

## National Conference of Stakeholders for the 2012 Elections

### Declaration on the 2012 Elections

*Keenly aware of the critical importance of the presidential, parliamentary and local elections scheduled for 17 November 2012 for Sierra Leone's continued progress on the path of durable peace, sustainable development as well as the strengthening of its democratic institutions,*

*Fully cognizant of the primary responsibilities of all Sierra Leonean stakeholders, in particular the Government, political parties, national institutions, including the Sierra Leone's Election Management Bodies, the Sierra Leone Police and the Office of National Security, Traditional and Religious Authorities, the Media, the Women and Youth of Sierra Leone, Civil Society organizations, the Independent Media Commission and academia to ensure the smooth and peaceful conduct of the 2012 elections,*

*Underscoring the importance of creating an enabling environment that is free from fear, incitement, intimidation and violence at all stages of the electoral period,*

*Strongly condemning all acts of violence, particularly violence against women by whomever they may be perpetrated, including the violence that occurred in various parts of the country from 2007 to the beginning of 2012,*

*Commending the Government of Sierra Leone for the timely action in the investigation of acts of violence, including in setting up an independent committee of inquiry to investigate the Bo incident, and for the follow-up action taken to implement the committee's recommendations,*

*Recognizing the release of the Government's White Paper on the Shears Moses Commission of Inquiry into the March 2009 political disturbances and noting the undertaking by the Government to implement fully the outstanding recommendations of the Commission,*

*Fully cognizant of the responsibilities of the Sierra Leone political parties to abide by the Political Parties Code of Conduct signed on 26 October 2006,*

*Recognizing* the respective responsibilities of all political parties for ensuring that their supporters and members act in a lawful and peaceful manner in airing their political views, and reaffirming their commitment to adhere to the spirit and letter of the Joint Communiqué of 2 April 2009,

*Reaffirming* the role of the Political Parties Registration Commission in regulating the conduct of political parties and monitoring the implementation of the Political Parties Code of Conduct,

*Recognizing* the constitutional obligations of the Sierra Leone Police for the maintenance of law and order and ensuring conducive security environment for the elections,

*Underscoring* the importance of the Sierra Leone Police performing its duties in an independent and professional manner, in full conformity with Sierra Leonean laws and international standards and best practices in policing,

*Recognizing* the authority of the National Electoral Commission under the Sierra Leone Constitution of 1991, and the significant progress made by the Commission in strengthening its capacity to carry out its functions,

*Emphasizing* the importance of close collaboration and constructive engagement between the National Electoral Commission and Sierra Leone's political parties and other relevant stakeholders to ensure successful electoral process,

*Determined* to prevent any future acts of political violence and to ensure resolution of all contentious issues through dialogue, peaceful and legal means especially as the country prepares for and conducts the 2012 elections,

*Calling on* the media to fully assume its obligations as an indispensable source of information and underscoring its primary responsibility for the accuracy of all materials generated by its members. In this regard, the media should be encouraged to moderate major debates among the standard bearers of the contending parties,

*Further calling on* the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation, as a unique independent national broadcaster, to ensure equitable access to all shades of opinion during the electoral process, including the equitable allocation of airtime to all registered political parties as well as independent candidates,



*Recognizing* the important role of paramount chiefs and traditional authorities in Sierra Leone not only as custodians of the worthy traditions of Sierra Leone but also indigenous partners of development in their respective localities,

*Noting* the worthy accomplishments of the National Commission for Democracy in mobilizing support for democracy at all times in Sierra Leone's history as well as the work of the National Human Rights Commission as a vital anchor of Sierra Leone's democracy,

*Recognizing* Sierra Leone's achievements in the establishment and operation of democratic institutions, as key pillars of the country's democratic process, and reiterating the importance of ensuring the independence of these institutions, and the Government's undertaking to provide them with all the necessary support, including the requisite financial and material resources,

*Underscoring* the urgency of accelerating ongoing government efforts at operationalizing the Independent Police Complaints Committee, as reflected in the White Paper on the Shears Moses Commission of Inquiry,

*Acknowledging* that the country's stakeholders, including women, the youth groups, the physically challenged as well as civil society must take national ownership of the dialogue process aimed at creating consensus on the ground rules for the 2012 elections,

*Further acknowledging* that the collective efforts of the country's stakeholders are to be guided by this Declaration and will be crucial in ensuring peaceful, free and fair elections, in deepening national cohesion and achieving a unity of purpose, the undersigned affirm that our actions will be guided by the declaration,

*Accordingly*, we commit ourselves to the full implementation of the following framework which will serve as the basis for our cooperation as well as in informing our respective roles and responsibilities.

