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CODEO EVE OF ELECTION STATEMENT: PREPARATIONS FOR OBSERVATION OF THE DECEMBER 7, 2024, PRESIDENTIAL AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

Date: Friday, December 6, 2024

Venue: Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center (KAIPTC)

Delivered by: CODEO Co-Chairs on behalf of the CODEO Advisory Board

Salutation

Our friends in the Media and,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

Introduction

Ladies and Gentlemen, on behalf of my colleagues on the Advisory Board of the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO), I welcome you all to this morning's briefing, which is to inform you about CODEO's preparations for observation of Ghana's presidential and parliamentary elections, which take place this Saturday, December 7, 2024. Several weeks ago, on October 17, 2024, we launched CODEO's election observation activities. I am pleased that CODEO is ready to deploy 4,000 observers nationwide for the December polls. Earlier this week, the Coalition also completed the set-up and full activation of its National Information Center (NIC) here at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center (KAIPTC). The CODEO National Information Center is staffed by over 100 persons. As in previous elections, this Center will serve as the central hub for CODEO's observation activities during the elections. Therefore, its successful activation is a significant step in our preparations for the observation exercise and our pursuit of transparent, credible elections.

CODEO and its objectives

CODEO's primary goal is to promote transparent, free, fair, inclusive, and peaceful elections in Ghana. To achieve this, CODEO supports and complements the efforts of the Electoral Commission (EC) and other stakeholders by mobilizing Ghanaians to participate in electoral processes.

The December 7, 2024 Elections and CODEO's Observation

On Saturday, December 7, 2024, eligible Ghanaians will exercise their right to select a President and a Member of Parliament for the next four years. This will be the 9th time Ghanaians go to the polls since the beginning of the country's current democratic dispensation in 1992. As a democracy, this exercise is significant for the opportunity it provides to all citizens to participate in governance. Conducting the elections in a manner that lends credibility and elicits the acceptance of all is critical in this regard. The country has achieved electoral credibility and general acceptance in the previous eight elections. At the same time, various challenges have and continue to characterize our electoral processes. Given their importance and current challenges, CODEO's independent and impartial role in these elections is crucial.

In line with its belief in a comprehensive assessment of the electoral process, CODEO's observation of the 2024 elections encompasses all phases of the electoral cycle, from the pre-election period to the election day and post-election period. The Coalition's pre-election observation kicked off with observation of the processes for the updating of the biometric voter register, which took place earlier in the year. As I speak, 97 CODEO Long-Term Observers (LTOs) who observed the pre-election environment have just concluded their observation activities, which began on the first day of October 2024.

CODEO Election Day Observation Deployment

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am pleased to inform you that tomorrow (December 7, 2024), CODEO will deploy 4,000 observers nationwide. These observers will comprise the following:

- *Polling Station Stationary Observation: CODEO Rapid Response Observers*

There will be 3,401 Rapid Response Observers (RROs) who will observe the polls at a representative sample of polling stations spread throughout all the 276 constituencies across the 16 regions of the country. This number includes 1500 Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT) Observers (deployed to a statistically representative sample of polling stations) and 1,000 youth observers. The stationary observers will observe the elections at their assigned polling stations from set-up through the declaration of polling station results.

- *Roaming/Mobile Observation: CODEO Roaming Observers*

In addition to the stationary observers, there will also be CODEO Roaming Observers. These will include 307 CODEO Regional Coordinators and Constituency Supervisors (CS). The roaming observers will be in all 276 constituencies where voting will occur. In addition, members of the CODEO Advisory Board and the CODEO General Assembly will undertake roaming observation in various constituencies.

- *Collation Center Observers*

There will be 276 observers (one each) at the 276 Constituency Collation Centers nationwide. For the first time, CODEO will also have 16 observers stationed at the 16 regional collation centers of the EC. Two observers will also be deployed to the National Collation Center in Accra. The observers at the collation center will monitor and report on the collating, tabulating, and declaration of results from the constituency to the national level.

- *CODEO's Deployment Plan*

CODEO leverages statistical principles to select polling stations for its Rapid Response Observers. The deployment and observation plan ensures a nationwide presence and visibility in every region and constituency, including remote and hard-to-reach areas.

Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT)

CODEO will employ the Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT) technique to give a comprehensive and accurate account of Ghana's election day process. The PVT involves deploying observers to a statistically representative sample of polling stations on election day. PVT observers will report on the quality of the setup, opening, voting, closing, and counting at their assigned polling station, providing a nationwide assessment of the process. Additionally, observers record official presidential results declared by poll officials at their CODEO-assigned polling stations. They then forward these results to CODEO's National Information Center, allowing CODEO to estimate the presidential voting results at a national level with slight margins of error. The official results announced by the Electoral Commission at the national level will be compared to the PVT estimates. PVT helps deter manipulation and, as appropriate, enhances transparency and increases confidence in official results. CODEO uses this observation methodology to assess the quality of election day processes and to estimate vote results accurately.

Preparation of CODEO Observers for Election-Day Observation

In October 2024, CODEO kicked off its preparations for election day observation with a three-day national training of trainers for CODEO Regional Coordinators in Accra. Subsequently, in November 2024, the Coalition recruited and trained 276 Constituency supervisors nationwide. Finally, in November, the Coalition recruited and trained Polling Station/Rapid Response Observers.

Every recruited observer received training on elections and election observation, including the legal framework for elections, election-day procedures, election observation, and tools for observation, as well as the code of conduct for election observers, to ensure their adequate preparation. Officials from the Electoral Commission facilitated training in voting procedures. CODEO observers were recruited mainly from its member organizations as well as selected youth-focused organizations. All observers observing the polls tomorrow have been accredited

by the Electoral Commission. CODEO is grateful to the EC for its training support and accreditation for observers.

As a member of the Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM), CODEO adheres to the "Declaration of Global Principles for Non-Partisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations." CODEO's preparations have, therefore, included training its observers on these global principles, and thus, we formally documented each CODEO observer's pledge of neutrality and non-partisanship.

To test the readiness of CODEO's reporting and communications systems and its observers, all CODEO observers participated in a national simulation exercise on Tuesday, December 3. To further test CODEO's preparedness for December 7, all observers participated in the second and final simulation exercise on Thursday, December 5, 2024 (i.e., just yesterday).

Ladies and gentlemen, with all these preparatory efforts successfully executed, we are confident that our observers have received the highest quality of training and are ready to carry out this important national assignment.

Observing and Reporting CODEO Observation Findings

Ladies and gentlemen, to ensure that all CODEO observers are adequately positioned to observe the elections, CODEO's stationary observers will arrive at their assigned polling stations by 6:00 AM and remain there until the official declaration of the ballot count is complete. While stationed at the polling stations, observers will monitor the set-up and opening of the polling station, voting, closing, and counting procedures, and the declaration of vote counts. They will regularly submit observation reports reflecting their findings and provide updates on incidents throughout the day. On the other hand, CODEO's mobile observers will visit various polling stations in their constituencies, particularly those polling stations without stationary observers deployed. They will also submit and send reports based on their observation findings.

Later, on December 7, CODEO Constituency and Regional Collation Center Observers will report at various collation centers nationwide, providing updates on the process and collation of election results. All CODEO observers will wear their blue CODEO T-shirt and a dark blue jacket boldly embossed on the front with the CODEO logo and at the back with CODEO's name. They will also have CODEO White Caps.

CODEO observers will use SMS technology to rapidly send their findings to a sophisticated data management system at the CODEO National Information Center (NIC) located here at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center (KAIPTC). CODEO has set up this system so that observers can quickly send

reports to the NIC at set times, allowing for a swift nationwide analysis of the voting process. The NIC will then issue regular statements on the polling process.

- *Critical Incidents*

CODEO has set up a critical incident desk at its National Information Center to track and address any issues that arise during the voting process. This includes violations, irregularities, disruptions, and other malpractices. Both stationary and mobile observers will file reports as incidents occur. Once verified, CODEO will share these reports with key stakeholders, such as the Election Security Task Force and the Electoral Commission, to ensure prompt action and corrective measures. CODEO will also collaborate with Penplusbytes and the Ghana Fact Checking Coalition to combat dis//mal/misinformation.

- *Dissemination of CODEO Findings*

CODEO plans to release three public statements within 24 hours of voting. These statements will be based on observation reports from CODEO observers.

- The first statement will be a "midday situational statement," issued at a press conference at the National Information Center on election day.
- The second statement will be a press release after the polls close on December 7.
- The third statement will be a press conference on December 8 to share CODEO's preliminary observations of the polling process.

Additionally, CODEO will release a PVT statement to verify the official presidential election results declared by the Electoral Commission.

