



# Election observing

Practical guide for members  
of election monitoring missions abroad



LE DIRECTEUR GÉNÉRAL  
DES ÉLECTIONS DU QUÉBEC



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# Introduction

In recent years, the number of election monitoring missions around the world has grown. While it is true that there was some improvisation in election observing in the past, this type of initiative is henceforth characterized by a higher degree of professionalism.

Assessments of election monitoring missions have already been made at both the regional and international levels. Based on experience acquired in the field, international agencies that promote democracy have established basic principles and codes of conduct, and have developed work tools for observers. Moreover, those countries that held their first democratic elections in the 1980s and early 1990s are now in a democratic institution consolidation phase. Such a phase requires greater specialization and expertise on the part of election observers. Expectations are high, and the international community must respond to them appropriately.

The purpose of this document is to provide members of election monitoring missions with a practical tool allowing them to adequately prepare themselves and quickly acquire the basic knowledge that they require to carry out their mandate. This document will enable readers to familiarize themselves with the latest knowledge in the election observation field and to acquire tangible elements needed for appropriate and comprehensive monitoring.

In this guide, we will examine in succession election observing, its principles and the applicable codes of conduct; the main stakeholders as well as the preparations for, the unfolding of and the follow-up on the mission. The personal preparation of observers and the list of elements likely to be observed will be dealt with in the appendices.

Needless to say, a tool such as this Practical guide for observers will have to be updated on a regular basis. The authors welcome comments from users. Readers may rest assured that their comments and suggestions will be taken into consideration.



# Observing, principles and codes of conduct

## 1.1 Nature of observing

First of all, it is important to specify what is meant by “election observing”. According to the definition of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, it involves:

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*“The purposeful gathering of information regarding an electoral process, and the making of informed judgements on the conduct of such a process on the basis of the information collected, by persons who are not inherently authorized to intervene in the process, and whose involvement in mediation or technical assistance activities should not be such as to jeopardize their main observation responsibilities.”<sup>1</sup>*

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This definition makes it possible to identify the exact role that observers are called upon to play. It is important to reiterate that observers are first and foremost witnesses. What they are asked to do, is to observe, note and suggest. Some people would like observers to have the role of mediator. In our opinion, this should only be the case under very exceptional circumstances, at the risk of jeopardizing the principle of non-interference in a country’s internal affairs, a principle that all observers must observe. Needless to say, the testimony of observers must respect the sovereignty of the country requesting the observation mission, the terms of reference of their mission and the rules of ethics, a topic that we will come back to later.

## 1.2 Types of observers

Generally, there are two types of observers: international observers and national observers. The two types of observers are not necessarily present at a given election. Whatever the case may be, there are common points and also significant differences in their role.

## **International observers**

International observers are not citizens of the country in which the observation of an electoral event is taking place. They are delegated by their own country or by an international body to be part of an observation mission. Their knowledge of the country where the election is to be observed, and their professional experience vary considerably depending on the case. That is why it is important that international monitoring missions be made up of experienced observers as well as younger members, who will benefit from the experience of the former. The number of members in the international monitoring mission is determined by the mandating agency, with a concern for an adequate regional representation of the Member States of this organization.

## **Long-term international observation**

A well-informed judgment on an election or a referendum cannot be based solely on the observations made on polling day. The level of preparation of the electoral administration, as well as the conditions surrounding the steps leading up to a poll are elements that are crucial for the success of an electoral event. Within this context, the observation of the pre-electoral period and the actual election campaign is essential. According to the terms of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, election observing does not involve simply taking a photo on polling day, but rather seeing the film of the event unfold.<sup>2</sup>

This explains the importance of ensuring the presence on site, a few months ahead of time, of a small group of long-term international observers. By being present in the country where a poll is to be held, these observers will be able to develop their knowledge of the country and the electoral process, and create a network of contacts with the institutions in charge of holding the elections and within civil society. When the short-term international observers arrive in the country a few days before the poll, they will be able to benefit from the analysis made by their colleagues who are already on site.

## **Short-term international observation**

After having taken part in a preparatory session, short-term international observers arrive in the country a few days before the poll and generally leave a few days after it has been held. The number of short-term observers is generally much greater than that of long-term observers. Their short stay is compensated by their massive presence and their distribution in all regions of the country. Their observation efforts focus on the final days of the poll, namely polling day, the counting of votes, and the announcement of the results. It is important to emphasize the

fact that short-term observers must make sure that they are adequately prepared. Moreover, they must make the appropriate contacts, as soon as possible, with the authorities of the host country, the long-term international observers, the members of the other short-term international observation missions, the national observers, as well as the representative organizations of civil society.

### **National observers**

Citizens of the country in which the poll is being held may also want to take part in the observation of the electoral process. These persons are volunteers from organizations of civil society who want to ensure the democratic nature of the political life of their country, be it on a short-term or on-going basis. While the in-depth knowledge that national observers have of the host country is unquestionably an asset, some people wonder about their technical expertise and their degree of involvement in the political debates of their country, which occasionally may undermine the credibility of their observation efforts.<sup>3</sup> Hence, international observers must make sure, in their contacts with national observers, that they gather comments that are representative of the range of opinions held by the country's electorate.

## **1.3 Principles and codes of conduct**

The presence of foreign observers on the territory of a country raises questions of an ethical nature. Simply being at the heart of an election campaign and on site during an electoral event in a foreign country can put an observer in very delicate situations at times. A number of international agencies that are devoted to the promotion of democratic rights and that sponsor observation missions have prepared on behalf of observers codes of ethics that promote greater professionalism in observation missions. These organizations include the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Francophonie.

## Code of conduct for the observation of elections (International IDEA)

For its part, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, based in Stockholm and commonly known as International IDEA, lists the observer's duties as follows:

- recognize and respect the sovereignty of the host country;
- be non-partisan and neutral;
- be comprehensive in their review of the election, considering all relevant circumstances;
- be transparent;
- election observation must be accurate.<sup>4</sup>

## Code of conduct of the OSCE

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has also drafted rules of ethics, which members of election monitoring missions should observe. The OSCE recommends that observers adopt the following conduct:

“ ...

- Observers will maintain strict impartiality in the conduct of their duties, and shall at no time express any bias or preference in relation to national authorities, parties, candidates, or with reference to any contentious issues in the election process;
- Observers will undertake their duties in an unobtrusive manner, and will not interfere with the election process, polling day procedures, or the vote count;
- Observers will carry the prescribed identification issued by the host government or election commission, and will identify themselves to any interested authority upon request;
- Observers will not display or wear any partisan symbols, colours or banners;
- Observers may wish to bring irregularities to the attention of the local election officials, but they must never give instructions or countermand decisions of the election officials;
- Observers will base all conclusions on well documented, factual, and verifiable evidence, and should fill out a statistical survey form of polling stations visited;

- Observers will refrain from making any personal or premature comments about their observations to the media or any other interested persons, and will limit any remarks to general information about the nature of their activity as observers;
- Observers will participate in post-election debriefings, by fax or telephone if necessary;
- Observers must comply with all national laws and regulations.”<sup>5</sup>

### Code of conduct of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

The principles of conduct recommended by the Inter-Parliamentary Union are similar to those advocated by the other international agencies active in the democratic rights promotion field. Generally, the Code of conduct for elections recommends that:

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*“The conduct of international observers, in addition to respecting the national legislation, is governed by the general principles of responsibility: observers must limit themselves to their mandate, show professionalism, be honest and impartial.”<sup>6</sup> (free translation)*

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More specifically, the following rules are stated:

“...

