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Policy

UN Electoral Assistance: Supervision, Observation, Panels and Certification

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POLICY ON UN Electoral Assistance: Supervision, Observation, Panels and Certification

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A. PURPOSE AND RATIONALE

A1. Purpose

1. This policy provides definitions, mandating authorities, policy principles and key elements for the following four types of United Nations (UN) electoral assistance activities:
 - a) Supervision of elections
 - b) Election observation
 - c) Expert panels
 - d) Certification of elections

2. This policy is complementary to and expands on the policy “Principles and Types of UN Electoral Assistance” and should be read in conjunction with it. Its purpose is to:
 - provide a more detailed description of each of the four UN electoral assistance activities listed above;
 - refer to the role of the UN Electoral Assistance Division (EAD) of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) in supporting such activities;
 - aim at ensuring consistency and coherence across the UN system.

A2. Rationale

3. The UN Focal Point for Electoral Assistance Matters, the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (hereafter “the Focal Point”), is the system lead in the development, issuance and dissemination of UN electoral policy. The General Assembly and the Secretary-General have repeatedly highlighted the importance of system-wide coherence and consistency and reaffirmed the leadership role of the Focal Point in this regard. ¹ UN electoral policy is defined as the normative framework and prescriptive guidance that apply to all UN entities providing electoral assistance. This policy has been developed as part of the efforts of the Focal Point to develop a comprehensive set of UN system-wide electoral policies.

¹ This includes successive General Assembly resolutions since 1991 (most recently resolution 74/158) and decisions of the Secretary-General, No. 2010/23 (12 October 2010 meeting of the Policy Committee) and No. 2011/23 (10 November 2011 meeting of the Policy Committee).

B. SCOPE

4. This policy applies to all entities of the UN system that provide electoral assistance. For this policy, United Nations is understood to refer to the entire UN system, that is, all UN departments, funds, programmes, entities, trust funds, commissions, peacekeeping missions, special political missions, peacebuilding missions, and other bodies. It may be particularly useful for representatives of the Secretary-General (Special Representatives, Special Envoys, Executive Representatives), Resident Coordinators (RCs), UNDP Resident Representatives and drafters of relevant Secretariat reports to the General Assembly and/or Security Council.
 5. The UN provides electoral assistance to Member States upon their request or when mandated by the Security Council or the General Assembly. Following a needs assessment led by EAD and a decision by the Focal Point, the UN may implement a range of activities related to electoral assistance.
 6. In some cases, the UN Secretariat is requested to put in place specific measures aimed at assessing an electoral process, which is the subject of this policy. This differs from technical electoral assistance as covered by other UN policies.
 7. Over the years, the UN's definitions on types of electoral assistance discussed in this policy have varied, reflecting both evolving terminology in global electoral practice and flexibility for meeting country-specific situations. This policy attempts to define the UN's electoral assistance in the following types: supervision, observation, expert panels, and certification.
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C. POLICY

C1. Common guidelines for the coordination of UN activities to assess an election

Relations with EAD

8. A clear communication and coordination line will be established and maintained between the teams entrusted with the implementation of the mandates described below and UN headquarters. In particular, regular exchange of information must be ensured between these teams and EAD to ensure coherence and dialogue.

Relations with the UN presence on the ground

9. A clear communication and coordination line will also be established and maintained between the teams entrusted with the implementation of the mandates described below and the UN presence on the ground (i.e., the leadership and relevant parts of UN missions and of UN country teams).
10. It is also important to maintain the distinction between different UN-supported electoral activities in cases where the UN is both providing technical assistance and undertaking one of the four assistance activities covered in this policy. The policy related to peacekeeping, peacebuilding and special political mission settings, according to which electoral assistance

is delivered in all mission settings in a fully integrated manner,² does not apply to these cases, specifically with regard to the relationship between the team carrying out one of the types of assistance activities outlined in this policy and the technical assistance team. In order to avoid a conflict of interest between the two mandates, coordination -- and not integration -- should be the guiding principle. Technical assistance will continue to be delivered in an integrated manner in accordance with UN policy.

