

PRELIMINARY REPORT OF AFRICAN MISSION TO THE
PRESIDENTIAL AND STATE LEGISLATIVE COUNCILS ELECTIONS
OF THE BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA HELD ON MAY
20TH, 2018

We, the below signed representatives of a number of African nations, here in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in the month of May 2018 in the capacity members of the international electoral accompaniment mission invited by the Venezuelan National Electoral Council (CNE), concord the following conclusions regarding the electoral process of May 20 in which the Venezuelan people elected their new President and 23 state legislative councils.

Our general evaluation is that this was a fair, free, and transparent expression of the human right to vote and participate in the electoral process by the Venezuelan people, and that the results announced on the night of May 20 are trustworthy due to the comprehensive guarantees, audits, the high tech nature of the electoral process, and due to the thirteen audits carried out previous to and on the day of elections which we witnessed.

We can also conclude that the Venezuelan people who chose to participate in the electoral process of May 20 were not subject to any external pressures, and carried out their right to vote in a peaceful and civil manner which we commend.

As such, we implore the international community to abide by international law and the principals of self-determination and recognize what we consider to be a free, fair, fully transparent, and sovereign election carried out in Venezuela this past May 20.

We declare that we cannot substantiate the declarations made by Rector Rondón following the announcements of the results based on our observations during the mission.

Regarding the opening of the voting centers and the voting stations

We observed that in general the opening of the voting centers was carried out according to electoral norms and on time. We were made aware of some minor incidents of machines which did not function at the start of the process, but we are satisfied that the reaction and behavior of the CNE staff in resolving the situations in a rapid and transparent manner according to the pre-established contingency plans did not impact the number of votes or the right to vote in these centers.

We are satisfied with the deployment of electoral material to the voting centers, having observed that every voting center visited was fully equipped with all of the material needed, including the signs which indicate and educate the voters about the various elements of the voting center and the electoral process. We are also satisfied that the system of using ID numbers in place of names ensures

transparency and guarantees voter secrecy. Finally, we observed that a suitable number of voting machines had been assigned to the voting centers along with all of their adjacent elements

Regarding the electoral staff

Whilst we did observe that some citizens decided not to comply with their legal requirement of electoral service, we are satisfied that the CNE followed pre-established protocols in replacing them rapidly and in a transparent nature. We understand that some of those who failed to comply with this obligation will be fined according to Venezuelan law, and we would like to express our slight concern that the procedure does not create an atmosphere of persecution for acts of protest in certain sectors of the population.

We are satisfied that the electoral staff- both the center coordinators and members of the booths- have received full training by the CNE, and were well prepared to inform, assist, and educate voters in the voting procedure and respond to any incidence or problem which may occur during the day. We confirm that we observed firsthand the members of the booths orientating voters throughout the day on the voting process in a correct and objective manner.

Regarding the party political witnesses

We observed party political witnesses at nearly every voting center from both the pro-government and anti-government candidates, and are satisfied with the guarantees which the CNE extends to every candidate to send witnesses. On discussion with the witnesses, no abnormalities in the electoral process were reported

Regarding the guarantees which ensure the secrecy of votes

We are satisfied that Venezuelans were able to exercise their right to vote in complete secrecy, and that the SAI authentication systems employed by the CNE guarantee both the secrecy of the voters selection and the one person one vote principal.

We are also satisfied that the placement of the screen and the fact that no one was allowed behind the screen at the moment of voting guarantees the secrecy of the vote in Venezuela.

Regarding the activity of voting, specifically the voting system, the authentication system, and the functioning of the voting stations

We are satisfied that the voting process established by the CNE of a mixed electronic and physical vote guarantees the trustworthiness of the electoral system and we consider it to be considerably more advanced than some of the systems in other countries in the world.

The step by step process flowed well and with the assistance of the members of the booth voters were clear in the correct procedure of voting and were thus able to vote in a tranquil and rapid fashion.

Whilst the electoral system we consider to be complex, we congratulate the CNE on simplifying it for greater voter comprehension.

Regarding the access and ease of the voting system for illiterate, disabled, or elderly citizens

We are satisfied that the touch screen electoral ballot system helps elderly or poor sighted voters exercise their right to vote due to the large size of the images. This enables illiterate voters to successfully select their candidate.

We observed numerous assisted votes and are satisfied that the correct procedure was carried out and that those assisting were correctly registered by the CNE. We saw no irregularities in the assisted votes.

We did however observe some disabled voters who struggled with access issues in getting to their voting booths and would encourage the CNE to consider the deployment of ramps for citizens in wheelchairs and possible relocating of booths to the ground floor where disabled voters are registered.

Similarly, whilst the electoral ballot is simple for illiterate voters to use, we are concerned that the verification of the receipt the machine generates by voters is impossible for illiterate voters.

Regarding the role of party political materials and campaigning

We observed no political campaigning neither within the voting center nor within the established 200m limit. We observed no “red points” closer than 200m, and we are satisfied that voters were given the opportunity to exercise their selection without any observable attempt to influence them.

Regarding the scrutiny of votes and the citizens audit process

We witnessed the process of citizens audit, the closing of the booths, and we consider that this process occurred normally with the physical receipts corresponding to the electronic tally's. We consider that this element significantly adds to the credibility of the electoral process.

Regarding the organization of the National Electoral Council

We are impressed by the thoroughness of the logistical deployment of the CNE for the day of voting and beforehand and saw no irregularities in this.

Regarding the participation of the population in the voting process

We observed a regular flow of voters in the voting centers throughout the day.

Regarding the technological platform of the voting process

We are very impressed by the technological platform used by the CNE and its accompanying audits. This system guarantees the reliable transmission of votes and the counting of votes.

Regarding the Republic Plan which accompanied the voting process

We are satisfied that the military carried out their public duties according to the law and we saw no abuses of power by uniformed citizens during the voting procedure. What more, we saw the military assisting voters who encountered problems of access, particularly disabled voters which we commend.

Caracas 21 May 2018