



THE 2026 ACCRA COMMUNIQUE ON ELECTORAL INTEGRITY AND DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY IN AFRICA

Accra, Ghana
23-24 September, 2026

Preamble

WE, the participants of the **third Electoral Integrity in Africa Summit**, convened in Accra, Ghana, from 23rd to 24th September 2026 under the theme “**Money, Technology & Civic Rights: Defending Electoral Integrity in Africa**”,

Affirm that electoral integrity extends beyond pre-polling, polling and the declaration of results. It encompasses the political, legal, institutional, financial, social and digital conditions under which citizens exercise democratic rights; political actors compete; election institutions operate independently; information circulates freely and reliably; and citizens observers independently assess the inclusiveness and quality of elections without undue restriction.

Reaffirm the role of citizen election observers as Human Rights Defenders, and citizen election observation as a legitimate expression of democratic participation, and a vital source of independent information and transparency across the electoral cycle.

Recall the [Lusaka Communiqué](#) adopted at the Second Electoral Integrity in Africa Summit (Lusaka, November 2025) and the [Accra Declaration](#) adopted at the High-Level Regional Convening on the Financialisation of Politics in Africa (Accra, July 2026), on which this Communiqué builds.

Note with concern the rapidly deteriorating environment for citizen observer networks, civil society organisations and media in several African countries, including Uganda, Tanzania, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, Guinea-Bissau and recently in Zambia. Reported challenges include restrictions on civic space, administrative barriers to citizen observation, denial or delayed accreditation, suspension of civil society organisations, judicial harassment, arbitrary arrests, intimidation and other measures that undermine independent monitoring and reporting on electoral processes.

Recognise that accountability must remain central to electoral integrity. Democratic commitments, electoral standards and observation recommendations have limited value if they are not translated into concrete reforms, followed up systematically and enforced through independent institutions.

Further note that artificial intelligence and digital technologies are rapidly reshaping elections and democratic participation. These technologies create opportunities to improve electoral administration, civic engagement and access to information, but also introduce risks through disinformation, deepfakes, algorithmic manipulation, cyber threats, surveillance, data misuse, opaque automated systems and other forms of digital interference.

Welcome the democratic resilience demonstrated in several African countries, including Malawi, Ghana, Senegal, Botswana, Namibia and Cabo Verde, through peaceful elections or transfers of power, civic engagement, dialogue and functioning electoral institutions. These experiences provide useful lessons for strengthening democratic practice across the continent

Recognise the valuable experiences and evidence shared by citizen observer networks and other stakeholders, and the important role of the African Union, Regional Economic Communities and other regional bodies in promoting democratic dialogue, conflict prevention and the protection of democratic norms.

Commemorate the 40th anniversary of the entry into force of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the 20th anniversary of the African Youth Charter, reaffirming the importance of these instruments in protecting civic freedoms, advancing participation and strengthening the rights of young people across Africa.

Guided by the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG), the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (AU CPPC), relevant AU and regional instruments, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Declaration of Global Principles for Non-Partisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations and other applicable standards, make the following observations, call to action and commitments.

1. Recent and upcoming electoral processes

The 2025–2026 electoral cycle offered important lessons on electoral integrity across Africa.

The Summit commends **positive practices**, including the peaceful and orderly conduct of the 2026 legislative elections in Cabo Verde and Malawi's peaceful 2025 tripartite elections, supported by electoral reforms, civic engagement and dialogue.

At the same time, the Summit notes **concerns emerging from recent elections**, including in Zambia, Guinea-Bissau, Tanzania, and Uganda relating to blatant violations of civic and political freedoms, weaponisation of security agencies and judicial systems to harass civil society and political opponents, violence and intimidation, results manipulation, misinformation and disinformation and the disturbing accounts of deaths recorded particularly in the electoral violence in Tanzania. The Summit highlights two disturbing cases. The continued prosecution and judicial harassment of Dr. Sarah Bireete, Chair of the Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM) and the East and Horn of Africa Election Observers Network (E-HORN), on trumped-up data-privacy charges linked to the 2026 elections, coupled with the continued [suspension of democracy and human rights organizations in Uganda](#). The other case relates to the continuous harassment of the National Election Watch, Sierra Leone's largest and most respected citizen observation group, using judicial and other legal processes following the 2023 elections for simply discharging their duty with professionalism and integrity.

We are sounding the alarm on the rapidly deteriorating environment for protecting electoral integrity in Africa since the post-COVID-19 era, and on the need to learn from the shortcomings of these electoral processes. and of ensuring that commitments to democratic and electoral standards translate into practice throughout the electoral cycle.

