

IDEG-CFI Press Statement

Moving forward on Ghana's Post Election 2020 Political Situation

16th December 2020

Members of the Media, Ladies and Gentlemen. Good morning, and a warm welcome to the Institute for Democratic Governance. Thank you for responding to the invitation to hear the considered perspectives of the Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG) and the Civic Forum Initiative (CFI), on Ghana's political situation following the December 2020 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections. We have issued an earlier press statement and have granted interviews on various media houses. This press statement is a continuation of the above. The purpose is to address issues that have emerged since our earlier press statement.

Ghana has just achieved the immense feat of undertaking general Elections within a Covid-19 context, and in a largely peaceful and orderly manner. We have attracted the admiration of our peers across the West African sub-region, and the respect of the international community. Today, every citizen of this nation should be proud to be Ghanaian.

Notwithstanding the above, developments following the declaration of the elections require that we, as a governance platform, clarify the dynamics of the current political situation and how to respond to it. We wish to assure citizens that the 1992 Constitution has adequate provision for redress of their concerns through civil and non-violent processes.

A key development has been the National Democratic Congress (NDC)'s contestation of the elections. Members of the public, CSOs and other concerned citizens have called upon the NDC to take their concerns to court. We appreciate the skepticism with which these calls have been received by sympathizers of the NDC, and wish, by this press statement, to speak to the concerns that may underlie the reluctance to seek legal redress in this contestation, and the preference instead for protestation and demonstration.

First and foremost, we wish to state that going to court is not contradictory to peaceful demonstrations. It is the political and civil right of all persons to demonstrate when they disapprove about some national development. Members of political parties therefore have the right to public protest and demonstration. They have the right to express themselves through demonstrations, so long as their demonstrations are peaceful. To ensure that their demonstrations remain peaceful, they must however secure police protection and ensure that their demonstrations are not infiltrated by agents of provocation, who may seek to incite acts of violence in the course of otherwise peaceful protests. To this end, we urge sympathizers of the NDC to secure police protection for their demonstrations. We appeal to opponents of the NDC to keep away from the NDCs demonstrations so as to avoid aggravation that could degenerate into violence. Again, we ask the Police to respect the right of members of the NDC to protest, and protect them. Demonstrators must be provided full police protection and all agents of provocation who may attempt to incite violence during such demonstrations must be arrested and brought to face the law.

We commend the Police for the arrest, prosecution and imprisonment of the ballot box snatcher of the just ended Elections. We urge the Police to go further to arrest, prosecute and imprison the person or persons responsible for the five deaths that were recorded during the Elections. To this end, we call on the Police to enforce the Vigilantism and Related Offences Law without fear or favor, and irrespective of the political colors of the person or persons involved, in order to put an end to electoral violence and impunity within our democracy. We also call upon the NESTF to assist the Police with information needed to carry out its investigations of acts of election-related violence.

The second key issue on which we seek to provide clarity through this press conference is the issue of seeking legal redress regarding contestation of the election results. As we have stated above, carrying out demonstrations and going to court are not mutually-exclusive nor contradictory. Legal recourse may be pursued even as peaceful demonstrations are carried out. Therefore, we join the voices of sections of the public to urge the NDC to present their concerns to the courts for legal redress.

We wish to emphasize, in this regard, that going to court does not amount to a lost cause. We fully appreciate that the aggrieved parties may be concerned over the length of time required in pursuing court cases, and the fact that during that time period, the processes of swearing-in the President and Parliamentarians will take place, seemingly bringing their case to nought. We wish therefore to explain that the Constitution indeed provides a tight schedule of statutory dates for the swearing-in of the elected president and parliamentarians. This schedule will have to be followed in order that the entire

system of governance does not come to a stand-still, leading to a Constitutional crisis. We wish to assure members of the public that the Courts have the mandate to effect necessary changes following their verdicts on election-related disputes.

We must now draw the attention of the two largest political parties, the NDC and the NPP, to the new reality in which we find ourselves as a nation. The election results send out a clear message to them from the electorate, which is that they wish to see opposing members of parliament working together and not at cross purposes. Beyond the settlement of the current election-related contestation therefore, the two political parties will need to work together, as alluded to, by the president Nana Akufo Addo in his speech shortly after the declaration of the election results.

We therefore urge the parties to begin to initiate dialogue right away. This dialogue must seek to decipher and clearly understand the mind of the electorate as reflected in the “skirt and blouse” voting patterns we have witnessed, make meaning of it, and identify how it needs to be expressed practically in governance over the period of January 2021 to January 2025.

The Elections results express the will of the electorate. We urge the political parties to carefully exercise the new governance mandate over the next four years in order to make our democracy inclusive, more accountable, and our economic development stronger.

As we enter the festive season of Christmas, we urge all citizens, political parties and you, our friends from the Media, to indeed reflect the spirit of peace and goodwill of the season in everything you do.

May God bless our homeland Ghana. Thank you.

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Maj. Gen. Nii Carl Coleman (Rtd)
Chairman, CFI

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Mr. Kwesi Jonah
Head of Advocacy and
Institutional Relations, IDEG