



The National Elections Commission on the eve of Voter Registration kickoff held a Press Conference on Tuesday January 31, 2017 at its headquarters to keep the public informed about the Voter Registration process. The NEC Boss Cllr. Jerome George Korkoya delivered a statement and responded to questions posed by journalists.

January 31, 2017

- Madam Co-chairman and members of the Board of Commissioners, Staffers of the Commission, Members of the press, My Fellow Liberians, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,
- I am pleased to welcome you to this very important press conference. This press conference is being held consistent with our responsibility to keep the Liberian people informed on the electoral processes;
- In this press conference, we will provide update on the electoral process, particularly the Voter Registration Exercise, The Lofa County Electoral District #1 By-election and Some of the newly promulgated laws governing the electoral process;

- As you all may be aware, the National Elections Commission will conduct Presidential and Representative Elections this year; occasioned by the expiration of the tenure of the President and Members of the Honorable House of Representatives.
- Prior to those elections, a number of activities are being undertaken by the Commission geared toward the free, fair and credible conduct of the elections. One of such activities is the 2017 Voter Registration Exercise.

What is Voter Registration and why is it Important in an Election?

- Voter Registration is the process by which the eligibility of individuals to vote in an election is established. The last time we conducted voter registration was in 2011. In 2014 we conducted update on the voter roll. The voter roll created in 2011 is no longer valid because it cannot be relied upon for accounting and planning purposes. Since those registrations, some of the registered voters have died while others have travelled. As such, the voter roll no longer offers realistic basis for conducting critical elections like those we are about to conduct.
- Besides, Article 77 of our constitution in part requires that Liberian citizens who have attained the age of 18 be registered as voters and to vote in public elections and referenda.
- Chapter III, Section 3.1 (a) of the New Elections Law of 1986 as amended in 2014 gives the NEC authority to conduct voter registration and voter roll update in Liberia;
- Therefore, the NEC will on Wednesday, February 1, 2017, commence the registration of eligible Liberians to vote in the 2017 General Elections and subsequent public elections.
- The registration period will run from February 1-March 7, 2017. Registration centers will be opened from 8:00AM to 5:00PM, Monday to Saturday. During this period, the NEC is targeting 2.5 million Liberians to be registered. This estimate is based on LISGIS population growth projection;
- After the 2017 Voter Registration Exercise, all previous voter cards issued by the Commission in 2005, 2011 and 2014 will no longer be valid. This means that no one will be allowed to vote during the 2017 Elections with voter cards other than those acquired during the 2017 Voter Registration Exercise;

- The 2017 Voter Registration Exercise will provide an opportunity for citizens who have attained the voting age of 18 years or older to get on the voter roll, enable citizens who have changed address to register and vote in their new communities of residence and afford citizens who have returned to the country the opportunity to get on the voter roll.

Preparation for the 2017 VR Exercise

- To conduct a new voter registration, the NEC had to procure voter registration materials; majority of which was procured overseas. Most of the materials including cameras, solar panels, and forms are in country and have been delivered to the various NEC warehouses in the counties for onward deployment to registration centers. The last batch of the OMR forms is expected in country shortly.
- We are confident that the materials in country are sufficient to start the process while we await the arrival of the remaining forms. We guarantee that this will in no way hamper the process.
- A total of 416 Registration Supervisors have been trained and deployed. 8,400 registration staff including Registrar, Registration Clerks, Shaders and Photographers have also been trained and deployed.
- Assorted CVE materials including flyers, posters, banners etc. have been printed and are in circulation to mobilize citizens to go and register. These materials are in addition to dramas, jingles and special messages being aired on various national and community radios across the country.
- 438 Civic Voter educators with 219 gender mobilizers have been trained and deployed;
- 108 CSOs, CBOs and faith based organizations have been hired by NEC and development partners to disseminate CVE messages on the VR process;
- One of the things we seek to achieve by the new registration process is cure voter apathy due to long distances travelled by electorate.
- Following the 2011 Elections, the Commission in collaboration with the Liberia Media Center conducted a survey to establish means by which we could improve the electoral process.

