AFRICAN UNION

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REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS IN AFRICA, JANUARY TO JUNE 2021

"EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE, PEACE DIVIDENDS"

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I.   **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1.   This bi-annual report on elections in Africa reviews the elections which took place in eleven (11) African Union (AU) Member States between January and June 2021. It also includes highlights of key trends in governance; emerging patterns in the conduct of elections during the reporting period; key interventions undertaken by the African Union Commission (AUC) in providing electoral support to Member States; an outlook of elections scheduled to take place between July and December 2021; and concludes with policy recommendations aimed at enhancing AU's concerted efforts expected to promote credible and peaceful elections in Africa.

2.   The AU Commission has identified **four critical issues** on governance trends with regard to the culture of democratic election in Africa. **First** is the increasing appeal for democratic dividends around the continent as African citizens seek benefits for their participation in democratic processes. The **second** is about the "choiceless" nature of electoral politics in some cases, on the continent, characterised by the narrowing of political space, which minimizes alternative choices for citizens as exemplified in situations where elections have taken place amidst boycotts by main opposition parties. Linked to the second is a **third** point relating to voter apathy with notable downward trend of voter participation as citizens reckon the essence of their participation in electoral processes which may not generate desired collective benefits of improving their welfare. And **finally**, there is the persistent challenge of the concentration of power at the centre which highlights the need to pay attention to strengthening local governance institutions and processes, including the conduct of democratic local elections.

3.   The following Member States conducted various types of elections (general, presidential or parliamentary) between January to June 2021: Uganda, Niger, Central African Republic, Cape Verde, Republic of Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Chad, Benin, Algeria and Ethiopia.

4.   For the second half of the year, elections are expected to be conducted in seven (7) countries: Sao Tome and Principe, Zambia, Morocco, Somalia, Cape Verde, The Gambia and Libya.

5.   Compared to the previous report of 2020, there are some general trends which percolate during the period under review including:

(a)   *Election Management*: Amidst the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Election Management Bodies (EMBs) showed commendable resilience and adaptability in rising up to the challenge. They were prompt to adjust voter registration and campaign schedules, establish new campaign regulations, and institute additional safety protocols to mitigate the transmission of COVID-19 during voting.

(b) ***Electoral Financing***: Increasingly, Member States are leading the financing of the entire or major aspects of their electoral processes. In 2020, elections in five countries were largely financed by the respective Member States with little or no external funding. Remarkably, the same trend is recorded in the period under review, where elections in four Member States were primarily financed by national funds.

(c) ***Respect of election calendars***: All Member States continue to hold periodic, predictable and timely elections in line with the <u>African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance</u> and their national constitutions. Ethiopia postponed elections in 2020 and again rescheduled this year as a result of uncertainties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Apart from this, during the period under consideration, no other African country postponed national elections as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic or other political reasons.

(d) **Citizen participation and voter turnout**: On average, data on the total voter turnout of all the countries will appear high, comparative data of a country's recent election with previous one will show a reduction in voter turnout across Member states, perhaps an indication of voter apathy and lack of trust in political parties.

(e) **Participation of women and youth**: The participation of women as polling staff, party agents and voters remain impressive in all Member States. However, the participation of women and youth as candidates remains low and timid. Of the 11 countries under review, only Uganda, Chad and Sao Tome and Principe had female presidential candidates. For the legislative elections, the rate of women and youth participation remains low.

(f) **Political Climate of Elections and Electoral Security:** Most elections under review took place in a climate of low to medium scale political tension and violence in the pre-electoral and/or immediate post-electoral period. For most countries under review, the pre-election period witnessed varying degrees of political tension and violence. While this stifled electoral participation to some extent, a largely peaceful voting climate prevailed on Election Day with few exceptions. This attests to a growing culture of tolerance of diversity.

(g) **Opposition Boycott and Contested Outcomes**: In 2020, opposition parties boycotted elections in three Member States and called for varying degrees of boycott and civil disobedience. This continued during the first half of 2021 with calls for boycott and attendant degree of civil disobedience and violent protests. These constitute a menace to electoral participation, inclusivity, integrity and even the legitimacy of the outcomes. The outcome of elections were contested in four Member States in 2020 and two member states so far in 2021.

6.   The AUC provided support to elections during the period under review by deploying short-term election observation and technical missions to all countries where elections were held except for <u>Cape Verde and Algeria</u>. In Ethiopia, due to the peculiar nature of the context within which the elections were held, the AUC deployed a long-term election observation mission in addition to short-term African Union Election Observation Missions (AUEOMs). The AUEOMs contributed to building confidence in the electoral processes on the continent by fostering electoral integrity.

7.   The Political Affairs Peace and Security (PAPS) Department has undertaken some measures based on a review carried out in April 2021 to ensure that the conduct of election observation is more effective and efficient. Key among the measures include producing final comprehensive reports of the AUEOMs within one month after the end of every mission, in order to ensure that they remain relevant and fresh to Member States. Other measures include; gender parity among AUEOs, issuance of certificate of participation to observers, increased youth participation, more balanced regional representation and greater interface with relevant RECs in the region.

8.   The report contains a number of recommendations, among others, the need to:

(a)   Implore all AU Member States to sign, ratify, domesticate and/or implement the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG);

(b)   Encourage Member States to explore concerted efforts to promote inclusive nomination processes of candidates where electorates have a chance to decide who represents them especially at municipal, provincial or regional levels, in a bid to prevent voter apathy over perceptions of choice-less democracy;

(c)   Encourage Member States to promote the inclusivity of women and youth participation, through reduced cost for candidacy, as well as enforcement of legally prescribed quota, including through party-level nominations;

(d)   Advocate to the Permanent Representative Committee (PRC) for the allocation of adequate resources to the AUC in support of electoral processes on the continent;

(e)   Fast-track the adoption of the Guidelines for the Conduct of Elections during COVID-19 and Public Health Emergencies;

(f)   Consider the institutionalization of a platform for EMBs to share experiences, exchange knowledge and provide updates on actions undertaken to safely organize elections within the context of COVID-19;

(g)   Review the electoral observation methodology to ascertain types of deployments to Member States in view of political context; and

(h)   Enhance the inclusion of relevant directorates/departments of AUC as well as women and youth in the promotion of democratic elections.

9.   In conclusion, worthy of commendation from all the elections held is the resilience and strategic measures adopted by Member States, EMBs, political actors, health practitioners as well as the general population with reference to adherence to recommended health protocols and safety guidelines in conducting and participating in elections amid the situation occasioned by COVID-19 especially in conflict and post-conflict situations.

10.   Despite the aforementioned strides, several factors continue to undermine the credibility and peaceful conduct of elections, developments that may impede democratic consolidation, as well as destabilize peace, security and stability, if not adequately addressed.

II.   **INTRODUCTION**

11.   Among the key objectives of the AU as defined by the Constitutive Act of the Union are to promote democratic principles and institutions, popular participation and good governance. In line with this objective, the conduct of peaceful, democratic and credible elections is one of the most expressive means of popular participation in which the authority of government is based on the will of the people in consonance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

12.   The AU has made various commitments in promoting the conduct of democratic elections in its Member States including: the 2002 AU/OAU Declaration on Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa; the 2002 AU Guidelines for Elections Observation and Monitoring Missions; and the 2007 African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance which came into force in 2012. These normative instruments define the benchmarks of elections conducted in Member States in conformity with national, regional and international standards. The conduct of democratic elections are central to peace, security and political stability on the continent and resonates with Agenda 2063, in particular, Aspirations 3 and 4 which envisage an 'Africa of good governance, democracy, and respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law', as well as 'a peaceful and secure Africa' respectively.

