

# Fourth General Assembly

## Safeguarding presidential elections in LEDCs

<b>Forum:</b>	General Assembly 4
<b>Issue:</b>	Safeguarding presidential elections in LEDCs
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## Introduction

As the chair of the Fourth General Assembly of this Model United Nations conference, I am honoured to present this research report on the topic of “Safeguarding Presidential Elections in Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs).” This topic touches upon the importance of democracy, stability and the fundamental civil right to vote.

In democratically governed countries that are ruled by a president, the presidential elections are what define the government. They are crucial events that reflect the opinion of the people yet also reflect the transparency of the government. In LEDCs, the integrity of these elections often faces challenges due to the social, economic and political landscape of the nation. Some of these factors include political instability, a limit on resources, and other external influences.

The purpose of this report is to provide relevant information on the state of democratic elections in LEDCs. On top of that, this report will provide delegates with possible solutions, and past attempts at solving the issue in order to help delegates formulate their own solutions. The report will tackle this issue through a variety of different lenses including the impact of events on electoral integrity, the impact of technology, and government involvement.

Let us work together and come up with detailed, well thought through solutions to the issue presented during the upcoming conference.

## Key Terms

### **Electoral Integrity**

The transparency, impartialness and level of professionalism within the preparation and administration of an election.

### **LEDs (Least Developed Countries)**

Underdeveloped countries listed by the United Nations as countries exhibiting the lowest signs of socioeconomic development.

### **Disenfranchisement**

The restriction of the right to vote for specific people or groups of people.

### **Democracy**

A form of government where residents have the right to representation within the government through elected presidents.

## General Overview

Presidential elections are the epitome of a democratic government, providing citizens with the opportunity to have an opinion and a voice. However, within less economically developed countries these electoral processes are often a lot less fair making it almost necessary for more developed countries to put in the effort to help increase the electoral integrity within these countries.

## Background

Less economically developed countries have recently struggled with many challenges, reducing the safety of many elections. Recently the violence and corruption within a majority of less developed countries, especially within Africa, has been at an all time high. The United Nations has recognised these challenges and has been as active as possible in synthesising measures to safeguard these elections and keep the governments as democratic as possible.

## Key Challenges

### Electoral Fraud and Corruption:

A key challenge within electoral integrity is fraud and corruption. This can be done by outside parties trying to rig the vote towards what they find appropriate, or candidates trying to rig the vote in their favor. This can be done through ballot stuffing, putting various votes with one name on them in at a time, vote-buying, and manipulation of voter lists, many of these happening recently at various electoral events such as allegedly the 2016 USA presidential elections. Through this, elections become less transparent as they unfairly become rigged in favor of one candidate.

### Political Violence:

During the time of an election it is very common for political violence to occur. This happens both before and after the actual election and it can strongly influence the results. Violence is often aimed at supporters of specific political parties or candidates depending on what is most popular

to hate at the time. Such violence can influence the results of an election as people are scared to vote certain candidates or are afraid to vote at all.

#### **Weak Institutional Frameworks:**

Many less economically developed countries have inadequate legal and institutional frameworks which means they often fail to enforce necessary rules during an election to ensure transparency. This makes interference a lot easier and gives many people opportunities to ensure the election is not transparent.

#### **Lack of Resources:**

A lack of resources ties in to weak institutional frameworks because even if frameworks are present, a lack of resources makes it less enforceable all over the country. Lack of resources provides more opportunities for fraud and foulplay from external parties, the general public, and candidates themselves.

### **Debate Surrounding the Issue**

One of the most prominent topics of debate surrounding this issue is the responsibility of international organisations and their right to interfere within less developed countries. While the intentions of these organisations and countries may be purely positive and supportive, the involvement of these organisations or countries can easily be seen as intrusive and disrespectful. It can be easy to infringe on national sovereignty and disrespect local culture while simply trying to provide a more democratic and transparent way of conducting elections. On top of that, the involvement of external parties may seem as disrespectful as it provides the more developed countries and organisations with a saviour complex and might lead to a less developed country being portrayed as less overall.