C2. Definition and methodology

11. In recent years, a degree of international consensus has been reached on modalities of election observation, including on its methodology. In contrast, electoral "supervision", "monitoring" (by expert panels) and "certification" are more complicated and potentially politically fraught activities. There are no universally agreed definitions and modalities for these three terms, even amongst electoral experts. In some cases, there may be a potential overlap in the different terms used. For example, supervision and certification can, at times, be difficult to distinguish. Moreover, each of these three terms (supervision; monitoring (by panels); and certification) has varied somewhat according to the circumstances where such activities were carried out. Consequently, it is important that a clear definition be given in the relevant Security Council or General Assembly mandate of a UN operation in which the term is used, for the sake of clarity. As stated in the Secretary-General's first report on "Enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections" in 1991, "agreement on and clear understanding of the terms of reference of the [electoral verification] mission to be undertaken and of its modalities are also important prerequisites for its success and to determine the cost of the operation". This also applies to the other forms of assistance in this policy.
12. These types of electoral assistance activities are sensitive, and three of the four activities discussed in this policy (supervision, observation, and certification) require mandates by the General Assembly or Security Council. These cases are not common, but when mandated, they usually accompany peace processes where confidence building in a post-conflict electoral process requires specific attention. They may, for example, serve as an additional instrument to assist national stakeholders in overcoming distrust in the electoral process, and/or provide the relevant UN body with an assessment of the process for its own further deliberations.
13. In light of the above, delineated methodologies are required to maintain consistency and ensure overall UN coherence while recognizing the special nature of each context in which these mandates are carried out.
14. The activities outlined in this policy will have varying political and legal implications (as well as operational and resource implications), and depending on the activity undertaken, some may involve the Member State ceding a degree of sovereignty over its electoral process to the UN. Given this, careful consideration is needed when deciding on which electoral assistance activity would be most appropriate for a given situation. The Secretary-General has stressed the importance of meeting certain criteria before the UN agrees to such

² The Secretary-General's decision 2010/23 states in part that "all electoral assistance in peacekeeping, peacebuilding, or special political mission settings will be delivered in a fully integrated manner from the outset, whether or not the mission is structurally integrated. As a norm, and subject to existing guidance on integration, electoral components in structurally integrated missions will report to the SRSG or head of mission through the Deputy SRSG who is also Resident Coordinator."

requests, critically among them: “where the induction of a United Nations presence in the electoral process of a State at a critical point in its political life is sought by the Government concerned, there must be broad public support in the State for the United Nations assuming such a role”.³ While this criterion applies to electoral verification, it is an essential consideration applicable to all forms of assistance set out in this policy.

Supervision of elections

Definition

15. The term “supervision” is used to refer to situations in which the UN is mandated to supervise key aspects of an electoral process. It was originally developed during the UN’s involvement in referenda and elections in the context of General Assembly mandates related to decolonisation during the 1950s and 1960s. In that historical context, supervision also varied according to the specific case, but often had the objective of ensuring that the right to self-determination was exercised. In implementing these supervision mandates, the UN often established a supervision commissioner or a small panel (commission) whose role and authority could include: being consulted on, reviewing, and giving an opinion on, the electoral legal and procedural framework; being consulted on, and sometimes approving, steps in the management of electoral processes; and reporting or making some assessment of the vote to the mandating UN legislative organ. In such contexts, the progress of the election may have been contingent upon the UN’s endorsement of each phase of the electoral process. Where the UN might not have been satisfied with electoral procedures or their implementation in a particular phase, the electoral management body (EMB) conducting the process may have been expected to act upon UN recommendations and make any necessary adjustments.

