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Preliminary Observations of OAS Electoral Mission to Haiti

Port-au-Prince, August 10, 2015 – The day after the first round of voting in Haiti’s legislative elections, the OAS Electoral Observation Mission (OAS-EOM), made up of 28 observers covering 171 polling stations throughout the country’s departments, has drawn up a list of preliminary observations.

The OAS-EOM particularly hails the fact that this first round of legislative elections was held and highlights that most Haitian political forces have participated. OAS Electoral Mission Chief Mr. José Enrique Castillo Barrantes also expressed the determination of the CEP (Provisional Electoral Council) to carry through with this electoral process.

Because the electoral process is ongoing, notably at the vote tally center, these preliminary observations concern the pre-electoral process and the August 9 balloting activities.

As of the time of its arrival in the country, the Mission has been looking into issues pertaining to voter registration and dissemination of the information required by citizens to be able to cast their ballot.

The Observation Mission notes the CEP’s efforts in the area of electoral education. However, enhancements could be made in this regard in order to increase Election Day turn out. It would be particularly helpful to carry out a civic education campaign on how to vote targeting eligible voters.

The observers were able to ascertain on the ground that voter lists were posted at polling stations, a practice which greatly contributes to increased transparency. Notwithstanding, posting these lists in public places in advance of Election Day would have allowed citizens to readily identify the specific polling station where they were supposed to cast their ballot.

Our observers witnessed certain confusion as to voting procedures, most specifically in the case of senatorial elections. This problem could have been avoided by posting instructions at all polling stations in plain sight. Due to the fact that the voting procedure in the next round of balloting will be even more complex, it will be essential to make sure that information is more readily available. One way to alleviate this problem would be a greater presence of CEP monitors and public outreach workers.

The Mission has noted that a significant number of polling stations opened later than the scheduled time. However, it recognizes that the CEP made a significant effort to allow most voters affected by this delay to vote in any case. It was also established that the necessary voting materials were available at the beginning of Election Day at polling stations.

The Mission notes that a variety of political parties engaged in campaigns. Despite the late date of release of campaign financing and issuance of campaign officials’ accreditation, the Mission was able to observe several political events, campaign advertising and the presence of different parties at polling stations.

Observers’ reports note that, in many instances, the sites selected for voters to vote and polling station workers to stand were adjacent to each other and thus were not conducive to



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optimal voting conditions and to keeping the balloting secret. Remedying this issue is all the more important for the October elections, because there will be a higher number of polling stations.

The OAS-EOM also highlights the effort put forth by all political parties to ensure representation of women among both national observers and party leaders. In fact, based on the information gathered by the Mission, 33% of political party representatives and 24% of all national observers were women. The OAS-EOM encourages political parties to promote women leaders within their ranks.

The OAS Electoral Mission will pay special attention to the reports of authorities with regard to the violence reported on Election Day. We deplore the use of violence in the context of elections. It is important, though, to note that these violent actions were not widespread and that they did not affect the overall voting process, as most polling stations were able to successfully complete balloting without incident.

The Mission shall ensure a continued presence at the vote tally center, 24 hours a day 7 days a week, until all ballots are counted.

As for overall election financing, undisbursed funds must be provided in a timely fashion in order to ensure the success of the upcoming stage of the electoral process.

The OAS would like to thank officials for helping the Mission to properly discharge its duties. The Mission also wishes to thank the governments of Argentina, Brazil, the United States, Spain, France, Italy, Quebec, Mexico and Peru for their financial support, which made it possible to conduct this Mission.

A second Mission will be conducted on the occasion of the first round of the presidential elections in October. After the electoral process is completed, the Mission will submit a report providing observations and recommendations to the OAS Permanent Council with a mind toward helping to enhance Haiti's election system.