

**11TH IMPLEMENTATION MEETING OF
THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES
FOR INTERNATIONAL ELECTION
OBSERVATION, JOHANNESBURG
18-19 OCTOBER 2016**



**11th IMPLEMENTATION MEETING OF THE DECLARATION OF
PRINCIPLES FOR
INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION**

18-19 October 2016
Crowne Plaza
Johannesburg, South Africa

The 11th implementation meeting of the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation (DOP) was hosted by the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) from 18 to 19 October 2016, at the Crowne Plaza hotel. Since the adoption of the DOP in 2005, endorsing organisations have held annual meetings at which endorsers exchange views on the implementation of the principles to further improve and harmonise the methodology for international election observation. The 11th implementation meeting was attended by 54 participants from 20 DOP endorsing organisations and other partner organisations.

WELCOME REMARKS

Mr. Denis Kadima, the Executive Director of EISA, welcomed participants and thanked them for their attendance. In his remarks, he noted that EISA hosted the DoP annual implementation meeting in 2008 in Maputo and is honoured to host the annual meeting for the second time. He emphasised the main objective of the DOP, which is to provide benchmarks for international election observation to ensure that international observers conduct election assessment in line with democratic principles in a professional, impartial and credible manner. Through the annual DoP implementation meetings, endorsing organisations share good electoral practices, explore thematic issues that could deepen election observation practice and methodology. He highlighted the thematic issues to be discussed in the course of the meeting and encouraged participants to share their experiences to contribute to learning during the meeting. He also highlighted the importance of gender as a crosscutting issues and the decision by the preparatory meeting held in Brussels to mainstream gender in all the thematic sessions.

HIGH-LEVEL PANEL

⇒ **Dr Christina Thorpe, Chair of EISA board and former Chairperson of the National Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone**

Dr Thorpe in her remarks noted that the 11th DoP implementation meeting coincided with EISA's 20 year anniversary. She highlighted how EISA's work has evolved over two decades, noting that the Institute conducted its first election observation mission (EOM) in 2000 in Zimbabwe. Since then, its work has grown and has positively contributed to the assessment of electoral integrity on the African continent. She noted that EISA provides technical support in election observation to

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the African Union (AU) and to most African sub-regional economic communities such as the East African Community (EAC), Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Economic Community of Central African States (CEEAC), the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The DoP has been an important milestone in the development of EISA's election observation methodology. Dr. Thorpe explained that the goal of the high level meeting of former Heads of Missions of international election observation missions, was to provide a platform for information exchange to improve the role of mission leadership and consistency in the manner mission leaders headed EOMs.

⇒ **Mr. Jason Carter, Chair of the Board of The Carter Center (TCC).**

Mr Carter in his remarks stated TCC's deeply commitment to the DoP. He recognised the group of DOP endorsing organisations as fundamental actors in the field of democracy, as they are keepers of the integrity of the process. He recalled that the integrity of the process can be impacted within any context, not just in transitional democracies, he noted, the need to remain committed to the principles enshrined in the DoP, which also serve as a remarkable source of information. He mentioned his participation in several EOMs over the last 20 years in Liberia, Egypt and, most recently, in Myanmar. He noted during these missions that inclusivity was a fundamental persistent democratic challenge. He therefore expressed his satisfaction with the focus on inclusivity issues in the DoP meeting. He also commended the mainstreaming of gender and women's rights in the thematic sessions throughout the programme. He stated that other challenges such as money in politics are fundamental systemic issues that are often pointed out by observers around the world and should continue to receive attention on such platforms. He concluded his remarks by conveying TCC's goodwill to the participants.

⇒ **Ms. Elena Valenciano, President of the Human Rights Committee, European Union Parliament.**

Ms. Valenciano in remarks noted that election observation is a tool of democracy support. Election observation should however, not focus exclusively on Election Day, but it is important for organisations to constantly improve their methodology to cover the entire electoral process. Providing support to States and stakeholders throughout the electoral cycle helps to promote democratic values, she noted. She stressed the importance of building close collaboration amongst all electoral stakeholders and key actors throughout the electoral cycle to further enhance the integrity of elections. As part of its effort to provide support throughout the electoral cycle, the European Union (EU) considers it crucial that its EOMs' recommendations are followed through and implemented to guarantee the improvement of the next elections. This approach is part of the EU action plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2015-2019. The European Parliament has a fundamental role to play in the recommendations tracking and monitoring process through the President, the political groups and the Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group, who all play a role in monitoring EUEOM recommendations.

