

## **PRESS STATEMENT ON ELECTION 2004**

### **COALITION OF DOMESTIC ELECTION OBSERVERS (CODEO)**

#### **PRELIMINARY STATEMENT ON GHANA'S PRESIDENTIAL AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION Held on Tuesday 7 December, 2004; Issued on Thursday 9 December 2004**

##### **INTRODUCTION**

The December 7, 2004 general elections marked another milestone in Ghana's Fourth Republic. To contribute to the transparency and integrity of the elections, the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) deployed 7400 observers in all ten (10) regions of the country to observe the presidential and parliamentary elections. CODEO Observers were posted to polling stations as well as at constituency collating centers in all the 230 constituencies in Ghana. The deployment of local observers by CODEO was to achieve the following objectives:

- Promote free, fair, transparent and peaceful elections;
- Instill confidence in the electoral process and in the Ghanaian;
- Work to deter, prevent and/or detect electoral fraud; and help
- Prevent and/or manage conflicts

In the afternoon of the election-day (December 7, 2004), CODEO issued a statement on the polling process, based on reports received from the observers. The general conclusion of that report was that the conduct of the polls at the time was peaceful and orderly, with very few incidents. Thirty-six (36) hours after the close of polls, CODEO is pleased to issue this preliminary general statement on the elections based on reports received from its observers throughout Ghana. A detailed analysis of CODEO observations will be released later in our final report.

##### **HIGHLIGHTS OF THE STATEMENT**

- *Voter Turnout*

Voter turnout was very impressive. As early as 4am, voters had started forming queues at some polling stations and at the close of polls at 5pm, there were still long queues at some polling stations. Indications are that turnout figures will exceed the 2000 level of 62.0%. Though voters reported at their polling stations as early as 4am - well before the official 7am opening of the polls – they comported themselves in a patient and dignified manner.

There was compelling evidence across the country that voters understood their electoral rights and responsibilities, as the polling process across the nation generally went quite smoothly. In the few cases where minor irregularities at the polling stations did occur, disputes were settled amicably as polling officers, party agents, election observers, and voters were aware of the prescribed election procedures. The high voter turn out on the whole illustrates increased voter and civic awareness that are necessary in a democracy. However, the process could have been speeded up if voter education on the voting process had been better than it was and this could have prevented the high incidents of rejected ballots.

- *Preparedness of Electoral Commission*

The supply of voting materials to the more than 21,000 polling stations across the country once again proved challenging to the Electoral Commission. As at 7am when polls were supposed to have been opened, materials for some polling stations had not arrived. It is worth noting however, that such incidents were relatively isolated and did not affect the smooth conduct of the polls. Reports indicated that there were adequate supplies of the electoral materials at polling stations. In areas, where there were shortages, the Electoral Commission eventually replenished them. Voting generally started on time. Most polling stations started at 7am. We note, however, that there were a few cases of delay.

- *Electoral Integrity*

Generally, officials acted in an entirely nonpartisan and professional manner, and were well apprised of the rules and regulations established by the Electoral Commission. Most electoral officers displayed independence and neutrality although there were reports of some officials conducting themselves in a way that suggested that they did not receive enough education and training.

Party agents were vigilant during the polls. For the most part, party agents conducted themselves in a collegial and mutually respectful manner. Almost every polling station had at least one party agent from the NDC and NPP, and most had representatives from PNC and CPP as well. Some political parties devised a tally card system on which their agents used to track the number of ballots cast at each polling station. They then used the tally cards to reconcile with the figures provided by the Electoral Commission.

- *Privacy of Voting and Access to the Disabled*

Arrangements at most polling centers provided enough privacy for voting. We note with commendation efforts made by the Electoral Commission to provide adequate access and support to the disabled to exercise their franchise. Particularly, the introduction of the tactile ballot system for the blind was a welcome innovation.

### Security Conditions

For the most part, the security personnel conducted themselves in a professional manner. Reports from observers however indicated that some polling stations were without security personnel at the start of polls but this was resolved by the security agencies. We shall give a comprehensive report on the security presence when we have analyzed the data from our observers.

- Malpractices or irregularities

There were reported cases of irregularities at some of the polling stations covered. In one constituency, our observer reported that two ballot boxes for the presidential and two for the parliamentary ballots got missing. It is alleged that at the close of polls, there was no vehicle to convey the materials to the constituency collation center. A 'good Samaritan' offered to assist with his own vehicle and in the process, bolted with the boxes.

- Incidence of Violence

There were reports of violence and threats to the electoral officials. There were also threats to burn down some offices of the Electoral Commission in some districts. In addition, there were also reports of violent behavior by political party supporters in some constituencies during polling. These isolated incidents of violence and threats did not affect voting.

## **GENERAL CONCLUSIONS**

Based on initial reports and returns from our observers, polling proceeded smoothly across the nation, with only minor incidents. From the preliminary reports from our observers, we can say generally that polling on election day was peaceful, free, fair, transparent with minor incidents. It must be noted that Ghanaians, in some instances, provided a congenial environment including the provision of benches and chairs for people to sit on. The aged and infirmed were also permitted to vote ahead of those in the queue. The entire voting process is a major achievement of which Ghanaians should be proud. The peaceful conduct of the elections once again demonstrates the ability of our established institutions to function properly in a democracy.

The coalition commends the various political parties, their supporters and Ghanaians in general for the mature way in which they conducted themselves during the polls and appeals that this maturity should be exhibited in the post-election period. Since all Ghanaians have a stake in the good governance and development of this country, CODEO appeals to all of us to sustain the peace that has prevailed throughout this election period.

Prof. Miranda Greenstreet

Justice V. C. R. A. C Crabbe

Co-Chairpersons, CODEO  
9 December 2004