With elections still to be held in 2026, including in The Gambia and Cabo Verde, and elections approaching in 2027, including in Nigeria and Kenya, the Summit calls on electoral stakeholders in these countries to draw on lessons from recent elections, identify and address potential risks early, and take measures to ensure that electoral processes protect civic space, promote inclusive participation, uphold fundamental rights, and deliver credible, transparent and accountable outcomes.

2. Civic space and election observation

Civic space is the foundation of any democratic society, providing the legal, political and physical environment that citizens, media and civil society organisations (CSOs) need to participate in governance and hold power to account, and non-partisan citizen election observation sits within it as a cornerstone of accountability that builds public trust and deters electoral fraud. Across Africa, both are contracting: state authorities weaponise regulatory frameworks, misusing Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) laws, foreign influence statutes and restrictive assembly laws to suspend CSOs, freeze bank accounts and cut off independent funding, while observers and human rights defenders face judicial harassment, arbitrary arrests, accreditation delays, etc.

We express particular concern about arbitrary and extrajudicial arrests, enforced disappearances, abductions, intimidation and other forms of retaliation against citizen observers, human rights defenders, journalists and other civic actors, including members of observer networks who face personal risks in carrying out legitimate democratic work.

Digital civic space faces internet blackouts, network throttling and surveillance during electoral periods, and in closed spaces authoritarian regimes deploy “government-organised fake/gong observer” groups that mirror official Election Management Bodies (EMBs) figures to mask irregularities, while genuine observation is too often confined to polling day rather than the full electoral cycle. Defending both requires declaring citizen observation an inviolable human right, insulating CSOs from executive overreach, rejecting election boycotts in closed spaces, deploying rigorous methodologies such as Process and Results Verification for Transparency (PRVT), building cross-border solidarity networks such as ROCiDAC in Central Africa, demanding free and predictable accreditation, and tracking post-election recommendations year-round.

Citizen observation should extend across the full electoral cycle, including voter registration, candidate nomination, campaigns, political finance, media and information environments, voting, counting, results management and the implementation of post-election recommendations.

3. Money, power and the financing of politics

The exponential rise of unregulated money in African politics represents a threat to democratic consolidation. Elections across the continent are increasingly commercialised, and public office treated as an asset to be bought and then recouped. Political actors invest heavily to win office and then use state instruments to recover that capital and hold on to power. Exorbitant candidate nomination fees, opaque party primaries, illicit financial flows, unregulated digital campaign advertising, pervasive vote-buying, and the systemic abuse of state incumbency distort public choice and exclude non-monetised actors, particularly youth and women. The familiar ‘triangle of compromise’ used to manipulate elections (complicit EMBs, subverted security agencies, and captured legislatures) has expanded into a ‘quadrant’ that incorporates captured judicial systems. Combating this financialization requires rigorous campaign finance transparency, enforceable expenditure caps, and the enforcement of continental anti-corruption instruments.

The Summit recognises that political parties and candidates have a central responsibility to promote transparent, accountable and lawful political financing throughout the electoral cycle. We therefore call for stronger political finance transparency, enforceable expenditure limits, disclosure of political contributions and expenditure, effective oversight of digital campaign financing, monitoring of the use of state resources, and enforcement of continental and national anti-corruption standards.

4. Artificial intelligence, digital technology and information integrity

Digital technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) present a complex, dual-edged reality for electoral integrity in Africa. On one hand, modern technologies such as biometric voter registration (BVR), electronic voter verification, digital results transmission systems, and civic tech platforms have enhanced administrative efficiency, expanded public access, and enabled real-time citizen verification. On the other hand, the rapid proliferation of generative AI, deepfakes, synthetic media, algorithmic bias, and coordinated online disinformation campaigns poses grave threats to information integrity. Authoritarian actors and political operatives weaponise digital platforms to manipulate public narratives, polarize electorates, and undermine public trust faster than fact-checkers and regulatory frameworks can respond.

Furthermore, automated systems and biometric equipment often suffer technical failures that disrupt voter registration and voting, creating public suspicion. Safeguarding electoral integrity in the digital age demands transparent technology procurement, independent technical audits, algorithmic accountability, platform responsibility, and multi-stakeholder ‘digital integrity rooms.’

