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Côte d'Ivoire

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS FOR THE PRESS CONFERENCE

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On Sunday, we shall witness an historic event: the first ever run-off of a presidential election in Côte d'Ivoire.

This event will constitute the moment of truth for the Ivorian people and leaders: from the first round of the poll, they demonstrated an unshakeable and laudable will to end the crisis and enter an era of peace and prosperity; will this exemplary will, which pleasantly surprised the world, be in evidence once again at the second round?

It will also be an opportunity for the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire and the international community to demonstrate once again, their firm determination to remain actively at the side of Ivorians up until the completion of the crisis-resolution process.

The election campaign for the second round began on Saturday last. It has been noted that, with the exception of a few incidents, everything is proceeding in a globally peaceful atmosphere. It is also important to make all the necessary arrangements to reinforce the transparency and credibility of the election and safeguard the results.

With regard to the transparency and credibility of the election, significant improvements relating to the vote count, transport and security of the tally reports have been undertaken.

Where safeguarding the results of the election is concerned, there are three essential elements: the gradual announcement of results, as they are validated, from the evening of the 28th of November; candidates refraining from announcing the results themselves; and complaints being made through democratic means.

Transport and security of the tally reports in Abidjan and Bouaké

In the first round, many rumours, most of them baseless, circulated, sowing doubts and speculation. The most persistent one concerned the transportation of the tally reports.

As a measure of improvement, UNOCI proposed to the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), which accepted, to transport all the tally reports from the polling stations in Abidjan and Bouaké to the IEC headquarters in Abidjan, via the local electoral commissions (CEL, French acronym) at the communal, departmental and regional levels. To ensure the security of the tally reports, UNOCI will mobilize all the necessary means (military, civilian and police) throughout the night of 28 November. Moreover, UNOCI will provide more than 400 vehicles to transport the tally reports, the chairpersons of the CELs and the representatives of the candidates wherever possible and according to their availability.

Transport and security of the tally reports elsewhere in the country

Outside Abidjan and Bouaké, UNOCI will also ensure the transportation of the tally reports from the local electoral commissions at the communal level to the IEC headquarters in Abidjan via the departmental and regional electoral commissions. They will be transported by road and air, under UNOCI police and military escort.

Regarding the transportation of the individual tally reports between some 9,000 polling sites and the local electoral commissions, this is the responsibility of the IEC. But the IEC is not alone. It has financial support from the international community and logistical support from the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). Contrary to the first round, the chairman of each local electoral commission will receive 50,000 FCFA to rent a vehicle to transport the tally reports from the polling sites to the local electoral commissions. At the same time, the IEC will still have the vehicles supplied by UNOPS as a supplementary arrangement, as was the case at the first round.

In this regard, I would like to thank Japan, the European Union and Switzerland, which have provided 450 million FCFA for this measure to improve the transparency of the poll and the credibility of its result.

Posting of the results and observation of the vote count

I would like to recall two excellent measures established by the IEC for the transparency and credibility of the poll: the posting of the tally reports at each of the polling stations and the presentation, on the spot, of an official copy of the tally report to the representative of each of the two candidates, before the tally report is taken to the local electoral commission.

Similarly, I would like to welcome the IEC's decision to also post the results of the vote count at the local, departmental and regional commissions, and to allow the representatives of the candidates to observe all counting and calculation operations.

Credibility of the gradual publication of the results by the IEC

Based on the experience of the first round, and bearing in mind the tension and speculation that arose while the results were being awaited, I am happy at the fundamental decision of the IEC to begin announcing the results gradually, on the evening of the 28 November.

Despite some communication problems, the IEC acquired, with the first round, solid credibility in its system of counting and calculating the votes. The IEC has proved that it was practically impossible to defraud and manipulate its system, which includes the presence of observers, the distribution of the tally reports on site to the candidates' representatives, the publication of the results at the places where they are counted and, finally, at the central level, in Abidjan, the presence of representatives of the main political parties, as officials, at the deliberations and final computation.

Thus, the real challenge awaiting us at the second round will not be the reliability or credibility of the IEC. It will rather be unfounded rumours, fear, speculation and suspicion, as was the case at the first round. At this historic moment, we shall not let ourselves be taken over by these negative sentiments. In this perspective, it cannot be stressed enough that the best way to meet this challenge is to gradually announce the results of the election from the evening of 28 November.

Proclamation of the results

I would like, particularly, to recall that the IEC is the only competent authority to announce the results of the election. In this regard, I would like to welcome once again, the exemplary behaviour of all the candidates at the first round for refraining from announcing the results themselves.

In fact, the gradual publication of the results by the IEC and the transportation of, and provision of security for, the tally reports would be to no avail if results were announced illegally by political parties or structures other than the IEC. This is why I am launching a solemn appeal to the two second-round candidates to refrain from proclaiming the results of the poll themselves.

The international community remains at the side of the Ivorian people and the IEC where safeguarding the results of the second round is concerned.

Complaints and recourse

The channels for complaints and recourse concerning the elections are stated in the Constitution and electoral law of Côte d'Ivoire. The Constitutional Council is the only body with the competency to rule on electoral disputes and to proclaim the final results.

The underlying meaning of this crucial provision is that no one must resort to undemocratic means to contest the election results. As a matter of fact, the people, as well as the political parties and candidates, demonstrated their maturity in the field of democracy in Côte d'Ivoire during the first round.

The second round is thus an opportunity for us to consolidate this achievement, which is essential for ending the crisis. The Ivorian people fully deserve it.

Certification of the results of the second round

On many occasions, I have publicly indicated that the aim of certification was neither to highlight the shortcomings of the electoral process and the election results nor simply to affix a stamp or not at the end of all the actions.

Certification has an eminently positive role that of safeguarding the election process and results.

To that end, the arrangements that were already tested during the first round, and which enabled UNOCI to scrupulously observe the conduct of all the operations, will be further reinforced to ensure the transparency and credibility of the second round of the presidential election, a first in the history of Côte d'Ivoire.

I am convinced that when all the above-mentioned measures are implemented, the act of certification will also be an opportunity to congratulate the Ivorian people and their leaders for their democratic maturity in a Côte d'Ivoire that is reconciled and blooming, a Côte d'Ivoire that will become once again the anchor of stability and centre of prosperity in West Africa.

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