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She also highlighted the EU's support to Parliaments in different countries which is focused on strengthening their capacity in law-making, by developing guidelines. The EU's parliamentary support contributes to the adoption of legislations towards subsequent elections. The introduction of last-minute electoral changes before elections is a pattern that has been observed, and it has a detrimental effect on both election observation and the electoral process itself.

On the issue of electoral violence, Ms Valenciano noted that EOMs currently play a limited role in conflict prevention, but can assume a more important role in mediation. The EU has been involved in conflict prevention in selected countries, subject to availability of funds. It strategically selects countries where the EU can make a difference.

⇒ **Justice Johann Kriegler, retired Judge of the South African Constitutional Court and former Chairperson of the South African Independent Electoral Commission**

Judge Kriegler outlined the importance of understanding the context, the participants and the aspirations of countries affected by conflict where observers may work. He noted that it is usually difficult for international observers to get this kind of insight on the context. It is even nearly impossible as they do not spend enough time within the society to understand it. Therefore, listening to the people with an open mind and with humility is an essential part of the observer's job, he advised. Regarding the issue of mediation, Judge Kriegler recalled that observers are not in a position to mediate, but are professionally required to observe hands off. Moreover, although elections are ideal to resolve political contestations for power in the states, elections can also bring their own tensions.

SESSION 1: THE GROWING TREND OF ENTRENCHED INCUMBENCY

Moderator: Ms. Brenda Santamaria – (Organisation of American States (OAS))

Ms. Olufunto Akinduro (EISA) provided an overview of legal provisions for term limits to establish the fact that entrenched incumbency is becoming a trend. She highlighted the different countries that have amended their constitutions to increase or limit presidential terms and the countries that do not have provisions for presidential term limits in their constitutions with Africa having the highest number of countries where the constitution has been amended. She noted that the issue of entrenched incumbency is deeply political and is not directly addressed in the benchmarks for democratic elections. It is also a very contextual issue that does not have a one-size-fits all answer. Her presentation identified 5 emerging trends of entrenched incumbency. On the question of how international observers could address the issue, she pointed out that entrenched incumbency compromises democratic principles such as: equal opportunity to be elected, open competition, and inclusivity. She highlighted the need for international observers to rather interrogate these principles rather than attempt to interrogate the question of term limits directly. She also noted the negative impact of entrenched incumbency which leads to rejection

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of election outcomes (e.g. Kenya and Zimbabwe); abuse of state resources and public upheaval that can sometimes lead to violence and almost always lead to a loss of trust in the credibility of elections (e.g. Tunisia, Egypt, Burundi, Burkina Faso and Ethiopia). She concluded with an emphasis on the fact that term limits and tenure of office is an issue of sovereignty, the people of each country should be able to determine of how long their leaders should be in power in a democratic manner. Whilst noting the tendency of incumbents to sometimes thwart such democratic processes. Observers however should seek ways to assess referenda and other political processes to verify that the will of the people is genuinely expressed during such processes. The case of Rwanda was used to highlight the scenario where a referendum was held in 2015 but observers were absent to assess the credibility of the process. However, observers will be present at the elections in 2017 to assess the elections and they will have to address the issue of incumbency.

Mr. Martin Kasirye (Commonwealth Secretariat) in his presentation focused on the role of international observers in addressing the issue of entrenched incumbency. He provided an overview of legal provisions for term limits in Commonwealth states. He discussed in further details the elements of incumbency that international observer can and should report on. Specifically, observers should assess the following: constitutional safeguard (term limits); neutrality of state institutions, use of state resources, campaign period, media coverage and the overall integrity of the elections. Within each element, observers should highlight, for example, whether state/party resources are separate, the media is free to operate and has access to necessary information, or whether EMBs are and are viewed as impartial, competent, and accountable. In his conclusion, Mr. Kasirye identified the need for international observers to develop appropriate methodology to assess whether the playing fields for political contestation is levelled and can be considered genuine and competitive. On the way forward, he called on international observers to highlight examples of abuse of incumbency and issue appropriate recommendations whenever there is an opportunity.