Mandate requirement

16. UN electoral supervision requires a mandate from the General Assembly or the Security Council.

Policy Principles

17. Such assistance has been very rarely provided. Within the meaning given above, it has been undertaken in the context of decolonization only, and at the request of the relevant government. It requires a mandate from the General Assembly or the Security Council, which would determine the nature of the supervisory responsibilities of the UN. The most recently UN supervised elections were in Namibia in 1989.⁴

Key Elements/Methodology

18. UN typically has a supervisory role over the electoral process, which may include the requirement that the UN be consulted on key decisions by the EMB and/or by other authorities involved in the elections, or that such decisions or other steps in the electoral process require UN endorsement or approval. As part of its work, the UN may review various aspects of the electoral legal framework for compliance with national legislation and

³ Report of the Secretary-General on enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections, A/46/609 of 19 November 1991, para. 79.

⁴ In its resolution 431 of 30 January 1976, the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to appoint a Special Representative to ensure “the early independence of Namibia through free elections under the supervision and control of the United Nations.”

international obligations related to elections and offer an opinion on the matter. The mandate may also involve submitting some assessment to the mandating organ. Close coordination with the relevant authorities would be required, as they would be the ones responsible for the actual administration of the election. In some past cases of supervision of elections and referendums in the decolonization context where “a commissioner or a commission was appointed, the basic electoral process for the organization were drawn up in consultation with the United Nations Commissioner and the wording of the question in the ballot to be put to the voters in the case of a referendum was formulated or approved by the appropriate United Nations organ, which afterwards endorsed or approved the results of the vote”.⁵

19. The UN, through its own supervisory activities, may assess both the process and the results. The EMB conducting the process might then be expected to act upon UN recommendations and make any necessary adjustments.
20. EAD plays a leading role in developing the methodology based on internationally recognized principles and taking into account the specific conditions on the ground.
21. Supervision of elections can be an extremely complex operation, and may involve a considerable commitment of personnel, time and financial resources. Staffing details have to be decided on a case-by-case basis.
22. Where an assessment by the UN is mandated, the assessment is forwarded in the form of a report to the mandating UN organ, which may endorse or approve the result of the vote. In the past, this organ has been most often the Trusteeship Council whereas today it is more likely to be the Security Council or the General Assembly.

Election observation

Definition

23. Electoral observation consists of systematic collection of information and an assessment of an electoral process by direct observation on the basis of established methodologies, often analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data. Election observers do not participate in the organization of the electoral process, but are accredited by the electoral authorities, generally following an invitation by national authorities. The process of observation leads to an evaluative public statement on the overall *conduct* of the electoral process. Election observation is concerned with election results only to the degree that they are reported honestly and accurately in a transparent and timely manner. International observation missions generally refrain from publicly commenting on the validity of the outcome.
24. UN election observation entails the deployment of a mission to observe the different phases of an electoral process and to report back to the Secretary-General, which includes the issuance of a public statement on the conduct of the election. UN election observers will, as a rule, not comment on the accuracy or credibility of the outcome overall, unless authorized by the Secretary-General. While election observation can enhance the transparency of the electoral process and may contribute to public confidence in the credibility of an election, it is not meant to validate the results or determine the legitimacy of the process.

⁵ A/46/609, para. 12.

Mandate requirement

25. UN electoral observation requires a mandate from the General Assembly or the Security Council.

Policy Principles

26. The assessment by the UN is of the electoral process only (and not the outcome, as explained above), and is without formal legal implication. However, this is often understood and perceived as a judgment on the legitimacy of the elected body and/or individual members, and potentially of the electoral process and work of the EMB. Considering that this may have broad political implications and serve as an important indicator for electoral stakeholders of the credibility of the election process, the public statement issued by the observation mission must be drafted carefully.
27. The UN rarely observes elections. The last UN election observation missions were in Burundi in 2015 and in Fiji in 2001 – and previous to that in the mid 1990s. In contrast, other organizations (e.g., intergovernmental organizations of a regional character and international non-governmental organizations) have a comparative advantage in this field and tend to be active in deploying missions. The UN encourages the involvement of regional organizations in election observation, while it maintains its leading role in the provision of other types of electoral assistance. The UN also advocates for observation by citizen observer organizations.
28. The UN should in principle not observe elections where it is providing technical assistance. This is due to the potential conflict of interest of observing an electoral process being organized with UN technical assistance. In Member States where technical assistance is provided, election observation can be only conducted simultaneously when mandated by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council. In such a case, efforts should be made to have different parts of the UN/UN entities take on observation and technical assistance.
29. The UN at times provides support to international election observers when so requested, which is a separate activity and is done in accordance with the policy “UN Support to International Election Observers”. In those cases, however, the UN does not issue any public statement or act as an observer but is merely a service provider for international observers from other organizations.

