The 8th Annual Continental Forum of Election Management Bodies concludes in Cotonou

The Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security (DPAPS) of the African Union Commission (AUC), in collaboration with the Association of African Electoral Authorities (AAEA), organized the 8th Annual Continental Forum of Election Management Bodies (EMBs) from 1-2 November 2023 in Cotonou, Benin. The EMBs Forum convened under the overall theme: “Strategic Communication: Building a Sustainable EMBs-Stakeholder Relationship”.

The opening ceremony of the forum was graced by the presence of Maitre Yvon Detchenou, Minister of Justice and Representative of Benin Republic President, who officially opened the forum following welcoming remarks by Dr. Sacca LAFIA, Chairperson, Autonomous National Electoral Commission (CENA), CENA -Benin, Remarks by Mr. Fabio Bargiacchi, Executive Director and Founder, European Centre for Electoral Support, and Statement by Ms. Patience Chiradza, Director Governance and Conflict Prevention, African Union Commission.

The annual continental forum of EMBs is one of the flagship policy platforms of the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) of the AUC aimed at promoting good governance and participatory democracy through fostering peer learning and harnessing lesson-learning in election management on the continent of Africa. Presently, the forum of EMBs is the only electoral policy and practice engagement platform on the continent that convenes EMBs drawn from across AU Member States. In a bid to promote effective and efficient management of peaceful, credible and democratic elections, the annual continental forum of EMBs is part of the Department of PAPS’ overall strategy on electoral assistance to the Member States in line with the mandate bestowed upon the AUC under Article 18 of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG).

This year’s forum, which followed a participatory approach, had 8 sessions with moderated panel presentations followed by plenary discussions. Participants shared continental, regional and national comparative case studies and experiences that were focused on 4 thematic areas:
Experiences and challenges of EMBs in relation to communication with electoral stakeholders and citizens; Developing Strategic Communication: EMB Perspectives, lessons learned and best practices; Avoiding pitfalls in communicating with stakeholders: the dos and the don’ts; and Counting the cost: Exploring opportunities for cost-effect EMBs communication strategies.

The participants to the 8th Annual EMBs Forum were drawn from the AUC Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security, EMBs of the AU Member States and members of the Association of African Electoral Authorities, Regional Economic Communities networks of EMBs, International Organizations involved in electoral assistance, Civil Society Organizations and academia working in the elections field and other key democratic governance actors. The Pro Electoral Integrity project founded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, through ECES, supported the Forum.

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