



Ghana General Election

7 December 2024



The Commonwealth

Electoral Commission
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION
2024
Polling Station: TUDU SOUTH

Ghana General Election

7 DECEMBER 2024



The Commonwealth

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Map of Ghana



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Acronyms and abbreviations

AI	artificial intelligence
APC	All People's Congress
AU	African Union
BVD	Biometric Verification Device
CDD	Centre for Democratic Development
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
C.I.	Constitutional Instrument
CODEO	Coalition of Domestic Election Observers
COG	Commonwealth Observer Group
CPP	Convention People's Party
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSO	civil society organisation
EC	Electoral Commission
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
GBC	Ghana Broadcasting Corporation
GCPP	Great Consolidated Popular Party
GFC	Ghana Fact Checking Coalition
GFD	Ghana Federation of Disability Organisations
GFP	Ghana Freedom Party
GTV	Ghana Television
GUM	Ghana Union Movement
ICT	information and communication technology
IDEG	Institute for Democratic Governance
IGP	Inspector General of Police
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPAC	Inter-Party Advisory Committee
IT	information technology
LPG	Liberal Party of Ghana
MP	Member of Parliament

NCCE	National Commission for Civic Education
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NDP	National Democratic Party
NEST	National Election Security Taskforce
NMC	National Media Commission
NPC	National Peace Council
NPP	New Patriotic Party
NUGS	National Union of Ghana Students
PEAM	Pre-Election Assessment Mission
PO	Presiding Officer
PVT	Parallel Vote Tabulation
PWD	person with disabilities
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WANEP	West Africa Network for Peacebuilding
WSR	Women Situation Room

Letter of Transmittal

Commonwealth Observer Group Ghana General Election

7 December 2024

13 January 2025

Dear Secretary General,

I am pleased to submit our Final Report, as Chairperson of the Commonwealth Observer Group (COG) to the Ghana General Elections that were held on 7 December 2024. It was an honour to chair this Group of eminent persons drawn from across our family of Nations, each of whom brought a wealth of experience and invaluable expertise.

This was Ghana's ninth General Election since 1992. The 2024 elections were held against the backdrop of the declining economy and other challenges. However, the COG noted commendable peace efforts by the National Peace Council and other stakeholders. These efforts brought together the Presidential candidates to sign the Fourth Presidential Elections Peace Pact on 28 November 2024. By signing this Pact, the candidates committed to peace and non-violence before, during and after the elections.

The COG praised the people of Ghana for the atmosphere of calm that prevailed before and during the elections. The COG also commended the professionalism of polling staff, National Elections Security Task Force (NESTF) as well as party agents in carrying out their duties.

However, the COG noted with concern the delay in announcing results from some constituencies by the Electoral Commission (EC), and the vacuum created by insufficient communication by the EC to the public. The COG also noted with concern and disappointment, fatalities, injuries, arson and threats attributed to some overzealous party supporters and found the inflammatory language

used by some parties to be unhelpful in dousing these tensions. The COG hopes these incidents will be thoroughly investigated and the perpetrators of electoral offences brought to decisive justice.

The COG applauded the statesmanship demonstrated by Dr Mahamudu Bawumia in his early concession to President-elect John Dramani Mahama. Likewise, the COG acknowledged President John Mahama's demonstrated grace in his acceptance speech of the election results. These gestures were essential in de-escalating potential tension.

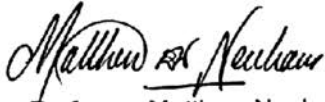
The COG noted the need to develop an effective regulatory framework for campaign financing, as has been recommended by previous COGs; and the necessity for political parties to encourage and enforce an inclusive participation in political leadership particularly for marginalised groups like women and persons with disabilities.

The Group's overall assessment is that the electoral process as a whole, was credible, peaceful and transparent. However, like all electoral processes it can be further strengthened. In accordance with our mandate, we submit our detailed findings and recommendations in the attached report to contribute to the strengthening of the electoral processes in Ghana. We hope that these findings are received in the constructive spirit in which they are offered.

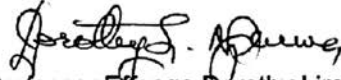
On behalf of the commonwealth Observer Group, and in my own name, I would like to express our gratitude for the opportunity to contribute to the democratic process in Ghana.


H.E. Dr Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi
CHAIR

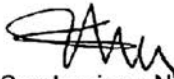
Observers' Signatures



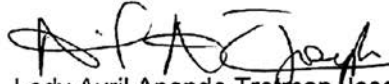
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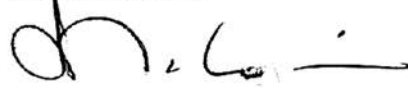
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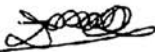
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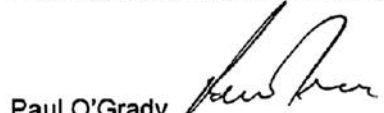
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Executive Summary

Following an invitation from the Electoral Commission (EC) of Ghana, the Commonwealth Secretary-General, the Rt Hon. Patricia Scotland KC, constituted a Commonwealth Observer Group (COG or 'the Group') for the general elections (presidential and parliamentary) held on 7 December 2024. His Excellency Dr Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, immediate past President of the Republic of Botswana, led the COG, which comprised 16 eminent persons from political, civil society, election management, diplomatic, media and legal backgrounds. The Group was supported by an eight-person staff team from the Commonwealth Secretariat.

On arrival in Ghana, the COG met with a broad range of key stakeholders to gain a holistic and comprehensive picture of the electoral process, the political landscape and the preparations for the general election. The COG observed the Special Voting, which took place on 2 and 5 December 2024. During the observation mission, the COG chair and other members of the COG paid a courtesy call on President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo and met with the Chief Justice, the Inspector General of Police, the Chairperson of the Electoral Commission (EC) and other EC officials, political party representatives, candidates, members of the media, civil society organisations, other domestic and international observer groups, and voters. The COG was deployed on 5 December 2024 to ten regions across the country, where it continued its stakeholder engagements and assessment of electoral preparedness. On election day, the COG observed about 250 polling stations, and witnessed the opening and closing procedures and collation at polling stations and constituency and regional centres.

The 2024 elections were held against a backdrop of challenging economic conditions, characterised by high cost of living and inflation rates and double-digit unemployment. This was coupled with allegations of rampant corruption and state capture of institutions, with public confidence in said institutions waning. The economic challenges were worsened by slow post-COVID recovery and a depreciating cedi. Ghana had defaulted on its loans from international financial institutions and had had to ask for a US\$3 billion bailout from the International Monetary Fund to make up for its shortfall, going against earlier promises by the government not to do so. The proliferation of *galamsey*, or illegal artisanal gold mining, also played a central role in the elections, not only because of its contributions to environmental degradation, water pollution and disease but also through allegations of the collusion of political interests and campaigns in gold exports and racketeering.

The constitutional two-term limit meant that President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo did not run in the elections. Though twelve candidates (eight from political parties and four independents) ran for the Presidential election, the competition was widely regarded as a two-horse race between the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP). For the parliamentary elections, there were 801 candidates. The elections had many unique features, namely: candidates from the north of the country were fielded as presidential candidates for the first time, by the two main parties. It was also the first time a major political party had a Muslim presidential candidate. Meanwhile, the first female vice-presidential candidate will become Ghana's first female vice-president. The elections also represented an attempt to break the eight-year cycle that has seen a turnover of governance between the two largest political parties (the NPP and the NDC) since multiparty elections began in 1992.

The EC is established as an independent commission under the Constitution. However, there was a noted trust deficit in the EC as an institution and in some commissioners in the runup to the elections and after. This was partly due to a perception that the Chairperson and other members of the EC appointed by the governing administration were potential party loyalists, raising concerns about their impartiality. The delay in the announcement of the election results and the vacuum caused in part by the absence of steady communication of results contributed further to this perception. The COG noted the use of the Inter-Party Advisory Committee (IPAC) as a platform for inter-party dialogue and noted some progress in this regard – namely, its accessibility and broadcasting of the Committee's proceedings to the general public and its success in bringing the parties to the table to address crucial electoral issues.

The EC established 40,976 polling stations and employed 210,000 temporary polling staff as polling officers to support the conduct of the elections. The increased number of polling stations as well as the capping of the number of voters per polling station were positive steps in the management of the elections, as this ensured (for the most part) shorter queues and quicker voting times. However, the COG notes that some work remains to be done in fine-tuning some aspects of the registration process to include more accessible registration centres, and the need to undertake boundary delimitation exercises that take into consideration the changing demography and reassess some constituencies that are too large or too small. Consideration also needs to be given to data protection in voting procedures and a voter identification system that is standardised and robust without disenfranchising voters.

The Affirmative Action Act was a welcome development, and the COG notes its potential to enhance greater participation and inclusion in the political landscape of marginalised groups. Its promise is yet to be realised, however, as the number of candidates from among women, youth and persons with disabilities was lower in this election compared with previous ones. Some female candidates did not make it past the primaries and, despite EC discounts on candidate nomination fees for women, costs, social norms and perceptions, a lack of role models and allies, and harassment continued to represent barriers to the greater participation of women, youth and persons with disabilities in politics. The COG did, however, note some presence of women in recruitment as polling staff and party agents, although most of the presiding officers and party agents were men. There was also a notable presence of youth as party agents and of some persons with disabilities as poll workers. Disaggregated data on voters with disabilities, as well as capacity-building and training in the use of assistive voting resources like the tactile jacket, would enhance assistive voting and enable other support that persons with disabilities require.

The civil society and media landscape in Ghana is robust and thriving. There are over 200 media outlets, comprising public and private ownership and Ghana enjoys relative freedom of expression as it pertains to media practitioners exercising their rights. However, there are concerns regarding the use of artificial intelligence (AI), mis/disinformation and, in some cases, harassment of candidates. It is noteworthy that campaigning in these elections relied less on rallies and was carried out more door-to-door, with the media used as a complementary tool for disseminating information and promoting political parties, manifestos and candidates. The COG noted more or less balanced media coverage of candidates, parties and platforms. There are laws and regulatory systems in place that govern media ethics and codes, and there seems to be a general adherence to these regulations. However, the politicisation of media ownership in Ghana and challenges related to the enforcement of laws on cyberbullying, harassment and the manipulation of AI to distort news are a concern. The perilous nature of investigative journalism and failure to bring to justice perpetrators of crimes against journalists were noted in the COG's interaction with some media stakeholders.

Following the counting of most ballots on 10 December 2024, the EC Chairperson announced the presidential results, and partial results for the parliamentary elections (pending the completion of the collation of the polling results in nine constituencies). John Dramani Mahama was declared the winner by 6,591,790 votes, which represented 56.42 per cent of the total votes, while Mahamudu Bawumia received 4,877,611 which represented 41.75 per cent of the total votes. In the parliamentary elections, the NDC won 183 seats to the NPP's 88 seats. Independent candidates won four seats.

On 9 December, His Excellency Dr Mokgweetsi Masisi, as Chair of the Group, issued an Interim Statement (Annex IV) highlighting the Group's preliminary findings and observations on the elections. The COG noted and praised the people of Ghana for the atmosphere of calm that prevailed before and during the elections. The COG lauded the professionalism displayed by polling staff and security agents as well as the diligence of party agents. The COG found the elections to be credible, peaceful and transparent, and applauded the statesmanship demonstrated by Dr Mahamudu Bawumia in his early concession to President-Elect John Dramani Mahama and credited his speech with playing an integral part in diffusing rising tensions in the country. Likewise, the COG acknowledged President John Dramani Mahama's demonstrated grace in his acceptance speech of the election results.

The COG noted with concern the delay in announcing results from some constituencies by the EC, and the vacuum created by insufficient communication by the EC to the public. The COG also

noted with concern and disappointment fatalities, injuries, arson and threats attributed to some overzealous party supporters and found the inflammatory language used by some parties to be unhelpful in dousing these tensions. The COG hopes these incidents will be thoroughly investigated and the perpetrators of electoral offences brought to decisive justice. The COG notes the need to develop an effective regulatory framework for campaign financing, as has been mentioned in previous COG recommendations; and the necessity for political parties to encourage and enforce inclusive participation in political leadership particularly for marginalised groups like women and persons with disabilities.

This report presents a comprehensive account of the COG's observation of the 2024 Ghana general elections and offers recommendations to further strengthen electoral processes in Ghana.

Recommendations

Legal Framework and Electoral Administration

- The Group recognises that any change needed to address the issue of appointments to the judiciary will require a constitutional review.
- The Group also acknowledges that a constitutional review process was started in 2010 and recommends that the issue of appointment be specifically addressed with a view to making it more transparent and less politicised.
- The Group recommends that the judiciary take active steps to ensure these cases are concluded within a reasonable time.
- Parliament should accelerate (prioritise) assent to the proposed reform of election adjudication rules for the effective judicial management of election petitions.
- It is recommended that Ghana review the appointment process of EC commissioners, including the Chairperson, to secure their independence from political actors and to strengthen public perceptions of their non-aligned role, in addition to specifying limits on their terms of office.
- It is recommended that voter registration centres increase instead of reducing in number in order to improve accessibility for voter registration.
- It is recommended that the EC increase its efforts to monitor social media and enforce the code of conduct.
- Ghana should consider the introduction of a quota for women to be elected to Parliament to add to the number of MPs elected through constituency elections.
- The current respective age requirements for contesting for the roles of President and MP could be lowered so as to be more inclusive of young persons, who constitute a significant proportion of the population.
- It is recommended to enhance systems to ensure data protection and privacy, particularly as a significant amount of personal detail is captured and made available to polling agents on election day. All procedures in relation to personal information should be in line with privacy requirements and Ghana's data protection legislation.
- The website is a key source of information. It is recommended that the EC revamp its website and ensure it is regularly updated.
- It is recommended that the EC enhance the training in relation to closing and rollback of the materials to the constituency centres.
- It is recommended that the EC develop an aide memoire to ensure polling agents (i.e., party agents) do not overstep the limitations of their role. It is further recommended that the terminology used to identify role players be consistent.

Participation and Inclusion

- The COG recommends that political parties consider fully implementing the Women Manifesto and the Party in Governance Manifesto.
- The Government of Ghana should consider an amendment to the Persons with Disability Act (2006) to be more reflective of the UNCRPD and the African Disability Protocol.
- The EC should consider the collection of voter data disaggregated by age, gender, and disability type and reflecting critical demographics, including women and youth with disabilities.
- The COG recommends that political parties consider the adoption and implementation of the Disability Manifesto. The COG further notes and is encouraged by the engagement of GFD with Parliament, especially the parliamentary caucus on persons with disabilities towards strengthening the inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in democratic processes.
- The EC should consider making provisions for timely and comprehensive civic and voter education programmes targeting persons with disabilities. The COG observed that there were no instructions in an accessible format for the deaf. In the lead-up to polling day, the EC advised deaf voters to come along to polling units with their sign language interpreters.
- The EC and the National Youth Authority should consider strengthening partnerships with student unions and youth-led organisations on voter education, particularly in rural areas.

Campaign and the media

Campaign

- The COG recommends that Parliament enact legislation providing a specific timeframe for electoral campaigns by political parties and candidates to reduce the risk of Ghana being in a permanent campaign mode from one general election to the next.
- The COG reiterates the recommendations of the 2020 COG for a review of legislation to ensure there is effective regulation, implementation and transparency around campaign financing and party funding.
- The COG recommends that key political stakeholders, especially the executive arm of the state, effectively implement the Vigilantism and Related Offences Act of 2019 to eradicate political violence and deepen the culture of peace in Ghana.
- It is recommended that the institutional capacity of the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice be adequately enhanced to bolster its effectiveness in combating political corruption, especially vote-buying and misuse and abuse of public resources during elections.

Media

- The COG recommends that all government ministries and other state institutions are well versed in and comply with media-related laws that empower journalists to seek and obtain information, and make this information available in a timely manner.
- The NMC should tighten and monitor the implementation of guidelines on ethical media reporting in line with the Principles and Guidelines for the Use of Digital and Social Media in Elections in Africa adopted by the African Union in 2023. Examples include the right to reply, balanced reporting and avoidance of mis/disinformation, especially during the election period.
- A cross-media ownership regulation should be introduced and implemented to prevent the monopoly of media ownership.
- Journalists should be trained by CSOs on gender reporting skills during elections and beyond, to understand and address the fundamental issues affecting women. Gender issues should not be limited to news stories but should be explored in depth through well-researched analytical articles and documentaries promoting specialist reports.

- Dialogue between media editors and women politicians should increase, facilitated by CSOs, to understand issues that affect the women.
- Deliberate quotas related to the coverage of women's issues should be set up for newspapers and media platforms.
- Specialised training by CSOs for women politicians or candidates should focus on the strategic use of media to boost their political careers and increase their visibility.
- The COG recommends that the EC work with the media to promote voter education among youth.
- The COG encourages training of media stakeholders on sensitivities around reporting on issues about PWDs.
- The media should employ PWDs and give them public prominence.
- The media should avoid showcasing PWDs as helpless victims and instead highlight their successes and the impactful role they play in society.
- The EC is encouraged to provide the media with regular updates ahead of the elections to raise awareness of the electoral processes.
- CSOs and fact-checking initiatives should educate social media users on critical thinking skills including source verification.
- CSOs should carry out special training for women politicians or candidates so they can protect themselves from cyberbullying.
- The COG recommends that CSOs and fact-checking organisations provide journalists with further training on fact-checking and ethical media reporting.

Voting, Counting and Results Process

- To ensure voters are able to vote without interference or undue influence, police officers should act upon any indications of vote-buying and vote-selling to apprehend the perpetrators as vote-buying is an electoral offence and subject to penalties.
- Sufficient canopies should be provided for polling officials and party agents at polling stations to better protect them from the elements (sunshine, wind and rain).
- The EC should strive to achieve parity in the number of men and women appointed as presiding officers.
- Party agents should respect the authority of polling officials and should receive training so they do not direct polling officials or participate in the polling process, beyond what is established in laws and regulations. In particular, they should never approach polling booths when voters are present or touch marked ballot papers during the count.
- The EC should find ways to enable voters to check more easily at which voting station they are registered.
- While the COG recognises the accommodations were made to better ensure that PWDs could participate in the elections, more needs to be done to ensure PWDs can exercise their franchise with dignity. Specifically, the EC should, in collaboration with organisations representing PWDs, undertake an audit of all polling venues to ensure their suitability for PWDs and introduce voting booths with an adjustable height.
- To ensure the secrecy of the ballot, it is recommended that the EC consider altering the method for marking the ballot paper such that it is marked with a cross or a tick rather than a fingerprint, which is captured in the BVD.
- The polling manual should be revised to include images of the layout of the polling station, in particular the placement of the voting booths, so that the secrecy of the vote is maintained, while allowing general supervision of the process.

- If the current system of marking the ballot is maintained, polling stations should be equipped with sufficient inkpads, which should be checked frequently, to ensure they enable voters to make a clear impression on the ballot paper.
- The training of polling officials should re-emphasise the need to check the reverse of ballots for an imprint of the unique polling station stamp. In addition, presiding officers should be reminded of the direction that 'Greater care should be taken to avoid rejecting ballots unreasonably.'
- The EC should provide the POs of polling stations located in the open air with sufficient lighting, so the count can be conducted correctly when it takes place after nightfall.
- The training of POs should emphasise the procedures for the completion of the results sheets, with an emphasis on the terminology used in the forms and how the voter register totals and voter participation totals are to be determined.
- The training regarding the packing away of materials to take back to the constituency and collation centres must be strengthened in accordance with established procedures.
- The EC should provide direction to POs on how to post results sheets where the polling station is located in the open air.
- The government should direct agencies to make more vehicles available to district election officers for the performance of electoral activities. Used polling materials and results should not be transported in non-designated vehicles.
- The EC needs to reconsider the organisation of collation centres so that bottlenecks and delays do not occur.
- Political parties and senior party officials should act responsibly and refrain from calling on their supporters to go converge on collation centres.
- It is important for the EC to ensure that it leads in the provision of results information and does not confine itself to the final results announcement alone. It should not provide only the constituency results but should ensure that, as the results information for the presidential election is received from the constituencies, it provides this as an ongoing process. In this manner, the EC will not run the risk of being accused of deliberately holding back results or trying to interfere with information that has already been made public through parallel vote tallies carried out by party agents, the media and CSOs.

1. Introduction

With a view to providing readers with important background information on the context in which Commonwealth Observer Groups (COGs) operate, this introductory chapter begins with a brief summary of the COG methodology. It concludes with an overview of this methodology as applied to the 2024 Ghana general elections.

International election observation methodology

Since 1980, the Commonwealth has observed over 200 elections in 39 countries. International election observation serves several purposes, including:

- promoting the openness and transparency of the electoral process;
- deterring improper practices and attempts at fraud;
- enhancing public confidence in the process, thereby contributing to acceptance of election results;
- diffusing political tensions through diplomacy and mediation; and
- strengthening international standards on electoral best practices.

The Revised Commonwealth Guidelines: key provisions

The Revised Commonwealth Guidelines for the Conduct of Election Observation in Member Countries ('the Revised Guidelines') were agreed by Heads of Government at the 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in London, United Kingdom. The key provisions include the following:

1. COGs are independent, including of the Secretariat
 'Members of a COG are invited by the Secretary-General ... in their personal capacity as an eminent Commonwealth citizen, not as a representative of any member country, government or political group.'
2. Observers, not monitors
 Unlike some citizen observer groups (monitors), which are permitted to intervene or offer assistance to electoral officials in a limited manner, Commonwealth observers – as with all international observers – cannot and do not interfere in any way with any aspect of the electoral process.
3. Taking forward COG recommendations
 The Revised Guidelines encourage member countries to establish 'domestic mechanisms', such as multi-stakeholder meetings or committees, to review and take forward recommendations made by a COG.
4. Whole-of-election-cycle approach
 Election observation is ideally not a stand-alone activity. Where possible, the Secretariat seeks to support stakeholders in the implementation of these recommendations through a range of methods, including the production of expert publications, the training of election management body staff, the facilitation of peer-to-peer knowledge exchange and, crucially, bespoke technical assistance to national stakeholders upon the submission of a formal request.

