

PETITION ISSUED BY CSO PLATFORM ON GOOD GOVERNANCE IN THE NORTHERN REGION ON THE SUSPENSION OF THE 3RD MARCH, 2015 DISTRICT LEVEL ELECTIONS

The 1992 Constitution of Ghana is the supreme law that governs our nation Ghana and has clearly spelt out the roles of state institutions with some level of interdependence to enhance the life of the ordinary Ghanaian. The Electoral Commission as per **Article 45(c) of the 1992 Constitution** is the independent statutory body mandated to conduct all elections, including the District Level elections and referenda in the country.

The Commission is further empowered in **Article 45 Clause (b) to create new electoral areas for the purposes of the District Level elections**. The constitution has also placed a huge weight on the importance of the local governance structure and thus Article 240 section 2(a) clearly states that **“Parliament shall enact appropriate laws to ensure that functions, powers, responsibilities and resources are at all times transferred from the Central Government to local government units in a coordinated manner”**. These provisions are to enhance coordinated efforts of the workings of local government and the legislative arm of government to maximize the best use of scarce resources.

Increasingly over the years, there has been a notable low voter turn-out during the District Level Elections such that the 2010 election recorded 25.27% voter turn-out. Despite the known challenges of low education of the electoral process carried out by the Electoral Commission, the uncertainty in the execution of District Level Elections remains a big contributory factor.

In the last 2010 elections, EC postponed **8 out of 10 regions election dates 5 times** before the execution of the elections in different months from 29th December, 2010 to 4th January, 2011. The result of this development was the great apathy that greeted the event.

In line with challenges suffered during the 2010 elections, Parliament set-up a **twenty (20) member Fact Finding Ad hoc Committee** to investigate issues surrounding the apparent difficulties of the Electoral Commission (EC) in conducting the originally 28th December, 2010 District Assembly and Unit Committee Elections and to make recommendation to Parliament to forestall recurrence in future elections.

This committee among other observations noted that **“It was revealed that the period between the time of releasing of L.I. 1983 and the Filing of Nomination was too short and could not allow for effective interaction with the public, especially the prospective candidates of the respective newly created Electoral Areas/Unit Committees. Again, the postponement of election date and the conduct of election on different dates at different Polling Stations affected the quantum of funds and other resources allocated for public education. Public education information had to be changed to suit**

different communities as to when voting was taking place. Most District Electoral Officers found it difficult to communicate the new dates of election to electorates in areas which could not vote. There were instances where the election date had been postponed but District Electoral Officers themselves did not know the new dates". There were series of election boycotts in the country and even election related court cases after the election.

The twenty (20) member Fact Finding Adhoc Committee among others recommended that; **"the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development in consultation with the Electoral Commission should fix a firm date for the conduct of the District Level Elections in the country. This will enable the Commission to work towards that date and to avoid the tendency of postponing elections. The Committee realizing that, there are a lot of processes and programmes that need to be rolled-out timorously by the Electoral Commission to both prevent the mishaps associated with the 2010 District Assembly Elections happening again and also ensuring transparent and fair conduct of 2012 elections. This involves a lot of Stakeholders working efficiently and effectively (Executive, Parliament, Judiciary, etc.). Parliament is being urged to maintain this Committee to monitor the electoral process and report periodically to Parliament"**.

In view of the above, the Electoral Commission and Parliament were supposed to work hand in hand for the successful execution of the 3rd March, 2015 elections. Unfortunately the inability of these two institutions to do so resulted in the suspension of the elections just 3 days to the election after a huge sums of **GHC 317million** of the tax payers' monies had been used since December, 2014 to carry out series of activities in line with the election. These are developments that are highly intolerable in the democratic process.

Citizens have been asking;

Why did the electoral commission wait to submit a constitutional Instrument in November, 2014 expecting its maturity on 19th December, 2014 when actually Ghanaians were expecting the elections to be conducted in October, 2014?

What happened to the recommendations of the twenty (20) member Fact Finding Adhoc Committee such that we are suffering more inefficiency in the 2015 District Level Elections?

What prevented parliament who knew that the inability to conduct the elections before 15th March, 2015 will create a vacuum in the assemblies to give a firm directive and make use of the 2010 recommendations for a smooth election?

Is parliament not aware that this development is gradually leading the country into a constitutional crisis?

These unanswered questions have left the ordinary Ghanaian frustrated and disappointed in Electoral Commission and Parliament of Ghana who by mandate must serve the interest of the people.

Both the electoral Commission and the Parliament of Ghana have woefully failed Ghanaians and **we the members of the CSO Platform on Good Governance in Northern Region on behalf of the citizens of Ghana demand the following:**

- 1. Parliament and Electoral Commission must work together to restore the confidence of Ghanaians in their mandates as state institutions by ensuring that the recommendation to have a fixed date for District level elections is adhered to.**
- 2. Parliament and Electoral Commission must as a matter of urgency act swiftly to have an LI within a shortest possible time to ensure that the District Level Elections are organized within the shortest possible time to avoid throwing the nation into a constitutional crisis.**
- 3. The government must as a matter of urgency provide the needed resources for the Electoral Commission to organized the election once a date is fixed and do same for the National Commission on Civic Education to carry out voter education to deal with voter apathy and restore voter interest in the District Level Elections.**
- 4. Any individual or group of individuals who have done Ghanaians this great dis-service must be shown the exit immediately**
- 5. Parliament must enact a law that will ensure that Presidential, Parliamentary and the District level elections are organized together.**

Signed:

Date: 17th March, 2015

On behalf of Members of CSOs Platform on Good Governance in Northern Region

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(Platform Coordinator)