- Act with strict neutrality and without bias towards national authorities, parties and candidates, electors, the press and the media, and the organization of election observers.
- Refrain from engaging in any act that could be prejudicial to the electoral system or to the administration of the election.
- Make known any fact that could give rise to a conflict of interests or to the appearance of a conflict of interests during the observation and the evaluation.
- Refuse gifts from parties or persons taking part in the election.
- Comply with national laws and regulations, as well as the electoral code.
- Show caution before publishing information gathered during the observation, and avoid hasty conclusions.
- Base all their conclusions on verifiable facts and use recognized reference standards.”<sup>7</sup> (free translation)

## Guidelines for election observing (Francophonie)

The Francophonie has adopted guidelines for sending an election monitoring mission. These principles were adopted by the Permanent Council of La Francophonie (PCF) in Marrakech on December 17 and 18, 1996. The guidelines stipulate that observers must have a reputation for independence of mind, impartiality and objectivity.<sup>8</sup>

Among the basic principles determining whether an observation mission will be sent in the Francophonie, the Requesting State must first submit an application to the President of the Permanent Council of La Francophonie and to the Secretary-General of the Agence intergouvernementale de la francophonie (AIF) three months before the electoral event. The PCF or its President may decide to first send an exploratory mission, the purpose of which is to collect documentation, analyze the measures taken or envisaged as well as the context, and to report to the President of the PCF.

The observation mission, which is part of a broader democratization support process instituted by a number of French-speaking countries, must respect the sovereignty of the Requesting State and the legislation in force. Equipped with the appropriate terms of reference and mission orders, the members of the mission must have a reputation for independence of mind, impartiality and objectivity. They must also have a good knowledge of election rules and techniques. In addition, they are expected to have some knowledge of the requesting country or at the very least of the region where the mission will take place.

The number of members of the mission is set by the President of the PCF, with a concern for the multilaterality of French-speaking countries. Special attention will be paid to the representation of the various regions that make up the Francophonie. The members of the mission, equipped with the relevant documentation that they will have received from the Agence, will take part in a preparatory session before leaving.

It is expected that members of the observation mission will have made, as soon as possible, all the appropriate contacts with the country's political and administrative authorities, in particular the authorities in charge of organizing and overseeing the elections. Special attention must be paid to actual access to the media.

During their stay, observers will take note of the location of polling stations, the opening and closing times; the actual conditions of voting; the presence of representatives of parties or candidates; the quality of the officials in charge of overseeing the conduct of operations, the



conditions of the vote count. As for the duration of their stay, it is preferable that observers arrive in the host country sufficiently ahead of time to be able to carry out their mission under satisfactory conditions, that they be present for the counting of votes and that they remain until the announcement of the provisional results. A press release will have to be issued on site immediately after the counting of votes, by the person in charge or the spokesperson of the mission. Wherever possible, the mission must take place in cooperation with other international monitoring missions.

Finally, the mission shall report to the President of the PCF in the fifteen days following its return. This report is made public. The PCF will examine the report and decide on the follow-up that it should be given, after having received the opinion of the Political Committee.

\* \* \*

Beyond the specific characteristics of these codes of conduct, it is important to understand that the conduct of members of election monitoring missions is a decisive factor for ensuring the credibility of the mission and, consequently, its success. A knowledge of the codes of conduct and the observance of internationally recognized rules of ethics in this field are imperative.



## Main stakeholders

### 2.1 Authorities of the requesting country

Among the authorities of the requesting country, one finds the government of the host country and the structure responsible for managing elections.

#### The government

The government has the highest political authority in the host country. Responsible for governance, it grants members of the election monitoring mission the accreditations and identification documents necessary for their movements on the territory. The government also assumes responsibility for the security arrangements put in place for voting. In all communications with the government, as in any action or in any statement, observers must respect national sovereignty.

#### The structure in charge of managing elections

The Agence intergouvernementale de la Francophonie distinguishes three forms of allocating responsibilities regarding the organization of elections: management of electoral operations entrusted to the Ministry of the Interior; organization entrusted to the Ministry of the Interior with which a National Electoral Commission is associated; management of the entire electoral process by an autonomous or independent National Electoral Commission (CENA or CENI).<sup>9</sup>

- Election commission

In some cases, an election commission assumes responsibility for the conduct and holding of the poll. This structure, made up of a variable number of members, is composed in certain countries of representatives appointed by the executive power, the legislative power – including opposition parties – civil society, etc. The commission may be a permanent or ad hoc body. In this latter case, it may have only been created a few weeks before the poll. The commission can also issue accreditations to observers.

- The Ministry of Interior and Territorial Administration  
In some countries, it is the government that takes care of the management of the electoral process by entrusting this responsibility to the Ministry of Interior and Territorial Administration. Elections are then managed by regional and local officials who report to the ministry: prefects, sub-prefects, and governors.

## 2.2 Political parties of the requesting country

Wherever there are elections, there are political parties. Together with the candidates, political parties are the main political stakeholders in an election campaign. The element that distinguishes a political party from an interest group is that a party is seeking to exercise power, or at least to participate in its exercise, for example by forming with other parties a coalition government. Some well-structured parties have a nation-wide organization and present candidates in almost every electoral division. Other parties have a regional or ethnic basis. Still other parties are made up of only a handful of active members. In all cases, the members of the election monitoring mission will have to ensure that they make contact with the political parties representing the broadest opinion spectrum in the country, without neglecting independent candidates.

## 2.3 The organizations of civil society of the requesting country

The term “civil society” refers to all of the elements of a country that intervene collectively on the political stage, with the exception of the government and political parties.<sup>10</sup> Unions, associations, churches, the media, professional bodies, women’s and youth groups are all examples of organizations that make up civil society. A civil society that is strong and pluralistic is one of the basic prerequisites for a democracy. Within the framework of an election campaign, civil society plays a significant role by mobilizing electors and monitoring the democratic process. Here once again, it is important that the members of the observation mission meet with the greatest possible number of representatives of organizations of civil society.

## 2.4 Democracy promotion agencies

The expansion of democratic values and practices has resulted in the birth and development of numerous groups and agencies dedicated to promoting democracy. These agencies and groups have developed extensive expertise and can contribute to the consolidation of democracy in those countries that solicit their cooperation, in particular by sending observers, publishing reports, etc. Here are some of these agencies and groups, which the observer may be called upon to cooperate with or contact:

- Agence intergouvernementale de la Francophonie (AIF);
- Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF);
- International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development;
- Council of Freely Elected Heads of Government;
- Friedrich Ebert Foundation;
- Groupe d'étude et de recherches sur la démocratie et le développement économique et social (GERDDES);
- Hemisphere Initiative;
- International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES);
- International Human Rights Law Group;
- International IDEA;
- International Republican Institute (IRI);
- National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI);
- Carter Center;
- National Endowment for Democracy (NED);
- Organization of American States (OEA);
- United Nations.