Mr. Emanuele Giaufret (European External Action Service (EEAS)) in his presentation focused on the role of political parties in addressing the issue of entrenched incumbency and the nature of support that international observers can provide. He noted that the main impact of entrenched incumbency is an unlevelled playing field which impacts negatively the outcome of the electoral process. He noted that the prelude to such an unlevelled playing field includes an erosion of legitimacy of institutions, low turnout, gerrymandering and overall disenchantment with democracy – these are all issues difficult to monitor on Election Day itself. He cited four key issues around political parties that, can either help solve or further deepen the issue, depending on how they are addressed,:

1. The need for institutionally strong political parties, and their capacity to adopt democratic norms within political parties;

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2. The need for parties to develop a stronger democratic culture;
3. The role of political parties in rule-making;
4. The role of political parties in the implementation of the rules of the game.

Ultimately, political parties need to engage in the rules of the game and the observers need to monitor and issue recommendations throughout the entire election cycle, often times far in advance of election day. Currently, international interest in such extensive long term monitoring has not been realised. He concluded his presentation by inviting DOP endorsers to develop methodology for long term assessment that will take into account the issues raised.

Discussion Session:

Participants shared the experience of their organisations with reporting on the issue of incumbency. Participants also highlighted the different motives for incumbents to want to retain power. The fear of prosecution by the International Criminal Court as well as a desire to retain the influence and tangible resources that come with executive power were cited as motives for incumbents to maintain power. Furthermore, it was noted that there is no culture of peacefully handing over power. It is therefore important to create a suitable environment for former heads of state who are at risk of poverty, prison or exile.

Participants also noted that apart from the trends identified by the first presenter, the imposition of age limits in certain contexts is one of the means employed by incumbents to retain power. It was also noted that there is no global consensus on the issue of age limits. Examples were drawn from countries like Nigeria and Uganda where age limit laws were used as a tactic for incumbents to both retain power and block others from reaching the executive leadership. This has garnered a pushback in Uganda, while in Nigeria, civil society has sponsored the '*Not Too Young To Run*' bill.

The question of whether international observers should be deployed to elections where an entrenched incumbent is a contestant was raised. Some participants were of the opinion that such deployment sends the wrong message as it could be viewed as legitimising or lending credibility to a tainted process. It was noted that different international groups may have different reasons for having a presence on the ground within such contexts. For example in the case of Burundi, the African Union was not present but the EAC was present as the elections were considered crucial. It was highlighted that the decision to deploy observers depends on the mandate of the different institutions, for instance at the Commonwealth, this decision rests with the Secretary General, and historically, the Commonwealth has not observed elections contested in contexts considered as uncompetitive. For instance, the Commonwealth and some other international organisations, did not deploy EOMs to Bangladesh when the opposition party boycotted shortly before Election Day. The AU clarified that article 23 of the African charter on Democracy Elections and Governance served as the basis of the AU's decision to deploy EOMs in its member states.

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The EU clarified that when it deploys a mission, there is a specific role carved out for coordination with other missions to ensure that their different roles and considerations are taken into account. The example of Sri Lanka's transformation from 2013 to 2015 was used to highlight the momentous change a country could make in such a short time.

Another question raised during the discussion was whether certain leaders' claims that a third term is necessary given the weakness of state institutions or the positive performance of the current administration are credible reasons to remain in power. This brought the discussion back to the need for observers to interrogate questions on whether or not there is equal space for competition and analysing the political context through the lens of universal standards. Participants also cautioned that noting the complexity of each political context, international observer groups should address the issue of entrenched incumbency without entangling themselves in the country's politics. To highlight the importance of political will, an example was drawn from the South African context, where it was noted that Nelson Mandela took a decision to limit himself to one term. However he would have likely been re-elected should he have chosen to run for another term based on his performance in office and his individual achievements.

The discussion ended with an emphasis on the need to ascertain that there is an informed public, freedom of choice without reprisal, and genuine opposition when determining the will of the citizenry. The presence of these factors indicate that there is an opportunity to observe. Thus the focus should be on the political context of the elections and not specifically on the issue of term limits.