The strength of Commonwealth Observer Groups

While all international election observer missions adhere to the 2005 Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, each organisation's methodology has slight variances that reflect its unique strengths. The strength and value of Commonwealth observer missions lie in three key characteristics:

1. Eminent observers

While COGs are smaller in size than some other international observer missions, they comprise eminent persons from across the Commonwealth in their respective fields of expertise, such as senior politicians; electoral commissioners; election experts; diplomats; and human rights, legal and media experts. The biographies of all the observers can be found in Annex I.

2. Diversity and peer-to-peer learning

COGs reflect the geographical diversity of the Commonwealth itself, with observers selected from each of the world's five continents. This inculcates a genuine spirit of peer-to-peer learning on election administration and democratic reform.

3. Political mediation through the Chair's Good Offices

COGs are normally chaired by a former Head of State or senior diplomat, invited based on careful consideration of a number of factors that ensure they are a 'good fit' for the election in hand. The respect afforded to such high-profile leaders allows COG chairs to enter into a 'Good Offices' role in instances of post-election political disputes and non-acceptance of election results. Such Good Offices roles have played a vital part in ensuring peaceful transitions between governments on many occasions.

More information on the role and mandate of observers can be found in the 2019 Commonwealth Handbook on Election Observation. For more information on the Commonwealth's efforts to promote democracy, please visit the Commonwealth Secretariat website.

Deployment of a Commonwealth Observer Group to the 2024 Ghana general election

The Commonwealth Secretary-General, the Rt Hon. Patricia Scotland KC, constituted a COG for the Ghana general elections held on 7 December 2024, following an invitation from the Electoral Commission (EC) of Ghana. The Secretary-General's decision was informed by a Pre-Election Assessment Mission (PEAM) undertaken by the Secretariat staff team from 7 to 13 October 2024. The PEAM met with various key stakeholders, including the EC, political parties, the National Peace Council, civil society organisations (CSOs), the media, international organisations and Commonwealth diplomatic missions.

The PEAM provided a report on the political and electoral landscape in Ghana as well as recommendations for the deployment of a Commonwealth election observation mission to Ghana.

Commonwealth Observer Group composition

The COG was led by His Excellency Dr Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, former President of the Republic of Botswana. The Group comprised 16 eminent persons drawn from across 15 Commonwealth member countries, representing all the five regions of the Commonwealth. Its members bring together a diversity of experience in the fields of election management, law, diplomacy, civil society, politics, human rights and the media, among others. The Group was supported by an eight-person staff team from the Commonwealth Secretariat. A full list of members can be found in Annex I.

Terms of reference

The mandate and agreed terms of reference for the Group were as follows:

- *The Group is established by the Commonwealth Secretary-General at the invitation of the Electoral Commission of Ghana.*
- *The Group is to consider the various factors impinging on the credibility of the electoral process as a whole.*
- *The Group will determine in its own judgement whether the elections have been conducted according to the standards for democratic elections to which the member state has committed itself, with reference to national election-related legislation and relevant regional, Commonwealth, including its Charter, and other international commitments.*



Members of the Commonwealth Observer Group and Commonwealth Secretariat support Staff

- *The Group is to act impartially and independently. It has no executive role; its function is not to supervise but to observe the process as a whole and to form a judgement accordingly. It would also be free to propose to the authorities concerned such action on institutional, procedural and other matters as would assist the holding of such elections.*
- *The Group is to submit a report to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, who will forward it to the Government of the Republic of Ghana, Electoral Commission of Ghana, leaders of political parties, and thereafter all Commonwealth member governments.*

Activities

The Group was in Ghana from 29 November to 13 December 2024. Its Arrival Statement was issued on 2 December 2024 (Annex II).

The Group met with a broad range of stakeholders including the EC, the Attorney General and the Minister of Justice, political parties, candidates, civil society, the Inspector General of Police (IGP), international and citizen observers, the media, fact-checking organisations and Commonwealth diplomatic missions in Accra.



COG members during briefings with various stakeholders



COG Chair at the briefing session with other international observers

The Chair of the Group met with the President and candidates of the main political parties. He also called on the Chief Justice and participated in heads of international election observer mission meetings, co-hosted by the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

On 5 December, members of the Group were deployed to ten regions across the country including: Northern, Northwest, Northeast, Volta, Western, Central, Ashanti, Greater Accra, Upper East and Upper West regions. On deployment, they received further briefings at the regional level from representatives of the EC, political parties, religious and traditional leaders, CSOs, international and citizen observer groups, the media and the police.



COG Chair receiving information from WANEP citizen observers

The Chair of the Group issued an Interim Statement (Annex IV) on 9 December 2024. The Statement highlighted the Group's preliminary findings and observations. The Chair commended the EC, polling staff, political parties, police, civil society and the media for their respective roles in ensuring the successful conduct of the elections in Ghana. He also flagged areas of concern.

The Chair also commended Vice-President Bawumia for his statesmanship and concession speech, which was instrumental in maintaining peace. He expressed his gratitude to the then President-Elect, John Dramani Mahama, for his graceful acceptance speech following his electoral victory.

The final report was drafted in Accra and was concluded prior to the departure of the Group on 13 December 2024.

2. Political Background

Introduction

This chapter provides a political context of the 2024 elections in Ghana. In assessing these elections, and offering the recommendations which appear in subsequent chapters, the COG took into account Ghana's political landscape and factors that have shaped its 67 years of independence, 32 of which have been as the Fourth Republic.

Ghana gained its independence from British colonial rule on 6 March 1957, making it the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to do so. The period from independence from 1957 to 1992 was initially marked by euphoria and optimism, under the country's first President Dr Kwame Nkrumah. It later deteriorated into an era of instability and military coups. Since the establishment of the Fourth Republic in 1992, and the adoption of a new Constitution, the country has consolidated its democratic and political credentials. It began to build a national constituency around its economic aspirations, democratic dispensation and political institutions, not least an executive, a parliament, a judiciary and a variety of democracy oversight bodies such as the EC. Compared with the tumultuous beginning of the country's political history after independence, the past 32 years of the Fourth Republic have been characterised by relative stability and peace.

Recent political history

The 1992 Constitution, upon which the Fourth Republic is founded, has proven to be a resilient document. Its adoption came on the heels of a decade of military rule. It reintroduced multiparty democracy and re-established democratic governance, enshrining human rights and other fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of the press. The Constitution establishes a system of checks and balances to prevent any one branch of government from having too much power.

Following two terms of elected government from 1992 to 2000 under former military leader President Jerry John Rawlings, general elections were held in Ghana on 7 December 2000. The candidate for the National Democratic Congress (NDC), founded by Rawlings, was his Vice-President, John Atta Mills. Opposition leader John Kufuor of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) led the field in the first round of voting, taking 48 per cent of the vote, and won a run-off vote on 28 December 2000. This election victory for the NPP was a significant break with the past. It set in motion what has become the pattern in Ghana – a cycle of elections every four years, and every eight years a change in the ruling party in power. This cycle has also seen the decline of smaller parties, with Ghana essentially becoming a two-party state. The NPP has built a power base in the central Ashanti region, while the NDC strongholds have tended to be in the North and the East, with Accra and the coastal regions being the 'swing regions'.

The 1992 Constitution set a very high bar for the political governance and economic management of Ghana. Public expectations therefore ran high throughout the country. In 2008, despite delivering reasonable economic and political performance, the NPP found itself out of office as the NDC under John Atta Mills won the election, once again after a run-off. Mills died in July 2012, and his Vice-President, John Dramani Mahama, continued for the rest of Mills' tenure. He led the NDC in another four-year mandate won during the elections held later that year.

In 2016, the NPP administration came back to power with the goodwill of the public and high expectations that they would be better manager of the economy than the NDC had been. However, they failed to build on the resources that the country had and to capitalise on the broad investor confidence that Ghana enjoyed at the time.

The 2024 electoral environment

On 7 December 2024, Ghana held its ninth general (presidential and parliamentary) elections. The incumbent, President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, was due to end his second four-year term in

office. His tenure spanned a particularly difficult global economic time spurred by various exogenous factors – namely, the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia–Ukraine conflict, supply chain challenges, regional political instability, terrorism and violent extremism in the neighbouring Sahel region and climate change, which affected food crops and food security and created a perfect storm for an economic crisis.

Both oil prices and production declined over this period, weakening the contribution to the economy from oil, from which much had been promised. Borrowing against prospective oil revenues, among other things, led the country into a debt trap and the need to arrange a bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The depreciation of the Ghanaian Cedi and the impact of high interest rates, as well as the high cost of living, inflation, unemployment and allegations of corruption and coopted institutions, capped what was a very difficult last term for the NPP.

The government failed to contain the rise of the *galamsey*, or illegal artisanal gold mining practices, which caused environmental and riverine destruction in the country, with significant health consequences for the affected population. It also undermined the institutional gold mining industry. This in turn denied the government huge revenues from taxes and had negative impacts on the structured and transparent sales of gold, as well as jobs in the mining industry. The elections therefore took place against a backdrop of economic and socio-political challenges.

The Candidates

Thirteen candidates from nine political parties with four independents vied for the presidency. For the parliamentary seats, 801 candidates vied for 276 seats. The contesting political parties were the All People's Congress (APC), the Convention People's Party (CPP), the Great Consolidated Popular Party (GCPP), the Ghana Freedom Party (GFP), the Ghana Union Movement (GUM), the Liberal Party of Ghana (LPG), the National Democratic Congress (NDC), the National Democratic Party (NDP) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP). The four independent candidates were Kofi Koranteng, George Twum-Barima-Adu, Nana Kwame Bediako and Alan John Kwadwo Kyerematen. Chapters 5 and 6 present more information about the campaign and the votes.

It is important to note that, despite the large number of candidates vying for the presidential seat, the election was largely regarded as a two-horse race between the flag-bearers of the two main political parties – John Dramani Mahama (for the NDC) and the incumbent Vice-President, Mahamudu Bawumia (for the NPP). The fact that both candidates came from northern Ghana and one was a Muslim made this election unique, and a 'first'. This was the third consecutive election that John Dramani Mahama had contested against an NPP candidate since losing power in 2016. The stakes were therefore higher, and crucial for him and his party. For its part, had the NPP won the 2024 general elections, it would have been the first political party to break the 'eight-year rule cycle' in the history of Ghana and Ghana would have had its first Muslim President.

Historically, ideology and manifestos have not played a central role in Ghanaian politics, and this year was no different. The manifestos of both the major parties and some of the independent candidates focused on key thematic areas that included education, renegotiation of the IMF bailout, economic growth, job creation, digitalisation and inclusive politics, albeit with varying proposals and solutions. Ethnicity and different religions did not seem to play a major role in the elections either. The Group noted that the religious groups worked well together and were key players in regional and local Peace Councils. Religious groups, traditional leaders and CSOs were instrumental in promoting peace and cautioning citizens against the use of violence and incendiary statements before, during and after the elections. This is commendable and a model for other countries to emulate.

The signing by all parties of the National Peace Pact under the auspices of the National Peace Council on 28 November 2024 was also a very positive development, which encouraged a calm atmosphere before and during the elections. Though there were some security incidents and attacks on collation centres, which were of serious concern and need to be addressed, with the perpetrators brought to justice, these did not detract from the overall positive atmosphere.

The 2024 result and its implications

The 2024 comprehensive electoral victory of the NDC signifies a shift in public expectations and a rekindling of hope that the government will invest in economic development and social prosperity, that corruption will be contained and that government resources will be used to build the infrastructure and the institutions that Ghana needs.

It is also significant that the 2024 elections delivered Ghana's first female Vic-President. This sends a powerful political signal to the women of Ghana, who continue to make great strides in their commitment to political engagement. At the same time, there has been a disappointing decline in the number of women Members of Parliament over the past decade, and this trend continued in this election. Though the Affirmative Action Bill was passed in Parliament before the elections, the Group was told that campaign costs, harassment, socio-cultural norms and a lack of allies and role models continue to impede women's political participation.

The Group also noted the lower participation rate of voters in these elections. Stakeholders informed the Group that a combination of reasons – from apathy to distrust and disillusionment with the political and electoral system and governance structure – explained this low turnout. Some citizens felt their votes did not matter or suggested that the two-party cycle every eight years made little difference to their economic aspirations and to the progress of the country. Others elected to use their absenteeism to voice their dissent.

Nonetheless, the 2024 general elections demonstrate a positive step in Ghana's political development. The vigorous but non-violent political campaign in the runup to the elections is now becoming a notable pattern for Ghana, demonstrating a stable and progressive political landscape. The Group noted the co-operation between party agents, electoral officials, security officials and political leadership. Ghana has turned a corner on issues of political interference and incumbency in the political electoral process, it would seem.

It is particularly noteworthy that the NPP candidate and incumbent Vice-President showed exemplary political presence of mind by relying on his own party's parallel tally to concede defeat. This diffused what were by then significant political tensions nationwide as the population awaited the official pronouncement of results by the EC. However, the Group had concerns regarding the unrest and security incidents that arose as a result of the delay in the release of several parliamentary results, and tension around transitional arrangements.

Through these elections, Ghana has once again demonstrated its commitment to stability and constitutional order. By contrast, the surrounding region has experienced a decline in political security and stability, with some countries recently experiencing devastating civil wars, coups and other unconstitutional change of governments, and a rise in terrorism and foreign military interference. However, during the 21st century, Ghana has missed significant opportunities, both politically and economically, to transform itself. Its geopolitical location is both precarious and strategic. Its people and resources provide opportunities and yet the regional context presents a cautionary tale for Ghana. It is hoped the country can capitalise on its advantages and these exemplary democratic elections to rise again as the 'Black Star of Africa' and as a regional and strategic economic hub to provide a model of good governance and economic prosperity in the region and beyond.

3. Legal Framework and Electoral Administration

System of government

Ghana has a parliamentary democratic system of government, with the President as the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces and the Head of State and Government. The 1992 Constitution of Ghana (as amended) is the supreme law of the land and establishes Ghana as a unitary state with sovereignty vested in the people, who exercise their power of choice during elections with the ultimate objective of discouraging dictatorial regimes. Elections therefore are an expression of the will of the people in determining who governs them.

Legislative framework

The core legislative and regulatory framework applicable to the 2024 presidential and parliamentary elections comprised both domestic law and international conventions, charters and agreements that Ghana has ratified or consented to.

Domestic laws are as follows:

- Ghana Constitution (1992, as amended in 1996)
- Presidential Elections Act (1992, as amended)
- Public Elections Regulation, 2020 (C.I.127)
- Political Parties Act (2000)
- Electoral Commission Act (1993, as amended)
- Representation of the People Act (1992, as amended) (C.I 2024)
- Political Parties Code of Conduct (2012)

Ghana has signed or agreed to all the major regional and international commitments and instruments relating to human rights and the conduct of elections. These include:

- Commonwealth Charter (2012)
- African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007)
- ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (2001)
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1996)
- African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979)
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)

Executive (President)

Article 66 of the Constitution provides for a four-year term for presidents with a maximum of two terms. In this case, the incumbent, Nana Dankwa Akufo-Addo had completed the maximum number of terms.

Article 63 of the Constitution provides that a person shall be elected as President only if he/she has more than 50 per cent of the total number of valid votes cast at the election. Where this does not happen, a run-off election must be held within 21 days after the previous election.

Ghana has a multiparty political system where constitutionally any citizen has a right to form a political party. This structure puts a great deal of responsibility on the institutions of government, particularly the EC and the judiciary, to deliver a free and fair election as mandated by the Constitution.

The Group notes that the two main parties in Ghana's electoral politics have dominated and exchanged governance since 2000. This trend has once again been confirmed by the declared results of the presidential and parliamentary elections on the 9 December 2024.

Parliament

Ghana has a unicameral parliamentary system based on a single member constituency election held every four years concurrently with the presidential elections. Article 93 of the Constitution provides as follows:

1. There shall be a Parliament of Ghana which shall consist of not less than one hundred and forty (140) elected members.
2. Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, the legislative power of Ghana shall be vested in Parliament and shall be exercised in accordance with this Constitution.

Members are elected under a first-past-the-post electoral system. Parliament is composed of 276 members.¹

Article 94 of the Constitution outlines the requirements for a person to qualify as a Member of Parliament (MP). These are identical to those for presidential candidates, save for age. While presidential candidates must have attained a minimum age of 40, parliamentary candidates need only to have attained 21 years of age.

As for the executive, the Constitution provides a term of four years for Parliament (Article 113): 'Parliament shall continue for four years from the date of its first sitting and shall then stand dissolved.'

Judiciary

The role and capacity of courts in handling election disputes

Perceived mistrust in the judiciary's ability to deliver its mandate was a recurring topic during the Group's engagement with stakeholders. There were concerns that public confidence in the judiciary had eroded substantially over the previous two election cycles as a result of the method of appointment of judges, and perceptions of their politicisation.

The Group notes that the Constitution's Article 144 on the appointment of judges makes provision for checks and balances, because the President appoints the Chief Justice in consultation with the Council of State and with the approval of Parliament. The other Supreme Court Justices are appointed by the President on the advice of the Judicial Council, in consultation with the Council of State and subject to parliamentary approval. Judges for the Court of Appeal and the High Court are similarly appointed by the President, acting on the advice of the Judicial Council.

Notwithstanding the above, the President holds significant power even in the Council of State, as the Constitution allows him or her to appoint 11 members of the Council, while the other members are also appointed by him or her in consultation with Parliament.

Apart from the procedure of appointing judges, the lack of an upper limit on the number of Supreme Court judges is controversial. The general perception was that this lack of certainty in the Constitution gives room

¹ Prior to 2023 there were 275 seats; the number increased to 276 with the creation of an extra constituency (Guan).

to the President to fill the Supreme Court with judges who are party loyalists. The Ghana Bar Association also considered the lack of upper limit as a gap in legislation and mooted a review of the Constitution to address it.

It is important to note, however, that the Supreme Court of Ghana has both original and final jurisdiction in handling presidential election matters. This is in addition to its original and appellate jurisdiction on all constitutional matters. This is a heavy workload for judges, especially during and after elections. The judiciary therefore was of the view that limiting the number of judges would be detrimental to the delivery of justice, given the breadth of the Supreme Court's mandate.

However, reform is needed on the mode of appointment of judges to address the mistrust and protect the integrity of the judicial system.

Recommendations:

- The Group recognises that any change needed to address the issue of appointments to the judiciary will require a constitutional review.
- The Group also acknowledges that a constitutional review process was started in 2010 and recommends that the issue of appointment be specifically addressed with a view to making it more transparent and less politicised.

Complaints, appeals and election petitions

Ghana has established a mechanism for dealing with election disputes, including a fast-track dispute resolution mechanism for election-related complaints during the electoral period. Decisions of the EC can also be challenged through the courts.

The Representation of the People Act (s.16-18) and the Presidential Elections Act (s.5) outline the procedure for challenging the validity of an election as follows:

- The action must be brought by petition (s.16).
- The challenger must be a citizen of Ghana or a candidate in the elections (s.17); however, for presidential cases, the Supreme Court has interpreted Article 64 of the Constitution to mean that only a presidential candidate who has lost an election is qualified to bring a petition.
- The petition must be submitted to the Supreme Court within 21 days of the results being gazetted (s.18).
- Similarly, a petition challenging the results of parliamentary elections must be brought to the High Court within 21 days of declaration of the result.

The Supreme Court has exclusive jurisdiction in all presidential election disputes and has neither original nor appellate jurisdiction in parliamentary election disputes. Appeals from the High Court go to the Court of Appeal, which has final appellate jurisdiction in all electoral offences.

Electoral offences

Part V of the Representation of the People Act 1992 outlines electoral offences in s.27–30, to include, among other things:

- multiple registrations, impersonation, registration of minors, registration of aliens, riots and hooliganism, use of force or threat;
- wrong information, mass transfer of voters to a different constituency, forgery of ballot papers, unlawful possession of ballot papers, selling of ballot papers impersonation, bribery, undue influence.

The Criminal Offences Act 1960 supplements the provisions of the Representation of the People Act and covers all criminal acts perpetrated during and after elections. Punishments for electoral offences as prescribed by law include fines, prison terms, a combination of fines and prison terms, and disqualification or ban from participating in political activities or being registered as a voter.

The Group noted incidents of electoral offences and election-related violence, particularly in the post-election period. It is recommended that these offences be prosecuted and adjudicated in a timely manner, to serve as a deterrent to others in future and maintain the integrity of Ghana's electoral process.

In line with this, the Group reiterates the need for impartiality and transparency in dealing with election cases, and recalls two electoral cases of concern that are still pending in the courts since the last election (2020) – namely, the **Savelugu Case**,² which is before the High Court in Tamale, involving a politician charged with unlawful possession of firearms, and the **Odododiodio Case**,³ in which the accused are standing trial for murder and conspiracy to commit murder during the 2020 election. The accused were members of the NDC, which has raised concerns regarding the delay in trial. The Attorney General informed the Group that the delay owed to administrative challenges in the adjudication process, including difficulties in accessing the accused to serve them with court processes and the ill-health of one of the accused.



Meeting with the former Attorney General Godfred Yeboah Dame

Recommendation:

- The Group recommends that the judiciary take active steps to ensure these cases are concluded within a reasonable time.

Length of time for adjudication of election petitions

Concerns regarding the length of time taken to adjudicate election disputes remain. Originally, election cases took a long time to decide: the 2013 election petition between Nana Dankwa Akufo-Addo and John Dramani Mahama took eight months to conclude. Dissatisfaction with this delay birthed the Supreme Court (Amendment) No. 2 Rules (2016) (C.I.99), which provide 42 days within which to determine the hearing of presidential election petitions. However, parliamentary elections that fall under the jurisdiction of the High Court are yet to benefit from this reform. After the 2020 elections, parliamentary election disputes took an average of 24 months to conclude. During engagements with the Chief Justice of Ghana and the election management committee, the Group was informed that the judiciary, in an effort to remedy

² The Republic vs Naa Mohammed Ahmed and Hon. Andulai J. Iddriss.

³ The Republic vs Mawuko Nyarko Dompren alias Nii Shipi II, Biney Godfred alias Wadada and G/L/CPL Ishamel Akai Nettey.

this, after extensive consultations, had submitted a draft of the proposed review of the adjudication rules (recommending a 45-day trial limit) to Parliament for approval. However, this has been delayed because Parliament has been on recess.

