

#### **D. OBSERVING THE COUNTING PROCESS**

The counting of the ballots is often carried out at the polling stations immediately after the close of the polls. However, some countries, often for security reasons, conduct the counting at one central location or at a number of regional counting centres. In these situations, ballot boxes and related materials need to be transported, thereby raising additional concerns which the observer must take into account.

##### **1. Transportation of ballots from the polling station to a counting centre**

Where ballots are transported from the polling station to a counting centre, observers should determine whether:

- all the ballot boxes, seals, unused ballots, stubs, etc. being sent have been properly sealed, secured and recorded;
- all the preparations have been observed by party/candidate agents and observers;
- the responsible election officials, military, or police, etc., as provided for by the election authorities, are present and have provided for suitable transportation facilities and adequate security;
- the ballot boxes, related election materials and reports are accompanied in the same vehicle by party/candidate agents and possibly observers;
- the length of time taken to transport the ballot boxes from the poll to the counting centre is unreasonably long;
- there were any incidents or complaints relating to the transport of ballot boxes; and whether
- on arrival, there is any evidence of tampering with or the replacement of any of the balloting materials.

##### **2. Counting at the poll or counting centre**

At the poll or counting centre, the observer should determine whether:

- party/candidate agents and observers are present throughout;
- media representatives are permitted;