

PRESS BRIEFING ON THE STATUS OF REGISTRATION FOR PHASE ONE AND STATE OF PREPAREDNESS FOR PHASE II

Fellow Commissioners

Members of the Press

Ladies and Gentlemen

The Commission has called for this Press briefing on registration of voters in order to give you members of the press an insight into what we have regarding phase one of the registration which has just been concluded. In this phase the registration exercise was conducted as follows:

1. NORTHERN REGION

- Nkhatabay Central
- Mzuzu City
- Mzimba North
- Mzimba North East
- Mzimba West

2. CENTRAL REGION

- Lilongwe Kumachenga
- Lilongwe Mpenu Nkhoma
- Lilongwe Mpenu
- Lilongwe South East
- Lilongwe East
- Lilongwe Central
- Lilongwe City Centre
- Lilongwe South West
- Lilongwe City South East
- Lilongwe City South West
- Msinja North
- Msinja South
- Ntcheu North

3. SOUTHERN REGION

- All constituencies in Blantyre
- Thyolo Thava

As we all know, Ladies and Gentlemen distribution of registration materials for phase one was done on the 16th of August 2008 followed by training of the three clerks who were recruited in centres to assist

the Supervisors and Camera Operators. This training was done in all Teacher Development Centres (TDCs) in all the districts involved in phase one. This was done to further equip the staff with registration procedures. On 17th August 2008, all centres were ready for registration to commence the following day.

Fellow Commissioners, members of the press, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am happy to mention that on day one, turn out of voter registrants was overwhelming and this had continued throughout the entire registration phase. Following this high turnout, I am proud to mention that in Blantyre we have managed to register 491,819 voters representing 85% of the projected registrants and in Thyolo Thava 35,934 voters registered representing 95% of the projected registrants. In the central region, in Lilongwe district, we have managed to register 403,793 representing 80.1% of the estimated registrants. This only includes the constituencies that were open for phase one. Since Lilongwe is continuing registration in phase two, the District percentage for Lilongwe will be known after the second phase is through and in Ntcheu North we have registered 20,236 representing 98% of the estimated registrants.

Members of the Press, Ladies and Gentlemen, in the Northern region, in Nkhata Bay Central 17,106 people registered representing 88.05% of the projected registrants. In Mzuzu City, 71,607 people registered representing 84% of the projected registrants and in Mzimba North, 56,482 people registered representing 85% of the projected registrants, Mzimba North East 34,596 registered, representing 98% of the projected registrants, in Mzimba west 28,021 registered representing 78% of the projected registrants. In total, 207,812 people registered in the constituencies where voter registration was conducted in the Northern Region.

Members of the Press, Ladies and Gentlemen, as you noted the phase had a number of challenges, some of which are;

- Photographic equipment gave a lot of problems in most centres. Some of the centres were unable to open due to problems in the operation of the equipment.
- Distribution of registration materials also had met some serious logistical challenges especially in Lilongwe where on day one, several centres had not yet opened as materials had not yet reached the centres. This, ladies and gentlemen, is what had necessitated the need for the Commission to extend the

registration period for an additional six days to cover for the lost days, but as you know, this could not only be opened in one part of the country as this was going to create a serious logistical problem on how to proceed to the other phase while the other part remains in the extension.

- For the extension that we had, there was a challenge on the budget as we were extending against the existing budget we are operating on. We hope that in the other phases, this scenario does not occur again.

Members of the Press, Ladies and Gentlemen, The second phase preparations are almost through. As I am addressing you now, all the registration materials and staff have been re-deployed to areas where phase two is to commence on the 11th September 2008. Actually, today, they are in their respective centres training their registration clerks in readiness of the registration tomorrow. We had a bit of a problem in Nsanje where fuel has to be drawn in Chikwawa. We are making arrangements for a local fuel attendant at Nsanje who operates Caltex to provide the fuel.

Drawing lessons from the problems encountered in the first phase, the following measures had to be put in place before commencement of second phase.

1. We conducted refresher discussions with supervisors and camera operators who had to be taken through the process again and clarify to them where they were not clear. This was due for both the general registration operational guideline and camera operation requirements.
2. Added on to the refresher course, we also invited the supplier of the equipment to impart additional technical knowledge on our local technical staff so that they could be attending to problems which may arise without hassles.

Members of the Press, Ladies and Gentlemen, let me hasten to mention that having put these corrective measures in place does not mean that all the problems we faced in phase one will be eliminated. We hope it will assist to reduce the problems by a greater percentage.

Meanwhile, the Commission has also ordered the purchase of additional equipment and spares so that these could be used in areas where problems are reported so that the damaged ones are withdrawn

for repairs and the services at the centres are not affected by replacing it with a spare equipment.

Last but not least, let me thank members of the press for the untiring effort you put into making the general public know about the dates when they were meant to go and register. The direct positive impact of this is the high turnout that was witnessed during the period of registration. I further urge you to be with us throughout all the other phases as we strive to build a better Malawi through conducting credible elections which are key to the sustenance of democracy in our country.