

**Statement Marking the Official Launch of the Civic and Voter
Education Campaign
For 2017 Presidential and Representative Elections
National Elections Commission**

**Your Excellences, Ambassadors Accredited to Liberia
Representatives of ECOWAS
Representative USAID
Representative of UNMIL
Representatives of NEC International Partners
Government Officials
Representatives of Other International Organizations
Representatives of Political Parties
Representatives of Civil Society Organizations
Staff of NEC
Distinguished Compatriots.**

In keeping with section 2.9 (Y) of the New Elections Law, the National Elections Commission (NEC) has the duty, among others, “to conduct programs to educate the citizens of Liberia about elections and referenda and their democratic rights related to them and to inform them about voter registration events and election and referendum events.” Pursuant to this statutory requirement, we have assembled here today to officially launch the Civic and Voter Education Campaign for the 2017 Presidential and Representative Elections. The importance of this occasion cannot be overemphasized because it marks the beginning of the process of ensuring that voters are provided the education necessary to make informed decisions throughout this electoral process; and to understand their Civic responsibilities and roles in these elections.

To ensure that a voter is adequately prepared for the elections, he/she must be knowledgeable of the steps and procedures that lead to the effective exercise of his/her franchise on Election Day. He/she must know the purpose of the elections, the time and place of the elections and why his/her participation in the electoral process is important to the democratic process.

Cognizant of its responsibility, the NEC has put in place the requisite administrative structures and the necessary strategies to reach out to every county, city, village and clan within the borders of Liberia to create the necessary awareness for the maximum participation of all eligible citizens in these Elections.

To guarantee the effective implementation and success of the civic and voter education outreach we launch today, the Commission has recruited and deployed 436 civic educators and 219 gender mobilizers across the country for a period of two months to carry out door to door outreach as well as face to face interactions with community dwellers. Additionally,

international partners of the NEC, including United Nations Development Program (**UNDP**), the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (**IFES**) and National Democratic Institute (**NDI**), have recruited over ninety (90) civil society organizations from across the country to assist the NEC in conducting its civic and voter education. These service providers who shall be properly identified, will frequent your communities and homes, to talk with you and distribute civic and voter educational fliers.

Considering the importance the Commission attaches to gender mainstreaming and the need for total inclusion of minority groups in the electoral process, gender mobilizers will work to encourage women and women groups, as well as people with disabilities, to actively participate in the electoral process. This will be done by making sure they understand how to navigate the challenges of the electoral process and to encourage and assure them that their votes are just as important as any other voters'.

Furthermore, a very important component of the Civic and voter education campaign is the use of the media, especially community based radio stations, to spread the messages through jingles, special talk shows and public service announcements to discuss the steps and procedures as well as the roles, rights and responsibilities of citizens and voters during the election.

Ladies and gentlemen, to sustain our emerging democracy, we must exercise maturity and a peaceful approach to issues of national concern. Election is a National exercise that must be guided by integrity, transparency and fair play if it must help in strengthening our young democratic way of life.

Democratic elections offer a choice between peace and uncertainty hence, it is incumbent upon all of us during this electoral period to conduct ourselves peacefully at all times, respecting the rights of others as we equally would want them to respect us. Election must be seen as the only viable pathway for people desiring state power, because it affords voters the opportunity to voluntarily decide on who they prefer to lead them.

We are therefore encouraging political parties and their supporters; and all citizens to remain civil and to conduct themselves in an orderly manner during the campaign period and the entire elections.

On this note; and on behalf of the Board of Commissioners of the National Elections Commission, I do hereby declare the Civic and Voter Education Campaign for the 2017 Presidential and Representative Elections duly Launched.

Thank You!