## **2.5 The authorities of the observer's country of origin**

The authorities of the observer's country of origin or of his government may be concerned at two points in time: when the members of the observation mission are chosen and when consideration is given to the follow-up on the report. Between these two points in time, these authorities do not intervene directly with the members of the mission but may express their comments to the agency that is sponsoring the observation mission.

## **2.6 The institution or the employer that delegates the observer**

The institution or the employer that delegates one of its members as a participant in an observation mission intervenes when observers are chosen. Although the employment relationship is maintained, it is the conditions of secondment that are proof of the relationship established between the person who becomes a member of the observation mission and his institution or employer. Observers, within the framework of their mission, report to the agency that is sponsoring the election monitoring mission.

## **2.7 Parliamentarians**

Election monitoring missions are generally made up of experts and parliamentarians. It is important to underscore the specific qualities and unique expertise of parliamentarians, which make them vital participants, in partnership with election management experts, in election monitoring missions.

A parliamentarian is first and foremost an elected official, namely someone who has experience in the field and who has successfully managed or run in one or more election campaigns. He has tangible and practical knowledge of the main workings of an election. His knowledge of political life and the work of grassroots activists represents a clear advantage.

Parliamentarians also enjoy another asset - their knowledge of parliamentary life: participation in the deliberations of the Assembly, committee work, representation of the interests of their constituents, oversight of the actions of government. Their political experience, in particular in the management of political crises and the holding of negotiations, gives parliamentarians an undeniable expertise, in which their analysis and assessment skills were put to good use.

Finally, by reason of their status, parliamentarians have a moral authority that can be very useful within the context of an observation mission. All these qualities make parliamentarians key players in supporting the implementation and strengthening of the constitutional state and, in particular, parliamentary and electoral institutions in countries moving towards democracy.

## 2.8 Experts

As for experts, the election monitoring mission benefits from their contribution in a number of respects.

When the experts are election administration specialists, they are familiar with all aspects of the management of electoral operations: drawing up of lists of electors, establishment of the electoral map, training of election officers, organization of polling stations, logistics and security, financing of political parties and candidates, control of election expenses, media relations, election fraud prevention, election disputes, and management of complaints. Moreover, experts have a very good knowledge of electoral operations in the field. Finally, they generally have first-hand experience with several electoral events in their own country and often have taken part in election monitoring missions, analysis or technical support missions abroad.

These experts have an operational knowledge that enables them to evaluate the quality of the preparation and organization of electoral activities, while being aware of the political realities inherent to the electoral context.

As for those specialists who are neither parliamentarians nor election management experts, they come from a variety of backgrounds: university professors, magistrates or presidents of jurists' associations, etc. Some of them have a knowledge of the different voting systems and electoral procedures and can make a significant contribution within the context of an observation mission.

Every election monitoring mission must include the presence of experts among its members.





## 3.

# Mission preparations

### 3.1 Choice of observers

The choice of observers depends on several factors. It is the agency sponsoring the observation mission that makes the final choice from among the names of potential observers submitted by a country. Parliamentarians are designated by their Parliament and experts by their employer. Generally, the mandating agency takes care of ensuring an appropriate regional representation and of determining the composition of the mission so that those persons having less experience are associated with veteran observers.

### 3.2 Terms of reference of the mission

Election monitoring missions take place within the framework of the terms of reference established by the agency or country sponsoring the mission. These terms of reference, which stipulate the conditions of engagement in a given situation, form the heart of the legal framework that governs the unfolding of the mission. For example, these terms may involve articles applicable to a peace accord or a resolution of the United Nations.

### 3.3 Mandate and status of the observer

Generally, the mandate of observers is to report on what they observed and to give an opinion on the credibility of the electoral process on the basis of criteria relating to the honesty and the democratic nature of the election, the application of the election legislation and the approved procedures, while taking into account basic democratic principles. This mandate also consists, albeit indirectly, of promoting the putting in place of better electoral systems. It should be noted that the specific mandate of the observer may vary somewhat depending on the mission.

More specifically, observers have a well-defined role that is delimited by rules of ethics and a precise mandate that observers must respect. In this regard, the mandating agency will issue the observers its

instructions and those of the host country as well as the various accreditation documents. On these documents may be found, among other things, the conditions pertaining to accreditation, the rights, prerogatives and duties of observers as well as specific instructions. It should be noted that it may happen that some of these documents are not distributed to observers.

The observer also represents his country. To avoid any faux pas that might be prejudicial to the delegation to which he belongs or to his country's government, the observer must remain cautious in his interventions and respect the sovereignty of the host country.

### **3.4 Knowledge of the host country and its legislation**

To ensure the success of such a mission, a minimum knowledge of the host country is essential. That is why it is important to prepare a file dealing with the following three subjects:

#### **Geography, history and economy**

Data on the territory (map), the climate, the history, the population (ethnic, religious groups, etc.) and the economic situation may prove very useful and will give an idea of the conduct and rules that should be followed from one country to the next. It is also important to know certain characteristics such as what behaviours should be adopted or avoided in countries where the religious, cultural or social rules are different, the working hours of the host country, etc.

#### **Political situation and democracy**

The following information should be compiled on the host country: system of government, institutions, governing power, political forces in place (political parties, unions, other), the country's electoral tradition, etc. With respect to political parties, the following elements should be noted: names of parties and their leaders; orientation and main supporters; foreign or other affiliations.

#### **Electoral process underway**

Occasionally, an observation mission is preceded by a preliminary evaluation mission. Before even arriving in the country, it may be possible to obtain important and up-to-date data concerning the electoral process underway. A detailed knowledge of the legal basis of the country's electoral system is indispensable. An attentive analysis of the constitution and the election legislation or electoral code in effect is also required. These legal documents provide a framework for the entire

unfolding of the electoral process. A good knowledge and understanding of the constitution, election legislation and electoral code will greatly facilitate the tasks to be accomplished in the field. However, it often happens that the electoral code can only be obtained once the observers are in the host country.

The election legislation creates administrative authorities in charge of applying this legislation. It is important to know the name, the composition, the duties, and the method of appointment of the members or any other characteristics of the various components of the administrative structure.

Finally, data on the electoral territory should be compiled, in particular the number of electoral divisions, their distribution, the scope, the electorate, etc.

### **3.5 Preparation of the observer for the mission**

It goes without saying that improvisation has no place in an electoral observation mission nowadays. While it may happen that observers only have a few days between their appointment and their departure for the host country, it is important to pay special attention to the preparation of observers for the tasks awaiting them. Indeed, the observer must have the appropriate aptitudes and knowledge in order to greatly improve the chances of success of the mission.

