



**EASTERN AFRICA STANDBY FORCE (EASF)  
SHORT TERM ELECTION OBSERVER MISSION (SEOM)**

**FOR THE ELECTIONS OF 15<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY, 2026  
IN THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA**

**PRELIMINARY STATEMENT  
DELIVERED BY THE HEAD OF MISSION  
AMB. DIEUDONNÉ NDABARUSHIMANA  
AT THE PROTEA BY MARRIOTT SKYZ HOTEL**

**KAMPALA, UGANDA**

**17<sup>th</sup> JANUARY, 2026**

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## **BACKGROUND**

1. At the invitation of the Government of the Republic of Uganda, the Council of Ministers of Defense and Security of the Eastern Africa Standby Force (EASF), in accordance with EASF Guidelines on Election Observation approved the deployment of an EASF Short-Term Election Observer Mission (EASF-SEOM), to observe the conduct of the General Elections. Specifically, EASF-SEOM focused on observing the Presidential Elections that were held on 15<sup>th</sup> January, 2026 in the Republic of Uganda.
  
2. The EASF Election Observer Mission was deployed in accordance with the African Union (AU) Charter on Elections, Democracy and Governance and the International Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, with the authority of the Chairperson of the EASF Council of Ministers of Defence and Security.

## **OBJECTIVES OF EASF-SEOM MISSION**

3. The objectives of the EASF-SEOM were:
  - a. To enhance public confidence in the electoral process.
  - b. To promote the fundamental freedom and political right of the local population in Uganda.
  - c. To conduct an objective assessment of the polling process.
  - d. To support the democratic process of the Republic of Uganda.
  - e. To observe any situation that may lead to a political crisis that may emerge after the election.
  - f. To uphold EASF's mandate in the promotion of peace and security

## **INTRODUCTION**

4. The Mission was led by Amb. Dieudonné Ndabarushimana, from the Republic of Burundi, as Head of Mission (HoM). He was assisted by Rt Hon Bernard Makuza, Chairperson of the EASF Panel of Elders from the Republic of Rwanda who acted as a Special Advisor to the HoM and by Mr. Souef Kamalidini from EASF Executive Staff as Deputy Head of Mission (DHoM). The Mission comprised 19 Short-Term Observers drawn

from EASF Member States, including Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia and Sudan, as well as accompanying EASF Staff.

5. The EASF SEOM was deployed from 10<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> January, 2026. Observers were deployed in 9 Field Teams. One team was manning the Mission Coordination Centre (MCC). The Field Team observed the polling process in 113 polling stations. The Field Teams were deployed to all regions of the country covering Kampala Central and Peripheral areas, Wakiso District, Jinja Municipality, Entebbe Municipality, Mbale City, Gulu City, Fort Portal City, Mbarara City and Lira.

6. The Mission Leadership participated in Local and International Observer Briefings with Heads of Missions at the regional and continental level, met with the Uganda Electoral Commission, media and CSOs. The objective was to have a fair and objective understanding of the Electoral Process and the Political Context.

## **KEY FINDINGS**

7. This Preliminary Statement gives an overview on the assessment of the Elections, and provides details of its observation. The Statement is based on objective and independent assessment of the electoral process, specifically at the end of the campaign and electoral period and on the actual Election Day and refers to the national legal framework on electoral matters. This includes the last days of the campaigns and the management of Election Day operations, including the counting process.

8. The key findings by the EASF-SEOM are as follows:

a. **Campaigns:** The campaigns were conducted in a largely peaceful environment with sporadic cases of violence. Most candidates conducted mobile campaigns that did not have large crowds of people. The campaigns were mainly done in local dialect. The Teams observed use of state resources in some cases which is contrary to the law. The presence of security personnel was also witnessed.

b. **Security:** Voting was largely peaceful in all Polling Stations observed despite some anxiety that was noted in a few Voters, especially those who reported early to cast their Votes but were unable to due to delays in the commencement of the voting process. In addition, there was a clear and heavy

presence of Security agents across all Polling Stations observed.

c. **Time:** Most Polling Stations observed opened late, mostly due to late delivery of election materials in some polling stations, Elections Officials failed to report on time hence affecting the preparations of their Stations.

In most of the polling stations observed, the Biometric Voter Verification Kits (BVVK) failed to work occasioning the late commencement of the Voting process which was long after the stipulated time of 7 a.m. The presiding officers were unable to log in to the BVVK kit as the system could not verify their credentials at the polling stations. The polling stations were opened at averagely 10.00 a.m. In order to mitigate the situation, the Uganda Electoral Commission issued a directive for Polling Stations to use the Manual Voter Register for purposes of Voter verification prior to casting of ballots.

d. **Communication:** The Nation-wide Internet blackout which started on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2026 at 6.00 p.m., negatively impacted the work of the Observers since information could not be shared in a timely manner between different Teams deployed in the different areas and the Mission Coordination Center (MCC).

e. **Voter turnout:** Low voter turnout was observed in most polling stations that may have been occasioned by the late opening of the polling stations.

f. **Media:** There was little to no visible presence of the Media including live media coverage in most Polling Stations that our mission observed.

g. **Local Observers:** Our mission encountered very few local observers in the polling stations that they visited. This brings into question the process of registration of domestic observers.

h. **Training of Polling Staff:** In general, a significant lack of harmonization of processes in the polling station was observed, which pointed out the lack of proper training of the polling staff. In certain instances, we observed the presiding officers handling the voter register while issuing ballot papers at the same time leaving other polling staff with no work to perform. We also observed voters being inked on different fingers which differed to the set guideline which indicated that fingers are to be inked on the voter's cuticle of the right-hand thumb.

i. **Closing:** Due to the late opening of the polling stations, closing was extended by one hour from 4.00 p.m. to 5.00 p.m. However, this communication came very late and some polling stations were unaware of this directive and even questioned the veracity of the information.

j. **Counting:** The Observer Teams indicated that the Vote counting process in most areas were conducted smoothly and in accordance with the Law. In a few polling stations the 20-meter rule that ensured the public did not overwhelm the polling station was not observed.

k. **Gender balance:** In the 113 Polling stations observed, 56% of the polling officials were female.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

9. The EASF-SEOM recommends the following:

- a. Urge all stakeholders to take note of the objectives and findings to improve future electoral processes in Uganda;
- b. Encourages continuous civic education in support of efforts already in place.
- c. Urge restraint to all stakeholders and further encourage adherence to the constitution and laws of the land in case of contestation.

## **CONCLUSION**

10. In conclusion, based on its observations and findings, the EASF-SEOM concluded that the electoral process took place in an overall orderly and calm manner.

11. This preliminary Statement will be followed by the Final Report which will be released within 90 days to the Republic of Uganda and shall be available on the EASF website.

End of Statement.