



June 8, 2020

THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF GHANA
RIDGE -ACCRA

**ATTN: MRS. JEAN MENSAH
CHAIRPERSON, THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF GHANA**

Dear Madam,

**AN OPEN LETTER TO THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF GHANA: ERR ON
THE SIDE OF CAUTION**

We the undersigned lecturers and staff from the various Universities in Ghana bring you fraternal greetings, and wish you and your team well in the performance of your duties in anticipation of a free, fair and transparent Presidential and Parliamentary elections in December 2020. This letter is necessitated by our concern for free, fair, and transparent elections and the need to ensure that events leading to, during, and after the elections conform to best and widely accepted practices in electoral management.

In the last several months, we have observed with utmost concern that public conversations on matters relating to the impending 2020 elections have been characterized by a series of controversies that have the potential to completely erode the trust and confidence the Electoral Commission has jealously guarded over more than a quarter of a century since ushering in our new political dispensation. Experience has shown that our country's success at previous elections was driven by the Commission's ability to nurture an environment of constructive deliberations that provide voice for political parties and other stakeholders to discuss, work through compromises, and build consensus on accepted rules of engagement.

It is our considered view that the Commission under your leadership seem to have thrown away the principle of constructive deliberation and consensus-building, and that to a very large extent has accounted for the current controversy. We are mindful of your constitutionally guaranteed independence but, we are also aware that the exercise of that independence over the years has been cognizant of the Commission's inter-dependent relationship with the political parties, other stakeholders and the citizenry at large. Your current unilateral departure from the previous approach to decision making by the Commission has poisoned the electoral environment, and has the potential to undermine the credibility of the 2020 elections.

We are particularly worried about the decision to compile a completely new voters' register given that our country's constitutionally scheduled Presidential and Parliamentary elections are about six months away. The decision is puzzling for a number of reasons.

1. The existing register has been used by your office to conduct the following:
 - i. 2012 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections
 - ii. 2016 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections
 - iii. A Referendum to create six (6) new administrative Regions in 2018
 - iv. A By-election at the Ayawaso West Wuogon Constituency, and
 - v. District Assembly Elections in 2019

So far, we have not seen any evidence to suggest that an updated version of the existing register cannot perform same role in the 2020 Presidential and Parliamentary elections, as the outcomes of these elections have been described by your office and other stakeholders as some of the most credible elections in our country's history.

2. We are worried about the international image of our country and wish to draw your attention to the negative effects of your decision to compile a new voters' register, as that conduct will violate *Section II Article 2 (1) of Protocol A/SP1/12/01 on Democracy and Good Governance Supplementary to the Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security*, which forbids ECOWAS member nations from making any extensive changes to electoral regimes in the last six (6) months before elections.
3. In the wake of the outbreak of COVID-19, there is the likelihood that any process of voter registration will defeat the principles of social distancing and compromise the health of many citizens. Our nation is already compelled to shoulder unexpected financial burdens arising from the outbreak of the

pandemic, and it will be an act of wisdom not engage in activities that will exacerbate that burden. Nothing should take precedence over healthy human lives, and so it is our considered view that existing voters register is updated as was done prior to both the recent referendum and District Assembly elections to pave the way for first time voters to exercise their rights to participate in the electoral processes.

4. While we are happy to support the Electoral Commission in coming up with solutions to clearly defined problems, we are still unclear as to the specific problems and challenges the decision to compile new voters register is intended to solve. Although a new register as you plan cannot be possible given the proximity to our scheduled elections, we implore your office to provide evidence of the specific challenges it seeks to address with the register and we are happy to participate in constructive deliberations to assist your office with alternative policy options that will enhance our electoral credibility.

In addition to our concerns about the compilation of a new voters' register, we are even more worried about your decision to limit registration eligibility requirements to passports and Ghanacards. We are unable to understand why you seem to have lost confidence in voters' identity cards issued by your office and rather gained confidence in an uncompleted Ghanacard operations being undertaken by the National Identification Authority (NIA). Given that the NIA has itself admitted that its work cannot be completed till September 2020, we fear that your insistence on using the Ghanacard card will disenfranchise millions of Ghanaians. We are aware that the NIA currently registers persons fifteen (15) years and above and that can introduce underage persons into the register. Passports are a privilege in Ghana and only about two million Ghanaians (6.7% of the population) possess them, and it is possible that most holders of passports are also holders of Ghanacards. Taken together, holders of passports and Ghanacards will be approximately nine million citizens. If the registration requirement is limited to these two documents, you risk denying about nine million Ghanaians the right to vote in December 2020.

Similarly, we are deeply concerned that if you proceed with your decision to exclude the existing voters' identity card from the primary documents required for the registration, you will open the Commission up to avoidable multiple legal challenges especially from holders of the existing voters' identity card who may feel their citizenship rights are threatened by your decision. It is important to keep in mind that millions of Ghanaians have never bothered to acquire passports because its acquisition has never been made mandatory for citizens, and often, it is perceived as a document that is necessary only when one has plans to travel abroad.

