

SPEECH DELIVERED BY MRS. JEAN MENSA, CHAIRPERSON OF THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF GHANA AT THE “LET THE CITIZEN KNOW” PRESS CONFERENCE

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On behalf of the Electoral Commission of Ghana, I welcome you all to this edition of the ‘Let the Citizen Know.’ We thank the good LORD for making it possible to meet under this platform to brief the citizenry about the ongoing Voters Registration Exercise for 2023.

Article 42 of the 1992 Constitution confers on every Ghanaian who is 18 years and above, and of sound mind the right to register to Vote.

Similarly, Article 45 of the Constitution clothes the Electoral Commission with the mandate and responsibility of compiling the register of voters at such periods as may be determined by law.

It is in the exercise of this mandate that we commenced the 2023 Voters Registration Exercise on Tuesday the 12th of September 2023. I am happy to note that in spite of the few hiccups experienced in the first two (2) days, the exercise is proceeding well to the glory of GOD.

As you may know, we experienced temporary breaks in the registration exercise in the first two (2) days due to a number of issues ranging from disruptions to the internet, power outages, rainfall and in a few instances faulty kits. We quickly moved to resolve these issues to ensure an unhindered, smooth and seamless process. I am happy to note that the registration exercise is proceeding well.

A key policy established to guide this registration exercise was the use of the online method of registration. By this I mean that the system is connected directly to our database. As such right at the point of registration, it is possible to detect whether or not a person had previously registered. Once the applicant places his/her fingers on the fingerprint scanner, the system is able to establish whether the person already exists in the database or not. One other advantage of the online system is that the details of a person who qualifies are immediately captured in the database. It is different from the offline in that with the offline registration, one is not able to immediately detect if a person is in the database. It is offline and it is not connected to

the server/database. The registration details of Applicants are captured onto a pen drive and exported at the end of each day to the database.

It is after the export that the server through a process called deduplication identifies individuals who have multiple registrations. In summary the system flags them out.

From the above explanation it is obvious that the online method of registration is more beneficial than the offline method.

The online mode however requires consistent uninterrupted internet supply.

Recognizing this, we worked closely with our partners MTN to put in place structures to make this feasible. In almost all our district offices we run two (2) platforms to provide internet service. The leased lines as well as turbo nets. As such in the event that the leased lines fail, service from the turbo net kick in immediately. In spite of these arrangements, we still experienced interruptions to our internet connectivity. This led us to revise our policy to allow for the use of both the online and offline methods of registration.

I am happy to note that this has ensured a seamless, unhindered registration exercise. For example, on Day 1, Tuesday 12th September 2023 relying solely on the online mode of registration we captured 12,467 registrants throughout the country. However, with the swift policy change which now allows the use of both online and offline modes of registration, we have seen an increase in the number of registered voters.

On Saturday 16th and Sunday 17th September 2023 we recorded 42,266 and 42,776 respectively. We are hopeful that with the use of both methods we will witness a smooth registration exercise throughout the country.

Another issue we experienced in the first few days was that of large crowds at the Registration Centres. We went back to the drawing board to identify these centres. We immediately increased the number of registration stations from two (2) to three (3) and in some cases four (4). Faulty kits were also swiftly replaced with spares in the Region. So for instance in Tamale Metro Office we experienced issues with the kits sent there resulting in a registration figure of four (4) voters on Day 1. We quickly stepped in and replaced the faulty kits. The registration is going on there without a hitch. Additionally, to deal with long queues in the Tamale Metropolis we have increased their registration stations from two (2) to four (4). I am happy to note that on Saturday they recorded a high number of 269 registrations and 410 on Sunday.

I share these examples to demonstrate that we are on the ground and working round the clock to ensure that every eligible Ghanaian who is desirous of registering as a voter, does so with ease.

We have heard allegations from various quarters that the Commission is seeking to disenfranchise eligible voters. This is false. It is not in our interest to disenfranchise any eligible voter. In fact, we take pride in the fact that we have second highest number of registered voters in the whole of Africa with the exception of Cape Verde which has a national population of about 600,000- and a voting population of 55.33%.

Per the 2021 census figures, Ghana boasts of a voters register which captures 55% of the national population. i.e.17,027,000 out of a national population of 31 million. We pride ourselves that our Voters Register population meets international best practice for the registration of voters.

We are aware that the Commission's policy to use its 268 district offices as the registration centres has attracted criticism from some sections of the society. As you may be aware, the Commission conducted a full-blown registration exercise in some 33,000 polling stations throughout the country.