Key Elements/Methodology

30. The UN is an observer of the electoral process, which is the responsibility of national authorities. When observing, the UN has no direct or shared responsibility for the conduct of an election and does not interfere in the process or decide on its credibility and legitimacy.
31. The UN assesses the process based on internationally recognized principles for elections as set forth in international legal instruments, including those of a regional character ratified by the concerned Member State, and other legal and political commitments.
32. EAD will develop, in each case, a methodology based on the principles set out in the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers endorsed by the UN Secretariat and other international

principles.⁶ It will also establish the composition of the mission, including the number of observers on a case- by-case basis following consultations with the concerned Member State and other relevant stakeholders. During this decision process, factors such as the size of the country, the number of voters, the number of polling stations and the desired coverage of the process as well as security conditions will be considered.

33. International electoral observation missions are generally large-scale operations that should include a core team of experts and both long- and short-term observers from countries other than the state being observed. UN electoral observation missions are headed by a senior figure appointed by the Secretary-General.
34. An election observation mission generally has a presence throughout the entire electoral process, which can include electoral boundary delimitation, voter registration, candidate nomination, the campaign period, polling and counting, and post-elections developments, including the publication of results and electoral dispute resolution. It also seeks to meet various deployment principles, such as adequate geographical and demographic coverage, aiming to visit a sufficient number of polling stations on election day to provide for a representative sample.
35. Observation missions issue public statements and reports of their findings, including an assessment on the conduct of the election and recommendations for improvement to the process. With very rare exceptions as may be authorized by the Secretary-General, UN observation missions will not comment on the legitimacy of the outcome, focusing rather on providing an assessment of the electoral process.

Expert panels

Definition

36. UN expert panels entail the deployment of a small team to follow and report on an electoral process. A panel can be an electoral expert monitoring team, composed of experts in such areas as electoral processes or mediation, or a high-level panel composed of eminent persons of political, electoral and/or mediation profiles. Relying on its own observations as well as those of other international and national stakeholders, the panel will provide an independent assessment of the overall political and technical conduct of an election. The assessment is provided to the Secretary-General through the Focal Point or to the Focal Point. Unlike observation missions, panels are not necessarily present in the country throughout an entire electoral process (limiting their visits to strategically important periods) and may not make their findings public.

Mandate requirement

37. No General Assembly or Security Council resolution is required to deploy an expert panel.

⁶ Those include the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which, while not legally binding, have a self-standing moral standard. Such principles are also established in international legal instruments such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other treaties and political commitments signed and ratified by the interested state, including regional commitments, which clearly promote and protect basic human rights including freedom of expression, information, assembly, association and movement. The inherent political nature of electoral processes will be taken into due consideration.

A mandate for such a panel may be provided by the Secretary-General or the Focal Point, at the request of the Member State.

Policy Principles

38. A panel can serve as a political/good offices tool, which can play a role as a confidence-building and diplomatic incentive. Continuing assessment by the panel in an environment where their recommendations directly and positively affect the management of an electoral process, may contribute to the acceptance of electoral results by national stakeholders and the international community.
39. If the panel is serving as a political/good offices tool, the question of the public or private nature of its assessment should be weighed against the needs in the particular context. In some cases, public statements/assessments can be useful confidence-building tools.
40. Panels must take care not to be, or be perceived to be, monitoring technical assistance if provided by the UN, but only the electoral process as managed by the national authorities. There should be no perception of a UN conflict of interest. Even in UN mission settings, panels therefore shall not be conducted in an integrated manner but coordinate with the UN mission.
41. Among the UN expert panels deployed includes to Nepal in 2008, Sudan in 2010-2011, Algeria in 2009, 2012, 2014 and 2017, New Caledonia in 2018, and Venezuela in 2021.

