

COMMUNIQUÉ

AT THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BIOMETRIC VOTER REGISTRATION AND E-VOTING IN GHANA

**8TH - 9TH FEBRUARY, 2010
ALISA HOTEL, NORTH RIDGE**

Under the auspices of the 2010 Danquah Institute Governance and Development Dialogue series with support from the World Bank and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation - a conference attended by representatives from the Executive, the legislature, the Electoral Commission, political parties, civil society groups, ICT organisations, and the mass media.

PREAMBLE

At the National Conference on Biometric Voter Registration and E-Voting in Ghana held at Alisa Hotel, North Ridge, Accra between 8th and 9th February, 2010, we the participants, including political parties, civil society groups, ICT experts, and legislatures:

AGREEING THAT

Some of the major difficulties which have affected our general elections since our return to constitutional rule in 1993, and which nearly marred the 2008 general elections have included:

- A bloated electoral register
- Conspiracy theories
- Multiple voting
- Voter impersonation
- Dud ballot papers
- Ballot box stuffing
- Ballot box theft
- Spoilt ballot papers
- Violence
- Intimidation
- Disenfranchisement of prospective voters arising from difficulties in

registering during voter registration exercises and

- Long periods between the time voting ends and when results are declared.

RECOGNISING

The periodic strides made to our electoral system to enhance its integrity in the past; those warning signals from the 2008 elections call as a matter of urgency for significant, considered changes to be made in order to rebuild voter confidence in the system.

CONSIDERING

Ghana's role as a beacon of hope for the success of the multiparty democracy experiment in Africa, the consequences of Ghana slipping back are too grave to contemplate for Ghanaians, in particular, and Africans, in general.

THEREFORE

Every effort to enhance the integrity of Ghana's elections must be appreciated in not only its domestic context but in its broader promotion of the continent's integration and prosperity agenda based on the principles of good governance, multiparty democracy, respect for the rule of law, individual liberty and human rights, and the collective wellbeing of the African peoples.

REALISING THAT

After interrogating, all the relevant issues at the conference, not only is the compilation of a new biometric-based voter register by the Electoral Commission feasible for 2012 but that it must be done.

REALISING FURTHER THAT

The introduction of electronic voting in Ghana is both feasible and desirable and that information on the technology must, henceforth, be opened to deeper and wider public scrutiny and understanding.

ACKNOWLEDGING THAT

On Tuesday, 12 May 2009, the Electoral Commission and seven political parties including the National Democratic Congress (NDC), the New Patriotic Party (NPP), the Conventions People Party (CPP) and the Peoples National Convention (PNC) through the Inter-Party Advisory Committee (IPAC) endorsed the compilation of a new voter register based on biometric technology as the solution to multiple registration and other electoral defects associated with voter registration in Ghana.

ACKNOWLEDGING FURTHER THAT

While a biometric voter register can resolve the illegal practice of multiple registrations, it will, nevertheless, not arrest entirely the problems confronting our voting system, including multiple voting due to the normal expectation of non-100% voter turnout and the anticipated absence of an electronic biometric data identification/verification system for individual voters at the polling station on voting day.

APPRECIATING THAT

Our electoral system will be more democratic, credible, less costly, and free from errors, delays, violence, fraud, intimidation and other electoral malpractices that frequently undermine the credibility and general public acceptance of our elections, if we institute a biometric

registration and electronic voting system in Ghana.

APPRECIATING FURTHER THAT

The Electoral Commission may be stretched by its multifunctional timetable, including, undertaking local government elections in 2010, a compilation of a new biometric-based voter register, a possible national referendum on Constitutional Review Recommendations and re-demarcation of constituency boundaries all before the 2012 general elections and that all these would lead to budgetary calls on the Consolidated Fund:

HEREBY RESOLVE THAT

1. The Government of Ghana, all the political parties and the Electoral Commission and

civil society pursue vigorously the implementation of a biometric voter register as endorsed by the Electoral Commission and the seven political parties on Tuesday, 12 May 2009 as a matter of urgency and necessity.

2. The Government of Ghana should enlist the support of Ghana's development partners in order to provide the Electoral Commission with the required financial and other resources to enable the Commission undertake the biometric registration of voters as a matter of urgency and necessity for its timely application for the 2012 elections.
3. The Electoral Commission should produce a credible biometric voter register by 2012.

4. The EC and other cognate agencies, such as, the National Identification Authority, the Ghana Statistical Services, the Births and Deaths Registry and the National Health Insurance Authority, should collaborate and produce a comprehensive national database.
5. Parliament should enact appropriate data protection legislation for Ghana in order to protect biometric and other personal data of individuals stored in government information repositories in order to protect the sanctity of the privacy and liberty of the individual.
6. The Electoral Commission should adopt an appropriate electronic voting system for all national elections in Ghana as a

means of eliminating the incidence of multiple voting, spoilt ballot papers, delayed counting, collation and declaration of election results and other related problems and that appropriate electronic voting system must be able to operate independently without depending on either electricity or an internet infrastructure.

7. A public education by the Electoral Commission and the National Commission on Civic Education must be done on the advantages and applications of biometric technology to our voting system and that the mass media and civil society groups must play an active role in this public education drive.

8. Local Information & Communication Technology experts and organisations must play a leading role in the development, adaptation, application and education of electronic voting machines and systems in Ghana.
9. The Electoral Commission should begin with preparations for the implementation of electronic voting on a pilot basis prior to its use in a national election.
10. Political parties should give serious consideration to using electronic voting for the election of their party officers and candidates, primarily as a way of reducing long hours of voting and counting at party conferences and in helping the case for the adoption of a national electronic voting system.

11. All stakeholders including the Executive, Legislature, Judiciary, the Electoral Commission, the National Commission on Civic Education, the political parties, the media, and civil society organisations should undertake public education on the merits of and necessity for an electronic voting system and work towards its urgent implementation in our electoral system through advocacy, provision of budgetary support and appropriate electoral and other legislative reform.

Political Parties

Name

Signature

Party

Civil society Organisations

Name

Signature

Institution

Media Organisations

Name

Signature

Organisation

Group of Experts

Name

Signature

Organisation