

Opening Remarks by Dr. Omane Boamah at the Meeting with Electoral Commission of Ghana on the UNFIT-for-Purpose Voters Register on September 06, 2024

Good afternoon,

Thank you for this extremely essential meeting which seeks to share our grave concerns identified, so far, about the defective and unfit-for-purpose voters register.

Unfortunately, contrary to our request, you blocked the media from covering this important engagement live. We have been wondering if this is the decision of the Commission or the wish of an individual being foisted on the Commission.

Introduction

We cannot wait and complain on Election Day! In this 2024 general elections, as our Flagbearer, HE John Dramani Mahama, has stated we do not seek to resort to the courts.

Delayed Release of the Provisional Voter Register – We wish to express our utmost dissatisfaction with the EC's decision to delay the release of the Provisional Voter Register to the NDC. It was released hours to the exhibition exercise. This delay initially denied us sufficient time to thoroughly examine the register and identify anomalies and irregularities well ahead of the exhibition exercise.

If we had had enough time, the EC may not have found itself in this quagmire of numerous avoidable errors that have confronted Ghanaians since the register was exhibited. As usual, we would have shared the detected defects with the EC.

Excuses Justifying the Massive Error Prone Exhibition Exercise: We wish to place on record that we vehemently reject the notion that because voter exhibition exercise is for corrections, objections and inclusions, the errors being discussed this year are acceptable and pardonable.

Never has Ghana experienced this level of inaccuracy during exhibition – The EC cannot even quantify the extent of illegal voter transfers effected!

Almost every regional EC outfit has insurmountable problems that they are forcing to solve by working 24 hours a day.

For example, this intercepted internal EC message suggests the intensity, immensity and gravity of the errors regional and district officers of the EC have been dealing with. Who caused it? Human? Software? Or both?

The intercepted message reads, *“The Commission has directed that we account for each Voter on the Transfer List. This would enable us to track the differences in the Transfer figures. Regional Directors should take note of the following and direct DEOS accordingly:*

1. Documents containing all the details of 2024 Transferred Voters for each Region have been provided below as a guide. It shows details of Transferred Voters in each District;

2. DEOS should use the List of Transferred Voters recorded at the District Level to crosscheck the one provided by HQ.

3. DEOS should use the Template provided below to record the details of all Transferred Voters on the List from HQ that were not captured at the District Level. (where HQ figure is more than District figure)

4. Where the District figure is more than that of HQ, DEOS should use the Template provided to record the details of all the Transferred Voters that are not on the list provided by HQ.

5. REGIONAL Directors should compile all their returns on a single Excel sheet.

6. Kindly submit your returns latest by 4:00pm tomorrow Sunday, 1st September, 2024.

PLEASE TREAT AS URGENT

THANK YOU.”

Additionally, how could a District Director transfer voters without the people themselves being aware? **What was the role of the Returning Officer? And what was the role of the technicians?** More questions than answers!

Urgent Need for Forensic Audit and Re-exhibition of the Register

In this meeting, we seek to share with you our observations, so far, from comparing voters in the 2023 register with the 2024 provisional register.

We will also seek to elicit honest answers about the root cause(s) of the massive unprecedented derangement that we have witnessed in the course of the 2024 Voter Exhibition Exercise.

After the presentation, we will strongly suggest/recommend that a forensic audit be conducted on the 2020, end 2023 and the 2024 voters registers.

The reason for widening the scope to include pre-2024 registers is anchored in the possibility that some of the anomalies could be traced to the parent document in 2020.

We wish to assure that we are driven solely by the utmost purpose of ensuring the credibility and integrity of the upcoming December 07, 2024 General Elections.

If a forensic audit could be avoided, we would never have opted for that path – unfortunately, under the present circumstances, a forensic audit is unavoidable and non-negotiable!

We firmly believe a forensic audit will answer several critical questions that need to be addressed in light of the recent allegations and admissions by the Electoral Commission (EC) regarding the voter register.

