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**Press Release**

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**PRESS STATEMENT**

**MARCH 24, 2020**

The Elections Coordinating Committee, (ECC) strongly opposes the nomination of Cllr. Ndubusi Nwabudike as the new Chairperson of the National Elections Commission (NEC), replacing Cllr. Jerome Korkoyah and calls on the President to withdraw the nomination and the Senate not to confirm him if the withdrawal is not heeded to. Not everything that is legal is expedient. If he is successful in serving as the Chairperson for NEC, he could sit as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Bench because there is no law that would prohibit it.

Within a year, Cllr. Nwabudike has been appointed to two other important government institutions: the Governance Commission (GC) and the Liberian Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC) and now nominated to head the NEC. These previous appointments are a clear demonstration that Cllr. Nwabudike has very close ties to the President. This also raises questions about his neutrality and independence to serve as the chair of the agency responsible to manage elections in Liberia.

The election management body cannot be seen as representing the interest of any particular political party. Elections are about people and the public needs to have trust in the election management body, which is a fundamental requirement for the peaceful outcomes of election processes. Liberians should not forget that the rigged elections of 1985 by Samuel Doe planted the seed for the 1989 civil conflict.

While it is true that Cllr. Nwabudike is a naturalized citizen of Liberia, he is firstly a Nigerian citizen and this questions his loyalty to Liberia and therefore is not a suitable candidate to lead and manage a sensitive state institution like the NEC. Article 52 (A) of the Liberian Constitution states that “no person shall be eligible to hold the office of the President or Vice-President unless that person is a natural born Liberian citizen of not less than 35 years of age”. As a naturalized citizen, it is not morally prudent for him to preside over a Commission that manages elections that determine who our President and other political leaders will become.

The ECC also opposes the confirmation of Mr. Floyd Saryon as a member of the Board of Commissioners and calls on the Senate to also reject his nomination. It can be recorded that Mr. Saryon played a controversy role in the recently conducted bi-election in District 15, Montserrado County that led the NEC to order a re-run at several polling precincts.

At the same time, the ECC has observed that the appointment of the new batch of Commissioners lacked broad based consultation with Political Parties and civil society organizations. While it is true that the President has the Constitutional power to appoint Commissioners of the elections management body, those on the Commission should reflect the country’s political diversity and interests.

Elections can make and break emerging democracies like ours and sometimes they contribute to violent conflicts. Our peace is fragile and we must protect our growing democracy by making the

right decisions, particularly when it comes to the nomination and appointment of individuals to manage and supervise the conduct of elections in the country.

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***“Promoting Credible Elections to Increase Public confidence in Democracy”***