

**SPEECH BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF
GHANA AT A PRESS CONFERENCE HELD AT 5.00PM ON MONDAY 29TH
JUNE 2020 AHEAD OF THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE 2020 VOTER
REGISTRATION EXERCISE**

Good evening distinguished citizens of our beloved country, Ghana, Members of the Press, Ladies and Gentlemen. It is a pleasure to speak to you this evening. I bring you warm greetings from the Electoral Commission of Ghana. This is the day our Father God has made we rejoice and are glad in it. It's been a long journey and we thank God for bringing us this far. Today marks an important day in our national calendar. It is the day that precedes the commencement of our 2020 Voters Registration Exercise.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, on Thursday, 25th June 2020, the Supreme Court gave its ruling in two cases brought against the Electoral Commission; one regarding the Commission's intended compilation of a new Voters' Register, and the other, regarding the Commission's position that existing voter identification cards should not be included in the list of eligible documentation for the registration of voters.

The Supreme Court in its ruling, directed the Commission and all its stakeholders to comply with Articles 42 and 45 of the 1992 Constitution, and CI 126. By this ruling, the Supreme Court granted the Electoral Commission the authority to carry on with the compilation of the new Voters' Register using CI 126, and to exclude the existing Voter ID cards as identification for voters. This ruling provides the Electoral Commission with the go ahead to commence the 2020 Voter Registration Exercise. This exercise will begin tomorrow, 30th June 2020 and will continue until 6th of August 2020.

The registration of voters is a critical process in our election cycle. The Voters' Register is the bedrock on which credible elections rest. It is the foundation upon which the sovereign right of a people to choose their national leaders is hinged.

Therefore, in carrying out the registration exercise, we, as a Commission, are mindful of the significance of the task we are undertaking.

We will like to assure you that, as a Commission, our rationale for compiling a new register, is not to disenfranchise any eligible voter. On the contrary, it is to ensure that all our citizens who qualify are afforded the opportunity to register and cast their votes. The Commission is of the view that only eligible citizens should be given the right to determine who governs and leads our dear country, and we are determined to ensure that no one is left behind.

We also deem it necessary to assure you that our decisions and actions are taken without fear or favour and without recourse to any individual or group of persons. We have a duty to our citizens to ensure that it is only the will of the people that stands.

I urge all Ghanaians to move forward with the Commission in implementing the ruling of the court. And indeed, this is the moment for us to move forward.

It is time for us to turn our energies towards the exercise of registering voters. Let us all join hands together, notwithstanding our differences, to ensure that every desiring Ghanaian of 18 years and above is able to register as a voter, and that only Ghanaian citizens of 18 years and above are able to register as voters.

Dear citizens, your participation in, and monitoring of, the voters' registration exercise will be critical to maintaining the integrity of the Register. Please participate in the Voters Registration Exercise. Monitor the process at your registration centre. Draw the attention of the Commission to any anomalies you might observe in the process. Together, we will arrive at a comprehensive and credible Voters Register.

The use of Guarantors in establishing one's Identity

I will now move on to an issue of importance to the voter registration process; that is the question of eligible documentation for proving one's identity as a Ghanaian. CI 126 speaks to this question.

CI 126 specifies the documents that each citizen of Ghana is required to present in order to be eligible to register as a voter. The required documents are a valid passport, or a National Identification Card issued by the National Identification Authority. CI 126 further specifies that in the event that a citizen of Ghana does not have either of the above documents, he or she must present two (2) guarantors, who must themselves have been registered under the current registration process, to vouch for, or guarantee, the identity of the said person, as a citizen of Ghana. Some concerns have been raised about the use of guarantors. We wish to acknowledge those concerns. We understand that it may seem like a burden, having to find 2 registered persons to vouch for ones identity as a Ghanaian. And yet, this seems to us to be the lesser of two evils. Although it may take a little bit more of your time and that of your guarantors, it will ensure that only persons who are Ghanaians, and of age of 18 years and above, are listed on our Voters' Register.

Guaranteeing of identity through the use of guarantors is actually not a novel phenomenon in Ghana's voting procedures. This system has been with us since the beginning of our democracy, as the framers of the law anticipated situations in which Ghanaian citizens might for legitimate and unavoidable reasons, be unable to produce documents to prove their citizenship.