Creation of New Registration Centers

- One of the things that came out of that survey was that most people in leeward counties were finding it difficult to access the electoral process due to long distances they were made to travel to register and vote.
- Based on those findings, the NEC approved the creation of additional 300 registration centers to add to the existing 1,780. This brings the total number of registration centers to 2,080.
- The major indicators used for the creation of the new centers were: (1) reduce distance between polling places and (2) Reduce population cluster in polling places;
- We know the additional 300 centers may not cover all the places we would have loved to establish centers but we are sure this will help to reduce distances between registration centers significantly.

The Lofa County By-election

- Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, while we undertake activities for the conduct of the 2017 Elections, we have also been required to by law to conduct a by-election in Electoral District #1, Lofa County.
- Is public knowledge now, the by-election was caused by the passing of Hon. Eugene Fallah Kpakar.
- Replacement of lost/damaged voters cards was held in the district and 1,128 voter cards were replaced;
- A total of nine candidates representing eight political parties and an independent have been certified by the Commission to contest the by-election on February 28, 2017.

Rule of Laws Governing the Electoral Process

- In a publication titled, Establishing Legal Framework for Democratic Elections, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) notes that democratic elections serve to settle fairly and peacefully the competition among those seeking to exercise governmental powers as representatives of the people.
- It points out that the only way to peacefully and fairly settle said competition is through the rule of law;
- The NEC is dismayed and disappointed by the willful violation of its regulations on pre-campaign by individuals who are aspiring to represent the people.

- It is unfair for people to begin to put up banners, flyers and posters aimed at selling themselves when campaign has not been declared open;
- The Commission has revised the Regulations and Guidelines for Political Parties and Independent Candidates with stiff penalties including the rejection of nomination application of individuals who are caught violating the campaign regulation.
- The Commission will not shy away from applying the law on violators no matter who they are;

Female Participation

- In Chapter IV, Section 4.5(c) of the 2014 amended Elections Laws, it is required that political parties and coalitions in the submission of their candidates list to the Commission should endeavor to ensure that the list of candidates has no less than 30% of its members from each gender;
- The NEC interpretation of that provision is that no list should have less than 30% men or women on it;
- Political parties will be required to show proof of endeavoring to ensure women inclusion on their list;

Trucking

- Tomorrow, February 1, 2017 marks the commencement of the Voter Registration process in Liberia. During the VR process, it is expected that eligible Liberians will turn up to register in their communities of residence.
- No one is permitted to leave his/her community of residence to register in another community in which he/she has absolutely no dealing. No trucking is allowed.
- For us trucking is when an individual who is not a resident of a particular place is transported by whatever means whether it is by foot, bicycle, motor bike, sedan, jeep, bus, and truck etc. to register and vote in said community.
- Violators will be turned over to the Ministry of Justice for persecution;

Commendation

- To get to the start of the 2017 VR process has not been and would probably not have happened on schedule without the support of some individuals and institutions.
- The Commission wishes to extend its profound thanks to Mrs. Elfreda Tamba, Commissioner General of the LRA and the LRA family for their deep understanding of the work of the NEC and their kind assistance in getting us here.
- Without flouting the laws Mrs. Tamba has been very helpful allowing us to interrupt her private time to get our materials in country. We are grateful;
- The Commission is also grateful to its traditional development partners, USAID through IFES, EU through UNDP, Swedish Government and all other friendly government for the kind assistance in helping us get to the start of this process;
- Last but not the least we want to extend special thanks to the Government of Liberia for its continuous support to the electoral process by providing needed funds even in these difficult times to procure and deliver our registration material on time. We are very grateful and look forward to a more cordial relationship as we move toward the main process in October.
I thank you!



Reporters/Journalists posed during the press conference at the NEC Headquarters