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9<sup>th</sup> April 2009

**Press Statement by the Chairman, Electoral Commission on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> April 2009**

Our dear stakeholders from the media, it is a pleasure to once again interact with, and share with you briefs on several on-going electoral programmes and activities.

1. Elections and By-election in Local Government Councils

As you are already aware, the programme for elections and by-elections to fill vacancies in Local Government Councils, newly created Sub-Counties, Town Councils, Parishes and Wards in the entire country commenced on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2009, and will be concluded with polling on 21<sup>st</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> May 2009.

Some exercises have been concluded, while others are still underway. For example, the display of the Voters' Register is on going in the all concerned electoral areas throughout Uganda. The nomination of candidates commenced on 7<sup>th</sup> April and was concluded yesterday, 8<sup>th</sup> April 2009.

Meanwhile, the Commission would like to clarify on the figures of vacancies to be filled during the elections and by-elections in Local Government Councils, newly created Sub-Counties, Town Councils, Parishes and Wards in the entire country.

The statistics of the vacancies to be filled have been changing due to the fact that on hearing the Commission's programme (to fill the vacancies), some districts which had not forwarded lists of vacancies at the right time moved to do so, while some which were submitted at the right time lacked supporting documents like Minutes of District Council Meetings and some were submitted from offices other than those provided in the Law.

While a provisional figure of 1,161 vacancies was initially given during the first press conference on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2009, further communication and reconciliation of data between the Electoral Commission and Local Government officials (Clerks to Council)

resulted in a reduction in some electoral areas and an increase in others. Consequently, the revised figure of 1,468 was communicated to the public on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2009, during a stakeholders meeting held in the Electoral Commission premises. This same adjusted position was communicated to political parties still as a provisional status.

Following the conclusion of the exercise of demarcating electoral areas of newly created Local Governments which took place from 5<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> March 2009, the number of vacancies was further revised to the current very final figure of 1,474.

Nominations were conducted on 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> April 2009 to fill a total of 1474 vacancies. Reports from the field indicate the exercise has been successfully concluded.

The Commission kept giving out provisional figures of vacancies in the spirit of transparency; it is not true, therefore, that there is any plan to manipulate this exercise to favour or disenfranchise any voters. We reiterate our commitment to delivering free and fair elections to all Ugandans, irrespective of the political outlook.

The Commission has no legal mandate to declare vacancies nor a legal requirement to compile and distribute such information. The Electoral Commission is just exercising natural justice.

## 2. Challenges encountered in filling these vacancies

The Commission has encountered the following challenges while making preparations to conduct the elections and by-elections listed:

- Uncontrolled creation of Administrative areas by the District Local Governments: the Ministry of Local Government should be requested to put a deadline to this practice otherwise, to enable us plan smoothly.
- Against the background therefore, the Commission requests for timely release of funding to re-organize and demarcate all new areas that will have been added onto the existing ones and to facilitate streamlining of polling station locations before the 2011 General Elections.
- Failure by some District Councils to report vacancies in the stipulated timeframe and procedure.

## 3. Launch of the Voter Education Project for Northern Uganda

On 23<sup>rd</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> February 2009, the Electoral Commission launched a voter education project in Arua and Lira districts respectively.

The project, which is funded by The European Union together with Government of Uganda, will be implemented in secondary schools and tertiary institutions in Northern Uganda, has the objective of realizing an educated electorate in future elections.

This project targets the youth basically because these are young people who have grown up in a war situation and have in most cases been left out on many issues related to their rights, duties and responsibilities in the governance and democratization processes.

#### 4. Integration of Voter Education in the School Curriculum

The Electoral Commission has been working with the Ministry of Education and Sports, through the National Curriculum Development Center (NCDC), to integrate voter education in the school syllabus in Uganda.

On Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2009, the project to implement the integration was officially launched at the NCDC headquarters in Kyambogo. This integration project is a long-term strategic objective to ensure that all Ugandans of six years and above acquire core knowledge about elections and democracy.

The integration of voter education in the school curriculum at Primary and Secondary level is expected to result into the development of basic democratic values and principles among the citizens, which are invaluable in achieving effective participation in decision making for the good governance of Uganda.

The Commission acknowledges with appreciation the support of the European Union towards implementation of this project.

#### 5. Conclusion

The Commission appeals for calm and tolerance during this exercise; as Ugandans, we must put the overall interests of the nation above individual/ party aspirations and seek for unity in diversity.

Electoral Commission officials will supervise the exercise to ensure compliance with the electoral laws. Candidates, agents, voters, the media and the public should support us by reporting any cases of deviation from the guidelines, during this by-election programme.

There is the display exercise going –on voters are urged to go and check their particulars in these centres, so that they can vote without any other hindrances come polling day.

The Commission has been mandated by the court to facilitate the interim council of the District comprising of Maracha and Terego counties to make a vote on the location of the District Headquarters and therefore the name of the District and also to organize the elections of the interim chairperson of the District.

We further call upon the people of Uganda to support the above programmes and activities, as the country prepares for the next election cycle, leading to the 2011 General Elections.

For God and my Country,

Eng. Dr. Badru M. Kiggundu  
**CHAIRMAN, ELECTORAL COMMISSION**