#### **Qualities of the observer**

First and foremost, the person asked to participate in an observation mission must be available and motivated. He must clearly grasp the importance and the impact of the role that he is being called upon to play.

This person must be very much at ease when working as a member of a team and be very open-minded as he will inevitably be called upon to collaborate with persons from different countries, backgrounds and cultures. He will also have to live in an unfamiliar setting and will be confronted with different social, cultural and political values. Moreover, this type of mission demands a great deal of flexibility on the part of the candidate as he will have to cope with the unexpected.

Excellent health and the ability to adapt are essential prerequisites given that the living conditions are often difficult due to the climate, the lack of basic comforts and the demanding nature of the work. It is important that all candidates in an observation mission be informed of the potential risks inherent to such missions. Although security arrangements are generally provided by the forces of law and order of the host country, it is nevertheless important to exercise caution and observe basic rules of safety.

Finally, a person who takes part in an observation mission must be aware of the political impact of his intervention. In this respect, he must show discretion, judgment, objectivity, impartiality and neutrality in the performance of his duties.

In Appendix I there are further details on the main elements that should be considered for the personal preparation of observers.

### **Knowledge required**

To take part in an election monitoring mission, it is imperative that the candidate be able to express himself in the language(s) of the host country. Moreover, as the mission is of an electoral nature, the participant must have a good expertise in matters pertaining to the electoral process and electoral systems as well as the ability to understand and apply election legislation. A good knowledge of his own country would be desirable, especially its political history and current events, as he may be asked questions on these subjects.

Moreover, he must be aware of the minimum conditions governing the holding of free and democratic elections, which emanate from various international agreements. For individuals and groups, these conditions pertain to the following rights:

- freedom of expression;
- freedom of association;
- right to meet;
- free and secret voting;
- right to equality.

## 4.

# Unfolding of the mission

## 4.1 Activities prior to polling day

### Arrival in the country

Within the framework of an observation mission, the observer should arrive in the country a few days before the event in order to be able to observe the climate surrounding the election, to supplement his knowledge, and to collect any information necessary for the process underway.

At the time of arrival, the observer is generally welcomed by a person designated for this purpose. Prior to your departure, you should find out what provisions have been made to welcome you.

### Getting set-up

The first step that should be taken upon arriving is to register at the embassy of your country or at the one acting on its behalf. In the case of certain observation missions, a visit to the ambassador is required to obtain the relevant information and recommendations. Moreover, the embassy will be able to provide useful health information such as a list of doctors, dispensaries or hospitals for emergencies. It will also be able to inform you about the measures that should be taken or the existing provisions for an emergency evacuation from the country.

Finally, the observer must contact his employer on a regular basis and, as soon as possible, provide him with a mailing address, telephone number and fax number where the observer may be reached quickly and at all times.

It is during this period that the information sessions are generally held. They give the observer the opportunity to familiarize himself with his duties, the procedures that should be followed, the composition of his team, the designation of the head of mission, the observer's assignment, and the means put at his disposal. Other observation missions may have been organized in the country. There may be meetings where observers can share information, tasks, responsibilities, and form "sister team", throughout the course of the stay.

If it has not already been done, measures concerning the physical and operational deployment (accreditation, etc.) will be conveyed to the observer at the time of his arrival or in the days that follow. Moreover, the mandating agency should hand out a badge or tag to identify observers, which should help avoid needless problems.

### **Contacts with civil, political and administrative authorities**

As soon as possible after arriving in the country, the head of mission makes the necessary contacts with the civil, political and administrative authorities of the host country, in particular the authorities in charge of the organization and oversight of elections. He will see to obtaining the necessary accreditations and identification documents. The quality of the initial contacts may be decisive for the success of the mission. That is why special attention should be paid to this aspect.

### **Preliminary activities and observations**

As soon as the observer arrives, he must make himself visible and make known his presence. In order to obtain the most objective possible portrait of the situation, he must endeavor to establish contacts with and collect information from persons and organizations that are representative of the country's main activity spheres such as:

- representatives and leaders of political parties;
- candidates;
- government administrators and civil servants;
- persons responsible for electoral administration;
- unions;
- human rights agencies;
- ethnic groups;
- electors;
- Canadian nationals;
- religious leaders.

In actual fact, the observation process begins as soon as the observer arrives in the host country. Ideally, the observer should travel across the entire national territory or at the very least the territory to which he has been assigned to obtain an overview of the process underway, to situate the polling stations, to identify anomalies (fraud, complaints), and to anticipate difficulties that may arise. On this occasion, the observer must make known his presence to the local authorities and to the representatives of the political parties and find out about any obstacles encountered.

Contacts with electors will make it possible to gauge the electoral climate. The observer will endeavor to find out electors' expectations, their confidence in the administration of the election, their interest in the parties, their knowledge of the candidates and the electoral procedure as well as how accessible information is. To promote freedom of expression, these interviews should not be conducted in the presence of government security forces.

The preliminary observations should also deal with the various groups: unions, religious groups, the police and the army.

Moreover, the country's attitude towards observers with respect to freedom of action, the possibility to talk to other observers, as well as the administrative and legal framework will be noted. This framework may differ from the preliminary agreements, in which case the mandating agency must be informed of the situation.

### **Contacts with the media**

Throughout this period and during the entire stay, special attention will be paid to both the written and electronic media. Three aspects should be monitored in particular, namely the general coverage of the election campaign, access to the media, and the potential existence of censorship.

During the course of his stay, the observer may be asked to give his opinion or to make comments on various aspects of the process being observed. It is important to reiterate here that the observer must remain impartial in any action or intervention. Moreover, unless he has been officially mandated to speak, the observer must refrain from making any public statement, and refer any request for an interview or a statement to his head of mission.

### **Cooperation with other international observation missions**

Wherever possible, the mission must take place in cooperation with other international monitoring missions. Increasing the number of exchanges with other observers will make it possible to become aware of a greater array of facts, opinions and analyses. Ideally, heads of mission should maintain regular contact with their counterparts for the entire duration of their stay in the country.

### **Progress report for the pre-electoral period**

The drafting of reports is an essential task that is incumbent on every observer. Indeed, it is an integral part of the mission. There are two types of reports, namely progress reports and the actual mission report. Basically, these reports summarize the observations made at

various stages of the electoral process and relate the conclusions and recommendations of the observers. To facilitate this task, it is essential to take notes on a daily basis.

Depending on the type of mission, these reports will be written according to the various periods of the electoral process, namely the pre-electoral period, the actual electoral period and the post-electoral period. They will be prepared on the basis of the daily notes and the forms provided by the mandating agencies or prepared by the observer according to the observation checklist and the election legislation.

The progress report for the pre-electoral period should cover:

- the electoral documentation collected on site such as the election legislation, the standards and the instructions for the poll, or any other relevant document;
- the electoral organization in general as well as the pre-election climate;
- the complaints and the difficulties encountered;
- the agenda and the persons met;
- the recommendations made.

