

A PRE-ELECTION PRESS STATEMENT

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Given at a CDD Conference Hall, Accra, 6th December 2004 at 11am

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Media:

We have invited you here this morning to brief you on our preparations towards observing the up-coming presidential and parliamentary elections scheduled for tomorrow, Tuesday, December 7 2004.

About CODEO

With your permission, let me say a few words about CODEO. The Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) was first formed in May 2000, under the management of the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD), with the sole purpose of recruiting, training and deploying local observers for that year's presidential and parliamentary elections. CODEO was revived and reconstituted in May this year, under the auspices of CDD.

Currently, CODEO comprises thirty five civil society, professional, and religious bodies in the country. Among them are Ghana National Association of Teachers; Ghana Bar Association; Ghana Registered Midwives Association; National Union of Ghana Students; Christian Council of Ghana; Federation of Muslim Councils; Ahmadiyya Muslim

Mission; International Federation of Women Lawyers; Amnesty International; Civil Servants Association; Trades Union Congress; Civic Foundation; Moral Re-Armament; Ghana Federation for the Disabled; Women in Law and Development; Legal Resource Center; Association of the Advancement of Women in Africa; Ghana Legal Literacy and Resource Foundation; Non-Violence International; Islamic Council for Development and Humanitarian Services; National Association of Graduate Teachers; and Center for the Development of People.

CODEO is managed by a nine-member Advisory Board supported by three five-member committees in charge of (a) recruitment, training and deployment; (b) logistics and resource; and (c) drafting and reporting.

The other members include Rev. Fred Deegbe of Christian Council of Ghana, Nii Osah Mills, Ghana Bar Association, Mr. Eric Carbornu of National Association of Graduate Teachers, Dr. Kwesi Appiah, Civic Foundation, Mr. Nicholas Akyire of Ghana National Association of Teachers, Prof. E. Gyimah-Boadi and Dr. Baffour Agyeman-Duah, both of CDD-Ghana.

The objectives of this Coalition are to:

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

Preparation of CODEO Observation Program

We have invited you here this morning to brief you, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Media, on our preparations towards meeting our stated objectives.

A three-day national training-of-trainers workshop was organized for fifty participants in Kumasi in early October 2004. Participants were nominated from among members of the Coalition from each of the ten regions. Ten regional training workshops were subsequently conducted, one in each regional capital. In all, six hundred observers were trained at the regional level. The Coalition also conducted training workshops in 60 districts throughout Ghana in the month of November.

The training covered the following subjects:

- Legal framework for the elections;
- Code of conduct for observers;
- Polling day procedure and electoral offences; and
- Observing the polling.

Officials of the Electoral Commission and the Ghana Bar Association facilitated the training with support from members of the Advisory Board. We want to register our profound gratitude and appreciation for their support and collaboration.

At this point, we are fully confident that our observers have been given the best of training and they are ready for their assignments.

CODEO will deploy 7400 observers on election-day. Observers will be deployed in all two hundred and thirty (230) constituencies, covering over 30 percent of the over 21,000 polling stations in the country. In addition to observing the polling centers, CODEO observers will be posted to all the 230 constituencies collating centers. Our observers will appear in white tee-shirts with CODEO boldly printed on the front and back. The observers will report to the polling stations by 6:30 a.m. and observe the entire process, including the counting of ballots.

An information bureau has been set up at the offices of the Ghana Center for Democratic Development to receive and process media enquiries on the election. The bureau will receive, analyze and prepare the preliminary CODEO report on the polls.

A reporting structure has been devised to ensure accuracy and timely delivery of information to the CODEO Secretariat in Accra. On the basis of these reports, CODEO will issue a statement on its general impressions of the polling around noon on election-day, and a preliminary report within 24 hours after the polls. The final CODEO report on the 2004 polls will be issued later in January 2005.

On behalf of the Advisory Board, I wish to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the large number of Ghanaians who volunteered to work for the CODEO project with enthusiasm and dedication. The Board also thanks the regional and district coordinators who worked tirelessly to ensure the success of the training workshops. We are confident that on election-day our

observers will apply to the maximum the discipline, non-partisanship, objectivity, knowledge and skills that have been imparted at the workshops.

Importance of Election 2004

The citizens of this country have worked assiduously to consolidate our newfound democracy under the Fourth Republic. Election 2004, in our view, brings us to the crossroads of our political development. It is an important test of Ghana's democratic institutions and their ability to function under different administrations and ruling parties. The successful outcome of the 2004 polls will contribute immensely to Ghana's democratic consolidation. It is important that Ghana succeeds. The whole world is watching how we, as a people, conduct ourselves at this critical stage.

We acknowledge and applaud the improvements in the overall environment for this year's elections: enhanced transparency in election administration and the electoral process; the relative evenness of the electoral playing field, especially in terms of media coverage of the campaign and other political activities. We also note with commendation the active civic and electoral education of citizens by the National Commission for Civic Education and others. Equally commendable are the activities undertaken by the churches and mosques, traditional rulers and several civil society organizations, including the media to promote peaceful and successful elections.

We of CODEO will do our best to contribute to the success of the elections. Our presence at the polling stations on Election Day will hopefully be a moderating influence and help to ensure electoral integrity. We believe that

once the process is seen to be free, fair and transparent, the outcome will be legitimate and acceptable to all, winners and losers alike.

Special Appeal

We wish to make a special appeal on behalf of the 7,400 observers of CODEO, to all the contesting candidates, political parties, their leaders, the security agencies and Ghanaians as a whole to help maintain the peace in our country.

We recognize that the competition for power usually evokes passions and extreme partisanship. However, we remind all candidates, parties and their supporters that they must not allow such sentiments and actions to create needless chaos in the country. We implore the political parties, especially the NPP and NDC, to urge their members to conduct themselves properly on election-day to forestall violent conflict. We call on politicians to endeavor to place the peace and stability of the country above parochial and partisan interests.

We appeal to the nation's security agencies to approach their national duty with professionalism and utmost respect for the Constitution. They should be nonpartisan in the political process, respect the electoral process, and seek the protection of all Ghanaians and most importantly the Constitution.

We implore all Ghanaians to cooperate and support the Electoral Commission in conducting tomorrow's elections.

On behalf of CODEO, we wish to express our deepest gratitude to the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the European Union, through the UNDP, for their generous support for CODEO's mission.

Finally, we appeal to all our fellow Ghanaians to comport themselves properly on the Election Day. Let us avoid any acts of intimidation or violence to ensure a peaceful election.

Thank you, Ladies and Gentlemen.