Recommendation:

- Parliament should accelerate (prioritise) assent to the proposed reform of election adjudication rules for the effective judicial management of election petitions.

The Electoral Commission

The Constitution and the Electoral Commission Act provide for the establishment of the EC as an independent body. Article 43.1 of the 1992 Constitution provides that the EC shall consist of seven members: a Chairperson, two deputy chairs and four members. The President, on the advice of the Council of State, appoints members of the EC for an unspecified period. The current EC Chairperson is Ms Jean Mensa. There has been a growing lack of trust in the EC and the electoral process, expressed by the NDC and others. The Constitution requires the independence of the EC in the performance of its functions indicating that the EC shall not be subject to the direction or control of any person or authority.

Recommendation:

- It is recommended that Ghana review the appointment process of EC commissioners, including the Chairperson, to secure their independence from political actors and to strengthen public perceptions of their non-aligned role, in addition to specifying limits on their terms of office.

There are seven departments at the EC head office. Each of these is headed by a director. The departments are Elections; Finance; Information Technology; Human Resource and General Services; Research and Monitoring; Training; and Public Affairs. The EC has an office in each of the 16 regions as well as district offices.

The EC appoints three to five persons from within each constituency to form a Constituency Election Committee, which is responsible for the administration of elections in that constituency.

The functions of the EC are to:

- compile the register of voters and revise it at such periods as may be determined by law;
- demarcate the electoral boundaries for both national and local government elections;



Members of the COG at the briefing with the Electoral Commission

- conduct and supervise all public elections and referenda;
- undertake the preparation of identity cards;
- educate people on the electoral process and its purpose;
- undertake programmes for the expansion of voters' registration;
- store properly election material; and
- perform such other functions as may be prescribed by law.

Boundary delimitation

Ghana is demarcated into 16 regions and 276 constituencies. Each constituency elects an MP based on the majority of votes received. The EC determines the constituency boundaries within each of the regions based on the population quota and taking into account communication, geography and other administrative or traditional areas. The last boundary demarcation was carried out in 2023 with the creation of Guan as the 276th constituency. Nonetheless, there is a significant disparity in the population sizes of the different demarcated jurisdictions. It was noted that this may also have contributed to the clogging of some of the constituency centres.

The EC divides every constituency into polling divisions and determines the number of polling stations within each division. It established 40,976 polling stations and employed 210,000 temporary polling staff as polling officers to support the conduct of the elections. The increase in the number of polling stations was positive in the management of elections.

Voter registration

Article 42 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana provides that, 'Every citizen of Ghana of eighteen (18) years of age or above and of sound mind has the right to vote and is entitled to be registered as a voter for the purposes of public elections and referenda.' It is noted that, in line with the UNCRPD, psychological disability should not disenfranchise any citizen.

The Registration of Voters Regulation sets out procedures for registering voters. Initial registration involves an applicant attending a registration centre in person to provide biometric information (photo and fingerprint scans) as well as details such as name, mobile number and address. At the point of registration, anyone entitled to be on the register, a political party agent or an EC officer may challenge the inclusion of any other person on the voter register. The EC must then determine whether the application to register is genuine.



Verification of a voter using the Biometric Verification Device

There is an appeal process to the EC's decisions involving the district and high courts. If no challenge is made, then the EC must include the individual on the provisional voters' register, assign a voter identification number to them, issue them with a voter identification card and assign each voter to their polling station. The EC is then required to publish ('exhibit') the voter register, so that the electorate and any interested party can confirm that they have been included, and that their details are correct. At this stage, anyone registered to vote in the same electoral area may challenge the provisional registration of another voter in that electoral area. When the period for correcting information and determining challenges has passed, the EC publishes the 'certified' voter register. Once a person is included on the 'certified' voter register, there is no further opportunity to challenge their right to vote. A person may vote in an election provided they have been included in the certified register more than 60 days before election day.

Since 2020, the EC has used electronic Biometric Verification Devices (BVDs) to verify the registration status of voters. Before issuing a voter with a ballot paper, polling officers check the voter identification of the individual's fingerprint and/or photo (facial) scans using the BVD.



Voter carrying Ghana National ID (also referred to as 'Ghana card')

In early 2023, the EC sought to reform the voter registration process and drafted a Constitutional Instrument (C.I.) that proposed a continuous voter registration system. The draft also recommended using the Ghana Card as the sole identification document to verify citizenship. The EC informed the PEAM that it sought these reforms as the guarantor system had become outdated and was prone to fraud and exploitation. Many stakeholders echoed these concerns, alleging that the guarantor system was being abused to register ineligible persons and minors. There were some cases where individuals were facing prosecution for providing false information to support others in wrongfully registering as voters. Parliament, however, rejected the Public Elections (Registration of Voters) Regulations 2023.

The Group notes the reasons or justifications given for retaining the guarantor system. Having observed the voting process, it would align with the EC's request to fund the National Identification Authority to ensure the Ghana Card becomes the only form of identity for voter verification as it would help ease the burden of voter verification. However, this may take some time to roll out and should not be the basis upon which to disenfranchise citizens.



The 2024 Voters Register and the Biometric Verification Device

As a result of Parliament's decision, for the 2024 limited voter registration exercise eligible voters could use either the Ghana Card or a Ghanaian passport to confirm their identity. If applicants lacked these documents, they could present two registered voters to vouch for their citizenship and age.

Voter registration was conducted at each of the 268 EC district offices and not at the previous 38,000 polling station sites. This was a significant reduction in the number of registration sites. There was a call for additional registration opportunities for those in remote areas to register but the EC did not accede to this.

Recommendation:

- It is recommended that voter registration centres increase instead of reducing in number in order to improve accessibility for voter registration.

Registration took place from 12 September to 2 October 2023 and again from 7 to 27 May 2024. There were disruptions and a temporary suspension of the registration process in some centres as a result of tensions around the presence of 'unauthorised persons' in the centres.

The total number of registered voters was 18,774,159, an increase from the 17,027,641 registered for the 2020 elections. Of the registered voters, 9,084,179 are men and 9,689,980 women. Most of these voters (excluding 131,478 'special voters' and 1,870 voters without biometric data) were captured on the BVDs. Of the total registered, 10,343,810 were young people (aged 18–35 years) and 55,492 were persons with disabilities (PWDs). At each polling station, the lists of voters without biometric data from that polling station were issued to the EC officials with copies to the polling agents.

Special voting allows individuals, including security personnel, EC officials, media and civil society voters, who are registered as such with the EC as performing duties away from their polling stations during the main elections, to cast their ballots.

Although the EC indicated that disaggregated information reflecting the different disabilities was available, this did not appear to have been recorded.

From the registration exercise, a number of additional lists are compiled per polling station, reflecting 'voters on multiples list', 'transferred voters' and 'absent voters'.

Prior to the elections, political parties and candidates, media and CSOs questioned the processes pertaining to voter registration, exhibition of the voters' roll and the associated IT systems of the EC. The NDC demanded a forensic audit of the voter's list for the 2024 elections, which was not acceded to. However, the demand for a forensic audit appears not to have been backed by sufficient evidence.

Exhibition of the provisional voters' register took place from 15 to 24 July 2024. Following subsequent representations by political parties to the EC about problems with the voters' roll, the EC arranged for a re-exhibition period. Additionally, the EC opened up the meetings of its liaison structure, the Inter-Party Advisory Committee (IPAC), to the public and the media in order to increase transparency.



EC Chairperson, Mrs Jean Mensa addressing the COG

Candidate eligibility and nomination

President

The President is directly elected through a national poll every four years. To be eligible as a candidate for the presidential election, a person must be a citizen of Ghana by birth, at least 40 years of age and a registered voter. For the nomination process, prospective candidates must submit to the EC certain relevant documents, signed by the candidate and not fewer than two other persons registered in each district. The nominee shall designate a person to serve as Vice-President on their nomination form. In addition, candidates are required to pay GHC100,000 (US\$6,733) as a filing fee, which is refunded to candidates who receive over 25 per cent of the total valid votes cast. A person is prohibited from contesting the presidency if she/he is a public employee (unless she/he resigns from his/her post); a chief; or deemed unfit for public office, convicted of treason or another offence concerned with state security.

For the 2024 presidential election, 22 presidential aspirants submitted their nominations but only 13 were admitted as candidates. One of the candidates died before election day. The final list of candidates was as follows:

- Mahamudu Bawumia, New Patriotic Party
- Daniel Augustus Lartey Jnr, GCPP
- Akua Donkor, GFP
- Christian Kwabena Andrews, GUM
- Kofi Akpaloo, LPG
- Mohammed Frimpong, NDP

- Nana Akosua Frimpomaa, CPP
- John Dramani Mahama, NDC
- Hassan Abdulai Ayariga, APC
- Kofi Koranteng, Independent
- George Twum Barimah-Adu, Independent
- Nana Kwame Bediako, Independent
- Alan John Kwadwo Kyerematen, Independent

The GFP candidate died before the election. The candidate nominated by her party was disqualified by the EC for not fulfilling the legal requirements.⁴

Parliament

Parliamentarians are elected on the basis of a first-past-the-post system. To be eligible as a candidate for the parliamentary elections, a person must be a citizen of Ghana of at least 21 years of age and a registered voter. In order to qualify to stand for a particular constituency, a person must be resident in that constituency or have been born there. Unlike a presidential candidate, who shall be a citizen by birth, an MP shall be a Ghanaian citizen by birth, adoption, registration or naturalisation provided they do not hold dual citizenship. For the nomination process, prospective candidates have to submit nomination papers to the relevant returning officer for the constituency by a specified date, with 20 signatures of registered voters of that constituency. In addition, candidates are required to pay a filing fee of GHC10,000 (US\$673). This is refunded to candidates who poll 12.5 per cent or higher of the valid votes cast. There is a 25 per cent reduction on filing fees for women and PWDs.

The number of women participating in the political party primaries declined in 2024, to 119 out of 802 parliamentary candidates. Notably, two of the thirteen presidential candidates and four of the vice-presidential candidates were women, including the running mate of the main opposition NDC, Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang, who will now take up the role of Ghana's Vice-President. While women continue to comprise the majority of voters, they face significant challenges with campaign financing (including political party candidate nomination fees and fees required by the EC), visibility, political violence and cyber-attacks.

Recommendations:

- It is recommended that the EC increase its efforts to monitor social media⁵ and enforce the code of conduct.
- Ghana should consider the introduction of a quota for women to be elected to Parliament to add to the number of MPs elected through constituency elections. The current respective age requirements for contesting for the roles of President and MP could be lowered so as to be more inclusive of young persons, who constitute a significant proportion of the population.

Preparations for the 2024 elections

The BVD was deployed to all polling stations, enabling verification via fingerprint or through facial recognition imaging. Civil society confirmed an improvement in relation to data transmission and IT security.

⁴ At a press conference held on 12 November 2024, the EC stated that it had disqualified the GFP candidate owing to 'a number of errors and some illegalities' on the nomination form. The EC noted that the GFP had been given an opportunity to correct these errors and the alleged illegalities but these were not addressed.

⁵ Details regarding social media monitoring are in Chapter 5.

Recommendation:

- It is recommended to enhance systems to ensure data protection and privacy, particularly as a significant amount of personal detail is captured and made available to polling agents on election day. All procedures in relation to personal information should be in line with privacy requirements and Ghana's data protection legislation.

The biometrics of some voters could not be confirmed during voter registration or were lost through corrupted data files. The EC put in place a process (including the completion of a form) for polling officials to implement on voting day to manually confirm the registration of these exceptions.

The procurement of materials was timely. However, the leaking of a ballot paper during production meant the EC had to destroy about 3.6 million ballot papers for Ahafo and Volta. Some materials produced for registration needed to be reprinted for these two regions.

The EC provided updates on its preparedness in the runup to the election. The Chair confirmed to the COG that the EC was ready, having procured and distributed all necessary materials for the election. Distribution of materials proceeded smoothly prior to election day.

Voter education

The EC undertook a voter education campaign, using radio, television, newspapers and digital media to spread messages regarding election information. However, the EC did not update its website with relevant and up-to-date information on the election and also does not provide disaggregated data on voter registration.

The National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) also delivered a wide-ranging programme of activities to provide information on the electoral process and promote peaceful and safe elections. This included public outreach, inter-party dialogues and forums across the country, as well as messages delivered via media.

Recommendation:

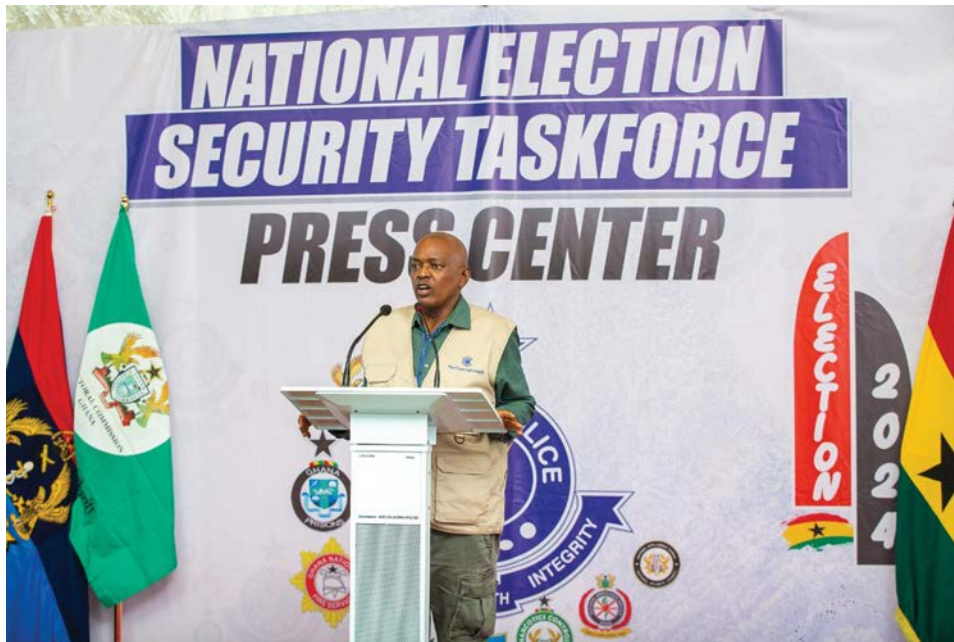
- The website is a key source of information. It is recommended that the EC revamp its website and ensure it is regularly updated.

Recruitment and training of election staff

The EC employed approximately 210,000 temporary officials, including returning officers and their deputies, presiding officers, verification officers, collation officers and name reference officers, for the 7 December 2024 elections. Names and pictures of returning officers, their deputies, presiding officers and polling assistants were published at least 10 days prior to the election and a copy was furnished to political parties taking part in the election to allow any objections to be raised and dealt with ahead of polling day. The COG was informed that training was conducted for each category of officials. The training of polling staff was conducted in batches/categories.

Security

The EC engaged with the security agencies under the auspices of the National Election Security Taskforce (NEST), which was chaired by the IGP. The taskforce had a mandate to protect election officials, materials and installations, and voters' right to cast their ballots freely. Security officers were drawn from various security services, including Ghana Police Service, Ghana Immigration Service, Ghana Prisons Service, Ghana Fire Service and the Customs Division of Ghana Revenue Authority and deployed across the country for election duty. The EC provided NEST with relevant information on all polling stations and collation centres and other details.



COG Chair speaking at the briefing session with Police

A four-tier deployment strategy was adopted, with unarmed security officers at polling stations and collation centres, supported by mobile patrols, rapid response teams and stand-by teams. Joint Operation Centres were established across the country to co-ordinate information and monitor mainstream and social media for reports of problems.

In a media release, Ghana Armed Forces stated that no military would be deployed to polling stations, and they would intervene only as and when the police called on them for support. However, on the eve of polling, the NDC put out a media release stating that the Ghana Armed Forces had started moving heavily armed soldiers to some regions to intimidate voters in those regions that were their strongholds.



Members of the COG and Police following the briefing

Deployment of security personnel to areas outside of their normal operational bases was implemented to strengthen the neutrality and associated perceptions in relation to the security officials based at each polling station. However, the rollback of materials to the constituency centres, including transport, was not consistently managed.

The EC supported the training of the security officials in relation to elections.

Recommendation:

- It is recommended that the EC enhance the training in relation to closing and rollback of the materials to the constituency centres.

Inter-Party Advisory Committee

This was the second consecutive election to be conducted under the same EC Chairperson. The NDC was critical of the EC leadership, which it perceived to be biased towards the NPP, an issue that stems in part from the method of selecting the EC Chairperson and commissioners through presidential appointment. The NDC had at one time boycotted meetings of the IPAC but participated closer to the elections. The EC chairperson opened up the deliberations of IPAC to the media, following calls by political parties to do so, to enhance public awareness of issues raised and resolved.

Recommendation:

- It is recommended that the EC develop an aide memoire to ensure polling agents⁶ (i.e., party agents) do not overstep the limitations of their role. It is further recommended that the terminology used to identify role players be consistent.

⁶ In Ghana, the terms 'polling agents' and 'party agents' are used interchangeably. For consistency, the term 'polling agents' is used in this report to align with language used in EC official documents such as manuals and aide memoires.

4. Participation and Inclusion

Introduction

This chapter analyses the dynamics of citizen participation in Ghana's 2024 presidential and parliamentary elections. The 1992 Constitution of Ghana guarantees the political and electoral rights of every eligible Ghanaian. Ghana has made progress in ratifying international conventions and developing national laws and policies, enabling citizens' electoral participation. The country has ratified in various years the following international conventions:

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)
- Commonwealth Plan of Action (2012)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979)
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2012)
- African Disability Protocol (2018)
- African Union Convention on the Political Rights of Women (2003)
- African Youth Charter (2006)

Participation by civil society organisations

The political ecosystem in Ghana has a vibrant civil society involvement. The COG was briefed by women, youth, persons with disabilities, and CSOs working to advance the participation of various groups in political and electoral processes. The COG was informed that the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO), the Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG), the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), the Ghana Fact Checking Coalition (GFC), women's groups and several other CSOs were engaged in voter education, electoral early warning, peace messaging, election observation and fact-checking activities.

CODEO deployed 4,000 observers on election day and 70 long-term observers in the pre-election period. The COG was informed of concern among some CSOs regarding the denial of election observation accreditation by the EC as a result of not meeting prescribed criteria.

Women's participation

As with previous electoral cycles, Ghanaian women participated in the presidential and parliamentary elections as voters, political campaigners, aspirants, candidates and supporters. The legal and policy frameworks for promoting political and electoral participation are embedded in the Constitution (1992), the Public Elections Regulation, (2012), and the National Gender Policy (2015). Apart from women-led groups that specifically work to foster women's political empowerment and inclusion, the larger civil society group in Ghana advocates for the political and electoral participation of women and the prevention of discrimination and violence against women in politics, including cyber-enabled violence.

The COG observed and commended the role played by women in advocating for credible and peaceful elections. In the days leading to the election, women's groups organised a peace walk to remind political leaders and Ghanaians of the importance of peace and inclusivity. The women's groups submitted petitions to political parties and challenged them to prioritise peace and stability in the country. The COG visited the Women Situation Room (WSR), which trained nearly 200 young women as observers for the 2024 elections and as 24/7 call centre operators to deal with reports and incidents for escalation.

The COG observed efforts by the EC to enhance participation and voting by the elderly, pregnant and lactating mothers, and persons with disabilities. Many polling stations were easily accessible in the open air and on flat ground, some with canopies provided. On polling day, the EC and the security forces fielded a good number of female personnel during the election process, as observed in polling stations around the country. Female polling officials were seen to be professional in the execution of their duties. It was also observed that the early voting exercise and prison voting made provision for the inclusion of women's participation. The COG observed an insignificant number of female party officials and agents at polling stations.



Meeting with the Network for Women's Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT) and Abantu for Development

Barriers to women's participation

Ghana grapples with minimal female representation in elective positions. The 1992 Constitution guarantees women's political rights, but women remain under-represented in government and many public institutions. Equal representation and participation of men and women in decision-making are essential to the improved functioning of a democratic society. The barriers to effective participation and representation of women as reported to the COG include cultural norms, intimidation, lack of resources to finance campaigns, and gender-based violence.

Cultural and social barriers play a role in preventing women's participation in politics in Ghana. The Ghanaian social system still perceives women to be of lower status than men in most aspects of social, economic and political life. These factors have continued to limit women's opportunity to participate in politics, especially the younger generation. The Government of Ghana should consider reviewing the Constitution and its electoral laws to provide for equity and inclusion.

The COG was informed that despite the existence of enabling legal and policy frameworks, there appears to be a general lack of political will to address gender inclusivity deficits, and therefore women's representation in elective positions remains low. Although women constitute a large percentage of voters in elections, they are not adequately represented in political and leadership decision-making processes. The COG was informed of a lack of commitment by political parties to support and nominate women as candidates, especially where they have high chances of winning.

Recommendation:

- The COG recommends that political parties consider fully implementing the Women Manifesto and the Party in Governance Manifesto.

Access to campaign finance remains the major barrier to women's political participation. Although the EC gives a 25 percent discount to women candidates, this does not appear to have been sufficient to motivate women to be aspirants, nor to have moved political parties to field more women candidates. The Government of Ghana should consider fully implementing the Affirmative Action Act (2024).

Status of women's political representation

The number of women in leadership positions has increased marginally over time but remains low. After the 2016 general elections, Ghana's Parliament recorded 35 (13 percent) female MPs and 240 (87 percent) male MPs out of the 275 MPs, while the 2020 general elections recorded 40 female MPs (14.5 per cent) and 235 (85.4 per cent) male MPs.

In response to advocacy for equity and inclusion, the Government of Ghana passed the Affirmative Action (Gender Equality) Act in July 2024, which was assented to by President Nana Dankwa Akufo-Addo in September 2024, late in the day for consideration during the political party primaries. The COG noted that, although the Act was passed too close to the elections, it demonstrated Ghana's efforts to improve women's participation in the electoral process.

Ghana has elected its first-ever female Vice-President, Naana Jane Opoku-Agyemang. She was also the running mate of the President-Elect, John Dramani Mahama, in the 2020 elections.

