



AVEOM POST-ELECTION STATEMENT ON THE 2023 TIMOR-LESTE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

23 May 2023

The AVEOM electoral mission wishes to congratulate the people of Timor-Leste, STAE and CNE on a peaceful and successful 2023 parliamentary election process. This election process shows that the East Timorese people continue to embrace and value their democratic institutions.

Summary

- AVEOM registered 43 national and international election observers with the Technical Secretariat for Electoral Administration (STAE) for the parliamentary election. AVEOM teams observed in Aileu, Ainaro, Atauro, Baucau, Bobonaro, Dili, Ermera, Liquica and Manufahi.
- On 21 May, the Timorese went to the polls to elect their government. An overwhelmingly peaceful campaign period was followed by a very well-organised election day.
- Seventeen parties participated.
- On our observation, STAE and CNE (the two bodies responsible for the conduct of the election) delivered a free and fair election process in a very professional way.
- AVEOM observers visited over 40 polling centres. Overall, AVEOM assessed voting and counting processes as good or very good in almost all observed polling stations and described the atmosphere as calm, efficient and orderly. Both preparation for, and conduct of, the election were overwhelmingly in accordance with the rules. The few small problems observed did not affect the outcome of the vote.
- Our observation was that STAE staff were well-trained and executed their duties to a very high standard, and with impressive enthusiasm. At least half of STAE staff were female, often including Polling Centre Presidents and Polling Station Secretaries.
- The presence of multiple *fiskais* (party agents) in each centre contributed to assuring transparency. *Fiskais* from different parties cooperated and worked together toward the common goal of a free and fair election. National observers were also present at many observed polling stations.
- National observer groups deployed countrywide added to the transparency of the electoral process. *Observatorio da Igreja para os Assuntos Sociais* (OIPAS) and RENETIL deployed many observers. AVEOM was the largest independent international observer group and will publish a full report in due course.
- There is no doubt some people present on voting day in Dili were unable to vote because they were registered to vote elsewhere. The proposed 2023 parliamentary reforms to parallel voting procedures were not in place in time for this poll, which is regrettable. AVEOM hopes this will be addressed before the next election as some voters were disenfranchised in this poll.

- While STAE staff consistently brought people with disabilities to the front of the queue and allowed support by companions for voting, physical barriers to the political participation of persons with disabilities remained largely unaddressed. No specific measures to facilitate the vote of people with disabilities were introduced for these elections, for a proposal for the adoption of a braille ballot paper was not passed in the National Parliament. AVEOM observers noted that difficult physical access to polling stations remains a challenge to disabled voters.
- The process of counting at polling centre level was undertaken in compliance with the relevant law and decrees. An increase in the number of polling stations, combined with unreliable internet connections and IT issues complicated the distribution of results to the general public. An opportunity exists for enhanced technical support to ensure timely public access to provisional results by the next election.
- Timely access to official data from CNE would enable greater national and international media coverage of the results, an important element in the democratic process.

This preliminary statement of the Australia East Timor Association/Victoria University and Victoria University Alumni Association Election Observation Mission (AVEOM) is delivered before the entire electoral process is complete. Critical stages remain, including the publication of final results.

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