Dr Christiana Thorpe Proclaims 17 November 2012 as date for Presidential Elections in Sierra Leone

Dr Christiana Thorpe, Chief Electoral Commissioner and Chairperson of the NEC on 12 November 2011 declared 17 November 2012 as the day for the conduct of elections for the Office of the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone. The declaration was made in a statement during the formal opening of the NEC Resource center. The proclamation was made in accordance with Section 28 of the Electoral Laws Act, 2002 (Act No. 2 of 2002). In another related development, the Office of the President issued a press release on the same day on registration of electors and appointment of dates for Parliamentary and Local Government Elections, January 23rd 2012 onto March 26th 2012 was slated for regis-

PEC Commissioners Visit to Nigeria on Technical Cooperation

HE Namadi Sambo, Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (right), Dr. Christiana Thorpe

A delegation from the National Electoral Commission from 23rd-28th October 2011 paid a visit to the Federal Republic of Nigeria on in-kind funding assistance and cooperation in support for the implementation of the 2010-2014 electoral cycle in Sierra Leone. The NEC delegation included Dr. Christiana Thorpe, Chief Electoral Commissioner/Chairperson, Electoral Commissioners Florence K. Kebbie and Mohamed N. Conteh and Albert Massaquoi, Chief of External Relations. The NEC visit was a follow up on earlier requests made to the Nigerian Federal Government, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)-Nigeria and the ECOWAS Commission based in Abuja, Nigeria. During the deliberations, a number of assistance requests were put forward which served as the basis for discussions with the respective individuals and institutions the delegation met with during their stay in Nigeria. The proposed requests were centered around the INEC-Nigeria Sponsorship on logistical and technical assistance and capacity building of NEC staff on study tour to Nigeria; Nigerian Federal Government assistance on acquiring vehicles and assistance in the construction of warehouses in Sierra Leone; ECOWAS Commission to facilitate the soliciting of technical and logistical assistance from other ECOWAS member countries in order to support the Biometric Voter Registration Process in Sierra Leone. During the 5-day visit, the delegation had the opportunity to meet with H.E. Architect Namadi Sambo, Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Professor Attahiru Mahamadu Jega, Chairperson of INEC, Commissioners and Staff of INEC -Nigeria, H.E. Jean de Dreu Samoa, Vice President ECOWAS Commission and other senior staff of the ECOWAS Commission in Nigeria. The Sierra Leone High Commission in Nigeria under the leadership of H.E. Henry O. Macauley was very instrumental in the arrangements and confirmations of appointments during the visit.
The National Electoral Commission on 1st November 2011 began conducting a 3-day Field Pilot Test of the Biometric Voters Registration (BVR) equipment at centers in the 14 electoral district head-quarter towns. The field pilot test was conducted from Tuesday 1st November to Thursday 3rd November 2011 from 10:00 am– 6:00 pm daily. Among some of the objectives of the project were to test the quality and effectiveness of the BVR kits in determining the throughput per registrant, the reliability of in-kit matching and rate of generator fuel consumption. The electronic equipment included computers, cameras and thumb print scanners. Interested citizens of voting age during the 3-day period were asked to avail themselves in order to capture their bio data. NEC district staff conducted the mock registration exercise and an estimated average of three hundred mock registrants per district, including political party representatives, civil society activists, state officials and NEC Commissioners and staff subjected themselves to the test exercise. The BVR pilot test was reportedly observed by the National Elections Watch (NEW), The Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC) and the Media. After the conduct of the exercise, a number of salient observations were highlighted by stakeholders in order for some improvement to be made on the process.

Sierra Leone Participates in West African Inter-Party Dialogue in Ghana

A five man delegation comprising Dr. Christiana Thorpe, Commissioner Aiah Mattia, Albert Massaquoi of the National Electoral Commission, Messrs Victor Foh and Sulaiman Banja Tejan-Sei, both Secretary Generals of the All Peoples Congress Party and the Sierra Leone Peoples Party, respectively and Mr Augustine Sannoh of Civil Society Movement participated in a regional inter party dialogue conference from 12-13 September 2011 in Accra, Ghana, which was organized by International IDEA. The dialogue forum was focused on the aim of providing the platform for key players in the democracy community in promoting healthy democratic environment among various political parties so as to promote credible elections. During the conference deliberations, several country reports on inter party dialogue were presented including that of Sierra Leone, which was presented by Albert Massaquoi. The conference also served as a forum that validated the regional reports on which were a compilation of several country reports on inter party dialogue. At the close of the seminar, the three representative groups from Francophone Lusophone and Anglophone countries developed draft guides for inter party dialogue which was intended to be used as reference in the future on inter party dialogue activities.

