



Press Release on the official opening of Sierra Leone’s 2018 Elections Situation Room

Freetown, March 6th, 2018: The Sierra Leone 2018 Elections Situation Room (ESR) managed by West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) and a consortium of Civil Society, State and non-state actors and the Media, with support from USAID, today became operational at the Radisson Blu hotel.

The focus of the Situation Room is to monitor, report, analyse, and facilitate response to incidences which may threaten the peaceful conduct of the March 7th Elections.

The Situation Room is made up of four operational sections comprising of Data Gathering Room, Analysis Room, Decision Room, and the Communication Room. The Central Coordinating Situation Room is located at Radisson Blu in Freetown, while a Satellite Situation Room is located in Kono district. The choice of the satellite ESR is informed by the high level of violent threats to the peaceful conduct of elections in this district as identified from the National Early Warning System (NEWS).

How the Situation Room will operate

A total of 75 personnel will be working in the two ESRs. The Central Coordinating Room at Radisson Blu in Freetown, will comprise of 57 personnel deployed in four sections.

1. The “**Data Gathering Room**”, which serves as the “**Technical Room**”, is responsible for direct communication with 500 observers in the field. These 500 accredited observers deployed across the 16 districts will use a checklist of questions divided into four sections (opening of polling stations and set up, conduct of the voting process, incident reports, and counting of polling results) to monitor the voting process in their allocated areas of assignment. The Data Gathering Room will collate all data received through the SMS platform and all other media channels for analysis. They will also categorize and map the data in order to inform analysis of identified occurrences that may mar the conduct of elections in risk areas. Additional

information will be uploaded through dedicated WhatsApp platforms and telephone communications from the observers in the field to the ESR. A total of 33 persons will work in this room.

2. The “**Analysis Room**” is responsible for interpreting the data for informed response. There are a total of 10 experts in this room comprising, lawyers, political scientists, peace and security experts, human rights experts, gender and media experts and academics.

3. Communication Room: The Communication Room is made up of four personnel that provides support to the Decision-Making Room in regards its engagement with the media and the general public.

4. The “**Decision Room**” comprises of 10 eminent persons who can use their good offices to influence positive response to identified threats. They include members of the National Elections Response Group, the Inter-Religious Council, media experts and other civil society groups and WANEP. These persons may be called upon to also engage in preventive diplomacy when the need arises.

We recognize that this election means a lot to Sierra Leoneans. We are therefore hopeful that the work of this Election Situation Room will go a long way in ensuring that the outcome will be credible, peaceful and acceptable by the general populace so that Sierra Leone can join the rest of West Africa in enjoying a sustainable democracy.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen of the press, on behalf of the partners of the Situation Room, WANEP and USAID, I wish to thank you for your time and pray that we all do our best to continue to work towards the conduct of a peaceful and credible elections in Sierra Leone.

