

For Immediate Release (6<sup>th</sup> April 2014)

## **MEC MUST REOPEN THE VOTER VERIFICATION EXERCISE AND ACT ON ELECTRICAL CHALLENGES**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Forum for National Development (FND) continues to note the challenges that have rocked the independent Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) in delivering free, fair and acceptable elections on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2014. We have noted a number of challenges that MEC has in delivering the coming tripartite elections which needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Free and fair elections are tenets of good democracy and good governance, delivering the same ensures that the nation is becoming of age in terms of developing its democracy. The irregularities that have rocked the electoral processes are a sign that MEC is not bringing confidence on how they are managing the election process.

Election is a cycle and a process starting from registration, voter roll verification, civic education, to the actual polling and management of results and all these should be handled very carefully.

While we acknowledge that the tripartite elections poses its own challenges because it's new, that in its own accord cannot be an excuse, since it is not a first time in Malawi that we have elections which are new phenomenon as we had similar situations like the Referendum in 1993 which was delivered very prudently

## **2. UNDERLYING ISSUES**

There have been several issues that have rocked this election process which were not synonymous with previous elections and these include;

- i. Registration process was marred with irregularities including early closure, lack of materials and complaints that other potential would be voters were denied the opportunity to register
- ii. Loss of hard disc at MEC which led to speculation about tampering with the voters information, and the explanation was not that satisfactory
- iii. Suspension of voter verification exercise due to numerous anomalies. The Voter's roll was full of anomalies which prompted MEC to suspend the whole exercise. However, in our opinion, we look at the suspension as not being a better option as it has robbed Malawi precious time which would have been spent on correcting those anomalies and challenges. We wonder whether MEC is telling Malawians that they have been collecting the anomalies in the voters' roll in absentia of the verification exercise which we believe was meant to help MEC correct the anomalies. And if indeed they have corrected the anomalies, why then were there in the first place?

- iv. MEC has been creating unnecessary anxiety in the people especially from opposition parties on how small issues like receiving containers from Zimbabwe which had tents and lanterns. MEC made a public announcement on opening these containers at a given time and invited witnesses to ceremony, but only to open at a very different time and days which ended up just creating unnecessary speculations that MEC is playing fishy business
- v. A lot of Malawians have been sentimental about the elections already being rigged which we believe is paranoia of the parties and individuals who are afraid of the elections knowing that they might not win the elections. However MEC has not been helpful in quest to quash these fears and it is only MEC who can remove these feelings from the people of Malawi

### **3. OUR CALL**

We call upon MEC to expediently;

- i. Demonstrate an assurance that they are going to handle the coming elections with all integrity, prudence and acceptable manner to all people of Malawi both from government and opposition parties. This will start with;
  - a. assuring the Malawi nation that they are ready to have the elections as scheduled
  - b. Immediately opening the voter verification exercise and assure Malawians that all anomalies will be addressed within the given period of time.

- c. MEC should outline a revised calendar of all activities need to be carried out in the next 40 days prior to the elections and give a detailed outline of how this will be done so that all Malawians should have confidence in the electoral process
- ii. Within the next 7 days, we call upon fellow Malawians to monitor closely the activities of MEC and make a conclusive position on whether the current leadership of MEC is going to deliver credible, free, fair and acceptable elections. Should the analysis continue to indicate otherwise, Malawians have a duty to play to ensure that changes are effected to bring integrity into the elections.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

MEC has been saying they are ready for elections, yet the evidence on the ground is showing to the contrary. This is not the first time for Malawi to have elections, and election is a cycle and a process of which the people who are independently entrusted to manage the electoral process are supposed to diligently manage the elections

It is therefore in our considered opinion, that the current MEC leadership is not doing enough to ensure that the elections would be credible, free, fair and acceptable by all stakeholders.

We are not even surprised that other sectors are calling for the postponement of the elections. It should be noted however, that every organization hinges on the ability of its leadership to manage the affairs of the organization, therefore any failure on MEC speaks volumes of the leadership ability to manage the elections.

This responsibility is not only for the government, but each and every peace loving Malawian including the opposition parties because elections processes if not properly handled breeds violence. We have seen similar situations in countries like Kenya, Zimbabwe to mention a few

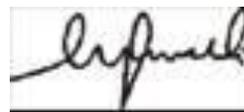
It is time that all Malawians regardless of political divide take a keen interest on these matters and ensure that MEC delivers free, fair and acceptable 20 May Tripartite elections

Signed



Bright Kampaundi

**CHAIRPERSON**



Fryson Chodzi

**NATIONAL COORDINATOR**