



Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO)

CONTACT

Secretariat: +233 (0) 244 350 266/ 0277 744 777

Email: info@codeoghana.org: Website: www.codeoghana.org

CODEO SUPPORTS CALLS FOR AN EMERGENCY IPAC MEETING ON PROPOSED NEW VOTERS' REGISTER

The Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) has followed the debates that have ensued following the Electoral Commission's (EC) decision to compile a new voters register ahead of the December 7, 2020 general elections. CODEO has diligently assembled and reviewed relevant and available information pertaining to the debate, including statements issued by political parties and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in support of or opposition to the EC's decision.

After careful deliberations over the matter at its meeting on Monday January 20, 2020, CODEO has come to see the urgent need for a meeting between the EC and all key election stakeholders, including the political parties and CSOs to discuss the various concerns and help minimize rancor and acrimony over the voters register as the country prepares for the December 2020 elections. Indeed, CODEO agrees with the recent call by the EC's Eminent Persons Advisory Body for an Inter-Party Advisory Committee (IPAC) meeting to find an amicable solution stand-off over whether or not to compile a new voters register for the December 2020 elections, including overhauling its Information Technology (IT) infrastructure. CODEO believes that the IPAC mechanism has served this country very well over the years and should be a platform to be utilized to address election administration disputes.

CODEO makes the following observations regarding the key issues articulated by some political parties and CSOs in opposition to the EC's decision to compile an entirely new voters roll:

- Some of the technical justifications for the EC's decision have been contested, and alternative suggestions advanced on how the EC can avoid having to acquire a new IT system for compiling and managing the register.
- Value for money issues associated with the EC's procurement process have been raised.
- The practice of registering voters every two election cycles is wasteful and must come to an end, particularly as this practice has not addressed some of the underlying challenges associated with the compilation of voters register in Ghana.
- There is a high degree of mutual suspicion and mistrust between the ruling and opposition political parties, the bases of which must be laid bare and addressed.

Recommendations

1. CODEO believes that given all that has ensued in the recent past regarding public discussions on the matter, the best way to get a resolution around these issues and to move the process forward is by providing an avenue for dialogue and consultation which also recognizes the constitutional mandate of the EC guided by several subsidiary rules to administer and manage the electoral processes in Ghana, and bearing in mind the electoral timetable. At the same time, the EC needs to acknowledge that not all electoral administration and related disputes are just a matter of law, but of political governance which requires transparency, accountability and the building of trust between the Election Management Body (EMB) and all stakeholders, including the general public. In this

regard, CODEO urges all stakeholders to engage constructively in an effort to address the issues raised.

2. CODEO is committed to the pursuit of a free, fair, transparent and peaceful elections on December 7, 2020. A credible voters register is essential to laying the foundation for a free and fair elections. CODEO is aware that by convention, the voters register must be ready at least three months to the election date to avoid any constitutional complications.
3. CODEO, thus, welcomes the recommendation of the Eminent Persons Advisory Body of the EC for an extended IPAC meeting to further discuss the issues towards building a national consensus on the way forward. CODEO recommends that the Advisory body extends this engagement to other stakeholders such as CSOs which have raised substantial issues on this matter. CODEO believes it should be possible for stakeholders to ascertain the true state of the EC's IT infrastructure in respect of the existing register, and whether or not it can deliver credible elections on December 7, 2020. Similarly, it should be easy to verify the prices of goods and services being sourced by the EC.
4. CODEO further believes that even if the EC has to proceed with its plans to compile a new register, it is important for the EC to invest time and energy to engage stakeholders and the general public on why it has taken its decisions, share relevant information and address any lingering concerns from stakeholders. This is important in building trust and enhancing the credibility of the EC going into the December election.
5. Finally, it is important for all electoral stakeholders, including the EC, political parties and citizens to work diligently to rid ourselves of the mistrust and suspicion that continue to characterize our electoral process and constantly threaten our democratic stability. Significantly, all stakeholders should ensure that this will be the last election year that the voters register becomes an issue of contestation. The country has made significant progress in its electoral administration over the past two decades for a voters register to always become a matter of dispute in every election year. All stakeholders must be part of a solution that ensures that under age voters and foreigners do not register during these exercises. In that regard, there has to be a credible plan to ensure that even if the EC goes forward with compiling a new register, it will be the last time it physically collects biometric data.

Signed:



Albert Arhin,
National Coordinator, CODEO
Dated: Tuesday, January 21, 2020