

PRESS STATEMENT

September 9, 2026

STATEMENT ON THE CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM IN GUINEA-BISSAU

The West Africa Democracy Solidarity Network has followed with deep concern the constitutional referendum held in Guinea-Bissau on August 30, 2026 and the tensions surrounding its conduct, legitimacy and outcome. The referendum asked citizens to approve a new Constitution that strengthens presidential powers, reduces the size of Parliament and changes aspects of the country's electoral framework ahead of the December 2026 elections. The National Electoral Commission announced that the "Yes" vote won with about 70 percent of valid votes, with participation reported at approximately 63 percent.

The Network recognizes the announced result while noting concerns raised by opposition parties and civil society organizations. The African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) and other political groupings called for a boycott, citing concerns about the process and the lack of safeguards and consultation. Civil society actors also questioned the inclusiveness and transparency of the constitutional process. These grievances, alongside conflicting claims about voter participation, risk deepening mistrust at a fragile moment.

WADEMOS calls on all political factions and actors to exercise restraint and address any grievances through peaceful and constitutional means. The Network urges the transitional authorities to protect political and civic space, respect fundamental freedoms, engage stakeholders transparently and ensure that the implementation of the new constitutional order and subsequent elections are credible, inclusive and subject to appropriate safeguards.

WADEMOS appeals to civil society, religious and traditional leaders, the media, youth and community leaders to use their influence to calm tensions, counter inflammatory rhetoric and promote dialogue as the country navigates transition to multi-party democracy.

Finally, we call on ECOWAS to intensify engagement with all stakeholders, facilitate an inclusive national dialogue and work with the African Union and other partners to support a peaceful democratic transition. Guinea-Bissau's future must be determined through dialogue, constitutionalism and peaceful democratic processes.

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About WADEMOS

WADEMOS is an independent and non-partisan network of diverse national and transnational civil society organizations and civic groups working to promote and defend democracy, good governance, and inclusive development in the West Africa region. WADEMOS mobilizes, coordinates, and leverages the collective voice and power of civil society and other pro-democracy actors, resources, and opportunities within the West Africa region to advance its mission. The current membership of WADEMOS stands at 47 spread across West Africa. The WADEMOS Secretariat is based in Accra, Ghana.

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