



Press contact:

Cllr. Oscar Bloh, ECC Chairperson

Contact: 0886554109

ECC Secretariat @ 0775186929

Email: jbwatchie@gmail.com

Website: eccliberiacom.org

Facebook: eccsecretariat2011

Instagram/Twitter: @eccliberia

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

For Immediate

Release April 26, 2024

“As part of the USAID-supported Liberia Independent Domestic Elections Observation (LIDEO) Activity, the Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC) COMMENDS THE PEACEFUL PARTICIPATION OF VOTERS IN THE CONCLUDED SENATORIAL AND REPRESENTATIVE BY-ELECTIONS IN NIMBA COUNTY AND GRAND GEDEH ELECTORAL DISTRICT #1”

Introduction

As part of the USAID-supported Liberia Independent Domestic Elections Observation (LIDEO) Activity, the Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC) commends the voters of Nimba and Grand Gedeh for peaceful participation in the concluded Senatorial and Representative By-elections and calls on the citizens to remain calm and await the official announcement of the results by the NEC. ECC noted the slow but steady pace at which voters turned out in both counties. As part of its observation mission, ECC staff attended campaign rallies in both Nimba and Grand Gedeh and did not record any incidents of violence.

This preliminary statement is based on reports that the Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC) received from 48 short-term observers deployed to cover voting precincts and polling places in Nimba County and Grand Gedeh Electoral District #1 for the by-election.

The statement includes findings on the set-up and opening of polls, voting process, closing, counting, and tallying at polling places.

Key Findings

Based on reports from ECC observers, voters in Nimba and Grand Gedeh Counties turned out peacefully to vote. ECC received no reports of incidents that undermined the conduct of the elections. Unlike the recent presidential run-off election where overcrowding was reported at many precincts, observers in Nimba and Grand Gedeh reported a low turnout of voters thereby posing no problem for queue management. Furthermore, ECC commends the NEC for the timely delivery of election materials to all polling places in the two counties.

Arrival at Polling Places

- All ECC observers were permitted to access and observe at assigned polling places and voting precincts.
- At polling places observed, there was security presence.

Opening

- ECC observers reported that voting generally commenced on time. Before 8:00 a.m., observers reported that 42% of polling places had opened for voting, and between 8:00 and 8:15 a.m., the remaining 58% of observed polling places opened.
- Additionally, in 96% of observed polling places, party agents were present at the opening of polls

Polling Place Set-Up

ECC observers reported that all observed polling places had the required sensitive voting materials available, including the Final Registration Roll, ballot papers, indelible ink, the official ballot stamp, tactile ballot guide, and the accounting forms. In addition, an average of five NEC staff members were present, with two or more women polling officials on each team during the setup. ECC observers also noted the presence of other observers and media representatives at the opening of the polls.

- In 17% of observed polling places, voters needed to use stairs to access the polling area, which potentially poses a challenge persons with disabilities or the elderly.
- In 100% of observed polling places, the ballot box was shown to be empty and sealed with four seals before voting began.

Voting Process

Following the set-up and opening of polls, ECC observers traveled between voting precincts and polling places to observe the voting. Observers reported using an observation checklist and sent reports through coded text messages to a central database system at designated times of the day.

At observed precincts and polling places, ECC observers noted that poll workers generally followed voting procedures and had no problem with queue control due to the slow pace at which voters turn out to vote.

- In 100% of polling places and precincts observed, voters were asked to present their voter registration (VR) card before voting. Additionally, ECC observers noted the inking of voters' fingers after voting in all observed places.
- ECC observers also reported that ballot papers were stamped before being handed to the voter and that voting booths were available, guaranteeing the secrecy of the vote in all observed polling places.
- In all observed places, no tension, violence, or disruption during voting was reported, and observers noted the professional manner in which security officers conducted themselves.

Closing and Counting Process

In 56% of observed polling places, voters were still waiting in line at 6:00 p.m. to vote, which indicates the late turnout of some voters during the day. In these instances, voters waiting in line were allowed to vote, resulting in the closure of these polls between 6:00 and 6:30 p.m.

Generally, NEC officials followed the procedures for closing and counting. ECC observers reported that party agents, media representatives and other observer groups were present during the counting process. At observed polling places, all party agents signed the result form and there were no complaints filed about the counting process.

There was sufficient lighting during the counting, and after completing the process, the presiding officer posted a copy of the result on the wall in all polling places observed.

Tally of Results

The ECC deployed its coordinators at the two designated NEC magisterial offices in Nimba and one magisterial office in Grand Gedeh to observe the tabulation of results. During its preliminary observation of the tally process, ECC notes that the tallying of results was done transparently, with the presence of party agents and observers. ECC commends the NEC for this level of transparency. ECC will continue to follow the process and provide relevant updates.

Recommendations

Based on its observations and findings, the ECC makes the following preliminary recommendations:

To the National Election Commission:

- Treat all electoral disputes equally, if any, and adjudicate them promptly and transparently.
- Inform the public in a timely manner of any challenge hindering the announcement of the final results. To political parties and independent candidates:
- If any political party or independent candidate has grievances on the outcome of the results, they are encouraged to follow the due process of law and refrain from inciting their supporters to violence.

Observation Methodology

The ECC trained and deployed sixty-60 short-term observers in both Nimba and Grand Gedeh counties to observe the Senatorial and Representative elections, 12 of which served as supervisors. Specifically, 48 of these observers were deployed in Nimba to observe the conduct of the Senatorial by-election, while 12 were deployed in Grand Gedeh Electoral District #1 for the representative by-election. The ECC observers in Nimba were deployed proportionately to voting precincts in each district, with each observer roaming between precincts. On the other hand, ECC observers in Grand Gedeh Electoral District # 1 covered all 11 voting precincts in the district, roaming between polling places. This observation method enabled the ECC to have a representative picture of the election day processes, drawing on data points from each district, in the case of Nimba and precinct, in the case of Grand Gedeh electoral district #1. All ECC observers submitted observation data through coded text messages to the ECC Apollo reporting database. The ECC additionally posted observers at NEC's magisterial offices in both counties to observe

and report on the tally of results. These observers will also follow and report on the filing and adjudication of electoral petitions.

###

About ECC

The Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC) is Liberia's largest domestic election observation network with diverse competencies, experiences, and expertise in democracy, elections, and governance established since 2010. ECC's members include the Center for Democratic Governance (CDG); Center for Media Studies and Peace Building (CEMESP); Center for Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding (CECPAP); Institute for Research and Democratic Development (IREDD); Naymote Partners for Democratic Development (NAYMOTE-PADD); West Africa Network for Peace Building (WANEP), and the Women NGO Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL). The ECC election observation effort is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). "The contents of this update are the responsibility of the ECC and does not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government."