



2019 DISTRICT LEVEL ELECTIONS AND NATIONAL REFERENDUM ELECTORAL SUPPORT

PRESS STATEMENT TO LAUNCH CODEO'S 2019 ELECTION SUPPORT INTERVENTIONS & OPENING OF WORKSHOP FOR CODEO CIVIC/VOTER/PEACE EDUCATORS IN THE GREATER ACCRA REGION

Delivered by Sheikh Armiyawo Shaibu, Acting Chairperson of CODEO

Date: November 5, 2019

Venue: AH Hotel, East Legon, Accra

Salutation

Chairperson, National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE),
Officials of the Electoral Commission (EC) of Ghana,
Members of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs),
Representatives of CODEO Member Organizations
District Directors of NCCE from the Greater Accra Region
The Representative of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID),
Development Partners,
Would-be CODEO Civic Educators,
Our friends in the Media,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Advisory Board of the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO), I welcome you all to this morning's event to formally open CODEO's 2019 election support activities. Today's event also marks the formal opening of a two-day workshop for CODEO Civic/Voter/Peace Educators from the Greater Accra Region.

The 2019 District Level Elections and National Referendum

Ladies and Gentlemen, as we may all know, Ghanaians will go to the polls in exactly six weeks to elect Electoral Area representatives (popularly called Assembly members) into the various District, Municipal and Metropolitan Assemblies to support the work of the various assemblies. In addition, voters will also be voting for Unit Committee Members

who will be supporting the work of the various Assembly members in their respective districts and localities.

These elections are fundamental to the country's efforts at decentralization which seek to give citizens more direct control over local governance and their local development processes. Nevertheless, you may agree with me that the objectives of the country's decentralization program are yet to be fully realized as more citizens are, or feel alienated from the business of their local assemblies. The low level of interest and participation and general apathy of many Ghanaian voters towards local government elections attest to alienation. This is particularly reflected in the consistent low voter turn-out (under 40%) in recent local government elections. Unfortunately, low citizens' interest weakens political accountability at local levels, and affects progress on the country's decentralization agenda.

As we grapple with the challenges associated with district level elections in the country, this year's District Level Elections are also being taken together with a national referendum exercise which seeks the opinion of citizens on whether or not Article 55(3) of the 1992 Constitution, which is an entrenched clause in the Constitution, should be amended to allow for political parties' sponsorship of candidates in future District Level and Local Government Elections. After almost 31 years of our local government system, the implications of this referendum outcome on future local governance processes is fundamental and therefore requires all qualified Ghanaian voters to do their constitutional duty and make their voices heard on the issue.

CODEO's Election Support Interventions

In line with its objectives of promoting electoral transparency, credible electoral outcomes and participatory electoral processes, and with the support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), CODEO is carrying out two major interventions to support the December 17, 2019 District Level Elections and National Referendum. As in previous District Level Elections, CODEO will undertake civic/voter/peace education activities with the aim of boosting citizen's informed and peaceful participation in the up-coming electoral processes, and to promote public trust in electoral outcomes through enhanced election transparency.

CODEO's civic education activities will particularly seek to enhance citizens' awareness, understanding and participation in the December 17, 2019 elections and referendum. In doing this, CODEO recognizes the limited public awareness about these elections and hope to contribute to enhanced citizens' understanding on the elections through a variety of mediums including media campaigns and community level civic/voter engagement.

- *Civic/Voter/Peace Education Through Community Interactions*

Ladies and Gentlemen, to enhance the reach of civic education messages, CODEO is engaging a total of 260 Civic/Vote/Peace Educators, one from each district, to undertake community-level engagements with citizens and to explain the essence of the upcoming electoral exercises.

In the past few days, CODEO has conducted a series of training workshops for its Civic/Voter/Peace Educators from 15 out of the total 16 regions in the country. The workshop to be conducted here in Accra within the next two days will be the final session of such workshops across the country to equip civic educators for their tasks ahead of the elections. **As a non-partisan and neutral observation group, I wish to emphatically state that CODEO has no position on the referendum question.** CODEO's sole objective for civic education activities in the elections will be to boost general voter understanding of issues as well as participation in the elections.

In the next two days, the CODEO Civic/Voter/Peace Educators who are also assembled in this room will go through an elaborate but purposeful program to prepare them for various community level civic education activities.

CODEO and NCCE Collaboration

Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish to also emphasize that CODEO's efforts under the various interventions in support of the elections are to complement the efforts of key stakeholders and national institutions in ensuring credible electoral processes. To help ensure that there is efficient and effective deployment of resources as far as civic education on the elections are concerned, CODEO is collaborating with the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) on its civic education activities. I wish to acknowledge the positive response so far received from the Commission towards achieving this objective. As part of this collaboration between CODEO and NCCE, district and regional directors of the NCCE have been invited to join the training of CODEO Civic/Peace/Voter education workshops to facilitate collaborative work between District NCCE offices and CODEO Civic/Voter/Peace Educators in the various districts across the country.

- *Election-Day*

In addition to the civic/voter/peace education, CODEO will recruit, train and deploy 1,000 Election-Day Observers on December 17, 2019. These observers will be deployed to systematically and randomly selected polling stations nationwide to observe election day processes and to contribute to enhancing the transparency of election day proceedings.

Conclusion

Ladies and Gentlemen, with the December 17, 2019 Referendum and District Assembly Elections, Ghanaians have once again, been presented with another opportunity to determine the course of the democratic enterprise that we embarked upon from 1992. For us in CODEO, we will continue to do our part to complement the efforts of stakeholders in achieving credible and participatory governance processes. CODEO urges all other key stakeholders, particularly our friends from the media to promote citizens' awareness and understanding on the elections. CODEO further appeals to the media to be circumspect in its coverage and reportage on the elections. The role of the media is to provide accurate information and education to Ghanaians and we expect them to discharge this function in an objective and professional manner. As always, CODEO will uphold its principles of non-partisanship, objectivity and neutrality in the execution of its activities.

Finally, CODEO wishes to express appreciation to all its key partners whose support has made this program successful. In particular, CODEO acknowledges the generous support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) which has made possible its activities in respect of the up-coming elections.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, with these words let me declare CODEO's 2019 Electoral Support Activity duly launched.

May God Bless Our Homeland Ghana

Thank You.

Sheikh Armiyawo Shaibu, Acting Chairperson