13.   In ensuring that Member States remain fully committed to the norms and standards of democratic elections, the AUC provides support to countries through deployment of the AUEOMs and Technical Assistance (TA). This support is electoral-cycle-based and comprises pre-electoral, electoral and post-electoral phases which are inter-linked with conflict prevention, mediation and long-term governance strengthening.

14.   Article 7 of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC), mandates the Council to conduct follow-up engagements to ascertain the progress recorded towards the promotion of democratic practices and good governance. In this regard, this bi-annual report on elections in Africa reviews the elections which took place on the continent between January and June 2021.

15.   **During this period, elections were held in the Republic of Uganda, Republic of Niger, Republic of Cote d'Ivoire, Republic of Congo, Republic of Djibouti, Republic of Benin, Republic of Chad, Republic of Cape Verde, People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.**

16.   The report also highlights key trends in governance; emerging trends on the conduct of elections during the reporting period; key interventions undertaken by the AUC in providing electoral support to Member States; an outlook of elections scheduled to take place between July and December 2021; and concludes with policy recommendations aimed at enhancing AU's concerted efforts to promote credible and peaceful elections in Africa. Intrinsic

III.   <u>**OVERVIEW OF GOVERNANCE TRENDS IN AFRICA**</u>

17.   The state of democratic governance on the continent of Africa continues to present a chequered picture which is characterized by regression, stagnation or retrogression. This partly reflects the global macro-trends which have shown that the quality of democracy is on the decline for the past decade.[1] Due to the inextricable linkages between governance, peace and security, the state of democratic governance on the continent also mirrors the challenges related to conflicts on the continent. This is adeptly demonstrated by the increased number of countries undergoing political transitions, some of which were preceded by unconstitutional change of governments.

18.   A number of key trends are worth highlighting which are germane to the conduct of elections on the continent of Africa. **Firstly**, there has been an increasing appeal for democratic dividends around the continent as African citizens seek benefits for their participation in democratic processes including elections. The clamor for socio-economic development has increased as many countries are increasingly experiencing high rate of unemployment, particularly due to the novel Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

19.   **Secondly**, there is a growing trend of "choiceless" electoral participation as the substance of making a genuine choice of electing leaders by the citizens is eroding. To some extent, this is attributed to the narrowing of political space, which minimizes alternative choices for citizens as exemplified in cases where elections have taken place amidst boycotts by main opposition parties.

20.   **Thirdly** and inextricably linked with the above problem of "choiceless" electoral participation is the trend of voter apathy. There has been a recent general downward trend of voter participation, as citizens reckon that the essence of their participation in electoral

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[1] International IDEA (2019) The Global State of Democracy Report 2019. https://www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/global-state-of-democracy-2019?lang=en accessed on 5 August 2021; Freedom House (2019). Freedom in the World 2019: Democracy in Retreat. https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2019/democracy-retreat accessed on 5 August 2021.

processes, may not necessarily generate the desired collective benefits of improving their welfare.

21.   **Fourthly**, the persistent challenge of concentrating power in the centre at the detriment of bringing it closer to the people as the beneficiaries of democratic governance has not borne fruits in a variety of contexts. While much of the focus has been on the conduct of presidential and parliamentary elections, the persistent challenge of concentrating power at the centre, highlights the need to pay attention to strengthening local governance institutions and processes.

22.   It however, should be noted that the trends cited above, have been further convoluted by the impact of the persisting COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has not only impacted on the quality of elections but also affected all the other facets of life. Consequently, all the elections conducted during the period under review were held under the challenging public health risks posed by the pandemic, as countries sought to respect their constitutional obligations of electing new leaders to public offices.

IV.   REVIEW OF ELECTIONS: JANUARY – JUNE 2021

23.   This section covers a review of elections held in **Uganda, Niger, Central African Republic, Cape Verde, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Chad, Benin, Algeria and Ethiopia.**

(a)   The Republic of Uganda

24.   The Republic of Uganda held general elections on **14 January 2021**. The presidential election had eleven (11)[2] candidates, including the incumbent Yoweri Museveni Tibuhaburwa Kaguta of the National Resistance Movement (NRM) and Kyagulanyi Ssentamu Robert (Bobi Wine) of National Unity Platform (NUP) who were the top two candidates. According to the final results announced by Electoral Commission on 28 January 2021, President Yoweri Museveni of the NRM secured 58.38% of the votes and was declared winner, while the main opposition leader Kyagulanyi Ssentamu Robert of NUP came second with 35% votes.[3] In the parliamentary elections, the ruling NRM also won majority of the 336 (43 more seats than it obtained in the previous elections) of the 353 constituency representatives of the[4] 553[5] seats in

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[2] Other candidates were: John Katumba, (Independent), Willy Mayambala, (Independent), Fred Mwesigye, (Independent), Henry Tumukunde, (Independent), Joseph Kabuleta, (Independent), Nancy Kalembe (Independent), Patrick Oboi Amuriat (Forum for Democratic Change), Mugisha Muntu (Alliance for National Transformation), and Norbert Mao (Democratic Party).
[3] https://www.ec.or.ug/sites/default/files/press/Press%20Publishing%20of%20Final%20Results%20of%20 Presidential%20Elections%202021_0.pdf. Accessed 4 August 2021.
[4] https://www.ec.or.ug/ecresults/2021/MPS_RESULTS_2021.pdf. Accessed 4 August 2021.
[5] The 11th Parliament of Uganda is made up of Constituency Representatives – 353, District Woman Representatives – 146, Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces Representatives (10), Representatives of the Youth (5), Representatives of Persons with Disabilities (5), Representatives of Workers (5), Representatives of the Elderly (5) and Ex Officio Members (27).

the Parliament. This was followed by NUP with 57 seats (it was the first time the party participated in the parliamentary elections). The Forum of Democratic Change also got 32 seats (4 seats less, than in previous elections). It is significant to note that independent candidates won more seats (74) than the main opposition party in Parliament.

25.   Final data issued by the Electoral Commission showed that 10,744,319 representing 59.35% of registered voters (18,103,603) took part in the elections compared to 61% of 15,277,198 registered voters in 2016. This shows that voter turnout was down by approximately 2% which could be attributed to the fact that the 2021 elections were held amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.

26.   The AU experts deployed during the elections took note of the fact that the voting process on Election Day was generally peaceful in most of the polling stations visited. It noted in particular, high turnout among young voters in spite of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The stringent COVID-19 protocols which were put in place to ensure public health safety on Election Day was also commendable.

