



**ROUND TABLE DISCUSSIONS ON EARLY WARNING
MECHANISMS FOR EFFECTIVE CONFLICT PREVENTION BY
HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS**

**Organised By
THE UGANDA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**

ARE WE READY FOR THE ELECTIONS IN 2011?

A paper presented by

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Allow me to express my gratitude to the organisers of the workshop for the timeliness in addressing the theme on, **“Early Warning Mechanisms for Effective Conflict Prevention by Human Rights Defenders.”**

On its part, the Electoral Commission is mandated under Article 61 of the 1995 Constitution of Uganda (as amended), to undertake specific roles geared towards ensuring that democracy prevails at the various levels of governance in Uganda. The most effective way through which this can be attained is when effective measures are put in place to ensure that the Ugandan voters exercise their rights in a free and fair environment. In execution of the electoral process, the Commission recognizes and is obliged to the protection and promotion of voters’ rights enshrined in the Constitution and in the laws governing elections.

The Electoral Commission is very appreciative of the partnership developed with the Uganda Human Rights Commission and this is indeed an opportunity for the EC to inform the various stakeholders of the state of its readiness for the General Elections of 2011.

2.0 PREPARATORY PLANS FOR THE 2011 ELECTIONS

Soon after the 2006 General Elections, the Commission held an evaluation workshop to review its performance over those elections. A lot of lessons were drawn from the exercise and measures for future improvements were documented. As you may recall, there were a number of court petitions and the judgements that were made in those cases, act as areas for critical attention and improvement in service delivery.

A number of by-elections that the Commission has conducted since the 2006 General Elections have been better managed because of the lessons picked from the major exercise.

As part of its planning mechanisms geared at ensuring efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of its mandate come 2010/2011, the Electoral Commission drew up a detailed 5 year Strategic Plan spanning the period 2007 - 2011.

From the Strategic Plan, the Electoral Commission came up with detailed and specific duties, activities, timeframes and financial implications, necessary for managing the 2011 General Elections. This is the 2010/2011 General Elections Roadmap. The Roadmap is based on the current electoral laws including those already proposed and submitted to Government by the Electoral Commission.

The Commission proposed to Government and to some development partners, to have the coming General Elections Roadmap managed as a phased project, that is, instead of funding the entire electoral budget in the election year, it was prudent that funding be spread through 3 Financial Years i.e. 2008/2009, 2009/2010 and 2010/2011. The major objectives of managing the 2011 General Elections as a phased project were to:-

- Avoid last minute rush in implementation of electoral activities;
- Provide a basis for better planning, implementation, benchmarking and performance assessment;
- Improve electoral administration;
- Improve stakeholder participation in the electoral process;
- Deliver timely electoral results; and
- Contribute towards good governance and security.

The Electoral Commission has already shared the phased project/roadmap to manage the 2011 General Elections with among others; the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, the Legal and

Parliamentary Affairs Committee and the Prime Minister. Due to the limited resource envelop of the nation, a number of adjustments have been proposed from the meeting with some of the stakeholders. The Commission has proposed to cover different activities as highlighted below in the 3 phases:-

2.1 Phase I Plans for the 2011 Roadmap (FY 2008/2009)

From the proposed Roadmap, the Commission plans to procure the following inputs in the FY 2008/2009. It is important that the materials below are procured in good time to allow installation, testing and operationalising of the general update of the National Voters Register.

- Data communication infrastructure
- Servers, computers, printers and accessories
- Electronic document management and archives systems
- Voter registration forms
- Voter registration equipment (cameras and accessories)

As part of its proactiveness, the Commission has also submitted 18 major areas in the enabling electoral laws that should be amended before the 2011 General Elections. If these areas are attended to by 26/2/1010, there will be adequate room to formulate voter education messages, designing and conducting of training programmes, access to funds as well as definition and procurement of the necessary materials.

In the same period, the Commission has also proposed the cut off period for the formation of new Administrative Units/Local Governments. This will not only enable the timely re-organisation of the existing administrative Units and polling stations, but if implemented as desired, it will save the Commission from logistical and budgetary implications that may differ from those already discussed with some stakeholders.

