



Republic of Liberia  
**National Elections Commission (NEC)**



**1 November 2005**

**TALKING POINTS**  
**CLLR. FRANCES JOHNSON-MORRIS**  
**CHAIR OF THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS COMMISSION**

**☐ VOTER EDUCATION**

NEC, UNMIL Electoral Division, other international partners and national Civil Society Organizations continue their voter education activities sharing key messages regarding the Run-Off Election. Town criers and voter mobilizers have begun spreading the messages on foot to reach as many Liberian voters as possible to motivate them to cast a ballot in the second round. Additionally, efforts to reach voters in face to face activities continue through the work of NEC, as well as through its partners NDI, EC Bilateral, UNDP and IFES and their various national implementing partners.

Posters entitled "Know Your Candidate" are being distributed throughout the country through UNMIL Electoral Division efforts, NEC and dozens of international and national NGOs. More posters on key Run-Off Election messages as well as stickers are also being shared with voters.

More civic education materials, such as posters, stickers and flyers, have been produced through UNDP. These materials are now being distributed through an IFES sponsored project coordinated via the Inter-Religious Council and directly through the various NGOs throughout the country. These items reinforce the messages that are running on the radio, such as the importance of participating in the Run-Off Election and encouraging voters to carefully consider the choices.

As further assistance for the visually impaired, NEC is, together with IFES, conducting a workshop on the use of tactile ballot guides on Wednesday, November 2.

**☐ VISIT TO NIMBA**

The NEC Chair and the Director of the UNMIL Electoral Division will visit Nimba County on Wednesday, November 2, 2005 along with UNMIL SRSG Alan Doss. During their visit, they will be meeting the county Electoral staff in order to see the progress in the electoral preparations for the November 8 Run-Off Election. The Chair also plans to lead a Voter Education event encouraging the voters to turn up and vote to choose their next president.

## **☐ TRAINING**

The cascade training of staff is continuing according to schedule. After receiving training here in Monrovia on October 25, the NEC Assistance Magistrates and UNMIL County Electoral Advisors have trained the Electoral Supervisors and UNMIL Electoral Support Officers in the counties between October 27-31. Starting today, the 3,070 Presiding Officers will receive training in order to be prepared for the November 8 polls.

A total of 16,511 polling staff will be working on November 8. As was the case during the October 11 election, each polling place will have a Queue Controller, a Presiding Officer, an Identification Officer and a Ballot Paper Issuer. The roles of Ballot Box Controller and the Inker have been combined for the Run-Off.

## **☐ GBARPOLU SENATE RACE**

As informed during our last press conference, anomalies in the race for the Junior Senate seat have been discovered in several polling places in Gbarpolu County. The case has been further investigated since then and the NEC has now found it necessary to refer the matter to the police since there are indications that electoral forms in these polling places have been tampered with. Such acts are considered an election offence in accordance with the 1986 New Elections Law Section 10.6.

Again, the NEC asks that political party representatives who were at a polling place in Gbarpolu County to bring their copy of the Senate Record of the Count to the NEC or UNMIL office in Gbarpolu or to the NEC headquarters in Monrovia, for further referral to the legal authorities now investigating the case.

## **☐ HEARINGS ON ELECTION COMPLAINTS**

In total, 30 hearings in respect of 41 complaints filed by 36 complainants were scheduled and heard during the week of October 24 – 31, 2005. One complaint was withdrawn while six were rejected without being scheduled as they did not comply with the prescribed procedures.

Final Rulings have been issued in 22 matters:

- 9 were dismissed because the parties failed to appear;
- 8 were dismissed because the allegations were of a criminal nature over which NEC does not exercise jurisdiction. Complainants have been advised to take up such matters with the respective County Attorneys, while NEC will be forwarding all information in its possession to the relevant authorities.

- 5 matters were dismissed for other reasons, such as: no evidence, no legal basis or no standing.
- 8 rulings are outstanding; these will be issued and served to the parties involved.

#### **☐ INTER-PARTY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**

The NEC will hold an Inter-Party Consultative Committee (IPCC) meeting to update the Chairpersons of Registered Political Parties, Alliances, Coalitions and Independent Candidates on Wednesday November 2 on the electoral preparations for the Run-Off Election.

