



I. INTRODUCTION

1. By Decrees No. 2024-690 and No. 2024-691 of 6 March 2024, the Senegalese electorate, both home and abroad, were convened for an election on 24 March 2024 to elect their fifth President. The election is also the twelfth successive Presidential election since independence in 1960.
2. Consistent with the provisions of Articles 12 and 13 of the ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, which mandate the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to provide assistance to Member States organising elections, the ECOWAS Commission:
 - Deployed a Pre-election Fact-finding Mission from 27 November to 3 December 2023;
 - Provided capacity support for stakeholders on the use of Dialogue and Mediation in the management of election-related conflict;
 - Engaged the Media and CSOs to enhance participatory democracy and the management of media space to address fake news, misinformation and disinformation in the period leading to, during and after the poll;
3. The purpose of the Fact-finding Mission was to assess the state of preparedness of the electoral management bodies and other critical stakeholders. In particular, the Mission held discussions with both state and non-state actors, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Senegalese Abroad, la Commission Electorale Nationale Autonome (CENA), la Direction Générale des Elections (DGE), political parties and their coalitions, representatives of civil society organisations, and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS).

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4. Based on the recommendations of the Pre-election Fact-finding Mission, the ECOWAS Commission deployed appropriate electoral assistance measures, including interactive workshops on dialogue and mediation for political actors and stakeholders on peaceful elections. The Commission also engaged targeted media professionals operating in the print, broadcast, and online spaces, particularly Managers, Editors and Senior Journalists, with the aim of strengthening their capacity in addressing the challenges of incitements, fake news, disinformation, misinformation, and mal-information, through fact-checking mechanisms.

5. In the build up to the 24 March 2024 presidential election, and in furtherance of the provisions of Articles 14 to 16 of the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (2001), the President of the ECOWAS Commission, **His Excellency Dr. Omar Alieu TOURAY**, deployed a 14-member Long-Term Observation (LTO) Team from 13 to 29 March 2024. He further deployed a Short-Term Election Observation Mission (STEOM), comprising 130 observers to Senegal. The Mission is led by **Professor Ibrahim Agboola GAMBARI**, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and former United Nations Under Secretary-General for Political Affairs. The Mission is supported by a technical team from the ECOWAS Commission, led by the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, **Ambassador Abdel-Fatau MUSAH**.

6. The ECOWAS Election Observation Mission (EOM) is deployed with a mandate to observe the conduct of critical phases before, during and after the election, with a view to ensuring that the processes are conducted in compliance with extant legal frameworks and international best practices and making critical recommendations for further improvement of the electoral process. The EOM also serves as a rapid response mechanism for preventive diplomacy initiatives on challenges emanating from the electoral process.



7. The membership of the EOM is drawn from the ECOWAS Parliament, the Community Court of Justice, the ECOWAS Permanent Representatives Committee, the ECOWAS Council of the Wise, Foreign Affairs Ministries and Election Management Bodies of Member States, Election Experts, as well as Civil Society Organizations and the Media.

II. CONTEXT OF THE 2024 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

8. Often seen as a bastion of democracy and a beacon of stability in a turbulent region, the context within which the 2024 presidential election is taking place in Senegal has been rocked by violent protests starting from 2021 and was recently reignited after an announcement to postpone the presidential election by the incumbent President on 3 February 2024.
9. Since 2021 the country has been experiencing violent socio-political unrests in the run-up to the 2024 presidential election. Between 1,200 and 1,600 people were reportedly detained between 2021 and early 2024 across Senegal for alleged crimes relating to anti-government protests. These violent tensions were once again rekindled in 2023, under the pretext of the uncertainty surrounding a possible third term bid by President Macky Sall and the legal proceedings against Ousmane Sonko, the leading opposition figure, the subsequent removal of his name from the electoral list and the refusal by la *Direction Générale des Elections (DGE)* on 29 September 2023 to provide him with a sponsorship form.
10. It would also be recalled that on 31 July 2023, *les Patriotes africains du Sénégal pour le travail, l'éthique et la fraternité* (PASTEF party) was dissolved by the Interior Minister who accused the party of fomenting insurrection, as well as acts of looting of public and private property. PASTEF challenged its dissolution at both the Supreme Court of Senegal and the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice. However, on 17 November 2023, the ECOWAS Community Court of



Justice ruled that the dissolution of PASTEF was not illegal and was in line with the Senegalese law. Furthermore, the Court ruled that none of the rights of Mr. Sonko had been violated by the State of Senegal and subsequently dismissed the case.