#### **A. Political Parties**

1. That Political Parties shall recognize the constitutional roles and responsibilities of the Government and the various national institutions, and pledge to engage in constructive dialogue among each other and with all other relevant stakeholders to ensure peaceful, free and credible elections to be held in Sierra Leone on 17 November 2012. The Political Parties shall abide by the principles



stipulated in the Code of Conduct for Political Parties signed on 20 October 2006, and stand ready to uphold the Rule of Law and maintain the core principles of democracy, of free debate over alternative policies and views in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

2. That Political Parties shall have the right to carry out their activities freely, within the limits of the law, as enshrined in the 1991 Constitution, the Political Parties Act of 2002 and the Public Election Law of 2012, and their actions shall not be militated by ethnic, regional, racial, gender, age and/or religious considerations.
3. That Political Parties shall conduct their activities according to the laid down rules and regulations and shall not engage in illegal campaign activities, rallies and processions or acts aimed at undermining the campaigns of their competitors. The Political Parties shall refrain from campaign activities until National Electoral Commission authorizes them to do so and/or make pronouncement to that effect.
4. That Political Parties shall negate the use of violence as a political tool and shall not advocate or resort to such illegal measure, maintain militias or resort to the use of hate speech during rallies, processions or campaigns.
5. That Political Parties and their supporters are prohibited from carrying or displaying arms, weapons or materials that may be used for purposes of intimidation at any political meeting, rally, march, demonstration, polling stations or any other gathering of a political nature.
6. That the Political parties shall promote an atmosphere in which elections can be conducted in a manner that is free, fair and democratic, during the campaign, on polling day and after the announcement of the results of the elections. They shall cooperate with elections officials to ensure peaceful and orderly polling and accord complete freedom for voters to exercise their franchise without being subject to any impediment or intimidation.
7. Violence against women is a significant obstacle to the equal participation of women in politics. Therefore, the political parties condemn categorically any form of violence against women as a form of political intimidation and stand together in calling on the Sierra Leone Police and the Judiciary to bring to justice perpetrators of such dastardly acts. Furthermore, all political parties will expeditiously work towards enhancing the political participation of women in accordance with their respective gender policies, if adopted by the parties. If not, such parties, along with those that have done



so, commit to support in Parliament and other fora the passage and implementation of a Gender Equality Bill granting women a minimum of 30% quota for elective positions.

8. That the Political parties recognize the important role of democratic institutions in Sierra Leone. Accordingly, they undertake to work together to enhance the respective roles and responsibilities and the operational independence of such institutions as the National Electoral Commission, the Political Party Registration Commission, the Independent Media Commission, the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation and other print and electronic media, the National Commission for Democracy, the Judiciary and the Sierra Leone Police, and other relevant national institutions. They also pledge to work together in further strengthening the integrity and professionalism of these national institutions as Sierra Leone's enduring governance architecture.

9. That the political parties recognize the dangers that heightened regional and ethnic divisions could pose to the Sierra Leone's hard-won peace and stability and are aware of the need to act as truly national parties that represent all aspects of Sierra Leone's rich and diverse social fabric. In this regard, the political parties acknowledge that denying political space to any political party is bound to severely undermine national unity and hinder the further entrenchment of democracy in Sierra Leone. They, therefore, express their opposition to the concept of the so called "no-go areas". They agree to help ensuring, during the elections, unhindered access to all parts of the country, irrespective of political, geographical or ethnic consideration.

10. In welcoming recent efforts aimed at the reactivation of All Political Parties Association (APPA), the political parties reaffirm their determination to institute formal mechanisms of inter-party dialogue at the national level. Until such time as they form their own umbrella organization dedicated to the furtherance of interparty dialogue, their interparty discussions shall be facilitated by the PPRC with the support of its international partners.

#### **B. The Sierra Leone Police**

11. The Sierra Leone Police, as a state institution that has primacy in the maintenance of law and order, shall act in an independent and professional manner in accordance with Sierra Leone's relevant laws and applicable international standards. To this end, the SLP shall ensure that the deployment of its personnel in public gatherings and/or locations, where campaign are held, shall be commensurate to the prevailing or anticipated threat level,



12. The Sierra Leone Police shall further enhance, with support from development partners, its capacities in the maintenance of public order, in particular in the area of crowd control, through appropriate policing means in order to provide effective security during the electoral period. In that regard, the SLP shall further develop its "early warning system" with the view to anticipating any possible violence, thereby do away with any manifestations of it,

13. The Sierra Leone Police shall provide static and mobile police security for authorized Political Party rallies, campaign and processions,

14. That Sierra Leone Police shall maintain regular lines of communication with the political parties, in close coordination with the Political Parties Registration Commission, on security related matters affecting political parties before, during, and after the elections,

15. In accordance with the Joint Communiqué signed between the All People's Congress Party (APC) and the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), an Independent Police Complaints mechanism shall be established and become operational as soon as possible.

16. The SLP to closely work with Local Policing Partnership Boards to monitor the security situation in the various localities before, during and after the elections.

### **C. The Political Parties Registration Commission**

17. The Political Parties Registration Commission shall discharge effectively its responsibilities for regulating the conduct of political parties throughout the electoral process, including the implementation of the Political Parties Code of Conduct signed on 26 October 2006,

18. The Political Parties Registration Commission shall hold regular consultative meetings with the political parties as well as other relevant institutions to ensure timely resolution of any potential problems and misunderstandings during the electoral process. In that respect, all signatories of this declaration commit themselves to closely collaborate and support PPRC. Further, the Political Parties Registration Commission will continue to advocate for technical and logistic support for the country's registered political parties and offer mediation services to political parties to resolve intra or inter-party disputes. It shall continue to assist in and/ or facilitate crucial inter and intra party dialogue processes.