This progress report is sent to the head of mission.

### **Observation of the electoral period**

An observation mission generally deals with the poll. However, it may cover the entire electoral process. That is why we will examine, in addition to the actual poll, the stages surrounding an electoral event.

Moreover, the mandating agency generally provides an observation checklist, which is determined according to the election legislation or which serves in its place. However, the observer may be called upon to establish a framework himself. That is why Appendix II presents a list of elements that are liable to be observed.



## **The election legislation and electoral administration**

The election legislation, the cornerstone of the electoral process, must ensure fairness for all stakeholders in the electoral process (electors, candidates, political parties). Among the minimum conditions for the holding of free elections<sup>11</sup>, the adoption of the electoral code should be based on the broadest possible consensus of parliamentarians.

As for the administrative aspects, meetings should be organized with central authorities in charge of electoral administration. The observations should be structured around the following elements:

- the competence of election officials;
- accessibility to the authorities and to personnel;
- the organization and efficiency of action of the agency;
- the training and supervising of the personnel;
- the existence of electoral procedures;
- the regional structure (authority, powers);
- the existence of monitoring commissions.

In terms of the preparation and planning of the election, it would be important to check if the forms, manuals or documents for the poll are available and appropriate. Special attention should be paid to the design of ballots (type of ballots used) and the security measures surrounding printing and quality control.

## **Delimiting of electoral boundaries**

The establishment of a fair delimitation is linked to respecting certain concepts including the equal value of an elector's vote (one person, one vote). Ideally, this delimitation should be made by an independent organization and, if this is not the case, the opposition should be able to take part in the delimitation process.

## Registration of electors

The elector registration period is a major phase in the electoral process. The various stages related to the registration of electors are very important as they can promote or undermine the elector's confidence in the electoral authorities. The presence of observers contributes to the transparency of the process. Observers must be familiar with:

- the standards and procedures related to registration;
- the material employed;
- the steps in the registration process;
- lists of electors (drawing up, publication and correction);
- identity cards or voter I.D. card.

## Political parties and candidates

Before leaving for the host country, the observer will have prepared a file containing basic data on the political parties. At this stage, he will have to focus his attention on the formalities for registering parties, their participation in the electoral process, the nomination period, the method of designating candidates, and the posting of lists of candidates.

Fair access to state resources for all political parties is undoubtedly one of the elements making it possible to certify that the poll is free, honest and democratic. Indeed, failure to respect this principle will cause serious prejudice to the election campaign of the opposition political parties.

When it comes to financing, various aspects must be monitored, including:

- the amounts that the State grants to parties or that come from the exterior;
- election expenses;
- the use of various state resources (public buildings, transportation, etc.).

## The climate surrounding the election campaign

Any element that is liable to disrupt the electoral climate and, in so doing, participation in the electoral process, must be reported, in particular:

- boycott of the election;
- violation of rules of law;
- economic conditions;
- activities that risk interfering with the conduct of the campaign;
- possibility of violence and intimidation.

## Access to the media

In some countries, an authority oversees access to the media. This authority makes sure that the air time is distributed evenly between the political parties during the election campaign and that the journalistic treatment is impartial.

Special attention must be paid to all of the media. In this respect, it would be useful to record, for the written press and the electronic media (television and radio), the following elements:

### Written media

- names of the main newspapers;
- affiliation (independent media, government press);
- distribution.

### Electronic media

- permit required;
- affiliation;
- percentage of the population having access to these media.

The observer will have to monitor three elements in particular, namely: censorship, access to the media and coverage.

If censorship exists, the observer will determine who exercises it, the legal bases underlying censorship and what type of information is subject to censorship. In the case of access to the media, the observer must find out if the media have given their support to all of the candidates and parties or to a limited number. He should also check if the various parties benefited fairly from the available air time. As for the coverage of the election campaign, it is important to determine if the media gave a balanced treatment to the campaign.

It should be noted that in countries on the road to democracy, posting remains a widely used means for disseminating information. As a result, it is necessary to monitor the following points: the users, the extent of use and respect for posted materials.

## 4.2 Activities on polling day

Before examining the various steps in the observation of a poll, a few preliminary considerations and recommendations are in order.

The poll observation period extends from the time polling stations open to the addition of the votes. In other words, the observer must prepare for long hours of work and anticipate certain needs, in particular food needs. During this exercise, the observer is expected to take note in an unbiased manner of all shortcomings or discrepancies liable to interfere with voting, and to evaluate the quality of the electoral process as a whole.

A work plan must be prepared to properly plan a day of observation. This plan will include the following points:

- team composition;
- itinerary, schedule and point of departure;
- list of polling stations to visit (location, persons to meet);
- logistical support (human and material resources);
- mandate and task.

A serious evaluation of the poll requires that a sufficient number of polling stations be visited. Upon arrival, the observer must introduce himself to the election officers and the representatives of the political parties, and present his accreditation and/or identity card issued by the authorities. If there are no problems, it is estimated that a minimum of 20 to 30 minutes per polling station are necessary to allow the observer to make his presence known and to record the information required.

### **The opening and location of polling stations**

The layout, location and accessibility of the premises as well as the hours of operation of the polling station should be noted. On the subject of the layout, everything must be done to preserve the secrecy of voting.

### **Availability of ballot boxes, ballots, lists of electors and election material**

Special attention must be paid to the material put at the disposal of election officers and electors: list of electors, poll book, minutes, ballots, ballot box, polling booth, lighting, etc. It is important to note if the material is available in sufficient quantity, as soon as the polling stations open and throughout the day.

## Voting

It is necessary to identify all of the election officers and to evaluate their proficiency, in particular regarding the knowledge and application of election standards and procedures.

A specific number of electors per polling station should be specified in the electoral procedures. Moreover, to avoid confusion, there should be no last-minute change in procedure. When monitoring voting, the following points should be noted:

- arrangement of the premises;
- accessibility;
- presence of representatives of political parties or candidates;
- quality of polling station personnel;
- waiting time and voting time;
- elector identification procedures;
- voting procedures;
- secrecy of voting;
- refusal to allow an elector to vote;
- number of registered electors who did not vote;
- number of electors who requested assistance to vote;
- complaints;
- potential acts of intimidation (nearby or inside the polling station);
- security of persons and election material (ballot boxes in particular);
- satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the various stakeholders (political parties, electors).

## Counting of votes and announcement of the results

In addition to being present at this stage, the observer will have to make sure that the standards and guidelines related to the counting of votes are known and applied by the election officers assigned to this task. The various elements that should be monitored are:

- the stakeholders;
- the vote counting and compilation methods;
- the transportation of the minutes and the material.

When the counting of votes occurs in a place other than the voting centre, you must make sure that all the security procedures are in place and more specifically, concerning the transportation of ballots.

As for the addition of the votes, it is an important activity that follows the counting of votes. To avoid any possibility of fraud, the observer must be present at this stage of the electoral process.

Various documents must be completed, signed and sent by the authorized election officers. Check to see that these formalities are duly completed. As for the dissemination of the results, it must be done by the electoral authorities within a reasonable time period so as not to undermine the process.