SESSION 2: SUPPORT TO CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS WORKING IN CLOSED SOCIETIES

Moderator: **Benjamin Mindes, National Democratic Institute (NDI)** The moderator in his introductory remarks noted that the rise of authoritarian regimes in countries such as Cambodia and Azerbaijan has restricted the political space in such countries. He noted the important role of citizen observers in these countries and the need for the community of DOP endorsers who are acknowledged as credible observers to develop ways to better support citizen observers in such contexts.

Ms. Marie-Danielle Luyoyo Pwenika (Episcopal Commission Justice and Peace (CEJP)), in her presentation talked about the challenges faced by citizen observer groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). She identified financial and logistical challenges (bad road conditions in a geographically large country, poor communication networks) as the most critical issues that have negatively impacted on citizen election observation. Over time, election observation had become challenging and costly in the country. She also identified insecurity as a challenge to citizen observers. Specifically, on the inclusion of women in observation initiatives, she mentioned that women in rural areas are sometimes discouraged from joining such initiatives as they have to seek their husband's permission. There is also the challenge of the negative public perception

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of citizen observation. Some citizen observers experienced attacks from political parties and citizens who do not understand the role of observers.

Mr. Steve Duwa (Malawi Electoral Support Network (MESN) and Global Network of Domestic Monitors (GNDEM) introduced the topic by stating that citizen observation is a human rights issue. The negative labelling of citizen observation that has led to physical harassment, violence and intimidation towards citizen observers is a major challenge. Women are not spared and have been affected by such intimidation, and violence. On how international observers can support domestic observers working in closed political spaces, he identified the need for international EOMs and citizen observers groups to coordinate their work. There is a need for information sharing; which can be done by developing communication platforms. He also encouraged international observers to make a more deliberate effort to engage with citizen observers. Besides the challenges associated with the political context, he also noted that the quality of reports produced by citizen observers is also a challenge. This challenge is indicative of the need for capacity building through technical support which can be provided by international groups.

Mr. David Carroll, (The Carter Center (TCC), stated that building ties between different communities of citizen observers and international EOMs helps to promote accountability. In 2003, TCC started the process that led to the DoP with other organisations. Since 2005, the different groups have tried to use an approach of election observation based on international obligations. DOP endorsers have strived to build ties and bolster information sharing between International EOMs and citizen observer groups, and develop new methodologies. He also mentioned the Human Rights and Election Standards workshops that were launched by TCC in 2015. Some of the recommendations that were discussed during the workshops include: the insertion of a summary of Human Rights issues in EOM reports, which could be submitted to UN treaty bodies and included in UN country profiles for the attention of special rapporteurs prior to country visits; as well as the use of references to Human Rights treaty bodies in observation reports. The country-level implementation of such initiatives implies that local CSOs and international organisations can work side by side international organisations.

Discussion session:

Participants asked about how closing spaces affect women and their right to participate as candidates and voters, and what strategies can be developed to overcome those barriers. It was noted that, some husbands do not allow their spouses to participate in citizen observation in rural areas because of security challenges. There are also cultural barriers to the participation of women in politics, as there is a collective perception that women should stand in politics and talk to men. The case of Malawi was cited where programmes have been implemented to support women's political participation as candidates and voters. There has also been emphasis on the education of women to encourage them to stand as candidates and to address the cultural barriers

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created by perceptions. It was also mentioned that MESN in the development of its advocacy strategy, ensured that the advocacy campaign reached both men and women to address cultural barriers. The network also implemented with political parties support programmes to promote women's political participation.

Participants also asked for recommendations on how CSOs and IEOMs can work together to strengthen the follow up of recommendations and the monitoring of electoral reforms. There were also questions on how IEOMs can help in the professionalization of citizen observation. In response to this question, the role of the GNDEM and how it could facilitate the process of electoral reforms, and monitor the implementation of IEOM recommendations across different contexts was highlighted. It was further noted in the discussion that the release of citizen observer reports is not usually as timely as IEOM reports. In this regard, IEOMs can provide technical assistance to citizen observers to be more professional in their reporting. With regard to follow up initiatives, the need to engage with CSOs was emphasised as they are considered a valuable resource in terms of providing information. IEOMs should therefore involve them in follow-up missions, more precisely in the monitoring of the implementation of recommendations. Participants shared their experience in follow-up. There were examples of in-country workshops at which CSOs and IEOMs met to discuss recommendations and strategies for reform. Other examples included technical support through comparative research. Some participants expressed dissenting views noting while IEOMs and citizen observers conduct complementary activities, their methodology is different. International observers may not be the best experts to build capacity of citizen observers, rather the work of international observers should be more on information sharing. It is important to acknowledge that the methodologies are complementary but distinct. The importance of coordinating the work of international EOMs in their engagement with citizen observers to avoid redundancy was also stressed.

