



**OFFICE OF THE LEADER OF OPPOSITION (APC)**  
PARLIAMENT BUILDING  
OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL  
FREETOWN

E-mail: [majubah.parl@gmail.com](mailto:majubah.parl@gmail.com)



Statement On the Challenges In The Ongoing Voter Registration  
Process

The voter registration process for the 2023 elections which started on the 3rd of September 2022, has continued to attract an impressive turnout of citizens at registration centers across the country. This portrays the determination of citizens to exercise their constitutional right and responsibility. The June 2023 general elections would be crucial to our nation's unity, peace and development which is why I am heartened by the huge turn out thus far. But credible elections start with a credible registration process and so, I am disconcerted by the persistent challenges hampering this critical electoral process.

Since the commencement of this exercise, Members of Parliament (MPs) of the All Peoples Congress (APC), including its leadership, have been actively engaged in monitoring the exercise, identifying, and collating details of the existing and emerging challenges. The objective is to facilitate the participation of our constituents in the process.

As the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, I have, with grave concern, witnessed and also been receiving updates, indicating that the process is fraught with challenges which should be addressed as soon as possible.

Some of the key challenges identified are:

**1. Logistics and Technical Challenges**

Most centers do not start on time and in some cases, will ironically stop the registration process before the prescribed closing time of 5pm. In the first few days

in particular, the challenges ranged from constraints relating to the transportation of registration equipment to the centers; delays in setting up of the centers; deployment of equipment in the wrong centers and districts; the unavailability of login passcodes amongst others.

## **2. Malfunctioning of Equipment.**

There has been a recurrence of failure of equipment for the capturing of biometrics, personal data and photographs, in some of the centers. There are complaints that computers are freezing rather too often; their batteries serve for very limited number of hours, and in many cases, there are no back up batteries or charging facilities.

## **3. First Time Voters Finding It Difficult To Register.**

First time voters are being confronted with challenges in the registration process. ECSL staff are not consistent with the required criteria for the registration of this important group of citizens. The controversy around the use of birth certificates, school documents, identification by community leaders, are all being interpreted differently by ECSL staff, thereby hampering the registration process.

It should be noted that the Public Elections Act is very clear and unambiguous on the eligibility requirement for the registration of voters. A birth certificate can be used as a form of identification and in the instance where a birth certificate is not available, a Pastor, Imam, Councilor or any other community leader, can be called upon to identify and vouch for the person. But reports abound of instances wherein a limit is placed on the number of persons a community leader can identify. This is not part of the law.

## **4. Capacity And Attitude Of The ECSL Staff**

Information from some of our MPs on the ground referenced with concern, the condescending and confrontational approach with which some of the ECSL staff



relate to their clients – the public; as well as the lack of proper ICT and technical knowledge to perform their duties.

#### **5. Uneven/Disproportionate Allocation Of Registration Centers**

I have also noted that the number of centers per(area/village) particularly in the Northern and Western Areas are fewer than those in other parts of the country. In the rural areas of the affected regions, citizens have to endure the burden of trekking for hours in order to access registration centers. This is a key disincentive for participating in this very critical electoral process, especially by older people and the physically challenged.

While we grapple with all of these challenges, I would like to highlight two other very critical issues:

The first is ECSL's cumulative registration figures for the first 4 Days. On Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> September the Commission announced a cumulative figure of about 415,465 which it says represents the total number of registrants for that period. My expectation is that such update ought to be disaggregated by centers and made available on a daily basis, especially to political parties.

The second issue is the use of unverified existing data to update the voters roll. As far as I am aware, political parties have not been intimated about ECSL's existing data. The public would note that the current registration exercise is in two phases. One is the fresh registration of eligible citizens. The second is an update of existing data already with ECSL. However, there is lack of transparency and inclusiveness relating to the existing data which raises questions about the comprehensiveness, accuracy, and reliability of such data. If political parties are not given the opportunity to verify some of the data which would eventually constitute the voter roll, this may impugn the integrity of the process. I therefore urge that the data which existed before the start of this registration process be made available to political parties for verification.

## Conclusion

As I conclude, I would like to state that I have had several conversations with the Electoral Commission and several other stakeholders, with the aim of ensuring that an integrated approach is adopted to addressing the challenges as soon as possible. I also note that the commission has acknowledged some of the challenges, made a commitment to address them, and to ensure that every eligible Sierra Leonean exercises their constitutional right and responsibility. However, it is astonishing that after seven 7 days, logistical challenges such as distribution of booklets still persist. For instance, on Saturday 10th September, 2022, in Constituency 124, Ward 429, Christ Church Primary School Center Number 16156 in the Western Area Urban, registration was done for a few hours only and the center had to close down owing to lack of registration material. It beggars belief that such challenges could still affect the registration process in our nation's capital. In a democratic state like ours, citizens must be able to elect their leaders through the ballot box in a process that is seamless, free, fair and credible. As I pointed out at the opening of this statement, credible elections start with a credible voter registration process. I therefore kindly urge ECSL to take the necessary steps to actualize this commitment of ensuring that every eligible citizen is able to register.

Once again, while I express my profound thanks and appreciation to all those who have already registered, let me use this opportunity to kindly encourage every eligible Sierra Leonean who has not yet done so, to exercise patience in their endeavour to register. Your power to vote for your next leaders in the June 2023 elections lies in making sure that you register, no matter the difficulties. As I look forward to a peaceful, transparent and satisfactory conclusion of the process, I send you and your families good wishes in all that you do.

Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2022