It is important to note that this exercise is an update of the register. It is to allow persons who have obtained the age of 18 years and above since the 2020 and others who had not previously registered the opportunity to register to vote. It is not a full-blown registration.

It is important to note that this will not be the only registration exercise before the 2024 elections. In line with our plans to promote an inclusive participatory registration process, we plan to institute continuous registration in all our district offices nationwide in 2024 for a considerable length of time. In addition to that, we will identify difficult to access areas and undertake a mop up registration exercise in those areas. Of course, we will rely on data from the Ghana Statistical Service and our own database to determine areas where the registration figures are low, due to inaccessibility to our district offices.

We wish to assure the citizens that we have their best interest at heart. We do not intend to disenfranchise eligible voters. It is in our interest to register them all. However, our present circumstances made it impossible to conduct registration on electoral area basis. As you are all aware, the Commission prepared a draft CI for continuous registration in all district offices nationwide. It was for a sustained long-

term basis. Indeed, had the CI passed we would have had some six (6) months to register voters at any time of their choice.

In this regard our 2023 budget and workplan were prepared along these lines. Our 2023 workplan and budget is based on a continuous voters' registration exercise in our district offices. We did not factor registration on electoral area basis in our 2023 budget and workplan. Hence our adoption of this method which is also in line with our long-term plan and vision. You are all aware that our budget and workplan is approved by Parliament. We are enjoined by law to discuss our budget and workplan with the Special Budget Committee of Parliament prior to approval so both are well known to them. As mentioned, our plan for 2024 is to undertake a mop up registration exercise in difficult to access areas after our continuous registration in our district offices. Those who are unable to register in this ongoing exercise will have the opportunity to do so next year.

As we noted in our previous engagement, the Statistical Service projects that 450,000 persons turn 18 years. This sums up to 1,350,000 eligible voters for the period of 2021, 2022 and 2023. This projection by the Statistical Service has aided our planning and procurement. For the purpose of this registration, we are targeting roughly 700,000 voters. i.e. 52% of the registerable population bearing in mind that not all who have attained the age of 18 years will participate in this exercise.

We are confident that with the long term continuous registration in all our district offices, coupled with the limited mop up exercise in difficult to reach areas in 2024, we will have all eligible voters on board, ahead of the 2024 General Election.

Ladies and Gentlemen while we are doing everything in our power to capture every eligible voter, we will do everything in our power to ensure that ineligible voters do not get onto the register. We are reliably informed about attempts by some persons to get minors on the register. We encourage citizens who observe these illegal practices to challenge them. We have charged our District Electoral Officers who are serving as Registration supervisors to challenge the registration of these minors. We expect that with their effective supervision and leadership, there will be no minors or foreigners on our electoral roll.

We have received reports of the arrest of the youth organizer of one of the political parties in the Shai Osudoku Constituency. It is alleged that he was facilitating the registration of minors. We are also aware of other such attempts to register minors and foreigners by persons who should know better.

It is for this very reason that as a Commission we felt it necessary to limit the documentation for identifying a person's citizenship and age to the Ghana Card. Our experience with the 2020 Registration Exercise revealed attempts by minors and foreigners to illegally get on our roll. It took a great deal of time, effort and money to expunge them from our roll. We succeeded in deleting the details of 15,000 persons from our register. Our proposal to use the Ghana Card as the sole document for identification for registration purposes, is simply to preserve the integrity/credibility of the register. It is not to disenfranchise any eligible applicant as it is being alleged. The current attempts by sections of the society to register minors strongly supports our proposal for the use of the Ghana Card as the sole document to verify a person's citizenship and age. Similarly, it gives credence to why our proposal was resisted.

We use this opportunity to caution guarantors to refrain from guaranteeing for minors and non-citizens. In the past they got away with it. This time we intend to compile the list of defaulting guarantors and bring them up for prosecution.

On a personal note, I have seen a video circulating in which the author states that as Executive Director of the IEA I called on the E.C to expand the registration centres during the 2016 Voters Registration Exercise ahead of the 2016 Presidential and Parliamentary elections.

I state categorically that I said so —and I did so in a constructive manner, devoid of attacks, insults and falsehood. We recall that in the lead up to the 2016 election, the Commission at the time, undertook voter registration in its district offices throughout the country. This was conducted in a year of a general election. i.e. a presidential/parliamentary election. I am being accused of doing the same thing.

The difference here is this, the current exercise being conducted in the 268 district offices is not being undertaken in a year of a general election. 2016 was a year for Presidential and Parliamentary elections, hence my call to the EC in 2016 to expand the scope of the registration. That is not to say that the District Level Elections are not important. They are.

