



ADM72/01

12th May 2010

Statement on the progress of the General Update of the National Voters' Register and other issues related to the 2011 General Elections, Wednesday 12th May 2010

Introduction

Our esteemed partners, members of the press,

I welcome you to the Electoral Commission premises, and wish to thank you for the important role you play in informing the general public about the planned activities of the Commission.

In order to update the general public with information on the progress of implementation of the Roadmap for the 2010-2011 General Elections, the Electoral Commission shall conduct a media briefing every Wednesday at 10:00am.

Today, the Commission will update you on various ongoing electoral activities as follows:

Progress of the nationwide exercise for update of the National Voters' Register

As you are already aware, the exercise for update of the National Voters' Register commenced on Monday 3rd May 2010, and shall be concluded on 4th June 2010.

As of today, Wednesday 12th May, 2010, the Electoral Commission has dispatched registration units to the various districts of Uganda for the purpose of Update of the National Voters' Register. Accordingly, eligible voters are called upon to turn up at the designated update centers within their respective parishes and register.

The Commission has been making continuous assessment of the progress of the exercise, and has taken note of emerging issues, especially technical and logistical challenges.

The Commission also received valuable input on the progress of the exercise from various stakeholders during the regional stakeholders' meetings held on Friday 7th May in eight different regions of Uganda.

I wish to assure the public that all these issues are going to be addressed to ensure that the exercise is successful.

As one of the measures to bring services closer to the people, the Commission is finalising a plan to set up a mobile update/registration center in at least two strategic locations in Kampala City. This shall enable urban-based eligible Ugandan citizens of 18 years and above, who have not had their pictures and bio-data taken before by the Electoral Commission for purposes of registration, to do so.

At the same time, any voter who knows the particulars of his or her voting location, namely, the district, county, sub-county, parish and village/polling station, can present himself or herself to be registered at any of our registration centers.

Concerning the voter data capture rate

The Commission has received complaints from the general public that the time taken to register a voter is very long, and it may not be possible to register all eligible voters by the 4th of June 2010.

The Commission wishes to clarify that the relatively longer time taken to register an applicant, is because of the amount of data required from the applicant. For the avoidance of doubt, this registration exercise includes capturing of the following data:

1. Photograph
2. Thumb print (for all available fingers)
3. The signature of applicant
4. Additional bio data, namely, the person's names, parents' names, date of birth, sub county and parish of origin, as well as sub county and parish of residence; and,
5. The preferred polling station which must be within the parish of origin or residence.

The public should carefully note the following activities that are taking place alongside the exercise of registration of persons of 18 years and above:

- The Commission has availed the National Voters' Register for each voting location, so that existing voters check and confirm their registration status.
- Registered voters, whose photographs were taken, but do not appear on the National Voters' Register, should turn up and have their photos retaken; and,
- All registered voters who wish to transfer to new voting locations should turn up and fill the necessary forms (requesting for such transfer).

The Commission calls upon the general public and particularly eligible voters, to remain calm, because every willing eligible citizen will have opportunity to register during this exercise.

Concerning ongoing registration of supporters by political parties

It has come to the attention of the Commission that various political parties and organisations are compiling registers of their supporters. This is done as part of preparations for conducting and holding their grass root elections (primaries) and national delegates' conferences, respectively.

Apparently, some members of the public are not able to recognise the difference between registration as a member of a political party/organisation, and registration as a voter.

The Commission wishes to clarify that while political parties and organisations are registering their supporters in register books bearing their respective party colours, the Electoral Commission is conducting a computer-based registration.

This registration includes taking the applicants' photograph, the thumb print (for all available fingers), the signature of applicant, and additional bio data, namely, the person's names, parents' names, date of birth, sub county and parish of origin, as well as sub county and parish of residence, as well as the preferred polling station which must be within the parish of origin or residence.

Political parties and organisations are warned not to confuse the public because this will frustrate the compilation of a credible National Voters' Register which means their candidates will not have voters to nominate them and support them in the elections.

Concerning reports of interference by local leaders in the update exercise

The Commission has received reports of interference by some local leaders in the update exercise, for example, attempts to direct activities of our registration officials.

This conduct is unacceptable; local leaders should desist from any activity that may derail the update exercise, and instead work with the Commission in mobilising eligible persons in your areas to turn up and register.

One such example is one Mr. Kafumbe Robert, of Makindye Division, Kampala District, who has been going around masquerading as Returning Officer for the Division.

The Electoral Commission has not appointed the said Mr. Kafumbe and hereby warns the public that he is not authorised to conduct any business on behalf of the Commission. Failure by Mr. Kafumbe and others like him, to heed to this warning, shall result in severe action in accordance with the law.

The Commission is also investigating reports of case of transporting persons from one given area to register as voters in another area. The law only allows for eligible persons to register at a preferred polling station which must be within their parish of origin or residence.

The Commission wishes to clarify that any voter who knows the particulars of his or her voting location, namely, the district, county, sub-county, parish and village/polling station, can present himself/herself to be registered at any of our registration centers.

Other than the above situation, the ferrying of persons to register as voters in areas (parishes) where they neither originate nor reside is an offence under the law, and offenders will be prosecuted.

The public is encouraged to bring any concerns about the conduct of the exercise to the attention of the Electoral Commission, through the respective district offices, or the Commission Headquarters. Our toll free line is No. 0800200071.

Similarly, any matters of security (persons and registration equipment) should be brought to the attention of the local police leadership, who are working closely with us.

Concerning accreditation of election observers

For purposes of transparency during the implementation of the 2011 General Elections, the Electoral Commission shall accredit national and international organisations, institutions and individuals to observe the various activities that are to be undertaken during the electoral process.

These activities include the ongoing update of the National Voters' Register.

The Commission, therefore, invites written expressions of interest from national and international organisations, institutions and individuals who wish to observe the said process(es).

Such organisations/institutions and individuals shall be required to prove that governance is a key aspect of their activities. They should also demonstrate a track record of credibility, demonstrate neutrality in the electoral process and be able to submit timely written observation reports.

The Commission shall provide accredited organisations, institutions and individuals with written clearance, relevant information and identification tags for the purpose of observing the various activities of the electoral process.

Successful applicants should, however, note that they will be expected to meet all their upkeep expenses and to comply with the guidelines to be issued by the Electoral Commission.

Interested national and international organisations, institutions and individuals should submit their applications to the Office of the Chairperson, Electoral Commission, Plot 55, Jinja Road, Kampala, P.O. Box 22678 Kampala, Uganda.

Conclusion

The Commission wishes to thank all stakeholders in the electoral process, namely, the government, political parties and organisations, civil society organisations, the international/donor community, the media, security agencies and the electorate for the support rendered towards implementation of the Roadmap.

We appeal to you to continue playing your respective constitutional roles to make the national update exercise, and subsequent activities a success.

On our part as the Electoral Commission, we assure you that we shall continue to work diligently, to ensure the successful implementation of our constitutional mandate.

For God and my Country,

Eng. Dr. Badru M. Kiggundu
CHAIRPERSON, ELECTORAL COMMISSION