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**Joint Statement by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union (AU), the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU) on Sierra Leone**

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union (AU), the United Nations (UN), and the European Union (EU) are following closely and with much interest the progress towards Sierra Leone's presidential, parliamentary and local council elections scheduled to take place on 7 March 2018.

The four organizations welcome the efforts made by the National Electoral Commission for the preparation of the polls and also welcome the deployment of short- and long-term national and international observer missions.

We also welcome the commitment expressed by Sierra Leonean stakeholders for the holding of democratic, transparent and credible polls, in line with national and international frameworks.

We are concerned about recent incidents of election-related violence, and call on all political parties and their leaders to exercise restraint, desist from inflammatory statements, and urge their supporters to refrain from violence.

We urge civil society, as well as the media to be aware of their important roles, and call upon the Judiciary and security services to fulfill their responsibilities with professionalism and impartiality.

We call upon all Sierra Leonean youth and women to engage and participate peacefully in the elections.

We reiterate that ensuring a level playing field for all political actors should be a priority for all institutions and individuals concerned in enabling inclusive, peaceful and credible elections.

The elections come after a series of successful elections recently held in West Africa. ECOWAS, the AU, the UN and the EU wish to express their confidence in the capacity of national actors to successfully conclude the electoral process, as a milestone towards nurturing and deepening democratic and participatory governance and maintain this successful trend in the region.

Freetown, 28 February 2018