11. Whilst the political situation appeared to have calmed down in the run up to the Presidential election, in addition to the announcement by President Macky Sall on 3 July 2023 that he was not going to contest for a third term, the events subsequent to the filing of nominations for the presidential contest and its consequent validation by the Constitutional Council reignited the tensions in the country. It would be recalled that during the nomination process of candidates, an unprecedented number of candidates (approximately 200) declared their intention to run for the presidency. After considering their nominations against their qualifications and validity of sponsorship, on 12 January 2024, the Constitutional Council validated twenty (20) candidates to run. Among those that were not validated included the candidatures of Karim Wade of the Parti démocratique Sénégalais (PDS), based on his dual Senegalese and French nationality and Ousmane Sonko, based on the latter's conviction and sentencing to a six-month jail term in a defamation lawsuit brought against him by a cabinet minister.

12. Claiming irregularities in how the Constitutional Council assessed and rejected their nominations, a group of forty (40) disqualified candidates set up the ***Front démocratique pour des élections inclusives*** (FDEI) to call for a reset of the electoral process. Similarly, following the disqualification of Karim Wade, his party (PDS) alleged that the Prime Minister and presidential candidate of the ruling **Benno Bokk Yaakaar** coalition had bribed two members of the Constitutional Council to disqualify their candidate. On the strength of this allegation, PDS members of parliament requested that a parliamentary inquiry be set up to probe the allegation. Ironically, **Benno Bokk Yaakaar** parliamentarians voted in favour of the quest for parliamentary inquiry.

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13. On 3 February 2024, citing the demand for a parliamentary inquiry and concerns that the presidential election would not be considered credible and inclusive if an eligible candidate is unjustly disqualified, President Macky Sall decided to abrogate decree n°. 2023-2283 that initially fixed the election for 25 February 2024.
14. On 5 February 2024, the National Assembly passed a bill to permit a postponement of the election date to 15 December 2024 and to also exceptionally allow the President to stay in office until the conduct of the election, while allowing the candidature of more would-be Presidential candidates to be considered.
15. These two actions, by the President and the National Assembly, were met with an overwhelming rejection from almost every stratum of Senegalese society as civil society, labour unions, the academia, and opposition political parties/candidates all called for street protests against what they considered a ploy to usurp political power.
16. Following a request for interpretation by opposition parliamentarians and candidates, on 15 February 2024, the Constitutional Council ruled the President's action and the law passed by parliament as unconstitutional, null and void, noting that the length of the presidential term of office could neither be extended nor reduced. This decision meant that the President's term of office would expire after 2 April 2024.
17. In reaction to the Constitutional Council's pronouncement, the President convened a National Dialogue from 26 – 27 February 2024, to allow stakeholders collectively agree a new date for the election. Although boycotted by 16 out of the 19 Presidential candidates and a significant proportion of active forces, participants proposed a new date of 2 June 2024 for the presidential election.



18. On 6 March 2024, following a request by the 16 Presidential candidates who refused to participate in the National Dialogue, the Constitutional Council affirmed that the presidential election must be held before the incumbent President's tenure lapses on 2 April 2024.
19. It is in the aftermath of the Constitutional Council's decision that the President announced 24 March 2024 as the new date for the Presidential election, by Decrees No. 2024-690 and No. 2024-691 of 6 March 2024. This also meant a shortened campaign period running for only 13 days, from 9 March to 22 March 2024, instead of the 21 days prescribed by the electoral laws.
20. Yet in a last-ditch attempt to force a reset of the electoral process, Karim Wade's PDS approached the Supreme Court, arguing that the new election date does not conform to timelines set out in the Electoral Act. On 15 March 2024, the Supreme Court declared the appeal as lacking merit, thus clearing the way for the election to hold on 24 March 2024.
21. On the evening of Thursday, 14 March 2024, five (5) days after the start of the campaign period, Bassirou Diomaye Faye and Ousmane Sonko were released from prison, under a Government amnesty program. The Government amnesty program that led to the release of political detainees from prison, contributed largely to the defusing of political tensions, thus normalising the political environment a few days to the election.
22. With the campaign period coinciding with the Muslim Holy month of Ramadan, the political campaigns were largely low-key, although there were isolated reports of clashes between supporters of the Coalition Diomaye President and supporters of Khalifa Sall. This took place in the neighbourhood of HLM Grand Yoff, in the Dakar District.
23. The Mission also notes the relative pluralism of the media landscape in Senegal. The state media provided equal access to candidates for their electoral



campaigns per the electoral laws and regulations. The media were used as platforms for voter and civic education, including electoral campaigns. Generally, the media exhibited independence, fairness, impartiality, and accountability, and taking up the national assignment in educating the citizenry about the electoral process.