Given the EC's admission of mistakes and errors, an INDEPENDENT forensic audit of the voter register to ensure transparency and confer credibility will restore trust in the EC.

The forensic audit is also necessary because the Electoral Commission's own internal directives to regional and district officers which we frequently intercept without fail points to the fact that there is massive discordance between data at the headquarters and data on the field.

Same discordance and discrepancies have been observed by hardworking NDC executives and agents in the field who have compared the displayed registers at exhibition centres and the register the Commission handed to us on August 19, 2024 – hours before the exhibition exercise commenced.

We believe a forensic audit will answer the following questions:

1. **The Extent of Manipulation:** How widespread is the issue of illegal voter transfers? If the Pusiga EC Office could transfer voters from Tamale South Constituency without proper authorization, what is the scale of similar incidents across the country? How many voters might have been affected, and how can this be accurately quantified?
2. **System Vulnerabilities:** What specific vulnerabilities in the Electoral Commission's systems – Human and Technical – allowed for these unauthorized transfers? Are there specific protocols or security measures that were bypassed or ignored? Specifically, will the EC's attempts to address these weaknesses prevent further manipulations ahead of the December 07, elections? If yes, what prevented the EC from not instituting such measures?
3. **Timeliness of Provisional Register:** Why was there such an avoidable delay in providing the Provisional Voters Register to the NDC?

4. **Impact of the Mistakes on the Elections:** What is the potential impact of the admitted mistakes and errors by the Electoral Commission on the fairness of the upcoming elections? Will the mistakes compromise the integrity of the election results?
5. **Historical Comparisons:** The EC generalized its mistake by referencing errors made by past Commissions. How does this comparison help address the current concerns, and what lessons have been learned from previous errors to prevent similar issues in the future?
6. **Timeline for Corrections:** What is the timeline for addressing these issues in order to derive a reliable, credible, accurate and fit-for-purpose voter register before printing of the registers, and other materials to commence as originally planned and agreed at IPAC?

Answering these questions through an independent forensic audit are essential for safeguarding the credibility of Ghana's electoral process and ensuring that the upcoming elections reflect the true will of the suffering people of Ghana.

Addressing these questions thoroughly and transparently will be crucial for maintaining public trust in the democratic process. It will also restore public confidence in the voter register and the overall electoral process.

And will assure voters who may feel disenfranchised that their information is accurate and that the election will be free, fair, and transparent.

For the many legitimate voters out there who may feel disenfranchised, we also request for a 5-day RE-EXHIBITION of the register after the forensic audit to enable them verify the accuracy and integrity of the voter register before the General election.

We urge the Electoral Commission to immediately convene an emergency meeting with all political parties, Civil Society Organisations, Diplomatic Community, (ECOWAS, AU, UNDP, EU, USAID, DANIDA, The British High Commission among others) to discuss these issues and proceed to conduct the forensic audit of the registers.

Ultimately, the credibility of Ghana's democratic process hinges on the integrity of its electoral institutions. We ask the Electoral Commission to uphold the highest standards of fairness, neutrality, and transparency in the upcoming 2024 elections.

In conclusion, let me assure the Commission that our criticisms are not aimed at undermining the Electoral Commission; but rather at ensuring accountability and the integrity of Ghana's democracy.

With these remarks, I invite Mr Yayra Koku, our Deputy Director IT, to delve deeper into the methodology and findings from our study of the faulty 2024 voters register.

AOB

1. **SPECIAL VOTING:** Considering the numerous transfer anomalies, what specific measures will the EC institute to ensure SAPECIAL VOTERS (security personnel, media personnel and EC permanent and temporary staff) are not disenfranchised during special voting? And how can we be assured of the transparency of the special voting process?
2. Recruitment of Collation Officers when Returning Officers exist and Implications (Collation Officers can send unlawfully collated results to the Regions for Regional Collation).
3. Any update on stolen/missing EC Biometric equipment (BVD and BVR laptops)?