PREFLIMINARY REPORT OF THE ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION OF THE PANAFRICAN YOUTH UNION FOR GENERAL ELECTIONS

(Presidential, coupled legislative: National and Provincial)

Democratic Republic of Congo, December 30th, 2018
I. INTRODUCTION:

On Sunday, December 30, 2018, Congolese voters went to the polls to elect a new President of the Republic and their next national and provincial representatives. On the basis of the information published by the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), there were 21 presidential candidates, 15358 national deputy candidates, and 19643 provincial deputy candidates; in all, 40,024,897 voters have been registered.

Responding to the invitation of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), the Pan-African Youth Union deployed an Election Observation mission, with the objective of making an independent observation, the professional and impartial evaluation based on transparency, integrity and fairness in order to ensure that the electoral process complies with the laws of the DRC.

Her Excellency Juliana RATOVOSON, Vice President of the Pan African Youth Union, leads the mission. This mission was deployed on December 16, 2018, and was made up of 3 members of the executive committee. International observers from the National Youth Councils of Zimbabwe, Mali, Niger, and Uganda as well as 12,500 young members of the Congolese National Youth Council also accompanied the mission. The observers of the Pan-African Youth Union have been deployed throughout the National Congolese territory.

As part of its activities, the mission of the Pan-African Youth Union met with the CENI Executive Secretary and the heads of this institution at the level of the local branches as well as the international observers, the national observers, and the voters.

This report, which is an assessment of the electoral context, is based on the activities and interactions of the observers of the Pan-African Youth Union with the country’s stakeholders as well as elections observation reports.
The observation mission of the UPJ will continue to follow the evolution of the electoral process and a comprehensive report that will sanction the end of our mission of observation of the general elections of December 2018 in the DRC, will be transmitted to the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) and published on the website of the UPJ and its social networks.

II. PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

A. The political context of elections:

The elections held on December 30, 2018, were initially scheduled for December 23, 2018. They were postponed for technical reasons. The Mission noted the following observations:

- **The postponement of elections in three localities:** Beni, Butembo, and Yumbi. Elections in these constituencies will be subject to a specific timetable; the CENI justifies the postponement of the elections in Beni, Butembo, and Yumbi by the persistence of the *Ebola virus disease*, the terrorist threat, the massive displacement of the populations, the destruction of all the electoral materials, the looting and the fire of the warehouses of the installation of the CENI antenna. In these localities, elections will be held in March 2019.

- Other observations include altercations between some supporters of the candidates and elements of the national police;

- A large number of applications;

- The location of polling stations in schools;

- Storage of voting machine reserves in some centers;

- A strong presence of candidates’ witnesses;

- A deployment of national and international observers.
B. Security

The mission notes that the security issue is an obstacle for all actors and more particularly the participation of voters in the vote, on polling day. The mission found that security services were working closely with CENI to address these challenges.

C. Electoral legal Framework:

The legal framework governing the organization of elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo consists in particular of:

- The constitution of the Democratic Republic of Congo,
- The electoral law and its implementing measures allocating seats by constituency of legislative, provincial, municipal and local elections
- The list of 601 political parties
- 69 political groupings
- The Order Establishing Courts of Appeal in the 26 Provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo

D. Electoral Administration.

The mission notes that the Independent National Electoral Commission is the coordinating body of the election process in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The stakeholder consultation frameworks set up by the CENI constitute a space of information and exchange that makes the electoral process more inclusive and shows transparency in the conduct of the electoral process.

E. Electoral register:

The electoral register includes 40,024,897 voters. 6,500,318 voters were removed from the electoral register after cleaning up and 337,208 as a result of the audit, so that 40,024,897 were retained on the electoral lists. The electoral register of the Independent Electoral Commission is inclusive, up-to-date, but perfectible.
F. Election campaign:

Presidential and legislative contenders had thirty days to campaign to convince their voters. The campaign was generally calm. Candidates were free to campaign in all the provinces of the DRC; however, the mission heard that the movements of some candidates might have been restricted. Despite this, the mission was told some criticism of some candidates about the means used, and the differences in language between supporters.

