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GPECS II
Global Project
for Electoral Cycle Support II

REGIONAL COMPONENT

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Global Project for Electoral Cycle Support:
Africa

Africa has made great strides in recent years in building democracy, enhancing the rule of law, consolidating good governance, improving human security and promoting and protecting human rights. Since the early 1990s, a majority of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have undergone momentous transitions from one-party, military or autocratic rule to multiparty democratic systems based on majority rule and popular participation. At the very heart of these democratic transitions has been the holding of periodic, multiparty elections. Elections in Africa, like elsewhere in the world, have become a powerful tool for democracy, accountability and, ultimately, human security. Numerous countries have managed to go through three or more consecutive electoral cycles and have introduced democratic elections not only as a mean to determine national, but also local and regional representation. UNDP supported many of the initial elections that ushered in democratically elected governments in African countries, and thereafter increasingly supported second and third generation elections. Such support has covered multiple phases of the electoral cycle and targeted many key players in the field of elections, including EMBs, the media, political parties, the judiciary, and civil society, including youth and women's organizations.

Despite this great progress, there remain many difficult challenges to free and fair elections in Africa. Some of the problems often highlighted include political intolerance, lack of inclusiveness, inadequacies of electoral management bodies and post-electoral violence. Hence, in several Sub-Saharan countries, democratic processes remain fragile.

In order to foster the advancement of stability, peace, democratic values and sustainable human development in Africa, UNDP will continue, through its main electoral assistance tool 'Global Project for Electoral Cycle Support' (GPECS II), to strengthen national and regional electoral stakeholders.

In line with the UNDP Regional Programme for Africa (2014-2017), the three priority areas for GPECS II in Sub-Saharan Africa are:

a. Strengthening the capacity and south-south cooperation of regional electoral bodies;
b. Enhancing inclusive electoral processes in Africa;
c. Support to the Sahel region

Regarding the strengthening of the capacity and south-south cooperation of regional electoral bodies, UNDP will closely cooperate with the African Union, the Pan-African Parliament and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), including EAC, ECCAS, ECOWAS, IGAD and SADC as well as the African Association of Electoral Authorities (AAEA),

towards strengthening their capacity to promote democratic elections on the continent. GPECS II aims at building the capacities of these institutions, as well as supporting their inter-linkage, in regard to the development of norms and standards of elections and domestic observation. Furthermore, GPECS II provides technical assistance and advisory services for conflict and risk assessments, electoral dispute resolution (EDR) and early warning mechanisms.

A key priority for promoting inclusive electoral processes in Africa is to enhance women's voice and participation. Phase II aims to ensure women's meaningful participation in political and electoral processes and their ability to fully engage in public life. Some African countries, such as Rwanda, have achieved remarkable success in this regard, while other countries still struggle to facilitate equal participation. Overall, the percentage of women MPs increased by 12.45 per cent over the last decade. In order to sustain the achieved success and assist the countries that have not yet reached the international benchmark of 30 per cent female parliamentarians, appropriate programmatic activities will be implemented in close partnership and coordination with other strategic actors in the field of gender politics, in particular UN Women. With the aim of sustaining and increasing the number of women in elected political/appointed leadership positions, regional and national CSOs as well as think tanks will be supported on a cross-region basis, to monitor and report on the proportion of women in elected positions.

A further priority is support to an independent, free and vibrant media landscape. Recognizing that a strong and free media plays a central role in creating conducive conditions for democratic elections, GPECS II will undertake initiatives to contribute towards building a more independent and professional media as part of its interventions. This activity will entail working with media associations at the regional and sub-regional levels, in cooperation with UNESCO, as well as training journalists to report on elections in a more professional, accurate, objective and balanced manner. This will include efforts towards the development of guidelines and code of conduct for the media aimed at developing more impartial and balanced campaign coverage throughout the electoral process. Likewise, Phase II will take on sharing and disseminating knowledge and developing appropriate mechanisms aimed at addressing gender based electoral violence and incitement.

GPECS II will also support activities indicated in the '2013 UNDP Support Framework for the Implementation of the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel'. The overall goal is to strengthen regional cooperation, enhance capacity and promote inclusive dialogue and participation in the electoral processes of the Sahel region. Among others, technical support will be provided to EMBs in the conduction of elections, the involvement of civil society and media in electoral processes, the inclusion of vulnerable groups, and the prevention of electoral-related conflict.

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