SESSION 3: DISABILITY AND OTHER INCLUSIVITY ISSUES

Moderator: **Mr. Tim Bittiger** (*Democracy Reporting International (DRI)*),

Panellists in this session presented the work that their organisations in promoting issues of inclusivity in electoral processes and the challenges faced by person with disabilities during the electoral process.

Mr. Michael Svetlik (*International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)*) presented the Foundation's work on gender and disability in the electoral process. Specifically, IFES has worked in 60 countries to improve disability rights and access to electoral processes for persons with disabilities. Internally, IFES has also worked on issues of inclusivity including in hiring practices, the creation of a reasonable accommodation policy, as well as space accessibility. IFES mainstreams disability issues across all its programmes and interventions including developing

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disability rights indicators to measure impact in that area. In external programming, IFES conducts trainings for its partners including EMBs, media, and other organisations to increase their awareness on disability rights and improve access to the electoral process. Media trainings focus on how to report and use the right language when reporting on issues and a rights-based approach to reporting on participation. Disabled person's organisations (DPOs) were trained on how to conduct proper audits, this exercise was developed into a report that could be used for advocacy on good practices. The presenter noted that most EMBs focus specifically on issues of access rather than participation in the entire electoral process. IFES will be producing a white paper in 2017 on issues of access to the electoral process for persons with disabilities.

Mr. Richard Lappin (OSCE/ODIHR), stated that although the OSCE/ODIHR has included person with disabilities in their work for a while, they do recognise that these issues warrant an increased focus. In addition, the institution intends to publish a handbook on persons with disabilities and access to the electoral process. He noted, that although steps were being taken, there are still gaps to address on issues of access for persons with disabilities. In the OSCE region, only 4 of 57 states have ratified or signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). There are however, a number of OSCE instruments that address access for underrepresented groups. Mr. Lappin noted that past OSCE/ODIHR recommendations have focused primarily on access to polling stations and the organisation is yet to develop a dedicated handbook or create a dedicated report section for persons with disabilities. On the issue of report, he noted that there are a number of lessons to be learnt from gender mainstreaming which could also be applied to persons with disabilities to ensure that access for persons with disabilities is mainstreamed in every section of election observation reports and also ensure that the lens of intersectionality is applied with other characteristics such as gender.

Mr. Kudakwashe Dube (African Disability Alliance (ADA)), noted that beyond the electoral process, the issue of inclusion of persons with disability should be considered in all aspects of life. He noted that the African Charter of Human and People's rights is a document that supports the right to full political participation of person with disabilities. Mr. Dube also noted that currently, the African Union is working on a protocol focused on the rights of persons with disabilities. He provided examples of challenges encountered by persons with disabilities in the electoral process that election observation organisations should consider. He emphasised the varying range of disabilities and the need to assist persons with a variety of needs, for example, when reference is made to accessible ballots, this could mean tactile ballots, pictorial instructions, easy to read instructions, and even placing ballots on lower tables. Election observers should also assess the issue of inclusion in voter registration, media coverage, campaigning, aggregation of results, security issues, and access to electoral dispute mechanisms. The presenter also highlighted the need for candidates to receive support and increased access to information on disability issues so that these candidates do not reinforce negative stereotypes. Having peer to peer exchanges

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and trainings done by persons with disabilities could greatly increase inclusion and access to all parts of the political process.

