

NEC, GOL, PARTNERS SIGNED 2011 ELECTIONS PROJECT DOCUMENT

(NEC/Monrovia/April 15, 2010) In preparation for the 2011 General and Presidential elections, the National Elections Commission (NEC) made significant inroads when the Commission along with the Government of Liberia and the International Community signed the 2011 Elections Project Document at the headquarters of the NEC on April 14, 2011.

The 2011 Elections Project Document contains all that is required to conduct the 2011 elections. The document was evolved by the NEC in close collaboration with line government ministries and agencies. The total estimated cost of the project contained in the document is US\$39.3 million out of which the Government of Liberia has committed US\$12.1 million to be bankrolled over a two-year period. Already, the government of Spain has contributed US\$750,000 while pledges towards this basket fund so far made by development partners amount to US\$15.6 million. The rest of the projected amount is expected to be mobilized before the end of this year. The basket fund will be managed by the UNDP.

The Minister of Planning and Economic Affairs, Amara Konneh, signed for the Government of Liberia, UNMIL Deputy SRSG and UNDP Resident Representative, Moustapha Soumare, signed for the International Community while NEC Chairman, James M. Fromayan, signed for the NEC in the full gaze of the media and scores of personalities from a cross spectrum of the international community, government officials, civil society organizations, political parties and a host of stakeholders.

During the signing ceremony, the Chairman of the NEC, James M. Fromayan, said the Commission was delighted to see the formalization of the Elections Project Document through the signing ceremony. The NEC Chair iterated that the ceremony was a significant milestone in the electoral history of Liberia .

“Let the word go far and beyond that the 2011 elections project is on course and the NEC is poised to conduct the elections in a manner that will be free, fair and transparent”, the NEC Chairman availed.

On the capacity of the NEC to handle the 2011 elections, Chairman Fromayan said, the elections will be an endogenously driven process led by the NEC, adding however that this is not to negate the fact that Liberia ’s international partners will work alongside the NEC.

Already, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the National Democratic Institute (NDI), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU) among others partners are working in-sync with the NEC in a bid to plan the 2011 elections and build workable electoral modules that are germane for the conduct of the 2011 elections.

In an apparent word of caution to the Executive and Legislative branches of government, Chairman Fromayan said, the Commission has always reminded the Liberian people that the Commission needs enough time to prepare for the 2011 elections. He again used the occasion to call for the passage of the Threshold Bill so that the NEC can have the legal framework to put in gear all of the programs that are sine-qua-non to the conduct of the 2011 elections.

For his part, the Deputy SRSG and Resident Representative of the UNDP, Moustapha Soumare, said the Project Document is a comprehensive presentation of all the essential requirements for the NEC to conduct credible, free and fair elections.

The Deputy SRSG named four key areas that the project will address. They include:

- Building the operational and professional capacity of the NEC;
- Conducting the key exercises of the Electoral Process including boundary delimitation, voter registration, civic/voters' education, domestic observation, women's participation, NEC's relations with political parties and training for security;
- Enhancing the electoral law reform and providing legal counsel to NEC and stakeholders' workshops on legal framework; and
- Support linkages between NEC and the relevant committees of the Legislature in the context of the Legislative Modernization Strategy, and seeks to build good working relationship between the NEC and the political parties.

“We are very much aware of the efforts of Government to pass the necessary legislations to establish the legal framework for the elections”, Mr. Sumare said while at the same time reminding political actors that “any further delay in the passage of the relevant Bills will have deleterious effect on the ability of the National Elections Commission to conduct the electoral Process.”

Also making remarks, the Minister of Planning and Economic Affairs, Amara Konneh described the signing ceremony as “an extraordinary day for Liberia” stressing that implementing the elections 2011 project document will mean that all Liberians will have a choice to exercise their franchise come 2011.

Minister Konneh promised that government is committed to meeting its obligation of US\$12.1 million over a two year period, saying, this is how government demonstrates that it is committed to ensuring the holding of free, fair and transparent elections. Mr. Konneh assured that the Executive will work with the Legislature to fast track the passage of the Threshold Bill.