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Press Release

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“ELECTORAL REFORMS ARE IMPORTANT FOR THE CONSOLIDATION OF LIBERIA’S DEMOCRACY”

The Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC) supports electoral reforms as an important component of deepening and consolidating Liberia’s emerging democracy. In pursuit of this agenda, the ECC adopted a participatory and bottom-up approach by consulting a wide range of stakeholders across Liberia’s 15 counties.

Several stakeholder engagements were held with policy makers including members of the House’s Committee on Elections and inauguration, the Governance Commission (GC), the Law Reform Commission (LRC) and the National Elections Commission (NEC).

The ECC also engaged members of political parties, lawyers, and media practitioners in a series of policy dialogues to seek their views on issues for electoral reforms.

In all of the 15 counties, the ECC gathered the views of women, traditional and religious leaders, people living with disabilities, and youth groups on their perspectives regarding the reform process.

All of the above consultative process culminated in a one-day validation exercise involving diverse stakeholders to consolidate the recommendations that emerged from the consultations. The recommendations for reforms are categorized under Constitutional and Statutory Amendments, mainly the New Elections Law (NEL).

The ECC wishes to inform the public that it has been following the debate at the National Legislature on amending certain provisions in the Constitution and the formulation of a gender parity bill to increase women’s political representation in the legislature. At this stage, it is unclear what the outcome of these discussions will be given the limited timeframe. However, the ECC urges citizens to remain engaged with their lawmakers as they visit their constituencies in the coming months.

At the same time, the ECC’s electoral reforms advocacy engagement efforts will continue while members of the 54th National Legislature are on their annual legislative break. As part of its advocacy strategy, the ECC will organize legislative-constituency town hall meetings in the electoral districts across the country to create the opportunity for citizens and their lawmakers to dialogue on this important democratic exercise. Additionally, the ECC will continue engagements with the NEC, traditional and religious leaders, women and youth and will also undertake a robust media advocacy campaign.

A summary of recommendations for reforms:

Constitutional Amendments:

Reduction in tenures for the Presidency (Article 50), Senate (Article 45) and House of Representatives (Article 48).

Change of election date: Article 83A: This amendment will remove the date from the Constitution and place it in the NEL to engender flexibility in the conduct of elections in the event of a national emergency and reduce challenges during electioneering year due to poor road infrastructure during the rainy season.

Abolish the conduct of by-elections: Article 37: To reduce electoral expenses but also by-elections raise question of legitimacy of political representation due to the low turn-out during voting.

Remove judicial power from the NEC: Article 83C: To speed up the adjudication of electoral disputes and minimize conflict of interest, an adhoc electoral tribunal is established.

Amendments to the NEL:(New Election Law)

Public vetting of Board of Commissioners of NEC: Amend NEL Sect 2.1 so that the appointment process for the Board of Commissioners is inclusive and broad-based representing the diversity of society through a public vetting exercise.

Quorum: *Section 2.4 of the NEL Chapter 2 is amended, to read: Any five (5) members, including the Chairperson or in the absence of the Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson, shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business of the Commission, they shall decide any question before it and said decision shall be binding on the Commission.*

Who may register to vote: Section 3.1 This Chapter is amended to read thus: Every citizen of Liberia who on the day of the elections will have attained 18 years of age or more, and can prove this through any official identification documents (passport, national identification card, birth certificate) and other processes.

New proposition to qualify candidates: This new proposition shall read thus: No sitting member of the House of Representatives shall contest for a vacant seat in the Senate unless he or she resigns his or her position. This holds as well for members of the Senate.

The Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC) is a civil society platform, comprising six (6) organizations that observe elections in Liberia. The members include: Actions for Genuine Democratic Alternatives (AGENDA); Center for Democratic Governance (CDG); Center for Media Studies and Peace Building (CEMESP); Institute for Research and Democratic Development (IREDD); NAYMOTE-Partners for Democratic Development (NAYMOTE-PADD); West Africa Network for Peace Building (WANEP), and the Women's NGO Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL).

This electoral reform process is implemented in partnership with the Liberia Accountability Voice Initiative (LAVI) with support from USAID.



The full package of the amendments can be accessed on the ECC's website at www.eccliberia.com and facebook pages at Liberia Decides and Elections Coordinating Committee-ECC.