4. Youth and other interest groups

Despite making up the vast majority of Africa's population, young people, women, persons with disabilities (PWDs), and marginalised communities remain structurally excluded from formal political power. Youth are frequently relegated to passive voters, campaign hand-out recipients, or mobilized as 'political cadets' during election cycles, while facing prohibitive presidential candidate age thresholds (e.g., a minimum age of 35), exorbitant nomination fees, and entrenched patronage networks that block elective contestation.

Women and PWDs encounter severe societal, financial, and physical barriers, including inaccessible polling infrastructure and patriarchal party structures. Achieving true democratic resilience requires shifting marginalised groups from passive democratic beneficiaries to active co-creators of policy, political leaders, and election observers. Structural reforms must dismantle institutional age and fee barriers, enforce voluntary and statutory candidate quotas, mandate accessible electoral infrastructure, and integrate youth directly into formal citizen observation networks.

5. Continental norms, regional solidarity and collective action

While Africa possesses a substantial body of democratic, human rights, and electoral norms, anchored by the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) and RECs protocols, a profound implementation gap persists due to weak enforcement, limited institutional capacity, political commitment deficits, executive overreach, and captured judiciaries. Widespread democratic regression across the continent, manifested in the manipulation of constitutional term limits, the weakening of accountability institutions, unconstitutional changes of government, and prolonged political transitions, underscores the complex environment in which independent EMBs, judicial dispute mechanisms, political finance regulations, and civic spaces operate. Continental norms, regional solidarity, and collective action serve as the vital framework for bridging this divide by linking high-level African Union (AU) and RECs mechanisms directly with grassroots civil society across the entire electoral cycle.

Within this framework, regional alignment encompasses the consistent application of normative instruments, the systematic tracking of election observation recommendations through prioritised timelines and measurable indicators, and structured cooperation between EMB associations (such as the Association of African Election Authorities (AAEA) and ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commissions (ECONEC) and regional observer networks, including the West African Election Observers Network (WAEON), the Electoral Support Network for Southern Africa (ESN-SA), the East and Horn of Africa Election Observers Network (E-HORN), and the newly launched Network of Civil Society Organisations for the Consolidation of Democracy in Central Africa (ROCiDAC)>

Through peer learning, joint research, election technology expertise, rapid solidarity, and robust protection protocols, regional solidarity shields isolated watchdogs, counters electoral manipulation, and safeguards the sovereign right of African citizens to participate freely in shaping their democratic future.

The Summit stresses that norms must be matched by implementation and accountability. Election observation recommendations should not remain recurrent findings across successive electoral cycles. They should be tracked through clear timelines, measurable indicators and transparent follow-up mechanisms.

6. Strengthening democratic dialogue

The decline and unpredictability of international funding threaten the sustainability and independence of civic actors. We encourage increased African philanthropy, regional solidarity funds, diaspora engagement, responsible private-sector partnerships, social investment, diversified institutional fundraising, technology-enabled cost efficiencies and long-term partnerships rather than short-term project financing. Alternative financing must preserve the independence, non-partisanship and public-interest character of civil society and citizen observation. Development partners should provide flexible, predictable and locally responsive support that advances African ownership.

Sustainable and independent civic engagement requires resilient institutions, the Summit encourages observer networks and civil society organisations to diversify their resource base by exploring sustainable domestic and regional mechanisms, including African philanthropic funds, diaspora funds, responsible private-sector support, pooled solidarity funds and other locally generated resources. Such efforts should be guided by transparency and accountability and structured to safeguard the independence, credibility and non-partisan character of civic organisations.

7. Call to action

Based on the foregoing, we call upon:

1. The AU, its organs and RECs to provide continental leadership on civic space, citizen observation, political finance, digital rights and inclusive participation, informed by credible independent evidence. In particular, we call on the AU and its organs to monitor restrictions on citizen election observation; include the protection of civic space and observation conditions in election assessments; facilitate dialogue between electoral management bodies and observer networks; promote common standards for accreditation and protection; and respond, within their mandates, where restrictions undermine democratic and human-rights standards. Particularly, we urgently call on the AU, ECOWAS, EAC and SADC to act decisively and stop the abuse and impunity targeted at citizen observers and organisations like Dr. Sarah Bireete and National Election Watch. Also to hold the governments of Zambia, Tanzania, Guinea Bissau and Uganda to their obligations under African Charter on Democracy, Good Governance and Elections and other regional norms.
2. The AU and RECs should strengthen regional electoral assistance, observation, peer learning, civic-space protection and follow-up mechanisms within their mandates, and, in consultation with the AU Advisory Group on AI, accelerate the finalisation of guidelines on the use of generative AI in elections.
3. RECs must apply regional democratic protocols consistently without double standards, establish harmonised EMB performance benchmarks, integrate civic space and campaign finance indicators into election assessment frameworks, and provide formal diplomatic and technical support to regional observer networks such as ROCiDAC.
4. National governments to protect civic freedoms, enable non-partisan observation, improve political finance transparency, uphold rights and promote inclusive participation. Governments should also protect accredited observers from intimidation, harassment, arbitrary arrest, surveillance and retaliation, and recognise and protect the legal status, independence and legitimate role of non-partisan citizen observers as democratic actors and human rights defenders.
5. EMBs should maintain independence, transparency and professionalism; ensure predictable accreditation; engage domestic observers constructively; and strengthen public accountability. EMBs should establish accreditation procedures that are transparent, objective, timely, proportionate, affordable and non-discriminatory, with clear requirements and review or appeal mechanisms.

