



# WEST AFRICA ELECTION OBSERVERS NETWORK (WAEON) NEWSLETTER

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## Introduction

WAEON's Newsletter provides news and information on activities undertaken by the Secretariat and Network members in their respective countries as well as updates on elections and governance issues in West Africa. This second edition for 2020 covers the period April to June, and provides highlights on electoral developments in West Africa and activities of WAEON member organizations.

## Elections and Governance News

- *Burkina Faso: Fair elections necessary for country's security*

As Burkina Faso gears up for its presidential and legislative elections later this year, the Catholic Church in the country has warned that a fraudulent election will further hurt the country's precarious security situation. The country's Catholic Bishops believe that the election which is scheduled for November 22, will be critical to the peace

and stability of the country. Read more [here](#).

### *MPs recommend postponement of legislative elections for one year*

Meanwhile, Parliamentarians are highlighting security concerns with regards to holding parliamentary elections which had initially been scheduled for November 22, 2020 together with the presidential election. The Parliamentarians however want the date for the presidential election maintained. A report to this effect was adopted unanimously by the Members of Parliament (MPs).

After a tour of the five regions most affected by insecurity, the MPs believe it is impossible to organize a legislative ballot capable of appointing legitimate representatives of the populations. In a report with about 20 recommendations which was submitted to the Head of State, the Burkinabè parliamentarians proposed to postpone legislative elections until the end of 2021.

The President of the Assembly cited the nature of security threats as one of the main reasons for the postponement of the parliamentary elections. *"In some regions or provinces, it is almost impossible to set foot there,"* explained Alassane Bala Sakandé, president of the Assembly. *"What can be the representativeness of a deputy elected by two municipalities out of 26 or 30? What legitimacy will such an assembly have?"* he asked rhetorically. It is not normal to set up an assembly after an election in which certain parts of the country have been excluded, he concluded. Read more [here](#).

- ***Côte d'Ivoire: Presidential election in Ivory Coast: Henri Konan Bédié announces his candidacy for the nomination of the PDCI***

Former President Henri Konan Bédié, aged 86, "agreed" to be a presidential candidate for the Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI) for the presidential election in October. Mr. Bédié who was president from 1993 to 1999 confirmed his candidature in a statement on June 20, 2020. Read more [here](#).

- *Why the government is giving voters a deadline*

Ivorian authorities extended the deadline for the electoral census by one week and the expiration date for identity cards by one year. This decision was ascribed to several reasons among which the COVID-19

pandemic and some administrative delays was dominant. The exercise which was supposed to run from June 10 to June 24, was expected to finally end on July 1. Read more [here](#).

- *Police and gendarmes trained to better secure the electoral process*

A training workshop for internal security forces opened on July 1 in Abidjan to strengthen the capacities of Ivorian police and gendarmes to effectively provide security during the electoral processes in Ivory Coast. This training session was co-organized by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Ivorian Ministry of Security and Civil Protection. Read more [here](#).

- *The Gambia: Draft law restricts presidential terms*

A new draft law for The Gambia seeks to ensure the shortest spell in office for any leader since independence in 1965. However, the cabinet of President Adama Barrow was not impressed with the contents. The Constitutional Review Commission in March presented President Barrow with a copy of the draft constitution. It will be passed to the National Assembly in August. Read more [here](#).

- ***Ghana: EC sued for the third time over new voters' register compilation***

Ghana's Electoral Commission (EC) was sued for its decision to compile a new voter register. This third writ unlike the previous two, was filed at an Accra High Court by a Member of Parliament (MP) who wanted the court to rule that the EC does not have the mandate to compile a new register.

The Supreme Court, in a unanimous decision on June 25, 2020 ruled that the Commission as an independent body had the power to compile a new register

In light of this, the EC begun the compilation of a new voter register June 30 ahead of the December 7, 2020 polls

Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

### ***Nigeria: Call for guidelines for political rallies and electoral activities in a period of COVID-19***

The Governor of Edo State in Nigeria, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, has charged the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) to set necessary guidelines to regulate the conduct of political rallies and elections in the face of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic ravaging the country, as political parties prepare to hold primary elections in Edo State.

The Governor made the submission when he received the Director General of the NCDC, Chikwe Ihekweazu, at the Government House in Benin City, the Edo State capital on June 20. Mr Obaseki urged the NCDC to

support the state in developing a framework to check the spread of the virus as political parties hold their primary elections. Read more [here](#).

### **By-Elections - 10 Constituencies Awaiting INEC to Fill Vacant Seats**

A total of 10 federal and state assembly seats are currently waiting for the green light of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to be filled.

Until July 10, the Commission had nine of such elections to conduct, apart from the two off-cycle governorship elections in Edo and Ondo states scheduled for November 19 and October 10 respectively.

INEC Chairman, Prof. Mahmood Yakubu had said at a virtual meeting with the Resident Electoral Commissioners (RECs) that in addition to the Edo and Ondo governorship elections, the Commission was also making preparations to conduct nine legislative by-elections. Read more [here](#).

- ***Sierra Leone: Drops on Global Peace Index***

Sierra Leone dropped by 18 places on the Global Peace Index between 2018 and 2019, ranking now at No. 52 out of 163 countries, and is listed among the five sub-Saharan countries recording the worst deterioration due to political and economic instability (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2019; Sesay, 2020).

Political tensions have been fuelled by recurrent conflicts between the two leading political parties before and after the March 2018 general elections, continuing with a violent clash of their youth supporters in January; the controversial annulment of the election of 10 opposition members of Parliament; and allegations that President Maada Bio manipulates the judicial system (Abdul, 2020; Mansaray, 2020; Niba, 2019). Unemployment is widely seen as contributing to the prevalence of crime in the country (Garda World, 2019).

