



## **OAS Observation Mission in Haiti commends improvements on Election Day**

November 21, 2016

The Electoral Observation Mission of the Organization of American States (OAS/EOM) to Haiti, headed by former Uruguayan senator Juan Raúl Ferreira, commends the efforts of all national stakeholders that led to a better Election Day despite the challenges posed by Hurricane Matthew. The Mission was encouraged by the greater national involvement and ownership of the process.

The OAS/EOM fielded a team of 130 experts and observers of 24 nationalities. On Election Day, they observed the electoral process in all ten departments of the country from the opening of the polls through the counting of the ballots, visiting 474 voting centers. The Mission is observing the tabulation process and will have continuous presence at the Tabulation Center (CTV) until the publication of the preliminary results. In addition, it will observe the contestation phase.

The OAS/EOM recognizes the measures implemented by the electoral authorities that resulted in improvements on Election Day.

All polling stations observed opened on average at 6.50 AM and most of them had all the necessary electoral material. The OAS/EOM was pleased to note the use of new polling booths, which contributed to the secrecy of the vote, as well as the introduction of a new type of indelible ink to identify citizens that had already cast their vote. The Mission recognizes that the voting process proceeded in a more efficient manner, which is partly due to a timely and thorough training of the electoral staff. These measures, amongst others, have been recommended by the OAS/EOM during previous deployments.

OAS observers reported an increase in the participation of women as polling station members. However, the EOM noticed that the representation of women as candidates was very low. According to data published by the CEP, under 10% of the legislative and senatorial candidacies were female. The Mission laments that political parties are not complying with the 30% quota established by the law for these elections.

On Election Day, national observers were present in numerous polling stations, demonstrating the engagement of civil society. Their participation is an important component in the strengthening of the Haitian democratic system.

In order to prevent the repetition of irregularities that affected the October 25, 2015 election, the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) took measures to provide more certainty to the voters, including the restriction of voting at polling stations where an electors name appeared on the list. The Mission also recognizes the efforts made to regulate the accreditation of party representatives, through an electronic registration system, observing a plurality of clearly identified party agents at the polling stations and a decrease in their numbers.

The OAS/EOM acknowledges the efforts made to facilitate voting of some of the actors involved in the organization of the election by way of complementary lists. The implementation of this initiative, however, encountered obstacles, including the late consolidation, printing and delivery of the lists. In addition, the Mission observed few cases of discrepancies between the partial electoral lists displayed outside polling stations and the voters list used by poll workers.

The decision of the CEP to reopen the voters list for this electoral cycle translated into an increase of approximately 318,000 voters, posing a challenge for the limited capacities of the National Identification Office (ONI) to timely deliver ID cards to new electors. This challenge was exacerbated by the consequences of hurricane Matthew.

Although voting in Haiti is not mandatory and the law does not provide for a participation threshold, the Mission expresses its concern for what appears to be a low turnout in yesterday's election and encourages Haitian authorities and political stakeholders to take measures to incentivize political participation.

The Mission commends the efforts of the Haitian National Police (PNH) and MINUSTAH to guarantee a generally orderly and safe voting environment. In the period awaiting the proclamation of the official results by the CEP, the EOM hopes to see a continuation of the spirit that has prevailed in the last weeks, calling upon all political actors to act responsibly so there may be a peaceful conclusion of the electoral process.

The OAS/EOM acknowledges the commitment of the government to this electoral process, including its timely financing and the efforts deployed to rehabilitate voting centers in the Matthew affected areas. It should also be commended for its efforts to remain neutral and promote the continuation of the electoral process.

In the coming weeks the Mission will present a report with recommendations to the CEP to be considered for the January 29, 2017 elections.

Finally, the Mission would like to thank the Government of Haiti for inviting the OAS to observe their November 20 elections and for their support in enabling observers to carry out their tasks. The Mission also wishes to thank the governments of Canada, Chile, France, Mexico, Switzerland and the United States for their financial contributions that made possible the deployment of this Mission to Haiti, as well as UNDP and MINUSTAH for their support.