### **Progress report for polling day**

The progress report for polling day should summarize all of the activities of the day and be structured according to the following elements:

- the general climate on polling day, the territory covered and the polling stations visited;
- the organization of polling stations;
- the conduct of the poll;
- the counting of votes;
- the addition of votes;
- the disclosure and the publication of the results;
- complaints and the follow-up;
- the conclusions and recommendations.

As was the case for the progress report for the pre-electoral period, the progress report for polling day will be transmitted to the head of mission who will handle it in the same way.

The observer can use the elements presented in Appendix III to prepare his observation checklist.

## 4.3 Activities following polling day

### Processing of complaints

Within the context of some missions, observers are sometimes empowered to receive and forward complaints, for the entire observation period. This duty is normally governed by rules provided by the mandating agency, the electoral or governmental authorities. It is a crucial duty given the impacts that it may have on the credibility and the trust that the various stakeholders will have in the electoral process.

This duty is particularly delicate and requires a great deal of tact by the observer. In some cases, complainants may expect the observer to investigate and settle the matter immediately. The observer must act in an unbiased, objective and impartial fashion by showing his interest but without getting too involved. Moreover, he must not take the place of the judge or rule on the dispute. The observer is not an arbitrator and in no case must he intervene when serious problems arise, except where he has been expressly mandated to do so. His role should be limited to collecting all of the information and assuring the complainant that the complaint will be forwarded to the designated authority. The complaint form should include the following information:

- complaint number;
- name and address of the complainant;
- date and location of the incident;
- nature of the complaint (illegal registration, etc.);
- summary (circumstances and witnesses);
- observer's comments and actions taken.

### Progress report for the post-electoral period

The content of this report will be prepared on the basis of the following elements:

- preliminary results;
- addition of the votes;
- end of the process;
- official announcement of the results;
- complaints and contestations.

## Press releases

Press releases are an efficient and simple means to make essential information public. As the mission report is generally only made public after the members of the mission return to their respective country, the mission must make known the main elements of its conclusions by way of press releases as soon as possible after the poll is held.

## Mission report

As several members of an election monitoring mission must prepare a written mission report, it is important to begin writing the report and, if possible, to complete it before leaving the host country. The progress reports prepared during the stay will serve as a basis for writing this report. This work may be divided between the members of an observation mission who will have agreed beforehand on the content of the report and who will designate a person to ensure the coordination of the drafting, publishing and distribution.

As for the content of the mission report, it should summarize in a narrative and descriptive style all of the activities and the mandate entrusted. The content should include the following elements:

- global and electoral context;
- importance of the elections;
- objectives;
- list of observers;
- terms of reference of the mission;
- mission mandate;
- composition, mandate and distribution of teams;
- work plan and timetable;
- itinerary of the observers;
- observation methods used;
- terms of cooperation with the other missions;
- results of the observation;
- conclusions of the mission;
- recommendations intended to consolidate democratic institutions.
- appendices (press releases, instructions, newsletters, calendars of meetings, communications, etc.);
- summary of the report.



## 5.

# Follow-up on the mission

## 5.1 Production and publication of the report

### Deadline for preparing the report

The mission report should be prepared and sent to the mandating agency not later than fifteen days after the return of the observers.

### Ownership of the report

The mission report is the property of the mandating agency and it is up to the latter to decide on the distribution of the report.

### Treatment of and follow-up on the report

As soon as the mandating agency receives the mission report, it forwards this report to the Requesting State, the member states of the agency, as well as the international democracy promotion agencies that sponsored other missions in the host country.

The mission report is taken into consideration by the authorities of the mandating agency, which examines it and decides on the follow-up that should be given thereto.

The authority in charge, within the mandating agency, of following up on the report takes the appropriate steps as soon as possible.

The mandating agency sees to the publication of the report.

In recent years, election monitoring missions have given rise to numerous comments, be it to call attention to the benefits or to criticize the shortcomings.





## Conclusion

In more political terms, the opinions are mixed regarding the utility of election monitoring missions. On the one hand, some people recognize that these missions are a means of disseminating recognized standards to ensure the legality of elections, to prevent election fraud, and to reassure the electorate. On the other hand, the utility and effectiveness of missions have been called into question. The media report comments to the effect that election monitoring missions are an obligation to which States agree under the pressure of international money-lenders. Some people complain that missions lend moral support to results that are not always reliable. The support or condemnation to which observation missions give rise, needs to be better motivated. It is important to reiterate in this respect that the International IDEA stipulates that the observer's duties include ensuring the completeness and accuracy of the observation.

We have already made note of the fact that electoral observation missions have been characterized by greater professionalism in recent years. It is increasingly recognized that these missions must be made up of specialists, experts or parliamentarians. The technical and political expertise of these persons can only be an asset for ensuring the success of election monitoring missions.

In addition, these specialists must be adequately prepared and equipped with tools allowing them to observe the electoral process in a manner that is complete, accurate and professional. The publication of the Practical guide for observers seeks to meet these requirements. Indeed, it is with this goal in mind that it was prepared.

We hope that this guide will meet your expectations and needs.

Have a good mission!!!





## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, *Code of conduct. Ethical and Professional Observation of Elections*, p.10.
- <sup>2</sup> Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, *The OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Handbook*, p. 8.
- <sup>3</sup> On this subject, see Neil Nevitte and Santiago A. Canton, “The Role of Domestic Observers”. *Journal of Democracy* (July 1997), pp. 48-61.
- <sup>4</sup> International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, *Code of conduct. Ethical and Professional Observation of Elections*, p. 10.
- <sup>5</sup> Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, op. cit., pp. 5-6.
- <sup>6</sup> Guy S. Goodwin-Gill, *Codes of Conduct for Elections*, Geneva, 1998. Inter-Parliamentary Union, p. 45.
- <sup>7</sup> Guy S. Goodwin-Gill, op. cit., pp. 45-46.
- <sup>8</sup> Permanent Council of La Francophonie, *Document portant principes directeurs devant guider l’envoi d’une mission d’observation d’élections*, Adopted by the PCF at its 23rd session, on November 12 and 13, 1996, (CPF-23/96/D 299), p. 5.
- <sup>9</sup> Agence de la francophonie, Délégation générale à la coopération juridique et judiciaire, *Consultations électorales en Francophonie : Bilan, implication de la Francophonie et perspectives d’avenir : Sessions d’échanges à Bordeaux en 1995 et à Dakar en 1997*, p. 66.
- <sup>10</sup> On this subject, see the issue entitled: “Rethinking Civil Society”, *Journal of Democracy* (July 1994), pp. 4-56.
- <sup>11</sup> International Republican Institute, *Election observation: what makes an election «Free and Fair»*, Washington, pp. 3.





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# Appendices



# Personal preparation of the observer

To be able to meet all the formalities and prior conditions and to know any limitations, special attention should be paid to certain elements. Depending on the case, these formalities are the responsibility of the mandating agency, the employer or the person assigned to a mission. Moreover, the observer should ask the mandating agency for all the documents necessary for the mission.