27.   Some of the issues raised by observers during the electoral processes include reported cases of violence during campaigns, arbitrary arrests, detentions and restriction of movement of opposition candidates and supporters, and the shutting down of the internet and social media on the eve of Election Day, thus limiting citizens' access to information about the electoral process. There was also some level of tension and violence following the declaration of results. To address the issues raised above, the AU expert mission recommended, among others; the need for stakeholders to undertake dialogue to foster national cohesion; for the government to conduct investigation of reported incidents of violence during the pre-electoral phase, hold those responsible accountable; and for all stakeholders, including the Electoral Commission, to strengthen engagement with the youth in political and electoral processes.
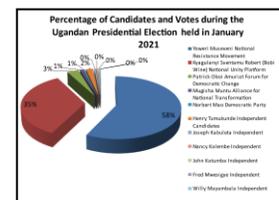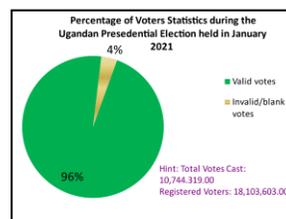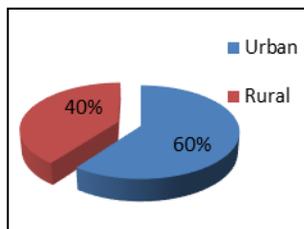
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(b)   The Republic of Niger

28.   During the last briefing to the Peace and Security Council on Elections in Africa, it was reported that presidential and parliamentary elections were held in Niger on 27 December 2020. In view of the fact that none of the candidate in the presidential elections gained the

See: https://www.parliament.go.ug/page/composition-parliament. Accessed 9 August 2021.

required absolute majority, a runoff was held on 21 February 2021 between the two leading candidates: Mohamed Bazoum of the ruling Nigerien Party for Democracy and Socialism who obtained 39.33% votes and Mahamane Ousmane of the Democratic and Republican Renewal who received 16.99% of votes.[6]

29.   According to the results released by the Constitutional Court on 21 March 2021, Mohamed Bazoum won the second-round of presidential elections with 55.75% of votes cast while the main opposition candidate Mahamane Ousmane received 44.25 % of votes cast.[7] There was a total of 7,446,556 voters, who registered for the polls, including 85,328 first/new voters. Women and youth represented 54.97% and 65% of the electorates respectively. Voter turnout for the second round was 62.91% compared to 69.68% during the first round.[8] Data released by the Constitutional Court during the 2016 elections showed that voter turnout was 66.75% during the first round and 59.79%. This shows that voter turnout increased in 2021 in respect of both the first and second round of election.

30.   Following the announcement of the final results, parts of Niger experienced violent protests forcing the Government to occasionally shut down the internet. The main opposition candidate and former president of Niger, Mahamane Ousmane, declared himself winner ignoring the official pronouncement by the Constitutional Court. Protests and violence were reportedly followed by an attempted coup barely two days to the inauguration of the president-elect. In spite of this development, Mohamed Bazoum, was sworn in as new president of Niger on 2 April 2021.

31.   It is important to note that the elections represented important steps towards democratic consolidation in Niger. **This is because it was the first time the country has had successful political transition with one democratically elected president handing over to another after the completion of two terms in office**. Given the post-election challenges, the AUEOM recommended, among others, the need for the Nigerien Government and all political stakeholders to create and strengthen a climate of confidence capable of guaranteeing peace and stability.
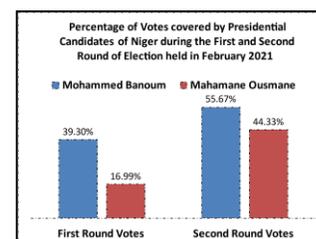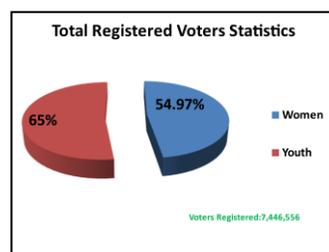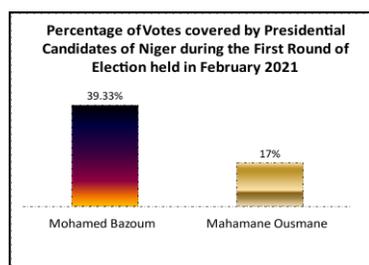
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[6] http://cour-constitutionnelle-niger.org/documents/arrets/matiere_electorale/2021/arret_n_06_21_cc_me.pdf. Accessed 4 August 2021.
[7] http://cour-constitutionnelle-niger.org/documents/arrets/matiere_electorale/2021/arret_n_023_21_cc_me.pdf
[8] Ibid.

(c)   Republic of Cote d'Ivoire

32.   Legislative elections were held in Cote d'Ivoire on 6 March 2021. The elections followed the presidential polls held in October 2020, which were boycotted by the main opposition parties. The Peace and Security Council was briefed on the presidential elections held in the previous report on elections in Africa.

33.   Forty-eight (48) parties and independent candidates took part in the elections. The final results announced by the Independent Electoral Commission indicated that the ruling coalition, Rally of Houphouëtists for Democracy and Peace, won 137 seats (a reduction of 30 seats from the previous elections) of the 255 seats in the National Assembly. This was followed by the Democratic Party of Ivory Coast/African Democratic Rally with 50 seats and in the third place was the Democratic Party of Ivory Coast with 23 seats. It is worth noting, that independent candidates got 26 seats (a reduction of 50) in the National Assembly.[9]

34.   Furthermore, it is important to underscore that the parliamentary elections, compared to the October 2020 presidential elections were peaceful, although turnout was 37.88% of the 7,359,399 registered voters, according to the Independent Electoral Commission. Voter turnout was equally low during the 2016 legislative elections and stood at 34.11%, an indication of voter apathy.

35.   The elections were important for the country's political stability and national reconciliation, as major political parties including the Ivoirian Popular Front (FPI) of the former president Laurent Gbagbo took part. It should be recalled that the FPI had boycotted all previous elections since 2011 when their leader was arrested and sent to The Hague. The overall assessment of the AUEOM is that the elections were well organised and met national and AU principles of democratic elections.

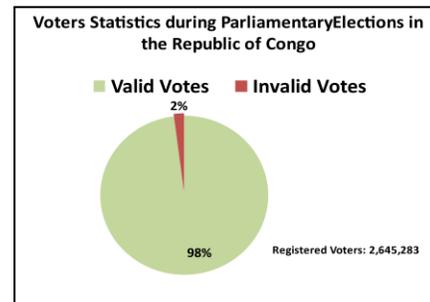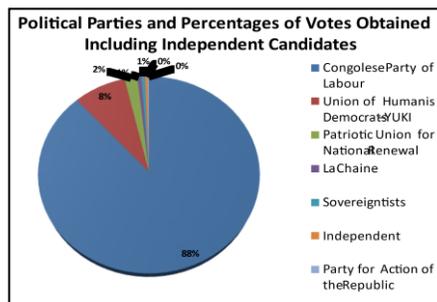

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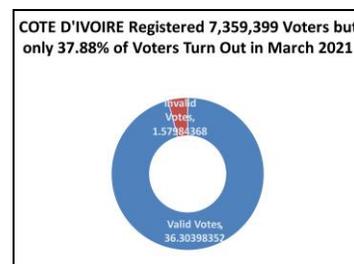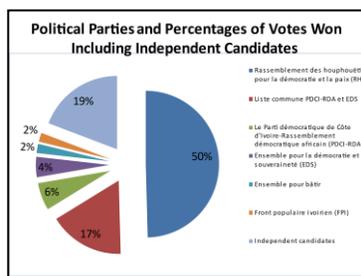
[9] https://www.cei.ci/resultats-recents/. Accessed 5 August 2021.

(d)   Republic of Congo

36.   The Republic of Congo held presidential elections on 21 March 2021. Seven (7) candidates participated in the election with the incumbent, President Denis Sassou Nguesso. The final results announced by the Constitutional Court on 6 April 2021 indicated that incumbent president, Denis Sassou Nguesso was re-elected with 88.4% of the total vote cast with his closest challenger, Guy Brice Parfait Kolélas[10] getting only 7.96 of votes.[11] Voter turnout was 67.17% of the total 2,645,283 registered voters, lower than the 68.92% turnout during the 2016 presidential election.

