

Gender

2024 General Election: Women underrepresented in elective positions

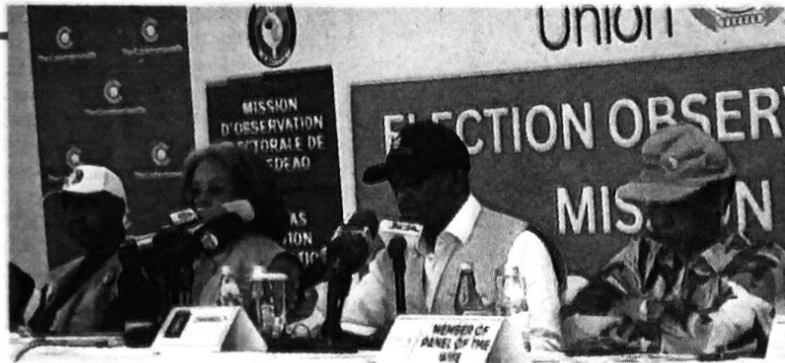
By Daniel Kenu & Augustina Tawiah

THE African Union Election Observation Mission (AUEOM) to Ghana has noted that although the majority of voters in the 2024 general election were women, they were considerably underrepresented in all elective positions.

It noted that with a total number of 9,689,980 registered voters being women, only one female was a candidate out of the 12 presidential candidates, while in the parliamentary ballot, there were 119 female candidates, representing 17 per cent compared to 682 males.

The mission also noted that the youth and persons with disabilities (PWDs) were under-represented as candidates.

The mission made this known in Accra last Monday at a joint media briefing organised by the AUEOM, ECOWAS Election Observation Mission (EOM) and Commonwealth Observer Group (COG) to present their preliminary statements of their observations during the December 7, 2024 general election in Ghana.



• Dr Mokgweetsi Eric Masisi (2nd from right), Head of Commonwealth Election Observation Mission and former president of Botswana, addressing the media

The Head of the AUEOM, who is also the former President of Ethiopia, Sahle-Work Zewde, presented the AUEOM preliminary statement, while the interim statement of COG was read by its head, who is also the former President of Botswana, Dr Mokgweetsi Eric Masisi. That of ECOWAS EOM was read by its head, who is also the former Nigerian Vice President, Mohammed Namadi Sambo.

Commendation

The AUEOM, however, commended the 25 per cent reduction in filing fees

to GH¢75,000 for women and PWDs and the EC's provision of tactile ballots for visually impaired voters.

It recommended to the government and Parliament to strengthen its commitment to gender equality by implementing measures that align with the African Union Agenda 2063 and international benchmarks such as CEDAW.

It further called on them to develop comprehensive campaign finance legislation to regulate political financing, limit the misuse of state resources and ensure a level playing

field.

To the political parties, it urged them to adopt a more inclusive approach through internal capacity building and civic education to nominate and support candidates from underrepresented groups, particularly women, youth and PWDs.

It called on them to also put in place measures to ensure the effective participation of youth who constituted most of the registered voters to encourage them to exercise their right to vote and select leaders of their choice.

On its part, COG said it observed the participation of female and male voters, as well as polling officials although most presiding officers were predominantly male.

It said it also observed that voting booths were too high for some voters on wheelchairs, suggesting that adjustable voting booths would have been helpful in that regard.

"More needs to be done to ensure that PWDs exercise their franchise with dignity and in accordance with the law," it said.

The ECOWAS EOM report also recognised the arrangements made by EC for PWDs and the visually impaired to enable their independent voting contributed to the inclusivity of the process.

Other areas captured in the reports of the three observer groups were commending Ghanaians for turning out in an orderly manner to vote and commending the Vice-President, Dr Mahamadu Bawumia for conceding defeat before the EC declared results.