CODEO's extensive experience in citizens' election observation has established it as a trusted source of credible, non-partisan, and objective information on Ghana's electoral process. With its history dating back to 2000, CODEO has observed all presidential and parliamentary elections in Ghana since its establishment. It has also observed party primaries, local government elections, and by-elections. As in past elections, CODEO remains dedicated to upholding its commitment to Ghanaians by delivering impartial information about the electoral process.

Highlights of CODEO Observation of the Pre-Election Environment

As previously mentioned, the Electoral Commission's voter registration exercise and the subsequent display of the voter register kicked off CODEO's comprehensive observation activities for the December 7 elections earlier in the year. CODEO shared its findings on these activities with the public. Beginning October 1, CODEO also deployed nearly 97 Long-Term Observers (LTOs) to 97 purposely selected constituencies nationwide. CODEO has since issued two public statements based on analyses of biweekly observation reports from its LTOs between the period October 1 and November 15. Analysis of LTO reports filed

subsequently for the period November 16–28 reinforces the earlier findings. CODEO's observation of the pre-election environment between October 1 and November 28 yielded the following key findings.

- The political environment was generally calm and peaceful.
- Voter and civic education activities within the observed constituencies were generally low, although improvement was observed in the last few weeks before the elections (i.e., between October 28 and December 4).
- The New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) dominated the campaign scene in the constituencies observed. House-to-house campaigning was the most frequently observed activity, followed by meetings and party rallies.
- There were notable differences in the key issues addressed by the NPP and NDC campaigns. The main issues raised by both parties included education, the economy, unemployment, corruption, food and agriculture, water, health and sanitation, crime, and security.
- There were instances of incumbency abuse, including using state resources, such as public vehicles and government-owned equipment, for campaign purposes.
- Voter inducement through the distribution of food, treats, and money by various candidates' campaigns was noted in a few constituencies.
- Incidents of vote-buying were reported in a few constituencies in the country.

'Special Voting' Exercises by the EC on December 2 and December 5, 2024

- The Electoral Commission organized "Special Voting" on Monday, December 2, 2024, and Thursday, December 5, 2024, for security personnel, election officials, and journalists on duty on December 7. CODEO observed the Special Voting by deploying 228 observers to 216 constituencies on Monday (Dec 2). Fifty-one (51) CODEO observers also observed Thursday's Special Voting in the Eastern and Western regions. On Tuesday, Dec 3, CODEO issued its observation statement on the December 2 Special Voting exercise, which occurred in all but two regions in the country. While CODEO observer reports noted a generally smooth voting process, CODEO was alarmed by reports of some voters photographing cast ballots and alleged incidents of vote buying.

CODEO's Appeal for Peaceful and Credible Elections

Ladies and gentlemen, to ensure a peaceful and credible electoral process and outcomes, CODEO calls on the following actors to take these important steps:

1. All eligible citizens must follow the appropriate electoral processes to exercise their franchise, respect electoral rules and public order, and avoid any incident that could mar the integrity of the elections.

2. Political parties and candidates must refrain from voter inducement practices. CODEO calls on voters to freely exercise their right to choose their leaders.
3. Political leaders, candidates, security personnel, and supporters must promote calm and restraint to maintain peace in the country.
4. The Electoral Commission and security agents must guarantee the secrecy of the vote and take appropriate measures in case of any attempt to influence voters.
5. The Electoral Commission and all polling officials must firmly, impartially, and objectively apply electoral rules to ensure a fair process.
6. Party agents must respect electoral laws, behave responsibly, and assist officials in executing their duties effectively.
7. The National Election Security Task Force and all security agents on duty must perform their duties with professionalism, fairness, and respect for Ghana's Constitution.
8. The media must provide professional and balanced reporting on the elections.
9. Finally, all domestic and international observers must support the polling exercise impartially and in coordination to ensure peaceful and credible elections.

Conclusion

CODEO urges all Ghanaians to uphold democratic principles by peacefully selecting leaders. CODEO commends all presidential candidates for their commitment to promoting peace during and after the elections, as seen in the peace pact ceremony on November 28, 2024. CODEO is confident that all stakeholders, including the Electoral Commission, the security agencies, the media, political party leaders, candidates, supporters, and all Ghanaians, will respect the country's electoral rules and regulations and discharge themselves accordingly. CODEO wishes to remind all to use appropriate channels and procedures to address any relevant grievance emanating from the conduct of the polls. Finally, CODEO calls on the general public to be wary of potential misinformation and take preventive measures to stem the spread of false information.

