



Coalition of Domestic Election Observers

Ensuring Peaceful and Credible Elections

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CODEO FINAL OBSERVATION REPORT ON THE TALENSI CONSTITUENCY BY-ELECTION

Introduction & Summary

The Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) deployed 30 of its trained, accredited, and non-partisan Observers to the by-election organized by the Electoral Commission (EC) in the Talensi Constituency of the Upper East Region on Tuesday, July 7 2015. CODEO Observers were stationed at representative randomly sampled polling stations spread across all the 22 Electoral Areas and also undertook roaming observation throughout the constituency on polling day. On polling day, Tuesday, July 7, 2015, CODEO issued two interim statements at mid-day and close of poll situational reports of its observation exercise. CODEO observers reported on opening and set-up of polls, voting, presence of security and collation and declaration of results.

This statement captures CODEO consolidated and final report on the just ended Talensi by-election. The statement is based on reports submitted by its stationary and roaming observers deployed in the constituency. Overall, CODEO observed that the polls were properly conducted in accordance with electoral regulations and procedures, and that the conduct of the polling, processes for counting and declaration of results were generally free and fair in spite of some minor irregularities. CODEO condemns the violence that characterized the polls, although, occurring mainly outside of polling stations.

Detail Observation Findings

Below are CODEO's observation findings.

- *Opening and Set Up of Polls*

CODEO Observers noted that voting generally started between 7:15am to 7:45am at most of the polling stations. A few polling stations, however, started after 8:00am due to delays in setting up polling centres. For instance, at the Pusu-Namogo Primary School and Balungu Primary 'B', voting commenced after 8:00am. Observers also reported that the polling stations were set up so that voters could cast their ballots in secrete at all polling stations observed. Polling stations were also accessible to persons with disability and the elderly. On the presence of political party agents at polling stations, CODEO observers reported that the National Democratic Congress (NDC), the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the Peoples National Convention (PNC) had their polling agents present in almost all polling stations observed. The Ghana Freedom Party (GFP), the New Vision Party (NVP) and the Progressive Peoples Party (PPP) also had agents at some polling stations observed.

- *Voting*

CODEO Observes noted that all polling stations observed had biometric verification machines with additional back-ups. There were no reports of breakdown of biometric devices in the polling stations observed. CODEO Observers further reported that all voters were biometrically verified before casting their ballots. Some voters however had minor difficulties with the verification devices and had to try more than once before being recognized by the devices.

Observers further noted that all voters had their fingers marked with indelible ink before voting and ballot papers were stamped with indelible ink before being issued out to voters.

- *Presence of Security*

Generally, voting was conducted peacefully at most of the polling stations observed throughout the day with visible uniformed police.

- *Collation and Declaration of Results*

CODEO Observers reported that no cases of harassment/intimidation were recorded during collation and counting of ballots at the polling stations observed and at the constituency collation center. However, a few polling stations recorded requests for recount of ballots by party agents. For example at the Namoalga Clinic A and at Balungo Primary B polling stations, political party agents requested for a recount of ballots by the EC. Observers also reported that copies of the declaration of results were not posted publicly at some of the polling stations.

- *Critical Incidents*

CODEO Observers reported no major incidents at polling stations observed. However observers reported of a major incident of gun shots and destruction of a vehicle in Tongo. The incident however did not interrupt the voting process at nearby polling stations. Similar incident of violence was reported in Winkogo Primary 'A' leading to destruction of vehicles and brief suspension of voting. The deployment of police/military personnel restored sanity to the area. CODEO Observers also reported that several dangerous weapons including guns and cutlasses were retrieved from some vehicles at a police checkpoint situated at the entrance of Tongo. Also at Wakii Primary A in the Wakii Electoral Area, voting was suspended for about 30 minutes due to allegations of money sharing at the polling station to influence voters. Calm was subsequently restored and voting continued afterwards.

Commendations & Recommendations

CODEO commends the political parties that participated in the by-election and also voters who came out to exercise their franchise. CODEO also commends the EC for the smooth conduct and quality administration of the election. CODEO, however, recommends to the EC to investigate allegations made by the Peoples National Convention (PNC) of impropriety leveled against polling officials. Such investigations if found to be credible, will inform measures to be adopted in strengthening Ghana's electoral process and enhance confidence in the EC in the management of elections.

To the security agencies, while CODEO commends them for the relative peacefulness that prevailed at the polling stations, it urges them to conduct thorough investigations into the acts of violence that occurred in some areas during the election and bring the perpetrators to justice. Such an endeavor will serve as deterrent to future perpetrators.

Conclusion

From the reports received from our observers, CODEO concludes that the conduct of the Talensi by-elections was largely in accordance with electoral regulations and procedures. CODEO however condemns election-related violence which has characterized almost all by-elections, and indeed, national elections, in Ghana under the Fourth Republic.

Signed



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(For and on behalf of CODEO)

CODEO Secretariat

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