Mr. Thomas Garrett (International Republican Institute (IRI)), stated that the Institute's programme focus on persons with disabilities began in 1996 in Albania and Uganda. In Albania, work was being done on access for persons with disabilities, but it was done on a very ad-hoc basis; there was however, more significant work in the lead-up to the 2007 elections. IRI uses a two-track approach by supporting Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) to improve reporting and access for persons with disabilities on the one hand and working with campaigns to include persons with disabilities on the other. This work involves DPOs creating a framework document that raised awareness and could also be used to push for legislations. By 2009, there was some ground gained in Albania, including ensuring the secrecy of the ballot for blind persons. In Uganda, in 2005, IRI worked with a local women's organisation to bring awareness to the challenges faced by women with disabilities. The programme entailed various dialogues and radio programmes, to teach disabled women about the transition process and teach them to advocate for their needs. By 2007 in Uganda, IRI noted that despite the existence of a legal framework with special provisions for persons with disability, their access and inclusion needed to be effectively guaranteed. In response to this need, the Institute increased the scope of its persons with disabilities programmes. Mr. Garrett also mentioned IRI's programme in Somaliland where in 2008, they facilitated an exchange visit of DPOs to Uganda for to learn from the good practices there.

Discussion session:

Participants asked whether organisations should include observations on access to candidacy during the electoral process and how this should be done. It was noted that access can be analysed and would be varied based on candidacy requirements in each country. It is necessary to understand how one becomes an effective candidate; whether persons with disabilities have access to those public spaces and their access to resources for campaigning. Another question raised was at what level persons with disabilities should be involved in the observation process itself. In response, the panel stated that observer organisation need to do an internal needs assessment to understand the types of accommodation that the organisation can provide. The OSCE/ODIHR noted that citizen observation groups that they have worked with have recruited persons with disabilities as observers, who are paired with another observer who provides assistance when necessary.

There was another question on whether there has been a study on the impact of e-voting on access to persons with disabilities. The panel noted that there is limited data currently available on the issue but as voting technology evolves there will most likely be more focus on inclusivity including audio and tactile ballots. There was also discussion on the best way to recruit observers with disabilities. Panellists noted that it depends on communication and that practitioners should

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reach out to organisations representing persons with disabilities and ensure that the information is accessible. Furthermore, they should be aware of the types of questions they can ask regarding reasonable accommodation.

Tim Bittiger concluded the session with a summary of key points. Specifically that the disability community is a varied population with many needs and it is important for all organisations to make this a first generation issue and mainstream it into their election assessment methodology.

SESSION 4: CONFLICT AND ELECTORAL VIOLENCE

Moderator: Ms. Holly Ruthrauff, (Electoral Observation and Democratic Support (EODS))

Ms. Caroline Hubbard (National Democratic Institute (NDI)) presented NDI's Gender, Women and Democracy (GWD) team's most recent initiative, *Votes Without Violence: Monitoring and Mitigating Violence Against Women in Elections (VAW-E)*. Building upon women's political participation and citizen observation work, the GWD team recognised the dearth of credible information around violence against women in elections. With case studies from Nigeria, Burma, Guatemala, Cote d'Ivoire, and Tanzania, Ms. Hubbard described how citizen observers are uniquely positioned to harbour data throughout the election cycle on the types of violence encountered by female voters, candidates, citizens, activists, election observers, or election officials. Violence Against Women in Elections is defined by the GWD team as any act of gender based on election violence directed at women because of their desire to seek political office, participate in political activities or to vote. Drawing upon the UN definition of violence against women, this violence can manifest itself as physical, verbal, sexual, economic or psychological harassment. The VAW-E toolkit helps groups understand VAW-E and the barriers in each phase of the electoral cycle. While the materials, case studies, and best practices are mainly aimed at citizen observers, there are elements that can be adapted and integrated for International EOMs. For example, how to gather baseline data ahead of the mission and how best to identify key stakeholders (shelters for victims of domestic violence, NGOs) to consult ahead of and during the mission. International observers are often well placed to bring attention to early warning signs of violence at a much higher profile than citizen observers. The VAW-E website is an ongoing live site that will house VAW-E data, comparing variables between countries and providing accessible information to all users.

Discussion Session:

The moderator opened the discussion session by noting the need to integrate VAW-E into international observer training and recognising the need to conduct thorough background contextual research before the mission arrives in-country. As a start, international EOMs could begin by linking with local civil society organisations already working to monitor and mitigate VAW-E issues.

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The issue of violence against women is highly contextual and it was noted by Sabra Bono (Gender Concerns International) that in the MENA region it is especially challenging to differentiate violence and harassment, and that violence is the defining factor for whether or not women participate in the political process. More positively, Myanmar was cited as an example where election administrators are largely women, though regrettably not in leadership roles. She also stressed the importance and necessity for women's groups to be involved in conversations lobbying parliamentarians and election administrators about the real problems faced in the electoral process.