May I crave your indulgence in presenting you with available data on the numbers of persons who have in the past been registered using guarantors as follows:

- In 2014, nine hundred and twenty-eight thousand, five hundred and forty (928, 540) persons were registered as voters. Of this number, **82.2%** of registering voters used guarantors.

- In 2016, one million, forty-six thousand, and sixty-seven (1,460,067) persons were registered as voters. Of this this number, **92.5%** used guarantors
- In the continuous registration process in 2016, thirty-seven thousand, nine hundred and twenty-nine persons were registered. Of this number, **93.1%** used guarantors.
- In the 2018 Referendum, forty-seven thousand, eight hundred and fifty-two (47,852) persons were registered. **99.5%** used guarantors.
- In 2019, one million, two hundred and eleven thousand, three hundred and ninety-five (1,211,395) persons were registered. **95.2%** used guarantors .

As you will have observed from the above numbers, my predecessors have applied this system in past voter registration processes as they have sought to ensure that no one was disenfranchised for valid reasons beyond their control.

I hope that the 2020 Elections should be the last time that we as a country will need the guarantor system, as come 2024, all citizens should have been issued with National Identification Cards, and the process of applying for National ID cards should have become a routine procedure carried out at district and regional levels.

Covid19 and the Voters' Registration Exercise

As I mentioned earlier, the Voter's Registration Exercise begins tomorrow. It begins at a time when we, as a nation, have not yet beaten the Covid19 virus nor completely curtailed its spread.

The registration exercise will require the gathering of large numbers of people. There is the risk of transmission and spread of the Covid19 virus at these gatherings. We are aware that some of us would prefer that we wait for the end of the pandemic before carrying out processes such as this one. Others believe that since the virus may linger into the long term, we must find ways to stay safe

while engaging in our normal business. The latter view seems largely to reflect the global approach to the question of when to resume normal economic and social life, but with each country adapting this approach to its circumstances.

As a Commission, we have paid close attention to signals from the government and our health experts, which suggest the latter approach. We have in addition held discussions with the National Covid19 Team established by the Government, and with the Ghana Health Service. We have taken their advice on best practice in curtailing the spread of the virus. We have thus developed the following safety regiment to be carried out at all registration centres.

First andt, as has been our practice, all registration centres will be set up, outdoors, in open spaces. Where schools, churches and other such venues are used as registration centres, we will not set up camp inside the school or church buildings. Our registration centres will be set up in open fields and open spaces outside of the school and church buildings. We will not use the school or church furniture. We will use the EC's furniture and set up for use as registration centres. This has been our policy and practice in times past and will remain so. As an added measure, our furniture will continually be wiped with alcohol wipes.

Other Covid19 preventative measures that will be observed at all registration centres are as follows:

1. All people entering the registration centre or queuing to enter the registration centre will be required to wear a nose mask.
2. Upon arrival at a registration centre, each person's temperature will be taken using a thermometer gun. Persons with temperatures above 37.8 degrees Celsius will be directed to health personnel at the registration centres or the nearest public health facility. Special arrangements will be made for them to register.

3. The Commission will provide liquid soap and water with veronica buckets for mandatory washing of hands before joining the queue or entering the registration centre.
4. There will be strict observance of physical distance of at least 1 meter in queues at the centres.
5. Fingerprint scanners will be cleaned prior to the capturing of fingerprints of applicants, using alcohol wipes,
6. Hand sanitizers will be provided for mandatory sanitizing of hands when leaving the centres. It is important to note that the Ghana Health Service has released some 7000 Health assistants to each of the Registration Centres. It is expected that the Health Assistants will help ensure strict adherence to the safety protocols outlined by the Commission.

The above health protocols are in line with the government's safety protocols.

In all these safety measures, we will rely upon your cooperation. It will not be easy, but with your compliance with the above measures, we should be able to carry out all registration procedures safely.

Special arrangements for the Vulnerable

I must mention further that special arrangements have been made for elderly and vulnerable persons during the registration exercise.

All vulnerable people, such as persons with disabilities, pregnant women, and breast-feeding mothers, the aged (60 years and above) and sick will be given priority at the registration centers.

In addition, the Commission has introduced a new facility to serve the aged and vulnerable as follows. The aged and vulnerable may go to district offices of the Electoral Commission across the country for their registration. Additionally, they

have the option of printing and filling out their forms before they go to the registration centres. This will help to speed up the registration process. The Form IA which captures the biometric data as well as guarantee forms can be found on our website www.ec.gov.gh. Please note that the Registration for the aged and vulnerable at district offices of the Electoral Commission starts on Thursday, July 2nd 2020.

