

New Realities of
Citizen Election

Observation in Africa

Nouvelles réalités de l'observation
citoyenne des élections en Afrique



For Immediate Release

May 11, 2023
Accra, Ghana

Citizen Observers from Across Africa Strategize on How Better to Safeguard Elections

Leaders from 24 citizen observer organizations from 20 countries from across Africa met in Accra, Ghana to strategize on how to better safeguard elections. The summit was the most comprehensive and diverse gathering of citizen observers from East, North, West and Southern Africa.

Delivering the keynote address, Prof Attahiru Jega, former Chairperson of the Independent Electoral Commission of Nigeria (INEC) stated “Nobody now doubts the value of citizen engagements in the electoral process, especially the positive role that citizen observers play in ensuring the transparency of the electoral process and holding election management bodies (EMBs) accountable.”

The “New Realities of Citizen Election Observation in Africa Summit” was held in response to the changing nature of elections in Africa and around the world. The event drew upon experiences from across the continent, including recent elections in Kenya and Nigeria as well as upcoming elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Liberia, Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe.

African Citizen observer organizations issued a [Joint Communiqué on the Future of Citizen Observation in Africa](#) (in [English](#) and [French](#)) that included more than 25 resolutions on how to be more effective defending the rights of citizens to vote in light of the new realities of elections in Africa. The participants agreed that the summit should become an annual event.

“While the demand among Africans for democratic governance remains high, democracy and credible elections are being undermined across the continent” explained Kojo Asante, Director of Advocacy and Policy Engagement, for the host organization the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana).

Cynthia Mbamalu, Yiaga Africa’s Director of Programs from Nigeria added “the challenges facing elections today are different than before, including: growing threats during the pre-election period, greater concerns about information manipulation; increasingly disputed outcomes being resolved by the courts; and closing space for citizen election observers.”

Further, inclusiveness is an essential precondition for credible elections and much more needs to be done to eliminate barriers that prevent the full and equal electoral participation

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of women, youth, persons with disabilities, ethnic and religious minorities, and other historically marginalized groups.

“This Summit builds on the [recent statement by United Nations Special Rapporteurs](#) which makes explicit recognition of election observers as human rights defenders and calls upon all member states to take all necessary steps to establish conditions that protect and allow observers to work without inhibition” noted Alexandra Boiro, Senior Program Manager for the National Democratic Institute (NDI).

The three day Summit from May 9 to 11, 2023 was jointly organized by [CDD-Ghana](#), [Yiaga Africa](#) of Nigeria and [NDI](#) of the United States.

The event was held in partnership with the [East and Horn of Africa Election Observers Network](#) (E-HORN), Election Support Network of Southern Africa (ESN SA), [West Africa Election Observers Network](#) (WAEON) and [African Election Observers Network](#) (AfEONet).

Participating citizen observer organisations included: [Alliance for Finance Monitoring](#) (ACFIM) [Uganda]; [Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace](#) (CCJP) [Malawi]; [Center for Constitutional Governance](#) (CCG) [Uganda]; [Christian Churches Monitoring Group](#) (CCMG) [Zambia]; [Coalition citoyenne pour les élections et la gouvernance](#) (CoCEG) [Guinea]; [Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections](#) (CECOE) [Ethiopia]; [Coalition pour l'Observation Citoyenne des Elections au Mali](#) (COCEM) [Mali]; [Collectif des Organisations de la Société Civile](#) (COSCE) [Senegal]; [Convention des organisations de la société civile pour l'observation domestique des élections](#) (CODEL) [Burkina Faso]; [Elections Watch Committee](#) (EWC) [The Gambia]; [Indigo](#) [Côte d'Ivoire]; [Elections Observer Group](#) (ELOG) [Kenya]; [Election Resource Center](#) (ERC) [Zimbabwe]; [Elections Coordinating Committee](#) (ECC) [Liberia]; [Ghana Center for Democratic Development](#) (CDD-Ghana) [Ghana]; [Justice et Paix Congo](#) (JPC)/CENCO [Democratic Republic of the Congo]; [Liberia Elections Observation Network](#) (LEON) [Liberia]; [Mourakiboun](#) [Tunisia]; [National Election Watch](#) (NEW) [Sierra Leone]; [Public Affairs Committee](#) (PAC) [Malawi]; [South Sudanese Network for Democracy and Elections](#) (SSuNDE) [South Sudan]; Sudanese Coalition for Democracy Support (SCDS) [Sudan]; [Yiaga Africa](#) [Nigeria]; and [Zimbabwe Election Support Network](#) (ZESN) [Zimbabwe].

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Contact Information

CDD-Ghana

Nana Ama Nartey
Ag. Communications Team Lead
+233 596913690
n.nartey@cddgh.org
<https://cddgh.org/>

Yiaga Africa

Mark Amaza.
Senior Communications Officer
+234 8103216621
mamaza@yiaga.org
<https://www.yiaga.org/>

NDI

Paulina Chavez Alonso
Press Secretary
pchavezalonzo@ndi.org
<https://www.ndi.org/>