III. ENGAGEMENTS WITH STAKEHOLDERS

24. Upon arrival in Dakar on 18 March 2024, the Head of Mission and his delegation held consultations with relevant stakeholders on the electoral process, including other presidential candidates and their political coalitions. The Mission equally held consultations with both state and non-state actors, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Senegalese Abroad, la Commission Electorale Nationale Autonome (CENA) and civil society organisations.

25. The Mission also held consultations with ECOWAS Ambassadors accredited to Senegal and other Heads of the International Election Observation Mission, including the African Union (AU), and the European Union (EU), as well as the West Africa Elders Forum, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), and the National Democratic Institute (NDI).

IV. ELECTION DAY

26. On Election Day, the Mission deployed 130 observers, grouped into 57 teams, across the length and breadth of the country, in all the 14 regions and 31 out of the 46 Districts. The 57 teams covered a total of 1140 Polling Stations and reported the following:



Opening of the Polls

27. The ECOWAS observers witnessed the opening at 57 Polling Stations countrywide. Generally, all the 57 polling stations visited at the start of the poll opened within half an hour of the official opening time of 08:00 am. No significant delays were recorded at the start of the poll, as voting materials and polling agents arrived ahead of the opening of the poll. Nonetheless, 91.84% of the polling stations opened on time, whilst 8.16% of the polling stations visited opened within 15 to 30 minutes after 08:00 am. On the average, it took about two minutes to process voters from the issuance of ballot papers to the casting of their votes.

28. The atmosphere at the Polling Stations was generally peaceful with security agents visibly present at all Polling Stations visited. In addition, our observers reported that 98.89% of Polling Agents were present at the opening of the poll.

29. All the Polling Stations visited had party agents representing the candidates. However, a significant number of the Polling Stations had only agents for Amadou BA, Bassirou Diomaye FAYE and Khalifa Ababacar SALL.

Voting Process

30. In all, the ECOWAS teams observed 1,084 Polling Stations in the 14 regions during the voting process, in addition to those visited during the opening of polls. Overall, voting materials were largely available, and in sufficient quantities, in all the polling stations that the ECOWAS observers visited. With respect to inclusion, 71.87% of the polling stations were accessible to Persons Living with Disability (PLWDs). In the polling stations (28.13%) that were not easily accessible, no special arrangements were made to provide assistance for the aged and persons living with disability.

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31. The ECOWAS Observers also reported that the voters' registers that were used at the polling stations visited were the same as those in the possession of the candidates' agents, thus offering comfort to the authenticity of the process.
32. All polling stations visited were set up in a way that guaranteed the secrecy of the ballot. In general, no voter was allowed to vote without proper identification. In 28 Polling stations visited (representing 2.58%), observers witnessed that voters were allowed to vote even though their names were not on the voters' register at those stations. Those allowed this dispensation included polling officials, officials from the CENA and security personnel on duty (who could produce voter identity cards). This, however, conforms with best practices where in Presidential elections, which is a one-constituency poll, people are allowed to exercise their franchise at any polling station provided they are able to provide a valid identification. Their particulars were subsequently captured in a special register.
33. Observers did not witness any active campaigning in about 96.72% of the Polling stations visited. However, in 12 polling stations, representing 1.10%, there were campaign posters of candidates within the vicinity, which were not removed before the election day. Nonetheless, at Polling Unit No. 2 in Ecole Elementaire Mpal Saint, in the Saint Louis District, our observers reported of persons soliciting for votes within the environs of the polling unit.

Closing and Counting

34. The ECOWAS Teams observed closing and counting at 57 polling stations. Generally voting ended on time at 6:00 pm, at the time of closing, most of the stations had no voters on the queues. Indeed, 98% of polling stations observed had no voter on the queue at the closing time. The only polling

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station observed that closed after 6:00 pm had just five (5) voters on the queue.