The Afrobarometer survey conducted in July 2018 shows high levels of fear of political violence and intimidation and a dramatic increase in the perception that party politics lead to violence. But a majority of Sierra Leoneans are satisfied with the government's efforts to prevent violence. Read more [here](#).

- ***Liberia: Legislature Adopts Resolution Postponing Midterm Senatorial Elections, Referendum to December 2020***

Members of the 54<sup>th</sup> Legislature have adopted a joint resolution postponing the midterm Senatorial elections and national referendum previously scheduled for October 13, 2020 to December 8, 2020 – one week ahead of President George Weah's proposed date of December 15, 2020.

Based on the advice of the National Elections Commission (NEC), President Weah had earlier requested the Legislature to postpone the elections due to the inconveniences caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Read more [here](#).

## **Activities by WAEON Member Organizations**

### **Convention de la Société Civile Ivoirienne (CSCI), Côte d'Ivoire**

#### *Awareness on voter registration*

On June 16, the CSCI regional co-ordination held an in-person and on-line Regional Co-ordination Workshop to discuss the revision of the Electoral List in Côte d'Ivoire.

There was a deployment of 57 officers to observe the revision of the electoral list. Officers were deployed to the outskirts of Abidjan and within Abidjan on June 18 and 19 respectively.

As part of the revision of the electoral list, CSCI carried out the deployment of its sensitizers agents on the ground. The National Coordinator of the CSCI, Mahamadou Kouma, stated that the registering for the electoral list, is a citizen act, and called on the population of voting citizens to participate in the ongoing operation. The mission of the deployed officers was to raise awareness of the revision of the electoral list to ensure its credibility.

On June 24, the CSCI further held an awareness caravan for registration on the electoral list in the municipality of Adjamé. Areas, markets and streets were visited to inform people about the arrangements related to the recruitment operation. This exercise ended on June 30.



*Awareness caravan launched by the CSCI in Adjamé*

## **National Election Watch (NEW), Sierra Leone**

National Election Watch (NEW), with funds from the European Union Delegation to Sierra Leone, launched a project titled "Enhancing Domestic Electoral Observer Organisations and Citizens Participation in Democratic Governance Reforms Leading to the 2022 and 2023 Electoral Cycle."

The project, is designed to specifically support NEW to become more effective in promoting democratic and governance reforms, peace, reconciliation and national cohesion with the purpose of enhancing citizens' participation.

According to the Project Officer of NEW, Charles Keif Kobai, the project seeks to address four key result areas:

1. Building internal processes and systems to strengthen NEW's governance with the aim to strengthen the internal capacity of its staff and Strategic Management Committee
2. Design and develop civic and electoral education to rekindle citizens' interest to engage democratic processes.
3. Follow up and roll out the election's observer missions recommendations that they proffered after the 2018 elections.
4. Participate in civil registration process and elections observation by ensuring the training and deployment of observers in line with appropriate strategies to cover the registration process.

In a statement, the Acting Chief Electoral Commissioner of the National Electoral Commission, Commissioner Edmond Sylvester Alpha, said that the project was very timely and that without a healthy environment, democracy and good governance will not thrive.

Before formally launching the project, His Excellency, Vice President Dr. Mohamed Juldeh Jalloh emphasized the need to address citizens systematic disengagement. He attributed the citizens' lethargy and disinterestedness in governance on systematic disengagement. He called on NEW to use this project to rekindle and

restore citizens' interest in democratic processes.

Meanwhile, with the existing threats of the COVID-19, NEW has developed implementation strategies and guidelines to direct its interventions in supporting the government to contain the spread of this pandemic.

The launch of the project is in line with President, Rtd Brigadier Julius Maada Bio's recent call on civil society organisations and development partners to support government's efforts to strengthen democratization and good governance in Sierra Leone.

NEW is very confident and proactive to work with every stakeholder in achieving. Read more [here](#).



*Launch of the 'Enhancing Domestic Electoral Observer Organization and Citizens Participation Reforms in Democratic Governance Reforms Leading to the 2022 & 2023 Electoral Cycle'*

## **Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO), Ghana**

### ***Statement on Voter Register impasse***

Ahead of the 2020 Biometric Voter Register (BVR) exercise in Ghana, CODEO released a press statement expressing its concerns about the inability of key stakeholders to forge a broad consensus over a credible and acceptable approach to compile the voter

register, especially with the COVID-19 pandemic affecting the lives of Ghanaians. Read more [here](#).

### ***Deployment of 100 observers for the Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) Exercise***

CODEO deployed a total of 100 observers to observe the 2020 voter registration exercise which takes place from June 30, 2020 to August 6, 2020.



CODEO observer trainings in Tamale and Kumasi, Ghana

Ahead of their deployment observers went through a one-day training session to enable them to conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times during observation.

In its first statement on the conduct of the voter registration exercise, CODEO highlighted a number of issues including the following;

- Some level of laxity with regards to adherence to COVID-19 health and safety protocols, particularly the lack of social distancing at some registration centers observed.
- Limited public awareness about the movement plan of registration teams

which contributed to crowding some registration centers

- The practice of party agents collecting voter information on newly-issued voter ID cards after a person has registered should stop as there are other mechanisms for political parties to collect information about the registration process.
- CODEO therefore urged the EC to intensify public education about the exercise and called on the general public to exercise optimum responsibility in ensuring that human lives are not endangered unnecessarily. Read more [here](#).

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### Note to WAEON Members

*WAEON Network members are encouraged to submit news entries to the Secretariat for inclusion in the WAEON Newsletter. Kindly send us with your views, comments and suggestions on what could be done to improve the network. The next edition (October – December) will be released in January 2020. Please send your entries to: [info@waeon.org](mailto:info@waeon.org)*