

Observers participating in the Joint COMESA-EAC-IGAD election observer mission to the Kenya general elections are undergoing a three day pre-deployment training at Hilton Hotel in Nairobi, Kenya. The training started on 25 February 2013, ahead of the election-day set for 04 March 2013.

Delegation leaders from COMESA, EAC and IGAD all described the training as vital because observers will be taken through the political context of the 2013 Kenyan elections, the local constitution, legal framework and the methodology of election observation in general. The training is being conducted by the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA).



The observers will also receive presentations on the preliminary assessment of the electoral process from the civil society, private sector, media, the police and the various political groups in Kenya. The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) will also make a presentation on the state of preparedness for the 2013 elections.

In his address to the observers, COMESA delegation head of mission, Ambassador Simbi Veke Mubako pointed out that Kenya is a very important member of COMESA and the final result of the election should promote unity in the country in particular, and the region as a whole.

“We are grateful to the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission of Kenya for inviting COMESA to observe these elections. This reflects a show of confidence in us working together with Kenyans to ensure that they conduct peaceful elections,” Ambassador Mubako said.

COMESA was invited by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission of Kenya to participate in the election observation.

The East African Community (EAC) election observer mission leader, Hon. Abdulrahman Kinana, said election observing promotes transparency and reinforces the integrity and legitimacy of the electoral process.

“This fundamental duty bestowed on us as observers is noble, as it will contribute to peaceful political change that has positive consequences not only for Kenyans but also for the whole region. Our collaboration is anchored on the fact that Kenya is a member of all the three Regional Economic Commissions represented here,” Honourable Kinana added.

The leader of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Dr Julius Rotich, revealed that the three RECs have a combined team of more than 70 observers who will cover half of the Counties in Kenya.

Dr Rotich noted that the observers are being trained and sensitized on the benchmarks for election observation, with focus on the dos and don'ts as well as consulting with key election stakeholders. This will help in understanding the political environment.

He added that regional organisations have the mandate to promote democracy and uphold democratic processes in their respective regions, and deployment of an observer mission is one of those means to promote democratic government and strengthen electoral processes in the region.

This is the second time that the three RECs are having a joint election observation mission in a member country – the first one being the 2011 elections in Uganda.