2.2 Phase II Plans for 2011 Roadmap (FY 2009/2010)

These include plans and budgetary implications to:-

- Procure Specialised equipment, materials and computer software
- Recruitment, training and deployment of the Commission's own staff at Parish and Sub County levels
- Re-organisation of polling stations
- Institute the cut-off period for registration of voters, and
- Commence the general update of the National Voters' Register

2.3 Phase III Plans for the 2011 Roadmap (FY 2010/2011)

These include plans and budgetary implications to:-

- Display the National Voters' Register
- Nomination of candidates for various levels of governance
- Procurement of ballot papers for various levels
- Polling period for elections at various levels of governance

From the above Roadmap, the Commission has received support from a number of stakeholders but achieving the actualities of the plans remains another issue to be accomplished. However, the Commission is confident that if the above plans can be implemented as stated, the following will be the benefits:-

- more timely informed stakeholders and electorate
- a credible voters' register
- efficiency and effectiveness
- timely procurement of materials and equipment
- value for money
- professionalism and a favourable working environment for all stakeholders
- delivery of free, fair and more transparent electoral activities

3.0 STRATEGIES DEvised BY THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION IN IMPROVING DELIVERY OF ITS CONSTITUTIONAL MANDATE TOWARDS 2011

Despite the fact that there are numerous challenges that have to be overcome to improve the administration of elections in Uganda, the Commission has devised strategies that have been tested through a number of elections and by-elections conducted since 2002. Many of these strategies were developed before the 2006 General Elections while others followed the loopholes cited in the various court judgements after those elections. With the cooperation of all stakeholders, it is hoped that these measures will continue to contribute to the conduct of free and fair elections. The measures include, among others:-

1. Use of a photo-bearing voters' register
2. Timely involvement and regular consultation with stakeholders in the planning and delivery processes. Since the 2006 General Election period, there has been creation of the National/District/Constituency Liaison Committees aimed at speedy resolution of conflicts that may arise during the election period
3. Strengthened cooperation with Uganda Police who are responsible for all security matters during the electoral period
4. Transparent identification, recruitment and training of election officials. The cooperation of political parties/candidates is paramount in these undertakings. The Commission encourages the political parties/candidates to send their agents to be trained with the electoral officials to ensure transparency in all electoral processes
5. Intensified voter education and training of the electorate and election officials
6. Timely publicity of the electoral programmes and activities to all stakeholders
7. Enhanced monitoring and supervision of all the electoral activities
8. Strong denunciation of all forms of electoral violence and sensitisation of the candidates to be tolerant of each other

9. Limited convoys at nominations and during campaigns to minimise clashes amongst intending/contesting candidates and their supporters;
10. Use of security seals on Declaration of Results Envelopes to counteract tampering with results before tallying, including serialising the form(s) and the Results Delivery Envelopes
11. Introduction of Complaints' Desks at National and District levels on polling day. Participating political parties/candidates agents' are members.
12. In a bid to counteract the disenfranchisement of voters, the Commission has now instituted a period after the official display of the voters register, to display, at parish level, the names recommended for deletion. This is done to provide natural justice
13. Invitation of political parties/candidates' agents to the tally centres to witness the tallying of results process
14. Timely submission of proposals for amendment of relevant electoral laws
15. Strategic planning in election management
16. The Commission organized a 2 day stakeholders' workshop on 10-11/09/2008, to review the already proposed Code of Conduct for Political Parties and Organisations. The revised version is now with the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs who will forward it to Parliament for final approval. Once in place, the code will go a long way in regulating the actions of the candidates and parties in the current Multi Party Political Dispensation.

4.0 ARE WE READY FOR THE 2011 ELECTIONS?

The most crucial necessities for readiness in the coming General Elections are; strategic planning, timely legal amendments, timely funding, a credible voters' register, competent staff at all levels, timely voter education and training, active participation and support from all stakeholders and a well informed electorate.

On its part, and on paper, the Electoral Commission is psychologically prepared to organise and conduct the coming 2011 General Elections. However, actualisation/implementation of the plans will depend on the timely provision of **all** the necessary inputs and in the timeframe that must be directly conforming to the Constitutional timelines.

The Electoral Commission therefore appeals to every stakeholder to be accountable and take the 2011 election period as an issue of paramount importance. It is going to be a complex exercise and therefore every stakeholder should strive to play his/her part with utmost care and patriotism to ensure that Uganda at large, successfully achieves the goal of free and fair continuity of democratic governance, peace and stability, and all the rest will fall in line!

FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY

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