There was a total of 40 female parliamentarians in the Parliament elected in 2020. While the COG observed a reduced number of female candidates for 2024, it was encouraged by the additional three parliamentary seats won by women, to a total of 43. However, four female parliamentarians lost their re-election bids.

The COG noted that there were four vice-presidential candidates and two presidential candidates out of thirteen in total, and this included an independent candidate for the Vice-President seat. One of the female presidential candidates died two months before the election date. There were 119 female parliamentary candidates out of 802 contesting 276 parliamentary seats.

Women voters' turnout

The COG noted and commended the high number of women who registered to vote (9,689,980), representing 50.1 percent of those who voted during the election. To further improve participation, the Government of Ghana should consider the inclusion of essential workers, such as doctors and nurses, on the priority voting list.

Participation by persons with disabilities

Persons with Disabilities constitute an estimated 8 percent of Ghana's population (2.4 million people) and continue to face limited opportunities to fully participate in the political life of the country owing to barriers related to inequalities, discrimination, and exclusion.

Ghana has made significant progress in ensuring disability-inclusive elections and governance, and the recent elections were generally accessible by PWDs. The main legal framework for the inclusion and

Table 1. Status of women's political representation

Elective position	Women candidates	Women as share of total candidates	Women candidates elected	Women as share of total elected
Presidential (1)	1 of 13	7.6%	0	0
Vice-presidential (1)	4 of 13	30.7%	1	7.6%
Parliamentary (276)	119	12.8%	43	15.5%
Total	124		44	

participation of persons with disabilities is the Persons with Disability Act (2006) (Act 715). Section 1 of the Act guarantees the participation of Persons with Disabilities in political life. The Act prohibits discrimination based on disability and guarantees access to public spaces and participation in national activities (Sections 4 (1), 6, and 39). This is consistent with Article 29 of the UNCRPD), and the African Disability Protocol, both of which mandate states to guarantee Persons with Disability political rights and the opportunity to enjoy these on an equal basis with others.

The Person with Disability Act further provides a penalty of fifty-50 penal units or a term of imprisonment not exceeding 3 months or both for any violations of Sections 1, 2, 4, or 7 of the Act.

The COG commended efforts by the Ghana Federation of Disability Organisations (GFD) with key electoral stakeholders (the EC and Parliament) to promote the inclusion and participation of PWDs.



Commonwealth Observer Grace Jerry with representatives of the Ghana Federation of Disability Organisations

Barriers to participation by persons with disabilities

Persons with disabilities face barriers to effective political and electoral participation owing to stigma and discrimination. The intersection of gender and disability reinforces such stigma against those with disabilities as unfit for politics, leadership, and elective positions. Although over 55 percent of registered voters are youth, there is no disaggregated data to understand the dynamics of political participation among youth and women with disabilities – even though the specific needs of youth and women with disabilities are not the same as for those without disabilities. The Persons with Disability Act (2006), the National Youth Policy (2022) and the National Gender Policy (2015) recognise the unique needs of youth and women with disabilities. However, the COG observed that PWDs were largely considered a homogeneous group because of the paucity of disaggregated data.

Another major concern among Persons with Disabilities relates to pockets of violence that can mar the conduct of elections. Persons with Disabilities are more vulnerable to political violence, which limits their participation in politics.

The COG was informed that, over the years, electoral reforms in Ghana, including the introduction of voter ID cards, biometric technology, transparent ballot boxes and the establishment of IPAC, had not considered the needs of persons with disabilities.



Commonwealth Observer Grace Jerry speaking with a voter to understand his experience after he cast his vote.

Recommendation:

- The Government of Ghana should consider an amendment to the Persons with Disability Act (2006) to be more reflective of the UNCRPD and the African Disability Protocol.

The COG was informed that the lack of national data disaggregated by disability hindered the targeting of policy toward addressing the gap in disability inclusion in elections and governance. This is also reflected in the internal politics of political parties as party policies and practices are not disability-sensitive or inclusive.

Recommendation:

- The EC should consider the collection of voter data disaggregated by age, gender, and disability type and reflecting critical demographics, including women and youth with disabilities.

GFD continues to engage critical stakeholders to ensure inclusive elections and governance for PWDs. One of the ways it aims to achieve this is through the Disability Manifesto,⁷ which calls 'on all political parties to recognize that political participation is a fundamental right for all including persons with disabilities'. The Manifesto further calls for 'inclusive practices and to ensure that persons with disabilities can fully participate in the political process, both as voters and as candidates'. The Manifesto also emphasises the importance of removing barriers to electoral participation, such as inaccessible polling stations and discriminatory practices, while fostering an inclusive political culture that values the contributions and perspectives of persons with disabilities".

The COG was informed that political parties were yet to develop mechanisms to involve Persons with Disability in the design and development of their manifestos.⁸ Political parties are also yet to implement the recommendations of the Disability Manifesto.⁹ The COG noted with concern that there was no single candidate with a disability fielded for either the presidential or the parliamentary elections.

⁷ GFD (2024) 'The Disability Manifesto: Agenda for an Inclusive Society for All Persons with Disabilities' (p. 1).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Report of the Meeting of the COG with GFD, 4 December 2024.

Recommendation:

- The COG recommends that political parties consider the adoption and implementation of the Disability Manifesto. The COG further notes and is encouraged by the engagement of GFD with Parliament, especially the parliamentary caucus on persons with disabilities towards strengthening the inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in democratic processes.

Persons with disabilities voters' turnout

According to the EC, the total number of registered voters was 18,774,159. However, there is no disaggregated data to enable an understanding of the political participation of youth and women with disabilities. The COG was informed of limited voter education targeted at persons with disabilities. On polling day, the COG noted that PWDs were given priority and that voters with visual impairments were provided with tactile jackets at most of the polling stations. However, lack of knowledge of the tool meant voters with visual impairments relied on family members or aids.



Tactile ballot jackets used by voters with visual impairment

Recommendation:

- The EC should consider making provisions for timely and comprehensive civic and voter education programmes targeting persons with disabilities. The COG observed that there were no instructions in an accessible format for the deaf. In the lead-up to polling day, the EC advised deaf voters to come along to polling units with their sign language interpreters.¹⁰

There were observed accessibility challenges at some polling stations, with stairs and voting booths that were too high for some voters in wheelchairs. Adjustable voting booths would have been helpful to ensure these categories of PWDs could exercise their franchise with dignity and in accordance with the law. It was reported to the COG that persons with hidden or psychosocial disabilities who were eligible to vote but not easily recognised by polling officials may not have enjoyed priority voting processes. The Government of Ghana should consider the inclusion of persons with disabilities on the special voting list.

¹⁰ Ibid.

The COG noted and is encouraged by the engagement of GFD with the EC to develop a sign language dictionary specific to elections. The EC should consider functional disability desks and documented disability participation guidelines for future elections.

Participation by youth

The legal and policy frameworks for promoting the political and electoral participation of young persons are embedded in the Constitution (1992), the Public Elections Regulation (2012) and the National Youth Policy (2022). The National Youth Policy defines youth as persons between the ages of 15 and 35 years. Ghana's youth population comprises 36 percent of the total population. The voting age is 18 years and, according to the EC, youth constitute a total of 33 percent of the eligible voter population. The COG noted stakeholders' concerns regarding the gap between aspirational policy frameworks and the representation of young people in political and governance decision-making mechanisms.

The COG's engagement with the Commonwealth Youth Council, Ghana National Youth Authority, the National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS) and other CSOs indicated that the issues of high interest to young people included education, unemployment, economic challenges, and internet connectivity. The NUGS expressed concerns about the potential for university students to be used for political advantage during the elections. Additionally, there exist political groups of students in the universities, aligned with various political parties.

The COG observed that young people were engaged in the election process through various means, including as agents of candidates and parties, election observers of various groups, media personnel, EC officials, and security. Notably, most polling and party agents were young people. The COG was told there were few mechanisms for young people to assume leadership and decision-making roles in political parties. The COG recommends that political parties take ownership of youth inclusion in party leadership structures through training and mentorship programmes.

There were widespread campaigns targeted at young people through mainstream media, social media, posters and awareness-raising led by the EC and civil society groups. While the majority of students and youth in urban areas are aware of the importance of elections, young people in rural areas do not appear to see elections as important, given the lack of services and the economic challenges they face.

Recommendation:

- The EC and the National Youth Authority should consider strengthening partnerships with student unions and youth-led organisations on voter education, particularly in rural areas.

Young people were active participants in the political campaigns of the various parties. On the final day of the campaign period, the COG noted youth efforts in ensuring rally setups, mobilisation and participation through music, slogan chants and poster awareness-raising in multiple communities across Ghana.

The EC engaged mostly young people as election officers on election day. They were trained, equipped with identification apparel, and guided to facilitate the voting process at polling stations. Young people showed up to vote, with some assisting their elderly family members to participate in voting. While some youths expressed their frustration about issues such as unemployment, many expressed hopes for a positive change and a better future, stating that their vote mattered.

Youth and political vigilantism

The COG noted the concerns of some key stakeholders about political vigilantism, which is perceived to be perpetrated by young people. However, it was reported that political vigilantism was less common in the 2024 elections. The COG was informed that the Political Vigilantism and Related Offences Act (2019) had banned vigilantism and reduced its prevalence. However, research conducted in August 2024 by the Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies of the University of Cape Coast found that political vigilantism had rebranded and was still an active phenomenon.

The COG was informed that there had been a reduction in the incidence of violent events that are traditionally linked to youth participation in large political rallies. The fact that political parties largely campaigned digitally and through door-to-door strategies led to this reduction.

Ahead of election day, student political factions in institutions took part in constructive debates, voter awareness programmes, peace awareness, civic education and observation of the election process. In the lead-up to election day, the NUGS conducted an online Peace Campaign Initiative and awareness-raising to urge peaceful elections and deter youth vigilantism.

Youth voters' turnout

While many young people voted on election day, observers in various constituencies, including Sekondi-Takoradi in the Western Region, had concerns about vote-buying and food distribution facilitated by youth and men. The EC should further strengthen the participation of student unions and youth-led organisations in the electoral processes.

5. The Campaign and the Media

The election campaign

As with previous general elections since Ghana's transition to multiparty democracy in 1992, the ninth presidential and parliamentary elections, held on 7 December 2024, were preceded by campaigns. The COG observed that the overall electoral campaign environment was tense and marked by vitriolic rhetoric between the two main political parties: the ruling NPP and the main opposition party, the NDC. Several stakeholders informed the COG that the tense atmosphere could be explained in part by the political culture of the eight-year power turnover between the two parties. Out of the eight presidential elections held in Ghana since its historic political transition in 1992, the NPP has triumphed in four elections, while the NDC has also won four.

The 2024 election campaign was characterised by door-to-door campaigns, political rallies and the use of mainstream (radio, print, TV) and digital media. Stakeholders emphasised that the NPP had mounted a campaign strategy based on 'break-eight' rhetoric.¹¹ The opposition NDC, meanwhile, was determined that it would not countenance being in opposition for a third term and promised to 'Reset Ghana'. In fact, during its briefing to the COG, the NDC said that, although it did not have confidence in the voter register, the EC and the judiciary, it felt it had done enough in preparation for the elections and was confident that, barring any irregularities, it was poised to win judging by the campaign it had mounted.

From this premise, among others, the electoral contest was a highly charged campaign, and instances of misinformation, disinformation and inflammatory language proliferated via digital platforms (see the Media section below). What gave the COG comfort was the fact that both the NPP and the NDC had signed the Peace Pact and assured the COG that they were prepared to accept the results of the elections that, in the case of any disputes, they would use the due legal process to seek remedy through established legal channels.

In terms of the broader context of campaigning, representatives of CODEO shared with the COG data from Afrobarometer indicating low public trust in governance institutions as follows: the army (67 per cent), religious leaders (43 per cent), the courts (36 per cent), the EC (33 per cent), the President (32 per cent), opposition parties (29 per cent), the police (28 per cent), the ruling party (27 per cent), Parliament (27 per cent), traditional leaders (25 per cent), Ghana Revenue Authority (25 per cent) and elected local government councils (25 per cent). Worth noting from Afrobarometer is that the majority of Ghanaians trust the army. Conversely, less than 50 per cent of Ghanaians trust all other institutions, including those that play a key role in elections such as the courts, the EC, the President, opposition parties, the police, the ruling party and Parliament. This could account, in part, for lower voter turnout in the 2024 general elections, along with the deteriorating socio-economic circumstances of ordinary Ghanaians.

Ghana's constitutional and legal frameworks governing elections do not provide specific campaign timelines. The EC's Calendar of Activities showing the programmes of the EC and their timelines cover the following broad areas:

- registration of voters;
- exhibition of the provisional voters' register;
- conduct of presidential and parliamentary elections;
- if necessary, a presidential run-off.

¹¹ The message was that it intended to break with the power turnover tradition between the NPP and the NDC: the NPP's slogan of 'break-eight' was a catchphrase for turning this tradition on its head by being at the helm of state power for three consecutive terms, a rarity in Ghana's political history since 1992.

While commendable, the EC's programmes did not show how the EC would ensure adherence of parties and candidates to the 2012 Political Parties Code of Conduct during the campaign.

Through consultations with key stakeholders, the COG learned that political parties and candidates were supposed to end their campaign 24 hours before polling day. This provision was generally respected by all political parties and candidates participating in the elections.



Vibrant political party campaigns with supporters of NDC and NPP glad in their party regalia



Recommendation:

- The COG recommends that Parliament enact legislation providing a specific timeframe for electoral campaigns by political parties and candidates to reduce the risk of Ghana being in a permanent campaign mode from one general election to the next.

The legal framework

Electoral campaigns take place within the framework of Ghana's 1992 Constitution as amended. Chapter 5 of the Constitution, among others, guarantees fundamental rights and freedoms, including freedom of expression, assembly, association, opinion and participation in elections.

The enabling legislation for elections in general and campaigns includes a number of laws and regulations, including the following:

- Criminal Code (1960)
- Representation of the People Act (1992, as amended)
- Presidential Elections Act (1992, as amended)
- Electoral Commission Act (1993, as amended)
- Political Parties Act (2000)
- Representation of the People (Constituencies) Instrument (2004)
- Political Parties Code of Conduct (2012)
- Vigilantism and Related Offences Act (2019)
- Public Elections Regulations (2020) (C.I.127)

Through its interactions with stakeholders, the COG learned that misinformation, disinformation and hate speech constituted major threats during the election campaign (see Media section below). This threat was compounded by the lack of a regulatory framework governing digital media platforms. However, the COG notes the existence of an initiative aimed at curbing the adverse effects of unregulated digital media, FactCheckGhana (see Media section). The COG agrees with submissions from various stakeholders, especially the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), that lack of a legal framework aimed at combatting misinformation, disinformation and 'hate speech' through social media platforms could be harmful to Ghana's democratic development.

Parties and candidates

The 2024 presidential and parliamentary elections presented a platform for political parties and candidates to contest for access to, and control of, state power in Ghana. There are 27 political parties registered in Ghana. However, only nine participated in the 2024 general elections:

- All People's Congress (APC)
- Convention People's Party (CPP)
- Great Consolidated Popular Party (GCPP)
- Ghana Freedom Party (GFP)
- Ghana Union Movement (GUM)
- Liberal Party of Ghana (LPG)
- National Democratic Congress (NDC)
- National Democratic Party (NDP)
- New Patriotic Party (NPP)

The COG noted that, although nine political parties participated in the elections, the contest was essentially a two-horse race between the NPP and the NDC. The dominance of the two main political parties has marked campaigns in all elections since 1992. The NPP presidential candidate was Mahamudu Bawumia, 61, Vice President to incumbent President Nana Dankwa Akufo-Addo. His running mate was Matthew Opuko

Prempeh, 56. The NDC presidential candidate was John Dramani Mahama, 65, former Vice-President (2009–2012) and former President (2013–2016). His running mate was his former Minister of Education, Jane Naana Opuko-Agyemang, 72, the first woman in this high-level political role in independent Ghana.

Despite the dominance of Ghana's two main political parties, the competition presented by two independent presidential candidates – Alan Kwado Kyerematen, 69, former Minister of Trade under the NPP government of Nana Dankwa Akufo-Addo, and Nana Kwame Bediako, 44, an entrepreneur – generated a rather spirited debate as to whether or not they presented an alternative third force. Kyerematen broke ranks with the NPP following his loss at the NPP primary election contest to Mahamudu Bawumia. He campaigned under the banner of the Movement for Change coalition. Bediako campaigned under the banner of the New Force and specifically targeted his campaign messages to youth and first-time voters. Prior to the polls, there were projections that these two candidates could attract substantial votes from the two main parties (NPP and NDC) to the extent that a presidential run-off could have been necessary. While the COG did not manage to obtain a briefing from Bediako's New Force Movement, the Group received a briefing from Kyerematen's Movement for Change. The Movement's ten-person delegation that briefed the COG took the COG through its manifesto and how it actually represented a third way in Ghana's political trajectory. Representatives emphasised their determination to break the two-party dominance and open up the country's democratic system, arguing that the winner-takes-all system was detrimental to the country's democratic development. They made a case for constitutional, institutional and systemic reform and transformation towards opening up the political system beyond the two-party system.

Party-endorsed and independent candidates campaigned and contested elections in 276 single-member constituencies. Of these, only 119 out of 802 candidates were female candidates. Stakeholders highlighted major weaknesses in Ghana's democratic system in relation to gender equality and equity. Despite the adoption of the Affirmative Action (Gender Equality) Act (2024) prior to the 7 December 2024 general elections, representation of women in the National Assembly is bound to be far less than the minimum threshold of 30 per cent. In terms of fielding women candidates during election campaigns, there was wide disparity between parties. Information received by the COG from the WSR shows that the NDC fielded 37.4 per cent of the total of 119 women candidates. It was followed closely by the NPP with 37.3 per cent. The other political parties trailed behind: LPG (11.1 per cent), NDP (4.4 per cent), PNC (3.3 per cent), CPP (2.2 per cent) and GUM (1.1 per cent). It is worth noting that the share of women independent candidates was greater than that of smaller political parties, at 6 per cent.

Campaign strategies and key issues

Political parties and candidates used door-to-door campaigning and digital media as the main strategies. This was complemented by meetings and rallies. However, during the campaign, there were several street protests and marches, including protests against illegal mining (popularly known as *galamsey*), which has proven hazardous not only to the environment but also to lives and livelihoods. The COG observed the last rallies organised by the NPP and the NDC in Accra on 5 December 2024. The two rallies, which were held adjacent to each other, proceeded in a peaceful, orderly and calm manner.

Besides door-to-door campaigns, meetings and rallies, political parties and candidates also used mainstream (radio, print, TV) and digital media platforms for campaigning, as well as political advertising through posters and billboards. These were also dominated by the NPP and the NDC, given the limited financial resources of smaller political parties and independent candidates.

Political parties and candidates used their manifestos to mobilise support and canvass for votes. The NPP manifesto was themed 'Selfless Leadership, Bold Solutions for Jobs and Business'. The NDC manifesto was entitled 'Resetting Ghana: Jobs, Accountability and Prosperity'. The other parties and candidates also developed their own manifestos, presenting themselves as alternatives to the two main parties in the electoral contest. Although they are ideologically different, the NPP (a conservative party) and the NDC (a social democratic party) had fairly similar policy issues informing their messaging during the campaign.



Supporters of NDC at the final rally



Supporters of NDC at the final rally

The key issues in the campaign were poverty/inequality; unemployment; water, health and sanitation; corruption; environmental security (especially illegal mining); crime and security; food and agriculture; the economy; and education. The COG noted that the key campaign issues resonated with what Ghanaians considered the most pressing socio-economic challenges of the day. The COG further noted that, while the NPP's campaign gave pride of place to education, given its successful free senior high school policy, the NDC focused more on the economy, to expose the policy failures of the ruling NPP, including the high inflation rate (of more than 20 per cent), the high cost of living, corruption, external loans from the IMF, the default on the payment of US\$30 billion in sovereign debt in 2022, the steep depreciation of the cedi and the

\$3 billion bailout from the IMF, among others. Since the campaign was largely issue-based and not driven by parochial personality-based politics intermingled with ethnicity, regionalism and religion, this may have helped reduce the political tension, thereby preventing large-scale electoral violence.



Supporters of NPP at the final rally



Supporters of NPP at the rally

Table 2 illustrates the fluctuating trends in voter turnout in Ghana's general elections between 1992 and 2024. The COG notes that voter turnout, at 79 per cent during the 2020 general elections, declined significantly to 63.97 per cent in 2024, according to the official Declaration of the Presidential Election Results announced by the EC Chair, Jean Adukwei Mensa, on 9 December 2024.

Table 2. Voter turnout in presidential and parliamentary elections, 1992–2024

Election year	Voter turnout (%)
1992	50.2
1996	78.2
2000	First round: 61.7; run-off: 60.4
2004	85.1
2008	First round: 69.5; run-off: 72.9
2012	79.4
2016	68.6
2020	79.0
2024	63.97

Source: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, Voter Turnout Database.

Campaign finance

Under the Political Parties Law Act (2000), political parties are required to submit their audited accounts annually along with:

- the state of their accounts;
- sources of their funds;
- membership dues paid;
- contributions or donations in cash or kind;
- properties of the party and time of acquisition;
- such other particulars as the EC may reasonably require.

The law further states that non-citizens are not allowed to make any contributions, donations or loans to political parties. The COG notes that political party financing remains largely unmonitored and unregulated. No restrictions exist in terms of how much a party or candidate can spend and, as the campaign period is not defined by law, campaign spending spreads over an unspecified period of time. Stakeholders indicated that elections were monetised in Ghana such that political parties with more financial resources dominate the political landscape.

The COG notes that there is no legally prescribed limit for campaign spending by political parties and candidates. This situation presents a challenge to Ghana's democratic development as it opens the political system to unbridled monetisation of politics and the commercialisation of elections, with dire implications for accountability. It also exposes Ghana's governance system to political corruption. Furthermore, as the campaign period is not defined by law, campaign spending spreads over an unspecified period of time.

Recommendation:

- The COG reiterates the recommendations of the 2020 COG for a review of legislation to ensure there is effective regulation, implementation and transparency around campaign financing and party funding.