6. The Political Parties and Candidates to uphold democratic competition, transparent financing, peaceful participation and citizens' rights throughout the electoral cycle.
7. The Civil Society and Observer Groups to maintain independence and professional standards while strengthening cooperation, protection, digital resilience and evidence-based advocacy.
8. Anti-Corruption and Financial Oversight Bodies (FIUs, Tax Authorities, Anti-Graft Agencies) must enforce compliance with UNCAC Resolution 11/7, track digital political ad spending and illicit financial flows in elections, and establish cross-border financial intelligence-sharing networks to detect dirty money in political campaigns.
9. The Judiciary and Constitutional Courts should maintain institutional independence when adjudicating electoral petitions, resist executive pressure to issue arbitrary injunctions against CSOs, enforce legal timelines to resolve election disputes prior to executive inaugurations, and uphold constitutional term limits as inviolable democratic boundaries.
10. The Media and Technology Actors to advance information integrity, responsible innovation, privacy, rights protection and constructive engagement with electoral stakeholders.
11. The Development Partners to provide sustainable, flexible and locally led support while reinforcing African ownership of democratic processes.
12. The Citizens of Africa to exercise democratic rights peacefully, participate in public affairs, demand accountability and help protect electoral integrity.
13. The Private Sector and Philanthropy to support African democracy initiatives through transparent, independence-respecting partnerships, and to refrain from illicit or undisclosed political financing.

Our collective commitment

We, the participants of the Third Electoral Integrity in Africa Summit, commit, within our respective mandates, values and capacities, to:

1. Defend civic space, democratic participation and the independence of citizen election observers;
2. Promote the application of the Good Practices for Accreditation of Non-Partisan Citizen Election Observers in Africa;
3. Promote transparent, accountable and enforceable political finance systems and support implementation of UNCAC Resolution 11/7; the African Model Law on Political Finance Transparency and the AU Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption;
4. Advance approaches to electoral integrity and the responsible rights-respecting use of AI and technologies that are grounded in African experiences and perspectives and aligned with established international norms;
5. Protect freedom of expression, access to information and information integrity;
6. Advance meaningful participation of young people, women, persons with disabilities and other underrepresented groups;
7. Strengthen solidarity, professional observation methodologies and standards, protection and cooperation among African observer networks;
8. Support evidence-based post-election reform follow-up and measurable implementation;
9. Promote sustainable and diversified financing for democracy-support initiatives; and
10. Place the rights, dignity, agency and democratic participation of African citizens at the centre of electoral governance.

Conclusion

The Third Electoral Integrity in Africa Summit convenes at a critical moment for African democracy. Electoral integrity is shaped not only at polling stations, but also by political finance, civic space, unequal participation, digital manipulation, artificial intelligence, information disorder, cybersecurity and the sustainability of accountability initiatives.

Africa nevertheless possesses important democratic assets: active citizens, expanding observer networks, continental and regional institutions, independent media, civic innovators, youth movements, reform-minded institutions and growing African knowledge. Our task is to strengthen the democratic ecosystem in which elections take place.

We reaffirm that electoral integrity is ultimately about protecting the agency, dignity and voice of African citizens. We commit to moving from diagnosis to implementation, from commitments to measurable action, and from fragmented interventions to stronger African-led solidarity and solutions.

We express our appreciation to the Government and people of the Republic of Ghana for their hospitality; to WAEON and the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) for hosting the Summit; to the African Election Observers Network (AfEONet) for convening it; and to all partners whose support made the Summit possible.

Adopted in Accra, Republic of Ghana, on 24 September 2026.

Participants of the Third Electoral Integrity in Africa Summit



This publication was co-funded by the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the African Election Observers Network (AfEONet) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.