



Republic of Liberia
National Elections Commission (NEC)



OCTOBER 7, 2005

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

☐ NEC PLEASED WITH ELECTION DAY PREPARATIONS

The NEC is confident that the months of work that NEC staff and International partners have been pouring into the electoral process will result in a successful election that all Liberians can be proud of. Logistics teams have ensured that Polling materials have all been deployed to the county level by today, and on the weekend and leading up to October 11, these materials will be delivered to all 3070 polling places.

Civic and Voter Education messages have been delivered to the far corners of our country, despite the enormous difficulties experienced as a result of poor roads and communication infrastructure. To date, more than 500,000 Liberians nationwide have received direct information from NEC Civic Educators, UNMIL Components and other international organizations such as IFES and EC-Bilateral, and those individuals have shared that information with many others. Liberian Civil Society organizations and community based organizations have also contributed greatly by actively spreading information on the Elections benefiting hundreds of thousands more.

18,600 Polling staff have been recruited and trained and will be deployed to the polling places on October 9 and 10, to be in place on Election Day. We call on each of them to be aware of their duty to their community and to conduct themselves professionally.

The Liberian National Police officers on duty on Election Day will be allowed to vote at any Polling place they are assigned to. The LNP Officers who are not assigned to the polling place they registered for will only be able to vote for President, and not for the Senate or House of Representatives.

Voters are reminded that they should keep their VR cards safe even after the election, to enable them to vote in the possible event of a run-off election.

☐ NEC BRIEFS DIGNITARIES AND INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS

The NEC through its Chairman, Cllr. Frances Johnson-Morris, has briefed the Chief mediator of the Peace Process, Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar, on the status of preparations for the Tuesday, October 11 poll.



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The NEC Chair similarly briefed His Excellency Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Republic of Nigeria, on the preparations in place, and outlined the progress made by NEC in preparing the nation for elections.

Earlier this morning, the NEC Chair along with UNMIL Electoral Division Director Mr. Ray Kennedy and various NEC and Electoral Division staff, briefed a joint observation delegation in Monrovia.

NEC ACCREDITATION

The NEC has, as of October 5, 2005, accredited a total of 3,865 international and domestic observers. 3,452 of the observers are from Domestic organizations, and 413 are international observers. A total of 246 media organizations have been accredited by the NEC. These observers are scheduled to be in all counties by Election Day in order to be able to make informed reports on the process as a whole.

NEC PUBLISHES CAMPAIGN FINANCE SUMMARIES

The NEC is today releasing, through the newspapers, summaries of campaign finance reports submitted by candidates. Candidates were required to submit campaign finance reports by 1 October to the NEC, to cover the period of when they first started expending campaign funds to September 26, 2005. Of the 762 candidates contesting these elections, 107 have submitted their reports.

The NEC is required by Campaign Finance Regulations to publish in at least two (2) newspapers with greatest circulation, a financial summary of the campaign finance reports. As additional reports are received, summaries will be published by the NEC.

NEC HOLDS WORKSHOP FOR DISABLED

On October 5, the NEC held a one-day workshop for 76 physically disabled and visually and hearing impaired people, and representatives of their organizations. The main purpose of this gathering was to issue instructions on best practices for polling day, in the context of voters with disabilities. The workshop was a Training-of-Trainers, and attendees will go back to their organizations to pass on the information they received from the NEC. The highlight of the day was the session on the use of tactile ballot guides, where blind voters were informed on the use of this voting aide, and will go on to teach others how to use it. Attendees voiced the various challenges they anticipated facing on Election Day, and NEC facilitators offered recommendations on how to overcome these issues.



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☐ NEC JOINS HANDS WITH CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

The National Elections Commission will host a half-day election summit with a variety of Civil organizations, spanning Student Unions, Christian groups, Women's Organizations, Teacher's Associations and Human Rights groups on Saturday, October 8. The purpose of this event is to update the 22 organizations on the progress made toward the October 11 election and obtain the support of these various entities in making the process a success. The composition of this gathering is intended to be highly inclusive and be as representative of all demographic groups in Liberia as possible, so as to gather the widest range of participation and input in making the 2005 Election successful.

☐ LAST IPCC MEETING BEFORE ELECTIONS

The last Inter-Party consultative council meeting prior to elections will be hosted by the National Elections Commission on Saturday October 8, 2005 at 11:00 a.m. The agenda of this meeting is to give the plenary a final update on developments and preparations for Election Day.

☐ SUMMARY OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Explaining about marking of the Senate ballots, Cllr. Johnson-Morris said a sample illustration will be placed behind voting screens at all polling places to clearly show a voter that he/she may mark two candidates of their choice on the Senate ballot, but may choose only one candidate each for the Presidential race and the House of Representatives race. She said a sticker inscribed with the words, "YOU MAY MARK TWO CANDIDATES OF YOUR CHOICE", will be placed on all the Senate ballots to educate voters.

Providing further clarification on why NEC had printed a higher number of ballots than there are registered voters, the Chair said the excess ballots were required to account for spoiled ballots resulting from mistakes by voters. The Chair stated that this is not unique to Liberia but was a common practice in elections. She said although there are 1.35 million registered voters, the NEC printed 1.7 million Presidential ballots, 1.6 million Senate ballots and 1.6 million House of Representatives ballots. She said the formula used was that the total number of voters for each polling place was rounded up to the nearest fifty, a full booklet of fifty was added, and then a 2% buffer added to the total number. The Chair said polling staff are required to fill out forms to reconcile all the figures of ballots issued, spoiled ballots, discarded ballots, etc. Each and every ballot will be accounted for during the counting process.

Asked to give her overall assessment of the electoral process, the Chair said she thought the process had gone well and she was confident that the elections would be held as scheduled. The Chair has traveled to some of the remotest regions of Liberia and she has personally seen the difficult situations, but saw that the people of Liberia have shown their willingness to beat all odds and exercise their franchise on Election Day. She said the



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Commission believes that the same determination with which the people turned out during Voter registration will be exhibited at the time of the elections.

Asked if the NEC had made any provision for Liberians living abroad to vote in the October 11 elections, the Chair stated that there will be no out-of-country voting.

Concerning reports that the Council of Churches had intervened on behalf of IDPs who opted to vote in their county of origin but are still in the camps, the Chair noted that the only provision made for this category of IDPs is to allow them to still vote for President. She said the NEC has been meeting the IDPs and educating them, and the IDPs now have a better understanding of the electoral process and have expressed their willingness to participate in the elections. Concerning whether IDPs who vote in the camps during the October elections will also be allowed to vote in the event of a run-off election, the Chair clarified that all registered IDPs may vote in a possible run-off presidential election whether or not they have returned home.

Requested to comment on a statement reportedly made by Information Minister William Allen, quoting Chairman Bryant as naming certain areas of the country as “flash points” for potential election violence, the Chair said that such information had not come to her attention. She however emphasized that the NEC has not designated any parts of Liberia as “flash points”.

In response to a question on whether NEC will make special provisions for Liberian media/personnel assigned to cover elections in areas other than where they registered to vote, the Chair said there will be no such provisions for media. She pointed out that media may vote only at the polling place for which they registered.