## Authorizations and conditions of secondment

The formalities surrounding the authorizations and conditions of secondment may vary depending on whether the organization is active in the public, parapublic or private sector:

- authorizations from the employer (electoral administration, civil service or other);
- conditions of secondment:
  - maintaining or interruption of salary, insurance and other fringe benefits;
  - purchase of travel documents and airport tax;
    - » check which organization takes care of the purchase;
    - » check who pays the cost of the airport tax (approximately \$20 per airport);
    - » travel in economy class preferably;
  - per diem;
  - travel expenses and cash advances;
  - release period.

## Necessary documents

Most of the necessary documents are listed below. To prevent them from being lost or stolen, it is imperative to store these documents in a security box. Moreover, it is strongly recommended that photocopies be made of the most important documents and that they be kept in a separate location.

- passport valid for the assignment period (Passport office);
- visas – anticipate stopovers (the obtaining of visas is generally the responsibility of the mandating agency, otherwise you must refer to the embassy or the consulate);
- vaccination booklet (traveler's clinic);
- travel documents;
- insurance (travel, medical, disability, etc.);
- accreditations, instructions, mission statement (it is possible that these documents will only be provided at the time of arrival);
- traveler's cheques, money and credit cards;
- health insurance card;
- business cards;
- calling card with international code;
- photos (passport size; required for various formalities).

## Medical measures

It is important to find out about the sanitary conditions in the host country and the precautions that should be taken both prior to departure and once on site. In this respect, traveler's clinics offer documentation and helpful advice. In order to not be caught unprepared at the last minute, it is suggested that you make an appointment even if the mission is not confirmed.

- Appropriate vaccinations:
  - plan your vaccinations at least one month prior to departure;
  - check who pays the vaccination costs;
  - traveler's clinics recommend certain vaccinations. However, the observer should check with the mandating agency if additional vaccinations are required;
- blood group;
- medical certificate;
- have medical and dental prescriptions;

- first-aid kit (for the content, check with a traveler's clinic or a LCSC);
- have on hand all the necessary information about your state of health (medic-alert bracelet etc.).

### Personal effects

As for luggage, it is preferable to take only the strict necessary. Generally, the mandating agency provides information on this subject prior to departure. However, excellent travel guides offer invaluable advice, particularly with respect to clothing and the rules that should be followed in the country.

- Appropriate clothing (adapted to the climate, natural fibers, light colours; plan for suitable dress for official visits);
- travel belt (passport belt);
- toiletries;
- extra pair of glasses and dentures;
- insect repellants;
- current converter and adapter;
- no apparent jewelry;
- pocket light;
- take any indispensable articles and a change of clothing on the plane.

### Day-to-day affairs

Various steps should be taken in preparation for a prolonged absence. If necessary, a person should be mandated to assume day-to-day obligations:

- payment of bills;
- rent, mortgage, insurance;
- mail (notify the post office);
- will and mandate in the event of incapacity;
- person to be notified in the event of an emergency.





# Elements of pre-election monitoring

## Election legislation

1. Who took part in the drafting of the election legislation?
2. How was the election legislation enacted (order, law, referendum, etc.)?
3. Who administers this legislation?
4. How and by whom are election officials appointed?
5. What powers do they have?
6. What is their degree of autonomy?

## Delimiting of electoral boundaries and voting system

7. Who is responsible for delimiting the territories to be used for election purposes?
8. How is this delimitation made?
9. What are the main criteria for the delimitation?
10. Into how many “electoral divisions” is the territory divided?
11. What is the voting system for each elected level?

## Registration

12. Is registration mandatory?
13. How does one register?
14. What procedure is put in place to determine who has the right to vote?
15. Which categories of persons (inmates, etc.) are deprived of their right to vote?
16. Are electors well informed of the dates, times and places where they can register?
17. What means were used to inform electors?
18. Are registration offices adequate and accessible?
19. Is the required material available?

20. What material (poll book, registration card, etc.) is used?
21. Do the staff members assigned to this task seem to be proficient?
22. What is the role of each staff member?
23. Does the registration process unfold in an orderly manner?
24. Were electors intimidated or did they receive illicit gratuities?
25. Were electors registered who should not have been?
26. Is there a revision period? If so, what are the procedures?
27. Were there applications for striking?

### **Political parties and candidates**

28. What are the rules concerning the registration of political parties?
29. Do these rules permit the exclusion of certain parties?
30. Does the election legislation control certain activities of political parties?
31. Which means are available to political parties to make known their platform?
32. Do political parties have a role to play in the administration of elections?
33. Does the election legislation contain provisions regarding the funding of political parties?
34. Does the State allocate amounts or resources to all political parties?
35. Do political parties receive financial backing from outside supporters?
36. Does the party in power use public resources for partisan purposes?
37. What are the eligibility criteria for candidates? Is a deposit required?
38. What is the period for receiving nomination papers?
39. What are the terms and the documents required for nomination papers?
40. Is the official list of candidates published in the media or posted in public places?
41. Are there procedures for challenging nominations?
42. Did any candidates withdraw?

## Election campaign climate and the media

43. Are human rights respected?
44. Is the rule of law generally respected?
45. Are there other factors that could disrupt participation in elections?
46. What is the duration of the election campaign?
47. Can one say that the press is free?
48. If there is censorship, how and by whom is it exercised?
49. Do all parties have fair access to the media?
50. Do the media give a balanced treatment of the election campaign?
51. Is electoral advertising limited?
52. Is information accessible to the entire population?
  - » illiteracy rate;
  - » percentage of the population that has a television, a radio.



# Elements for monitoring the poll

### Polling stations

1. Are the site and the layout of polling stations suitable?
2. Are the premises monitored by the police or by soldiers? If so, do the latter facilitate voting?
3. Is there a sufficient number of polling stations (number of electors per polling station)?
4. Is the location of polling stations well known and easily accessible for electors?
5. Is all the necessary material available?
6. Are there special polling stations (advance polling, mobile polling stations, etc.)?
7. What are the hours of operation of all polling stations and are these hours respected?

### Ballot

8. What type of ballot is used?  
one for all candidates  
one per candidate
9. Is the ballot sufficiently clear?  
candidate's photo  
acronym of the political party  
candidate's name  
colour of the paper
10. How is the ballot marked?
11. Are ballots numbered?
12. Do ballots bear the initials of one of the election officers?
13. Can an elector be traced from a ballot?
14. Does the elector place the ballot in the ballot box?

## Secrecy of voting

15. What type of ballot box is used?
16. Are seals employed? What type? Presence or absence of seals?
17. Does the layout of the polling booth ensure the secrecy of voting?
18. How are ballots collected after voting?

## Procedures

19. Are the remarks pertaining to the conduct of voting recorded in a document such as the poll book?
20. How are unused or smudged ballots disposed of?
21. What measures are implemented to prevent electoral fraud?