37.   The AUEOM reported that candidates carried out campaign activities without hindrance, although some political stakeholders complained about unequal allocation of time in public media. The mission also noted the interruption of the Internet connection.

38.   During the election, concrete measures were taken to ensure public health safety and prevention against COVID-19. These include; provision of face mask to voters without masks and Covid – 19 posters to raise awareness in the polling stations. However, enforcing physical distancing proved to be challenging during the voting process. Overall, a calm and peaceful socio-political environment prevailed on Elections Day and the polling operations complied with relevant international, continental and sub-regional benchmarks for the conduct of democratic elections.
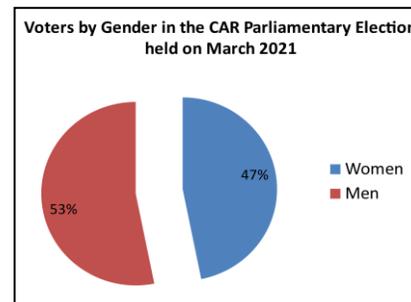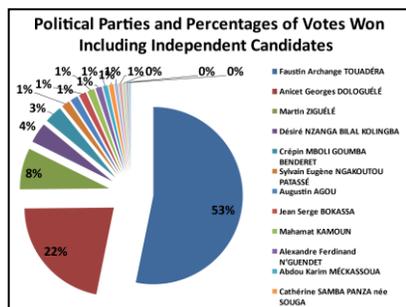

Political Parties and Percentages of Votes Obtained Including Independent Candidates

- Congolese Party of Labour
- Union of Humanis Democrats YUKI
- Patriotic Union for National Renewal
- La Chaine
- Sovereigntists
- Independent
- Party for Action of the Republic

2% 1% 0% 0%
8%
88%

Voters Statistics during Parliamentary Elections in the Republic of Congo

- Valid Votes
- Invalid Votes

2%
98%
Registered Voters: 2,645,283

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[10] . Passed away on Election Day due to illness.
[11] https://cour-constitutionnelle.cg/admincc/decisions/DCC-003-EL-PR%20-%202021.pdf

(e)   Central African Republic (CAR)

39.   On 14 March 2021, voters in the Central African Republic (CAR) demonstrated their political rights to elect the seventh legislature. The elections were held against a backdrop of significant security and operational challenges. There were runoffs in 50 electoral districts and first-round voting in 68 districts where security challenges had disrupted their organization in December 2020. Twenty-two (22) out of 140 seats in the National Assembly were gotten during the first round. The elections were crucial for reviving the legislative arm of government within the framework of the implementation of the February 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation. Given that the process to elect all the members of the National Assembly is still ongoing, detailed report will be provided in the next briefing.

Political Parties and Percentages of Votes Won Including Independent Candidates

Voters by Gender in the CAR Parliamentary Election held on March 2021

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(f)   Republic of Djibouti

40.   Presidential election was held in Djibouti on 9 April 2021 with two candidates[12], the incumbent President Ismaïl Omar Guelleh of the People's Rally for Progress and Zakaria Ismael Farah of the Movement for the Development and Balance of the Djiboutian Nation (MDEND). The final results announced by the Constitutional Court on 20 April 2021, showed that the incumbent president, Ismail Omar Guelleh won with 97.30% of votes for his fifth term in office. His only opponent, Zakaria Ismael Farah had 3.70% of votes.[13] Voter turnout stood at 76.44% of 215,687 registered voters[14] compared with 68.96% of 191,103 registered voters recorded during the 2016 presidential election, showing an increase.[15]

41.   The major opposition candidates boycotted the elections over concerns of credibility of the voters register and voter cards as well as unequal treatment of all parties by the government.[16]

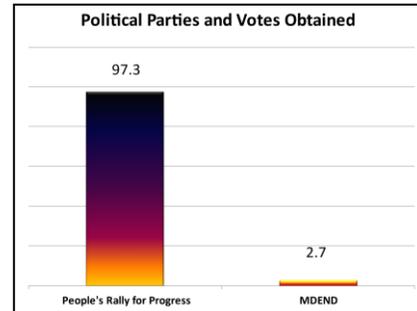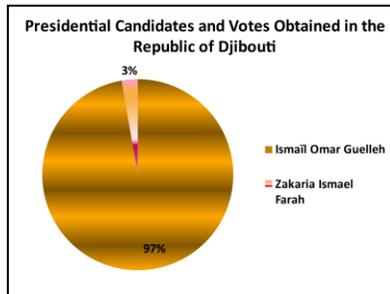[12] . Six candidates participated in the 2016 presidential elections.

[13] https://www.presidence.dj/texte.php?ID=04&ID2=2021-04-20&ID3=D%E9cision&ID4=8&ID5=2021-04-29&ID6=n. Accessed 5 August 2021

[14] Ibid.

[15] https://www.presidence.dj/texte.php?ID=4&ID2=2016-04-19&ID3=D%E9cision&ID4=3&ID5=2016-04-20&ID6=spelec. Accessed 5 August 2021.

[16] AUEOM final report Djibouti 2021.

42.   The polls took place in a generally peaceful environment, and in accordance with international standards. It is worth noting, that the Government provided anti-COVID-19 hygiene sanitary kits for the disinfection of the hands of voters and personnel involved in the electoral process.

Presidential Candidates and Votes Obtained in the Republic of Djibouti

Political Parties and Votes Obtained

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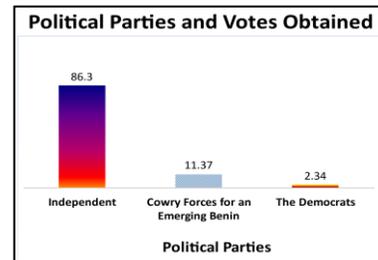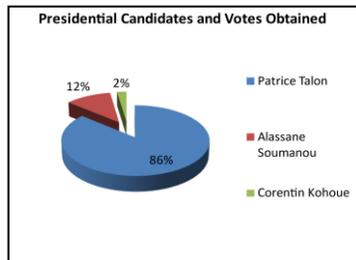
(g)   *Republic of Benin*

43.   Presidential election was held on 11 April 2021 in the Republic of Benin. Three candidates participated in the election including the incumbent President Patrice Talon, Alassane Soumanou of the opposition party - Cowry Forces for an Emerging Benin (FCBE) and opposition figure Corentin Kohoue.

44.   According to the final results declared by the Constitutional Court on 21 April 2021, the sitting president, Patrice Talon was re-elected with 86.30%, for a second and last term in office. His opponents, Alassane Soumanou and Corentin Kohoue, got 11.37% and 2.34% of the votes respectively. Voter turnout was 50.17% of 4,802,303 registered voters.[17] During the 2016 presidential election voter turn for the first and second rounds were 66.05% and 66.13% respectively of 4,746,348 registered voters.

45.   The elections took place amid tension and protests/boycott in some parts of the country as a result of what the main opposition parties considered as exclusion politics of government. The inability of the majority of the opposition parties to be accepted to contest in the election is largely due to new constitutional provision that requires candidates to be nominated by 10% of members of parliament and mayors. It is important to note that the main opposition groups had previously boycotted the 2019 and 2020 local government elections and as such, do not have sufficient representatives to endorse their candidates.