As an independent, impartial, and objective observer, CODEO assures Ghanaians of its role in ensuring electoral integrity. CODEO's presence at polling stations will have a moderating influence on key actors, promoting peaceful and credible elections. CODEO will also collaborate with the Electoral Commission, political parties, civil society organizations, international observers, and the media to achieve a successful election. CODEO acknowledges the presence and solidarity of observer groups that are on a technical mission and are being hosted

by CODEO. They are as follows: the West Africa Democracy Solidarity Network (WADEMOS) and the West Africa Election Observers (WAEON), joint mission, the East and Horn of Africa Election Observers Network (E-HORN), the National Democratic Institute (NDI) study mission, the Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room, and the International Women Communication Center (IWCC). Lastly, we recognize our sister organization, YIAGA Africa, which is also based in Nigeria.

Acknowledgment

CODEO acknowledges with gratitude the generous support of its partners, including the American people, through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO) of the UK government, the European Union (EU), and ECOWAS.

May God bless our homeland, Ghana!
Thank You.

Mrs. Elizabeth Joyce Villars
Co-Chair, CODEO
(For and on Behalf of CODEO)

Rev. Dr. Fred Deegbe
Co-Chair, CODEO

Friday, December 6, 2024

About CODEO and Election Observation in Ghana

The Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) is an independent and non-partisan network of civil society groups, faith-based organizations, and professional bodies *that* observe Ghanaian elections. The Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) established CODEO in 2000 to encourage Ghanaians to participate in the electoral process and support Ghana's Electoral Commission's efforts to ensure transparent, free, fair, and peaceful elections. With twenty-two founding organizations in 2000, CODEO currently comprises 42 organizations (*See CODEO Brochure for the list of CODEO member organizations in your folders.*) CODEO has become a platform for citizens and groups to participate in the Ghanaian democratic process. CODEO is a member of the Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM). CODEO is also a founding member of the West African Election Observers Network (WAEON).

Objectives of CODEO:

1. Promote free, fair, and transparent elections;

2. Promote issue-based campaigning;
3. Build public confidence in the electoral process;
4. Encourage citizen participation in the electoral process;
5. Prevent and/or manage conflicts; and
6. Lend legitimacy and credibility to electoral outcomes.

CODEO Management Structures

CODEO has four principal institutional structures through which it implements its election activities. These include the CODEO Advisory Board, the CODEO General Assembly; the three (3) CODEO Sub-committees (*which are in charge of recruitment, training, and deployment of observers, procurement and logistics for observer deployment, and drafting and reporting of CODEO findings*); and the CODEO Secretariat, located at the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD Ghana), which provides technical and administrative support. The CODEO Advisory Board acts as the policy and executive decision-making body for CODEO. A fourteen-member Advisory Board representing member organizations and selected eminent Ghanaian citizens manages the Coalition. The General Assembly of CODEO serves as the platform for all the representatives of the 42 member organizations. The Assembly oversees and approves CODEO activities and acts as a recruitment pool for CODEO observers.

Key Accomplishments of CODEO

Ladies and gentlemen, throughout the twenty (20) years of its existence, CODEO has accomplished the following:

- Deployed its members to observe the 2000, 2004, and 2008 (including presidential run-offs), 2012, 2016, and 2020 elections.
- Deployed its members to observe local government elections in 2002, 2006, 2010, 2015, and 2019, as well as by-elections organized by the Electoral Commission.
- Deployed its members to observe political party primaries.
- Introduced systematic and innovative ways of tracking abuse of incumbency and monitoring election violence.
- Introduced and successfully implemented the Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT) methodology for domestic election observation for the first time in Ghana in 2008 and repeated in 2012, 2016, and 2020 to independently verify the accuracy of the results of the presidential polls.
- Promoted the inclusion of marginalized groups in the electoral process and governance, particularly women and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs).

CODEO's interventions and constructive recommendations in its observation reports, based on rigorous and objective analysis of the electoral environment and electoral administration, have enhanced electoral transparency in Ghana.

Partners and Donors of CODEO

CODEO has made this impact through the cooperation and tremendous support from Ghana's Electoral Commission, the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), the national security agencies, the media, and other key election stakeholders in its election observation programs. CODEO has been able to implement its electoral support activities since its establishment through the generous financial support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the European Union, ECOWAS, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UK Aid, STAR-Ghana, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA), STAR-Ghana, the Ford Foundation, and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF). CODEO has also received technical assistance on implementing the PVT from the Washington DC-based National Democratic Institute (NDI) since 2008.