## Electors

22. Who has the right to vote?
23. What means are used to identify electors?
  - list of electors
  - elector's card
  - other
24. May an elector who has an I.D. card but who is not registered vote?
25. Are there provisions for voting by persons who are absent? If so, what are they?
26. Are there provisions for persons who are unable to go to polling stations?
27. Were electors prevented from voting? If so, why?
28. Can electors be assisted? By whom? How many were assisted?
29. How much time does it take to vote, from the receipt of the ballot paper to its deposit in the ballot box?
30. Is the wait outside the polling station long?
31. How many electors voted during your visit?
32. Do electors seem to clearly understand the voting procedures?
33. Can the electors make it to the polling places easily?
34. Does there appear to be any form of intimidation of electors?
35. Do the persons present at the polling station attempt to influence electors?
36. Do the electors seem to find the process credible?

37. When the polling station closed, were the persons who were still waiting able to vote?
38. Overall, do the electors seem satisfied?

### **Election officers**

39. Are the election officers (the person in charge, the deputy returning officer, the person responsible for security, etc.) easily identifiable?
40. Which other persons (political parties, volunteers, journalists, forces of law and order) are present?
41. How were the election officers chosen?
42. Were the staff adequately trained? Do they seem proficient in their duties?
43. Do the election officers carry out the tasks assigned to them in accordance with the standards and procedures?

### **Counting of the votes and compiling of the results**

44. Where is the counting done?
45. How much time elapsed between the closing of the polling station and the counting of the votes?
46. Who is present at the counting of the votes?
47. Are the persons assigned to the counting of the votes well acquainted with the rules?
48. Under what conditions does the counting of the votes take place?
49. Who observes the counting of the votes?
50. Who compiles the results?
51. How are the results transmitted and to whom?
52. Are unused or smudged ballots compiled?
53. Does the counting of the votes take place at a location other than the polling station? If so, where and what security measures are taken?
54. Who carries the ballot box?
55. How long did the counting operation last?
56. To whom is the statement of votes sent?
57. How are the results certified?
58. Who can contest the results and were they contested?
59. What is done with the election material (ballot boxes, ballots used, lists of electors, poll books, etc.) once the counting of the votes has taken place?

## **Results**

60. Who is authorized to disclose the results?
61. What is the credibility of the organization in charge of disseminating the results?
62. How much time lapsed between the end of the poll and the announcement of the official results?
63. What are the results of the poll?
64. What is the turnout rate?
65. What is the rate of rejected ballots? Does it seem unusually high?

## **Fraud and complaints**

66. What steps are taken to avoid election fraud?
67. Are observers integrated in all stages of the election process and in particular during the counting of the votes?
68. Did the parties take part in the counting of the votes?
69. Were there any complaints?
70. Was the population informed of the possibility of lodging a complaint?
71. Are there any irregularities or unusual incidents to report?



## Electoral irregularities

- Intimidation, violence;
- Unfair redistribution of the electoral map;
- Erroneous application of the provisions of the Election Act;
- National, regional or local electoral authorities adhering to the cause of a party;
- Elector with several elector's cards;
- Sale of elector's cards;
- Electors not having the possibility to register;
- Illegal modifications to the list of electors;
- Obstruction of the right to vote;
- Voting by persons who are not qualified electors;
- Same voter voting more than once;
- Stuffing or manipulation of ballot boxes, manipulation of ballot papers;
- Bogus or fictitious polling stations;
- Deliberate poor organization of the poll;
- Exploitation of the ignorance of electors;
- Cheating by using visible indelible ink;
- Falsification of reports;
- Manipulation of figures at the time of the publication of results;
- Complicity of the justice system during disputes;
- Buying of some electors' votes.

## Model of a summary report of an observer

**Observer's name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Accreditation zone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Type of election:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date :** \_\_\_\_\_

Number of polling stations visited: \_\_\_\_\_

Numbers of the polling stations observed: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Description of the irregularities identified: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Statistics on the irregularities identified: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Administrative shortcomings: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Recommendations concerning the legitimacy of voting in the observation zone:

\_\_\_\_\_

Recommendations to improve the management of the electoral process:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Documents to be appended:** Report sheets for each polling station observed

# Rights and duties of observers

Observers are independent, but they have the rights and duties listed below; these rights and duties are not mutually exclusive, with some being both rights and duties.

### Rights:

- Travel anywhere on the territory of the host country without prior authorization or notice, with the sole constraint being personal safety;
- Be entitled to observe the entire electoral process;
- Be free to meet with and speak to the representatives of political parties, candidates and election officers, according to their availability;
- Observe any meeting of electoral and political authorities during hearings, objections, complaints and appeals;
- Accompany the transport of material and observe its delivery;
- Have access to every voter registration office, every polling station and every centre where results are compiled;
- Report on his observations to his organization.

### Duties:

- Abide by the laws and respect the sovereignty of the host country;
- Refrain from interfering in the affairs of the country;
- Refrain from interfering in the electoral process, issuing instructions to election officers or disturbing the process;
- Be neutral, impartial, objective and unbiased; not wear a uniform, signs, colours, etc. that would suggest or indicate their support for a given party or candidate;

- Wear at all times during the observation of the process, the accreditation card issued by the host country;
- Report as soon as possible to the electoral authorities, any presumed major irregularity or fraud observed, and ask that a report be prepared;
- Respect the secrecy of voting;
- Not be in the possession of or carry any firearm for the duration of their assignment to the observation mission.

# Plan of a general report of an electoral observation mission

- I. Summary
- II. Terms of reference
- III. Context and stakes of the elections
- IV. Legal, political and administrative framework of the organization of elections
- V. Observation methods used
- VI. Description of the activities of the mission
- VII. Obstacles encountered
- VIII. Analysis of the various aspects of the period preceding the holding of the poll, among others:
  - The selection and behaviour of the members of the Electoral Commission;
  - The electoral structure;
  - The legal framework;
  - The election calendar;
  - The general climate;
  - The various stakeholders;
  - The registration of electors and candidates;
  - The election campaign;
  - The preparation and distribution of election materials;
  - Information for the electorate;
  - The training of members of polling stations.

IX. Evaluation of the highlights of the observation, among others:

- The environment inside and outside polling stations;
- Election materials: lists of electors, ballot boxes, ballot papers, polling booths, etc.;
- Conduct of election officers;
- Conduct of electors;
- Counting of the votes;
- Return of the materials;
- Consolidation of the results.

X. Conclusions of the mission

- Eventual limits of the report

XI. Recommendations intended to consolidate democratic institutions

XII. Acknowledgments

Possible appendices:

- Press releases issued by mission;
- Pre-election reports;
- Composition and breakdown of teams;
- Work plan and work calendar;
- Itinerary of observers;
- Statistical assessment of the facts observed;
- Documents collected on site (electoral code, manual for members of polling stations, regulations, procedures, forms, minutes, specimens of ballot papers and other materials);
- Key figures, organizations and political parties met with;
- Eventual collaboration with other organizations;
- Complaints and challenges received;
- Other forms of assistance from the international community in the holding of the elections.