### **Global Implications of the Issue**

The issue of safeguarding presidential elections in LEDCs has significant global implications, influencing international stability, economic development, geopolitical dynamics, human rights, and global governance. Unstable or unreliable elections can lead to unrest within the country's population, a strain of resources and tensions within and between countries. Credible elections

are crucial for attracting foreign aid and developing economically. With mass violence occurring during elections, elections can influence mass migration affecting other countries in the area. Furthermore, the involvement of international organisations costs a lot of time and money which affects many countries globally, and not just LEDCs. A positive global implication is that credible elections contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which is crucial to sustain peace across the globe. Lastly, more developed countries and organisations assisting less economically developed countries in their journey towards better elections create stronger bonds and positively influence the relationships between countries all over the world.

Safeguarding presidential elections in LEDCs is a complicated challenge that requires much effort from national governments, international organisations and neighbouring More Economically Developed Countries (MEDCs). By addressing the main challenges and implementing detailed measures the integrity of these electoral processes will be enhanced, therefore promoting democracy and sustainable development within less developed countries .

## Major Parties Involved

### United States

According to the Electoral Integrity Project, electoral integrity within the United States has been at an all-time low recently and has compared poorly with other democracies around the world. Though they claim to have a lot of integrity, the United States is ranked quite low on the electoral integrity scale, reflecting negatively on the country. Though this is true, the United States puts in the effort to help less developed countries and continents become more democratic.

### Nigeria

Nigeria has been holding presidential elections since the formation of the republic in 1960. Yet recently the integrity of these elections has become a lot worse with much disinformation being spread online and violence becoming a common part of elections. Due to these challenges it has become more crucial than ever to support Nigeria and help democratic elections become safer.

### Haiti

Haiti is currently on the brink of collapsing. Since the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in 2012, there has been no elected official anywhere within the Haitian government. Due to this there has been mass violence everywhere, famine is up to extreme levels and hundreds of thousands of residents have been displaced. While presidential candidates are present, these individuals are former coup leaders and US detainees, and a former gang leader. This struggle makes it more important than ever to provide Haiti with the support it needs.

### European Union

The European Union has put astronomical levels of effort into safeguarding elections all over the world. In May, a press release was published detailing the newest decision of the European Union to help safeguard elections from foreign information. While the European Union has been less focused on safeguarding elections within less developed countries, it is important to use the decisions of the EU as an example or even a template when considering solutions for this issue.

### United Nations Development Program (UNDP)

The UNDP is the lead UN organisation focused on achieving peace. The UNDP is currently working together with the EU to implement mechanisms within less developed countries to prevent widespread violence in response to elections. This is currently being implemented in multiple African countries including Burkina Faso, Zambia, the Central African Republic and more.

### **International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)**

This organisation works within many countries to build a fair and resilient democracy within each country. Based in Virginia, USA IFES works with 145 countries in all continents to make sure the public can safely and equally participate within fair elections.

### **The Carter Center**

A non-governmental organisation founded by former US president Jimmy Carter, this NGO aims to better people's lives by resolving conflicts related to human rights and advancing democracy within many countries.



## Timeline of Key Events

### **1966: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**

A treaty adopted by the United Nations aimed at ensuring and protecting civil and political rights for every human being

### **2012: Launch of the Electoral Integrity Project**

The EIP is a project aimed at researching 3 specific questions in order to keep elections as reliable and valid as possible.

### **2017: Presidential Election in Kenya**

This election started Africa's journey towards a better mindset and more credible elections.

### **2018: Presidential Election in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)**

One of the most marred elections within the African continent, including voter suppression, irregularities, and violence.

### **2018: Presidential Election in Zimbabwe**

When the presidential elections got delayed the public protested in the street leading to mass violence from uniformed soldiers.

### **2019: Presidential Election in Nigeria**

During this election candidates Muhammadu Buhair and Atiku Abubakar accused each other of spreading misinformation.