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[17] . https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hKai2uqCJIJ5wz07XVecN2T_8yV2M4hL/view. Accessed 25 August 2021.

46.   In view of the context within which the elections were held, the AUEOM recommended the need for continuous political dialogue in Benin, to ensure broad-based political inclusion in future electoral processes.

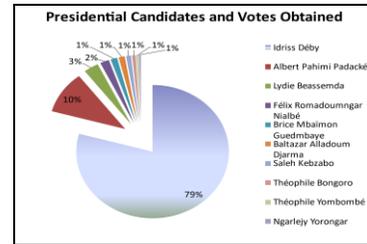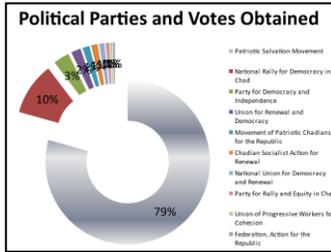**AU weblink to be referred to for more information**

(h)   Republic of Chad

47.   Presidential election was held in Chad on 11 April 2021. The elections were the seventh since the introduction of multi-party politics in 1996. Ten (10) out of 17 candidatures approved by the Supreme Court took part in the election, including the incumbent, President Idriss Deby Itno and, for the first time in the country's history, there was a female aspirant in the person of Mrs. BEASSEMDA LYDIE. Three candidates pulled out of the presidential race ahead of the April polls, citing excessive use of force against the opposition.

48.   According to the results released by the Independent National Electoral Commission   on 19 April 2019, the incumbent president, Idriss Déby Itno, was re-elected with 79.33% of the vote. Voter turnout was 64.81% of the 7,388,348 registered voters.

49.   Certain difficulties related to the preparation and distribution of voter card were addressed by the National Framework for Political Dialogue, authorizing registered voters, who did not receive their voter cards on time, to vote with their old voter card or registration receipt. However, the elections were held within the context of mistrust among political stakeholders amid reports of episodic campaign restrictions and some arbitrary unrests.

50.   On 20 April 2021 – a day following the election result release, President Idriss Déby Itno was killed on the battle front while leading his country's troops in a battle against the Front for Change and Concord in Chad (FACT). Following President Déby's death, the Transitional Military Council, led by Mahamat Déby Itno, dissolved the government and the legislature, and proclaimed an 18 months transitional period. At the 996th meeting of 14 May 2021, the Peace and Security Council considered the report of the fact-finding mission to the Republic of Chad. However, the Commission, through the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) continues to closely monitor the unfolding political and security situation in Chad, and is exploring strategies to facilitate and support a swift return to constitutional/political order, as well as democratic governance, while concurrently preserving the security and territorial integrity of Chad.
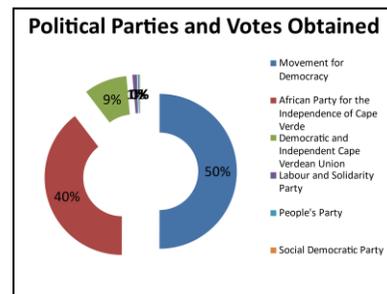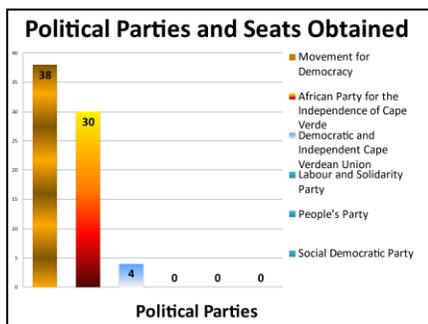
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(i)   Republic of Cape Verde

51.   The Republic of Cape Verde held parliamentary elections on 18 April 2021 for 72 members of the National Assembly who were elected in multi-member constituencies through a proportional representation, electoral system.

52.   Six political parties took part in the elections and the final results which were announced by the Independent Electoral Commission showed that the Movement for Democracy political party won 38 seats (less two seats from the previous elections) of the 72 National Assembly seats. The African Party for the Independence of Cape Verde won 30 seats (plus 1 seat from the previous elections) followed by Democratic and Independent Cape Verdean Union with the remaining 4 seats (plus 1 seat from the previous elections).[18] Voter turnout was 57.5% of 392,899 registered voters [19] compared to 65.97% of 347,622 registered voters in 2016.

53.   Although the AUC did not deploy any AUEOM due to logistical reasons, through remote monitoring, it noted that the elections were peacefully conducted without incidents.

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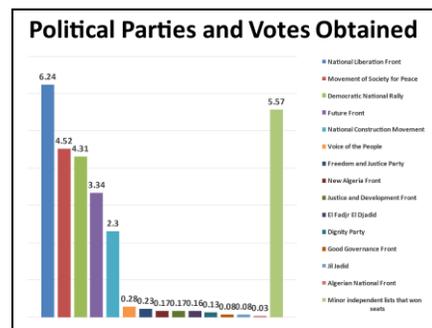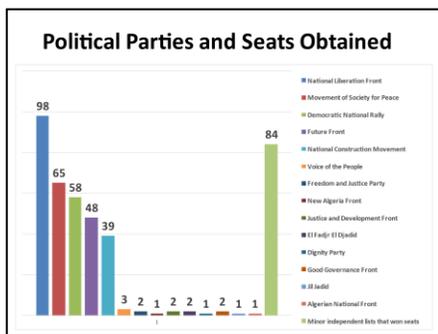### *(j)   People's Democratic Republic of Algeria*

54.   The People's Democratic Republic of Algeria held parliamentary elections on 12 June 2021 for 407 members of the National Assembly. The elections which were initially scheduled

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[18] . https://eleicoes.cv/resultados. Accessed 5 August 2021. ; 2021 Algerian legislative election - Wikipedia
[19] .Ibid.

for 2022 became necessary after constitutional amendments were approved in a referendum in November 2020.

55.   Fourteen main political parties and coalitions took part in the elections. The ruling National Liberation Front won 98   seats (a reduction of 63 seats from the 2017 elections), followed by the Movement of Society for Peace with 65 seats (31 seats up from previous elections) and in the third place was Democratic National Rally with 58 seats (42 less from the last elections). Independents gained 84 seats at the expense of other political parties. Similarly, Women won 35 seats and[20] Voter turnout was 22.99%, the lowest in the history of the country. However, the AUC could not deploy observers to Algeria, due to logistical reasons.

AU weblink to be referred to for more information

(k)   *Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia*

56.   Ethiopians went to the polls on 21 June 2021 to elect the members of the House of Peoples' Representatives (HoPR), Regional State Councils and City Councils. These were the 6th general elections since the return to civilian rule in 1995 and were largely considered as a watershed for the country's democratic development. The elections took place against the backdrop of extensive legal and political reforms undertaken since in 2019 following the ascendance to power of the current Prime Minister, Dr. Abiy Ahmed.

57.   Noteworthy, elections took place amid several challenges that is faced by the country, including ongoing conflict in Tigray, the GERD dispute, the border disagreement with Sudan, and the COVID-19 pandemic. These factors created a tense security situation in the country and impacted on the timely conduct of elections in some constituencies and regions. Despite this, the Government and the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) put in place adequate security and operational measures that contributed to a generally peaceful electoral outcome.

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[20] . https://www.joradp.dz/FTP/jo-part123/F2021051.pdf. Accessed 9 August 2021.

