

PRESS RELEASE

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The Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC) Prepares to Observe the 2017 Presidential and Legislative Campaign.

With the official commencement of political campaign, the Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC) adds its voice to the President of Liberia, US Embassy, African Union, ECOWAS and UNMIL, in calling on all political parties, independent candidates and their supporters to uphold the principles and intent of the Ganta and Farmington Declarations to conduct a violent free-campaign.

While the campaign has started, the ECC wants to commend the National Elections Commission (NEC) for releasing a summary of the final voter registration figures disaggregated by gender, age, districts and locations. The ECC assumes that the final voter listing addresses the issues of some missing names and photos linked to the Provisional Registration Roll (PRR) and therefore calls on the NEC to make public the detailed voter registration roll that highlights the particulars of every voter as this will help political parties and independent candidates to better plan for their campaign.

As the campaign gears up, the ECC calls on all political parties and independent candidates to engage in issues-based political debates and refrain from personality attacks as well as the use of divisive, inflammatory, abusive, profane, and hate speeches that could incite or drive their supporters to engage in violence that has the potential to undermine the peace and security of the country. We also call on the leaders of political parties to urge their supporters to refrain from provocative acts that could incite violence including the destruction and tearing down of campaign materials (posters and billboards). The political transition that we all desire cannot be done peacefully if the campaign and other electoral events are marked by violence.

The ECC is also urging all political parties to provide their campaign timetables to the NEC, the Liberian National Police and the county authorities so that the use of public facilities for campaign purposes do not create unnecessary tension and conflict between supporters of political parties. At the same time, the ECC calls on county authorities to ensure that all parties and independent candidates have equal access to the use of public facilities to carry out campaign activities.

In order to contribute to a level playing field, we call on all parties to refrain from the use of state resources to engage in any form of campaigning. In pursuit of this agenda, the ECC is calling on the President to use her good office to ask all members of her government holding executive positions in any political party to resign so that their service in government does not come in conflict with campaigning activities, the code of conduct (Section 5.1) or the elections law. At the same time, the ECC is urging that all parties and independent candidates seeking state power should be in compliance with campaign finance laws and regulations. We call on the NEC to ensure that parties and independent candidates comply with the campaign finance laws.

While the ECC encourages political parties to seek mediation and other forms of dispute resolution, it is the view of the ECC that in the event where alternative dispute resolution fails, parties should seek legal remedies in resolving any and all grievances.

The dates of some electoral events can be changed or extended but the date of election cannot be altered as it is a Constitutional requirement. In this vein, the ECC is calling on the government of Liberia to provide the financial support that the NEC needs to implement its activities. In a similar vein, the ECC is calling on improved collaboration between the NEC and other government institutions so that the procurement of goods and services can be done in a timely manner.

In the meantime, the ECC is challenging the media particularly newspapers and radio stations to be conflict sensitive in covering the campaign and not to use their channels to allow politicians to engage in negative campaigning. The media must be perceived as being neutral and it has the moral responsibility to promote civil campaigning in order to prevent any form of electoral violence.

In preparation to observe the campaign, the ECC has conducted training for its 32 long term observers to cover all the 73 Electoral Districts of Liberia and they have been deployed to observe the entire campaign period starting from July 31-October 8, 2017. Observers will be required to send in bi-weekly observation checklist and critical incident reports to the ECC Information Center. Regular statements will be issued based on the information that will be received from the observers.

The call for a peaceful political transition that is critical for the country's democratic process and continuity must be marked by positive actions from all stakeholders involved in this electoral process.

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The ECC is a civil society platform that observes elections in Liberia and works in partnership with the **United States Agency for International Development (USAID)** and technical assistance from the **National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI)**. The ECC electoral program is also co-funded by the **Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA)**.

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