### **2020: Global COVID-19 Pandemic**

COVID-19 was a global pandemic starting in 2019 and ending in 2023 where the entire world had to be quarantined affecting countries economically, socially and politically.

### **2021: Summit for Democracy**

In 2021, over 100 countries gathered at this summit in the US to discuss democracy.

## UN Involvement and Other Treaties

This section contains treaties, resolutions and conferences that are relevant to the issue at hand and have taken part in making a change. The list contains general UN resolutions, UN conferences and more specific charters that are applicable only to specific continents, more specifically, continents containing less developed countries.

- United Nations General Assembly Resolution 46/137, 1991
- United Nations General Assembly Resolution 55/96, 2000
- United Nations General Assembly Resolution 66/163, 2011
- Global Commission on Elections Democracy and Security, November 27 2011, Doha, Qatar
- Electoral Integrity Conference, 2012, Madrid, SPain
- International Conference on Electoral Systems and Democracy, 2014, Washington D.C., USA
- Inter-American Democratic Charter, 2001
- African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption, 2003

## Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

### Past Resolution

The United Nations, since recent events, has put in a lot of effort to safeguard elections within less economically developed countries. This has primarily been done by passing new resolutions. While some resolutions passed have been more general such as resolution 46/137, emphasising the importance of periodic and transparent elections, other resolutions such as resolution 66/163 are more specific in expressing the necessity of nations supporting each other in order to spread democracy.

### International Organizations and Initiatives

Another way the UN has contributed to solving this issue is through forming international organisations and initiatives such as the UNDP, the Carter centre, and IFES. These international organisations have made much progress in keeping residents of less economically developed countries safe and with the right to vote. These organisations have strengthened the governments of already democratic countries and have helped non-democratic countries develop their governance to a more democratic way. IFES has observed elections within LEDCs to estimate the credibility and help out, Carter Center has helped reduce the amount of violence due to elections, and UNDP has supported countries in the preparation and process of elections.

### Regional Efforts

Especially within Africa, there has been much effort to better the electoral processes. Within the African Union (AU) countries such as Kenya, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Nigeria have encountered challenges within recent elections which they solved. During Kenya's presidential elections in 2017 the supreme court annulled the original election due to suspicions of irregularities. This was a big step as it showed a clear effort to keep electoral processes fair and transparent. During the presidential elections in Nigeria in 2019, Nigeria implemented new security measures in order to prevent widespread violence caused by elections. Lastly, during the DRC's presidential elections of 2018, the UN provided the country with technical support and observers to assess the fairness of the presidential elections, providing the country with significant advice. All of these show a dedicated effort towards more transparent elections within less economically developed countries.

## Possible Solutions

As presidential elections are such a complicated topic, synthesising solutions may become difficult. Much effort has been made to solve this problem already, meaning that many options have already been attempted. Yet, there are always more options which will be explored within this section.

### Establishing Legal Frameworks

The best solution for ensuring electoral integrity and safeguarding elections, is establishing legal frameworks. Electoral laws that include clear guidelines for voter registration, polling procedures and candidate eligibility must be clearly enacted in each country. This will ensure that the process stays trustworthy and all residents enjoy their right to vote.

### Creation of Task Forces

Another possible solution is the creation of task forces or electoral committees that will oversee elections and ensure that all processes are transparent, and governments are held accountable. These task forces can implement tools to improve voter identification and ensure that all votes are accounted for. On top of this, these task forces can stand up for the rights of the residents within countries where they aren't recognised. In countries allowing disenfranchisement or countries with an overall corrupted government, task forces could step in and fight for what is right.

### Education

Socially, it is important for governments to provide quality education for all citizens, so they are aware of their voting rights. Citizens should also be aware of polling locations and the importance of their vote. This includes education about misinformation in the media, inclusive dialogue, and critical thinking. Finally, governments must ensure that training and technical assistance is provided to election officials and other staff to utilise their full capacity in electoral administration and monitoring. This includes efficiently using technology to improve the transparency of elections.

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