G. Media:

Regarding the media coverage of the elections, there was freedom of expression and opinion.

H. Civil society

Congolese civil society has been involved in the organization of elections but also in raising awareness among citizens for a climate of social dialogue and appeasement. The engagement of civil society in election observation has helped to build citizen confidence in the process.

I. Participation of Young people and women

The PYU Election Observation Mission noted an increased participation of youth at all levels of the electoral, especially in national and provincial elections. Women represent 12% of the total number of candidates in the 2018 elections. Moreover, among the 21 candidates in the presidential election there was a woman and a youth person.

J. Participation of people with disabilities

The Mission notes the candidacy of people living with a handicap.
III. OBSERVATION ON THE DAY OF THE VOTE

A. Opening of polling station

Most of the polling stations visited on the polling day by the PYU observers opened at the scheduled time, that is, at 6 o'clock in the morning. However, there were some polling station that lagged from 30 minutes to 1 hour. These delays were due to heavy rainfall observed in Kinshasa and some other cities. At the opening of the polling stations, witnesses from parties and political groups were present. Queues were observed at all the polling stations visited.

B. Electoral Material

The election voting kit was available in insufficient quantity in all the polling centers visited; there was only 1 voting machine in each polling station for 600 voters. In addition, sometimes the mission noted some delays in the start of operations, following the delay of the arrival of the electoral kits at polling stations.

C. Electoral personnel

In almost all the offices visited by the PYU observers, the electoral staff were present. The PYU Mission found that an election staff was wearing a badge that was not signed was not dated by a CENI member. Young people were well represented among polling station staff.

D. Presence of observers and witnesses of candidates

The mission noted the presence of Candidates' witnesses, national and international observers in most of the polling stations visited. They had free access to the voting stations and could exercise their role without restriction if they had an accreditation.
E. Voting process

The vote went well overall and was inclusive. The secrecy of the vote was respected in the offices visited by the PYU observers. However, the mission found a variation in the time of the handling of the voting machine. Less than two minutes for people familiar to technology and more than 2 minutes for those who needed more assistance.

F. Counting and divestiture

The closing was made in the presence of the last 5 voters, the witnesses of the candidates and the member of the polling station in each polling station.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to continually improve the Congolese electoral system, the PYU Observation mission addresses the following recommendations:

a) To the CENI:

- To organize the elections in the regions where the vote has not taken place in accordance with the provisions of the electoral law, in this case, Beni, Butembo, Yumbi;
- Continue sensitization of the population, especially young people, with a view to their involvement in the inclusive, peaceful and transparent electoral process;
- Create conditions favoring access to polling stations for the elderly and those living with disabilities;
- Provide assistance to people with reduced mobility and the elderly
b) To political actors:

- Encourage the search for consensus with political actors in the settlement of disputes;
- Exhaust the competent legal bodies for the settlement of all electoral disputes.

c) To the government:

- To promote volunteering to strengthen the participation of young people and women during the electoral process;
- Strengthen logistics during the electoral process.

d) To the civil society:

- To sensitize the population, the political actors, the authorities of the country for the maintenance of a peaceful post-electoral climate;
- Pursue and strengthen the work of citizenship education.
V. CONCLUSION

The elections of December 30, 2018 in the Democratic Republic of Congo, by their stakes demonstrate an important step in the consolidation of democracy and stabilization of the country. Despite the challenges, the stakeholders showed their willingness to run the elections in accordance with the norms and rules and allowed the Congolese people to freely exercise their civic duty.

The voter turnout at the poll has not yet been publicly announced by the authorities, but it appears to be relatively important. Any dispute arising from the proclamation of the results must take into account the laws and be submitted to the competent legal authorities. All candidates must advocate moderation in behavior and respect for results as stated by the CENI.

The use of the voting machine is an innovation to recommend and encourage in Africa, but education for its use is indispensable for both voters and polling station members.

Kinshasa, 2nd January 2019

For the mission,

Juliana RATOVOSON
Head of the Mission
PYU Vice President