Accra Principles of Electoral Justice Launched in Sierra Leone

The National Electoral Commission officially launched the Accra Principles of Electoral Justice (APEJ) in Sierra Leone on Wednesday 16th November 2011 at the NEC Headquarter, Tower Hill, following its initial international launching in Accra, Ghana from 13-15 September 2011. The ceremony was well attended by guests representing various institutions including state officials, representatives from Ministries, Departments and Agencies, the international community, the Security Forces, Legal and Media practitioners, Civil Society and NEC were in attendance. In her opening statements, the chairperson of the programme, Dr. Christiana Thorpe gave a brief background of the APEJ project and the rationale for the implementation of the initiative that will put Sierra Leone in the international limelight. Dr Thorpe outlined that the APEJ initiative was a pilot project intended to be implemented in three (3) African States – Ghana, Kenya and Sierra Leone for an eighteen month period. Commissioner Miatta French in her statement, dilated on the background of APEJ which was a joint combination of initiative by multi- stakeholders to improve trust in the electoral process by developing global standards for electoral administration. Mr Francis A. Munu, Inspector General of Sierra Leone Police, gave the keynote address and officially launched the implementation of APEJ in Sierra Leone.
The Electoral Commissioners and staff of NEC and other invited guests on Thursday 10th November 2011 witnessed the official launching of the NEC library and resource center at the Commission’s head office in Tower Hill, Freetown. Mr. Sallieu Turay, Chief Librarian, Sierra Leone Library Board gave the keynote address and officially cut the tape to the entrance of the resource center. The opening of the resource center was in accordance with the Commission’s 2nd objective of the strategic plan 2010-2014 programme of action in improving NEC’s institutional memory and accountability by implementing a new and cost effective record keeping and archiving system. The initial funds to the tune of $12,000 (Sixty Million Leones) to equip the resource center were provided by USAID through the American Embassy in Freetown. The library has been equipped with literature on a wide range of disciplines including legal instruments, electoral education, electoral management and capacity building manuals, articles on elections, conflict and governance, articles on electoral observation, political parties and gender issues.

GIS/GPS Data Capture Training Held in Makeni

The Training and Operations Departments of NEC in collaboration with Statistics Sierra Leone (SSL) and CERSGIS, University of Ghana, Legon, on 1-3 December 2011 organized a training on field data capture of voter registration centers using the Geographic Information Systems (GIS)/Geographic Positioning Systems (GPS) technology for NEC and SSL district and data field staff respectively at the Pastoral Center in Makeni. The objective of the training was to practically expose field staff on the operations and use of the GPS equipment and digital cameras and how they are used to obtain and analyze electronic geographical images and details about the terrain where registration centers are located in order to produce credible information which will be used for planning purposes and decision making for the Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) in January 2012. After the hands on training, exercise, the NEC and SSL staff were paired into 14 electoral districts teams and on Sunday 4th December 2011 they commenced the actual data collection for a period of 10 days. The data captured were brought and analyzed at the data center at NEC head office at Tower Hill in Freetown.

NEC Embarks on Recruitment and Training of Voter Registration Staff

The Human Resource Department in collaboration with other departments and units embarked on a nationwide recruitment drive for various cadre of temporary staff in preparation for the BVR process in Sierra Leone. From 1st-14th October 2011, 15 IT Focal Persons and 30 IT Software Engineers were recruited and trained. From 7th — 18th November 2011, 394 Ward Coordinators were also recruited and trained. From 5th — 15th December 2011 a total of 2,998 Registrars (800), Assistant Registrars (800) and IT Data Entry Operators (800) were recruited and trained. The formation of Electoral Ward Education Committee (WEECs) also commenced on the 19th December whereby, the Commission gave the mandate to NEC district staff to liaise with community stakeholders in the nomination of representatives into the WEECs. The formation of WEECs comprising NEC staff, representatives of political parties, the Paramount Chefs, religious organizations, youth and women’s groups and the civil society, was tasked with the responsibility to effectively undertake voter education and sensitization activities in the wards using the appropriate dialect prevalent in the communities and to generally mobilize community members on the advantages of the BVR process in Sierra Leone.

IT exams conducted for Recruits in Tonkolili
Exclusive Pictorials on NEC/ Stakeholders Meetings on BVR Sensitisation

Meeting with the Media

Meeting with the Paramount Chiefs in Bo

Meeting with Women’s Groups

Meeting with Political Parties
Eight (8) Reasons Why You Can Trust NEC

The National Electoral Commission is the authority, established by Section 33 of The 1991 Constitution, with a mandate to be responsible for the conduct and supervision of the registration of voters for, and of, all public elections and Referenda...