Key Elements/Methodology

42. The panel monitors an electoral process that is organized and conducted by national authorities. The UN has no direct or shared responsibility for the conduct of the election, regardless of any technical assistance the UN may be providing.
43. The panel assesses the overall political and technical conduct of elections, in accordance with its mandate. The panel's report may include recommendations for future electoral processes.
44. EAD will develop, in each case, a methodology for the UN panel based on internationally recognized principles for elections as set forth in international legal instruments, including regional instruments ratified by the concerned Member State, and other political commitments. The overall assessment framework should be discussed by the expert panel and the national stakeholders in consultation with UN headquarters and the UN presence on the ground.
45. UN panels have generally comprised from three to five senior figures with electoral and political expertise. The exact number is decided upon by the Focal Point taking into due consideration the expertise required, gender and geographical representation, and following appropriate consultations (including with the concerned Member State). Usually, panel members will be appointed by the Secretary-General upon recommendation from the Focal Point. They may make one or more short visits to the country, including on and around election day. A panel also requires additional personnel; its size varies from a small secretariat to a large field monitoring presence.
46. The panel will rely not only on direct observation, but also on information gathered from a

variety of sources, including state and electoral authorities, political parties and candidates, civil society, citizen and international observers and UN and other international presences in country.

47. The panel should coordinate closely with the UN presence in country (missions, RCs, country teams) to ensure an adequate and efficient flow of information, coherence in assessments and messaging, and avoid areas of overlap. In many cases, the UN structures in country may be willing to provide administrative and logistical support and may help to ensure that the panel is aware of the overall political context in which elections are taking place. The panel reports (to the Secretary-General through the Focal Point or to the Focal Point) in accordance with its mandate. Unless specifically authorized by the Secretary-General or Focal Point, panels and their members do not issue public statements. The report may include an assessment of the credibility of the overall process. Such an assessment should, as a rule, remain confidential, unless it is deemed helpful to make it public in a given situation. Public statements may be issued in special cases as a confidence-building measure, and the panel may take a more high-profile approach.

Certification of elections

Definition

48. The term “certification” is widely understood in electoral practice as the legal process by which a national authority approves or “certifies” the final results of its own election. However, on rare occasions, the Security Council or General Assembly may ask the Secretary-General to play a “certification” role. This used to be referred to also as “verification” and both terms, “verification” and “certification”, have been used for this type of assistance. In such cases, the UN is requested to certify the credibility of all, or specific aspects of an electoral process conducted by the national election authority. The UN is required to produce a final statement attesting to the election’s credibility. The modalities will vary according to context.

Mandate requirement

49. UN electoral certification requires a mandate from the General Assembly or the Security Council.

Policy Principles

50. UN certification implies a pronouncement on the legitimacy of those elected to hold office. It is therefore a sensitive mandate and should in principle be considered on a limited and exceptional basis.
51. As in the case of electoral observation and expert panels, caution should be exercised if the UN is mandated to certify an election in a case where electoral assistance is also being provided by the UN system to prevent a conflict of interest. Only if specifically mandated by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council should the UN certify an election while it is simultaneously providing technical assistance.
52. UN verification missions were mostly conducted in the early 1990s, such as in Angola, El Salvador, Haiti, Nicaragua, South Africa and Mozambique. Certification was carried out in

