



## STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE NEC

17 October 2005

7:00 pm

### **□ STATUS OF RETRIEVAL OF MATERIALS AND TALLYING**

Bomi, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Kru, Lower Nimba, River Cess, River Gee, Sinoe and Upper Bong have all finalized tallying.

Out of these, the NEC has so far received the Preliminary Declaration of Results from Bomi and Grand Cape Mount. Upper Bong has submitted its Preliminary Declaration to the National Tally Center, which is awaiting the Preliminary Declaration from Lower Bong in order to consolidate the totals from the two offices before forwarding them to the NEC.

Lofa has started tallying the results from the 42 polling places that were retrieved from Kolahun by helicopter today.

### **□ PROGRESSIVE RESULTS FROM TALLYING**

A total of 970,704 votes have been counted and tallied as of this evening. 2,917 polling places or 95% of all polling places for the presidential election, have now reported. The recorded turn out for the polling places which have reported amounts to 74%.

The updates included come from the following counties: Grand Bassa, Grand Geddeh and Montserrado.

Presidential Candidates receiving more than five percent of the vote based on the polling places which have reported are as follows:

| <b>CANDIDATE</b>         | <b>NUMBER OF VOTES</b> | <b>% PERCENTAGE OF VOTES</b> |
|--------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. GEORGE WEAH           | 268, 777               | 28.8                         |
| 2. ELLEN JOHNSON SIRLEAF | 186, 821               | 20                           |
| 3. CHARLES BRUMSKINE     | 129, 567               | 13.9                         |
| 4. WINSTON TUBMAN        | 89, 436                | 9.4                          |
| 5. VARNEY SHERMAN        | 72, 411                | 7.8                          |

Please be advised that detailed reports will be distributed at the end of the press conference.

## **□ PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION RUN-OFF**

Looking at the numbers above, and estimating a total turnout of approximately 1 million, which is about 74% of the 1.35 million registered voters, the NEC sees it prudent to begin preparations for a Presidential election run-off. If the final results from tallying confirm this assessment, the run-off election will be held on November 8, 2005.

However, NEC has yet to receive all the Declarations of Preliminary Tally Results from the counties and will then require time to review these before making any formal announcement on the electoral results for the three elections. The procedures in place require that the Board of Commissioners complete a thorough review of the Declarations. The public is advised that this is a process which will require the patience of the electorate as the Board of Commissioners validates the accuracy of the results.

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

Asked whether there would be campaigning for the run-off election, the Chair said the campaign period for the run-off would be set between the announcement of final results, by October 26, and conduct of the run-off, which is tentatively scheduled for November 8. She emphasized that no extra time would be added beyond this period.

On whether the NEC had received a complaint from a senatorial candidate of the NDPL accusing ALCOP standard bearer Alhaji Kromah of smuggling a large number of foreign nationals into Liberia to vote in the October 11 elections, the Chair said no such complaint had been filed with the Commission. She also refuted reports that some voters who registered in one location were allowed to vote in other locations in contravention of NEC's voting procedures.

Commenting on lapses identified in the preliminary election observation reports by some organizations, the Chair said she agreed with the observers that NEC needed to conduct more voter education activities before the second round. She however applauded NEC staff in the field for working very hard and doing extremely well in the midst of numerous constraints.

Responding to a question regarding an alleged disappearance of ballots in Grand Bassa County, the Chair said she cannot give credence to such rumours. She noted that election magistrates and supervisors in the county had received no report or complaint about any ballots gone missing.

Asked whether the NEC could interfere in the ongoing 'horse trading' (or political bargaining) by political parties in anticipation of a run-off election, the Chair clarified that the NEC has no interest in what strategies political parties and candidates are designing for the run-off. The Chair said it is only through the media that she gets any reports about what the parties are doing.

On whether she had any further details about the recent threat on her life from an anonymous caller, or whether she now believed the incident was a hoax, Cllr. Johnson-Morris said her initial reaction was to dismiss the issue; but considering that there are so many criminal-minded people around, she decided to take the threat seriously. The Chair said the matter has been turned over to the relevant people at the NEC, and if they see the need they will forward it to the Ministry of Justice.

Commenting on reports that there were no party representatives and observers at polling places in Electoral District #4 in Montserrat County, the Chair said every political party and independent candidate had the right to be present at all polling places, and the NEC had issued accreditation to the party and candidate representatives to allow them to monitor the elections. She said if parties failed to assign representatives at any polling place it was their prerogative. On the question of observers, the Chair noted that observers were also free to be present at polling places, but the NEC could not control their movement.

Requested to comment on reports that some party agents ransacked the premises of their standard bearer for allegedly failing to compensate them for monitoring the October 11 elections, the Chair said such incidents fall within the purview of the Ministry of Justice, not the NEC.

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