



COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN SIERRA LEONE

4^A King Harman Road, P. O. Box 404, Freetown, Sierra Leone, Tel: 078-987 121 Email: councilofchurchesinsl@gmail.com

Website: www.ccslation.org

STATEMENT BY THE COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN SIERRA LEONE ON DEVELOPMENTS TOWARDS THE ELECTIONS OF JUNE 2023

1. INTRODUCTION

The Council of Churches in Sierra Leone (CCSL) started in 1924 as the United Christian Council (UCC) with a membership of 7 (seven) Churches. Currently the membership has grown to 24 full members and 9 affiliate members.

Council has as one of its strategic directions – **promoting good governance** with three (3) broad activities namely:

- Supporting peace with justice activities
- Supporting the consolidation of democracy initiatives and
- Building effective leadership of Council

By participating in the country's election process as observers and monitors, CCSL aims to

- Promote citizens' participation in the elections in particular and generally in public life
- Encourage a peaceful campaign and election environment
- Deter possible election irregularities and fraud
- Make recommendations to the Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone (ECSL) and
- Report findings to the commission and the public in an accurate and timely manner.

Members: African Methodist Episcopal, Baptist Convention Sierra Leone, Bo Anglican Diocese, Christ Apostolic Church, Christian Reformed Church, Church of the Lord Aladura, Church of God of Prophecy, Church of God World Missions Sierra Leone, Congregational Evangelical Mission, Countess of Huntingdon Connexion, El-Shaddai Charismatic Ministries, Emmanuel Baptist Conference, Evangelical Lutheran Church, Evangelical Mission, Freetown Anglican Diocese, Methodist Church Sierra Leone, Missionary Church of Africa, National Evangelical Mission, National Pentecostal Mission, United Brethren in Christ, United Methodist Church, Vine Memorial Baptist, Wesleyan Church of Sierra Leone and West African Methodist Church. **Affiliate:** Bible Society Sierra Leone, Christ United Pentecostal, Faith Worship Ministries, Scripture Union, Sierra Leone Theological College & Management and Church Training Center, St. Peters Healing Church, United Church Women, Young Men Christian Association, Young Women's Christian Association.

It must be emphasized though that the primary concern of a non-partisan group like the CCSL in participating in the election process of our nation is to protect the integrity of the electoral process regardless of who wins or loses.

2. THE BACKGROUND

In preparation for this task and for a positive involvement in the electoral process, the Council of Churches in Sierra Leone has organized over the past six weeks a series of consultative workshops facilitated by experts in the legal and electoral fields. Those workshops involved primarily leaders of the two principal Faiths in the country – Christianity and Islam.

As those workshops participants reviewed Government White Paper on the recommendations of the Justice Cowan Constitutional Review Commission; critically examined the proposed Public Elections Bill and the constitutional provisions with regard the electoral systems that are operative in our country.

Issues were raised and discussed over

- (1) The insistence on a 4-tier elections on the same day
- (2) The threshold of 50% + 1 for the elections of the President
- (3) The reference to the proportional representation electoral system.

Council thus feels adequately informed to come out with the statement on the developments towards the 2023 Elections.

3. COUNCIL'S STANCE

- A. Council's notes that the necessary amendment has been made to the Local Government Act thus making it legally possible to hold Local Government Elections in tandem with Presidential and Parliamentary Elections.

Council holds that in a country with a high percentage of illiteracy and whose politics is influenced by colour rather than political ideology a multi-tier elections is viewed as critical and lends itself to suspicion of encouraging election fraud.

It becomes all the more critical against a background in a country of just over 3 (three) million registered voters being called upon to vote for 17 (seventeen) political parties.

- B. Council is cognizant of the current debates on the electoral systems as contained in our constitution. CCSL regards this as a positive demonstration of the level our country's democracy has attained.

Council holds the view that whatever electoral system is to be introduced into the electoral process, the people should receive adequate education/sensitization to fully understand the electoral/constitutional provisions governing the system.

- C. The Council of Churches in Sierra Leone is following quite keenly the ongoing debate on the Public Elections Bill.

The Council guided by experts' opinion calls for a close scrutiny of the bill so that it may not appear contrary to the 1991 constitution of Sierra Leone.

For instance whilst Council welcomes stipulating a fixed date for elections, Council holds it must sync with the stipulations of the current constitution dealing with the end of a presidential term of office and the going to the polls to fill the vacancy.

CCSL notes that there are a few issues that need to be made clear not least for the benefit of the populace.

Council believes that the National Identification Number (NIN) is good but it must not be made a condition for voter registration at this point in time.

4. CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

As an organization that prides itself as the **Voice of the Voiceless** and on successes it has achieved as an Advocacy Group, Council urges that in all of these the interest of the populace must be the priority of all concerned.

Council insists that any **faux pas (wrong step)** in the whole process will come to haunt us as posterity is always a hard judge of present actions.

If the interest of the people must be in the vanguard then high premium must be put on civic education and voter sensitization.

Thus Council recommends that in all our moves to ***Festina Lente*** (**hasten slowly**)!

For and on behalf of
the Council of Churches in Sierra Leone



.....
Rev. Henry A. Samuels
President

20th July, 2022