



UNITED NATIONS



**The Forum for Electoral Management Bodies in the Arab States**  
**League of Arab States – United Nations**  
**Cairo, 9-11 May 2016**







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## FOREWORD

Building on the successful partnership between the League of Arab States (LAS) and the United Nations (UN), the LAS organized, with the support of the UN, the 'Forum for Electoral Management Bodies in the Arab States' at its headquarters in Cairo from 9 to 11 May 2016. This first of its kind event, brought together officials and representatives of electoral management bodies (EMBs) in the Arab states, in addition to participants from leading regional and international organizations in the field of elections, all of whom contributed to the success of the Forum. The event was a partnership between the League of Arab States, the United Nations Department of Political Affairs (Electoral Assistance Division) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

We take this opportunity to thank all the participants, for their insightful contributions during the Forum. Through the sharing of their valuable experiences and engaging in constructive discussions, they were able to enrich the event and contribute to its success. The event has also set a precedent for future engagement between LAS, the UN and EMBs in the region

We strongly hope that the good relations, which the forum succeeded in establishing between the Arab electoral management bodies and the regional and international organizations, would contribute towards strengthening the professionalization of elections in the region as well as encourage regular holding of similar peer-to-peer exchanges.

This report reflects upon the most important topics discussed during the various sessions and proceedings as well as the outcomes of the event. It also presents a summary of the topics, ideas, and recommendations shared during the event, which are intended to contribute to the strengthening of electoral processes in Arab countries. It is our hope that this report offers a comprehensive and clear view of the experiences presented by Arab EMBs during the Forum and contributes to the benefit of all other electoral stakeholders in the region.

**Ahmed Benhelli**

Deputy Secretary-General  
League of Arab States

**Jeffrey Feltman**

Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs and  
Focal Point for Electoral Assistance United Nations





## I. Introduction

This report compiles and presents in a systematic manner the information generated from the 'Forum for Electoral Management Bodies in the Arab States' according to a specific methodology. The report is structured from a thematic perspective around various topics related to elections in the Arab region, the role of international and regional organizations in this field, particularly in the Arab region, in addition to the ideas, floor discussions and suggestions presented by participants.

### Background of the Forum

The Arab region has seen various electoral events in recent years, whether presidential, parliamentary or municipal, as well as referendums, which led to a growing interest in the electoral process in the region in both the official and popular realms. The different types of electoral management bodies (EMBs) in the Arab states have been responsible for supervising the conduct of these elections, and they have exerted huge and valued efforts in order to make elections successful, despite facing many difficulties and challenges. The League of Arab States (LAS) was not distant from such developments. The LAS saw the importance of presenting the electoral experiences in the Arab region and discussing the different challenges and difficulties which faced the Arab EMBs, as well as presenting their successful achievements through a forum that brings together the electoral authorities of the LAS member states.

Within the framework of successful cooperation between the LAS Electoral Affairs Department, the United Nations Department of Political Affairs (UNDPA) and the UNDP's Regional Electoral Support Project in the Arab States, the UN welcomed co-sponsoring the above-mentioned forum. On this basis, the LAS Electoral Affairs Department proceeded to present the matter to the LAS Ministerial Council in its Regular Session 144, which issued Decision No. 7961 dated 13th of September 2015 as follows:

*"We welcome an expanded forum on elections to be held by the LAS in cooperation with the UN during the first half of 2016, including the participation of Arab EMBs as well as the leading international and regional organizations specialized in this field. The aim is to present the most prominent electoral experiences in the Arab region and determine the lessons learned, in addition to strengthening and enhancing cooperation between all the electoral stakeholders in the Arab region."*



A regional forum co-sponsored by the LAS and the UN was seen as a convergence of the purposes of the two organizations. The LAS sought to hold this forum in order to establish and instill electoral cooperation between all the Arab states as well as strengthen and enhance the framework of cooperation between all the electoral stakeholders in the Arab states and the international and regional organizations working in this field. As for the UN, the main purpose of the UNDP's support in the Arab States is to enhance and reinforce the exchange of electoral knowledge and experiences and strengthen cooperation and partnerships among electoral stakeholders in the region.

The LAS accorded special attention to this event as the electoral authorities in the Arab region were meeting for the first time to discuss the topic of elections in the presence of leading international and regional organizations specialized in this field. This represented a great opportunity to establish relations of cooperation and create a network of communication between the member states and the international and regional organizations working in this field. The field of elections has indeed attracted considerable attention on the international level in recent years.

### **Purpose of the Forum**

The main objectives of the Forum were the following:

1. As the first regional experience of its kind, the main objective of the forum was to facilitate the encounter of the relevant electoral stakeholders in the Arab region in order to establish and strengthen cooperation among them.
2. Present, discuss, and exchange electoral experiences in the Arab region and determine the lessons learned from these experiences, which would contribute towards developing electoral practices in the Arab region in the future.
3. Establish cooperation between the electoral authorities in the Arab countries on the one hand, and the international and regional organizations working in the field of elections on the other hand.

### **Forum's perspective**

The Forum sought to achieve a number of outcomes as follows:

1. Identifying the structures of electoral administration bodies in the Arab world and their mechanisms as well as widening the knowledge on electoral practices and experiences in the Arab region in recent years.
2. Recognizing the role played by international and regional organizations working in the field of elections, including the LAS, the UN/EAD, UNDP and other international and regional organizations participating in the forum.
3. Establishing a communication network for the electoral administrations of Arab countries to ensure the sustainability of cooperation and coordination among them in the field of elections, with the participation of international and regional organizations working in the field.
4. Agreeing on a mechanism that ensures the sustainability of communication and exchange of experiences between the electoral stakeholders in the Arab region, with the participation of the leading international and regional organizations working in the field.

## Sponsoring Institutions and Participants

The overall attendance of the Forum included around 100 participants from different institutional affiliations as follows:

### 1. Sponsoring Institutions

- League of Arab States (LAS): Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Ahmed Benhelli represented the Secretary General at the opening and other sessions of the forum, and Assistant Secretary General for the Media and Communication Sector Ambassador Doctor Haifa Abu Ghazaleh delivered the closing speech.
- United Nations: In representation of the UN Secretary General, the Director of the Electoral Assistance Division Mr. Craig Jenness and on behalf of UNDP Mr. Khaled Abdelshafi, Director of the Regional Hub for Arab States.

### 2. Participants

- Heads and representatives of electoral authorities from the following member states of the Arab League: Algeria, Bahrein, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Mauritania, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia, and United Arab Emirates. Regarding Comoro Islands, Jordan, Morocco and Yemen, representatives from their respective missions before the Arab League participated in the Forum.
- International and regional organizations: Representatives from the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU), the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Arab Parliament, the Organization of Arab EMBs (ArabEMBs), the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA), and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES).

## Proceedings of the forum

The proceedings of the forum were structured into a number of sessions which included a presentation of the experience and methodology of the League of Arab States' work in the field of elections, a presentation of the United Nation's role in providing electoral assistance to member states, in addition to a thematic presentation on electoral administration as a profession. Country reports were presented along a number of panels -three countries each- to be followed by open floor discussions. The country presentations focused on the type of electoral administration, the type of elections in each country, recent electoral experiences and other relevant aspects. Moreover, international and regional organizations offered their presentations which included a brief description of each organization and its experience in international cooperation on elections with a particular focus on the Arab region and its future vision in this area. An evaluation questionnaire was filled by the participants on the last day. The chronology of proceedings can be found in the Agenda annexed to the report.

## Media Coverage

The Forum for Electoral Management Bodies in the Arab States received extensive media coverage by various Arab media outlets. The Forum's press release was issued and distributed to several news agencies in Egypt and on a regional and international level. Many newspapers and Arab news agencies

provided media coverage of this important event. The following is a summary of the main points mentioned by media outlets in their coverage of the event:

#### **Sunday 8 May 2016**

- The League of Arab States will host the 'Forum for Electoral Management Bodies in the Arab States' with the participation of all the Arab electoral authorities and EMBs along with the leading international and regional organizations in the field of elections. Over a period of three days, the Forum will address the electoral experiences of each Arab country, the achievements, and the different challenges and obstacles that were faced. Moreover, the participating international and regional organizations will offer presentations on their roles and experiences in the international cooperation for elections, in addition to their future approaches towards developing the electoral practices of Arab states.
- The League of Arab States issued a press release which mentioned that the Forum was held for the first time within the framework of the implementation of the LAS Ministerial Council's Decision No.7961 which was issued in its Regular Session 144 on 13 Sept. 2015. The decision welcomed holding an expanded forum on elections with the participation of all the Arab authorities and EMBs in addition to the leading international and regional organizations specialized in this field.
- Secretary-General of the League of Arab States Dr. Nabil El-Araby met with Mr. Craig Jenness, Director of Electoral Assistance Division and the representative of the UN Secretary-General in the 'Forum of Electoral Management Bodies in the Arab States' on May 8, 2016. The meeting focused on the recent preparations to hold a forum for electoral authorities in the Arab states.
- Mr. Craig Jenness stressed the importance of holding this forum for the exchange of experiences between the participating countries and organizations, indicating that the UN is an important partner along with the LAS in supporting electoral processes and it has considerable experiences in providing electoral assistance to its member states

#### **During the period from 9 to 11 May 2016**

- In his opening speech, which was delivered on behalf of the Secretary-General, Deputy Secretary-General of the League of Arab States Ambassador Ahmed Benhelli, emphasized the need to strengthen the role of EMBs in the LAS member states in order to reinforce democracy and good governance, indicating the importance of cooperation and coordination with the international and regional organizations in electoral observation and the exchange of successful experiences. He also stressed during his address that elections constitute one of the most important methods of peaceful transfer of power and one of the pillars of democratic regimes, good governance and the principle of Shoura. He also explained that since the beginning of the 1990s, the LAS was keen on following the various electoral events which were conducted in its members states, having since sent 65 electoral observation mission to 20 Arab and non-Arab countries to monitor presidential and parliamentary elections or constitutional referendums.
- Director of the UN's Electoral Assistance Division emphasized in his address, among other things, the importance of enhancing women's participation in elections and strengthening the role of women in political processes. He noted that in the past two decades, we have witnessed the continuing upward trend in the number of women in elected and appointed positions across the globe and that the Arab

region has made great strides since in the last 20 years the number of women in parliaments in the Arab region has increased from under 4% to just over 18%. But, still more needs to be done in the region and around the world as women remain highly underrepresented. Mr. Jenness added that currently the global average rate for women in parliaments remains below 25% and therefore we all need to do more globally, both in developing and in developed countries.

- Rafael Lopez Pintor, chief electoral advisor of the UNDP, explained the role of elections as a mechanism that enables authorities to make decisions and as a means of choosing leaders and participating in governance.
- Throughout the three days of the event, participating electoral authorities from the different Arab countries presented their electoral experiences, their achievements, and the challenges and difficulties they faced. In addition to the presentations offered by the international and regional organizations on their role in this field.

**Arab news agencies highlighted the country presentations in their media coverage as follows:**

- Emirates News Agency: The UAE presents a paper on the elections of the Federal National Council at the Forum of Electoral Management Bodies in the Arab States.
- Baghdad Azzaman: The Independent High Electoral Commission in Iraq participates in the first Forum for EMBs at the League of Arab States.
- QNA: Qatar participates in the 'Forum for Electoral Management Bodies in the Arab States'.
- Al-Manama: Bahrain presents the electoral experience of parliamentary and municipal elections at the 'Forum for Electoral Management Bodies in the Arab States'.
- Palestine News Network: The Central Elections Commission participates in the LAS Forum.
- Kuwait News Agency: Kuwait participates in the Forum with a delegation headed by the Undersecretary of the Court of Appeals.
- Libya: The Arab EMBs Association participates in the LAS Forum for Electoral Management Bodies.

**Media outlets also highlighted the most important topics discussed in the Forum including the following:**

- This Forum represents a great opportunity which can be harnessed to build and sustain relations of cooperation between all the electoral authorities in the Arab states.
- Strengthening and promoting the basis for cooperation between all the electoral stakeholders in the Arab states and the international and regional organizations working in this field.
- The Forum represents a significant opportunity to develop the best electoral practices for the Arab region in the future.
- The LAS is keen to strengthen the role of EMBs in its member states in order to achieve democracy and good governance.
- Commending the roles of the LAS, the UNDP and other international organizations in providing support and assistance to the Arab EMBs.
- Presenting the role and experience of international and regional organizations in the field of elections, particularly in the Arab region.
- The LAS is aspiring to provide all means of support to strengthen the role of Arab EMBs and assist them in carrying out their responsibilities in the best possible manner.





## II. Welcoming the Forum

# Address by Ambassador Ahmed Benhelli Deputy Secretary General of the League of Arab States

First of all, allow me to welcome you all on behalf of the Secretary-General Dr. Nabil El-Araby to the headquarters of the League of Arab States, the house of Arabs. It is my honor to participate with you at the opening ceremony of the 'Forum for Electoral Management Bodies in the Arab States' which is held in collaboration with the United Nations for the first time at the headquarters of the LAS Secretariat. The convening of the Forum represents a confirmation of the international commitments to promote the democratic transition and maintain the basis of good governance and the principle of Shoura. Elections are a means to reflect the free will of citizens in choosing their representatives and forming a regime of their choice to manage the public affairs. In addition, the Forum was the culmination of the joint efforts and continuous cooperation between the LAS and the UN on various issues pertaining to human development and advancement of societies.

I would also like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to all those involved in the UN and its agencies for the efforts exerted to cooperate with the relevant LAS departments and sectors to facilitate holding this Forum. This institutional cooperation has become an important milestone on the path of establishing and deepening the foundations of democratic regimes and good governance.

We would also like to thank the representatives of international organizations participating in the Forum which include the Arab Parliament, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the European Union, the Africa Union, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), and the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) for contributing to the Forum and enriching the debate in order to reach the desired outcomes.

From an early stage, the League of Arab States has realized the importance of elections as one of the most substantial methods for the peaceful transfer of power and one of the fundamental pillars for building democracy and good governance and implementing the principle of Shoura. Thus, the LAS has been keen, since the beginning of the 1990s, to follow the various electoral events which were conducted in its Members States, sending 65 electoral observation missions to 20 Arab and non-Arab countries so far to monitor presidential and parliamentary elections or constitutional referendums. These missions have included the participation of a total of 1600 female and male observers, all of whom are the staff of the LAS General Secretariat, professionally trained to perform this task in accordance with the international standards of this field. The LAS electoral observation missions expanded in scope to include non-Arab countries.

The past few decades have seen a growing interest in the international observation of elections as an important mechanism to ensure the integrity of elections because it provides an accurate and non-biased assessment of the electoral process. The importance of international observation of elections was reinforced in recent years as many countries were keen to invite regional and international organizations to observe elections. Some countries amended their legislations to allow international observation of elections as it has become one of the important factors that contribute to the success of elections as well as reinforce the integrity and credibility of the electoral process. Moreover, election observation plays a key role in encouraging acceptance of the election results and contributes towards reducing the possibilities of internal strife or election-related conflicts. In addition, the reports, remarks, and recommendations of election observers contribute to the overall improvement of the electoral processes in the future.

In this respect, we bring special attention to the document titled "A Course for Development, Modernization and Reform in the Arab World" which was issued by the Arab Summit in Tunisia in 2004. It emphasized the importance of deepening the foundations of democracy and Shoura as well as increasing citizens' participation in the political and public spheres. This document is considered one of the main references for the electoral observation missions of the LAS.

The Arab region has seen various electoral events in recent years whether presidential, parliamentary, or municipal, as well as referendums, which led to a growing interest in the electoral process in the region on both the official and popular levels. The different types of EMBs in the Arab states have been responsible for supervising the conduct of these elections, as they have exerted huge and valued efforts in order to make elections successful despite facing many difficulties and challenges. The League of Arab States was not distant from such developments but accorded special attention to the matter. The LAS looks forward to providing all the necessary means of support to strengthen the role of Arab EMBs and assist them in carrying out their duties and responsibilities to the fullest extent.