Timor-Leste in 2007 and in Cote d'Ivoire in 2010.⁷

Key Elements/Methodology

53. The UN certifies an electoral process that is organized and conducted by national authorities. The UN has no direct or shared responsibility for administering the process, even though it may separately provide technical assistance.
54. The UN authority or entity with the certifying mandate may intervene in the process during different phases to point out procedural deficiencies and inaccuracies through periodic and/or special reporting.
55. In establishing the methodology, EAD will consult with the UN presence on the ground, thereby taking into consideration the specific mandate and contextual elements of the particular electoral process.
56. The mandate to certify the elections may rest with the UN mission as part of its mandate or an ad hoc UN entity established solely for this purpose. Unless otherwise determined by the mandating organ, UN certification is conducted by a team of senior electoral experts appointed by the Secretary-General. Composition and staffing will vary depending on the mandate and circumstances.
57. A UN electoral certification mandate requires the UN to pronounce upon the credibility of an election. It is both a technical and political judgment based on national and international legal instruments, including regional instruments ratified by the concerned Member State, and other political commitments. As such, it has at least two elements:
 - A pronouncement on the legitimacy of the entire electoral process (e.g., electoral boundary delimitation, voter registration, candidate nomination, campaign, polling and counting, tabulation of results, electoral dispute resolution).
 - A pronouncement on whether the results can be considered to reflect the will of the voters.
58. The methodology should be tailored to the particular electoral process, reflecting the inherent political nature of elections, while using clearly established criteria, internationally recognized principles and detailed guidelines for electoral practices. In this sense, the methodology should consider the electoral process in its entirety, avoiding an approach by which single aspects of the process are “graded” separately. The methodology should be clearly defined and clearly communicated to relevant national stakeholders. The outcome of the certification should reflect the methodology used and should elaborate reasoning and evidence indicating how certification was conducted.
59. The team should follow all aspects and phases of the electoral process and, where possible, maintain a presence in country throughout the electoral process. The certifying authority

⁷ For example, in Timor-Leste, the Security Council adopted resolution 1704 (2006), giving the UN the following mandate: “To support Timor-Leste in all aspects of the 2007 presidential and parliamentary process, including through technical and logistical support, electoral policy advice and verification or other means”. In Côte d'Ivoire, the UN Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (ONUCI) was mandated to certify “that all stages of the electoral process provide all the necessary guarantees for the holding of open, free, fair, and transparent presidential and legislative elections in accordance with international standards”. See Security Council resolutions 1765 (2007) and 1603 (2005).

should gather information through direct observation and interviews with various sources, for example state and electoral authorities, parties and candidates, civil society, citizen and international observers and the UN and other international presences in country. When possible, the team should conduct field visits throughout the entire territory of the country.

60. The final assessment or certification report is forwarded to the Secretary-General who will present it to the mandating UN body in accordance with the mandate. The mandated UN certifying authority will normally issue a public statement on the outcome of the certification. In addition, and in accordance with the specific mandate, the UN certifying authority may also publish interim reports containing updates on the implementation of the certification mandate during different stages of the electoral process.

C3. Additional guidance

61. Unless the UN has received such a mandate, UN personnel on the ground should refrain from being seen as “observing”, “monitoring”, “overseeing”, or “evaluating” an election. The mandate of UN missions often includes provisions related to creating a conducive environment for the implementation of various tasks usually listed in their mandate. In countries where they have such a mandate, they may use their good offices, political role and military or police presences to contribute to creating a conducive environment for the holding of elections.
62. In some cases, UN personnel, including UN political officers, are asked to follow the political process, including election day, to assess the political environment and report to headquarters. In addition, UN electoral experts deployed as part of technical assistance projects (such as Chief Technical or Chief Electoral Advisors) may follow the performance of the EMB and others involved in organizing elections to evaluate the effectiveness of the provided assistance.
63. As per its mandate, OHCHR, may also decide to monitor the human rights situation in a country, before, during and/or after an election in order to foster an environment conducive to credible elections and ensure the respect of relevant international standards.
64. As per its mandate, UN Women may monitor the situation regarding women’s participation in a country, before, during and/or after an election in order to foster an environment conducive to inclusive elections and ensure the respect of relevant international and national standards.
65. In specific circumstances such as countries in transition or at risk of violence, DPPA as the UN system lead for peacemaking and preventive diplomacy may also assist with mediation, conflict prevention and good offices. Support of UN senior officials to reducing and managing election-related violence (including gender-based violence in elections), may entail the deployment of additional UN personnel to support existing UN electoral assistance efforts. These can include UN staff, in particular DPPA staff, UNDP staff, OHCHR staff, UNDP/DPPA Peace and Development Advisors, UNVs and/or other experts deployed to support the office of the RC. In transitional and high-risk situations of electoral violence, UN system programmes focusing on governance, human rights and conflict prevention and peacebuilding, including those of UNDP and UN-Women, may contribute to lowering tensions and mitigating risks, supporting the creation of a conducive environment. OHCHR may be consulted and may consider monitoring the situation or implementing other mandated tasks as necessary. Representatives of the Secretary-General (Special