35. In most of the 57 polling stations visited, the opening of ballot boxes, sorting, counting and tallying of ballots were done at the stations and in clear view of party agents and election observers. However, at two (2) polling stations (i.e., Polling Unit No. 1 at Ecole Liberté 1 of Sicap Liberté in Dakar District; and Polling Unit No. 8 at Ecole Bounama Diallo at Tambacounda in Tambacounda District), there were disagreement over rejected ballots by party agents. In addition, in five (5) polling stations visited, party agents requested for recount of ballots. These polling stations include:

- a. Polling Unit No. 2 at Ecole Cite Imprimerie at the Rufisque Ouest in Rufisque District, in Dakar Region;
- b. Polling Unit No. 3 at CEM Malick Fall in Ziguinchor Municipality, at Ziguinchor;
- c. Polling Unit No. 1 at Sally Portudal, Mbour, in the Thies Region;
- d. Polling Unit No. 1 at CEM Khar Ndoffene Diouf, at Fatick Municipality in Fatick Region;
- e. Polling Unit No. 1 at Ecole 8 / Ecole 1 at Kaffrine Municipality, in the Kaffrine Region.

36. Notwithstanding the few incidents of disagreement over rejected ballots and request for ballot recount observed, closing and counting were generally peaceful and orderly in the 57 polling stations observed.

V. PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS



37. The Mission notes that much of the drama liable to compromise the integrity of the electoral process occurred between the period 2021 and the Constitutional Council ruling of 6 March 2024. After that, the process proceeded smoothly, inclusively and peacefully.
38. The Mission welcomes, with satisfaction, the peaceful conduct and comportment exhibited by stakeholders and the electorate throughout the electioneering process, particularly after the ruling of the Constitutional Council on 6 March 2024 and the eventual issuance of Decrees No. 2024-690 and No. 2024-691 of 6 March 2024 by President Macky Sall setting the date for the presidential election. The Mission also notes that the amnesty program initiated by the Government, which led to the release of several political detainees from prisons on the eve of the election, contributed to the largely peaceful atmosphere that heralded the conduct of the presidential election.
39. The Mission further notes that the polling process generally proceeded smoothly and in a largely peaceful atmosphere. Eligible voters were able to freely exercise their franchise without hinderance, even though there were some polling stations (28.13%) which were not easily accessible to physically challenged persons, particularly the aged and persons living with disabilities (PWDs). The Mission also commends the electoral management bodies and their officers for their efficient conduct and coordination, which facilitated the smooth voting process on the election day.
40. The ECOWAS Election Observation Mission welcomes the gracious gestures of the Government's official candidate, candidate Amadou Ba, and the outgoing President, H.E. Macky Sall, who congratulated the President-Elect, Bassirou Diomaye Faye, even before the official declaration of preliminary results. This contributed to further thawing tensions and promoting national reconciliation.

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41. The Mission commends the Government of Senegal, the Ministry of Interior, the CENA, the republican institutions, civil society organisation, women's organisations, youth groups, and the entire people of Senegal for their courage and determinations to preserve the democratic credentials of the country, especially the commitment to the rule of law, as well as peaceful and credible election, the outcome of which would clearly reflect the will of the electorate. .
42. Even while welcoming the remarkably peaceful and inclusive outcomes of the electoral process, the ECOWAS Election Observation Mission wishes to note certain processes and practices that would require a review to further strengthen the electoral framework. These apparent shortcomings, which would be subsequently discussed with the competent authorities of Senegal include, but not limited to:
- a. The need to review the Parrainage (sponsorship) system to make it more transparent and equitable, in particular, the draws of straws to determine positioning of would-be candidates and the software used to process the system.
 - b. The need to properly manage perishable electoral materials, in particular the unused ballot papers to prevent the potential abuse and corruption of the voting process.
 - c. The need to adopt a unique ballot paper which would contain all candidates to reduce the cost of procurement of ballot papers.
 - d. The need to review the costs of elections by considering limits to campaign financing, declaration of assets by candidates and the coupling of elections. (The Mission was informed that the concluded electoral process officially cost 14 billion Francs CFA).
 - e. The need to make adequate provision of facilities to enable physically challenged persons access the polling units.

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f. The need to consider further gender-inclusivity measures to encourage greater women's participation as candidates in future Presidential elections. The just-ended Parrainage system eventually returned only one female candidate out of 19.

43. The Mission commends the electoral officials for the exhibition of remarkable professionalism in the execution of their duties, as well as the security agencies for their high sense of duty and professionalism.

44. The Mission will continue to closely observe the concluding phases of the electoral process, in particular the aggregation, collation, and announcement by the CENA, and the validation of the results by the Constitutional Council.

Done in Dakar, Senegal, on 26 March 2024

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**PROFESSOR IBRAHIM AGBOOLA GAMBARI
HEAD, ECOWAS ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION**