputes and appeal procedures

03

## POST-ELECTORAL STAGE

- Formation of new cabinet
- Post-electoral evaluation/examination
- Reforms
- Capacity building and training
- Updating voters' lists

## Stakeholders in the electoral process

- National authorities (government, parliament, judiciary)
- Election management body
- Voters
- Political parties and candidates
- International community (UN, donors, etc.)
- Religious organizations and bodies
- Minorities
- Displaced persons, refugees
- Media
- (National and international) observers
- Security forces
- Civil society organizations (women's, youths', disabled persons' groups)

# UN Entities Providing Electoral Assistance

## Department of Political Affairs (DPA)

The Deputy Secretary-General for Political Affairs, who is the Head of this Department, serves as UN Coordinator for electoral assistance activities and is supported in this task by the Electoral Assistance Division (EAD). All electoral assistance requests sent to the UN must be submitted to the Deputy Secretary-General, who plays a dual role: provide the Secretary-General with advice on the requests from the Member States and ensure coherence of the UN electoral assistance. In addition to its extended coordination role, the Department supervises field political missions, which, in many cases, carry out electoral assistance activities under their conflict prevention or peacebuilding missions.

## United Nations Development Program (PNUD)

The UNDP is the main implementing body for electoral assistance measures taken by the UN, as an entity providing technical assistance, especially in development-related contexts, and also, in many cases, as a major stakeholder in integrated peacekeeping operations. Every year, the UNDP manages 40 - 50 field electoral assistance projects. It also collaborates with Member States in long-term capacity-building activities, including reinforcing electoral process management bodies in-between the elections. At local level, UNDP country offices play a leading role in coordinating electoral assistance. In addition to its field activities, the UNDP produces important analyses on election-related issues.

## United Nations Office for Project Support (UNOPS)

The UNOPS is a service provider for the United Nations system and Member States. It has provided operational support and other forms of electoral process support in many countries. Most of the time, it collaborates directly with the UNDP to provide electoral assistance. Its flexibility and responsiveness are major assets for the UN system in the implementation of electoral assistance activities.

## Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

The High Commissioner's role in electoral assistance is essentially to monitor the human rights situation in a given country, before, during, and after the elections, in order to create an environment conducive to credible elections and ensure compliance with relevant international standards. It issues also human rights guidelines applicable to elections.





## United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

As a United Nations specialized institution, the UNESCO's mandate is to promote and support freedom, freedom of the press, and freedom of information. Free and independent media, accessible online or in another form, are crucial to the transition to democracy. For this purpose, it endeavors to build the media's capacities to provide objective and balanced reports on electoral activities. Through country offices around the world, UNESCO collaborates with local journalists and media professionals by providing training and by building the capacities of those responsible for reporting on the conduct of the electoral process.

## Department of Peace Keeping Operations (DPKO)

In peacekeeping and many post-conflict situations, assistance is generally provided through electoral components of field missions, under the auspices of the DPKO. In such cases, the EAD works in close collaboration with the DPKO in planning and managing the aspects of peacekeeping operations related to electoral assistance.

## United Nations Volunteers (UNV)

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) program provides technical and operational support, which is crucial to UN field electoral operations, with staffs assigned to these operations being supported by experienced professionals, often in great number, and very short deployment periods. The Electoral Assistance Division (EAD) works in close collaboration with the UNV in selecting candidates for volunteer positions to be filled under the field electoral assistance missions. The persons registered as UNVs can apply for volunteer positions in field electoral assistance activities.



For more information, please visit this website:  
[www.un.org/undpa/fr/elections](http://www.un.org/undpa/fr/elections)