Representatives, Special Envoys, Executive Representatives) and in non-mission settings, RCs, in their capacity as representatives of the Secretary-General may, in close coordination with DPPA, play a mediation, conflict prevention and good offices role.

66. To ensure that such types of activities, particularly, political, human rights, and gender equality monitoring, are not perceived as UN election observation, it is important that the relevant UN entities providing such types of assistance emphasize their specific mandate and refrain from traditional election observation tasks, such as observing the technical aspects of the electoral process, including observation of polling and counting in polling stations. Separate guidance for UN personnel has been developed on how to manage the UN presence in such cases.⁸
67. UN statements and public comments around elections can be important diplomatic tools, used to convey messages of calm or encouragement of a peaceful, orderly conduct. But they should be used strategically to avoid any misunderstandings about the UN's role, or being instrumentalized politically. Unless mandated as part of one of the types of electoral assistance activities outlined in this policy, statements, if any, should not give a qualitative judgement on the validity of an electoral process or of the outcome, but should rather focus on the atmosphere of the process. Public statements on the validity of the electoral process and especially the electoral results should generally not be made, and in any case will require the approval of the Focal Point. Separate guidance for UN statements around elections has also been developed.⁹

D. REFERENCES

Normative or Superior References

- General Assembly resolutions: 46/137, 47/138, 48/131, 49/190, 50/185, 52/129, 54/173, 56/159, 58/180, 60/162, 62/150, 64/155, 66/163, 68/164, 70/168, 72/164, 74/158

Related Policies

- Policy: Principles and Types of UN Electoral Assistance
- Guideline: United Nations Electoral Needs Assessments
- Policy: Support for International Election Observers
- Policy: Conduct of UN personnel in and around electoral sites
- Policy: United Nations statements and public comment around elections
- Declaration of Principles of International Election Observation and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers, commemorated on 27 October 2005 at the United Nations, New York.¹⁰

E. MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE

⁸ See the policy: Conduct of UN personnel in and around electoral sites.

⁹ See the policy: UN statements and public comments around elections.

¹⁰ Available at: <https://aceproject.org/electoral-advice/election-observation/declaration-of-principles-for-international>.

68. The Focal Point is tasked with ensuring coordination within the UN system with regard to electoral assistance and will therefore help to ensure that the principles outlined in this document are adhered to.
69. Managers of UN electoral assistance programs and projects will also be responsible to ensure compliance with this policy by all UN electoral personnel under their supervision.
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F. CONTACT

70. Policy and Institutional Memory Team, Electoral Assistance Division, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, ead@un.org.
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G. HISTORY

71. Drafted by the Policy and Institutional Memory Team, Electoral Assistance Division, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, on 17 January 2013, and revised on 15 December 2021.
72. Consulted with members of the Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanism for UN Electoral Assistance (ICMEA) prior to adoption.
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APPROVAL SIGNATURE:

Rosemary A. DiCarlo, UN Focal Point for Electoral Assistance Matters, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs



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