Field staff for the Registration Exercise

A major concern a number of citizens have raised with us has to do with the quality of our temporary officers.

We have recruited and trained and deployed over 44,000 temporary officials into the field. We are confident that the training given them has prepared them to operate efficiently and professionally. As part of the training we have drummed home the importance of instilling the principles of integrity, fairness and transparency in their actions throughout the registration period to supervise day to day activities of our temporary team.

We have introduced a Code of Conduct which spells out guidelines for their operations. As part of the recruitment exercise all staff signed an oath pledging to abide by the rules governing their activities.

We have also procured and disseminated various materials to the field. These include, forms, laminates, indelible ink, toner cartridges, and thumb-print pads. For the first time we have procured other items we term COVID-19 items and deployed these to the field.

Again, ahead of the Registration Exercise the Commission will deploy 8000 Biometric Voter Registration Kits into the field. The kits have been thoroughly tested and we are confident that they will function effectively and ensure the smooth and speedy registration of each applicant. We envisage that with the

robustness of the kits as well as the extreme training offered, each applicant should not spend more than (ten) 10 minutes in going through the registration exercise.

Over 500 technicians have been trained and deployed to assist with any technical issues that may arise.

The Commission has also set up Zonal Centres throughout the country. These Zonal Centres will be manned by our technicians who are expected to ensure the prompt and timely replacement of faulty kits in the field. We believe that this will contribute to a smooth and seamless process.

Mode of Registration

The Cluster system will be used for the voter registration exercise. A cluster will consist of five (5) registration centres/polling stations in a district. In all a total of 6788 clusters made up of 5 polling stations each will be covered. This means that all 33,367 registration centres will be covered during the registration exercise. The registration will take place simultaneously in all 16 Regions.

The entire registration will be undertaken in five (5) phases. Each phase will span a duration of six days. In effect, a registration team will spend six (6) days at each of the five centres in a cluster, thus making thirty (30) days per cluster. Six (6) days will be used for the mop up exercise.

We have published the Movement Plan on our website and in the newspapers today.

Transparency of our Processes

Distinguished Citizens, it is important to emphasize the transparency of our processes and to allay the fears of stakeholders. Over the years a number of mechanisms have been built into our processes to tighten the loose screws and ensure transparency and accountability from the registration of voters to the

declaration of results. For the purposes of this exercise I will focus on the transparency embedded into our registration process.

Before the Electoral Commission commences any registration process, it has to provide all registered political parties with 21 days' notice of its intention to compile or update the register. This is to afford the opportunity to the Political parties to train and assign agents to the registration centers. The agents remain at the centers from the start of the process to the end. At the beginning of each day, the Electoral Commission Officers start the machines/kits in the presence of the Political Party agents. The kits show the date, time and a record of the number of persons who have registered and should be empty/zero at the beginning of the day.

At the end of each day, the kit generates a print-out that gives the total number of persons who have been registered in the day. Each political party is given a copy of the print-out. The Electoral Commission also forwards the same copy to its data base. Additionally, the Political Parties on their own, also record the number of persons who are registered per day. This enables them to confirm this against the print-out from the Electoral Commission. Indeed any political party with this information can set up its own system to track and record the number of applicants per registration center across the nation on a daily basis. Furthermore, the entire registration process is monitored by various Observer Groups. This year we have a good number of observer groups which have showed interest in monitoring the processes. This will further strengthen our processes.

As a Commission which believes in law and order, peace and security we have engaged consistently with the Security Agencies through the mechanism of the Election Security Task Force. We are confident that our early and regular engagements will yield positive gains and cause us to witness a peaceful and

violence free exercise. On our part we call on all Ghanaians to work with us to ensure a peaceful Voters Registration Exercise.

Members of the press, dear citizens, ladies and gentlemen, this has been a rather lengthy speech, but I hope it has addressed the most important issues relating to the 2020 Voter Registration Exercise. On behalf of the Commission I thank all our stakeholders, i.e. leaders of religious bodies, traditional authority, civil society and the media for their support over the months.

I also thank all of you for your time and the opportunity to speak to you. We look forward to seeing you, at the registration centres, with your face masks firmly in place, as we embark upon this all-important exercise. We will carry out this exercise efficiently and safely, God being our helper.

I wish you all a good evening.