



Republic of Liberia
National Elections Commission (NEC)



STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE NEC

21 October 2005
2:00 pm

□ PROGRESSIVE RESULTS FROM TALLYING

All 3070 polling places nationwide have reported and a total of 1,012,673 votes have been tallied. The recorded turn out for the polling places amounts to 74.9%.

These figures are not final yet. The NEC is still awaiting the Declaration of Preliminary Results from some counties, so far Declarations have been received from Bomi, Grand Cape Mount, Margibi and Sinoe.

Reports from recounts of the House of Representative votes in Grand Kru, District 1, and Gbarpolu, District 2, are also pending. The NEC Decision number 52 passed on October 10 states that if there is a difference of less than 50 votes between the leading candidates in the Election for House of Representatives, an automatic recount should take place.

In the case of Grand Kru, a recount was conducted yesterday under the observation of party representatives and observers. This recount however led to the order of the candidates being changed. There will therefore be a second recount of these votes in Grand Kru on Monday where the two candidates have been invited to attend. As always, observers and candidate and party representatives are invited to observe the process.

Presidential Candidates receiving more than five percent of the vote are as follows:

CANDIDATE	NUMBER OF VOTES	% PERCENTAGE OF VALID VOTES
1. GEORGE WEAH	275,265	28.3
2. ELLEN JOHNSON SIRLEAF	192,326	19.8
3. CHARLES BRUMSKINE	135,093	13.9
4. WINSTON TUBMAN	89,623	9.2
5. VARNEY SHERMAN	76,403	7.8

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

☐ ANNOUNCEMENT OF FINAL RESULTS

The NEC wishes to advise that the above figures are to be considered Preliminary until they are certified by the Board of Commissioners and declared final. The Commission will declare the final results on Wednesday October 26, at 10am. The Media will be duly invited to attend this event.

☐ RUN-OFF ELECTION POLLING PROCEDURES

Assistance to voters

Following the October 11 Elections, the NEC has reviewed various recommendations and one of these was on the issue of assistance to voters. In order to facilitate the voting of those who need assistance, voters are encouraged to bring relatives or friends to assist them, as Presiding Officers will no longer be allowed to assist them.

Inking procedure

The inking of the fingers for the Run-Off will be done by the ballot box controller/inker. The inker will apply ink on the left hand index finger of the voter.

Voting locations

All registered voters will vote at the same place they did for the October 11 elections. All efforts will be made to avoid confusion with queues, such as using barrier tapes and posting of signs prior to voters lining up. Voting is to be conducted between 8am and 6pm, as on October 11.

☐ REQUEST FOR ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORTS

The NEC is constrained to remind all campaign committees of Candidates, Political Parties, Alliances and Coalitions that their CFO1 Forms, Annual Financial Reports are over due. Specifically, the Campaign committees were required to submit their reports on August 31, 2005.

While the Annual Financial Reports of Parties and Alliances were due September 1, 2005, similarly, the first Campaign Financial Reports were due on October 1, 2005. The second Campaign Financial Reports are due on October 26, 2005.

Upon hearing this announcement, all delinquent Committees and Parties are advised to send said Reports on or before October 26, 2005. Failure to do so shall compel the Commission to institute the appropriate measures stipulated for non-compliance.

❑ OBSERVER REPORTS

Observer reports from various observer groups have been submitted to the NEC and are available to the media after the press conference. Recommendations have been taken into consideration by NEC, as evidenced by the effort to incorporate these suggestions in the polling procedures for the upcoming Run-Off Election.

The NEC Chair conducted a brief Voter Education session on the Run-off election prior to proceeding to Questions and Answers.

❑ SUMMARY OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Asked whether she has received more death threats, the Chair said someone informed her that some people were planning arson attacks on the homes of all the NEC Commissioners if their candidate lost the election. She said the plotters were reportedly mapping out the homes of the Commissioners. The Chair dismissed the threats and described those behind the plan as “frustrated, ignorant people who don’t know how to handle their situation”. “We are waiting for them,” Chairman Johnson-Morris noted.

On whether the NEC had received any protests from candidates, the Chair disclosed that more than 20 complaints have been filed with the Commission. She however emphasized that people will have to produce tangible evidence to support their allegations. She said the NEC had taken measures to minimize the role of the Presiding Officer as regards providing assistance to unlettered and elderly voters.

Asked whether the November 8 Run-Off election could be delayed if a presidential candidate protests the results of the October elections, the Chair said the official time for post-election complaints is after the announcement of final results. If NEC receives a formal complaint within the required timeframe the Commission will conduct an investigation, she stated. The Chair said she does not think this will affect the November 8 date.

Answering a question regarding what prompted a recount of votes in Grand Kru, District 1, the Chair explained that according to the NEC Regulations an automatic recount must take place if there is a difference of less than 50 votes between the leading candidates in the House of Representatives race.

Concerning whether candidates may begin campaigning now for the Run-Off election, the Chair clarified that no candidate or party is allowed to start campaigning. She said the NEC has to declare the final official results of the October 11 elections before it will announce when the campaign may begin.

On whether the NEC has started printing of ballot for the Run-Off, the Chair said printing has not yet started but the design of the ballot has been worked on. She said NEC

is making necessary adjustments to enable voters to more easily recognize the candidate of their choice.

Regarding civic education initiatives, the Chair said the NEC is working on a number of activities to better educate voters for the Run-Off and minimize the number of invalid votes. She said, for example, the ballot design will incorporate larger photographs of the candidates (2 presidential and 2 vice presidential). The Chair said the critical issue is getting people to vote even if the candidate they voted for in the first round is no longer in the race. "You still have the right to determine who will be the president. Whoever is elected president will be president for all Liberians," she noted.

Requested to give a breakdown on the number of excess ballots used or left over from the 700,000 excess ballots printed for the October 11 elections, the Chair said the statistics were available at the Data Centre and on the NEC website. She said that all ballots had been accounted for during the counting procedures. She said media interested in information on how the excess ballots were used could obtain it from those sources, and they could determine whether the printing of excess ballots was justified. Concerning invalid votes, she said all information about invalid votes was also available at the Data Centre and on the NEC website. She pointed out also that each political party representative present at the polling place had a worksheet indicating this information.

Asked to comment on why there was a lower percentage of invalid votes in some rural parts of Liberia than urban areas, the Chair said this was a surprise that she herself could not explain. She cited remote areas like Grand Kru and Sinoe counties which had fewer invalid votes than Montserrado, where voters had greater exposure to the media and more civic education. The Chair urged the media to help with the civic education campaign to better prepare voters for the Run-Off.

Asked whether it was acceptable for a candidate that is out of the elections to discourage his/her supporters from voting in the Run-Off, the Chair it is an election offence to prevent people from voting.
