

5. How the observer is required to act

Like any other actor in the electoral process, election observers, too, must be conducted properly. The factors that should guide election observers in their work are often stated in the form of a code of conduct or ethical principle consisting of **dos and don'ts**. The EC is in no doubt that the agency sponsoring the observations will instruct it about proper behavior. However, since Ghana is a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The EC recommends to our domestic observers, which is summarized below. The code addresses the individual observer directly and is consistent with internationally accepted principles of election observation.

- Play your role with strict impartiality, independence and objectivity; and refrain from any expression of bias or preference in relations to parties, candidates, or any issue under contention in the relation to parties, candidates, or any issues under contention in the election.
- Undertake your duties in an unassuming manner, without disrupting or interfering with the election processes and procedures.
- You may bring any irregularities that you notice to the attention of election officials, but do not command them or countermand their instruction.
- You must base all conclusions you make on well documented, factual, and verified evidence.
- Do not prejudge the outcome of the election, or in any way allow your personal opinions, likes, and dislikes to influence your judgment.
- Do not accept any gifts or favors that might influence your work.
- At all times during the period of observation, including during private time away from work, you should behave blamelessly, exercise sound judgments, and display the highest level of personal discretion.
- You must comply with any instructions given by polling officials. If for some reason, you are dissatisfied with any official's instructions, record the circumstances.
- Do not attempt to take part in the actual administration of the election: under no circumstances should you handle official election documents in the polling station without the permission from the presiding officer.
- Do not physically assist in the voting or counting process.
- Avoid doing anything whatsoever that may be construed to be a disruption or interference with the work of the election officials or with the voting, counting and collation processes.
- Do not attempt to play an active role in resolving any disputes or complaints, to avoid the possibility of compromising the observer group's eventual position on the matter.
- Do not use a photographic, video, or recording equipment at the polling station without the permission of the presiding officer or any persons concerned.
- Do not wear or display anything whatsoever –including symbols, colors, or banners- that could be construed as identification with any particular candidate or party.

- Record concrete details of any details of any complaints made to you, including the name, the organization (where relevant), and address of the complaints.
- Avoid any form of confrontation with security personnel
- Try not to give the impression that you are rushing from one polling station to another. However, quickly get away from any manifestation of danger to your person.

In terms of how observers are required to act, two additional factors are noteworthy:

- An observer does not enjoy any special immunity from committing an electoral offence or any offence under the general laws of Ghana.
- It is prudent for individual members of the observer group to avoid personal or premature comments or statements. Such statements may contradict or prejudice the eventual official statements and dent the credibility of the group. Besides, reckless statements by individual observers can easily increase tensions and lead to actual during or after an election. For this reason, it is important to identify the person/s authorized to speak on behalf of the observer group.

