



Sudanese Network for Democratic Elections Observation Statement on the Voter Registration Process

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I. Introduction:

The Sudanese Network for Democratic Elections (SuNDE) is a non-partisan coalition of 78 Sudanese civil society organizations committed to promoting the ability of the Sudanese public to participate freely, equitably, and effectively in transparent and democratic processes, and ensure that the outcomes of those processes reflect the will of citizens. SuNDE does not support any political party and is registered under the NGO Act of 2003.

SuNDE, formed in April 2009, has successfully set up State Steering Committees in all 10 states of Southern Sudan. SuNDE conducted 2 rounds of voter education on the voter registration process that directly reached over 200,000 citizens in September and October. SuNDE has concluded its observation of the voter registration process in southern Sudan and plans to observe the candidate nomination process, the campaign period, and polling day as well as conduct another round of voter education prior to Election Day.

II. Methodology for SuNDE Voter Registration Observation:

This statement is prepared on the basis of reports compiled by SuNDE State Steering Committees during the pre-registration period as well reports received from SuNDE's non-partisan observers who observed between November 19 - 22 and November 27 to 30.

SUNDE deployed over 180 accredited domestic observers across the 10 states of southern Sudan. SuNDE observers covered 102 geographic constituencies in 45 counties and 260 registration centers during its observation effort. SuNDE volunteers observed as stationary observers in teams of 2 during each phase of the observation effort.

SuNDE observers used a standard checklist and incident reporting form to record their observations. Each checklist and incident reporting form was entered into a database so that results could be analyzed and compared across states.

III. SUMMARY

Overall, at the voter registration centers that SuNDE observed, voter registration was conducted in a free, peaceful, and transparent manner. SuNDE observers reported that applicants were able to register without fear of intimidation or violence. The National Elections Committee, voter registration officials, and other election authorities helped make the registration process open and accessible for all citizens.

SuNDE would like to congratulate the people of southern Sudan for their enthusiastic and orderly participation in the voter registration process. Relatively large numbers of citizens turned out to register to vote. At the registration centers SuNDE observed, the average number of people registered per day was 144. The states with the highest average number of people registered per day at the registration centers SuNDE observed were Warrap (205) and Lakes (183) states.

However, SuNDE observers did observe some shortcomings in the voter registration exercise. These shortcomings included the National Election Commission not releasing the procedures of the voter registration process in a timely manner and election officials not adequately publicizing where and when voter registration would take place.

Other important issues SuNDE observed included the suspension of the voter registration process in some centers, mostly caused by a shortage of registration materials, and people registering without presenting themselves at the registration center.

IV. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

A) Election Administration

SuNDE congratulates the NEC, South Sudan High Committee (SSHC), and the State High Committees (SHC) for making the registration process open and accessible to citizens. SuNDE received cooperation from the electoral authorities at all levels and SuNDE observers found that registration officials largely understood the registration process and their roles within it. However SuNDE has noted some areas regarding administration of the process that could be improved.

1) Planning and Preparation

The voter registration process needed to be planned further in advance. The lack of advance planning delayed many important preparatory activities or caused activities to occur at the last minute, such as the training of voter registration officials.

NEC released guidelines for the voter registration process on October 4 and then made several amendments to the guidelines in the following weeks. With voter registration scheduled to begin on November 1, there was little time for election authorities to

conduct thorough trainings of registration personnel and organize all of the logistical arrangements for the voter registration process to proceed on time.

As a result the beginning of the registration period, scheduled to start on November 1, started late in many counties and in some cases it started late in entire states. For instance, in Western Equatoria voter registration did not start until November 4 in Yambio and not until November 6 in other counties in the state.

Inadequate planning also resulted in the SHCs being unable to provide the public with clear and timely information on the locations or voter registration centers and movements of voter registration teams making it difficult for the public to know when and where they should register.

Other issues related to inadequate planning included voter registration centers not having essential materials or running out of registration materials all together. For example 8% of the voter registration centers SuNDE observed did not have laminates and 7% did not have plastic seals. In addition, in 14% of the voter registration centers SuNDE observed, not all three voter registration officials were present.

2) Training of Voter Registration Staff

SuNDE observers reported that in 10% of the voter registration centers they observed, registration officials did not conduct the process according to the regulations. This included instances of registration staff allowing people to register for others who were not present.

In some voter registration centers security personnel were allowed to be located inside the voter registration center, instead of outside the center, and in some instances registration officials allowed security personnel to actively participate in the registration process. More thorough training of registration staff would help address these issues.

3) Observer Accreditation

SuNDE appreciates the quick accreditation given to it by election officials. However the rules and procedures for accrediting observers were not released until November 2, after the registration process had already started. This made it difficult for domestic observers to observe the beginning of the registration process. There was also confusion over what information observers needed to submit to election authorities to receive accreditation.

B) Voter Registration Process

SuNDE observers reported that in the vast majority of voter registration centers observed, the process went smoothly and generally complied with the guidelines set forth by the NEC.