Over the last few years, the NEC under the leadership of Dr. Christiana Thorpe has organised, conducted and supervised several electoral activities. But many a time, the integrity of NEC has been questioned as to whether it is professional enough to conduct credible elections in Sierra Leone. This question of trust has been rhetorically asked by the Sierra Eye News Magazine with a portrait (on the cover page) of the Chief Electoral Commissioner, publicly displayed on bill boards along the streets of Freetown, captioned “Christiana Thorpe, Can we trust her again?” After a thorough reflection on the question and the prevailing circumstances, here are some fundamental reasons why you can trust NEC:

1. On record, the NEC conducted internationally acclaimed transparent and credible elections in 2007 and 2008. (Courtesy of NEW, ECOWAS, AU, EU, observation reports)
2. NEC is guided in the performance of its function by the electoral legal framework and always insist on compliance of all stakeholders with its operational procedures.
3. NEC always collaborates and associates with all its stakeholders both locally and internationally by conducting itself in an equitable and fair manner comparable to international standards.
4. The present board of commissioners is arguably the most experienced set that the NEC has ever had, sharing among them sixty seven years of valuable electoral experience.
5. The commission is headed by arguably the most astute and trustworthy chairperson it has ever had in the person of Dr. Christiana Thorpe.
6. The NEC staff are among an elite of Sierra Leone’s finest corps of professionals who have been exposed to rigorous trainings not only for technical competence but also to be morally prepared for electoral operations in all circumstances.
7. Dr. Christiana Thorpe is chairperson of NEC that is presiding over the 2012 elections. Her virtues and steadfastness then (in the conduct of the 2007 election) was unshakable and she (as chairperson) is even more determined to lead Sierra Leone through in the conduct of another set of elections come 17 November 2012.
8. It is on record that the technical and logistical preparations that the Commission has undertaken are in line with the timeline for the biometric voters registration process scheduled to commence in January 2012. There has not been any inhibiting situation that has warranted review of the commission’s implementation strategy, hence the NEC’s operations are on course.

Technical Committee on Legal Reforms drafts new Election Laws

The Legal Affairs Department and collaborative partners in the Technical Committee on Legal Reforms on Saturday 17th December 2011 concluded and submitted to the Commission a draft report on the reform and consolidation of electoral laws and the draft bill entitled the Public Elections Act, 2011. The Commission reviewed the draft report and bill and forwarded imputes to the technical committee for finalization. The final draft document in the form of a cabinet paper was expected to be submitted through the Attorney General and Minister of Justice to Cabinet and eventually tabled before Parliament. According to Mr. Macksood Gibril Sesay, Ag Director of Legal Affairs, “...the review of electoral laws has to be done at least one year before the conduct of polls, in order to meet with international best practices and acceptable standards.” The review according to Mr Sesay is in accordance with the Commission’s objective No 5 of the strategic plan 2010-2014 programme of action of ‘...ensuring clarity in the legal framework governing the conduct of credible and transparent public elections and referenda by reviewing inadequate and ambiguous laws to enhance their consolidation...’.
NEC Chairperson Declares date for Local Council Bye-Elections in Ward 369, Freetown City Council

Dr Christiana Thorpe, Chief Electoral Commissioner and Chairperson of the NEC on Friday 18th November 2011 in a press release, declared Saturday 14 January 2012 as the day for the conduct of Local Council Bye-election in Ward 369 in the Western Area Urban City Council. The declaration of election date for the said election was in accordance with Constitutional provisions. The vacancy was reported in a correspondence by the Chief Administrator of the council following the death of former Councilor Abdul Salaam Ade Lewally of Ward 369, leaving the seat vacant. Dr. Thorpe in her statement declared that ‘...in pursuant of provisions in section 10 (1) of the Local Government Act of 2004, the seat in the said Local Council be filled within 90 days period...’.

NEC Embarks on Capacity Building for its Drivers and Office Assistants

The Training and Human Resource Departments in collaboration with the Best and Brightest Driving School conducted two sets of 2-day trainings on 3rd – 4th December 2011 and 9th - 10th December 2011 respectively on the theme: Advanced Safety and Defensive Driving for drivers at HQ and the district offices. The workshops were held in keeping with the NEC strategic plan 2010-2014 on specialised trainings and capacity building. The training objective was to keep drivers abreast with professional ethics required for efficient, effective and competent driving and to further acquaint them on Government policy on the use of public property like government vehicles, the interpretation of road signs, the role of drivers in cases of breakdowns and road accidents and passenger safety and the issue of substance abuse during driving. During the training sessions, drivers were exposed to on the road refresher driving tests and also given education about the NEC FAQs of electoral operations. In another development, the training for Admin and Office Assistants was scheduled to commence on the 30-31 December 2011 on office best practices, ethics and staff self motivation.

Chief Electoral Commissioner's New Year’s Message & NEC Pictorial Electoral Education Messages

The NEC sends you and your entire family the gift of Peace for the New Year.
Register free to get your own Biometric Voter Registration ID Card with Joy and Happiness.
Prove Your Citizenship and Vote in the 2012 Elections.
Your Vote is Your Power!!!

Happy New Year
Signed: CEC/Chairperson

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