58.   The results announced by NEBE on 10 July 2021, declared that the Prosperity Party (PP) of the incumbent Prime Minister won 406 out of 436 House of Peoples' Representatives seats (representing 93.1%) and duly declared it as the winning party in the Federal Parliament. The PP also won majority of seats (1,625 (81.6%) out of 1990) in the Regional Council elections. The significantly high voter turnout in some constituencies, particularly in Addis Ababa city and Afar region, which recorded a turnout of 99% and 97%, respectively, attracted special interest of some observers. In all, the overall voter turnout for the elections was 89.4%.[21]

59.   Based on its findings, the AUEOM recommended that the government should sustain and enhance the political freedoms engendered by the ongoing reforms; take measures to heal the apparent societal cleavages through national dialogue and reconciliation; and ensure continued commitment to democratic governance that goes beyond the holding of regular elections.
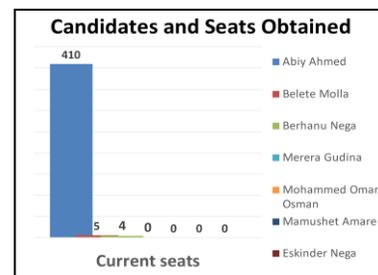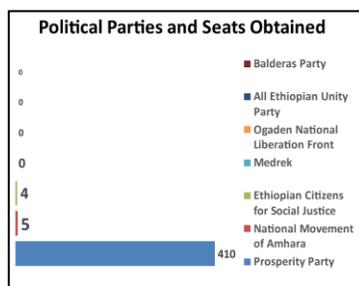
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V.   KEY EMERGING TRENDS IN AFRICA'S POLITICAL GOVERNANCE - COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: 2020 AND 2021

60.   Based on the above review, the following emerging trends are specifically noteworthy and are relevant for the attention of the PSC:

   (a)   Election Management: In 2020, against all COVID-19 elections-related odds, including the implications of the lockdowns and other adopted containment measures for preparedness and elections management, Election Management Bodies (EMBs) in Africa showed commendable resilience and adaptability in rising up to the challenge. They were prompt to adjust voter registration and campaign schedules, establish new campaign regulations, and institute additional safety protocols to mitigate the transmission of the COVID-19 virus during voting procedures. In so doing, EMBs were able to promptly balance the dual objective of effective election management and safeguarding public safety. In most countries, EMBs provide sanitation materials and mask to enhance the safety of voters. The same trend has continued in 2021 where countries that have so far conducted elections and made provision to enhance safety of voters amid the prevailing

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[21]. AUEOM Final Report Ethiopia 2021.; 2021 Ethiopian general election - Wikipedia

pandemic. Overall, the trend in 2020 and 2021 indicate improved understanding of the opening, voting and counting procedures. Given the constraining circumstances, the overall election management in the AU Member States under review is praiseworthy. This attest to growing professionalization and pro-activeness of African EMBs, and the determination of all political actors and stakeholders, including national authorities to stay the course for a more democratic continent.

(b) **Electoral Financing**: Increasingly, member states are leading the financing of the entire or major aspects of their electoral processes. In 2020, elections in Guinea, Chad, Seychelles, Tanzania and Togo were largely financed by the respective Member States with little or no external funding. Remarkably, the same trend is recorded in the period under review, where elections in Algeria, Benin, Chad and Djibouti were primarily financed by national funds only. This is a laudable display of a growing sense of local ownership and leadership for democracy through internal political investment.

(c) *Respect of election calendars:* AU Member States continue to hold periodic, predictable and timely elections in line with the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance and their national constitutions. In the year 2020, despite the uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic, with exception of Ethiopia, most countries held elections on schedule.[22] This trend has continued in the period under consideration as no country postponed national elections as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic or other political reasons. This is illustrative of a growing democratic culture and strict adherence to constitutionalism and the rule of law.

(d) **Citizen participation and voter turnout**: Voter turnout tells the pulse of democratic vitality. It indicates participation rate, inclusivity and overall trust in the political stakeholders/institutions. In 2020, voter participation averaged 57.57% varying from a high of 87% in Burundi to a low of 35.58% in Algeria. The current average, stands at: 60.71 and none of the countries under review scored below average on voter turnout. Bearing in mind the humanitarian emergency context within which these elections were conducted, which constrained registration, voter education, distribution of voter card, campaigns and even voting, this average increase in voter turnout is remarkable and highly encouraged. For the first half of 2021, voter turnout ranges between a high of 89.4% in Ethiopia to a low of 22.99% in Algeria. While an average figure of the total turnout of all the countries will appear high, comparative data of a country's recent election, with previous one will show a reduction in voter turnout across member states, perhaps an indication of voter apathy.

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[22] . Countries that held elections in 2020 included Burkina Faso, Burundi, Comoros, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Ghana, Malawi, Mali, Tanzania, and Togo,

(e) **Participation of women and youth**: The political rights of women and youth are enshrined in several continental instruments including Banjul Charter, Maputo Protocol, ACDEG and the African Youth Charter. This is reinforced by the relevant national frameworks of the countries under review. In practice, however, while the participation of women as polling staff, party agents and voters have witnessed a slight increase, the participation of women and youth as candidates remains timid. Of the countries under review, only Uganda and Chad filled female presidential candidates. For the legislative elections, the rate of women and youth participation remains appallingly low. This suggests the need for more targeted efforts to interrogate, identify and address the impediments of an effective and meaningful inclusion of women and youths in electoral processes; as well as multiply best practices.

(f) **Political Climate of Elections and Electoral Security:** Most elections under review took place in a climate of low to medium scale political tension, and violence in the pre-electoral and/or immediate post-electoral period notably: Benin, Chad, Uganda, Niger and Ethiopia. Nonetheless, on Elections Day, the polling processes were relatively peaceful with rather isolated instances of low scale tension and violence. For most countries under review, the pre-election period witnessed varying degrees of political tension and violence. While this stifled electoral participation to some extent, a largely peaceful voting climate prevailed on Election Day with few exceptions. This attests to a growing democratic culture of tolerance of diversity of opinion. In general, elections during the half of 2021, have not exacerbated political tension or security to the extent of increasing the state of insecurity.

(g) **Opposition Boycott and Contested Outcomes**: Opposition boycott diminishes the participatory, competitive and pluralistic nature of democratic elections. One consistent trend in relation to elections on the continent is opposition parties boycott of elections and what appears to be politics of exclusion in some cases. In 2020, there were opposition boycott of elections in Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, and Niger as the opposition called for varying degrees of boycott and civil disobedience. In 2021, there were also reported boycott of elections in Benin, Djibouti, Algeria, Chad and CAR with some Member States witnessing attendant degree of civil disobedience and violent protests. In a number of cases, outcome of elections have been contested as was the case in Ghana, Guinea, Togo and Tanzania in 2020. In 2021, electoral outcome in Niger and Uganda were contested through public protests and in courts. These constitute a menace to electoral participation, inclusivity, integrity and even the legitimacy of the outcomes. It also deals a severe blow to the consolidation of participatory democracy in the countries.

