



Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society for Election (CECOE)

A Press Release Regarding the Commencement of Voting in Polling Stations

June 21, 2021

Addis Ababa - In the period leading up to the sixth national and regional elections of the country, CECOIE recruited and trained over 3,000 observers in six regional states and two city administrations holding elections on 21 June 2021. On Election Day CECOIE deployed observers across the regions as well as Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa to systematically observe and report on voting and counting. These observers use a real time reporting mechanism to transmit coded text messages evaluating key components of the electoral process. Currently, 2,125 trained accredited observers have reported into CECOIE's data center and the Coalition expects reports to increase after voting concludes given that some observers are located in remote parts of the country with limited telecom coverage. The Coalition has continued to analyze and verify the data as it is reported by its observers throughout election day. As such, the coalition would like to note that the numbers below may vary in the final observation report.

The following is a press release based on data collected from observers based on the arrival of observers and the opening and set-up of polling stations. This data was collected from over 2,000 polling stations across the country:

- Approximately 93% of observers deployed by CECOIE reported that polling station officials were present when they arrived at the polling station;
- In 3% of observers were not allowed to enter the polling station despite presenting the necessary accreditation to polling station officials;
- In 98% of the polling stations visited by reporting CECOIE observers, voting started before 7:00 AM in the morning
- Another report by observers was that 89% of the polling stations were not located in a military camp, a police station or a political party building, all of which are prohibited places to open PSs.

- In line with the regulation by NEBE on election day procedures, approximately 89% of polling stations reported that there weren't campaigning activities or materials near the polling station.
- Regarding accessibility, about 96% of observers reported that both male and female voters can equally access locations selected as polling stations. In conjunction, only 11% of polling stations visited by reporting observers were identified as inaccessible without assistance for persons with disabilities and mobility issues (the elderly, persons carrying small children, etc.).
- Regarding COVID19 protocols, observers reported that 20% of polling stations were set up in a way that ensures social distancing whereas 53% of polling stations were only partially set up to ensure social distancing measures.
- In conjunction with this, the inside of the polling station was not set up in a manner that ensures social distancing in 8% of the reports submitted by observers while 50% of polling stations were only partially set-up to ensure social distancing.
- During the opening of polling stations, in 99% of polling stations visited by reporting observers ballot boxes were shown to be empty before being sealed.
- Regarding polling station officials, an average of four polling station officials were present in polling stations according to SMS reports submitted by observers. Encouragingly, an average of two electoral officials were female while in 21% of polling stations visited by reporting observers the chairperson of the polling station was female.
- Finally - CECO's preliminary findings based on the reports it received since voting started this morning - in 90% of polling stations party agents as well as other observers groups were present in the polling station.

CECOE has already received a total of 118 critical incidents of which 93 have already been verified. The largest number of critical incidents so far have been received from SNNPR and Amhara regions. The most common types of critical incident so far were initial refusal to permit observers into polling stations and missing polling station materials. This data is still being verified and critical incident reports are still being received.

As noted in the opening segment of this press release, CECOE is not drawing conclusions until voting and counting have finished and CECOE has been able to fully verify and analyse its current and pending data. The coalition expects to release a comprehensive report as soon as the necessary verification and analysis is complete. Meanwhile, CECOE encourages all

Ethiopians to remain calm, law abiding, and allow the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia to work and conclude the process of voting and counting.

For further information please contact Mr. Yosef Makonen on +251913923542 or email us at info.cecoe.org. Additionally, you may also visit our Twitter and Facebook pages as well as our official website to get important insights into the election.