



MISSÃO DE OBSERVAÇÃO ELEITORAL DA UNIÃO EUROPEIA



SÃO TOMÉ E PRÍNCIPE

Eleições legislativas, regional e autárquicas, 25 Setembro 2022

Peaceful and orderly election day proceedings despite electoral framework limitations

São Tomé, 27 September 2022 – The Chief Observer Maria Manuel Leitão Marques, Member of the European Parliament, presented today the preliminary findings of the European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) on the legislative, regional and local elections held on 25 September in São Tomé and Príncipe.

“I congratulate the voters of São Tomé e Príncipe who cast their votes peacefully and patiently, as well as all polling staff: voting and counting operations were evaluated by EU EOM observers as satisfactory, with good level of transparency in the 157 observed polling stations. This is confirmed by the number of results protocols that we saw posted outside almost all the polling stations we observed” said Ms. Leitão Marques in a press conference today.

“Political parties were able to campaign freely and they did it peacefully. However, we observed significant disparity of resources among political parties and candidates, due to the absence of ceilings for campaign expenditure, and the difficult enforcement of the foreign funding ban”, she added.

The legal framework of São Tomé e Príncipe provides sufficient guarantees for transparent and democratic elections. However, its practical application was not always grounded on its consistent and rigorous interpretation.

The *Comissão Eleitoral Nacional* (CEN) conducted sufficient electoral preparations throughout the country, with significant international technical support. However, the timing of the CEN appointment by the National Assembly, and the unclear primary responsibility to carry out voter registration prevented the mandatory holding of the voter registry update. This is against international law and international principles. A potentially significant number of first-time voters were consequently disenfranchised.

The ambiguity of the Election Law allowed for a restrictive interpretation of the gender quota requirement. As a result, the 30 per cent gender quota was not systematically applied and women were not placed in eligible positions on the lists at all elected levels.

The state-owned media provided free and equal airtime to all contestants, fairly balanced campaign news coverage, and organised two inclusive election debates. Social media were consistently used to campaign mainly by the two major parties and the ruling party in the Autonomous Region of Príncipe.

District tabulations are ongoing and EU EOM observers are present to observe in all districts. The CEN preliminary tabulation has been conducted in a transparent manner, in the presence of parties’ representatives and international observers. It is desirable that the preliminary results are published by CEN for each polling station.

The EU deployed 42 observers from EU Member States as well as Norway. *“The EU EOM will remain in São Tomé and Príncipe to observe the remaining stages of the process, including the announcement of results and the adjudication of eventual complaints. Now the EU EOM is in a position to comment only on observation undertaken to date, and will later publish a final report including full analysis and recommendations for potential improvements,”* the Chief Observer concluded.

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