Another issue which came out in the discussion was that deeply rooted culture, has drawn certain lines that women are not intended to cross, even if doing so means increased independence to freely take part in the political process. The presenter acknowledged this line of thinking and noted that gender norms are completely defined by the socio-cultural norms and DOP endorsers have a responsibility to help address this issue through their assessments and recommendations.

There was a question on whether VAW-E should be assessed separately or within the broader topic of women's political participation. The presenter responded that the subject should not be examined as a stand-alone issue but rather, it should be integrated into broader election observation work. She also noted that barriers against women are compounded when they are also disabled or members of ethnic minority groups, thus making a cross-cutting issue.

To buttress the point that women participating in the electoral process even as observers face a unique set of challenges, Marie-Danielle Luyoyo Pwenika (CEJP) provided a personal example from when she was deployed alone on an observation mission to Guinea-Conakry and she faced a distinct set of challenges that were not experienced by her male colleagues. However, she admitted that despite these challenges, she performed better than her male colleagues.

Participants shared their institutional methodology on reporting on gender issues in IEOM reports. The EU reiterated that women's political participation is a priority area in its work and it is setting up a programme focused on political parties and the role of women. To contribute to awareness on gender issues, EUEOM reports always have a section on women and the recommendations from these reports could contribute to the research on VAW-E. The presenter noted that some of the recommendations from IEOMs have been helpful in terms of creating more space for women to engage. For example, developing guidelines for EMB workers on sexual conduct, complaints/mechanisms within parties to protect and help women report incidents - with punishments, etc. It was also mentioned that violence against women in politics/elections is prohibited by law in countries like Bolivia, after advocacy efforts. The OAS also pointed out that gender issues and violence are mainstreamed into all its reports and recommendations.

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Participants commended the GWD team for its work and reiterated that although the VAW-E manual is designed as a citizen observer guide, it should not just be used for citizens but international observers as well. Participants also committed to take at the toolkit and consider ways to mainstream VAW-E in their election assessment efforts.

Mr. Craig Jenness (United Nations Electoral Assistance Division (UNEAD)) provided a brief explanation of the potential for election violence in a context where there are disputed election results. He noted that the primary responsibility for peaceful elections is with political leaders (not with electoral management bodies) as violence is often committed in the name of candidates. The day immediately following the elections, it is interesting to watch whether one candidate publicly points to electoral fraud while the other calls for patience in the aggregation of results. This often times points to the loser/winner. In such a scenario there are typically the following actual scenarios occurring: 1) the election was actually stolen, 2) it was not stolen but parties think it was, 3) the losing candidate knows he/she lost but is unwilling to accept the outcome, or 4) the losing candidate seizes the opportunity to gain bargaining power for political negotiations in the post-election period. In terms of international election observers, Mr. Jenness urged that honest assessments are both critical and necessary. He noted that the inability of the international community to come up with common positions has exacerbated the risks of violence. He posed the question, whether a more unified stance from international observers is helpful or not? He admitted that there are built-in-biases depending on each mission. For example, because of the international community's concerns about incumbency, do we have a different point of view about opposition or ruling party?

Discussion Session:

In response to the issues raised by the presenter, the use of joint statements in problematic elections was cited by participants. The question of having a unified position was viewed as a positive, particularly when the focus is on levels of transparency (e.g. in Gabon). In response to the presenter's point about candidates and parties having a primary responsibility to control their supporters, it was noted that parties also try to bring in the internationals in their contestation. IEOM leaderships need to coordinate their efforts to manage highly contested elections in the pre-election period.

An example was provide of the recent TCC/OAS/Creative collaboration using a social media data mining tool to monitor election violence ahead of the elections in Guyana. Such analysis of social media can feed data into existing international observation efforts (as was the case in Guyana with TCC and OAS), and can also be tailored to be used by other civil society organisations.

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While agreeing with the presenter that the hallmark of a mature democracy is the acceptance of results by a losing candidate, it was also emphasised that the winner has a higher responsibility in being gracious in their victory, especially in a situation such as Zanzibar in the 2015 elections.

