



Communique

Meeting of the West Africa Election Observers Network (WAEON) on the status of implementation of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance in West Africa

The members of the West Africa Election Observers Network (WAEON) (a coalition of non-partisan citizen observation groups in 11 West African countries, namely: Burkina Faso, Cote D'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo) met at a symposium in Abuja, Nigeria, from the 5th to 8th May, 2013 to discuss preliminary findings of a study on the status of signatory, ratification and implementation in West Africa of the Africa Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.

Members of WAEON observed that although the West African sub-region has the highest number of countries on the continent who have ratified the Charter (11 out of 20); the sub-region remains the most unstable in Africa. The sub-region has recorded 10 out of 14 attempted disruptions of constitutional and democratic governance in Africa since the adoption of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance in 2007. WAEON is concerned with the wanton disregard, particularly by the military, of processes toward establishing democratic good governance in some countries in the sub-region. WAEON, once again, condemns recent disruptions of the development of constitutional governments in Mali and Guinea-Bissau by the military. We urge the military in the West African sub-region to defend statehood by submitting itself to constitutional democracy and to ensure that democratic principles of choosing governments are left with the people. Furthermore, we are worried with the absence of consensus between the ruling government and opposition groups in Guinea in developing a clear framework for transparent elections; and in Togo, the lack of clear timetable for organizing parliamentary and district assembly elections.

WAEON calls on all governments in West Africa to demonstrate greater commitment towards consolidating democracy in their countries by implementing fully the tenets of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance. Accordingly, we congratulate the member states of the African Union who have ratified the African Charter, notably **Mauritania, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Lesotho, Zambia, South Africa, Guinea, Chad, Niger, Guinea-Bissau, Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Cameroon, Malawi, Mali and Sudan**. We encourage the African countries that have not yet signed and ratified the Charter to do so as a matter of urgency.

We also invite all African stakeholders and supporters of democracy, notably civil society organizations and national legislatures, to take up the challenge of popularizing the Charter and advocating for the ratification and its subsequent implementation.

Finally, WAEON calls on international institutions such as the ECOWAS, AU and UN to amplify the need and importance of ratifying and implementing the Charter as a way of contributing to the strengthening and consolidation of democracy on the continent.

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