1) Security At Voter Registration Centers

SuNDE volunteers observed that applicants were able to register freely and without intimidation or violence at the centers SuNDE observed.

In 99% of the voter registration centers SuNDE observed, there were no instances of bribery, intimidation, or violence. SuNDE observers reported only one incident of violence on November 22 in Nazareth constituency at the Nazareth Primary School voter registration center in Western Bahr Ghazal. This incident was quickly dealt with by the security personnel at the center.

SuNDE observers reported that security personnel were present at 77% of the voter registration centers that SuNDE observed. Security officials successfully maintained order in and around the registration centers and should be commended for their efforts.

2) Suspension of Voter Registration Process

The most common problem reported by SuNDE observers was the suspension of voter registration processes for either part of the day or, in some instances, the entire day. Suspension of the voter registration process may have deprived some citizens of their right to register for the upcoming elections.

Suspension of the voter registration process was reported in 7% of the centers SuNDE observed at and accounted for 57% of the incident reporting forms SuNDE observers submitted.

SuNDE observers reported that the main cause of voter registration processes being suspended was due to a lack of materials at the centers, most notably a lack of registration books and laminates. The instances of registration centers lacking materials increased significantly in the second round of SuNDE's observation which occurred on November 27 and 30.

Unity State, which registered very high number of voters, reported the most cases of the voter registration process being suspended due to lack of materials. However instances of registration centers closing due to lack of materials were also reported in Central Equatoria, Eastern Equatoria, Northern Bahr Ghazal, and Lakes State.

In some cases, the lack of materials caused some people to not receive registration receipts. SuNDE observers reported that in 5% of the voter registration centers observed few, some, or many people did not receive a receipt. For instance on Nov. 29 in Yei town at the Freedom Square registration center, 137 people were registered without receiving a receipt because the voter registration team lacked laminates.

For the two days SuNDE observed on November 29 and 30, the Upper Nile State High Committee suspended registration in Malakal County on account of the Eid el Adha holidays. This was the only report SuNDE received of a SHC suspending registration due to the Eid el Adha holidays.

3) People Being Registered by Others

Although not widespread, SuNDE observers reported several incidents of voters being registered without being present. People were sometimes allowed by voter registration officials to register for their wives, children, or elders. This was the second most common incident reported by SuNDE observers although it occurred in less than 5% of the centers observed.

For instance, on November 27 in Juba East constituency at the Gabate Market registration center in Central Equatoria, five people were registered without being present.

4) Other Observers

In 24% of the registration centers observed, SuNDE reported other non-partisan observers were present. In 38% of the registration centers SuNDE observed political party agents were present. The highest reported party agent presence was in Lakes, Northern Bahr Ghazal, Western Bahr Ghazal, and Western Equatoria. In those states, SuNDE observers reported party agents in over half the registration centers observed.

V. Recommendations

For National Elections Commission (NEC) and Election Authorities

- SuNDE recognizes the presence of security personnel at 77% registration centers it observed, and encourages the NEC to continue cooperating with the government and the Ministry of Interior to ensure security personnel are well trained and deployed to ensure a peaceful election day.
- SuNDE recommends electoral authorities to provide more training to election officials and security personnel so that they better understand electoral procedures and their roles in the electoral process.
- SuNDE urges the NEC to develop, publish, and communicate electoral timelines and procedures in a clear and timely manner to all stakeholders in the electoral process. This includes publishing the polling procedures as well as the locations of polling centers in each constituency well in advance of Election Day.
- SuNDE urges electoral authorities to announce accreditation procedures for the polling process in a timely manner. SuNDE also encourages electoral authorities to ensure that accreditation badges for non-partisan domestic observers and party agents are clearly distinguishable from one another.
- SuNDE encourages the NEC to ensure that polling stations are accessible, neutrally located, and well-demarcated.
- SuNDE suggests that more resources should be made available to the State High Committees and voter registration/election officials. These resources should be

given in a timely manner to expedite the smooth running of the election and election related activities.

For Political Parties

- SuNDE encourages all political parties to field more party agents during the polling process and in future voter registration exercises.
- As the campaign period approaches, SuNDE encourages political parties to promote peaceful campaign practices and encourage the participation of all parties and citizens.
- SuNDE also encourages political parties to increase their involvement in voter education.

For Citizens

- SuNDE encourages citizens to continue to participate in the electoral process and stay committed to a peaceful and democratic Sudan.

For the International Community

- SuNDE encourages the international community to continue to demonstrate their support for the democratic process in Sudan by supporting civil society organizations in their voter education and domestic observation efforts and continue providing technical advice to other electoral actors.

For Media

- Although SuNDE did not conduct monitoring of the media, SuNDE urges all the media houses to be responsible and unbiased and to promote peaceful elections.

SuNDE would like to thank the National Election Committee, South Sudan High Committee, all of the State High Committees, and all other officials who cooperated and assisted SuNDE in its observation effort.

SuNDE would also like to extend its most sincere gratitude and thanks to all of SuNDE's volunteers whose time and effort made this report possible.