It is therefore essential that the Commission acts in a manner that does not penalize some of our fellow citizens for their inability to possess documents for which until now, they have no reason to acquire. It is our considered view that although the Commission is mandated to register citizens for election purposes, the determination of who qualifies as a citizen of Ghana with voting rights falls outside its domain, hence the need to exercise extreme caution so as not to violate important constitutional provisions.

We have taken note of the window you provided for those without the passports and Ghanacards to register if they are able to obtain guarantees from two registered voters. We are worried that this window is a recipe for disaster, as it will provide an entry point for several foreign nationals and underage persons to register. Respectfully, that window is also absurd as it makes mockery of the sacred principles of citizenship itself, especially because it will give rise in some instances to people having to vouch for the citizenship of their biological parents simply on accounts of the latter not having the prescribed documents. It is important to note that a person's citizenship and the rights inherent are alienable and cannot be taken away simply because he or she does not possess a specific piece of paper. Given that your new eligibility requirements will make millions of Ghanaians ineligible to register and vote, we are worried about the adverse implications of that for the legitimacy of recently elected Assembly Members, the President of Ghana, and the Members of the Legislature whose mandate is held on accounts of some of the persons likely to be disenfranchised by your decision.

We wish to urge you to revisit the processes involved in the compilation of the existing Biometric Voters' Register leading to the 2012 elections. In that process, all the political parties and other stakeholders were actively involved in decisions leading to the compilation, and everyone had adequate opportunity to make inputs. Entrenched positions were relaxed and compromises evolved. The process was free from political manipulation or intimidation and therefore provided all eligible persons the necessary and required environment to be captured in the biometric voters' register. The biometric process itself was designed to ensure that only eligible voters whose bio-data was captured could be on the voters' register. Overall, the high integrity of the process of registration makes the current register, without doubt, one of the fairest, most credible, and fit for purpose. Please be reminded that current President Nana Akufo Addo and the Members of Parliament were elected into office with the existing biometric register.

Finally, we wish to urge you to act as a referee without any sign or acts of partiality. It is necessary for all stakeholders especially the political parties to go into the election without harbouring suspicion about your neutrality as the referee primarily because such a feeling is dangerous to the integrity and acceptability of the

outcome, and the stability of our country. We are aware, that beautiful games have been marred by poor officiating, a domain you should avoid. It is our belief that a return to constructive deliberation is the surest way for developing a consensus and collective position in the interest of our country. Electoral disputes have resulted in the loss of millions of lives in other countries in the sub-region, and the lesson therein for us is to avoid belligerent decisions and intransigent and bellicose positions.

Please feel free to contact **Professor Kodzo Gavua on 020-813-0581; Professor Anthony M. Sallar on 054-315-4128; Dr. Nana Ama Brown-Klutse 024-498-3637** or via the following email address culghana@gmail.com if you need further clarification.

Yours Sincerely,

_____ **signed** _____

1. Professor Stephen Kendie, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast
2. Professor Kodzo Gavua, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra
3. Professor Ohene Adjei, (rtd) Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi
4. Professor Fred Binka, Fmr. Vice-Chancellor, University of Health and Allied Sciences (UHAS), Ho
5. Professor Joshua Alabi Fmr. Vice-Chancellor, University of Professional Studies (UPSA), Accra
6. Professor Anthony M. Sallar, Ghana Institute of Management & Public Administration, (GIMPA), Accra
7. Professor Martin Oteng-Ababio, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra
8. Professor Avea Nsoh, College of Languages Education, Ajumako, University of Education, Winneba
9. Professor Parpah Senanu Kwawukume, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi
10. Professor Clement Opoku-Okrah, Radford University College, Accra
11. Professor Raymond Atuguba, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra
12. Professor Emeritus Kwame Ninsin, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra
13. Professor George Oduro, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast
14. Professor Awuah-Nyamekye, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast
15. Professor Emeritus Kwame Ninsin, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra
16. Professor Victor Yankah, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast
17. Professor Smile Dzisi, Koforidua Technical University, Koforidua

