

# EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY



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## OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL

### TALKING NOTES FOR THE SECRETARY GENERAL DURING THE PRESS CONFERENCE OF THE ELECTORAL CONSULTATIVE MISSION TO THE REPUBLIC OF BURUNDI, 08<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2020

#### Members of the Media

- At the outset, allow me to greet you and to thank you for agreeing to come and cover this press conference.
- I would also like to thank you for the good work you are doing in informing and educating East Africans on the integration process.
- This will be an eventful year for the East African Community as the region has started its election cycle, which will run for the next three [3] years. The Republic of Burundi is set to go to the polls in May 2020, and the United Republic of Tanzania in October 2020. The Republic of Uganda will hold her elections in 2021 and the Republics of Kenya and Rwanda in 2022.

- Article 124 of the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community recognises the need for **peace and security** within the East African Partner States. The same article spells out wide-ranging approaches for implementation in order to have a stable and secure environment within the region. This is geared towards promoting development and harmonious living of the people of East Africa.
- The Treaty mandates the East African Community to observe the electoral process within the context of the National Constitutions of the Partner States. Further, good governance is recognised by the Treaty as one of the fundamental principles that govern the achievement of the objectives of the Community.
- It is against this background that the EAC has always deployed Election Observer Missions (EAC-EOM) to all its Partner States who have gone through elections over the years, in line with the principles of promoting democratic governance in EAC integration.
- The EAC Observer Missions are guided by international and regional instruments and standards on governance, democracy, human rights and freedom. The EAC minimum standards of Election Observation are stipulated in the EAC Principles for Election Observation and Evaluation 2012, which among others lay down the scope of election observation missions. **The EAC Secretariat is therefore preparing to deploy an Election Observer Mission ahead of the May 2020 General Elections in the Republic of Burundi.**
- The Electoral Observer Missions will observe the electoral process, offer a balanced and informed assessment, create public confidence, identify

challenges, weaknesses, opportunities and strengths that can be harnessed into best practices for the region and facilitate peer learning by the Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) in East Africa.

- The EAC Election Observer Mission will enhance public confidence in the electoral process; through encouraging voters and political parties to participate in a free, fair, and competitive environment; free of intimidation and violence.
- The EAC shall deploy a long-term election observer mission to consult with Electoral Management Bodies and key stakeholders on the environment within which elections are being organized. The long-term mission will observe all activities before, during and after the elections. The EAC shall also deploy a short-term election observer mission to observe elections on the polling day.
- The EAC Partner States will nominate the Members of the Election Observer Mission as per the EAC prescribed standards. The composition will include representatives from the Partner States, the Electoral Management Bodies, East African Legislative Assembly (EALA), EAC Secretariat, EAC Ministries, National Human Rights Institutions, Civil Society Organisations and other relevant Institutions in the EAC region. The deployment of the mission will be undertaken in a transparent manner, with concerted efforts to cover as many regions of the country as possible.
- A delegation from the EAC Secretariat has been in Bujumbura this past week, holding consultative meetings with various key stakeholders. The broad objective of these meetings were to consult with stakeholders and prepare ground for the deployment of the EAC Electoral Observer Mission.

- Our consultations have included meetings with CENI, various Ministries as well as political parties registered in Burundi.
- During our consultations, we have shared important information regarding the preparations for peaceful and credible elections. The areas that need support or improvements were discussed at length. We have emphasized the need to abide by the Constitution and the laws of the land. We have also underscored the need for a level playground for all stakeholders.
- We appreciate the progress made by the different stakeholders with respect to preparations for elections, and we have established that there is an enabling environment for peaceful elections.
- We are also happy to learn that the political parties in Burundi are ready to take part in the elections, and some Parties have already nominated their candidates.
- The broad understanding gathered from the information generated during these consultations will be used to provide factual and contextualized briefing to both the long and short term Missions ahead of deployment.
- As the East African Community (EAC) we pledge our support in ensuring credible, free, fair and peaceful elections.

**-ENDS-**