VI.   AFRICAN UNION INTERVENTIONS IN ELECTORAL PROCESSES

61.   Pursuant to the mandate bestowed on the AU to support electoral processes in Member States, the AUC provided support to elections during the period under review by deploying long-term and short-term African Union Election Observation Missions (AUEOMs) to all countries where elections were held except for Algeria and Cape Verde. In Ethiopia, due to the peculiar nature of the context within which the elections were held, the AUC deployed a long-term election observation mission in addition to short-term observation. The AUEOMs contributed to building confidence in the electoral processes observed by fostering electoral integrity and equally contributed to the goal of positively reflecting AU's image on the ground, in its Member States. The reports of AUEOMs have made various recommendations for further electoral reforms which Member States are encouraged to consider in strengthening their democratic institutions and processes.

62.   In a bid towards continuous improvement of the AU methodology in the conduct of election observation, PAPS Department has undertaken some measures based on a review carried out in April 2021 to ensure that the conduct of election observation is more effective and efficient. Key among the measures taken include producing final comprehensive reports of the observation missions within a period of one month after the end of respective missions in order to ensure that they remain relevant to the Member States. In addition, henceforth election observers are issued with certificates of participation in AUEOMs. Similarly, the introduction of gender parity and more youth participation, based on regional balance has been effected. Measures were also taken to manage the cost of the conduct of election observation missions by rationalizing the number of observers and experts who compose the AUEOMs in order to make them more efficient and financially sustainable.

63.   During the period under review, in collaboration with the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division, PAPS Department has also embarked on developing an AU Electoral Assistance Guide to EMBs in the Member States. This Guide will systematize our support to be more effective to EMBs as their needs continue to increase in managing democratic elections. The Commission is also working towards the review of all guidelines and frameworks on Elections Observation.

64.   The AUC has focused its attention on providing electoral assistance to countries undergoing political transition and emerging from conflicts. This focus will ensure that the AUC makes a meaningful contribution in supporting EMBs and other national electoral stakeholders in organizing elections in conformity with national, continental and international standards and lay foundation for democratic consolidation, peace and stability. This is reflective of the decision of the PSC for the AUC to boost support to Member States In transition and those in post conflict reconstruction and development (PCRD) context

65.   Despite the aforementioned strides of the AUC's support to electoral processes, some challenges abound especially with limited funding. Thus, the PAPS Department was unable to

fully undertake its activities in electoral assistance and observation in line with the mandate bestowed by the normative instruments, due to budgetary constraints.

VII.   OUTLOOK OF UPCOMING ELECTIONS: JULY – DECEMBER 2021

66.   Between July – December 2021 seven (7) countries, namely: Sao Tome and Principe, Zambia, Morocco, Somalia, Cape Verde, The Gambia and Libya are scheduled to hold elections. This section provides a preview of elections in Sao Tome, Zambia, Somalia, Cape Verde, Morocco, The Gambia and Libya.

(a)   Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe

67.   On 18 July 2021, presidential elections would be conducted in the Democratic Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe with 19 aspirants including three (3) women. As indicated by the National Electoral Commission, a total of 123,302 people registered to vote. Notably, the decision by President Evaristo Carvalho to stand down from the election, enlarged the space for participation and competition. Following the Government's request, the AUC will dispatch a Technical Assessment Mission to assist the electoral process through consultation with key electoral stakeholders as well as observation of the process.

(b)   Republic of Zambia

68.   The Republic of Zambia is scheduled to hold general elections on 12 August 2021 to elect a president and members of the National Assembly. While the provisional voter register stands at 7,002,393 representing 83.2% of eligible voters, the gender aggregated data reveals a higher percentage of female registered voters (53.4%, or 3,739,971) compared to male (46.6% or 3,262,422). Further, 16 candidates including incumbent President Edgar Lungu and Hakainde Hichilema, the main opposition candidate, both of which competed in 2016 polls are cleared to vie for the presidency.

69.   Ahead of the polls, the Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ) is expected to elaborate technical and operational measures to ensure the conduct of credible polls.

70.   The AUC-PAPS Department is expected, in collaboration with the International IDEA to deploy an observation, as well as preventive diplomacy and mediation mission to Zambia with a view to promoting and supporting a credible and peaceful electoral outcome.

(c)   Kingdom of Morocco

71.   The Kingdom of Morocco is scheduled to hold general elections – legislative, provincial and local on 8 September 2021, which shall constitute the third elections since the 2011 constitutional reforms. The House of Representatives elections are crucial given their significance in determining the future head of government.

72.   Whereas some concerns on the electioneering process abound including the impact of COVID-19, efforts have been made to address the concerns and enhance the process. Notably, in February 2021, four (4) legal documents were adopted as part of efforts to strengthen the credibility and efficiency of the process, set guidelines for financial support to political parties as well as foster an increased representation of women.

73.   Some of the most prominent parties competing in the legislative polls are the ruling Justice and Development Party (PJD), the National Rally of Independents (RNI), and the Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM), among others. The AUC is closely monitoring the political developments in the Kingdom of Morocco.

(d)   Federal Republic of Somalia

74.   Following the political agreement of 27 May 2021, the Federal Republic of Somalia marshalled plans to conduct indirect elections as follows: Elections of Members of the Upper House: 25 to 28 July 2021; Elections of the House of the People: 12 September to 2 October 2021; and presidential election on 10 October 2021 respectively.

75.   The holding of elections are crucial for the political stability of Somalia, especially the relationship between the Federal member states and Federal Government. Further, persistent threats by Al-Shabaab, warning politicians against taking part in the elections is also a cause of concern. Any protracted delay of the polls may affect the security situation, due to increasing implications for peace, stability and development.

76.   Based on the request from the Government and Federal Electoral Implementation Team, the AUC plans to provide substantial electoral assistance towards the organization of peaceful and credible polls.

(e)   Republic of Cape Verde

77.   On 17 October, Cape Verdians will again approach the polls to elect a president following the end of President Jorge Carlos Fonseca's two-term tenure. The six political parties who contested in the April 2021 parliamentary elections will participate in the polls with envisaged dominance by the ruling Movement for Democracy (MpD) and the African Party for the Independence of Cape Verde (PAICV). The pre-electoral landscape is largely peaceful and centered on issues-based politicking, which are expected to dominate the political campaigns with focus on the diversification of the economy, given the socio-economic impacts of the three-year drought as well as COVID-19, especially on the tourism sector. Be that as it may, premised on the 2016 polls, isolated tensions may erupt but could be strategically managed to prevent election-related violence.

(f) Republic of The Gambia

78.   On 4 December 2021, The Gambia will hold presidential elections deemed as crucial to consolidate democratic gains. However, ahead of the polls, some issues dominating the political landscape are inter party tensions primarily between the newly formed party of incumbent President Adama Barrow – the National People's Party (NPP) and the former ruling coalition – United Democratic Party (UDP). This is seen by local observers as part of the fallout of the transitional arrangement by the coalition, which ousted former President Yahya Jammeh.

79.   The AUC is closely monitoring the interventions being deployed, to promote a credible and peaceful process such as persistent efforts by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) to assuage public anxiety; the operationalization of an inter-party committee to facilitate dialogue between political parties, as well as civil society engagements including through the establishment of a National Elections Response Group, which comprises state and non-state actors with the objective of deploying proactive measures to prevent and mitigate election-related conflicts.

80.   The AUC plans to deploy a technical multi-dimensional mission to The Gambia in September to assess the situation of things ahead of the polls and to consider the state of preparedness that will inform the relevant technical support to be provided. An AUEOM will also be deployed.