However as mentioned earlier, our budget and workplan for 2023 which Parliament approved was based on a continuous registration exercise not registration on electoral basis. I place on record that our plan for 2024 is not the same and will not be the same as the modalities currently in existence. Neither will it be the same as the 2016 registration exercise. In the lead up to the 2024 Presidential and Parliamentary

elections, we will roll out a continuous registration of voters for several months at District Offices. Additionally, we will undertake a limited mop up registration exercise in selected electoral areas. And so you see that the registration exercise planned for 2024 is different from what was conducted in 2016.

What is baffling is that the very same persons who are accusing us of trying to disenfranchise eligible voters were silent in 2016 when the Commission instituted registration in the District Offices ahead of the Presidential and Parliamentary election.

I take the opportunity to urge the good citizens of Ghana not to believe everything they hear. The allegations being made against us including accusation of our working to disenfranchise eligible voters, to sending faulty kits to the strongholds of a specific political party are false.

A number of districts reported having faulty kits in the first two (2) days. These kits were not located only in the strongholds of one particular political party. The evidence is there for all to verify. The only region that did not report a single faulty kit is the Savannah Region. All other regions had faulty kits which were swiftly replaced. As mentioned earlier the faulty kits in Tamale Metro were replaced to enable a smooth registration of Voters. As a result of the backlog from Day 1, and based on our discussions with Hon. Haruna Iddrisu we set up two (2) additional Registration Stations to cater for the teeming crowds. In all the Tamale Metro Office has four (4) registration stations. This has helped to ease up the long queues and traffic.

As a Commission we remain open to constructive dialogue and call on stakeholders particularly the leadership of political parties to engage us to ensure a successful registration exercise.

I wish to emphasize once again that in 2024, the Commission will undertake a Continuous Registration in all districts for a sustained period; for some 5-6 months. Additionally, a mop up exercise will be held in selected areas where it is difficult to access our offices.

We remain committed to ensuring that every eligible voter who is registered gets on our roll and we will work within our mandate to ensure that.

I will now turn my attention to the data from the Voters Registration Exercise so far.

At the end of six (6) days we recorded a figure of 182,831 registered voters. The breakdown as follows:

2023 LIMITED VOTER REGISTRATION EXERCISE DAILY RETURNS																							
REGION	NATIONAL TOTAL	%	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5	DAY 6	DAY 7	DAY 8	DAY 9	DAY 10	DAY 11	DAY 12	DAY 13	DAY 14	DAY 15	DAY 16	DAY 17	DAY 18	DAY 19	DAY 20	DAY 21
WESTERN	11,644	6.4%	764	1,498	1,967	2,263	2,704	2,448															
WESTERN NORTH	6,491	3.6%	566	968	987	983	1,455	1,532															
CENTRAL	17,590	9.6%	1,246	2,614	2,683	2,794	4,073	4,180															
GREATER ACCRA	27,264	14.9%	1,712	3,633	3,926	4,323	6,583	7,087															
VOLTA	12,681	6.9%	716	1,743	1,900	2,124	2,899	3,299															
OTI	4,427	2.4%	232	625	715	855	939	1,061															
EASTERN	19,327	10.6%	1,334	2,928	3,321	3,203	4,124	4,417															
ASHANTI	29,255	16.0%	2,240	4,501	4,540	4,925	6,530	6,519															
BONO	6,580	3.6%	583	1,027	959	1,156	1,448	1,407															
AHAFO	4,519	2.5%	403	679	726	685	956	1,070															
BONO EAST	7,291	4.0%	440	1,115	1,191	1,214	1,818	1,513															
SAVANNAH	4,656	2.5%	301	760	835	934	985	841															
NORTHERN	12,982	7.1%	827	1,826	2,023	2,020	3,028	3,258															
NORTH EAST	4,244	2.3%	264	547	615	667	1,060	1,091															
UPPER EAST	8,639	4.7%	544	1,071	1,329	1,304	2,251	2,140															
UPPER WEST	5,241	2.9%	295	652	922	1,046	1,413	913															
NATIONAL TOTAL	182,831		12,467	26,187	28,639	30,496	42,266	42,776															

Interestingly we see a pattern of more males registering than females. At the end of Day 6, 53.9% of males had registered as against 46.1% females.

I wish to urge our media personnel to partner with us so as to ensure that the citizenry are provided with the truth.

Thank you very much for your time. May God bless our homeland Ghana and us all.