18. Dr. Nana Ama Brown-Klutse, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra
19. Dr. Michael Kpessa-Whyte, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra
20. Dr. James Dzisah, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra
21. Dr. Abukari Salifu, University for Development Studies, Tamale Campus
22. Dr. Vida N. Yakong, University for Development Studies, Tamale Campus
23. Dr. Kwabena Opoku-Agyemang, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra
24. Dr. Elijah Yendaw, Simon Diedong Dombo University of Business and Integrated Development Studies, Wa
25. Dr. Vincent Adzahlie-Mensah, University of Education, Winneba
26. Dr. Gameli Kwame Nordge (rtd), University of Health and Allied Services, Ho.
27. Dr. Abdul Nashirudeen Mumuni, University for Development Studies, Tamale
28. Dr. Kwamina Mintah Nyarko, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast
29. Dr. Vincent Assanful, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast
30. Dr. Hussein Inusah, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast
31. Dr. Kolawole Ojo, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast
32. Dr. Alexis Akanson, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast
33. Dr. Alexander Y. Segbefia, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi
34. Dr. Sam Agblorti, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast
35. Dr. Kaderi Bukari, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast
36. Dr. Haruna Rufai Kilu, University of Professional Studies, Accra
37. Dr. Quaidoo Christopher, University of Professional Studies, Accra
38. Dr. Agbanyo Richard, University of Professional Studies, Accra
39. Dr. Chris Phares, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast
40. Mr. Reindof Kesempkor, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast
41. Mr. Martin Koomson, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast
42. Dr. Benedicta Yayra Fosu-Mensah, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra
43. Mr. John Linscell Yen, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast
44. Mr. Ebenezer Domey, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast
45. Dr. Abdul-Gafaru Abdulai, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra
46. Dr. Musah Dankwah, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast
47. Mr. Selorm Klogo, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi
48. Dr. Samson Obed Appiah, University of Ghana, Legon Accra
49. Dr. Kodzovi Akpabli Honu, University of Ghana, Legon Accra
50. Dr. Kwaku Agbanu, University of Ghana, Legon Accra
51. Dr. Francis Adzei, University of Ghana, Legon Accra
52. Mr. Fortune Adika- Bessah, University of Ghana, Legon Accra
53. Dr. Godfred Seidu Jasaw, University for Development Studies, Tamale

54. Dr. Edward Brenya, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi
55. Dr. Salifu Seidu-Larry, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast
56. Dr. Michael Mensah, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi
57. Dr. Ahmed Mohammed Gedel, Accra Technical University, Accra
58. Dr. Yusuf Hadrat, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi
59. Dr. Sameul Azinga, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi
60. Mr. David Wowui Brown, Accra Technical University, Accra
61. Mr. Azumah Bright Kojo, Accra Technical University, Accra
62. Dr. Issahaku Shriaz, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra
63. Mr. John Tumaku, Ho Technical University, Ho
64. Dr. Francis Atsu, Ghana Institute of Management & Public Administration, (GIMPA), Accra
65. Dr. William Darbi, Ghana Institute of Management & Public Administration, (GIMPA), Accra
66. Dr. Nene-Lomotey Kuditchar, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra
67. Dr. Abdallah Mumuni, University of Professional Studies, Accra
68. Mr. Matthew Monyo, Koforidua Technical University, Koforidua
69. Dr. Butakor K. Paul, University of Professional Studies, Accra
70. Mr. Timothy Avordeh, University of Professional Studies, Accra
71. Mr. Michael Kubi, University of Professional Studies, Accra
72. Dr. Zubairu Ibrahim, Accra Technical University, Accra
73. Dr. Edem Bani, Accra Technical University, Accra
74. Mr. Martin Out Offei, Koforidua Technical University, Koforidua
75. Dr. Gideon Adotey, Accra Technical University, Accra
76. Dr. Pius Siakwah, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra
77. Dr. Abu Mumuni, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra
78. Dr. John Kanyiri Yambah, University of Education, Winneba
79. Dr. Abass Kabila, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi
80. Reuben Glover Esq, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi
81. Mr. Bismark Agbelengor, Koforidua Technical University, Koforidua
82. Dr. Collins Nunyonameh, Ho Technical University, Ho
83. Dr. Aminu Dramani, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi

84. Mr. Mawutorwu Doe, Koforidua Technical University, Koforidua
85. Mr. Jonny Osei, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi
86. Dr. Evans Agalega, Koforidua Technical University, Koforidua
87. Dr. Paulina Ampomah, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast
88. Dr. Shaibu Akansiseh, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast
89. Mr. Ebenezer Annan, Koforidua Technical University, Koforidua
90. Mr. Seth E. K. Gati, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra
91. Dr. S. K. Kuwor, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra.
92. Mr. Kofi Anthonio, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra
93. Mr. Mustapha, Mohamed, Koforidua Technical University, Koforidua
94. Dr. Yao Elikem, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi
95. Mr. Christopher Alatarige, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast
96. Dr. Deodat E. Adenutsi, Ho Technical University, Ho
97. Dr. Emmanuel Osei Sarpong. University of Education, Winneba
98. Ms. Vivian Akpalu, Koforidua Technical University, Koforidua
99. Dr. Ben Kwofie, Koforidua Technical University, Koforidua
100. Mr. Stephen Adingo, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra
101. Dr. Adam Salifu, University of Professional Studies, Accra

cc: All Media Houses