(h) State of Libya

81.   The ceasefire agreement of 23 October 2020 led to the resumption of political talks in Tunis in November 2020 with participants of the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF) adopting a roadmap for the conduct of elections billed for 24 December 2021. In February 2021, an interim unified executive authority was inaugurated to lead the country until the elections. A significant outcome of the LPDF roadmap was the opening of the coastal road connecting the east to the west of Libya. However, some challenges confronting the process include: lack of consensus by Libyan stakeholders on a legal framework to hold presidential and parliamentary elections; unresolved efforts to unify the Libyan army and security forces; concerns over the conduct of elections without the withdrawal of all foreign forces and mercenaries, a development that may affect the electoral outcomes. Whereas, the elections are crucial towards the restoration of constitutional order, peace, security and stability in Libya, they remain tentative due to the aforementioned challenges, which require strategic approaches to ensure the credible and peaceful conduct of the polls but most importantly reconciliation.

82.   The AUC is planning to closely monitor the electoral developments in Libya from the perspective of a post conflict and political transition situation. Thus, a technical assessment mission is slated to visit Libya in the third quarter, before the holding of elections, to assess technical support needs by the AU.

VIII.   POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

83.   As part of efforts to enhance electioneering processes in Africa and support forthcoming elections, the following policy recommendations as categorized in two-parts are proposed:

Political Governance/Election-related:

- Implore all Member States of AU to sign, ratify, domesticate and implement the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG);

- Encourage Member States to explore concerted efforts to promote inclusive nomination processes of candidates where electorates have a chance to decide who represents them especially at municipal, provincial or regional levels in a bid to prevent voter apathy over perceptions of choice-less democracy;

- Given the diverse disputes that arise during electioneering process, there is need for standardized and approved statutory procedures for lodging complaints, managing and addressing election disputes as well as adoption of penalties for electoral malpractices. It is also important to avoid several court litigations which to some extent may "judicialize" politics and politicize the judiciary. Hence, the imperative of establishing and strengthening alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, anchored on effective and efficient national infrastructure for peace cannot be overemphasized;

- Encourage Member States to refrain from the review/modification of constitution or electoral laws close to elections due to negative perceptions on the exact intent of such reform, which threatens the credibility of the process, as well as over diverse contestations on different sessions of the law. It is therefore advisable that EMBs submit propositions to parliaments of Member States and timeously advocate for their adoption at least two years before elections; Indeed, some of the RECs have already issued guidelines in this regard;

- Entreat Member States to leverage technology for increased political participation and transparency in election management. Whereas, the potentials of technology are enormous to enhance the credibility of the process, some challenges such as erratic network and risk of hacking could undermine the process. As such, Member States should encourage EMBs to set up adequate safeguards to promote electoral credibility aimed at fostering trust between citizens and EMBs. They should also ensure that adequate legal frameworks are in place to guide the usage and deployment of necessary technology to avoid litigation;

- In view of increasing security threats to the organization of credible and peaceful polls, the EMBs are encouraged to intensify collaboration with security agencies including the integration of security risk assessment plans throughout the

electioneering process, while ensuring that the over-securitization of elections process does not become routine.

- Urge Member States to promote the inclusivity of women and youth through reduced cost for candidacy, as well as enforcement of legally prescribed quota, including through party-level nominations; and

- Entreat Member States to continue to invest in actions aimed at preventing and containing the spread of the virus during elections, including institutionalization of strategic measures to guide campaign and voting processes. Notably, considerations for rescheduling or proceeding with elections should be guided by consultations and consensus with relevant stakeholders, in line with the constitutional framework of concerned Member State (s).

Institutional-related (AUC):

- Advocate to the Permanent Representatives' Committee (PRC) for the allocation of adequate resources to the AUC in support of electoral processes on the continent;

- Fast-track the adoption of the Guideline for the Conduct of Elections during COVID-19 and Public Health Emergencies;

- Consider the institutionalization of a platform for EMBs to share experiences and provide updates on actions undertaken to safely organize elections within the context of COVID-19;

- Expedite action on the development of the AU Electoral Assistance Guide to EMBs with the view to systematically enhance relevant support to EMBs due to increasing demands in the management of democratic elections;

- AUC PAPS Department to continue with its improvement measures for the AUEOMs through the already established Advisory Committee (AC);

- AUC PAPS Department and Africa Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) to start close working relationship on election observation and monitoring, towards incorporating the key outcomes of the AUEOMs in the annual State of Governance in Africa Report to the AU Assembly;

- Adopt a robust strategy of providing technical support to Member States in a timely manner especially for countries undergoing political transition, as well as those in post-conflict situations. In this context, undertake a needs-assessment mission to Member States scheduled to hold elections, preferably a year earlier to unearth their needs, and deploy the relevant support in a timely manner;

- Device an inclusive strategy for a department-wide election monitoring and intervention on the evolving political dynamics in Member States to inform strategic actions required to prevent and/or to mitigate election related disputes/violence. In this respect, consider instituting a departmental task force on election dispute management to ensure robust monitoring, analysis and deployment of timely preventive diplomacy and mediation mission, including support to national dialogue and reconciliation efforts, as part of measures to facilitate consensus-building amongst political stakeholders. Coordination and collaboration with RECs/RMs for the prevention and mitigation of election related disputes/violence is crucial;

- The AUC in its political governance engagements, should continue to pay special attention to AU Member States in political transition.

- Premised on electoral administration and political developments in countries scheduled to hold elections in the remaining half of 2021, the AUC should consider the deployment of strategic technical support to the EMBs, particularly, in Somalia and The Gambia, as well as preventive diplomacy and mediation interventions to douse election-related disputes; and

- Review the electoral observation methodology to ascertain types of deployments to Member States in view of political context; as well as ensure the inclusion of relevant directorates/departments within the AU, along with a higher participation of women and youth.

IX. **CONCLUSION**

84. From the foregoing, democratic elections in Africa are gaining traction with several Member states conducting regular elections, a signal of democratic consolidation. Notably, critical steps are employed to promote inclusivity of political stakeholders, as well as women and youth through relevant national frameworks. Worthy of commendation, is the resilience and strategic measures adopted by Member States, EMBs, political actors, health practitioners, as well as the general population with reference to adherence to recommended health and safety guidelines in conducting and participating in elections, amid the unprecedented and novel situation occasioned by COVID-19, especially in conflict and post-conflict situations.

85. Despite the aforementioned strides, several factors continue to undermine the quality of elections, a development that may impede democratic consolidation, as well as prospects for peace, security and stability, if not properly addressed. Indeed, elections are triggers of violence and instability, given the plethora of structural socio-economic and governance grievances that often instigate tensions during electioneering process, coupled with COVID-19 induced challenges. Election disputes with violent expression could be attributed to several factors, including, limited mechanisms to manage election disputes, weak democratic structures and

abridged confidence in institutions that manage elections and broader governance, as well as socio-economic grievance.

86.   In this context, it is imperative for Member States to receive appropriate support from the AU, RECs and relevant partners, in order to put in place relevant mechanisms to promote transparent and credible electoral processes, as well as to address structural causes of conflict, with emphasis on responding to potential triggers of election disputes/violence that may arise at any stage of the electoral process. In that regard, the AUC and in particular, PAPS Department, needs to be allocated adequate funding so as to play a greater and more meaningful role in contributing to electioneering processes in the Member States.

87.   The overall significance of strengthening democracy and political governance on the continent is brought closer home with Member States' commitment to organizing free, fair, credible and transparent elections for the Africa We Want to be more realistic in this 21st century.