



STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE NEC

18 October 2005
2:00 pm

☐ PROGRESSIVE RESULTS FROM TALLYING

As of this afternoon, a total of 998, 060 votes have been counted and tallied. 3020 out of 3070 polling places have submitted reports, translating to 98.4% of all polling places for the presidential election have now reported.

The recorded turn out for the polling places which have reported amounts to 73.8%.

Updates include information received from the following counties; Gbarpolu, Upper Nimba and Lofa. Grand Gedeh and Lofa Counties have completed their tallying.

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

CANDIDATE	NUMBER OF VOTES	% PERCENTAGE OF VOTES
1. GEORGE WEAH	272, 283	28.4
2. ELLEN JOHNSON SIRLEAF	189, 053	19.7
3. CHARLES BRUMSKINE	131, 838	13.7
4. WINSTON TUBMAN	87, 819	9.2
5. VARNEY SHERMAN	75, 769	7.9

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

☐ CLARIFICATION ON RESULTS AND SUBSEQUENT RUNOFF

The NEC wishes to emphasize to voters, according to the Electoral Reform Law, a Presidential run-off election is necessary since no candidate received more than half of the votes in the election held on October 11. In the run-off, the registered voters of Liberia will be able to choose between the two candidates that received the most votes in the Presidential election.

An information sheet with Frequently Asked Questions on the run-off will be available for distribution after the press conference.

□ PREPARATIONS FOR A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION RUN-OFF

Operations

The operational plan for the run-off is being finalized. This plan outlines how the run-off election will be executed, looking at various logistical aspects of the process and scheduling important events like deployment of polling kits and retrieval of materials and tallying.

A draft ballot for Presidential election run-off is being designed in preparation for a second round. The production and delivery of this ballot is being planned keeping in mind November 8 as the date for the run-off.

The re-recruitment of polling staff started yesterday, October 17. Training is being planned for presiding officers.

Voter Education

Taking into account the reports from observer groups, the NEC and its international partners have started preparing a broad voter education strategy.

A Civic and Voter Education roundtable even for Civil Society organizations debriefing session took place this morning, October 18. In attendance were civil society organizations; cultural and religious groups; representatives from disabled people's organizations; women's organizations; Ministry of Gender; observer groups, community radio network, IFES, EC, EC Bi-lateral, UNMIL Electoral Division and NEC External Relations and Voter/Civic Education. The meeting discussed lessons learned from the elections and developed ideas on how to apply these lessons for the run-off election.

Points discussed include posting signs in the voting Precincts prior to Election Day in order to prepare voters who arrive early on where they are going to vote and providing larger photos on the ballot paper. Drafts of voter education materials are now being designed, including posters, stickers, banners and other materials for distribution. Once approved these will be procured for reproduction and distributed by the different organizations involved in voter education. The plans thus far, like in the previous voter education campaign, include the participation of Civil Society Organizations, community based organizations, religious groups, community leaders and the Media.

The Commission wishes to remind all voters that their Voter Registration cards will be needed to vote in the run-off, and to continue keeping these safe. Replacement cards will not be issued for the run-off election. Voters should cast their votes at the same polling place they went to on October 11.

□ SUMMARY OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Answering a question on the cost of conducting the run-off election, the Chair said discussions involving the NEC and its partners are being held to finalize the operational plan, and she did not have any exact figures at this stage. Asked to explain why NEC was drawing up an operational plan for the run-off whereas the NEC's election budget already has an allotment of US\$1.0 million for a run-off, the Chair said other preparations were needed besides the issue of funding. She said the Commission is faced with new challenges and will have to recast the budget in consultation with its partners.

Asked about the venue for the printing of ballots for the run-off election, the Chair said she was almost certain that the ballots would be printed in Ghana where the ballots for the first round were also printed.

On reports that a representative candidate from District #4 in Montserrado County is accusing some electoral workers of arm-twisting some voters to cast their ballots for Unity Party during the October 11 elections, the Chair said the NEC has not received any such complaints of interference by electoral workers in Montserrado County. She said the only complaints NEC has received so far have come from Bomi and Gbarpolu Counties.

Asked whether Bomi senatorial candidate, Sando Johnson, had filed a formal complaint with the NEC about alleged irregularities in the elections, the Chair said the senatorial candidate turned out at NEC's office and he was given a complaint form to fill out and return it to the Commission.

On whether the NEC will post the results of the run-off, the Chair said the Commission will use the same procedures as during the first round. She said the results will be posted and party representatives issued copies. She noted that determination of a winner for the run-off would be quicker since there would be only two candidates contesting, as opposed to 22 candidates in the first round.

Asked whether during the run-off it would be possible for people to vote at locations other than where they registered, the Chair said this will not be allowed. She clarified that all registered voters may vote only at the same place where he/she registered and voted during the first round. The Chair stated that this procedure will not be changed because it makes the process less complicated and allows better crowd control.

Commenting on what was discussed at the civil society roundtable meeting, the Chair said the meeting identified some of the shortcomings of the October 11 elections, such as the disorderly way in which queues were arranged and the need for more voter education. She said the meeting also reviewed suggestions of how each of these shortcomings could be addressed.