Pre-election political violence

The pre-election campaign period was marred by incidents of political violence.¹²

¹² During a parliamentary by-election in January 2019 in Ayawaso West Wuogon constituency, in Greater Accra region, vigilante violence erupted between NPP and NDC supporters. The police and the army intervened. Eight people died and several others were injured. A Commission of Inquiry was set up and completed its report, recommending that the perpetrators of the vigilante violence be subjected to the law. However, no action had been taken up to the 7 December 2024 general elections. A major positive development resulting from the Commission of Inquiry was the promulgation of the 2019 Vigilantism and Related Offences Act. This has contributed to a reduction in vigilante violence, especially between 2020 and 2024.

The COG noted that, in the runup to the 7 December 2024 general elections, several stakeholders were apprehensive about the possibility of a resurgence of vigilantism, given the tense political environment ahead of the polls. However, no major incidents of vigilante violence marred the campaign and election phases, which were largely peaceful.

Stakeholders who came to brief the COG, most notably UNESCO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the National Peace Council (NPC) and IDEG, shared vital information about possible hotspots of violence during the campaign. This information was corroborated by timely and informative reports from WANEP, which had a situation room at the Movenpick Hotel that monitored electoral violence during the pre-voting, voting and post-voting stages of the electoral cycle. These stakeholders were all unanimous that one of the hotspots to watch was Bawku municipal district in Upper East region, adjacent to the border with Burkina Faso. The district's own inter-communal, inter-ethnic and chieftaincy-related violent conflicts, propelled by social media mis/disinformation and hate speech, could potentially become a gateway for terrorism and violent extremism prevalent in the Sahel region through Burkina Faso, the COG was told.

The COG credits the peaceful nature of the 2024 general elections to the concerted peacebuilding efforts of various stakeholders, including the NPC, the NCCE, NEST, IPAC, WANEP, CODEO, the Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), IDEG, the media, various election situation rooms, women's groups and, especially, the people of Ghana. The NPC, with technical support from IDEG, facilitated the commitment by all political parties to vigilante-free and peaceful elections in July 2024. Subsequently, the parties signed the Peace Pact, appropriately entitled 'Pursuing Peaceful Elections, Non-Violence and Justice', on 28 November 2024.

Recommendation:

- The COG recommends that key political stakeholders, especially the executive arm of the state, effectively implement the Vigilantism and Related Offences Act of 2019 to eradicate political violence and deepen the culture of peace in Ghana.

Electoral offences

The COG noted that the 2024 general elections were marred by some electoral offences, chief among which were vote-buying and misuse of public resources. The COG noted several instances of vote-buying during election campaigns, during the special voting that took place on 2 December 2024 and on election day on 7 December 2024. During the special voting exercise, CODEO reported several instances of vote-buying. There were also reported incidents of abuse of national resources and incumbency. Vote-buying and misuse of public resources amount to political corruption and have the potential to undermine Ghana's democratic credentials.

Recommendation:

- It is recommended that the institutional capacity of the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice be adequately enhanced to bolster its effectiveness in combating political corruption, especially vote-buying and misuse and abuse of public resources during elections.

The media

This section provides an overview of key findings on the state of the media in Ghana, the legal frameworks that govern and regulate its work, ownership, funding and the critical role that mainstream (print media, TV channels and radio) and digital media played during the 7 December 2024 general elections.

This report's observations and recommendations are drawn from a media analysis of mainstream and online news during and before the elections and a range of media organisations observed and interacted with. The stakeholder discussions were instrumental in deepening the COG's understanding of the state's role in the media and other fundamental electoral issues crucial to Ghana's democratic governance and development.

Ghana's media comprises state- and privately owned media, bolstered by constitutional protection through the National Media Commission (NMC), a vibrant civil society and a lively national and international press corps.

Media sources

Television

As of 2022, there were 155 authorised television stations, with 113 on air. The state-owned Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) and its television Ghana TV (GTV) and digital networks, including the widely watched news channel GBC 24, held a significant market share, with a land-size coverage of up to 95 per cent. This figure has dropped to 75 per cent as a result of poor signal access in some regions, which now experience intermittent electricity blackouts. Key networks with unique offerings include Metro TV, jointly owned by the government and private companies, and the privately owned Joy TV, TV3 and E.TV.

Radio

There are around 549 commercial radio stations,¹³ 31 public radio broadcasters and 137 community radio stations. The liberalisation of the airwaves in 1996 led to a surge in private and commercial channels. Radio is the primary source of information for a diverse population, as it is easily accessible and affordable. It demonstrates the broadest reach in the country, with almost 100 per cent penetration, even in areas without electricity, mainly through battery-operated radio sets. The GBC broadcasts in 25 languages over 18 stations, with local networks connecting to Radio Ghana for English news for 30 minutes 4 times daily, then transitioning to regional programmes. During the general elections, locally owned private and community radio stations were also pivotal, enhancing nationwide coverage and engaging listeners in the democratic process.

Print media

There are over 40 newspapers published in Ghana. The state funds two daily newspapers and two weekly entertainment papers. The state-owned newspapers, Daily Graphic and Ghanaian Times, dominate the print media sector.



Election coverage: COG members reading newspapers

¹³ <https://nca.org.gh/authorised-radio/>

Other mainstream news sources

Ghana News Agency is state-run and has broad reach in remote parts of the country.

General media environment

Despite the wide range of media outlets in Ghana, many face challenges such as financial constraints and misinformation and disinformation, the latter brought on by the variant political and business interests of the owners of media channels and citizen journalism prevalent on social media.

Ghana's 1992 Constitution, in Chapter 12, Articles 162–173, guides and regulates the media. These articles highlight the fundamental elements of professional and ethical journalism under which all mainstream media organisations are expected to operate.

The media self-regulates under the guidance of the NMC, established in July 1993. The NMC ensures the establishment and maintenance of the highest journalistic standards in the mass media, including the investigation, mediation and settlement of complaints made against or by the press or other mass media. As one of Ghana's four independent governance institutions, the NMC operates without government control and prioritises its commitment to serving Ghanaian citizens.

Articles 162–173 of the Constitution ensure the freedom and independence of the media, the responsibility of state-owned media and the proper appointment of board members and editors of state-owned media. Notably, editors of state-owned media are appointed by the governing bodies of the respective corporations in consultation with the Public Services Commission, ensuring a transparent and accountable selection process.

Additionally, in 2019, the government introduced a law – the Right to Information Act (2019) (Act 989) – making it possible for journalists to demand information from the government deemed to be of national interest. The law establishes the right to apply for information from a public institution without giving a reason, leaving space for limitations to this request in the interests of national security, public safety and personal information. Since the law's adoption, more than 1,000 requests have been submitted, 838 of which have been granted, according to the information minister. A clause in the law allows a fee to be charged, which has in some cases been prohibitive. There have been attempts to regulate these fees recently.

Media stakeholders shared their experiences with the COG of encountering obstacles when seeking information from authorities. Although they had not been denied access, they had faced subtle delay tactics that hindered their work. These tactics included delays in providing requested information or, in some cases, no response. This may undermine the ability of journalists to hold those in power accountable.

A significant development in the media coverage of the 7 December 2024 elections was the EC's reversal of its earlier decision to prevent journalists from accessing collation centres, following consultations with stakeholders. The initial decision would have restricted media access to a vital part of the polling process, undermining transparency and limiting access to information.

Recommendation:

- The COG recommends that all government ministries and other state institutions are well versed in and comply with media-related laws that empower journalists to seek and obtain information, and make this information available in a timely manner.

Media ownership and influence

Given that the majority of the media in Ghana is privately owned, this report aims to highlight the role private media played before, during and after Ghana's 2024 elections in shaping voter perceptions and voting patterns. The political affiliation of media owners has emerged as a significant issue, undermining democratic discourse. According to the Media Ownership Monitor-Ghana, a substantial portion of media ownership in the country is concentrated in the hands of a few individuals who are either politically active or closely aligned with the political system.¹⁴

¹⁴ <https://ghana.mom-gmr.org/>

The GBC has the most expansive coverage, at up to 95 per cent of the country. However, this reduced to 70 per cent during the 2024 elections owing to electricity challenges in the Upper West, Bono West and Ahafo regions. The Ministry of Communication is responsible for distributing television signals throughout the country. The COG was informed that television and radio signals were interrupted during the elections as a result of an unreliable electricity supply.

Other notable broadcasting stations include the following:¹⁵

- **Multi-Media Broadcasting Limited** is a network that runs six FM radio stations, three websites, three TV stations and a digital satellite platform with many channels that host Ghanaian and foreign media stations. All their channels covered the elections in English and Twi, the local dialect.
- **Media General Ghana Limited** is a media network that operates four FM radio stations and one TV station, TV3. It covers elections on all its platforms using English, Twi or Akan.
- **Despite Group of Companies** runs three FM radio stations and one TV station. It broadcasts nationwide in Akan and English.
- **Angel Broadcasting Services** has five channels.
- **Excellence in Broadcasting Limited** includes six FM radio stations and two TV stations, which all broadcast in English, Twi or Akan.
- **Loud Silence or With All Due Respect**, a media and news company that broadcasts nationwide online.

Recommendations:

- The NMC should tighten and monitor the implementation of guidelines on ethical media reporting in line with the Principles and Guidelines for the Use of Digital and Social Media in Elections in Africa adopted by the African Union in 2023. Examples include the right to reply, balanced reporting and avoidance of mis/disinformation, especially during the election period.
- A cross-media ownership regulation should be introduced and implemented to prevent the monopoly of media ownership.

Funding

Regulations on campaign financing and spending for public or state-run media vary from country to country; in Ghana, most media outlets generate resources independent of government support.

Although privately owned media stations appear well resourced by their owners and are generally equipped to cover elections effectively, the leading public broadcaster, the GBC, was required to generate funding to support its coverage of the 2024 elections. The GBC does not receive state funding; its resources are derived from advertising and other revenue streams. However, the Ministry of Communications did provide some funding to the GBC in the 2020 elections.

Election coverage 2024

One of the most notable aspects of the election coverage in Ghana was the media's proactive role in shaping the narrative. Across mainstream media outlets and platforms, issue-based reporting was pivotal, with the media driving the election by ensuring that issues such as the economy, vigilantism, education access, corruption and unemployment were at the core of the discussion through interviews and news reports. The GBC and private media encouraged live debates between the candidates of the two main political parties.

Through a two-hour daily programme, the GBC gave equal access to all political parties, allowing politicians to promote their manifestos and appeal to voters.

The group commends the state broadcaster for its efforts to maintain balance in airtime allocation.

¹⁵ www.mom-gmr.org/en/countries/ghana/

Media and women

Newspapers reported significantly more on topics involving women or key messages shared by women politicians than did television. Most gender-based issues were intricately interwoven with election themes such as the economy, unemployment, access to primary women political candidates and the environmental impact of illegal mining, adding a layer of complexity to the election coverage.

This observation contrasts with the negative profiling of women politicians on social media. The Movement for Women in Media claimed that these gender-biased attacks were one reason for poor participation of women in politics.

Recommendations:

- Journalists should be trained by CSOs on gender reporting skills during elections and beyond, to understand and address the fundamental issues affecting women. Gender issues should not be limited to news stories but should be explored in depth through well-researched analytical articles and documentaries promoting specialist reports.
- Dialogue between media editors and women politicians should increase, facilitated by CSOs, to understand issues that affect the women.
- Deliberate quotas related to the coverage of women's issues should be set up for newspapers and media platforms.
- Specialised training by CSOs for women politicians or candidates should focus on the strategic use of media to boost their political careers and increase their visibility.

Media and youth

With youth (18-35 years old) making up to 57 per cent of Ghana's potential voters,¹⁶ media coverage during the election campaign was notably inclusive. Nearly all media outlets covered political party manifestos and pronouncements targeted at young voters. Key issues addressed included empowering youth to participate in economic development by introducing a 24-hour economy to promote entrepreneurship and specialised skills among young people. A common theme in media stories was the pledge by political parties to make high school education free, thereby allowing Ghanaian youth to obtain tertiary education. Robust discussion programmes on radio and television, featuring diverse groups from civil society and other organisations, further highlight the inclusivity of the media coverage. Another issue affecting youth is *galamsey*, or illegal small-scale mining. Politicians capitalised on this hot topic during the campaign.

Recommendation:

- The COG recommends that the EC work with the media to promote voter education among youth.

Coverage of persons with disabilities

Generally, issues involving PWDs received some media coverage, although most reports monitored did not feature the person but rather spoke about or discussed their issues. Concern was expressed about the language used in such reporting, with phrases such as 'deaf and dumb' or 'even the blind can see that this is ...' found to be derogatory and hurtful.

Recommendations:

- The COG encourages training of media stakeholders on sensitivities around reporting on issues about PWDs.
- The media should employ PWDs and give them public prominence.
- The media should avoid showcasing PWDs as helpless victims and instead highlight their successes and the impactful role they play in society.

¹⁶ <https://statsghana.gov.gh/ghfactsheet.php>

Coverage by other key platforms

Ghana Police Television ran a 24-hour news service. The channels constantly updated on election preparedness, security and other safety matters during the election period.

The Election Commission and the media

The COG commends the EC for strengthening its relationship with the media through press conferences, statements and updates on its social media platforms, so that journalists and the public could stay informed.

The more prominent radio and television stations ran 24 hours of live broadcasting, updating on results and other election-related stories. Media outlets such as the GBC featured a comprehensive range of subject experts on topics such as the economy, the political history of the parties, visiting parties and other election-related issues. This coverage provided news-based information and a deeper understanding of the election process, with startups and data on voting patterns and results broadcast as they were received.

The EC also issued press releases, which kept audiences informed and engaged in the electoral process. However, its website needed to publish key updated information that some media and observers required, such as documents and statements about election results.

Recommendation:

- The EC is encouraged to provide the media with regular updates ahead of the elections to raise awareness of the electoral processes.

Social media

Political parties increasingly use social media platforms to share their manifestos, avoiding the costs associated with mainstream media.¹⁷ However, concerns are mounting – more so than in the last election – regarding the potentially harmful effects of mis/disinformation and the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to manipulate photos and videos. These issues pose significant risks to the electoral process and threaten the integrity of democracy in Ghana.

An overview of the internet access and freedom

Ghana gained internet access in 1994, making it one of the first African countries to do so, according to the Media Ownership Monitor-Ghana, a platform launched by the Media Foundation for West Africa in collaboration with Reporters Without Borders.¹⁸ The Measuring the Information Society Report 2017 also identifies Ghana as an attractive hub for information and communication technology (ICT) in the region.¹⁹ As of January 2024, internet penetration in Ghana has reached 69.8 per cent, showing consistent growth.²⁰

Ghana emerged as one of the most dynamic countries in 2010–2015 based on the ICT Development Index, climbing significantly from 130th to 109th place.²¹ The 2004 ICT Policy for Accelerated Development contributed in great measure to improvements in the quality, accessibility and infrastructure of the internet.²²

The number of mobile connections as of January 2024 has decreased to 39 million, a decline from 44 million in the same period in 2023. However, nearly every household in Ghana owns a mobile phone.²³

¹⁷ Smaller political parties and independent candidates who may not have access to the mainstream media tend to utilise social media platforms for their political campaigns.

¹⁸ <https://ghana.mom-gmr.org/en/media/online/>

¹⁹ ITU (2017) 'Measuring the Information Society Report 2017, Volume 2: ICT Country Profiles'. https://ft.dfs.un.org/sites/default/files/measuring_the_information_society_report_misr2017_volume2_2.pdf

²⁰ Kemp, S. (2024) 'Digital 2024: Ghana'. <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-ghana>; Statista (2024) 'Internet Penetration Rate in Ghana from 2017 to 2024'. www.statista.com/statistics/1171435/internet-penetration-rate-ghana/; Dabalen, A. and Tei Mensah, J. (2023) 'Ten Facts About Digital Technology Adoption in Ghana'. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/african/ten-facts-about-digital-technology-adoption-ghana>

²¹ <https://ghana.mom-gmr.org/en/media/online/>

²² IRI (2024) 'Ghana 2024 Elections: A Risk Assessment of the Online Information Space'. www.iri.org/resources/ghana-2024-elections-a-risk-assessment-of-the-online-information-space/

²³ Statista (2024) 'Total Number of Mobile Connections in Ghana from 2017 to 2024'. www.statista.com/statistics/1171461/number-of-mobile-connections-ghana

Ghana ranks 65th out of 100 countries on Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2024 report and enjoys internet freedom without technical censorship.²⁴ CSOs and media stakeholders consulted by the COG expressed confidence that internet access would remain uninterrupted during the election period. As is also evident in the Freedom House report, they raised no concerns about potential internet shutdowns.

Consumption of social media platforms

In Ghana, various online media platforms are widely used, with private messaging service WhatsApp²⁵ leading the way, with 10.1 million users.²⁶ Facebook is the second most popular social media platform, with 7.4 million users.²⁷ The COG noted that Facebook was among the most frequently mentioned social media platforms among stakeholders consulted. Instagram (2.2 million users as of early January 2024)²⁸ and X (previously Twitter) (with 1.7 million users as of early January 2024)²⁹ are also popular platforms. TikTok is popular among youth (522,615)³⁰ in Ghana, though not as popular as the other social media platforms mentioned.

Despite the popularity of social media, radio was consistently identified as a primary source of information.

Concerns with information integrity

Concerns about the integrity of the information landscape emerged in the context of Ghana's general elections.

The proliferation of mis/disinformation in the media was identified as a significant challenge in the lead-up to the elections. A widely reported incident cited by stakeholders consulted by the COG involved a journalist allegedly urging voters to cast their votes for presidential candidates on different days.³¹ The COG acknowledged the worry that journalists and others expressed with the scale and significance of mis/disinformation circulated not just on social media but also on mainstream media outlets such as the radio.

Stakeholders recognised the prevalence of inflammatory language in the online space as a significant concern during the elections. Examples included slurs and derogatory terms associated with animals. The COG observed that efforts to incite religious divisions, which were reportedly the intended aim, largely failed, as acknowledged by the majority of stakeholders. Some stakeholders highlighted that the public actively resisted such attempts.

Stakeholders expressed deep discontent with the conduct of the media – both mainstream and digital – in the lead-up to the election. The COG observed a lack of trust in mainstream media and anxiety around mis/disinformation in the social media sphere.

Problems unique to the online sphere undermine the integrity of the information environment. Bot accounts on X,³² AI-generated deepfakes,³³ doctored images³⁴ and co-ordinated networks on X³⁵ were shared as examples of concerns related to the online space. Discussions with stakeholders raised most of these problems.

²⁴ Freedom House (2024) 'Ghana'. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/ghana/freedom-net/2024>

²⁵ Access Now (2024) 'Rainbow-Burning: How Social Media Companies Increase Risks for LGBTQ+ People in Africa'. www.accessnow.org/publication/social-media-companies-increase-risks-lgbtq-africa/

²⁶ World Population Review (2024) 'WhatsApp Users by Country 2024'. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/whatsapp-users-by-country>; IRI (2024) 'Ghana 2024 Elections: A Risk Assessment of the Online Information Space'.

²⁷ IRI (2024) 'Ghana 2024 Elections: A Risk Assessment of the Online Information Space'.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Kemp, S. (2024) 'Digital 2024: Ghana'.

³⁰ IRI (2024) 'Ghana 2024 Elections: A Risk Assessment of the Online Information Space'.

³¹ Yaw Kwafo, E.N. (2024) '2024 Election: Police Arrest Wontumi Radio Presenter Oheneba Nana Asiedu for the Publication of False News'. www.modernghana.com/news/1359485/2024-election-police-arrest-wontumi-radio-present.html

³² Haskins, C. (2024) 'Phony X Accounts Are Meddling in Ghana's Election'. <https://restofworld.org/2024/ghana-election-ai-bots-x-twitter/>

³³ Freedom House (2024) 'Ghana'.

³⁴ Ayamdoo Salifu, A.G. (2024) 'Video of Mahama saying "Ghanaians Are Small-Minded" Doctored'. www.fact-checkghana.com/video-of-mahama-saying-ghanaians-are-small-minded-doctored/

³⁵ Ghana Fact-Checking Coalition (2024) 'Inside the Hashtag Cold Wars: How Coordinated Networks on X Are Driving Disinformation in Ghana's 2024 Elections'. www.fact-checkghana.com/inside-the-hashtag-cold-wars-how-coordinated-networks-on-x-are-driving-disinformation-in-ghanas-2024-elections/

Additionally, civil society actors and media personnel who were consulted by the COG identified cyberbullying targeting women and women political candidates as a significant hindrance in the information space. Cyberbullying that particularly targets women poses a dual threat: it undermines the integrity of the information space and hinders the active and effective political participation of women, including those running for office.

Overall, these concerns undermine trust in the media in Ghana.

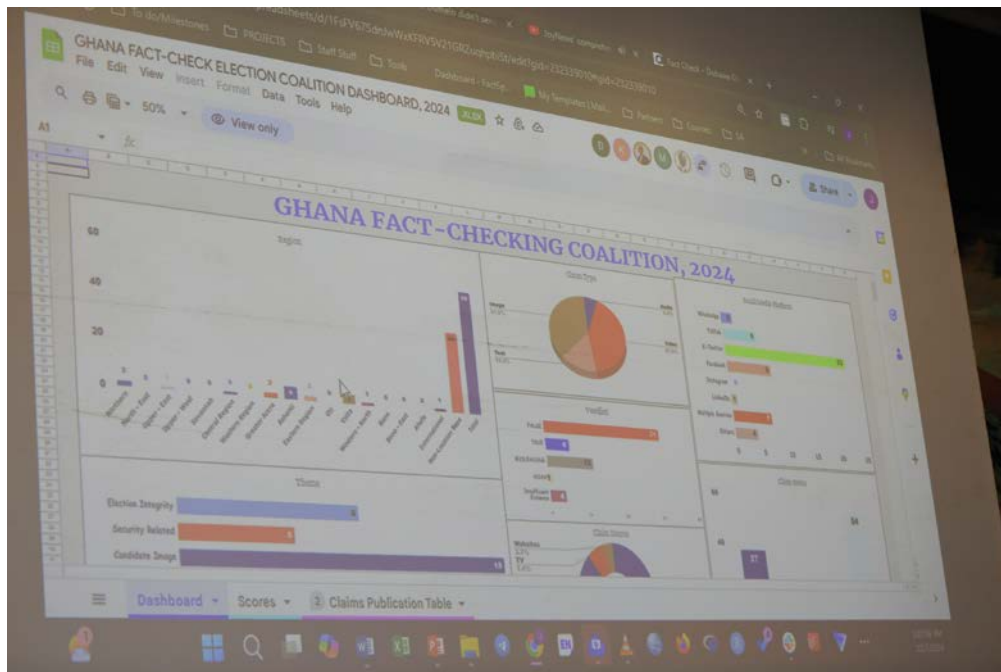
Recommendations:

- CSOs and fact-checking initiatives should educate social media users on critical thinking skills including source verification.
- CSOs should carry out special training for women politicians or candidates so they can protect themselves from cyberbullying.

Countering concerns with information integrity

Efforts to address and challenge concerns regarding the integrity of information in the lead-up to Ghana's elections were driven by both CSOs and fact-checking initiatives.

The Ghana Fact-Checking Coalition (GFC) is made up of the country's three leading fact-checking organisations, all of which are signatories to the International Fact-Checking Network: Fact-Check Ghana (Media Foundation for West Africa),³⁶ Dubawa Ghana (Centre for Journalism, Innovation and Development)³⁷ and Ghana Fact (FactSpace West Africa).³⁸ The GFC worked with CSOs, including Africa Check, CDD-Ghana, Penplusbyte, WANEP and Digital Africa Research Lab.³⁹



Ghana Fact-Check Election Coalition Dashboard

³⁶ www.fact-checkghana.com/

³⁷ <https://ghana.dubawa.org/>

³⁸ <https://ghanafact.com/>

³⁹ MFWA (2024) 'MFWA, DUBAWA and Ghana Fact Establish Ghana Fact-Checking Coalition ahead of December Elections'. <https://mfwa.org/mfwa-dubawa-and-ghana-fact-establish-ghana-fact-checking-coalition-ahead-of-december-elections/>

Media Situation Rooms dealing with mis/disinformation were operational from 4 to 11 December 2024.⁴⁰ CODEO collaborated with the GFC to set up these Media Situation Rooms and increase journalists' capacity for fact-checking and debunking.⁴¹ The UNESCO office in Ghana also conducted training for journalists covering elections to equip them with skills to counter misinformation and hate speech.⁴²

Recommendation:

- The COG recommends that CSOs and fact-checking organisations provide journalists with further training on fact-checking and ethical media reporting.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ CODEO (2024) 'CODEO Collaborates with Ghana Fact-Checking Coalition to Combat Misinformation and Disinformation'. <https://codeoghana.org/2024/11/codeo-collaborates-with-ghana-fact-checking-coalition-to-combat-misinformation-and-disinformation/>

⁴² United Nations Ghana (2024) 'Countering Hate Speech and Misinformation- UNESCO Kickstarts Regional Trainings for Journalist ahead of 2024 Elections'. <https://ghana.un.org/en/272297-countering-hate-speech-and-misinformation-unesco-kickstarts-regional-trainings-journalist>

6 Voting, Counting and Results Process

Polling procedures

The Public Elections Regulations (2020) (C.I.127) adopted by Parliament, and supplementary aide memoires issued by the EC, establish clear procedures and a variety of ballot security measures. The security measures put in place for voting include the following:

- use of BVDs to check the identity of voters through fingerprint and/or facial recognition;
- imprinting of serial numbers on ballot papers and ballot paper counterfoils;
- marking of the reverse of ballots at the point of issue to voters with a stamp that is unique to individual polling stations;
- inking of voters' fingers to indicate that they have received ballot papers;
- closure of ballot boxes with seals bearing a unique number and affording political party agents the right to add their unique seals to the ballot boxes;
- use of tamper-proof envelopes for used ballot papers and other sensitive materials after the poll is concluded.

If followed correctly, the procedures and additional security features are sufficient to ensure the integrity of the voting and counting processes. To enhance compliance, the EC provided training and issued a manual outlining the roles and tasks of electoral officials at various levels, as well as security officers on duty on election day.⁴³

Special voting

Special (early) voting took place at 328 polling stations on 2 December for polling officials, accredited media and security personnel who would be working on 7 December 2024 election day. The EC postponed voting in the Eastern and Volta regions because of the leakage of a single ballot paper from the printing houses. The EC organised the reprinting of the entire ballot print run and held special voting in these regions on 5 December 2024. In total, 131,478 voters were registered to vote as special voters. The COG observed elections at a few polling stations on 2 and 5 December 2024, where the process went smoothly.

Observation by Commonwealth observer teams

For the election period, the Commonwealth deployed 10 teams, to 10 regions of Ghana.⁴⁴

Setting up and opening of polling stations

On 6 December 2024, district election officials prepared polling materials for subsequent distribution to polling stations early on the morning of election day. The materials were guarded overnight by armed police units.

⁴³ Including district electoral officers, constituency returning officers, polling station presiding officers, polling assistants and collation officers at constituency and regional levels.

⁴⁴ The teams were deployed to Northern, Northwest, Northeast, Volta, Western, Central, Ashanti, Greater Accra, Upper East and Upper West regions.



Distribution of materials in preparation for Election Day

The COG observed that polling officials had received all the required sensitive and non-sensitive materials and diligently followed the procedures for setting up polling stations. However, the volume of tasks, strict adherence to procedures and a few instances of difficulties with BVDs meant that a few polling stations observed by the COG opened a little later than 7 am as stipulated by law.



Pre-poll arrangements: polling official setting up and preparing materials for voting

Election day atmosphere

The COG noted that, in general, voting was conducted in a largely calm and orderly atmosphere that was conducive to the free exercise of Ghanaians' voting rights. Although queues formed, by and large voters waited patiently to cast their vote. The capping of the number of voters per polling station at 750 was helpful in avoiding congestion and ensuring that voting was conducted smoothly, without a build-up of a large number of voters in the queues.

However, the presence of groups of party supporters in the vicinity of some polling stations, particularly later in the day, on occasions may have increased tensions and could have affected some voters' experiences on election day. COG teams also reported that some may have been involved in influencing voters in their choices, including through vote-buying. A few COG teams reported confirmed cases of vote-buying involving cash payments, while other forms of inducement were noted.⁴⁵

Recommendation:

- To ensure voters are able to vote without interference or undue influence, police officers should act upon any indications of vote-buying and vote-selling to apprehend the perpetrators as vote-buying is an electoral offence and subject to penalties.

⁴⁵ Including through the collection of names and IDs by persons associated with the political parties. The photographing of ballots was also reported and/or directly observed.



Voters waiting patiently to exercise their franchise



A voter casting his ballot for the 2024 Parliamentary Election

The Inspector General of Police informed the COG of its comprehensive security plans, police training, establishment of situation rooms and multi-agency taskforces as well as its strategy to de-escalate political tensions. Police officers, sometimes deployed from outside their usual area of work, were present at all polling stations visited by COG teams, thereby providing reassurance to voters. However, in a significant exception to the calm election day atmosphere, gunfire occurred in Nyankpala community, Tolon constituency, located in the Northern region, tragically resulting in a fatality and injuries. The incident resulted in several arrests. After the incident, the COG noted a higher presence of security forces including military personnel in the region.

Queues of voters were noted at most polling stations visited, particularly in the morning. Voters waited patiently to make their electoral choices, and tension was noted only rarely. As most polling stations were set up in open-air venues, congestion at polling stations was seldom a problem. While the selection of outdoor locations meant that the polling process was visible to all, and thus transparent, it also meant that sometimes there were no walls on which to affix the voter information materials and aide memoires that the EC had supplied. Furthermore, the ground was often uneven, creating an additional difficulty for PWDs; uneven pavements in the vicinity of polling stations located in buildings were also noted as a problem. Outdoor venues were also exposed to the elements, including sunshine, which was problematic where no natural shade existed, and polling officials were not supplied with sufficient canopies.

Recommendation:

- Sufficient canopies should be provided for polling officials and party agents at polling stations to better protect them from the elements (sunshine, wind and rain).

COG teams frequently reported a good level of co-operation between polling officials, party agents and police officers stationed at polling stations. In the runup to the election, the authorities announced the closure of Ghana's land borders. The COG noted that, in border areas, the police and the immigration authority worked together closely and constructively, demonstrating good inter-agency co-operation. Traditional chiefs also played a positive role in promoting peaceful and democratic elections.

The right of citizens to free movement prior to election day and on election day was largely respected, although voters in some parts of the country were stopped at police checkpoints because of security concerns.

Polling officials, party agents and observers

The EC appoints a presiding officer (PO) to each polling station to lead on the organisation of the polling process. The PO should be supported by no fewer than four polling assistants. Each candidate contesting the parliamentary election and each presidential candidate may appoint a party agent to scrutinise the polling process and to 'certify that the poll was conducted in accordance with laws and regulations governing the conduct of elections'. International and national organisations can apply to the EC for accreditation of observers.

The COG noted that polling officials appeared well prepared for their tasks and, in general, fulfilled these professionally and diligently. While women were well represented as polling officials, men were disproportionately appointed as presiding officers.

Recommendation:

- The EC should strive to achieve parity in the number of men and women appointed as presiding officers.

Party agents representing the two largest parties were present at all polling stations visited by the COG. This contributed to the general transparency of the voting process. In many polling stations observed, party agents had received a copy of the extract of the voter register, and in some regions polling officials announced the name of the voters, which assisted party agents in monitoring participation. In other regions, they did not.

In general, the interaction between polling officials and party agents was collaborative, although at times the latter appeared to assume the authority legally assigned to the former, and on occasions appeared to direct officials in their actions and decision-making. This became more problematic on those occasions when the party agents were less well versed in the correct procedures than the officials.

Recommendation:

- Party agents should respect the authority of polling officials and should receive training so they do not direct polling officials or participate in the polling process, beyond what is established in laws and regulations. In particular, they should never approach polling booths when voters are present or touch marked ballot papers during the count.



Political Party agents checking the serial numbers on the seals

The COG did not observe a significant presence of unauthorised persons in polling venues, and polling officials were able to undertake their tasks independently, impartially and largely without interference.

In addition to the COG, observers from the various international and regional organisations were accredited by the EC, including the African Union and ECOWAS. Citizen observers from several Ghanaian institutions, CSOs and CSO networks deployed observers in large numbers.⁴⁶ CODEO deployed 4,000⁴⁷ observers and conducted a Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT). Some Ghanaian CSOs and CSO networks focused their observation on the participation of women and PWDs in the polling process.⁴⁸ Observers from other organisations met by the COG did not report any difficulties in carrying out their tasks. The COG was able to receive all the information it requested from election officials at all levels.

Media organisations were also eligible to apply to the EC for accreditation for their reporters to enter polling venues and other collation centres to cover election day and result tabulation proceedings.

Voter participation

The COG noted that almost all voters who attended a polling station appeared on the main voter register or other voter lists⁴⁹ and were able to cast their vote without undue impediment, although a few presented themselves at the wrong polling station and were redirected to another polling station. However, in one polling station observed, a voter who had applied for a transfer of his registration to another polling station informed the COG that he had been assigned to a polling station that appeared not to exist. Voters with a disability, elderly voters and nursing mothers were prioritised, such that they were processed without having to wait in line.

⁴⁶ Over 150 organisations were accredited as observers. These include international and citizen observers, the diplomatic community and government institutions.

⁴⁷ CODEO deployed 1,500 PVT observers out of the 4,000 observers.

⁴⁸ For example, GFD deployed observers to polling stations where PWDs would be voting.

⁴⁹ In addition to the main voter register, polling stations are given lists of voters who have transferred into that polling station (transferred voters list); persons who voted during special voting or have transferred out of the register for that polling station (absent voters list) and persons who, owing to ill health or absence from the constituency, have elected to vote by proxy (proxy voter list). In addition, the names of 1,870 persons whose registration data was corrupted appeared on the voters without biometric data list.

Recommendation:

- The EC should find ways to enable voters to check more easily at which voting station they are registered.

Nevertheless, some voters with a disability faced obstacles to their participation, including polling stations located in unsuitable locations such as in venues that could only be accessed by stairs or that lacked ramps. The polling booths were of a uniform height rather than adjustable, creating a difficulty for PWDs in casting their ballots without hindrance and in full secrecy. The EC provided tactile ballot jackets printed in braille at the large majority of polling stations, which allow voters with visual impairment to cast their ballots unassisted. However, on occasions, voters with visual impairment still required or requested assistance in marking their ballots and casting their votes. Polling officials also provided sign language interpretation in a few polling stations.



Observer Grace Jerry checking tactile ballot jacket for voters with visual impairment.



A polling station on ground level to allow voters with mobility challenges to cast their votes

Recommendation:

- While the COG recognises the accommodations were made to better ensure that PWDs could participate in the elections, more needs to be done to ensure PWDs can exercise their franchise with dignity. Specifically, the EC should, in collaboration with organisations representing PWDs, undertake an audit of all polling venues to ensure their suitability for PWDs and introduce voting booths with an adjustable height.

Polling station officials were given tally sheets to record the number of men and women voters, enabling the production of disaggregated voter data. Observers commented that women appeared to have voted in larger numbers. This is yet to be confirmed by data to be released by the EC.

Voting process

In general, polling officials complied with procedures diligently. Voter cards were routinely presented and checked, and all voters were checked using the BVDs. However, on a few occasions, the BVDs failed to recognise any of the five fingerprints of some voters, particularly elderly voters, and these persons had to undergo identification through comparing their face with their image, also stored in the BVDs. When BVDs did not recognise either voters' fingerprints or the facial image, voters had to undergo a 'manual' verification and complete a prescribed form.

Voters requiring assistance were not always able to attend polling with an assistant of their choice, and on occasions polling officials provided this assistance. Other than in these cases, observers did not report instances of more than one voter being seen at a voting booth (family or group voting). This may be because the ballot contains a photograph and the symbol of each candidate as well as their name, better enabling the voter to identify unaided the candidate of their choice. The voter makes this choice by thumbprint.

Recommendation:

- To ensure the secrecy of the ballot, it is recommended that the EC consider altering the method for marking the ballot paper such that it is marked with a cross or a tick rather than a fingerprint, which is captured in the BVD.

The secrecy of the vote, which is required under international, regional and national law, was not always guaranteed. Where they occurred, infringements owed mostly to the poor positioning of the voting booths, although the general volume of people at polling locations also affected voters' privacy. On occasions, voters folded their ballot papers outside of the voting booths, meaning that those in the polling area could, on occasions, see the position of the thumbprint on the ballot paper. In some places, the voting booths were positioned such that polling officials could not carry out 'general supervision' of the ballot marking area, for example to check that voters complied with their legal obligations and did not photograph their ballot.⁵⁰

Recommendation:

- The polling manual should be revised to include images of the layout of the polling station, in particular the placement of the voting booths, so that the secrecy of the vote is maintained, while allowing general supervision of the process.

In general, the polling materials worked as planned and were delivered in sufficient quantities. However, in some polling stations, the inkpad used by voters to mark their ballot became sticky or dry resulting in poor quality impressions on the ballot paper, which in turn caused difficulty during the count when polling officials determined the validity of ballots. In addition, the inkpads used by polling officials to stamp the reverse of the ballots became dry, and at times left a faint impression.

⁵⁰ In one polling station observed, a police officer drew the attention of the presiding officer to an instance of a voter photographing their ballot. In this case, with the positioning of the voting booths, it would have been difficult for polling officials to see the voter's actions.



A voter being verified using a BVD



Polling official using BVD to verify the voter

Recommendation:

- If the current system of marking the ballot is maintained, polling stations should be equipped with sufficient inkpads, which should be checked frequently, to ensure they enable voters to make a clear impression on the ballot paper.

Complaints may be filed at polling station level, but the COG did not report that they had been filed in significant numbers.

Counting

Where voters were still queuing at 5 pm, the time set for the close of polls, a police officer noted the last voter, and those present at that time were able to vote.

Prior to the opening of the ballot boxes, the COG noted that polling officials generally followed the correct ballot reconciliation procedures, including rearranging the polling station to prepare for the counting of votes; and determining the number of unused and used ballot papers, as well as the number of voters recorded as having voted by BVD and any voters who had had to be manually verified.

At the polling stations observed by the COG, party agents were able to check the serial numbers on the ballot box seals before the boxes were opened. Sometimes the total number of ballots in the box was not determined immediately after the ballots were removed from the boxes, but rather at the end of the sorting and vote counting. In most cases, polling assistants worked simultaneously to sort the votes. On some occasions, the party agents also handled the marked ballots before the actual vote count took place. The reverse of the ballot paper was not systematically checked for the stamp imprint.



Polling officials sorting ballot papers in preparation for counting



Sorting of ballot papers in preparation for counting

The votes were counted in full view of the party agents and observers and in the general view of the public, although the presiding officer did not always audibly announce the votes for each candidate. Those votes where the intention of the voter was unclear were reviewed by polling officials with party agents able to express a view. The COG noted that a few votes were rejected because the ballots had been folded while the ink (used to make a thumb imprint) was still wet and had made small marks in the boxes next to the names of another candidate. In these instances, the COG felt that the intention of the voters was clear, and notes that the training manual states:

'Greater care should be taken to avoid rejecting ballots unreasonably. A distinction should be made between mere stains and actual thumbprint of the voter. Where the choice of the voter is clear, stains on the ballot paper should not be the basis for rejecting a ballot.'

However, in general, the number of invalid votes observed during counting by the COG was relatively small.⁵¹

Recommendation:

- The training of polling officials should re-emphasise the need to check the reverse of ballots for an imprint of the unique polling station stamp. In addition, presiding officers should be reminded of the direction that 'Greater care should be taken to avoid rejecting ballots unreasonably.'



Polling officials counting ballots in the presence of party agents and observers.

After the counting of the presidential ballots was completed, polling officials proceeded to count the votes for parliamentary candidates, following the same procedures as for the presidential elections. In many cases, the counting of the presidential election votes began in daylight and finished in darkness. Almost all parliamentary vote counts took place after nightfall. Few open-air polling places were equipped with a light by the EC, and polling officials improvised light, for example by using car headlights, phones and torches.

Recommendation:

- The EC should provide the POs of polling stations located in the open air with sufficient lighting, so the count can be conducted correctly when it takes place after nightfall.

⁵¹ The final results as announced by the EC indicated that 2.1 per cent of votes were rejected.

In general, the vote count was transparent and went smoothly, although polling officials were less certain in completing certain fields in the results sheets⁵² (the so-called 'pink sheets'). In particular, reconciling the numbers of voters based on the register and the various lists and the difference between 'spoilt' and 'rejected' ballots were not clearly understood. In some polling stations, the party agents were assertive in advising the polling officials on the completion of the results sheets, even when they were not fully correct in their understanding of procedures.

Recommendation:

- The training of POs should emphasise the procedures for the completion of the results sheets, with an emphasis on the terminology used in the forms and how the voter register totals and voter participation totals are to be determined.

The packing of materials by polling officials into tamper-proof envelopes sometimes took place simultaneously with the completion of the results sheet.

Recommendation:

- The training regarding the packing away of materials to take back to the constituency and collation centres must be strengthened in accordance with established procedures.

After completion, the two result sheets were signed by the PO and party agents. At those polling stations observed by the COG, party agents received copies of the results sheets, adding an important layer of confidence to the electoral process. However, several polling stations did not publicly post a copy of the results sheets, often because there was no place to do so, although they did announce the results to persons gathered at the perimeter of the polling station.

Recommendation:

- The EC should provide direction to POs on how to post results sheets where the polling station is located in the open air.

Collation procedures

For parliamentary elections, the final results are tabulated by the constituency collation officer and announced by the constituency returning officer. These officials are assisted in the collation tasks by assistant returning officers. These officials report to the district election officer. The returning officer is also responsible for counting the special votes cast on 2 and 5 December 2024. Results are collated both manually and electronically.⁵³ The results of the electronic and manual collation should match. The cumulative results should be displayed on a large screen.

The constituency returning officer may make changes to the data contained in the polling station results sheets if they contain obvious errors, such as in the mathematical logic or through an incorrect figure being entered into a field.⁵⁴ However, this has to be carried out in a manner specified in the aide memoires.

The EC Chairperson is the returning officer for the presidential elections and the sole person with the responsibility to announce presidential results. However, the presidential result for a constituency is collated by the constituency collation officer and the constituency returning officer. Once finalised, the constituency results sheets for the presidential elections should be delivered to the respective regional collation centre. These centres operate under the supervision of the regional collation officer, supported by at least two assistants. These officials report to the regional election director. The regional collation officer RCO collates the regional level presidential result based on the cumulative total of presidential election results from the constituencies within the region. These results are conveyed to the EC.

⁵² Forms 8A (parliamentary) and 8B (presidential).

⁵³ The constituency collation officer is responsible for the electronic collation of both parliamentary and presidential results. The returning officer handles the manual collation.

⁵⁴ The Aide Memoire on Correction of Errors on Election Result Sheet/Form issued by the EC sets out detailed procedures for circumstances in which results sheets may be corrected and the manner for doing so.



Results transmission: 16 faxes at the National Collation Center receiving results from the 16 regions

In one region, a COG team was informed by the police that the police service was conducting a parallel tallying of the results to be aware of voting trends.

Observation of the transfer and collation of polling results

After the completion of the count and the packing of the voting materials⁵⁵ in tamper-proof envelopes and then in ballot boxes, the COG followed the transportation of materials and results sheets⁵⁶ to the constituency collation centres.

The COG was informed that the electoral administration was required to requisition vehicles from other state bodies to complete its tasks, but often lacked the required number of vehicles. COG teams reported that, at the close of polls, transportation was frequently not available, and a variety of means were used to transport the materials to constituency collation centres, including private vehicles. On one observed occasion, in Ashanti region, a vehicle associated with a political party functionary was used to transport the material.

Recommendation:

- The government should direct agencies to make more vehicles available to district election officers for the performance of electoral activities. Used polling materials and results should not be transported in non-designated vehicles.

At collation centres visited by the COG, armed police had a visible presence both inside and outside of the building. The venues used as collation centres were large and suitable for the purpose but the checking of results sheets and materials was slow, partly because there were not enough officials to complete the tasks speedily. As the evening progressed, some collation centres began to fill up with polling officials, party agents and functionaries, and observers. In locations where the collation proceeded slowly, this delayed declarations.

⁵⁵ Except for the BVDs, which are handed over separately.

⁵⁶ The results sheets are also sealed in tamper-proof envelopes and are *not* placed in the ballot box together with the materials and votes. The sheets enumerating the number of male and female voters are also not placed in the ballot box but rather handed over to the returning officer.

Recommendation:

- The EC needs to reconsider the organisation of collation centres so that bottlenecks and delays do not occur.

On the evening of 8 December 2024, the two largest political parties called on their supporters to go to collation centres, and in some locations unrest and violence occurred. In Domongo constituency, Savannah region, the collation centre was set ablaze, destroying the venue and polling material and resulting in a fatality from a gunshot. The NPC urged political leaders to publicly call on their supporters to vacate collation centres and respect the integrity of the electoral process. The incident in Domongo occurred after the withdrawal of party supporters and security forces from the collation centre. Unrest also occurred at other constituency collation centres, and there were significant delays in finalising parliamentary and presidential results in these constituencies.

Recommendation:

- Political parties and senior party officials should act responsibly and refrain from calling on their supporters to go converge on collation centres.

Results announcement

Individual parliamentary results were announced locally by constituency returning officers. The media tracked these results and also announced the cumulative presidential result tally based on data the outlets had gathered from constituencies.

The EC did not announce any partial, preliminary data on the presidential election result, or the rolling number of parliamentary seats won by the political parties' candidates. The EC took this approach because it considered that it was only mandated to declare the final result of the presidential election, and to do so it needed to have received the presidential results sheets⁵⁷ from the regional collation centres. This created an information vacuum and the possibility that media outlets would declare different results based on results from different areas that they had gathered.

Recommendation:

- It is important for the EC to ensure that it leads in the provision of results information and does not confine itself to the final results announcement alone. It should not provide only the constituency results but should ensure that, as the results information for the presidential election is received from the constituencies, it provides this as an ongoing process. In this manner, the EC will not run the risk of being accused of deliberately holding back results or trying to interfere with information that has already been made public through parallel vote tallies carried out by party agents, the media and CSOs.

Despite the absence of released partial, preliminary results data from the EC, the candidate of the NPP, Mahamudu Bawumia, conceded defeat early on the morning of 8 December 2024. This act was highly significant and played an important role in reducing rising tensions over the presidential election. However, in some areas, tensions persisted regarding the outcome of constituency contests, with reported acts of arson on public and private property and attacks on security officials.

The EC declared the final result of the presidential election at 5 pm on 9 December 2024. However, unrest at nine constituency collation centres meant that the final result declared was based on only 267 of the 276 constituencies. In announcing the results, the EC Chairperson paid tribute to 'polling officials who had been manhandled and endured risks to their lives in fulfilment of their tasks'.

The absence of nine constituency results from the presidential vote total did not affect the outcome of the election as the winner, John Dramani Mahama, had received 6,328,397 votes (56.55 per cent) while his nearest challenger, Mahamudu Bawumia, had received 4,657,304 votes (41.61 per cent), a difference of 1,671,093 votes. The other 10 candidates put together had 205,721 votes (2.09 per cent). The total number of registered voters in the nine missing constituencies amounted to 947,116.

⁵⁷ Form 11.

Table 3 Results of the presidential election from 275 out of 276 constituencies as declared by the EC Chairperson on 10 January 2025

No.	Candidate	Political party	Votes obtained	Share of votes
1	John Dramani Mahama	NDC	6,591,790	56.42%
2	Mahamudu Bawumia	NPP	4,877,611	41.75%
3	Nana Kwame Bediako	Independent	88,944	0.76%
4	Alan John Kwadwo Kyerematen	Independent	32,457	0.28%
5	Nana Akosua Frimpomaa	CPP	23,991	0.20%
6	Hassan Abdulai Ayariga	APC	17,938	0.15%
7	Daniel Augustus Lartey Jnr	GCPP	17,299	0.15%
8	Christian Kwabena Andrews	GUM	17,030	0.15%
9	Kofi Akpaloo	LPG	5,327	0.05%
10	Mohammed Frimpong	NDP	4,499	0.04%
11	Kofi Koranteng	Independent	3,415	0.03%
12	George Twum-Barimah-Adu	Independent	3,182	0.02%
13	Akua Donkor	GFP	–	0.00%
Total valid votes			11,683,483	100%
Total rejected ballots			247,937	
Total votes cast (including valid votes and rejected ballots)			11,931,420	
Total registered voters				18,774,195
Registered voters in 275 constituencies				18,652,926
Voter turnout in 275 constituencies				63.97%

Note: The final results of the Ablekuma North constituency were on hold owing to violence at the collation centre (as at finalisation of this report). There are 121,269 registered voters in Ablekuma North constituency.

Table 4 Parliamentary seats following the 2024 Parliamentary Elections based on results from 275 out of 276 constituencies as declared by the EC Chairperson on 10 January 2025

Political Party/Candidate	Total seats
National Democratic Congress (NDC)	183
New Patriotic Party (NPP)	88
Independents	4

Note: There is one undeclared seat (as at finalisation of this report). The results of the Ablekuma North constituency were on hold owing to violence at the collation centre.

CODEO released the results of its PVT on 9 December 2024. CODEO confirmed that the PVT results were consistent with the official final results as announced by the EC. On 10 January 2025, the EC announced the final results following the collation of results in eight out of the nine remaining constituencies. While the share of votes slightly changed, this did not affect the outcome of the elections. John Dramani Mahama, received 6,591,790 votes (56.42 per cent) while Mahamudu Bawumia received 4,877,611 votes (41.75 per cent)

Of the 18,774,159 registered voters, 11,931,420 voters⁵⁸ participated, giving a national turnout in the presidential election of 63.97 per cent. However, these figures exclude the Ablekuma North constituency that had not completed its collation, and so revised final turnout, to be declared by the EC at a later date, is likely to increase. Whatever happens, the turnout will be lower than in the 2020 general elections.

The number of rejected ballots was 247,937. This is quite low and reflects a commendable level of voter education.

⁵⁸ This figure includes 247,937 rejected (invalid) votes.

Annex I. Composition and Biographies of the COG

Chairperson of the Commonwealth Observer Group

His Excellency Dr. Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi has served as the 5th President of the Republic of Botswana since April 1, 2018. Before assuming the presidency, he was the 8th Vice President of Botswana (2014–2018). Following a successful electoral victory in October 2019, former President Masisi began a full five-year term from November 1, 2019, to October 30, 2024.

During his tenure, President Masisi spearheaded the Reset and Reclaim Agenda forging Botswana's shift from a resource-based economy to a knowledge-driven economy. His administration prioritized universal digital inclusion, expanding connectivity to underserved communities and ensuring equitable access to government programs and services. President Masisi has played a pivotal role in integrating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into education, fostering a culture of research, innovation, and entrepreneurship among Botswana's youth.

Prior to being elected as the President of the Republic of Botswana in 2018, he served as the Vice President of Botswana (2014–2018), Minister of Education and Skills Development (2014), Minister for Presidential Affairs and Public Administration (2011–2014), Assistant Minister for Presidential Affairs and Public Administration (2009–2011), and a Member of Parliament for Moshupa/Manyana Constituency (2009–2019).

Former President Masisi has experience in Research and Advocacy at home and abroad. Membership to a diversity of governing Boards in the region and within Botswana, sharpened his capacities to oversee critical developments with a diversity of partners.

Former President Masisi also established his unique skills in negotiations as he delivered the globally recognized and Landmark master mining agreement between the Government of Botswana and De Beers whose Heads of Terms were agreed to and signed for in July 2023 and final Agreement signed for in February 2025. This Diamond Mining and Sales Agreement yielded the most beneficial returns to a government in the developing world from its strategic partnership with a multinational like never before.

Observers

Honorary Professor Matthew Neuhaus (Australia)

Matthew Neuhaus is an Honorary Professor (International Law) at the Australian National University (ANU) College of Law.

Professor Neuhaus was an Australian Diplomat from 1982–2023, serving as Ambassador to the Netherlands (2018 to 2022), Ambassador to Zimbabwe (2011–15) and High Commissioner to Nigeria and Ghana (1997–2000) and Director of the Political Affairs Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat (2002–2008). He had earlier postings to UN New York, Papua New Guinea and Kenya.

He holds a BA (Hons) LLB from Sydney University and MPhil (International Relations) from Cambridge, and is President of the Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS) in Canberra.

Professor Dorothy NJEUMA née EFFANGE (Cameroon)

Dorothy L. Njeuma née Effange is a professor of Biology. She studied at Brown University in the United States and at University College London. She is currently a member of the Electoral Board of Elections

Cameroon. Professor Njeuma served for many years as Vice-Minister of Education, was a pioneer Vice-Chancellor of the University of Buea and Rector of the University of Yaounde I. As a panel member of the African Peer Review Mechanism of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), she led teams which monitored governance in Rwanda and Mali. Professor Njeuma has considerable experience in election management and has observed elections in a number of African countries.

Samboujang Njie (Gambia)

Njie was the Director of Electoral Operations and currently the Chief Electoral Officer of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) of The Gambia. He is also Secretary to the Commission, heads and serves as Member of several Committees including UNDP Election Projects. He attended election trainings, seminars and workshops both home and overseas which were organized by the Commonwealth, UNDP, AWEB, AU and ECOWAS; held in India, South Korea, Nigeria and Ghana. He organized trainings for electoral stakeholders; conducted briefings for citizens and international observer missions from Commonwealth, AU, ECOWAS and EISA. He participated in election observation missions in South Africa, Kenya, Zambia, Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Cape Verde and Liberia with EISA, ECOWAS and AU.

Lady Avril Anande Trotman-Joseph (Grenada)

Avril Anande Lady Trotman-Joseph a lawyer since 1987 is a former Solicitor General, Founding Partner of Chapman & Trotman, Guyana, and is Managing Partner, of Joseph & Joseph, Grenada. A graduate of University of the West Indies, Hugh Wooding Law School and University of London, she received post graduate certification in law and development, hemispheric defence and utility regulation strategy, WTO Customs Assessment and Appeals regime; AML and assets declarations compliance. Chairperson of the Commonwealth Caribbean Association of Integrity Commissions & Anti-Corruption Bodies (immediate past Chairperson of Grenada's Integrity Commission), Chair-Grenada's Customs Appeal Commission, Principal Representative of GTM insurance Group, Immediate past President of Caribbean Women in Leadership & Patron Grenada chapter, PRO of Women's National Organisation.

Member of Sierra Leone Commonwealth Observer Group 2023, Commissioner Telecommunications Regulatory Commission, President Grenada and Guyana Bar & Women Lawyers Associations, elected women's' representative Guyana Constitution Reform Commission, member UN Women's Civil Society Caribbean Advisory Group, Chairperson Rights of the Child Coalition, Adoption Board and Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Committee, led Caribbean Women Major's group SIDS "Prep Com" & Samoa Global Conference; and contributed to publications on rule of law, human rights, and Commonwealth Anti-Corruption Benchmarks.

Hon. Justice Amraphael Mbogholi Msagha (Kenya)

Justice Msagha is a retired Judge of the Court of Appeal, Kenya. He was appointed Judge of the High Court on 27 May 1987. He holds Bachelor of Laws (Honours) degree from the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and a Diploma in Law from Kenya School of Law. He was admitted as an Advocate of the High Court of Kenya in 1978 and was in private practice until his appointment to the Bench. Justice Msagha was the pioneer Principal Judge of the High Court following the promulgation of the new Constitution in the year 2010. He also served as the Presiding Judge in many Stations and Divisions of the High Court.

Justice Msagha chaired the Taskforce Committee that developed and published the Sentencing Policy Regulations. He also chaired the Judiciary Committee on Elections leading to the 2017 general elections. In the process, he interacted with many stakeholders. Justice Msagha has handled many election petitions, including the Presidential Election Petition in 1997 – Kibaki v Moi – and the Nairobi Governor Election Petition in 2017.

Justice Msagha is a certified internationally accredited mediator. Under the Commonwealth Observer Group, Justice Msagha has observed elections in Lesotho and Sierra Leone, and was a member of the mediation team assigned to resolve the political stalemate in Sierra Leone following the 2023 elections."

Ambassador Macharia Kamau (Kenya)

Macharia Kamau is Ambassador and Special Envoy, Senior Advisor to the Group President of Trade Development Bank and Bankers Without Boundaries. He is on the board of Equity Group Foundation. He is Chairman of the UN Secretary-General's Advisory Group on the Peace Building Fund and the ISC's Oversight Committee on global science missions. Previously, he was Special Envoy for the UN Secretary-General on El Niño and Climate, and led UN negotiations for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Kamau worked for 24 years with UN organizations, including UNICEF and UNDP, and was Kenya's Ambassador to the UN for nine years and Principal Secretary in Kenya's Ministry for Foreign Affairs. He holds degrees from Wooster College and Harvard University.

Dr Khabele Matlosa (Lesotho)

Dr Matlosa is the Director, Strategic Institute for Research and Dialogue, Maseru, Lesotho. He is also a visiting Professor at the Centre for African Diplomacy and Leadership at the University of Johannesburg.

He is the former Governance Advisor at the United Nations Development Programme Regional Service Centre for Africa, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. He is the former Director, Department of Political Affairs, African Union Commission, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. He is an expert on democracy, governance and elections. He is the author of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance which was adopted by the African Union Heads of State and Government in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 30 January 2007. The Charter came into force in 2012 and guides all AU Election Observer Missions in all Member States. He has observed elections in several countries in Africa and beyond.

Grace Jerry (Nigeria)

Grace Alache Jerry is a dedicated human rights and disability advocate, a social inclusion and Policy expert, renowned for her work in advancing the rights of persons with disabilities and fostering gender equality. She is the founder and Executive director of The Inclusive Friends Association, a data-driven organization committed to removing barriers faced by PWDs in Nigeria.

Grace has championed accessibility, notably through her Access Nigeria Campaign. She conducted Africa's first, second and third Polling Unit Accessibility Audits and successfully influenced reforms within Nigeria's electoral system, such as the amendment of the Electoral Act 2022 (as amended) to include mandatory disability Inclusive provisions, introducing Braille ballot guides for blind Voters, written instructions for voters with hearing impairments, and contributing to the historic Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018.

Kim Allen (Papua New Guinea)

Kim Allen is the former Chairperson of the Commonwealth Youth Council. Passionate about sustainable development, he has over 10 years of youth development work and four years of experience in the development sector across various reputable international organizations, such as the United Nations Development Programme, USAID, and Cardno International Development. Kim is a member of various local, national, regional, and international youth networks working on good governance, youth development, climate change, environment conservation and the Sustainable Development Goals. He has implemented various community-led initiatives focusing on education, water and sanitation. He holds a Master of Arts in International Development from Nagoya University, Japan, and a Bachelor's Degree in Communication Arts from the Divine Word University in PNG.

Hon Jacqueline Muhongayire (Rwanda)

Hon Jacqueline Muhongayire is a former Rwandan Senator, former Member of the Pan African Parliament and the East African Legislative Assembly. She has over 20 years of public service experience, and served as Minister of the East African Community in the Rwandan Government and Deputy Speaker of Parliament. She was one of 12 women founders of the "Rwandese women Parliamentary Forum" and member of

diverse women's rights organizations. She is passionate about gender equality, women in decision making and empowerment. She contributed to promoting social welfare and appropriate mechanisms for equal opportunity and social justice. During the period of the 1994 post-Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, she contributed to the reconstruction of the country and adoption of an inclusive Constitution.

Dr Fatmatta Taqi (Sierra Leone)

Dr Taqi is an educationist and an advocate for rights, access, inclusion, equity, advancement and development. She works at the University of Sierra Leone as the Director of Academic and Career Advisory, Counselling and Student Complaints Services and a lecturer in the Language Studies Department and the Institute of Gender Research and Documentation at Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone. She is the founder and the co-ordinator of the University of Sierra Leone Creative and Theatre Group.

Fatmatta is the vice-president of the Eminent Women Peace Mediators (SL), a pioneer member of the African Women Leadership Network (AWLN) and a past president of the renowned 50/50 Group. She is a Martha Farrell Memorial Fellow of the 2020 cohort.

Janet Love (South Africa)

Janet Love was appointed Electoral Commissioner in 2016 and assumed her current position as Vice-Chairperson of the Electoral Commission of South Africa in 2018.

Formerly, National Director of the Legal Resources Centre (2006-2018), she also served as a South African Human Rights Commissioner. Ms. Love was in the underground structures of the liberation movement and, later, was involved in negotiating South Africa's constitution. She served as a Member of Parliament in the first democratic Parliament during Nelson Mandela's presidency.

She studied through the Universities of the Witwatersrand and London and has post-graduate qualifications in public administration and development finance.

Deepanjali Abeywardana (Sri Lanka)

Deepanjali has extensive experience in media ethics, media behaviour as well as media and women. She also trains journalists on media ethics and has taken part in several fellowships and programs on media studies abroad. Additionally, she has experience in conflict resolution and human rights through her studies at University of Oslo, Norway and the University of Fribourg, Switzerland. Deepanjali received a BA in International Relations from the University of Colombo and a First Class in MA in South Asian Studies from Pondicherry University, India where she was selected as one of the first two Sri Lankans to undertake the MA on a Madanjeet Singh Scholarship. She also received a Distinction for her MSc in Media, Communications and International Journalism she pursued at University of Glasgow in the United Kingdom on a Chevening Scholarship. Deepanjali has worked with a wide range of local and international stakeholders and media practitioners on understanding the Sri Lankan media, media ownership and media's role in fostering reconciliation.

Paul O'Grady (United Kingdom)

Mr O'Grady has worked in the field of elections for over 30 years with international organisations including the United Nations, the Commonwealth, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the African Union. He has participated in over 30 election observation missions. In 2005, he co-founded Democracy Reporting International, serving as Deputy Chair and Co-Director. In 2015, he founded Article 21, a consultancy company specialising in issues related to democracy. In recent years, he has advised international organisations on the development of methodology to support electoral reform. He has contributed to a number of election observation handbooks and guides, reviewed electoral laws and published opinion pieces in the international media.

Maureen Nkandu (Zambia)

Maureen Nkandu is a seasoned communications expert and international journalist with over twenty-five years of experience. She has held senior roles in global multilaterals, including the United Nations and the African Union, elevating organisational profiles and showcasing impact through public information, advocacy, and strategic communication strategies. Maureen reported extensively on political, economic and social issues, including elections, conflict and humanitarian emergencies in Africa, for the British Broadcasting Corporation in London and the South African Broadcasting Corporation in Johannesburg, making her an authority on a wide range of issues in Africa.

Staff Team

Abiola Sunmonu (Staff Team leader)

Adviser and Head of Africa Section

Lindiwe Maleleka

Political Adviser, Electoral Support Section

Azuka Ogundeji

Trader Adviser, Trade Oceans and Natural Resources (TONR)

Musu Kaikai

Political Officer, Africa Section

Abubakar Abdullahi

Peace and Development Officer, Good Offices Section

Temitope Kalejaiye

Public Relations and Engagement Officer, Senior Director GPD

Madonna Lynch

Executive Officer, Electoral Support Section

Ashish Upadhyay

Assistant Programme Officer, IT

Annex II. Arrival Statement

**Arrival Statement by
His Excellency Mokgweetsi Masisi
Former President of the Republic of Botswana
Chairperson of the Commonwealth Observer Group
Ghana**

2 December 2024 Accra, Ghana

Ghana's democracy and years of political stability has been a stabilising influence in the sub- region. A peaceful and credible conduct of elections will continue to solidify Ghana's reputation as a stable democracy in the region.

These elections are particularly noteworthy for the Commonwealth, as they mark the final major election in a year that has seen numerous polls across the world and been dubbed as the 'global year of elections.'

It is essential that government, political parties and civil society organisations uphold and promote democratic culture and practices and are accountable to the public, as enshrined in the Commonwealth Charter.

It is therefore my honour and privilege to have been asked by the Commonwealth Secretary-General, the Rt Honourable Patricia Scotland KC, to lead the Commonwealth Observer Group to Ghana's 2024 General Elections, and to be here in the country for this election.

I am grateful to be joined by 16 experts selected from across the Commonwealth. They bring together a diversity of experience, in the fields of election management, law, civil society, politics, human rights, and the media, amongst others.

This eminent Group was deployed by the Secretary-General, following an invitation from the Electoral Commission of Ghana. The Group's presence reaffirms the Commonwealth's solidarity with Ghana and its democratic processes. The Group has now assembled in Accra and has commenced briefings with the various stakeholders.

Our mandate, as set out in the Commonwealth's 'Revised Guidelines' for election observation, is to observe and evaluate the pre-election environment, polling day activities and the post-election period. We will consider whether conditions exist for a credible, transparent, and inclusive election, including whether there is a level playing field for candidates; whether public media has been impartial; whether the administration of the electoral process has been transparent; and whether the rule of law has been adhered to.

Following the election, our Group will issue an interim statement on our preliminary findings on 9 December. This will be followed by a comprehensive report which will assess whether the election was conducted in accordance with the standards to which Ghana has committed itself and consider whether the administration of the election is in keeping with international good practice.

In accordance with the provisions of the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, to which the Commonwealth Secretariat is a signatory organisation, the Group has no executive role; its function is not to supervise but to observe the process as a whole and to make recommendations accordingly. In conducting our duties and undertaking our assessment, we will be neutral, impartial, objective, and independent.

We will be meeting numerous stakeholders, including the Electoral Commission of Ghana, political parties, the police, civil society groups, citizen observer groups, the media, other international observers and the diplomatic corps.

Today, our team will observe the Special Voting which is restricted to registered members of the security agencies, media and electoral officials.

From 5 December, we will deploy our observers in small teams to different regions to observe electoral preparations and meet with local stakeholders in their respective locations.

On election day, our Group will observe the opening, voting, closing, counting and the results management processes.

The first draft of our final report will be prepared in-country, with the report submitted to the Commonwealth Secretary-General shortly thereafter. It will then be shared with relevant stakeholders and the public.

On behalf of the Commonwealth Observer Group, I urge all stakeholders to ensure the election is held in a peaceful manner, consistent with the country's reputation, and I thank you for allowing us to be a part of this process, as voters cast their ballots on Saturday.

Annex III. Deployment Plan

TEAM	REGION	LOCATION
Team 1: HE Mokgweetsi Masisi (Chair) Abiola Sunmonu Temi Kalejaiye	Greater Accra	Accra
Team 2: Grace Jerry Lindiwe Maleleka Madonna Lynch	Greater Accra	Accra
Team 3: Dr Khabele Matlosa and Dr Fatmatta Taqi	Ashanti	<i>Kumasi</i>
Team 4: Kim Allen and Musu Kaikai	Western	Sekondi Takoradi
Team 5: Lady Anande Trotman-Joseph and Amb. Macharia Kamau	Central	Cape Coast
Team 6: Janet Love and Ashish Upadhyay	Western North	Sefwi Wlawso
Team 7: Prof. Matthew Neuhaus and Hon Jacqueline Muhongayire	Volta	Ho
Team 8: Prof. Effange Dorothy Njeuma and Justice Amraphael Msagha	Eastern	Koforidua
Team 9: Maureen Nkandu and Paul O'Grady	Northern	Tamale
Team 10: Deepanjali Abeywardana and Abubakar Abdullahi	Upper East	Bolgatanga
Team 11: Samboujang Njie and Azuka Ogundeji	Upper West	Wa

Annex IV. Interim Statement

**Interim Statement by
His Excellency Dr Mokgweetsi Eric Masisi
Former President of the Republic of Botswana
Chairperson of the Commonwealth Observer Group (COG) Ghana
9th December 2024**

Good morning, Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, the media, fellow observers, Ladies and Gentleman and the people of Ghana. Thank you for honouring our invitation to come to this Commonwealth Observer Group Press Conference.

Thank you for honouring our joint invitation to come to this Observer Group's Conference.

The Commonwealth is honoured to have been invited to observe Ghana's 2024 General Elections. Following the Pre-Election Assessment Mission in October and the subsequent invitation from the Election Commission of Ghana, the Commonwealth Secretary-General, The Rt Hon Patricia Scotland KC, constituted our Group to observe Ghana's 9th Presidential and Parliamentary elections since the transition to multi-party democratic rule in 1992.

We arrived on 29 November and will depart Accra on 13th December. As Chair, I am honoured to lead a Group of sixteen eminent persons drawn from across thirteen Commonwealth member countries and representing all the five regions of the Commonwealth. They are diplomats, and experts in elections management, law, gender, inclusion, youth as well as the media. The Group is independent of the Secretariat.

Our role is to offer an independent, informed and impartial analysis of the electoral process, taking account of all factors which may impact or impinge on the overall credibility of an election.

I now have the privilege to present our preliminary findings which are based on our engagement with a cross section of stakeholders.

Our final report with key recommendations will be submitted to the Secretary-General and shared with the Government of Republic of Ghana as well as other key stakeholders, and to the wider public.

Let me begin with the pre-election environment.

Pre-election Environment

For a nuanced understanding and assessment of the pre-election environment, our observers met with the Electoral Commission (EC) of Ghana, candidates and representatives of political parties, and civil societies.

We commend the EC and the political parties for their re-engagement through the Inter-Party Advisory Committee (IPAC) and their commitment to transparency in these proceedings by making it accessible and available to the public. We applaud political parties for signing the Peace Pact on 28 November. This is a testament of Ghana's continued commitment to stability and peace and its recognition as a stable democracy.

The professionalism and preparedness of the National Election Security Taskforce is commendable. We had significant engagement with the Police Service, and we were assured of their commitment to peace and de-escalation tactics to ensure that Ghanaians were able to exercise their right to vote in a peaceful manner.

We commend the proficiency and confidence demonstrated by the Inspector General of Police (IGP) as the chief law enforcer for elections in Ghana.

We note that the civil society in Ghana is robust and vibrant. The coalitions of organisations that came together across national and regional networks working on civic and voter education, media training and gender mainstreaming were remarkable and impressive.

We observed the last rallies of two main parties in Accra. Although the rallies were at close proximity, the campaigns were conducted in a peaceful atmosphere. The fundamental rights of candidates, political parties and supporters to assemble and campaign seemed to have been observed.

Our teams were deployed to ten regions across the country including: Northern Region, Northwest and Northeast, Volta Region, Western and Central Regions, Ashanti Region and Greater Accra.

In these locations, we observed the pre-election preparations and engaged with district election officials, local chiefs and police commanders, to gain a deeper appreciation of the electoral process.

Special Voting

We observed special voting on 2 December 2024. Ghana is to be commended for this initiative, which allows those performing election duty to exercise their franchise. Polling was conducted smoothly in a peaceful environment at polling stations observed. The polling officials were meticulous in following the procedures.

Election Day

Pre-Poll and Opening of Poll Procedures

The polling officials followed pre-poll and opening procedures diligently. Polling stations largely opened on time, however, some stations opened slightly late due to a number of reasons including the malfunctioning of the Biometric Verification Devices (BVDs) and late setting up of the polling stations.

Conduct of the Polls

Voting was conducted in a peaceful and orderly environment at most polling stations. However, we are saddened by the reports of violence which resulted in death and injury during these elections. The Commonwealth Observer Group condemns this act of violence and calls on the respective authorities to investigate and bring the perpetrators to justice.

The layout of most polling stations which were outside in the open, ensured secrecy of the vote for the most part, though in some cases the positioning of the voting booths could have potentially compromised secrecy.

Polling officials must be commended for conducting their duties with professionalism and transparency.

Participation and Inclusion

We observed the participation of female and male voters as well as polling officials, although, most Presiding Officers were predominantly male.

We observed that Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) and the elderly were given priority and that the visually impaired voters were provided tactile jackets at some polling stations. Polling officials also provided sign language interpretation at some polling stations. This must be commended.

However, we noted accessibility challenges at some polling stations with stairs. We also observed that voting booths were too high for some voters on wheelchairs. Adjustable voting booths would have been helpful in this regard. More needs to be done to ensure that PWDs exercise their franchise with dignity and in accordance with the law.

Political Party Agents

Political party agents were present at most polling stations. They conducted themselves in a professional manner in most polling stations observed.

Citizen and International Observers

We interacted with International and citizen observers at various polling stations.

Close and Count

There were no queues at the close of polls at 5:00 pm, at most polling stations we observed. The polling officials followed closing and counting procedures with transparency and professionalism. We observed that the counting of votes continued after dark in most polling stations. Flashlights and other forms of lighting were provided to assist with this process.

We followed the results process from polling stations to collation centres. We noted some logistical challenges such as the transportation of ballot boxes at some collation centres and recommend some reforms to ensure order during the collation exercise.

Media

Ghana's media is characterised by vibrant, diverse, and relatively free outlets across traditional and digital platforms.

Despite facing challenges such as financial constraints and disinformation, the media landscape remains robust. Although relatively free, media ownership continues to affect the quality and ethics of journalism.

We commend the media, including radio, TV, and print, for providing extensive coverage of the elections and related issues. We especially commend the state broadcaster for their efforts to maintain balance in airtime allocation.

The Electoral Commission is also commended for fostering a relationship with the media through regular press conferences, statements, and updates on their social media platforms, ensuring journalists and the public stay informed. The EC's decision to reverse restrictions on the number of journalists at collation centres following consultation with media stakeholders is commendable.

Political parties and independent candidates have leveraged social media platforms to share their manifestos without the cost that comes with traditional media. However, there is a growing concern about the negative impact of mis/disinformation and the use of AI to manipulate photos and videos.

We commend the coalition of fact-checkers in Ghana for their initiatives and efforts to mitigate disinformation.

Conclusion and Post-Election Period

We applaud the people of Ghana for turning out in an orderly manner to exercise their franchise.

We commend the Electoral Commission, polling staff, political parties, police and the media for their respective roles in ensuring the successful conduct of the elections in Ghana thus far.

We also commend Vice President Bawumia for his statesmanship and concession speech, it was essential in de-escalating potential tension. Speaking from experience, that is a highly significant gesture. We congratulate the President-Elect, H.E. John Dramani Mahama, for his reelection as the incoming Head of State of the Republic of Ghana.

We note that the process of collating results is still ongoing. We hope and expect that Ghanaians will continue to maintain a peaceful environment in the post-election phase as we await the conclusion of the process.

We will provide recommendations on how the processes might be further improved in our final report which will be made public at a later date.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the people of Ghana for the warm 'AKWAABA' accorded to myself and the group during our entire stay and the unencumbered access we were given for our observation processes.

Ghana's success as the Black Star of Africa is a model for not only the region and the rest of Africa, but the Commonwealth and the world.

Issued on 9 December 2024

Accra

Annex V. Ghana Recommendations Tracker



Ghana COG 2024

Status of 2020 COG Recommendations as at December 2024.

The 2020 COG Report is available [here](#), General Elections, 7 December 2020. Report of the Commonwealth Observer Group.

Summary:

• Total Recommendations	38
• Fully implemented	11
• Mostly implemented	2
• Partially implemented	14
• Not implemented	10
• Not yet determined or N/A	1

No.	2020 COG Recommendations	Type of recommendation	Electoral Framework & Electoral Administration	Status of implementation	Comments
1	<p>The EC should revisit its strategy to build consensus among political parties around the electoral process. The Inter-Party Advisory Committee (IPAC) process should be reformed to allow for more meaningful engagement and consensus-building.</p>	Political	<p>The EC has made IPAC more transparent by opening up its proceedings to the public and the media.</p>	Fully	<p>IPAC meetings are livestreamed.</p>
2	<p>Consideration should be given to making the process of appointing Commissioners more inclusive.</p>	Political		Not implemented	<p>This has not been implemented. The 2024 COG recommends that Ghana review the appointment process of EC commissioners, including the Chairperson, to secure their independence from political actors and to strengthen public perceptions of their non-aligned role, in addition to specifying limits on their terms of office.</p>
3	<p>The EC should ensure there is an ongoing consultative process with political parties and civil society organisations regarding the procurement and deployment of electoral technologies in the electoral process to promote transparency and confidence regarding the cost, reliability and security of these technologies.</p>	Administrative/ technical		Not implemented	<p>There appears to be a lack of trust in this area. Ahead of the elections the NDC made specific demands to the EC including the forensic audit of the voters register and the IT systems.</p>

(Continued)

No.	2020 COG Recommendations	Type of recommendation		Status of implementation	Comments
4	In view of expansion of the number of regions, the EC should review if the current electoral regime remains sufficient.	Legal/regulatory	The EC determines the constituency boundaries within each of the regions based on the population quota and taking into account communication, geography and other administrative or traditional areas.	Partially	
5	In line with the provisions of the Constitution, a review of electoral boundaries should also be undertaken to ensure equal suffrage is provided for.	Legal/regulatory	The EC determines the constituency boundaries within each of the regions based on the population quota and taking into account communication, geography and other administrative or traditional areas.	Partially	
6	Any voter registration exercise should be conducted well before an election, following comprehensive consultations with all stakeholders.	Administrative/technical	In early 2023, the EC sought to reform the voter registration process and drafted a Constitutional Instrument (C.I.) that proposed a continuous voter registration system.	Partially	Parliament, however, rejected the Public Elections (Registration of Voters) Regulations 2023.
7	Existing political party finance reporting laws should be enforced to ensure greater transparency.	Legal/regulatory and administrative		Not implemented	The COG notes that there is no legally prescribed limit for campaign spending by political parties and candidates.
8	A consultative process should be initiated to develop a regulatory framework for campaign finance in order to promote fairness, transparency and accountability.	Legal/regulatory		Not implemented	The COG reiterates the recommendations of the 2020 COG for a review of legislation to ensure there is effective regulation, implementation and transparency around campaign financing and party funding.

(Continued)

No.	2020 COG Recommendations	Type of recommendation		Status of implementation	Comments
9	Consideration may be given to the establishment of a formal campaign period to better manage campaign activities.	Legal/regulatory	The 2024 COG recommends that Parliament enact legislation providing a specific timeframe for electoral campaigns by political parties and candidates to reduce the risk of Ghana being in a permanent campaign mode from one general election to the next.	Not implemented	The COG notes that political parties and candidates were supposed to end their campaign 24 hours before polling day. This provision was generally respected by all political parties and candidates participating in the elections.
Participation and inclusion					
10	The Government should consider further action to fulfill its commitments as a signatory to the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In particular, the Government should consider enacting affirmative action legislation to provide for a mandatory affirmative action quota of a minimum of one-third women candidates.	Legal/regulatory	The Affirmative Action (Gender Equality) Act was passed in July 2024. It was assented to by President Nana Dankwa Akufo-Addo in September 2024.	Fully	
11	Political parties should also consider voluntary provisions for women's representation within the party structure and equally as candidates for elections, particularly in safe seats.	Political	Although women constitute a large percentage of voters in elections, they are not adequately represented in political and leadership decision-making processes.	Not implemented	The COG recommends that political parties consider fully implementing the Women Manifesto and the Party in Governance Manifesto.

(Continued)

No.	2020 COG Recommendations	Type of recommendation		Status of implementation	Comments
12	Civil society, women's groups and donors should expand capacity-building for prospective women candidates and initiatives for sustainable women's participation and representation throughout the electoral cycle.	Policy		Partially	In the days leading to the election, women's groups organised a peace walk to remind political leaders and Ghanaians of the importance of peace and inclusivity.
13	Increase civic education to promote and strengthen women's inclusion and political participation.	Administrative/ technical		Partially	Several CSOs were engaged in voter education, early warning, peace messaging, election observation and fact-checking activities.
14	The EC should target and increase numbers of women as presiding officers.	Policy and Administrative/ technical		Partially	The COG noted that while women were well represented as polling officials, men were disproportionately appointed as presiding officers. The COG recommended that the EC should strive to achieve parity in the number of men and women appointed as presiding officers.
15	Political parties should desist from the use of vigilante groups and promote the constructive participation of young people, for example by supporting them as candidates and encouraging their participation in the development of policies and manifestos.	Policy		Mostly	The COG noted that, in the runup to the 7 December 2024 general elections, several stakeholders were apprehensive about the possibility of a resurgence of vigilantism, given the tense political environment ahead of the polls. However, no major incidents of vigilante violence marred the campaign and election phases, which were largely peaceful.

(Continued)

No.	2020 COG Recommendations	Type of recommendation	Status of implementation	Comments
16	The EC should conduct research to understand the requirements of all PWDs throughout the electoral process, with a view to catering for further categories of PWDs. It should also create guidelines for proper implementation of its policies regarding PWDs.	Policy	Partially	The COG noted and is encouraged by the engagement of Ghana Federation of Disability Organisations with the EC to develop a sign language dictionary specific to elections. The EC should consider functional disability desks and documented disability participation guidelines for future elections.
17	Political parties should facilitate the participation of PWDs as candidates for office and party agents.	Political	Not implemented	The COG was informed that political parties were yet to develop mechanisms to involve Persons with Disability in the design and development of their manifestos. Political parties are also yet to implement the recommendations of the Disability Manifesto
18	Stakeholders including the election management body and political parties should consider how civic and voter education can be better tailored for those with disabilities, including learning difficulties.	Policy	Partially	The COG was informed of limited voter education targeted at persons with disabilities.
Electoral Campaign and Media				
19	The Group welcomes the enactment of the Vigilantism and Related Offences Act 2019 and urges more decisive action to enforce the provisions of the law in this regard.	Political	Mostly	The COG noted that, in the runup to the 7 December 2024 general elections, several stakeholders were apprehensive about the possibility of a resurgence of vigilantism, given the tense political environment ahead of the polls. However, no major incidents of vigilante violence marred the campaign and election phases, which were largely peaceful.

(Continued)

No.	2020 COG Recommendations	Type of recommendation	The COG credits the peaceful nature of the 2024 general elections to the concerted peacebuilding efforts of various stakeholders, including civil society organisations.	Status of implementation	Comments
20	Coordinated efforts by civil society and other stakeholders to promote peace should be supported and maintained throughout the electoral cycle.	Political	The COG credits the peaceful nature of the 2024 general elections to the concerted peacebuilding efforts of various stakeholders, including civil society organisations.	Fully	The NPC, with technical support from IDEG, facilitated the commitment by all political parties to vigilante-free and peaceful elections in July 2024. Subsequently, the parties signed the Peace Pact, appropriately entitled 'Pursuing Peaceful Elections, Non-Violence and Justice', on 28 November 2024.
21	The National Media Commission should be encouraged and supported in maintaining its functional independence and reflect the needs and concerns of all stakeholders within its remit.	Political	As one of Ghana's four independent governance institutions, the National Media Commission operates without government control and prioritises its commitment to serving Ghanaian citizens.	Fully	National Media Commission should tighten and monitor the implementation of guidelines on ethical media reporting in line with the Principles and Guidelines for the Use of Digital and Social Media in Elections in Africa adopted by the African Union in 2023. Examples include the right to reply, balanced reporting and avoidance of mis/disinformation, especially during the election period.
22	Media organisations should develop a Code of Conduct for journalists and provide appropriate training to promote responsible coverage of elections.	Administrative/ technical		Fully	One of the most notable aspects of the election coverage in Ghana was the media's proactive role in shaping the narrative. Across mainstream media outlets and platforms, issue-based reporting was pivotal, with the media driving the election by ensuring that issues such as the economy, vigilantism, education access, corruption and unemployment were at the core of the discussion through interviews and news reports.

(Continued)

No.	2020 COG Recommendations	Type of recommendation		Status of implementation	Comments
23	Political parties should develop guidelines for the responsible use of social media during the campaign and election period.	Regulatory		Not implemented	The COG recommended that CSOs and fact-checking initiatives should educate social media users on critical thinking skills including source verification. It was also recommended that CSOs should carry out special training for women politicians or candidates so they can protect themselves from cyberbullying.
24	The use of mass text messaging and social media by political parties should adhere to the provisions of the Data Protection Act (2012).	Regulatory			Not assessed.
25	Civil society and independent media organisations engaged in educating the public on the responsible use of social media and fact-checking should be supported and encouraged.	Administrative/ technical	Efforts to address and challenge concerns regarding the integrity of information in the lead-up to Ghana's 2024 elections were driven by both CSOs and fact-checking initiatives.	Fully	
26	All stakeholders should take an active role in preventing the online harassment of women, for example through targeted messages to young people.	Policy	There are concerns about the negative profiling of women politicians on social media. The Movement for Women in Media claimed that these gender-biased attacks were one reason for poor participation of women in politics.	Not implemented	The COG made a recommendation for a dialogue between media editors and women politicians, facilitated by CSOs, to understand issues that affect the women.

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No.	2020 COG Recommendations	Type of recommendation		Status of implementation	Comments
27	The EC should use its website as the main repository of all information regarding the election. This should be published in a timely and transparent manner and remain available to citizens following the election.	Administrative/ technical		Partially	The EC issued press releases, which kept audiences informed and engaged in the electoral process. However, its website needed to publish key updated information that some media and observers required, such as documents and statements about election results.
Voting, Counting and Results					
28	The EC should provide clear guidance in manuals and training regarding the layout of polling stations to ensure that the secrecy of the ballot is consistently maintained.	Administrative/ technical	The secrecy of the vote, which is required under international, regional and national law, was not always guaranteed. Where they occurred, infringements owed mostly to the poor positioning of the voting booths, although the general volume of people at polling locations also affected voters' privacy.	Partially	The COG recommends that the polling manual should be revised to include images of the layout of the polling station, in particular the placement of the voting booths, so that the secrecy of the vote is maintained, while allowing general supervision of the process.
29	More signage should be introduced to direct voters through the polling station, and to reduce confusion when there are multiple polling stations and/or separate queues in one location.	Administrative/ technical		Partially	While the selection of outdoor locations meant that the polling process was visible to all, and thus transparent, it also meant that sometimes there were no walls on which to affix the voter information materials and aide memoires that the EC had supplied.

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No.	2020 COG Recommendations	Type of recommendation	Status of implementation	Comments
30	Ballot boxes for different elections should be more clearly distinguishable. For example, different colour lids or labels could be used.	Administrative/technical	Fully	Ballot boxes for Presidential and Parliamentary elections were clearly labelled.
31	All polling materials should be clearly labelled. In particular, a clear distinction should be made between the indelible ink for voters and the ink used for stamping ballot papers.	Administrative/technical	Fully	Materials were clearly labelled.
32	The EC should consider the provision of lamps or another form of illumination to facilitate counting after dark.	Administrative/technical	Partially	Few open-air polling places were equipped with a light by the EC, and polling officials improvised light, for example by using car headlights, phones and torches.
33	Greater effort should be made to prioritise pregnant women and those with babies in the queue in line with the provisions in the Training Manual.	Policy	Fully	This was implemented in most polling stations observed.
34	The EC should place a greater emphasis on recruiting, training and deploying greater numbers of women Presiding Officers.	Policy	Partially	The COG noted that while women were well represented as polling officials, men were disproportionately appointed as presiding officers. The COG recommended that the EC should strive to achieve parity in the number of men and women appointed as presiding officers.

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No.	2020 COG Recommendations	Type of recommendation	Status of implementation	Comments
35	Political parties should consider how to recruit, train and deploy greater numbers of women polling agents.	Policy	Partially	The COG observed a small number of female party officials and agents at polling stations.
36	The EC should avoid raising expectations regarding precise timings for the declaration of results, and instead focus on following all procedures to declare accurate results in a timely manner.	Administrative/ technical	Fully	This was fully implemented. The EC announced the results when it was ready to do so.
37	The EC should provide regular updates throughout the counting, collation and tabulation process. If scheduled announcements are delayed, or corrections to declared results are necessary, the EC should provide reasons for the changes, and engage with stakeholders to address their concerns.	Administrative/ technical	Not implemented	The EC did not announce any partial, preliminary data on the presidential election result, or the rolling number of parliamentary seats won by the political parties' candidates. This created an information vacuum.
38	A full table of results and summary of voting should be published on the EC website, not just the results summary sheets by constituency/region.	Administrative/ technical	Fully	The EC published the results on its website, including on social media.

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