

# SIERRA LEONE PEOPLE'S PARTY



**ONE COUNTRY, ONE PEOPLE!**

**Tuesday September 13, 2022**

**Press Statement.**

## **OBSERVATIONS ON ONGOING VOTER REGISTRATIONS**

Since the commencement of the voter registration on September 3, 2022, the Sierra Leone People's Party has been monitoring with eagle eyes the conduct of this very critical function of the Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone. The Party cares for the rights of the people of this country to participate freely in democratic processes.

Ten days into this crucial national exercise, which is a precursor to the general elections slated for June 24, 2023, the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) wants to commend the Chief Electoral Commissioner Mr. Mohamed K. Konneh and the Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone (ECSL) staff for undertaking this laborious task with determination and high level of professionalism and discipline. We also thank the National Civil Registration Authority for their collaboration and the people of Sierra Leone for showing so much enthusiasm for democracy by registering to vote in the general elections next year. No doubt, our people have shown great resolve to register no matter the encumbrances.

However, the SLPP notes that while the exercise has been inclusive, it is not seamless and the Party would like to bring to the attention of the Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone and other stakeholders in the electoral process the following observations and concerns in the hope that appropriate measures will be taken to address them without delay.

1. **Communication:** Whilst we understand that the registration exercise needed to be done in phases for prudent resource management purposes, we observed that this was not adequately communicated to the people. A significant percentage of the people initially thought that all centers would be opened throughout the country from the onset of the registration process. The fact that the exercise will be done in two phases was not explicitly explained to the people, or where it was done, the message was not as clear as it needed to be. This resulted in a large number of people turning up at the registration centers established for the first phase of the registration, thereby overwhelming ECSL staff and logistics. Eventually those who were turned down and told to wait for the second phase became anxious and suspicious of the fairness of the process.



2. **Security:** Security at some of the voter registration centers was either inadequate or non-existent in some instances leading to standoffs between rival party agents who would want to forestall suspected malpractices. It is important that collaboration with the Sierra Leone Police and other security agencies continue so that citizens are given the full protection as they practice their constitutional rights. Citizens are urged to remain peaceful as well.

3. **New Registrations:** We observe that new registrations have been highest in Bombali, Port Loko and Western Area. The registration of new entrants into the voting circle seems to be fraught with a number of technical difficulties leading to confrontations between party agents, ECSL staff and parents or other stakeholders in some cases. ECSL has since announced that it has now programmed/updated the computers to accept those people who would be turning 18 years on or before June 24, 2023. We hope that this will eliminate any such related delays at the Centers.

4. **Identity fraud:** We are also gravely concerned about multiple cases of identity fraud perpetrated by mainly opposition operatives. Questionable birth certificates and other forms of identification were presented in Bombali, Tonkonli and Kerene at some centers, but the SLPP's party agents stoutly resisted attempts to use those certificates for the purposes of voter registration. In some cases, local authorities such as local chiefs and councillors, were hired to authenticate the clearly forged documents that those opposition party operatives sought to use. Many of those arrested are now helping the police with the investigations.

5. Along the same line of attempts to employ fraudulent means to register persons who were otherwise ineligible, there were attempts to register minors who still will be ineligible to vote in next year's elections. In mainly Western Area and the North, (Tonkonli, Bombali, Karene and Kasunko Chiefdom in Koinadugu) our agents, through robust monitoring, detected attempts by some parents apparently acting on instructions of their political godfathers, to register under-age children by presenting forged or fake birth certificates and other identity.

6. We also noticed that access to some registration centers is cumbersome especially for our aged people who live in far-flung communities. They have found it very difficult to trek to these centers.

In spite of these challenges and attempted manipulations of the process by opposition operatives in some parts of the country, the SLPP is generally pleased with the conduct of the exercise, even as we humbly appeal to ECSL to find ways of resolving the foregoing concerns.

We are pleased to inform our people that we deployed party agents at every center across the country, and they have been quite active and effective in providing us feedback on a daily basis. We will continue to vigilantly monitor the process until it is successfully concluded.



We once more thank the ECSL for a job well done so far. We extend special thanks to our party agents and other stakeholders who have shown tenacity of purpose and provided support to our agents across the country.

We continue to appeal to our people to come out in their numbers, exercise patience and be registered.

We are confident that the final outcome will be acceptable to all, as we prepare for the June 24 Parliamentary and Presidential elections.

One Country! One People!

  
Umaru Napoleon Koroma  
National Secretary General.

