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## **OAS Mission in Nicaragua Recommends Integral Electoral Reform**

November 7, 2017

The Electoral Observation Mission of the Organization of American States (EOM/OAS) in Nicaragua today published its [preliminary report](#) on the November 5 preliminary elections, in which it identifies "important advances" and "weaknesses typical of all electoral processes" that have "not affected substantially the popular will expressed through the vote."

The Mission, headed by the Vice President of the Electoral Court of Uruguay Wilfredo Penco, reiterated in the report its "profound concern regarding the acts of violence registered after the elections and its solidarity towards the families of the victims and the people of Nicaragua." "The Mission calls upon the society as a whole to resolve its differences through civic mechanisms," it said.

The Mission reflects in the report the main observations and recommendations on the electoral process, as well as the complaints received. In general, the EOM/OAS notes that "there is space to strengthen the legal, technical, procedural, technological and human aspects of electoral processes in Nicaragua."

"The electoral system of Nicaragua would benefit from a comprehensive electoral reform that addresses various topics. A permanent judicial and administrative framework that gives more confidence and security to political forces and citizens is necessary," indicates the report.

Since October 9, the Mission progressively deployed a team of 60 observers, regional coordinators and experts. The team held meetings with the main actors of the electoral process and observed the preparations and the elections in the 15 departments and two autonomous regions of the country. On election day, observers visited 787 polling stations and 393 voting centers.

On election day, the members of the Mission observed the integration and opening of the polling stations, the development of the vote and the counting of the votes. They then accompanied the transfer of the poll statements to the municipal tabulation centers, where they observed the arrival and filling of documents, their processing and arithmetic revision, as well as the transmission of results. In Managua, the specialists in electoral organization and technology were present at the National Tabulation Center, where they observed the setting of the databases and the tabulation of results.

The voting itself took place in a calm, smooth and pacific manner, with no large incidents. However, at the end of this phase, isolated incidents of violence took place that resulted in the death of five people and several injured. The Mission regretted these acts and requested that authorities open the corresponding investigations and punish those responsible for the crimes.

The Mission carried out an integral analysis of the process. With the objective of contributing to the continuous improvement of the electoral system of Nicaragua, the Mission presents a number of preliminary observations and recommendations with special attention paid to the following topics:

#### Electoral Organization and technology

- Training
  - Use of technology in electoral logistics
  - Ballots
  - Copies of the poll statements
  - Transmission of results
  - Access to information
- Electoral registry
- The electoral authority
- Dispute resolution management
- Political parties
- Electoral-political financing
- Political inclusion
  - Participation of women
  - Participation of civil society

The Mission will shortly present a complete report to the OAS Permanent Council, which will be shared with the Supreme Electoral Court and distributed to the different actors of the electoral process.

The Mission expresses its gratitude for the cooperation of the Supreme Electoral Council, in particular its President, Vice president, magistrates and staff. In addition, it thanks government authorities, especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, political parties, civil society organizations, security forces and the citizenship for their cooperation and support.

The Electoral Observation Mission thanks Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Dominican Republic, Germany, Honduras, Korea, Luxembourg, Spain and Switzerland for their financial contributions, which allowed for its deployment in Nicaragua.

The Electoral Observation Mission also expresses its thanks for the essential support of the members of the conversation and constructive exchange group established between the OAS General Secretariat and the Government of Nicaragua.

Reference: E-079/17