SESSION 5: MONEY IN POLITICS AND ABUSE OF STATE RESOURCES

Moderator: ***Ms. Ilona Tip, (EISA)***

Mr. Richard Lappin (OSCE/ODIHR) noted that in their institutional analysis on the subject of party and campaign finance, some of the key conclusions reached include: that there is a failure to provide a level playing field and that the abuse of state resources favoured incumbents. As at 2015, OSCE/ODIHR made 12 recommendations on the abuse of state resources in its EOM reports. Several generations of both incumbents and civil servants consider the abuse of state resources to be a normal part of the electoral process. The OSCE looks specifically at institutional, financial, and enforcement abuses. There are substantive challenges in balancing campaign freedoms with electoral integrity; an issue which is systemic, extending often beyond elections. Practical challenges include political sensitivities and verifying abuse as cases of abuse of state resources are easy to allege but very difficult to approve. As recommendation to observers, Mr. Lappin recommended that they analyse the subject based on standards. He concluded by emphasising the real value of sharing experience, resources, and cultivating connections between vulnerable groups. This can increase advocacy efforts and forward movement.

Mr. Devin O'Shaughnessy, (Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD)), stated that abuse of state resources was important topic to his organisation. He mentioned the increasing pressure to win elections and to retain political power. The cost of politics has become a significant issue globally even though the cost of politics in the UK is relatively reasonable compared to other places. The WFD's research was informed by the need to know how the cost of politics influences aspirants from the point when they join a party through the sitting costs and the re-election. He argued that the costs that candidates and members accumulate create obligations during their time in office. The Foundation identified a significant range of the costs associated with getting on the ballot with very limited transparency. There are instances in which candidates do not get enough money from individual donors or the states, they compelled to supplement their funds in whatever ways they can. The consequences of these high costs could be vote buying, exclusion and underrepresentation. The growing cost of politics leads to a growing disconnect between representatives, citizens, the government, and leads to policies that advantage the elite and special interests; with members of parliament becoming more focused on fundraising instead of their primary assignment of law making.

Brenda Santamaria (OAS), reiterated the priority given to the issue of money in politics at the OAS. She cited Article 5 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter's, which speaks specifically to

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campaign finance. In addition, the OAS has published a methodology which provides a framework for the observation of finance systems during elections. The OAS also observes campaign finance with a gender lens. Through its gender and political finance specialists, it was observed that financing is one of the barriers that women confront, and there is a need for a more comprehensive study on the connections between gender and political financing. She identified some factors that could level the playing field include: direct and indirect public financing, increased access to the media, transparency and accountability. Other considerations include private contribution limits to minimize the gap between candidates, in addition to more effective control systems, and increased financing directed towards the empowerment of women. She also cited cases that indicated advances in the promotion of women's participation. Brazil now has 10% of media time to promote women political participation, with plans to increase to 20% in 2016-2018 period. The presenter also mentioned Mexico as another good case study because in 2015, it offered 3% of public funding for all political parties. Although Latin America has made some progress, implementation remains an issue. The presentation was concluded with a call for additional studies and analysis to better understand the relationship between women, money, and politics.

Discussion session:

During the discussion, participants spoke about equal access to funds and how social media can impact elections and campaign funding. Major recommendations included reducing the cost of elections and for running for office in general, including by providing for public financing, easing access to the media and ensuring more transparency and accountability, encouraging more robust legal frameworks and audits, and reducing the amount of bad money flowing into the political system.

CLOSING SESSION

In his closing remarks, Denis Kadima, the Executive Director of EISA, thanked everyone for attending the 11th DoP meeting. He expressed his gratitude to the participants for their contribution to discussions, which helped understand complex issues. He expressed his expectations that organisations that have not endorsed the DoP will endorse it after the meeting. Mr. Kadima then announced that the 12th DOP implementation meeting will be hosted by the OAS and handed the floor to Ms Brenda Santamaria.

Ms Brenda Santamaria expressed the OAS's gratitude for having been chosen to host the next DoP implementation meeting in Washington DC, USA. She indicated that this will be 10 years after the organisation first hosted the meeting. Ms Santamaria asked for support, comments and advice to guide the next host-organisation in its preparations for the 12th implementation meeting.

Mr Kadima declared the 11th DOP meeting closed.