



## STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE NEC

9 November 2005

11:00 am

### □ MEDIA ANNOUNCEMENT OF RESULTS

NEC wishes to congratulate print and electronic media in fulfilling their role of keeping the public informed. We especially wish to recognise radio stations, as we know that most Liberians rely upon you as a main source of information. Keeping in mind the reliance and trust our people have on the media, we wish to remind all journalists that as they broadcast the results from individual polling places, they make it clear that they are only reporting partial figures. We emphasize this because it is vitally important that media reports seek to minimize confusion.

Please be aware that figures announced by sources other than NEC have not been through the processes of verification by the NEC. Our quality control measures begin at the polling place with the ballots being read loud out by the counting Officer, checked by the presiding officer, and those results being placed outside the polling place for transparency. The next stage of checking data occurs at the tally center, the details of which are laid out below.

### □ TALLYING PROCESS

Counting of ballots took a shorter period of time for the November 8 election, as compared to October 11. On average it took 2-3 hours, and so by 9pm last night, many polling places had completed the counting process. Retrieval of materials is ongoing, and tally centres are preparing for the transmission of tally results to the National Tally centre.

Following the counting of ballots in all 3070 polling places, the Record of the Count Forms are being transported under security by LNP, UNMIL CivPol and UNMIL Military to the County Electoral Offices, where the tallying process is now beginning. Data will be entered both manually and electronically.

The NEC County Electoral Office will post progressive tally results (along with the Record of the Count Forms) outside Tally Centers. Once the results are finalized at the county, a copy of the Declaration of Preliminary Results will also be posted for public viewing. The signed Declaration (for each of the 15 counties) will be sent to the National Tally Center to create a national total. The results from the 15 counties will be checked, compiled and forwarded to the NEC Board of Commissioners.

The entire process is expected to take 3 to 7 days, depending on the county. To ensure transparency, accredited domestic and international observers, party representatives, and media are welcome to witness the Tallying.

The National Elections Commission wishes to remind all political parties and independent candidates as well as national and international observers to send their accredited representatives



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and observers to the Unity Conference Center near Virginia, Montserrado County, to monitor and observe the tally process of election results from all voting precincts within Montserrado County.

### **❑ INACCESSIBLE AREAS**

For the 273 inaccessible sites corresponding to 128,154 voters or 9% of the electorate, 7 flights have gone out to 19 landing sites in Grand Kru, Gbarpolu, Grand Cape Mount and River Gee in order to retrieve materials.

### **❑ POSTING OF RESULTS**

The NEC wishes to clarify that the Presiding Officers in all polling places have been given the instruction to provide copies of the results to the party representatives, giving priority to CDC and UP. These results have then been posted at the polling place for journalists and the public to view.

### **❑ TRANSPARENCY**

302 international observers representing 27 international organizations and diplomatic missions were accredited to observe the November 8 election. These are: African Union, American Embassy Monrovia, Baptist World Alliance, Carter Center, DRC Inter-Institutional Delegation, EC Bilateral for Election Program in Liberia, ECOWAS, Embassy of Nigeria, European Commission, European Parliament, European Union (EU), IFES, Independent Election Commission of Nigeria, International Republican Institute (IRI), IRIN (Integrated Regional Information Network) UN, Merci-ship, Sierra Leone Election Commission, University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), USAID, West African Civil Society Forum (WACSOF), West African Women Association, UNDP and World Bank.

In addition, 3,583 domestic observers representing 52 organizations and 40,000 representatives of the political parties and independent candidates were expected at the polling places throughout the country. We are expecting them to begin issuing their assessments of the process shortly.

### **❑ PRESS CONFERENCE SCHEDULE**

The NEC wishes to inform the media that the schedule for press conferences has been reviewed. We had announced previously that the last press conference for the day will be at 7pm, however we will now have it at 8pm. This is our effort to provide you with more comprehensive information.

Thus the press conference today will be held at 11am, 4pm and 8pm.

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## □ SUMMARY OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Asked why the NEC has not released any election results as yet, the Chair said the Commission has a schedule for that. She disclosed that NEC will start announcing progressive results of the Run-Off at 4:00 p.m. today.

Requested to comment on a press statement issued today by the CDC in which the party accused the Chair of being biased against the CDC and asked her to recuse herself from the entire electoral process, the Chair said there are procedures for complaints, and any party that wants to take up issues with the NEC must follow these procedures. She said the statement being referred to was not addressed to NEC, and the Commission does not respond to press statements. Cllr. Johnson-Morris denied being biased against any party and said she will continue to play an impartial role throughout the electoral process.

Asked to respond to claims made by CDC, at a press conference it held today in Monrovia, that there were irregularities in the elections, the Chair said the NEC has received no formal complaints from the CDC about election irregularities.

On whether she has received any more death threats as happened during the first round, the Chair responded in the negative.

On whether despite the apparent “media war” between NEC and CDC the Commission will give CDC the lead if that party gets the higher number of votes in the election, the Chair clarified that NEC was not engaged in a media war with CDC or anyone. She noted that the CDC were given the lead in the first round, and they will similarly be given the lead if this is the result in this round.

Regarding claim by the CDC that, on the eve of the election, the NEC Chair made a statement that was denigrating of George Weah and prejudicial to his candidacy, the Chair again stressed her impartiality and said she had not campaigned against CDC or anyone. Cllr. Johnson-Morris said she could no longer engage in a debate with the CDC over its accusations.

Asked whether she will feel comfortable if CDC wins the election, the Chair said she saw no reason not to feel comfortable with a CDC victory.

Responding to a question on whether she would accept a job offer in the new government from either Ellen or Weah, whoever wins, the Chair said she is prepared to work with anyone elected as president.

Concerning reports that polling staff in certain areas refused to give media copies of the count results, saying NEC had instructed that media not be given results, the Chair said that information was true. She said according to the election procedures journalists were not entitled to individual copies of the results, but they were free to copy results posted by NEC outside the polling place.

Asked to provide an update on the car accident in Buchanan involving polling staff, the Chair said the accident was not so serious and the staff shortly went on to work.

Asked what message she had for Liberians, on this history-making election, about how to promote a spirit of reconciliation, the Chair said as Liberians cultivate democracy they should practice tolerance. “Election is nothing but competition, not war. There are bound to be winners and losers....In the end it is Liberia that matters,” Cllr. Johnson-Morris said. She noted that democracy in Liberia should be driven by issues, not personalities.