In this regard, the Forum comes as a continuation of the LAS efforts in this field and an implementation of the LAS Ministerial Council's Decision No. 7961 at its 144th Session dated 13 September 2015. It also represents the culmination of existing cooperation between the LAS and the UN. The LAS has realized the need to hold a forum which brings together electoral authorities in the Member States to present and discuss electoral experiences in the Arab region as well as the different challenges they faced and the achievements they were able to accomplish.

The LAS believes that the main purpose of holding this Forum is to strengthen and reinforce the bonds of cooperation between all the electoral authorities in its Member States on the one hand, and between them and the international and regional organizations working in the field of elections in the Arab region on the other hand.

I am confident that the expertise and experiences you have in the field of elections will enrich the discussions of the Forum. The LAS hopes that the Forum's recommendations and results will benefit the Member States in achieving their interests, and strengthen and support joint Arab action on elections.

At the end of my speech, I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation on behalf of the LAS to all the relevant authorities in the Arab Republic of Egypt, especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for their fruitful and constructive cooperation which facilitated the success of the Forum. I wish you all success in the proceedings of this Forum.



## Address by Mr. Craig Jenness Director of the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division

I am honored to speak here today before this distinguished Forum on behalf of the United Nations Secretary-General and to convey his warmest greetings -and his congratulations- on the occasion of this important event.

I wish to extend our sincere appreciation to the League of Arab States for inviting the United Nations to be a partner in organizing this Forum. It is an opportunity for us to learn more from the experiences of the Member States in the region.

I am pleased to see colleagues and friends from so many of the election management bodies in the region. Our gathering is enriched by the presence of representatives from the Arab Parliament, partner organizations including the OIC, the EU and AU, and electoral experts from IFES and EISA in addition to the recently established Association of Arab EMBs. Please allow me to join His Excellency Ambassador Ben Helli in welcoming you all.

The LAS is an important partner for the United Nations in several aspects, particularly in the field of electoral support. With its long history of observing electoral processes, and its increasing ability to provide technical assistance, the League has a wealth of experiences and good practices which can and should be shared both in the region and globally.

Over the past 20 years, the UN has supported more than 100 of its member states to enhance their nationally-led and nationally-owned democratic processes. We work only upon request of our Member States. On a few occasions over the years our role has been substantial and visible. But in most cases our assistance is very limited and discreet. That is the way we like it. Conducting elections is the sovereign responsibility of Member States. The UN's role -when asked- is to support sovereign processes and not to interfere.

As the UN Secretary-General has indicated in a number of his reports on elections, it is up to the peoples in the Member States to decide about the credibility of their elections. At the end, a genuine election is one in which the result reflects the freely expressed choice or choices of the electors and is therefore broadly accepted.



And, as numerous UN General Assembly resolutions point out "while democracies share common features, there is no single model of democracy and that democracy does not belong to any country or region." The context and needs in each region and country should be taken into consideration when discussing elections and electoral processes.

The Forum's participants will be discussing many challenges over the coming days. I would like to mention here just one -which is a global challenge and very close to the UN Secretary-General's heart. That is the issue of women's electoral participation.

In the past two decades, we have witnessed the continuing upward trend in the number of women in elected and appointed positions across the globe. The Arab region has made great strides -in the last 20 years the number of women in parliament has increased from under 4% to just over 18%.

But, around the world, women remain underrepresented. The global average of women in parliament remains below 25%. We need to do more globally, both in developing and in developed countries.

The United Nations works with dozens of EMBs around the globe. We appreciate how difficult your job is and the magnitude of the challenges you face. But we also know the importance of your role and the high expectations that are upon you. But meetings like this one -which allow colleagues to share experiences and discuss good practices- can only help us all to meet the aspirations of the people we ultimately serve.

The Arab region, with its rich history, culture, and civilization, and with its remarkable contribution to global progress in so many areas, has much to offer to the world in promoting and enhancing democratic values and principles.

Please allow me to conclude by once again extending our sincere thanks to the LAS for organizing this important event and to thank you all for your participation. I am very much looking forward to our discussions in the next few days.



## III. Presentations by Sponsoring Institutions

### Methodology of the Electoral Affairs Department of the League of Arab States

#### First: Electoral observation

##### 1. The beginning of work on electoral observation

The League of Arab States started working in the field of electoral observation since the beginning of the 1990s amid the growing international interest in electoral observation. Numerous observation missions were deployed in response to the invitations received from the countries in the region which welcomed international observation of elections. The electoral observation missions of the LAS came as a support to the process of political reform and democratic transition in the Arab region.

##### 2. Establishing the Electoral Affairs Department

Due to the increase in the requests received by the LAS from Member and non-Member States to participate in observing and monitoring elections, particularly in the period between 2004 and 2013, and in the light of the attention accorded by the LAS to support and strengthen the process of democratic transition in its Member States, there was an urgent need for an institutional body within the LAS which is mainly concerned with electoral affairs. In this context, H.E. Dr. Nabil El-Araby, the former Secretary-General of the LAS, issued a decision in May 2013 to establish the 'Electoral Affairs Department' within the structure of the General Secretariat and under the chairmanship of the Deputy Secretary-General. The department assumed the responsibility of overseeing all the election observation tasks and carry out all the technical and organizational work related to this task through the coordination with the various relevant sectors and department of the LAS and the relevant authorities in the country where elections are held. This coordination takes place in all aspects related to elections including law, media, politics, and finance.

##### 3. Statistics on the election observation missions of the League of Arab States

The LAS has so far observed elections in 20 countries around the world, 12 of them Arab and 8 non-Arab, whether presidential or parliamentary elections or referendums. The League has deployed so far more than 65 election observation mission, which included in total no less than 1600 observers from the LAS staff.

#### **4. Methodology of the election observation missions of the League of Arab States**

The methodology of work of the election observation missions of the LAS is based on the following:

- The Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers
- The Arab Charter on Human Rights.
- The document titled "A Course for Development, Modernization and Reform in the Arab World" which was issued by the Arab Summit in Tunisia in March 2004.
- Upon receiving the official invitation from the country where elections are held, in which it requests the participation of the LAS in election observation, His Excellency the Secretary-General gives directions to form an election observation mission headed by one of the Assistants to the Secretary-General or whoever is found suitable from the General Secretariat. A set of criteria is taken into consideration when forming the mission including the size of the country, the population and the size of constituencies. In addition to the chief, each mission is composed of: deputy chief, general coordinator, head of operations, financial officer, media officer, and short-term observers. Various criteria are taken into account when selecting members of each mission, including experience and competence in this area, diversity of nationalities, gender balance, and the physical ability to withstand the hardships of the task.
- The pre-election delegation visits the country to hold meetings with the different electoral stakeholders and the official authorities responsible for the preparation and organization of elections. The delegation attempts to reach an agreement on the framework for election observation and discusses the technical

and logistical arrangements required for the members of the mission. In addition, it holds a number of TV interviews, make statements and issue press releases. The delegation signs a memorandum of understanding with the country's electoral management body as well as coordinates with other international and domestic organizations observing the electoral process.

- Members of the mission travel to the country sufficiently in advance of the polling day. A plan is prepared to distribute and deploy observers as each mission is divided into teams of two who are deployed in the areas covered by the mission, which usually includes most of the parts of the country.

#### **Stages of the work of the LAS election observation missions**

##### **A-Pre-polling**

Preparation stage:

- The Electoral Affairs Department cooperates and coordinates with the Political Affairs Department in studying the latest political developments in the country as well as follows up on the positions and approaches of political parties and candidates towards the electoral process.
- A study of the legal framework governing the electoral process is conducted, which includes the country's constitution, the electoral laws, the related decisions and decrees, and the rules and operational procedures and guidance issued by the EMB.
- An information paper is prepared on elections in the country, and the permits for observers are issued through coordination with the relevant state authorities. All the documents related to the mission (polling and counting procedures) are prepared using electronic observation forms on tablets, which were created by the Electoral Affairs Department through the Max Report application.

- The Electoral Affairs Department holds orientation sessions for the members of the mission to inform them of the methodology of the mission's work, the legal framework for elections in the country of concern, polling and counting procedures, and introduce them to the role of observers and their rights and duties.
- An operations room is set up mainly to communicate with the observers during the mission and monitor all the media's coverage of the electoral process, particularly during the stages of polling and counting.
- The Financial and Administrative Sector allocates budget for the mission from the budget of the Electoral Affairs Department according to the size of the mission and the duration of its work.

#### **B- Polling day**

- The role of observers on polling day is to monitor the electoral process, fill out the electronic forms and send them back to the operations room. They are expected to cover all the aspects of the Election Day throughout the stages of opening polling stations, polling, end of polling, sorting and counting ballots.

#### **C- Post-polling**

- After concluding its work on polling day, the mission issues a preliminary statement of its observations of the various stages of the electoral process, including the number of polling stations and centers, the areas visited by the observer teams, the objective evaluation of the electoral processes, and the most important aspects highlighted by observers during the processes of polling and counting.
- Following the announcement of results, the LAS election observation mission drafts a final report which is then submitted to H.E. the Secretary-General and a copy is sent to the EMB in the country of concern. The report covers the

preparations necessary for the mission, the tables covering the deployment of observers to areas and polling centers, the meetings and activities of the observation mission, the detailed observations of the different aspects of the electoral process and the work of the EMB, in addition to the mission's recommendations which are intended to address any shortcomings that may have occurred during elections.

### **Second: Electoral assistance and support**

- The Electoral Affairs Department aims to develop the work of the League of Arab States in the field of electoral observation to include providing technical support, assistance and training to the electoral authorities of the Member States, upon their request, particularly the countries which are going through the phase of preparation and establishment of its electoral authority and require support and experience in this area. There are various types of electoral assistance which can be provided to the electoral authorities of the Member States which vary between sending specialized experts to assist in the different stages of the electoral process, procurement of electoral materials, or training electoral staff. The LAS is currently building the capacity of the General Secretariat staff in order to have a BRIDGE-certified technical teams who can contribute in this field in the future.

### **The UN framework for Electoral assistance**

#### **The United Nations Electoral Support to Member States**

**Mandate:** Biennial UN General Assembly resolutions unanimously approved by all member states.

The UN has been involved in providing electoral assistance to Member States immediately since

its establishment. However, the current framework and structure for the UN's electoral assistance was created through the General Assembly in 1992.

#### **The UN's Structure for electoral assistance**

- The UN Focal Point for electoral assistance (USG for Political Affairs)
- The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
- Other UN entities (DPKO, UN Women, UNOPS, OHCHR, UNESCO, ...)

#### **The need for a request or mandate**

- The UN's electoral support is provided either based on a request from the Member States (the majority of cases) or based on a mandate from the UN Security Council or the UN General Assembly.

#### **Assessment of the needs**

- After receiving the request or the mandate, the UN usually conducts a needs assessment mission or a desk review.
- The assessment report will recommend: i) Whether or not the support should be provided and if so, ii) what are the parameters for the UN's support.
- All of the above should be in line with the priorities and request of national officials.

#### **Principles for the UN's electoral assistance**

- The UN's support is needs-based.
- It is guided by the principles of national leadership, national ownership and full respect for national sovereignty.
- It is objective, neutral, impartial, and independent.

- Broad national support is required for the UN's assistance.
- The UN's assistance is based on the understanding and acknowledgement that there is no one size fits all. The UN's assistance is tailored to the needs of the requesting Member States and has been provided to over 100 Member States in the past two decades.
- Member states at different levels of economic and democratic development are among those requesting assistance.
- It is norm-based but not prescriptive.
- Cost effectiveness and sustainability.
- Political perspective, the importance of the political will of the people.
- Integration.
- Broader and long term focus.
- Promoting inclusiveness (women's participation, participation of marginalized groups and people with disabilities).

#### **Types of UN's electoral support to Member States**

- The UN rarely conducts election observation. Regional organizations are better placed to do election observation.
- The UN conducts election observation only if there is a mandate from the UN Security Council or the General Assembly.
- Most of the UN's electoral support today is of technical nature which includes providing advice in the following areas:
  - Electoral laws and regulations.
  - Electoral systems design and reform.
  - Electoral planning and administration.

- Electoral budgeting and financial management.
- Constituency delimitation.
- Election logistics and operations.
- Trainings.
- Voting and counting procedures.
- Voter education.
- Civic and Voter registration.
- Results management.
- Public outreach.
- Electoral dispute resolution mechanisms.
- Procurement of electoral materials.
- Developing professional election management bodies.
- Media.

#### **Examples of past or current technical support**

- In the past two decades, the UN has provided technical support, upon request to over 100 member states.
- A few examples are as follows:
  - Asia-Pacific: Indonesia, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, India, Maldives, Palestine, Myanmar, Philippines, Yemen, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, and Timor-Leste.
  - Africa: Zambia, Tunisia, DRC, CAR, Mali, CDI, Gambia, Libya, Malawi, Comoros, Somalia, Kenya, Ghana, Chad, Senegal, Sierra Leon, South Africa, and Nigeria.
  - Europe: Romania, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, and France (New Caledonia).
  - Latin America and the Caribbean: Belize, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Peru, Argentina, Grenada,

Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Panama, and Mexico.

#### **Other less common types of assistance**

- Organization or conduct of elections (Cambodia 1993, Eastern Slovenia 1997, East Timor 1999).
- Observation of elections (Fiji 2001- GA resolution and Burundi 2015- SC Resolution).
- Certification of election results (Timor-Leste in 2007; Cote d'Ivoire in 2010 and 2011).
- Expert panels (Nepal, Maldives, Bangladesh, Algeria, Papua New Guinea).

#### **Partnership with other intergovernmental organizations and international NGOs**

- The UN also works very closely in partnership with regional organizations (e.g, LAS, OAS, OIC, AU, EU, OSCE, CARICOM Secretariat, SADC) as well as international NGOs including (EISA, IFES, IDEA, NDI, INE).

#### **The UN Electoral Roster**

- The UN single roster is considered very important.
- There are over 1000 experts on the roster, around 70 of them are fluent Arabic speakers (not including those with basic knowledge of Arabic).
- Efforts have been made to bring in more Arabic speakers to the electoral roster.
- In 2012, the Electoral Assistance Division (EAD) conducted a special campaign to roster Arabic speakers. Only applicants who were fluent in Arabic were eligible to apply.
- Also to the extent possible, the EAD tries to consider senior Arabic speakers with experience in EMBs for short term consultancies, so that they can acquire more experience in other countries.



## IV. The Conceptual Framework

### Electoral Administration as a Profession

\* Rafael López Pintor

The discussion of elections can be approached from a variety of perspectives, one of which is looking at elections as a public service in helping the exercise of popular suffrage as a method of collective decision for the choice of public authorities, which is at the essence of the democratic system of government.

#### Elections today: A universal phenomenon

While looking at electoral practices around the world, one may feel as if standing in the middle of a forest where the trees can be seen, while the view of the whole forest is missing. It is an unprecedented experience in human history that in most countries public authorities are chosen by the method of collective decision which are elections. For first time in history, this is happening in all continents and cultures of the world.

By the beginning of 1970's (only forty-five years ago) competitive elections were held in less than 30 countries at a time when the total number of countries in the world had become already close to the number today. During the following 15 years, the number of electoral democracies had grown to around 40. And only ten year later, by the end of the 20th Century, the number of countries holding elections had more than tripled jumping over 150. At the present time, it is easier to do the counting in the opposite direction: How many countries do not hold elections. Would it not be surprising that they could be counted on the fingers of only one hand?

Within the Arab world, the general pattern applies albeit at a somewhat slower speed than in other regions of the world. Elections are increasingly becoming the method of choosing public authorities of different ranks. Suffice it to say that during the five-year period between 2016 and 2020, around 50 electoral events of different levels would take place in the Member States of the Arab League (according to constitutional-legal calendars, electoral laws and some authoritative announcements).

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\* Professor Rafael López Pintor, UNDP Senior Election Advisor for Arab States, wrote this paper as part of the Forum's conceptual framework and he presented it at the opening session.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
Presidential	2	1	3	2	2	10
Parliamentary	4	4	7	3	2	20
Local	4	3	4	3		14
Referendum	1					1
Total	11	8	14	8	4	15

## ELECTIONS IN MEMBER STATES OF ARAB LEAGUE, 2016-2020

Why has this all happened in the timespan of just over one generation? Some key facts may be brought to help an understanding of this development. With the exception of Southern Europe and Latin America where electoral democracy had been experienced with its ups and downs since the last quarter of the 19th Century, the main trigger of the universal phenomenon (often called the third wave of democracy) was the end of the Cold War in the 1990's. This worked as a watershed in world politics facilitating that a number of social and cultural changes, operating deep since World War II, could come to the surface of political life in a matter of two decades: Mainly unprecedented demographic and economic expansion in all societies since the 1950's; educational and communication revolution; and changing the presence and role of women and youth in society.

### Elections as a public service of democracy

Elections are most often approached by the public mind -especially among candidates, voters and mass media- as the more dramatic scenario of democracy with the fury of campaigning, the color of public mobilization, advertisements, and public debate, all of it in search of the vote for the positions of political authority. A different approach is that prevailing in academic circles usually focusing on the study of the voter turnout, electoral results, their causes and effects. Then there is what could be considered the practitioner approach of elections as a public service of democracy. This approach would mainly concern those public officials charged with implementing the electoral operations starting with voter registration and

ending with the publication of results and resolution of electoral disputes. These are officials from a variety of institutions mainly ministries of interior and finance, local governments, electoral commissions, national offices of statistics and personal identification, etc. National and international experts and agencies for technical assistance and electoral support shall also be included within the practitioner sector.

A consensus exists among theorists and practitioners in the sense that the concept of good practice applies to elections in the same manner as it does to other public services of massive scope either in general (e.g. health, education) or specific to democratic governance (e.g. independent mass media, judicial practice which is consistent with rules of due process). Consequently, as in any other public service, planning, programming, budgeting, and accountability (responding for service delivery) are necessary. Public authorities are charged and expected to produce the service of elections under general standards of good practice: Transparency, effectiveness, professionalism and cost-effectiveness.

As with other public services, the electoral service can be addressed in terms of service providers, direct recipients, beneficiaries and quality of deliverance. Service providers are the electoral administrators no matter which institutional shape is in place (ministries, electoral commissions or a mixed organizational arrangement); political parties and candidates; and other government agencies involved in the electoral operations. Direct recipients of the service are the citizens, mainly those turning out to vote. The main beneficiary is the entire society as far as elections contribute to the maintenance and solidity of the system of rights, freedoms and obligations which are the kernel of democratic government. Finally, quality delivery is the degree in which the service has been provided according to standards of good practice.



Some main differences of elections vis-à-vis other public services like education, health, or customs control. One is the periodic character of elections, at least the polling operations, although elements such as voter registration or civic education have a more continuous character. The recurrent character of elections purports high challenges in performance, and would advise that well-trained and experienced administrators take care of the service; hence comes the importance of professional electoral administrators.

Another difference stems from the extreme sensitivity of the content and output of the service: that is the contest for political power. The winners will be put in positions where the decisions they make would bound the entire community and can be enforced by coercion if necessary. The fact that the content and output of the service are most sensitive would call for transparency and impartiality by electoral administrators as key guiding principles of the electoral process. An ethics of professionalism is needed.

A caveat on common sense and rational thinking would be pertinent here. Good practice shall not be equated to perfection. Aiming at perfection is a laudable ethical and professional purpose at service delivery, but perfection is a rather elusive and hardly attainable goal. More still so if the service under consideration is of a massive scope and should be delivered in a very short time as is the case with elections. Millions of people are generally involved in the electoral undertaking, which is meant as a competition for political power, nothing more nothing less. Technical flaws and shortcomings normally implied in mass processes are here compounded by the passion at power seeking and the compelling strength of ideology. In this context, aiming to perfection at service delivery can be admirable, however perfection is statistically unlikely. Consequently, the concept of good practice would bring the practitioner and observer as close to what is reasonably attainable

under the circumstances, with well-meaning and due diligence taken for granted.

A modest constructive approach at service delivery takes into account that a particular election is usually preceded and followed by other electoral events; and that future improvement should be looked for, but that worsening quality of the service and decay are also possible.

Contrary to extreme idealism and wishful thinking, it is worth reminding that practice in a democratic government is not a matter of black and white, but of varying degrees in the exercise of freedoms and rights after a starting floor or level is guaranteed with the establishing of certain institutions, one of them being competitive elections.

Democracy is not just elections although there is no democracy without elections. Democracy is a process with a mix of citizens' participation (elections), rule of law (the law equally applies to everybody) and accountable government that guarantees the exercise of the citizens' rights, and also may ensure that the citizens' obligations are enforced. Citizens' rights and obligations should go hand in hand if the quality of democracy is to improve. And quality would depend on an acceptable equilibrium between legally-established democratic institutions and their performance in a manner which is consistent with good democratic practice.

#### **Electoral administration as a profession**

All public services are provided by using an organizational instrument which is usually called public administration or state bureaucracy. The public administration for elections is discussed here with a focus on public administrators who are called electoral officers: Type of organization where they serve and characteristics of their particular professional endeavors.

### **What type of electoral administration?**

Within the state structures, the public service of elections is conducted under given institutional authority and service management staff, the modality of which varies among countries and historical conditions. This electoral administration may be embedded within the executive branch of government (usually the Ministry of Interior and local government); a collective body or commission which is organically separated from the executive branch (hence its usual title as independent); or a mix of both types of authorities (the ministry manages under supervision of a collective body).

From a historical perspective and also according to democratic theory, any of the three institutional types shall be considered equally legitimate as far as the electoral operation is conducted in a manner which is consistent with standards of impartiality, transparency and professionalism.

Whatever the model of electoral authority or electoral administration, two levels of responsibility must be distinguished. On the one hand, at the top level is the institutional authority proper (minister or director general, the body of commissioners). Authorities at this level are appointed by the head of state (king or president of the republic), the prime minister, the legislative assembly or a combination of them. In any case, appointment at this level of authority necessitates political confidence. On the other hand, there is the level of administration or implementation, which shall be and is normally filled with staff whose appointment is based on technical criteria of educational background and professional performance. At a certain degree of stability, an electoral administration is usually composed of a mix of permanent staff under civil service regulations and temporary staff which tends to be massively hired for the polling operation.

### **Trends worldwide and in the LAS Member States**

Elections have been managed by different authorities in different countries both historically and at the present time. In older democracies, the Ministry of Interior and the local municipal authorities conducted elections traditionally and today. With time, in a number of countries, government-run elections were supervised by electoral commissions normally composed of judges and representatives of political parties. As a third historical development, elections are managed by electoral commissions which are organically independent from the executive branch of government. The latter has become the prevailing model of electoral administration today.

Comparative data from 204 countries of all regions of the world show that elections are exclusively conducted by the executive branch at the central and local levels in only 19% of cases; being mainly the case in older democracies of Western Europe, the United States of America, and Japan. With the spreading of emerging democracies in the last few decades, the prevailing model of EMB has become an electoral commission with full responsibilities in the conduct of elections (60% of cases). As for the third model of EMB -the executive conducting elections under the supervision of a collective body- the number of cases would amount to 21%.

Historically, elections tended to be run by the executive branch in the hands of political parties. Elections have always been as the relative degree of party pluralism and media independence would allow in a given country. It was only under the increasingly effective scrutiny of opposition groups and parliamentary committees that ministries of interior and local officials learned how to conduct elections which were acceptable to all contenders. In most of the older democracies, as an effect of historical experience, elections continue being basically run by representatives of political parties and candidates in cooperation with the

administrative machinery of local municipal governments. Political personnel control each other in the conduct of the elections. This is the reason why election results are rarely contested; and if contested, the same political actors would take a very active role in helping the labor of judiciaries whose decision will most likely be commonly accepted (the case of Bush in the US 2000 is paradigmatic).

In the Arab World, the institutional shape of electoral administration is following a similar evolutionary pattern to that prevailing in the world today. The number of countries where the electoral authority is a part of the executive branch of government has decreased while the number of countries where electoral commissions are established moves in the opposite direction. The number of countries

where the EMB was a part of the executive amounted to 10 five years ago (Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Syria, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates) while it is 7 today. On the other hand, electoral commissions existed in 4 countries (Iraq, Sudan, Palestine, Yemen) while they have risen to 13 today. The EMB model of executive under supervisory body existed in 2 countries (Algeria and Djibouti). Interestingly enough, the number of 2 remains today, but their model of electoral administration has changed. In Algeria, a new constitution has established an electoral commission fully responsible for elections although it has not been created yet. Djibouti has established an electoral commission. In Morocco, the Ministry of Interior continues to conduct elections but now under the supervision of a temporary electoral commission.

#### Types of EMBs in LAS Member States with an International Comparison

	WORLD	Middle East, Maghreb LAS States	Western Europe, US, Canada	Eastern Europe	Sub-Saharan Africa	Asia Pacific	Latin America Caribbean
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Ministry of Gov.	19	32	42	-	9	20	16
Ministry supervised	21	9	46	5	30	10	21
Electoral Commission	60	59	12	95	61	70	63
Percent	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Number of countries	204	22	26	22	44	46	43

Source: Successive updates by author Rafael López Pintor (2000), *Electoral Management Bodies as Institutions of Governance* (New York; UNDP).

#### Type of EMBs in the Member States of the League of Arab States

TYPE OF EMB	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES		COUNTRIES
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	PERCENT	
Ministry of government	7	32 %	Bahrein, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria
Ministry supervised by commission	2	9 %	Algeria, Morocco
Electoral Commission	13	59 %	Comoro Islands, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Mauritania, Palestine, Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen
TOTAL	22	100 %	

Source: Table composed by the author from legal sources.

**A caveat about independence of electoral commissions:** Confusion about the concept of independence is frequently attested among electoral experts and practitioners including political leaders and election managers. The concept of independence for an EMB has both an institutional-organizational dimension and a behavioral one. The institutional-organizational independence implies organic autonomy from the executive branch of government (Ministries) and the necessary legal provisions ensuring that such autonomy may be made effective (mainly rules of appointment and removal of commissioners and chief executive, budgetary regulations, civil service staffing). An electoral commission can be nominally independent, but if other conditions are not guaranteed, its independence will amount to mere formality. On the other hand, independence is an attribute of behavior; an electoral authority conducts its business with independence by acting in an impartial, neutral and transparent manner. This aspect of independence applies to and shall be expected from any type of electoral authority; either ministry or local government, electoral commission or a mix of both.

### **Elements of a profession**

Today, what is considered as a profession is a way of dealing with problems in a particular field of practice by people who work under the same standards: technical, procedural and ethical. Professional activities require basic common technical knowledge, rules of authority, and ethical principles. The knowhow is acquired at specialized educational agencies, normally though not only universities. Rules of authority develop from collegial bodies known as professional associations. Ethical values are the philosophical foundations of a profession.

In a sense, the story of modern professions is that of continuing substitution of rational thinking and empirically-based methods for older ways of doing as dictated by myth, prejudice or ideology. It is at the core of a profession that given (codified) solutions to problems are accepted by a community of peers on the grounds that they were reached according to principles and rules generally accepted by that community (these being lawyers and judges, medical doctors, audit accountants, or election administrators).



In making a given area of practice standardized and accepted, a profession shall include four basic elements: a) Books with codified specialized knowledge (the know-how); b) A code of ethics where standards of conduct are defined; c) A professional authority to ensure good performance by professionals abiding to rules and procedures; and d) Diplomas by which qualification for professional entitlement is certified by a recognized educational institution. How would the profession of electoral administrators feature in this blueprint?

### **Books**

As already said, by books it is meant the codified knowledge of a profession. Its content can be embedded in a variety of instruments today: either paper or electronic; book proper, dictionaries, working paper series, journals, atlas etc. Specialized materials are necessary as the repository of accumulated knowledge as much as a fountain of innovative thinking.

In the Arab world, a number of these instruments have been produced in the past few years. Most important are these: The Arabic Lexicon of Electoral Terminology; handbooks and monographic papers from different international organizations have been translated into Arabic dealing with electoral systems, election management, electoral observation, and polling staff training. A section in Arabic in the electoral encyclopedia ACE can be accessed on the web.

It is still missing a compendium of electoral legislation of the Arab World with extensive chapters by country where the legal framework and recent practices of elections is approached in a systematic manner, including annexes with the text of electoral legislation. Likewise, good practice manuals contextualized for the region would also be useful, mainly on voter registration and voter lists, poll worker recruitment and training, electoral dispute resolution, transmission of electoral results, and media's role in elections.

### **Code of ethics**

This is the deontological guide of a profession. It provides guidance both ethical and for good practice to practitioners. Moreover, the ethics of a profession would enhance professional independence vis-à-vis other people who are subjected to different codes of ethics (persons from other professions, government authorities, politicians, journalists, etc).

The code of ethics of the profession would normally be enshrined in the charter of a professional association. Totally or partially, professional ethics of elections is also embodied and disseminated through a variety of published codes of conduct governing specific areas of the electoral undertaking; mainly the polling operations, electoral observation, political parties and candidates, and media.

In the Arab world, a variety of such codes of conduct have been issued in different countries. Codes of conduct produced and validated by different international organizations are translated into Arabic and made available through the web. The professional Association of Arab EMBs has obviously its own charter in which ethic guidelines are included. Consequently, it is not the material that is missing, but the harmonization and exchange between and among the electoral stakeholders from different countries would help in attaining a commonly shared ethical umbrella for the practice of elections.

### **Professional authority**

An authority which is based on knowledge and recognition among peers as contrary to authority emerging from other considerations such as personal ties or political partisan criteria. Professional authority is normally institutionalized in associations governing the profession either at the national or the international level. The professional association is an authority responsible for setting standards of good practice and caring that individual professionals abide

to those standards. This authority has also a sanctioning function in cases of non-abidance or malpractice.

### Diplomas

Contrary to professional fields such as law or medicine, a curriculum on election administration does not exist in any university, at least at the level of first degree (i.e. Licentiate, Bachelor). Persons with different educational backgrounds usually become election administrators "on the job" by applying their specific professional knowledge in the conduct of electoral operations (i.e. lawyers, business experts, engineers, etc). If they keep working on elections over the years, they actually become experts at elections.

Such has been the case at some point in time in older well-established democracies from India to the UK, from Sweden to Uruguay. The enhancement of electoral professional practice has been accompanied and certainly sustained by parallel developments of a professional civil service and widespread state apparatuses at both national and local levels. Nevertheless, a deficit in the development of state apparatuses and a professional civil service are among the weakest aspects in the largest number of emerging democracies (around 150 countries where competitive elections became a political practice in the last forty years). How can a professional electoral administration be developed as a part of state apparatuses in situations where a professional civil service is not fully consolidated at all levels of government?

This is the crux of the matter in most democratizing countries today: Is there a professional civil service from which election administrators can be outsourced in big numbers and adequately trained for elections? In any case, imaginative educational or training programs including adequate certification should be looked for. Bottom line is that election administration is a profession in the making. Advantages for proceeding in that

direction are widely offered by modern information and communication technology. One may fully benefit from learning through the web given well-structured and controlled procedures while classical learning or a mix of both is equally valid. The key element for such learning process is that certification is issued by some internationally-recognized institution or group of institutions joining in this effort. In most countries of the Arab world, a professional civil service generally exists although with varying degrees of coverage over the entire state apparatus (national, governor and local-institutions), expert capacities and career stability of the staff.

Under the circumstances, it is proving useful -as in other regions of the world- to provide expert electoral knowledge to people with different professional backgrounds working in elections. Sometimes it will be training on the job, sometimes through topical courses and seminars of varying scope. In this context, the BRIDGE product can be mentioned for which an increasing number of Arab trainers have been certified, and the Arabization of the product is proceeding (i.e. case studies and references). A number of specialized international workshops and seminars are also organized where high quality training is provided on specific aspects of elections (e.g. voter registration, electoral dispute resolution, results transmission). Setting specialized courses within graduate curricula in well-reputed universities of the region should not be discarded as a step forward in the definition and consolidation of election administration as a profession. With time, perhaps the creation of a regional training center could also be beneficial (little physical infrastructure would be necessary, with strong visual and presentational components within some solid institution already functioning whether intergovernmental or academic.

## **Benefits of strategic thinking in developing electoral administration as a profession**

First, strategic thinking would normally take advantage of whatever existing institutional resources that can be mobilized for the attainment of a goal (in everyday language, not starting from scratch and not reinventing the wheel if some valuable resources already exist).

Second, strategic thinking is also sensitive to the relationship between technical competence and independent judgement as trademarks for any profession. Enhancement of these two dimensions is necessary if a given metier or way of doing things is to develop into a consolidated profession. Technical competence and independent judgement are mutually interrelated. Without fostering competence, independence at judgement can hardly improve. The other way around, by limiting the capacity for independent judgement a barrier is set for the growth of knowledge. In any professional field, without knowledge there cannot be independent judgement. It is in this context that the four elements already discussed (i.e. books, certificates, associations and codes of ethics) shall be considered as inexhaustible sources of technical competence and independent judgements as the trademarks for electoral administration as a profession.

## **Electoral Observation: Principles and Practice**

\* **Rafael López Pintor**

In the last few decades, electoral observation at the international and domestic levels has increasingly become a matter of interest among election managers and practitioners all over the world including the oldest democracies.

### **The observer phenomenon, how did it all start?**

In the manner that is known today, election observation is a phenomenon of our times, since the

last quarter of the 20th Century, most notably since the last decade of the century when competitive elections have become actually universal. International organizations initiated the practice in the early 1990's, especially the UN and regional branch organizations of the international system. A simultaneous development took place on the level of national civil society observer groups.

This pattern is reproduced today in the Arab world, although competitive elections only recently have become widespread over the region. At the international level, and for years already, the League of Arab States has been deploying observer missions in a number of countries. More recently, missions were deployed to Darfur for a referendum, and Comoro Islands and Djibouti for national elections. As for domestic or national observation, civil society organizations which are involved in electoral observation exist in at least 17 countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoro Islands, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Somalia, South Sudan, Tunisia, and Yemen. It is also worth noticing that two regional networks exist of civil society organizations observing elections: The Election Network in the Arab Region (ENAR), and the Arab Network for the Monitoring of Elections (ANDE).

### **Is electoral observation a necessary part of democracy?**

It is clear that monitoring elections through different instruments (modalities) helps the creation of conditions for security and freedom for the exercise of voter suffrage as well as for transparency of electoral procedures. If we concur that conditions of security, freedom and transparency are necessary for democratic development, then it can be said that electoral observation or monitoring of some kind is a part of democracy as a system of participatory government.

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\* This paper was prepared as part of the Forum's conceptual framework providing an assessment of the current state of affairs on election observation at the international and domestic levels, however, it was not presented at the Forum due to time constraints.

What are the modalities/instruments for monitoring elections? International and domestic electoral observation became a standard practice in the last thirty years in parallel with the widespread of multiparty elections around the world. It is not that electoral observation is prohibited in older well-established democracies -in fact the presence of domestic and international small observer missions is increasingly seen in a number of countries- but the overall presence of political party and candidates' representatives monitoring the conduct of elections at all levels as well as access to the polling stations by mass media and other stakeholders seemed to suffice for ensuring the transparency and fairness of elections. In emerging democracies, observers have been called by the authorities, or have themselves demanded to participate due to the main following reasons: a) to strengthen the credibility and legitimacy of newly-established electoral authorities and electoral performance by enhancing the transparency of the electoral process; b) to at least partly, fill in the deficit of the political parties' organizational strength, often not being able to display their own monitors all over the polling stations; c) the frequently-found weakness of independent media reporting on elections; and d) last but not least, the concerns by local authorities and the public about having national elections duly recognized as legitimate by the international community.

Electoral observation can sometimes become a conflictive matter; be it regarding international organizations observing elections or regarding domestic or national observers. Complaints on interference or lack of impartiality have been sometimes heard about international observation missions; as for domestic observers, complaints are sometimes heard about their impartiality, accuracy of their findings, abidance or respect of the law and the electoral authorities of the country.

The deepest roots of tensions and conflict between public authorities and observer organizations more

frequently reside on: a) lack of understanding of the nature of observation, b) vacuum of regulations on this matter, and c) deficit of professionalism in electoral observation either domestic or international.

#### **Aspects of the electoral observation process**

Electoral observation has to do with witnessing and reporting on electoral developments by a group of institutionally-affiliated persons through independent, systematic and comprehensive evaluation of legal frameworks, institutions, and processes related to elections; in addition to offering appropriate recommendations for the improvement of electoral practices in the future.

Non-partisan election observation by civil society organizations is the mobilization of citizens in a politically neutral, impartial and non-discriminatory manner to exercise their right of participation in public affairs, and advocating for improvements in legal frameworks for elections, and follow up on their implementation through election-related administration, in addition to the removal of impediments to full citizen participation in electoral and political processes.

In the case of international observation, electoral observers are deployed as a mission by intergovernmental as well as international non-governmental organizations and associations.

In the case of domestic observation, electoral observers are affiliated to or mobilized by national civil society organizations or other national institutions (e.g. trade unions, universities). Their activity shall be considered in the domain of their civil and political rights of participation in public affairs. The fact that they are nationals of the state -within the boundaries of which their observation activity is conducted- constitutes a crucial difference vis-à-vis international observers.

From a conceptual or theoretical perspective, the purpose and content of electoral observation



by international and domestic observers is the same. But the rights and obligations to which their respective activity is bound greatly differ. In the domestic case, citizens are acting under the law of the land. In the international case, observers are bound to the law of the country, in addition to legal international obligations, and the protocols and practices of diplomacy. This difference of legal status has huge practical implications for the conduct of international and domestic observation (relationship to public authorities, reporting method, freedom of information and speech, etc.).

None of the following actions should be considered as electoral observation proper:

- Individual isolated observation which is unconnected to any organized group or institution taking responsibility for the observation operation.
- Just looking around during election season or the polling days in a non-systematic manner, without a proven methodology.
- Drawing conclusions without explaining the scope of matters being observed or the method used for observation.
- Launching an observation operation with obvious or even declared intention to oppose or support one of the competitors either from the government or the opposition.
- Similarly, launching an observer operation in a declared adversarial mood to the electoral system and/or the electoral authorities responsible for the conduct of elections. In the case that a political operation of this kind is undertaken it should not be considered as election observation, but as an operation of political confrontation, which might be fully legitimate.

**Normative international framework: Covenant and declarations**

If a legal international basis is to be searched in justification of electoral observation, this should be Article 25 of the 1966 UN International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). This is the main source of international legal inspiration for contemporary democratic practice, and has been adopted by practically all Member States of the United Nations.

The scope of Article 25 covers the entire electoral cycle in reading: "Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without any of the distinctions mentioned in Article 2 [such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status] and without unreasonable restrictions: (a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives; (b) To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors; (c) To have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country."

Article 25 is considered to offer a good reason for a systematic periodic observation of elections. More specifically, the electoral processes would imply that short-term observation of a single electoral event is not enough, and that the thrust of observation must be of a long-term nature. This is a reason why the main responsibilities of electoral observers are often established by the electoral law and secondary regulations issued by electoral authorities. Moreover, observer codes of conduct are normally issued by observer organizations, both international and domestic.

There are also a coupled of relevant international declarations. In 2005, the United Nations issued a Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers. It has been endorsed by more than 50 international organizations both

governmental and non-governmental, including the League of Arab States.

An adaptation of this declaration of principles for its application to domestic or national observers was initiated in 2006 and submitted for public consideration and endorsement by the Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM): Declaration of Global Principles for Non-Partisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations and Code of Conduct for Non-Partisan Citizen Elections Observers and Monitors. It was commemorated by the United Nations in 2012, and has been endorsed by 164 CSOs from 76 countries among which there are 18 CSOs from 8 countries in the Arab world: one per country from Bahrain, Lebanon and South Sudan, two from Egypt, three from Morocco and Tunisia, four from Yemen, and six from Jordan. This declaration has also been endorsed by 7 regional and international networks of CSOs, 7 international governmental organizations and 6 international non-governmental organizations.

It goes without saying that at the national level there are numerous national legislative provisions and codes of conduct on electoral observation.

The following are main guiding principles on electoral observation as stemming from the international normative framework and as embodied in numerous national electoral legislations and codes of conduct:

- Election observation must be conducted with respect for the sovereignty of the country, its laws and authorities, including electoral bodies.
- Electoral observers must act in a manner that is consistent with respecting and promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- Observers must maintain strict non-partisanship, by remaining politically neutral by refraining from expressing publicly any preference for or against any candidate, political party, group, movement or other association seeking public office.
- Observers must actively seek cooperation with the country's electoral management body, other governmental agencies and electoral stakeholders, and must not obstruct the election process.
- Observers gather systematically and always evaluate impartially information concerning all the aspects of an electoral process.
- Observation includes the responsibility to issue regularly public reports, statements and releases that are accurate, impartial and timely and that present observations, analysis, findings and recommendations for improving electoral processes.
- Observers must maintain strict adherence to the principle of nonviolence.
- Providing sufficiently high-quality training for all observers to allow them to understand the Code of Conduct of observers, sign the necessary pledge and provide reports that meet the standards of good practice.
- Specifically on international observer missions, they come upon invitation by the national government (usually an invitation issued by the electoral authorities and processed through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs).
- Specifically on domestic observer organizations, they should be independent of government, including electoral authorities, both institutionally and in their conduct of activities. They should also be transparent about their funding and must not accept funding from any source or upon any condition that creates a conflict of interest that would hinder the organization from conducting its monitoring activities in a nondiscriminatory, impartial, accurate and timely manner.

## Standards of good practice

The following are guidelines normally enshrined in codes of conduct and observers' handbooks:

- Election observation evaluates pre-election, election-day and post-election periods through comprehensive, long-term observation, employing a variety of techniques. As a part of these efforts, specialized observation missions may examine limited pre-election or post-election issues and specific processes (such as: delimitation of electoral districts, voter registration, use of electronic technologies, and functioning of electoral complaint mechanisms).
- A variety of credible methodologies and techniques for observing electoral processes can be used, sometimes depending on the aspect of the electoral process and/or electoral environment being evaluated. Nevertheless, observer organizations shall commit to sharing approaches and harmonizing methodologies as appropriate.
- Observers are expected to issue timely, accurate and impartial statements and reports to the public (including providing copies to electoral authorities and other appropriate national entities), presenting their findings, conclusions and any appropriate recommendations they determine could help improve election-related processes.
- Observers are supposed to submit or share their extensive observation report with the electoral authorities. This matter is often a matter covered by a secondary regulation issued by the EMB.
- Observers shall always wear appropriate identification (name of observer organization and a personal accreditation).
- Individual observers shall refrain from making comments to the public or the media before their organization speaks. Usually, it is the formal representative or spokesperson of the organization but not individual observers who can speak about observer activities. Individual observers are supposed to only speak about their personal identification, institutional affiliation, the nature of the activity.
- Observers should establish regular communications with, and cooperate as appropriate with other observer organizations under the normative framework of their respective organizations.
- Specifically on international observer missions, as they come upon invitation by the host country's government, they may have conducted an assessment or a fact-finding mission prior to deployment in the country, and may have signed a Memorandum of Understanding or an observation agreement about the conduct of their mission. The latter would usually include guarantees for unimpeded access of observers to all stages of the electoral process and all electoral technologies, to all persons concerned with the electoral processes, as well as the freedom of movement around the country and other related operational matters.
- Specifically on domestic observers, they are allowed to accompany the electoral process under the following main conditions:
  - a) Observers must belong to organizations properly registered and recognized as part of civil society;
  - b) They perform their duties according to rules prescribed by the electoral authorities usually including a code of conduct;
  - c) They are duly accredited by the electoral authorities without unreasonable restrictions; and
  - d) They issue public reports in a manner and time which have been prescribed prior to elections. It is considered a good practice that such aspects are included in the electoral legislation (the law and secondary regulations).



### Evolutionary trends on electoral observation

Trends along the last twenty years can be summarized as follows:

1. Type of observation mission: from large thinly-spread on the ground towards smaller and deeper rooted missions.
2. Saliency of domestic versus international observers: from lower towards higher saliency of domestic observer vis-à-vis international observer missions.
3. Methodology: from check list/questionnaire focused on Election Day towards assessment/audit methodologies embracing broader areas in the electoral process.
4. Timing in the field: from short-term deployment around Election Day towards longer-term undertaking ideally covering the entire electoral process.
5. Focus of observation: From assessment of legal framework and observing polling and counting on Election Day towards inclusion of a larger number of areas/issues of elections.

### Current and future challenges

Here are the main challenges facing election observation:

1. Quality of voter lists (actual if not legal disenfranchisement of vulnerable populations women, ethnic cultural minorities, the poor, peasants, the youth- the status of the civil registers and personal identification documents, audit of voter lists).
2. Electoral campaign funding and expenses (hard to follow everywhere).
3. Media use and media access monitoring.
4. Aggregate vote counting, data processing and transmission of results -more and more electronic means are used (audit-ability of the system put in place from the beginning to the end).
5. Adjudication of electoral complaints and appeals (timely for input claim and output resolution; fairness/impartiality of judiciaries).



## V. \*Arab Countries Presentations

### Basic Information on Elections in the Arab Region

The chapter above contained the substance of thematic and conceptual presentations as rendered to the forum by officials and experts from the League of Arab States and the United Nations. This chapter will focus on providing an overview of the basic information on elections in each of the Arab countries in the form of a summarized box, while the full text of country reports is appended as an annex to the report. The Arab electoral authorities offered presentations on their electoral experiences in order to present a comprehensive view of elections in the region. The presentations offered by the different countries were rendered in a systematic manner according to the thematic outline prepared by the League of Arab States in order to ensure homogeneity and consistency among the different country contributions.

Below is a summary of the factual information submitted by the Arab electoral authorities on elections and the electoral system in each country:

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\* Country presentations were submitted by delegates to the forum on 9 May 2016.



## Algerian People's Democratic Republic

<b>Electoral law:</b>	<b>Articles of law related to the electoral system</b>
<b>Presidential elections:</b>	It takes place every five years, and the last elections were held in 2014.
<b>Parliamentary elections:</b>	It takes place every five years, and the last elections were held in 2012.
<b>Local elections:</b>	It takes place every five years, and the last elections were held in 2012.
<b>Referendum:</b>	Conducted in 2005.
<b>The electoral system:</b>	
<b>Presidential elections:</b>	Two-round system.
<b>Parliamentary elections:</b>	Proportional representation system.
<b>Local elections:</b>	Proportional representation system.
<b>Voting age:</b>	18
<b>The voter register in the last elections contained:</b>	22,880,678 voters.
<b>Electoral Management Body:</b>	The Ministry of the Interior and local communities.



# Kingdom of Bahrain

<b>Date of last constitutional amendment:</b>	2002
<b>Date of issuing the electoral laws:</b>	The Shura Council and Council of Representatives Act 2002. Election of Municipal Councils Act 2002.
<b>Types of elections:</b>	
<b>Parliamentary elections:</b>	It takes place every four years, and the last elections were held in 2014.
<b>Local elections:</b>	It takes place every four years, and the last elections were held in 2014.
<b>The electoral system:</b>	
<b>Parliamentary elections:</b>	Two-round system
<b>Voting age:</b>	20
<b>The voter register in the last elections contained:</b>	349,713 voters
<b>Electoral Management Body:</b>	The Directorate of Elections and Referendum



## Union of the Comoros

<b>Date of Constitution:</b>	2001
<b>Date of issuing electoral law:</b>	2014
<b>Types of elections:</b>	
<b>Presidential elections:</b>	It takes place every five years, and the last elections were held in 2010.
<b>Parliamentary elections:</b>	It takes place every five years, and the last elections were held in 2015.
<b>Local elections:</b>	It takes place every five years, and the last elections were held in 2015.
<b>Elections of governors of the Islands:</b>	It takes place every five years, and the last elections were held in 2010.
<b>Elections of the members of the Islands' assemblies:</b>	It takes place every five years, and the last elections were held in 2015.
<b>The electoral system:</b>	
<b>Presidential elections:</b>	One round system alternating between the islands
<b>Parliamentary elections:</b>	Absolute Majority (Two-round system)
<b>Voting age:</b>	18
<b>The voter register in the last elections contained:</b>	301,000 voters
<b>Electoral Management Body:</b>	Independent National Electoral Commission





## Republic of Djibouti

Date of Constitution:	1992
Date of issuing the electoral law:	1992
Types of elections:	
Presidential elections:	It takes place every five years, and the last elections were held in 2011.
Local elections:	
Legislative elections:	
The electoral system:	
Presidential elections:	Absolute majority (two-round system)
Voting age:	18
Electoral Management Body:	The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).



## The Arab Republic of Egypt

<b>Date of Constitution:</b>	2014
<b>Date of issuing the electoral law:</b>	- The 2014 Presidential Elections Law. - The House of Representatives Law (Amendments) of 2015.
<b>Types of elections:</b>	
<b>Presidential elections:</b>	It takes place every four years, and the last elections were held in 2014.
<b>Parliamentary elections:</b>	It takes place every five years, and the last elections were held in 2015.
<b>Local elections:</b>	It takes place every four years.
<b>A referendum on the Constitution:</b>	Conducted in 2014
<b>The electoral system:</b>	
<b>Presidential elections:</b>	Majority System
<b>Parliamentary elections:</b>	Absolute Majority
<b>Voting age:</b>	18
<b>The voter register in the last elections contained:</b>	55,606,578 voters
<b>Electoral Management Body:</b>	The High Elections Commission (HEC)/



# The Republic of Iraq

<b>Types of elections:</b>	
Presidency of the Kurdistan Regional Government elections:	
Iraqi Council of Representatives elections:	It takes place every four years, and the last elections were held in 2014.
Kurdistan Regional Parliamentary elections:	It takes place every four years, and the last elections were held in 2013.
Provincial elections:	It takes place every four years, and the last elections were held in 2013.
Provincial elections of the region:	It takes place every four years, and the last elections were held in 2014.
<b>The electoral system:</b>	
Presidential elections:	President of the Republic is elected by the Council of Representatives.
Parliamentary elections:	Proportional representation system
Local elections:	Proportional representation system
Voting age:	18
The voter register in the last elections contained:	20,397,798 voters
Electoral Management Body:	The Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC).



## The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Date of last constitutional amendment:	2014
Electoral law:	2012 Elections Law No. 25
Types of elections:	
Parliamentary elections:	It takes place every four years, and the last elections were held in 2013.
Local elections:	It takes place every four years, and the last elections were held in 2013.
The electoral system:	
Parliamentary elections:	A mix of single-non-transferable vote and closed proportional list
Voting age:	18
The voter register in the last elections contained:	2,272,182 voters
Electoral Management Body:	The Independent Elections Commission (IEC)



# Kuwait

Date of Constitution:	1962 Electoral Law No. 35 and amendments
Types of elections:	
National Assembly elections:	It takes place every four years
Electoral Management Body:	Ministry of Interior - General Directorate of Legal Affairs - Electoral Affairs Department.



## Lebanese Republic

### Types of elections:

Presidential elections:	It takes place every six years, and the last elections were held in 2008.
Parliamentary elections:	It takes place every four years, and the last elections were held in 2009.
Local elections:	It takes place every six years, and the last elections were held in 2010.

### The electoral system:

Presidential elections:	President is elected directly by parliament
Parliamentary elections:	Majority system
Local elections:	Majority system
Voting age:	21
Electoral Management Body:	The Ministry of Interior and municipalities- department of political and refugee affairs



## Libya

<b>Date of Constitution:</b>	2011
<b>Date of issuing the electoral law:</b>	- The Constituent Assembly Elections Law issued on 20 July 2013. - The House of Representatives Elections Law issued on 31 March 2014.
<b>Types of elections:</b>	
<b>Parliamentary elections:</b>	Latest elections held in 2014.
<b>Elections of the Constituent Assembly to draft a constitution:</b>	Conducted in 2014.
<b>The electoral system:</b>	
<b>Parliamentary elections:</b>	Single non-transferable vote.
<b>Elections of the Constituent Assembly to draft a constitution:</b>	Simple Majority
<b>Voting age:</b>	18
<b>The voter register in the last elections contained:</b>	1,509,291 voters
<b>Electoral Management Body:</b>	The High National Election Commission (HNEC)



## Islamic Republic of Mauritania

<b>Date of Constitution:</b>	1991
<b>Date of issuing the electoral laws:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Presidential Elections Law in 2012.</li> <li>- The National Assembly Elections Law (Amendments) in 2012.</li> <li>- The Senate Elections Law (Amendment) in 2012.</li> <li>- The Municipal Elections Law (Amendment) in 2012.</li> </ul>
<b>Types of elections:</b>	
<b>Presidential elections:</b>	It takes place every five years, and the last elections were held in 2014.
<b>National Assembly elections:</b>	It takes place every five years, and the last elections were held in 2013.
<b>Senate elections:</b>	It takes place every six years, and the last elections were held in 2009.
<b>Local elections:</b>	It takes place every five years, and the last elections were held in 2013.
<b>The electoral system:</b>	
<b>Presidential elections:</b>	Two-round Absolute Majority
<b>National Assembly elections:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Two-round majoritarian system.</li> <li>- Two-round + block system (two-member constituencies).</li> <li>- Proportional representation system (multiple-member constituencies).</li> </ul>
<b>Senate elections:</b>	Two-round majority system.
<b>Local elections:</b>	Mixed system (Absolute majority + proportional representation system).
<b>Voting age:</b>	18
<b>The voter register in the last elections contained:</b>	1,328,168 voters
<b>Electoral Management Body:</b>	The Independent National Electoral Commission





# Palestine

The date of issuing the electoral laws:	The Local Elections Law in 2005 The General Elections Law in 2007.
<b>Types of elections:</b>	
Presidential elections:	It takes place every four years, and the last elections were held in 2005.
Parliamentary elections:	It takes place every four years, and the last elections were held in 2006.
Local elections:	It takes place every four years, and the last elections were held in 2012.
<b>The electoral system:</b>	
Presidential elections:	Two-round majority system
Parliamentary elections:	Mixed system
Local elections:	Proportional representation system
Voting age:	18
The voter register in the last elections contained:	1,951,799 voters
Electoral Management Body:	The Central Elections Commission



## Qatar

The date of issuing the electoral laws:	The Law on the Organization of the Central Municipal Council of 1998.
Types of elections:	
Central Municipal Council elections:	It takes place every four years, and the last elections were held in 2015.
Constitutional referendum:	Conducted in 2003
The electoral system:	
Voting age:	18
The voter register in the last elections contained	21,735 voters
Electoral Management Body:	Ministry of Interior



## Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The date of issuing the electoral laws:	1977 Law on Municipal and Local Elections
<b>Types of elections:</b>	
Local elections:	It takes place every four years, and the last elections were held in 2015.
<b>The electoral system:</b>	
Local elections:	Majority System (single vote)
Voting age:	18
The voter register in the last elections contained:	1,484,929 voters
Electoral Management Body:	The Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs - General Secretariat for Municipal Councils - General Elections Commission



## Republic of Somalia

<b>Types of elections:</b>	
Presidential elections:	It takes place every four years, and the last elections were held in 2012.
Parliamentary elections:	It takes place every four years, and the last elections were held in 2012.
<b>The electoral system:</b>	
Parliamentary elections:	Clan-based representation system
Presidential elections:	To be determined
Electoral Management Body:	National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC).



## Republic of Sudan

<b>Date of Constitution:</b>	2011
<b>Date of issuing the electoral law:</b>	Electoral Law (Amended) 2015
<b>Types of elections:</b>	
<b>Presidential elections:</b>	It takes place every five years, and the last elections were held in 2015.
<b>The National Assembly elections:</b>	It takes place every five years, and the last elections were held in 2015.
<b>The Council of States elections:</b>	It takes place every five years, and the last elections were held in 2015.
<b>The electoral system:</b>	
<b>Presidential elections:</b>	Two-round Absolute Majority
<b>Parliamentary elections:</b>	Single-member constituencies: Absolute Majority National constituencies: Proportional representation
<b>Voting age:</b>	18
<b>The voter register in the last elections contained:</b>	19,472,245 voters
<b>Electoral Management Body:</b>	The National Elections Commission



## Republic of Tunisia

Date of Constitution:	2014
Date of issuing the electoral law:	Basic Law No. 16 in 2014
<b>Types of elections:</b>	
Presidential elections:	It takes place every five years, and the last elections were held in 2014.
Legislative elections:	It takes place every five years, and the last elections were held in 2014.
Municipal elections:	It takes place every five years
<b>The electoral system:</b>	
Presidential elections:	Two-round majority system
Parliamentary elections:	Closed-list proportional representation system with the largest remainder method.
Local elections:	Draft law has not been adopted yet
Voting age:	18
The voter register in the last elections contained:	5,306,324 voters
Electoral Management Body:	The Independent High Authority for Elections



## United Arab Emirates

Date of issuing the electoral law:	The Federal Supreme Council Resolution No.4 for the year 2006. Presidential Resolution No.3 for the year 2006.
Types of elections:	
National Assembly elections:	Latest elections were held in 2015.
Electoral system:	
National Assembly elections:	Single non-transferable vote.
The voter register in the last elections contained	224,281 voters
Electoral Management Body:	The National Election Commission (NEC)



## Republic of Yemen

<b>Date of Constitution:</b>	2001
<b>Date of issuing the electoral law:</b>	2001 General Elections and Referendum Law
<b>Types of elections:</b>	
<b>Presidential elections:</b>	It takes place every seven years, and the last elections were held in 2012.
<b>Parliamentary elections:</b>	It takes place every six years, and the last elections were held in 2003.
<b>Local elections:</b>	It takes place every four years, and the last elections were held in 2006.
<b>The electoral system:</b>	
<b>Presidential elections:</b>	Two-round absolute majority system
<b>Parliamentary elections:</b>	Majority System
<b>Local elections:</b>	Majority System
<b>Voting age:</b>	18
<b>The voter register in the last elections contained:</b>	10,243,364 voters
<b>Electoral Management Body:</b>	The Supreme Commission for Elections and Referendum (SCER).







## VI. Presentations by Regional and International Organizations

Objectives, programs and activities of different international organizations of either global or regional scope were presented by representatives of the different organizations. The following is a summary of their presentations in the Forum:

### The European Union

The European Union provides electoral support to different countries around the world through two main tracks:

- The first is the Election Observation Missions which help enhance the credibility of electoral processes, thereby strengthening the democratic foundations of government,
- The second is the specific technical assistance provided by the EU.

Election observation is a useful tool in the set of instruments of EU foreign policy when it comes to providing support to the strengthening of the democratic foundation of a country. Election observation can indeed contribute to the strengthening of democratic institutions, help build public confidence in electoral processes and deter fraud, intimidation and violence. Thus, election observation is an important element in the broader picture of the relationship between the EU and a partner country which generally goes well beyond the discussion of political matters, covering also economic, assistance and sectoral relations. Electoral observation can reinforce other EU foreign policy objectives, including conflict resolution.

The EU has become a leading force in international election observation. Since 2000, over 120 EU Election Observation Missions (EU-EOMs) have been deployed to all continents, with the exception of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) region because the EU does not wish to duplicate the very useful work of the OSCE Election Observation Missions. As regards the Arab region, fully-fledged EOMs or more focused EEMs have been deployed to Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Tunisia, West Bank and Gaza (Palestine), Yemen.

In addition to election observation, the European Commission is engaged in electoral assistance, which provides technical or material support to electoral processes. Election assistance may imply professional help to establish a legal framework for elections. It may also take the form of a general input to the

national electoral body, such as providing voting material and equipment, or helping in the registration of political parties and the registration of voters. It may also imply support to NGOs and civil society in areas such as voter and civic education or training of local observers, as well as support to the media monitoring and training of journalists.

The EU is also working with the Arab League in order -to the extent possible- to enhance interaction in the domain of electoral support. It also seeks to foster cooperation on the ground, should EOMs of both organizations be deployed in the same country. Moreover, the EU is keen to explore ways to strengthen bilateral cooperation with countries in the Arab region.

## The African Union

The advent of the African Union (AU) can be described as an event of great magnitude in the institutional evolution of the continent. On 9 Sept. 1999, the Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity issued a Declaration (the Sirte Declaration) calling for the establishment of an African Union, with a view, inter alia, to accelerate the process of integration in the continent and to enable it play its rightful role in the global economy while addressing multifaceted social, economic and political problems compounded as they are by certain negative aspects of globalization.

The main objectives of the OAU were, inter alia, to rid the continent of the remaining vestiges of colonization and apartheid; to promote unity and solidarity among African States; to coordinate and intensify cooperation for development; to safeguard the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States, and to promote international cooperation within the framework of the United Nations. African countries, in their quest for unity, economic and social development under the banner of the OAU, have taken various initiatives and made substantial progress in many areas

which paved the way for the establishment of the AU.

The AU has been working to promote democracy and good governance within the continent by:

- Coordinating and organizing African Union election observer missions to Member States of the Union: The AU participates in all the stages of the electoral process. The pre-election delegation consists of staff from the Political Affairs Department, while observers who are monitoring the polling and counting process are selected from the AU staff in addition to the African Parliament staff and other regional organizations, civil society groups and human rights activists. The mission is headed by one of the leading figures spearheading democratic transition. The African Union Commission has established a roster (database) which fast-tracks the selection of election observers and creates a more transparent, neutral and uniform environment.
- Enhancing the national electoral processes of Member States through the provision of direct technical and electoral assistance to Election Management Bodies in Africa. The AU works with Member States on building the capacity of the official institutions, political parties, civil society, and militants returning to the politics following peace talks.
- The African Union seeks to establish an African Electoral Commission.

The Democracy and Electoral Assistance Unit (DEAU) of the African Union Commission provides the following technical assistance to Member States:

1. Assist in establishing independent electoral management bodies (EMBs) at the national level;
2. Provide the necessary training programs for newly established EMBs;

3. Assist with the establishment of the voter registration database.

## The Organization of Islamic Cooperation

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is the second largest inter-governmental organization after the United Nations, as its membership include 57 countries spreading over four continents. The OIC is considered the collective voice of the Muslim world; ensuring and safeguarding its interests in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among the peoples of the world.

The current Charter of the OIC was adopted by the Eleventh Islamic Summit held in Dakar in March 2008. Article 27 of the Charter urged Member States to strengthen and promote good governance, democracy, human rights, fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law on the national and international levels. In addition, Chapter 8 of the Ten-Year Program of Action of the Organization called for intensified efforts to increase political participation, achieve equality, strengthen civil liberties and social justice, and promote transparency and accountability in the OIC Member States.

Departing from this vision, the OIC General Secretariat started undertaking the task of electoral observation in its Member States which are distributed on four continents. It should be noted that the OIC have only started electoral observation recently, hence it is new in this area compared to other international organizations. The first electoral observation missions of the OIC had only a small number of observers who covered a short duration, which was not sufficient to cover all the stages of the electoral process properly. At the same time, the OIC began its commitment towards capacity building for the aim of strengthening good governance and the rule of law in its Member States.

The OIC cooperates with other international organizations to build partnerships in order to achieve its goals. Training sessions were held to build the capacities of the OIC staff within the framework of partnership between the OIC and international organizations, including the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the UN Electoral Assistance Division, the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the Organization of American States (OAS), and civil society organizations working in the field of elections in a number of Islamic and non-Islamic countries.

The agreement signed between the OIC and the LAS was the culmination of cooperation between the two organizations; in addition, the joint committee holds periodic meetings to promote work in the areas of cooperation, including electoral support. Regular meetings are held between the two electoral affairs bodies of the two organizations to coordinate joint training programs in the field of elections as well as holding joint meetings between the electoral observation missions before and during elections to exchange information, results and final reports.

The General Secretariat of the OIC has recently undertaken a lot of election observation missions in various countries of the Muslim world. The OIC missions are now larger in number and stay for longer durations to be able to cover most of the stages of the electoral process.

## The Arab Parliament

The idea of establishing a body directly representing the will of the Arab people within the LAS goes back to the mid-1950s, as the LAS General Secretariat submitted proposals to amend the League's Charter, which included establishing a new body that takes the form of a popular association. However, the proposal was not endorsed at that time, yet the idea of establishing an Arab parliament remained

present in the deliberations and discussions, and it was included in the reform initiatives of the Arab League structure. Afterwards, the Arab Summit took a decision to establish the Arab Parliament in its 17th Session which was held in Algeria.

On 29 March 2012, the Council of the Arab League issued Decision No. (559) on the Summit Level at its 23rd Regular Session held in Baghdad, endorsing the statute of the Arab Parliament to become "a space for exercising the principles of Shoura, democracy, freedom and human rights," and "a tool for dialogue and decision-making, a popular force for Arab action, and an active partner in the formulation of a common Arab policy that serves the higher interests of the Arab nation and reinforces the principle of expanding the scope of political participation as the basis for democratic development in the Arab states and a means to establish closer ties between the Arab peoples." The Parliament's mandate is established by the statute which mentions that it shall aim at enhancing joint Arab action, achieving economic integration, social solidarity and sustainable development in order to achieve Arab unity.

The Arab Parliament's mandate and interests refer to developing forms for joint Arab action, strengthening its mechanisms, and working to ensure the Arab national security and human rights. Accordingly, the Parliament participated in election observation of 11 electoral events which ranged between referendums, parliamentary or presidential elections in the Comoros Islands, Sudan, Egypt, and Mauritania.

The Arab Parliament's election observation missions were keen to follow the international standards in the performance of their functions through signing memorandums of understanding with the relevant authorities in the countries where the Parliament is observing elections, designing an election observation form, and following the guidelines of the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation. On more than

one occasion, the AP election observation missions were keen to cooperate and coordinate with the LAS missions, most recently in the presidential elections of the Comoros Islands.

Although the Arab Parliament is still taking its first steps in the field of election observation, it is paying a huge attention to this issue in its endeavor to ensure the consolidation of democratic values, promoting human rights, reinforcing voters' confidence in the electoral process, and ensuring the transparency and integrity of elections. Towards this goal, the Arab Parliament took the decision to establish a special unit in the LAS General Secretariat to be mainly concerned with following elections; documenting electoral processes in the Arab countries and following up on recent developments of the electoral management and observation around the world.

### **The Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA)**

The Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa was established as a non-profit organization in June 1996, initially focusing on Southern Africa. EISA extended its geographic outreach to the entire African continent since 2002.

**Vision:** An African continent where democratic governance, human rights and citizen participation are upheld in a peaceful environment.

**Mission:** EISA strives for excellence in the promotion of credible elections, citizen participation and strong political institutions for sustainable democracy in Africa.

**Strategic Goals:** EISA is supported by four strategic goals, namely:

1. Electoral processes are inclusive, transparent, peaceful and well-managed.
2. Citizens, in particular women and excluded groups, participate effectively in the democratic process.

3. Political institutions and processes are democratic and functioning effectively.

4. EISA is a stronger and more influential organization.

The Institute's partners include electoral management bodies, NGOs, political parties, parliaments, donors, relevant governmental departments and community-based organizations. Through innovative and trust-based partnerships in Africa and beyond, EISA engages in mutually beneficial capacity reinforcement activities aimed at enhancing all partners' interventions in the areas of elections, democracy and governance and promoting human rights.

EISA contracts regional, continental and international democracy and governance experts to support its activities. Technical assistance provided by EISA includes expert advice on electoral system reforms; election monitoring and observation; orientation of newly composed EMBs, constructive conflict management; strengthening of parliaments and democratic institutions; capacity building for civil society organisations; and enhancing the institutional capacity of the election management bodies. In addition, the Institute initiated and introduced Election Conflict Management Panels which were used by various Member States.

The Institute contributes to the existing knowledge base on democracy, elections and good governance in Africa through research, publications, policy dialogue, networking, and information resources. It has published over 300 publications, journals, occasional papers, reports and surveys on these topics. Moreover, it has an extensive library, Information, Computer and Technology department, and its website offers comprehensive and updated materials on various aspects of the electoral systems and an African election calendar.

**EISA works on two programmatic areas as follows:**

- Elections and Political Processes:
  - The Electoral and Political Process (EPP)'s primary role is to develop and promote good practices in election management, monitoring and observation with the aim of improving the level of freeness, fairness and credibility of elections.
  - EISA has observed over 120 elections across the continent either deploying its own missions and/or supporting regional bodies working on elections such as the AU.
  - EPP also provides technical support to all the electoral stakeholders as well as support to electoral reform initiatives.
  - It provides consultancy services on balloting mechanisms. It has developed a range of election technologies providing high quality, innovative, comprehensive and efficient support to electoral processes.
- In the area of good governance EISA's work includes the following programmes:
  - Legislative Strengthening: this work includes engagement with and identifying capacity building needs of parliamentarians and facilitation of stakeholder dialogue.
  - Political Party Support: EISA's work with political parties creates a platform for constructive dialogue within and between parties. This intervention cuts across political divides, creating a shared basis for peaceful conflict resolution. More importantly EISA has, together with political parties, formulated a set of benchmarks for best practices for the building and institutionalization of political parties.
  - Supporting the engagement of civil society organizations in the efforts of promoting democratic governance in Africa.

## The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)

Building and strengthening electoral systems and operations and contributing to raise the efficiency of electoral administration are an essential aspect of IFES's work in promoting democracy and good governance. Since its establishment in the US in 1987, IFES has provided technical assistance in the field of electoral administration for over 100 countries around the world through coordination with local and international partners, particularly the UNDP and the UN Electoral Assistance Division in the Department of Political Affairs.

The Foundation's methodology in providing technical assistance depends on the international standards, in particular the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights, both of which reaffirm that the will of the people is the main source of legitimacy for any regime and that citizens have the right in managing the public affairs of their countries by selecting their representatives through free and fair elections. Free and fair elections provide the necessary political legitimacy to elected institutions and enable them to create stability and face the challenges of sustainable development.

IFES's approach in providing electoral assistance is based on full credibility and integrity, respect for the sovereignty of the host country, its laws and its rights to take decisions without any foreign interventions. This approach gave the Foundation the legitimacy and impartiality necessary to support various national elections in the Arab region. The National Unity Elections in Yemen in 1993 were the first elections in the region to receive the Foundation's support. It has currently 6 active programs in the region, namely in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Morocco, Jordan and Syria, and hopes to resume its work in Yemen in the near future. It has also provided support to national governments and

EMBs in Iraq, Palestine and Lebanon in their efforts to conduct legitimate and credible elections in line with internationally recognized standards and has the confidence of all the electoral stakeholders, including competing political parties and voters.

The Foundation believes that there is no single model of democracy. It realizes that elections may not guarantee democracy but there cannot be democracy without credible elections. There is no doubt that electoral and political processes are extremely sensitive and critical matters, especially since its essence is the competition for political power and control over state resources. In such a political context, which is often volatile, IFES seeks to maintain political neutrality and full independence. Thus, its contribution is always based on strengthening the electoral processes through applied research, exchange of information and lessons learned, providing analyses, mobilizing resources to increase confidence in electoral processes and in the final results of elections.

**The main areas of technical assistance provided by IFES around the world are as follows:**

- Supporting the reform of the legal aspects for electoral systems;
- Raising the efficiency of electoral administrators;
- Supporting the infrastructure and technical systems required for managing electoral processes;
- Providing electoral materials;
- Supporting and promoting civic education and raising the awareness of voters;
- Enhancing electoral dispute resolution;
- Building the capacity of domestic observers;
- Strengthening the role of local media in conducting a transparent and credible coverage of elections; and
- Increasing the political participation of women, youth, minorities and people with special needs.

## Association of Arab Electoral Management Bodies (Arab EMBs)

The idea of establishing an entity which brings Arab EMBs under the same umbrella did not emerge from void but rather it was the result of a number of meetings, discussions, and suggestions which took place on the sidelines of international conferences and forums. Arab delegations attending such events were keen to establish an organization which can bring together Arab EMBs and strengthen cooperation between its members with the aim of building networks of communication and cooperation between the different EMBs in accordance with the international principles and standards.

The Arab environment is almost considered a single environment even if it was divided into different countries. This fact has resulted in the realization that electoral practices and different experiences produced effective mechanisms and approaches which would help in overcoming the difficulties and increase the participation of citizens in the electoral process. Thus, one of the most important motives for establishing this association is the need to bring together these practices and the resulting experiences and specialized staff in a structured framework that allows its members to benefit, each according to their needs and functions.

During several preparatory meetings attended by representatives of 8 EMBs, participants agreed on a draft charter for the Association which contains the structure, purposes, mission and the policies pursued to achieve its goals. The Charter emphasized the independence of the EMBs members in the Association and non-interference in their affairs or decisions. It also stressed the strictly technical nature of the Association and its concern with the technicalities required for managing and executing electoral process in an Arab context. The Association shall refrain completely from undertaking any political role or engaging in any programs or projects of a political nature no matter how relevant they are to the electoral process.

The Charter was ratified in June 2015 in Beirut, Lebanon, and since then members took it upon themselves to move on from the level of planning and preparation to the level of implementation and contribution. Thus, the Association was able to accomplish many achievements within the timespan of a year, which indicates that it will have an effective role in promoting joint Arab action on one hand, and it will advance the electoral processes to higher levels in line with international principles and standards on the other hand.

On the international level, the Association received considerable attention by various international and regional organizations working in the field of elections. The UN Secretary-General acknowledged the importance of launching this Association and the positive role it could play in promoting free and fair elections that reflect the aspirations and hopes of the peoples in the region. Various relations of cooperation were established with other regional and international organizations, as partners or supporters. Through such cooperation, the Association seeks to benefit from the expertise of others and exchange experiences with the aim of enhancing the electoral process to be similar to the countries which are advanced in this field.

This Forum attests to the sincere hopes of the League of Arab States which is keen to develop Arab action on different levels, including electoral administration and observation, in an effort to ensure the rights of Arab citizens in a free, fair and inclusive elections that takes into account the particularities of Arab societies.







## VIII. Topics and Discussions

This chapter aims to capture the actual atmosphere of the Forum by providing an analysis of the main topics of interest and issues being raised by participants during the sessions of the Forum. Moreover, on given topic, the participants' contributions were organized around three main axes: questions raised, comments or considerations, challenges identified and suggestions for future improvement. This analysis is based on information originating from three different sources: First, systematic note taking at open floor debates which provided a documentation of the discussions throughout the different sessions; second, evaluation questionnaires filled by the Forum's participants at the closing of the event; and third the additional comments and suggestions informally submitted in writing by a number of participants.

It can be expressed by a practically unanimous view that the Forum offered an exceptional opportunity for exchange of information and experience between and among electoral authorities of the Member States of the Arab League as well as with other international electoral stakeholders. This general topic set aside, when it comes to the saliency or importance of specific topics brought under discussion during the forum, two main indicators are offered. One and most relevant comes from the actual unfolding of floor discussions during the different session. This refers to the extent and intensity in which given topics were discussed at the open floor. The following topics were spontaneously arising longer and more lively floor discussion:

### Topics arising longer and more lively during floor discussions

- Electoral observers
- IT and electronic voting
- Voter registration
- Electoral disputes resolution
- Women's participation and representation
- International cooperation for elections

A second indicator comes from a reflection by participants about the overall unfolding of the Forum. It includes a ranking of topics compiled by the report analysts according to the number of times that a given topic was mentioned by participants as "most interesting" in the evaluation questionnaire when responding to a question, the responses to which are compiled in the table below:

**“What were the most interesting topics discussed during the forum? ”**

Topics discussed during the forum	Number of times a topic was spontaneously mentioned from among 36 respondents to the evaluation questionnaire
International electoral observation	12
The electoral administration (EMB) and its conducting of the electoral operations	6
International cooperation and technical assistance	6
The use of IT in elections (mainly electronic voting, biometric voter registration)	6
The professional Association of Arab EMBs	6
Women's participation and representation	6
Electoral legislation (harmonizing rules and standards for the region)	3
Voter registration	3
Electoral dispute resolution	3
Financing of elections (sustainability)	3
Training of electoral officers	3
Voter education (expanding the culture of elections)	3
Website on elections set up by Arab League	2

## International and regional cooperation in elections

This section summarizes floor discussions during the sessions which addressed the role of the Electoral Affairs Department of the Arab League, the role of the United Nations, in addition to the role of international and regional organizations in the international cooperation for elections.

- The importance of cooperation. A generalized view among forum participant was apparent about the importance of international cooperation between stakeholders from within the Arab world as well as between foreign agencies and Arab stakeholders. The main cooperation instruments singled out are: exchange of information and experience, support to training initiatives, holding of fora and specialized workshops, the production of knowledge products, etc.
- The particular conditions of a given country shall be taken into consideration by international organizations addressing technical assistance and other cooperation relationships. For example, some organizations focus only on training and capacity building but they should

also consider assistance in the procurement of electoral materials which are very important for the success of the electoral process.

### The Electoral Affairs Department of the Arab League

- Role of Arab League at electoral assistance in general. The view was generally held in the sense that electoral technical assistance from the Arab League as a regional authority would be welcome in Arab countries. That more attention should be paid to providing electoral assistance to countries in order to benefit from the experience of the Arab League in this field. The LAS could provide assistance to EMBs in the area of training and capacity building. This type of assistance is equally or even more needed than election observation.
- Support to training by Arab League. Areas specifically identified where training might be more beneficial: electoral staff in general and in particular how they should deal with electoral observers; media on covering elections; and different stakeholders about strengthening women's participation in the electoral process.

- Website on elections. Very frequent suggestions were made about creating a website of the Arab League's Electoral Affairs Department which include all the information related to elections in the Arab region. Such website administered by the Arab League should include, among other items, electoral laws of Arab countries and translated versions of electoral laws from other countries, and electoral calendars of Arab countries. This website would be a reference for accurate information for practitioners, experts and researchers specialized in elections.
- Preparing a roster of Arab electoral experts in order to benefit from their expertise in finding technical and legal solutions which would facilitate the electoral operations.
- Agreeing on a code of conduct for the electoral administration and their staff in the Arab world.

#### The professional Association of Arab EMBs

- Some participants expressed acknowledgement for being informed about this new organization, especially participants from countries other than the eight signatories of the Association's Charter.
- Knowing the association better. Details were given about the independent non-governmental character of the organization, therefore without any political affiliation. The idea of establishing the organization stemmed from some of the Arab EMBs. The UN endorsed the idea and provided start-up financial support. The EMBs are responsible for managing the funding process. There are financial contributions of \$10,000 paid by each member annually in addition to the funds which may be provided by countries.
- The rules of the organization. Like with any other professional association, joining gives members the right to participate in the governing of the Association including participating in changing the Charter and the location of

headquarters for example. The Charter of the organization provides that any of its provisions may be amended upon a decision from the general assembly which is held annually. The headquarters location in Amman, Jordan, was selected through voting by the majority of members.

- Relationship with the League of Arab States. It is a relationship of mutual cooperation. As part of its mandate, the Arab League shall facilitate the development of professional associations of different kinds in the region, therefore it plays a role in supporting associations of electoral officers. The Arab League would reinforce the role of the professional Association of Arab EMBs as a platform for technical cooperation and professional enhancement of electoral administrations in the Arab region. The Forum was considered a method for cooperation between the LAS Electoral Affairs Department and the Arab EMBs Association, and an opportunity for exchanging practical experiences.

#### Electoral observation

Electoral observation proved to be a topic of most interest for participants. The topic came to floor discussion throughout different sessions of the Forum. A summary of the main questions, arguments and suggestions from discussions is offered here:

- Cooperation is needed to reach a common understanding on the role of electoral observers. Exchanging experiences, establishing capacity building programs and training cadres to observe elections through cooperation with the Arab League, Arab Parliament and other Arab organizations.
- A number of countries within the region have already had the experience with electoral observers both domestic and international. For example, reference was made to specific

country experiences with international observer missions like Palestine in 1996 and 2005 in which observers offered recommendations on improving performance; in Kuwait 2013, there were more than 150 media staff from different parts of the world to cover elections, in addition to other human rights and civil society organizations. There were also international observer missions for several elections in Tunisia, Egypt and Iraq. Moreover, national observer groups do actually exist in practically all countries of the regions where elections are held.

- Special consideration was given to the role of League of Arab States in observing elections. The role and procedures of the organization for observing elections was explained in details and specific questions were answered about recruitment and training of observers. A suggestion was made that each Arab electoral administration invites Arab League to observe, monitor or follow elections in its country.
- Composition of external participants in Arab League observation missions. Participants saw that it might be useful to include electoral administrators and experts from the Member States (university professors, parliamentarians, civil servants) in the LAS observation missions instead of being limited to the Secretariat's staff, as is the case with the African Union. This suggestion should be studied well in order to set special criteria to be approved and adopted by Arab countries. It would be very useful to benefit from the experiences of those specialists, particularly since there will be many electoral events in the upcoming period.
- A Roster of observers. Participants suggested building a database or a roster of electoral observers from the different countries in order to facilitate their engagement in the Arab League's observation missions.
- MOU needed? The question was raised of why is it important to sign an MOU if the observing organizations have their own approaches and each country has its own electoral laws. Signing an MOU might raise doubts over neutrality. In responding to this question, it was stated that the MOU is important because it represents a legal framework through which the mission operates and the country ensures the rights and duties of observers.
- Observation mission's final report: How shall the final reports of the Arab League's observation missions be handled? Should they be published? Should they be distributed to the media? The League of Arab States confirmed that sending final reports to Arab electoral administrations is an essential part of its methodology; whereas it offers an initial statement to the media through a press conference in which the mission presents its preliminary observations on the electoral process, a detailed final report is submitted to the official authorities responsible for elections including all the positive and negative observations of the mission in addition to recommendations to improve future elections.
- Concerning the invitation to Arab League, what would be the situation if no invitation was sent? Representatives of the Arab League clarified that its methodology requires that an invitation has to be sent by the country of concern in order to send an observation mission.
- The observation activity by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) as a more recent phenomenon. Representatives of the OIC described the normative framework and actual activities of the organization in observing elections. Since 2011 an election observation unit was established under the political department, which is responsible for all the technical and organizational matters related to observation missions. As a new task for the

organization, the first observation missions were small and short-term, so they could not cover all the phases of the electoral process. Today the OIC's observation missions are large in number and long-term which enables them to observe the different aspects of the electoral process. A draft code of conduct for observers was prepared and a team of experts from the Member States held a meeting to discuss this draft at the end of January 2016. It is scheduled for approval at the next Ministerial Summit which will take place in September 2016.

- The legal framework for electoral observation. Regulation of observation activity is usually included in the electoral law, and with more specificities in codes of conduct and MoU signed by electoral authorities and observation missions. Some participants made a suggestion about considering the possibility of reaching a unified model of legislation regulating electoral observation in Arab countries.
- How countries may benefit from international and domestic election observation missions. Regarding contribution by observers for the improvement of electoral practice, election observation is very important to ensure the integrity of elections. More specifically, technically sound and well-grounded observation reports may contribute to improving the output of the electoral process.

## IT and electronic voting

The topic of the use of new technology for elections first came into floor discussion as a vivid exchange sparking after the presentation on the use of electronic voting in recent parliamentary elections in the United Arab Emirates. It was presented as a success story which excited comments about the challenges involved in the use of this new technology. A summary of the main questions, arguments and suggestions from discussions is offered here:

- Potential values of electronic voting are mainly speed for voting and counting, and the practical elimination of invalid votes due to error in filling the ballot paper. Moreover, electronic voting might have a greater value for out-of-country voting.
- Priority issues. Some participants saw that there are other priorities that should be accounted for before discussing electronic voting including the voting age and women's rights as voters and candidates.
- Challenges of transparency and trust on the use of IT in elections. In this respect, electronic voting might raise some doubts, although the experience of India was mentioned with 550 million voters who cast their ballots through electronic voting and the results of elections are not questioned.
- Ensuring secrecy of the vote. The question was raised with regard to guarantees offered by electronic voting. Information was given by presenter from United Arab Emirates in the sense that there are many international organizations specialized in information security and they work to ensure that election results are accurate. Another participant commented saying that the main guarantee is trust between the citizen and the electoral authorities. Whoever can ensure that ballot papers are accurate, can also ensure that electronic ballots are accurate.
- Different challenges related to the use of IT. Participants referred to several challenges related to civic education, voter information and training of polling staff. This is particularly relevant in countries with high rates of illiteracy as well as countries with a political culture that might not be particularly fond of technological innovation for the issuing and counting of voting. They agreed that such challenges go far beyond the Arab world.

- Suggestion to Arab League to conduct a study on electronic voting and submit it to Member States so that they benefit from it in accordance with their conditions. In this connection, the Arab League could consider requesting the assistance of international experts in conducting a study on this topic.

## Women's participation and representation

A vivid discussion about gender and minority representation was sparked after the question was posed of whether establishing quotas for minorities and women is consistent with the principle of equal representation. A dominant view emerged from among the various opinions expressed in the sense that "temporary special measures" like quotas are necessary for the enhancement of participation and representation of sectors of the population which have been historically marginalized from public life as it is often the case with women and ethnic cultural minorities as well as vulnerable actors like people with disabilities. Participants often described how women quotas are applied in their countries. A summary of the conceptual premises as well as of specific country experience provided is offered here:

### Conceptual premises:

- The question: Does ethnic or gender quotas contribute to the principles of democracy or work against them? Would the issue of quota raise questions over competence?
- Participants held different views on this topic. Some believed that the quota system is one of other temporary special measures that are designed to help certain groups in the society, which have been historically underrepresented, in order to achieve equal representation in the future. Meanwhile, others saw that quotas do not necessarily take into consideration the criteria of competence and equality of opportunity. In the end, participants agreed that every country is free to choose the system that best suits its needs in order to build its own democratic model. At the international level, many countries signed international agreements to ensure its commitment towards temporary special measures for underrepresented groups.
- The size of women quotas. Quotas are used to enhance women's representation. The nature of developments in the society sometimes makes it difficult for women to participate in elections, particularly during periods of security and political instability. Some participants referred to the endorsement of the recommendations issued by the Beijing Conference which encouraged countries to implement a 30% quota for women in parliaments.
- Two types of quota: There are horizontal quotas (by constituencies) and vertical quotas (on the electoral lists), and both can help guarantee women's representation
- People with special needs: Among other vulnerable sectors are people with special needs, particularly amid the violent events in the region which left many people disabled. They also may benefit from temporary special measures to ensure their representation in the institutions of government.
- Historical considerations: Quotas are not only a matter of contemporary electoral politics or in dealing preferably with gender. There are examples of quotas based on territorial and ethnic cultural representation in countries with a democratic system for more than 100 years and still having their representation system based on quotas (e.g. territorially-based legislative chambers like Senates are usually structured on a fixed-quota basis independently of population).

### Some country examples:

- Iraq. Ethnic components being intrinsic in the society, thus in order to ensure that each component of the society is well represented, legislators resorted to the quota system. Still in 2010, women won 12% of the seats without quotas and in some cases they won seats against male candidates (the Electoral Commission of Iraq held 4 elections in 3 years with 65 polling centers and 300.000 polling staff).
- Sudan. In order to cover the educational and representation gap between men and women, 30% of the seats of any legislative body is allocated for women. It is the quota system which ensures an equilibrium between male and female in legislative assemblies.
- UAE. Women represent 50% of the National Election Commission and the president of the Federal National Council is also a female.

### The EMB and the electoral operations

Main issues raised regarding the structure and functioning of the electoral authority revolved around the method of appointment, composition and sustainability of the EMB. A summary of the main comments, questions and suggestions from discussions about voter registration is offered here:

- Appointment method and composition. Specific questions were posed regarding Egypt since draft legislation for the establishment of a new electoral commission was at the time under discussions. Representatives of Egypt explained that a draft law was presented to the Cabinet and it would be submitted to the State Council and the Parliament. The Constitution includes provisions related to the National Electoral Authority which would be responsible for all types of elections. The proposed structure is divided into a board of commissioners and an

executive body. The commissioners will be in number of 10 coming from the different judicial authorities. The appointed commissioners would have at least 6 years before the age of retirement. There is a mid-term renewal for half of the commissioners to ensure sustainability of its work. On its turn, the executive head and his deputies are appointed by the body of commissioners for a term of 4 years, renewable once, and if the end of their term coincided with an electoral event, then they would continue in office for one additional year to ensure sustainability of work.

- Financial challenges are not only about sustainability of a permanent electoral administration, but also of the electoral process. On the one hand, a permanent electoral administration requires a clear budgetary commitment from the side of the government and legislature. On the other hand, for the financing of the electoral process, mainly campaigns, the question was raised on how to monitor the financing of political parties in general? Also is there a maximum limit for campaign spending and how is it monitored? In Tunisia for example, campaign funds are monitored as well as all the spending at least 4 months before elections. There is a maximum limit for campaign spending; it should not be more than 5 times as the government's fund.

- Electoral challenges. Two kinds of challenges were discussed. One challenge has to do with the complexity of the electoral cycle and processes. In Mauritania for example, it was explained that the existence of more than 100 political parties brings by itself a big challenge for the management of elections. This is in addition to legal challenges of drafting laws and regulations for a society where elections constitute a new experience. Hence the need of benefiting from experiences and trainings in this field in other countries.



- Political challenges. There are situations, such as Yemen, where political and constitutional consensus represents a major challenge. This is in spite of the fact that there are experiences in elections in Yemen which should contribute towards advancement in this field.

### Voter registration

On this topic, the thrust of the discussion went about obtaining factual information about the method and procedures of registering the voters and building voter lists in a number of specific countries. These were mainly the cases brought into consideration:

- Who and how is the population census and voter registration conducted in Mauritania? There is a national office for statistics that conducts the population census. The National Elections Commission in 2014 began its work and completed a comprehensive statistics of voters. There were committees composed of members of the National Office for Statistics and the National Elections Commission. Registration was in-person through more than 1000 permanent and mobile registration offices.
- How is the voter registration done in Tunisia? Registration for general elections is done in-person by the voter showing up at registration centers. There are electronic methods for voter registration which were introduced in 2014. It can also be done through the phone using the name and ID number, voters can also change their information electronically. As for local elections, registration is also done in-person.
- A question was asked about the number of voters in Saudi Arabia where municipal council elections were held in December 2015 (previous elections in 2005 and 2011). The 2015 elections were for two-thirds of the council seats in 284 municipalities. For the first time women were registering both as voters and candidates. Voter registration was run on a voluntary basis with 1.48 million people registered, including 131,000 women.
- A uniform system of voter registration for the Arab world? Such was the suggestion by some of the participants.
- Which authority is responsible for registration of political parties? The question was addressed to several countries. In Algeria, the Ministry of Interior reviews the applications and conducts an investigation before granting accreditation to political parties. In Djibouti, the Electoral Commission is responsible for registration of political parties after a decision has been made by the Ministry of Interior, which has the authority



to approve or reject the registration of political parties. In Tunisia, the registration of political parties is done only before the Independent High Authority for Elections.

## Capacity building

This was one of the topics more frequently coming to floor discussions in relation to a variety of broader issues like the structuring and consolidation of an electoral administration or the need for further development of the profession of electoral administrators. A summary of the main comments, questions and suggestions from discussions about voter registration is offered here:

- International technical assistance for national capacity building. There is a rather common view that election administrators and other electoral stockholders from different countries can and should benefit from the international experiences mainly through the production and sharing of documentation in Arabic, support to training activities and reaching out on a broader scope for general education on elections.
- Technical assistance through Arab League. Suggestions were made in favor of developing at Arab League the necessary capacities and resources to provide support and assistance to Arab electoral administrations, including considering the possibility of establishing an election fund for Arab states.
- Knowledge products. The production and sharing of books, journals and other information materials related to elections would contribute towards establishing a reservoir of electoral knowledge in each electoral administration. In this context, the necessity of drafting a manual on the legislative framework for elections in the Arab region was mentioned. Equally useful would be a manual of electoral procedures which would help accumulate experiences and contribute to the conduct of free and fair elections. Along the same line of reasoning, the desirability of establishing an Information Center within the Arab League's Electoral Affairs Department was mentioned.
- Educational instances on elections. The main educational options discussed for enhancing the professional background of electoral administrators and other electoral stakeholders are the following: a) production of university curricula and establishing a training program by the Arab League's Electoral Affairs Department focusing on the study of elections to be adopted by relevant graduate programs in universities of the region; b) supporting the conduct of studies on electoral systems in Arabic by faculty departments; c) establishing a training program by the LAS Electoral Department for training of electoral observers in member states.
- Priority areas for training of electoral officers. Specialized trainings and workshops on elections can be organized under the guidance of the LAS and other regional or international organizations with the aim of building the capacity of electoral staff. Among areas where specialized training is most needed, the functioning of electoral administration and electoral procedures were singled out.
- Reaching out for electoral education. Voter education to be approached as a responsibility of the EMB throughout the different phases of the electoral cycle and not only during electoral events. Hence comes the necessity of adopting a broad approach for spreading the values and proceedings of the electoral process. One option on this is preparing a syllabus for school students on election in general and on voting procedures in particular, and circulate it in order to influence their being adopted by the school system.

## Electoral dispute resolution

Discussion on this topic mainly evolved around questions and answers about how disputes are handled in different countries and which authority is responsible for electoral dispute resolution. Here are some examples:

- **Algeria:** There are cases examined by the Electoral Courts, particularly challenges against the nomination of candidates, while other cases related to the distribution of seats are examined by the Constitutional Council whose decisions are final.
- **Djibouti:** The system is similar to Algeria; it depends on the type of complaint. The law stipulates that the Administrative Court resolves challenges against candidates, while the Constitutional Court deals with the challenges against the final results.
- **Egypt.** Before elections, the Administrative Court is responsible for resolving disputes, while after elections it is the Court of Cassation. Regarding the levels of litigation on electoral disputes, it proceeds through two levels if the challenge was filed before the Administrative Court, but for the Court of Cassation it is only one level.
- **Tunisia.** Litigation is on two levels for all types of electoral disputes. In 2014, a large number of complaints were filed mostly demanding the suspension of certain decisions by the electoral authorities. There were few complaints related to voter registration, while a larger number of complaints was related to nominations. There was a legal debate over electoral lists as the law provided that the entire list should be eliminated in case the nominations were invalid. However, there were demands for partial elimination of the lists because the total elimination was seen as a waste of votes. This debate led to the amendment of the law in order to allow the electoral commission to partially eliminate the lists.

## Overall assessment of the forum

The view was unanimous among participants that the Forum was a positive development initiated by the League of Arab States with the UN's support. And an almost unanimous opinion was formally expressed that this type of forum should be held on a regular basis (such was the opinion in 34 out of 36 evaluation questionnaires submitted).

As an overall assessment of the Forum, the average rating among participants amounted to 4.1 on a 1-5 point scale where 1 reads for "insufficient" and 5 for "excellent" (5 rate was given in 11 evaluation questionnaires, 4 in 19, and 3 in 6 questionnaires). When it comes to the logistical organization of the event, an average rating of 4.3 resulted from the data on a similar scale where 1 reads for "insufficient" and 5 for "excellent" (5 rate was given in 14 evaluation questionnaires, 4 in 18, and 3 in 4 questionnaires).

Most often the idea of the Forum being held on an annual basis under the auspices of the Arab League was expressed. It was commonly shared the idea that every year the Forum should focus on a specific topic to be taken for in-depth discussion. Two or three countries could offer presentations about their experience on that particular matter. Under a given topic, several sub-topical sessions or workshops can be included. In one case it was suggested that the Forum be held each year in a different country. For the Forum initiative to be implemented on a regular basis, it is necessary to ensure sustainability, and therefore participants emphasized that the League of Arab States and other relevant institutions should give consideration to the matter from the very inception of its development.

Moreover, in the view of some participants, discussions could lead to a declaration of principles including the minimum requirements to be met by all electoral authorities.

It was practically a unanimous view that the Forum serves as a mechanism for exchange of experiences and cooperation between Arab EMBS; consequently, there is a need to keep it as a mechanism for enhancing regional integration of electoral stakeholders, including EMBS and international and regional organizations specialized in elections, in addition to reaching a unified vision on certain issue areas of elections.

More specifically, the following suggestions were more frequently made:

- Holding the Forum on a regular basis under auspicious of the Arab League, hopefully annually.
- Making the Forum each year focusing on a specific theme. Sharing with participants the topics of the Forum prior to the event would allow for collecting information and a better preparation. Proposals on specific topics can be made by participants upon due consultation by the Arab League. By this involvement, participants would be contributing to the improvement of focus and development of the Forum's initiative and with this to the improvement of elections and electoral administration.
- Within a given theme, sub-committees or workshops can be set along the Forum to discuss specific sub- topics.
- Always using a professional approach to the selected topic by refraining from contentious topics and focusing instead on the technical substance. Approaching the topics from a professional technical perspective would imply refraining as much as possible from representing the countries in favor of representing the electoral administrations themselves.
- Inviting experts not only from the Arab states but also from other countries. Experts from outside the region with relevant electoral experience (e.g. Mexico and India) to be invited to present

their longer electoral experiences. This will contribute toward enhancing the democratic process in the Arab region.

- Continue inviting regional and international organizations to participate in the Forum.
- Concerning proceedings of the forum, suggestions revolved mainly about time management by observing date and time allocated for each session. Control of discussion should be tight in order to avoid some interventions straying from the topic of the session, particularly comments tackling sensitive or problematic matters. Additionally, more time could be allowed for discussion in each session.
- Agreeing on proposals that contribute to the improvement of electoral administration (for example, on electoral legislation, women's representation, handling electoral results).
- Finally, drafting an extensive report about the Forum which includes all the experiences presented and lessons learned. This would help the follow-up on the outcome of the Forum.



## VIII. Closing Messages

# Address by Ambassador Haifa Abu Ghazaleh

(Assistant Secretary General of the League of Arab States and Head of the Media and Communications Sector)

I would like to convey to you the greetings of H.E. the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States and his appreciation for the great efforts you have exerted throughout the duration of the Forum for Electoral Management Bodies in the Arab States, which concludes its proceedings today at the headquarters of the LAS in cooperation with the United Nations. The Forum represents the first regional initiative of its kind, as it succeeded in bringing together all the electoral stakeholders in the Arab region along with their international and regional partners for the aim of building and strengthening relations of cooperation among them.

The Forum represented an important opportunity for Arab electoral administrations to present their rich electoral experiences, exchange opinions, thoughts and expertise, and deliberate on a number of topics and aspects related to the work of EMBs and the various electoral systems of the Member States. In addition to that, they were able to draw from such experiences the lessons learned, identify the major challenges facing electoral administration, and discuss ways to overcome them.

The distinctive presentations and valuable interventions, offered by representatives of the regional and international organizations participating in the Forum, contributed to the enrichment of discussions as well as provided knowledge on their different roles in the field of elections, which varied between electoral observation and providing electoral assistance and support to the authorities supervising electoral processes in the Arab States.

Given this context, I would like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to all those who contributed to the preparation of this Forum, and I specially thank all those working in the United Nations for their valuable efforts which led to the outstanding success of this Forum.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to the opinion expressed by many participants on the need to agree on a mechanism for the Forum to convene on a regular basis in order to ensure the sustainability of communication and consultation as well as strengthen relations of cooperation in the field of elections. I would like to express my sincere wishes that the Forum and its outputs would form a basis on which we can build future endeavors.



## Address by Dr. Khaled Abdel Shafy (UNDP Director of Regional Hub for Arab States)

I am very proud to be here today, at the end of a historic three-day event that brought together 18 Arab countries to discuss the very important topic of elections.

It is commendable to see Arab EMBs from across the region coming together to share their experiences and lessons learnt, and to find ways to promote the professionalization of the field of elections.

As we've learned from your presentations over the past few days, Arab experiences on elections are diverse and your national contexts vary, but your deliberations over the past three days have also acknowledged the importance of credible and inclusive elections. Similarly, for the UNDP, elections are a cornerstone of our mandate on democratic governance. And within the new development agenda (Agenda 2030) elections sit well within the SDG16, calling for inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels.

We support EMBs around the world, with 67 Member States receiving electoral assistance over the past two years, including many Arab countries. In addition to working with you at the national level, the UNDP also supports you through regional bodies like the League of Arab States, and more recently through the newly-established Organization of Arab Electoral Management Bodies (ArabEMBs).

As you have also noted in your presentations, the challenges facing the region are significant, and include the right of people to take part in government. These rights are proclaimed and guaranteed by many global and regional instruments including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Arab Charter on Human Rights and numerous others.

The task is not easy. With the growing interest and demand from individuals in this region to take part and have a say in how they are governed, you have an important and critical role to play in ensuring that people's voices are heard in a safe and conducive environment.

Of utmost importance is the equal participation of men and women in electoral processes; this is a message that I want to stress to you today at the closing of this event, calling on you to do your part in ensuring that all your citizens have equal access to the different phases of the electoral process.

And that you are aware and can apply the various types of special measures available to electoral bodies to promote the participation of women in elections. [Reference can be made to the recently launched guidebook for EMBs on women in elections]

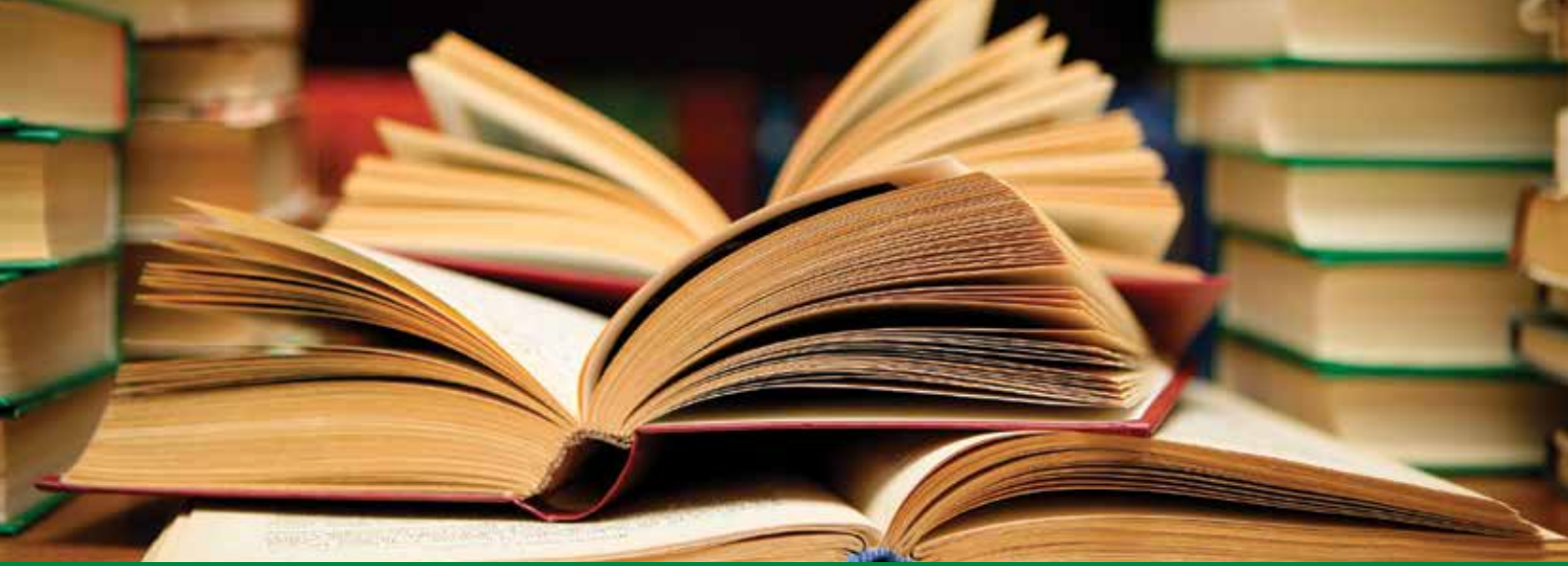
Additionally, with 60% of the Arab population under the age of 25, it is of utmost importance to find ways and strategies to encourage and motivate youth to take part in political and electoral processes. They are the biggest asset of this region, and making sure their voices are heard is critical not only to the stability and development of the region, but to the prevention of violent extremism.

This Forum is, therefore, not only timely, but it also puts into practice the need for sharing and learning from your experiences on elections for the benefit of the entire region. The UNDP has been promoting knowledge and cooperation for years and it is commendable to see this in action today in the Arab states on elections.

The UNDP, and the Regional Hub in Amman, is committed to supporting you as you work towards further strengthening and professionalizing the field of elections. And to supporting the holding of this Forum again in the future.

I congratulate the LAS Electoral Affairs Department and our Regional Electoral Support Project on recognizing the need for this Forum and making it possible. A lot of effort has gone into making those three days a success, with the initial discussions on the vision for such a Forum held nearly two years ago. I also want to recognize the unwavering partnership and support of the EAD throughout our engagement with the LAS; and especially for this event.

In closing and most importantly, let me thank all of you for attending and taking active part in the discussions over the past three days and for your continued commitment to credible and inclusive elections in the Arab States.



## References

A short list is offered below with basic references in Arabic on the topic of electoral administration. The ten references below can be accessed in Arabic, English and French through the following link:

*[http://www.ec-undp-electoralassistance.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=147&Itemid=103&lang=en](http://www.ec-undp-electoralassistance.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=147&Itemid=103&lang=en)*

- UNDP (2015). Electoral Results Management Systems: Catalogue of Options (Beirut, UNDP).
- UNDP (2014). Arabic Lexicon of Electoral Terminology (Cairo: UNDP).
- UNDP (2014). Conference on Reinforcing the Credibility and Acceptance of Electoral Process: The Role of Electoral Stakeholders and Electoral Administration. (Dead Sea Jordan, EC-UNDP).
- UNDP (2013) Thematic Workshop on Sustainability of Electoral Administration: Adequate Resourcing for Credible Elections (Maputo: EC-UNDP).
- UNDP (2012) Principles for independent and sustainable electoral management. International standards for electoral management bodies. Global comparative experience. Forum report (Cairo: UNDP).
- UNDP (2011) Thematic Workshop on ICT and Election Management. Summary Report (Mombasa: EC-UNDP).
- (UNDP 2015). Working Papers on Electoral System and Electoral administration (UNDP: Issue Brief Series). The 13 papers contain summary concepts and examples from countries around the world under the following titles:
  - The electoral systems worldwide: an overview.
  - Boundary delimitation, size of electoral district and representation formula.
  - Voter lists: responsible authority and registration method.
  - Out-of-country voting: modalities and practice.

- Dispute resolution on final results of elections.
  - Voting by the military and police: international experience.
  - The electoral executive: recruitment and appointment of the head of the management body for elections.
  - The sub-national structures of electoral administration.
  - Recruitment methods and training of polling station officers.
  - Relationship between the EMB and political parties.
  - Electoral observers: regulation and practice.
  - Preliminary results: transmission and announcement.
- UNDP (2011). Comparative Experience in Electoral Administration and the Arab World. (UNDP, working paper. Copies in Arabic to be requested from the Regional Electoral Support Project).
  - (UN, 2005). Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers.
  - (GNDEN, 2012). Declaration of Global Principles for Non-Partisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations and Code of Conduct for Non-Partisan Citizen Election Observers and Monitors (initiated by the Global Network of Domestic Election Observers and commemorated at the United Nations).



## عقد ملتقى للإدارات العربية للانتخابات

إن مجلس الجامعة على المستوى الوزاري،

- بعد اطلاعه:

- على مذكرة الأمانة العامة،
- وعلى تقرير الأمين العام عن نشاط الأمانة العامة فيما بين الدورتين،
- وعلى توصية لجنة الشؤون السياسية،

### يقرر

الترحيب بعقد ملتقى موسع حول الانتخابات بالتعاون مع منظمة الأمم المتحدة خلال النصف الأول من عام 2016، تشارك فيه كافة الهيئات والإدارات الانتخابية العربية، والمنظمات الإقليمية والدولية الرائدة في هذا المجال، وذلك لاستعراض أبرز التجارب الانتخابية العربية، واستخلاص الدروس والعبر المستفادة منها، بالإضافة إلى توثيق وتعزيز أواصر التعاون بين كافة الجهات المعنية بمجال الانتخابات في المنطقة العربية.

ق: رقم 7961 - د.ع (144) - ج 2 - (2015/9/13)



ملتقى الإدارات الانتخابية في الدول العربية  
Forum of Electoral Management Bodies in the Arab States

Cairo 9-11 May 2016 القاهرة 9-11 مايو 2016



**DAY 1 (May 9, 2016)**

TIME	TOPIC	Speaker
9.00- 9.30	Registration of Participants	
Opening session		
9.30 - 9.35	Introducing the forum, announcing speakers	General Facilitator: Ms. Hadia Sabry, Director of LAS Electoral Affairs Department
9.35 - 9.50	Welcome Speech, background and objectives of the forum	Amb. Ahmed Benhelli, LAS Deputy Secretary General
9.50- 10.05	Welcome Speech	Mr. Craig Jeness, UN - EAD Director
10.05- 10.35	Keynote Speech	Mr. Rafael Lopez Pintor, UNDP Senior Election Advisor, Arab States
10.35- 11.00	Coffee Break	
Morning Session		
11.00- 11.15	Explaining the proceedings of the forum	General Facilitator: Mr. Ahmed Amin, LAS electoral affairs department - Head of Election observation division
11.15- 11.45	LAS Electoral Affairs Department experience in the election field and presentation of its methodology	Mr. Ahmed Amin, LAS electoral affairs department - Head of Election observation division
11.45- 14.00	- The State of Elections in the Arab World: Country presentations on current developments and future challenges. - Floor Discussion	Jordan UAE Bahrain Moderator: Mr. Alaa Elzuhairy
14.00- 15.15	Group photo and Lunch	
Afternoon session		
15.15- 17.00	- The State of Elections in the Arab World: Country presentations on current developments and future challenges. - Floor Discussion	Tunis Algeria Djibouti Moderator: Ms. Elham Elshegny
17.00- 17.15	Wrap up and Closing of the day	General Facilitator: Mr. Ahmed Amin



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**DAY 2 (May 10, 2016)**

TIME	TOPIC	Speaker
<b>Morning Session</b>		
9.00- 9.15	Proceedings of the day	General Facilitator: Mr. Ahmed Amin
9.15- 9.45	United Nations and Electoral Support to Member States.	Mr. Craig Jenness, UN - EAD Director
9.45- 11.15	- The State of Elections in the Arab World: Country presentations on current developments and future challenges. - Floor Discussion	KSA Sudan Somalia Iraq Moderator: Ms. Hadia sabry
11.15- 11.30	Coffee Break	
11.30- 13.30	- The role of International organizations on electoral cooperation - Floor Discussion	UNDP European Union African Union Organization of Islamic Cooperation Arab Parliament Moderator: IFES Mr. Luis Martinez Betanzos, EISA UNDP regional electoral support project
13:30-14:30	Lunch	
<b>Afternoon Session</b>		
14:30- 16.00	- The State of Elections in the Arab World: Country presentations on current developments and future challenges. - Floor Discussion	Palestine Qatar Comoros Kuwait Moderator: Ms. Elham Elshegny
16.00- 17:00	- The State of Elections in the Arab World: Country presentations on current developments and future challenges. - Floor Discussion	Libya Egypt Moderator: Mr. Alaa Elzuhairy
17.00	Wrap up and closing of the day	General Facilitator: Mr. Ahmed Amin



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**DAY 3 (May 11, 2016)**

TIME	TOPIC	Speaker
<b>Morning Session</b>		
9.00- 9.15	Proceedings of the day	General Facilitator: Mr. Ahmed Amin
9.15- 10.15	The State of Elections in the Arab World: Country presentations on current developments and future challenges. - Floor Discussion	Mauritania Yemen
10.15-11:00	The Arab EMB Organization Floor discussion	Mr. Emad El Sayeh, Head of the Arab EMB Organization
11:00- 11:15	Evaluation questionnaire by participants	General Facilitator: Mr. Ahmed Amin
11:15-11:45	Coffee Break	
<b>Closing Session</b>		
11:45- 12:00	Concluding remarks by UNDP	Mr. Khaled Abdelshafi, Manager of UNDP's Regional Hub for the Arab States in Amman
12:00- 12:30	Closing remarks	H.E. Amb. Haifa Abu Ghazaleh Assistant Secretary General - Head of the Media and
13.00	Lunch at the Ritz Carlton	Communication sector in LAS





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