#### **☐ ANNOUNCEMENT OF RESULTS FOR THE RUN-OFF**

The NEC wishes to remind the media and the public that the announcement of results for the Run-Off Election will be done according to the same procedures in place for the October 11 elections.

On November 8 there will be two press conferences, at 11am and 7pm to provide information on the progress of voting.

Starting November 9, there will be three daily press conferences at 11am, 4pm and 7pm, with the first initial results being announced at the 4pm press conference, just like during the October 11 Elections.

Despite there only being the presidential ballot to count this time, the public needs to be reminded that the retrieval of materials needs to take place before any tallying can commence and that for inaccessible areas, this process will still take some time for porters and helicopters to transport the materials.

#### **☐ THANKSGIVING**

Today is exactly one week to the November 8 Run-off Presidential Election. On that day, more than 1.3 million registered voters in Liberia will have the opportunity to elect a new president who will lead this nation for the next 6 years.

The NEC admonishes the two presidential candidates contesting the Run-Off Election to encourage their party members and supporters to engage in a peaceful and orderly campaign. We also appeal to Liberians to turn out in large numbers on polling day to freely choose their next president.

As we approach Thanksgiving Day, the NEC wishes to express profound gratitude, first to the Almighty God through whose guidance we have so far successfully

implemented our mandate. The Commission would also like to thank the people of Liberia for their full and active participation in the electoral process, and to our international and local partners for their remarkable support in fulfilling this important mandate under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

## **□ SUMMARY OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

Commenting on rumours that the NEC planned to design the ballot paper in a manner that would be disadvantageous to one of the two presidential candidates, such that the ink mark placed in the box opposite that candidate will erase shortly after voting, the Chair said such rumours were completely untrue. She noted further that she has no magical powers to cause a voter's mark on the ballot to disappear.

Asked whether the NEC had received reports of campaign violence, the Chair said none had been reported. On whether the Commission had received any complaint from the Unity Party concerning an attempt to attack the party's head office in Monrovia, the Chair said she had heard about this through media but that no formal complaint had been filed with the NEC.

On how the NEC was handling the matter concerning anomalies in the Gbarpolu County Junior Senate race, the Chair reiterated that the case has been referred to the police for investigation as an election offence. She said the Commission will provide the police with all necessary information to enhance its investigation. In a follow-up, a representative of the LNP who was present at the press briefing estimated that the investigation will take approximately 5 days.

Responding to a question on what the NEC was doing about the "excessive use of media" for mudslinging, the Chair said the NEC does not control the media and it cannot impose restrictions on their reporting. She said it is the media themselves that have the responsibility to regulate their own coverage.

On whether the NEC had rules on how political parties should conduct their campaigns, the Chair said there are regulations and codes of conduct in place that explicitly forbid mudslinging/character assassination. She said if there is evidence of any violation, the NEC may impose penalties as defined by law and this could include de-registration of any political party found guilty.

Asked about the status of the complaint filed with the NEC by the Liberty Party of Cllr. Charles Brumskine, the Chair said ruling into that complaint and several others are pending.

On whether the 15-day period for announcement of results which applied to the October 11, 2005 elections will similarly be required for announcement of results of the Run-Off, the Chair said the NEC still has that timeframe. She said, as many parts of the

country remain inaccessible, retrieval of election materials and the announcement of the final results of the Run-Off will take time.

Asked to comment on the deployment of election materials around the country, the Chair said the NEC has already begun deployment of materials to remote and inaccessible areas.

Responding to a question on the recent death threats, the Chair said she has not received any more death threats. She indicated that investigation was ongoing but it has been difficult to trace the anonymous caller(s) who had issued the threats via text messages sent to her mobile phone.

The Chair urged Liberians to be mindful of people that want to lay the groundwork for chaos. "If we have chosen the democratic path, we must stay on that path... we can't allow people to hijack this country," Cllr. Johnson-Morris pointed out. She said that no one should be allowed to disturb the peace process. The NEC will not be intimidated or distracted, rather the Commission remains resolute and will ensure that the Run-Off election on November 8 is conducted in a free and fair manner just as the October 11 elections was.

\*\*\*\*