#### D. Paramount Chiefs and the Traditional Authorities

19. In accordance with the Code of Conduct for paramount chiefs and traditional authorities adopted on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2011, hereby undertake to remain neutral and remain "above the cloud" in all matters relating to political activities befitting the dictates and dignity of the office they hold.

20. They further undertake to ensure that their chiefdoms shall be open to all political contestants, irrespective of their affiliation. Consistent with the Bo Communique of 2011, paramount chiefs and traditional authorities will continue to uphold the principles of freedom of association, as enshrined in the 1991 Constitution and very importantly encourage all political associations and organizations to respect their declared neutrality.

#### E. National Electoral Commission

21. All stakeholders recognize and respect the vital role of the National Electoral Commission as mandated by the 1991 Constitution and accompanying electoral legislation. The Commission shall continue to remain an independent and impartial institution committed to ensuring free, fair and credible elections in 2012, in accordance with laws of Sierra Leone and all applicable international standards.

22. The Commission also recognizes that the political parties are one of its primary stakeholders. In that regard, the National Electoral Commission will continue to build on its regular dialogue with registered and regularized political parties through the Political Parties Liaison Committee and other bilateral mechanisms with a view to strengthening its interaction thus promoting an understanding of the electoral processes as well as resolving any concerns that may arise between the political parties and the Commission on arrangements for the 2012 elections,

#### F. The Media

##### i) The Independent Media Commission

23. The Independent Media Commission shall, in accordance with its mandate, continue to regulate the print and broadcast media with the goal of combating the broadcast of inciting messages and the dissemination of offensive materials which have the potential to derail the upcoming elections. To that end, the Commission shall



uphold the Code of Conduct governing the conduct of members of the media.

24. The Independent Media Commission shall promote, as envisaged in the Independent Media Commission Act, policies in the national interest of the media and shall move expeditiously towards the adoption of a Revised Media Code of Conduct. It shall also proactively monitor the media and take swift measures against all violators of the Code of Conduct. With support from international partners, the Commission shall continue offering training and capacity building programmes for journalists with the view to improving the quality of the print and broadcast media in the country.

**ii) The Sierra Leone Association of Journalists and the Guild of Editors**

25. The Sierra Leone Association of Journalists and the Guild of Editors certainly have important responsibilities to the people of Sierra Leone, particularly during this crucial election period. They both undertake to work with their respective membership and all publishers and editors of the print media to avoid publications and/or the broadcast of material that will be prejudicial to the conduct of the elections. They undertake to ensure that their journalistic output is balanced and avoid incitement or material that could lead to ethnic discord and/or a breach of the peace. In seeking and telling the truth, they shall resist temptation to resort to character assassination of political actors and others who may wish to engage in the service of their country.

26. The Guild of Editors and the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists agree to cooperate closely with the Independent Media Commission in the discharge of its functions as the principal constitutional organ for regulating the activities of the media in Sierra Leone.

**iii) The Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation**

27. The Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation accepts its unique role as an independent national broadcaster which came into being following the closure of political party radio stations as agreed in the 2 April 2009 Joint Communiqué. As such, the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation pledges that all shades of political opinion will enjoy equitable access to its services. Further, it shall establish an Elections coverage mechanism comprising representatives of all



registered political parties to formulate guidelines on equitable political access that will be validated by the political parties.

iv) Political Party Newspapers

28. Political Party Newspapers, notwithstanding their responsibility to propagate the philosophy, ideas, manifesto of their parties and to show case candidates for the Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Council Elections, should ensure what they publish conforms with the IMC Code of Conduct.

G. The National Commission for Democracy

29. The Commission has a track record in advocating for democracy in Sierra Leone and is encouraged to promote education for the culture of peace, citizenship, good governance and nation building. The Commission is also encouraged to continue to advocate for participation by the citizenry in the country's democracy based on, among others, full knowledge of the democratic processes, the principles of equality, the adverse effects of ethnicity and regionalism in the country's polity and the need for peace and non-violence. The Commission shall strengthen its coordination with the Political Parties Registration Commission.

H. The National Human Rights Commission

30. The Commission should continue to monitor the electoral process to ensure adherence by all stakeholders to international human rights norms and standards and shall, through its existing mechanisms, promptly report human rights violations that have the potential to undermine the electoral process.

I. Civil Society Engagement in Elections and Electoral Processes

31. The contribution of Sierra Leone's civil society in monitoring and providing an independent assessment of the elections, sensitizing the citizenry on the electoral process and assisting in critical voter education efforts as well as advocating for political tolerance and non-violence cannot be overstated. All stakeholders fully acknowledge the vital role of civil society in this endeavour and pledge their cooperation to enable it discharge the aforesaid responsibilities.

#### J. Women Political Participation

32. Securing the passage of the Gender Equality Bill by Parliament and its implementation is the next step in achieving an increase in women's representation in Parliament, local councils, Government and non-Government institutions. The Women Support Solidarity Group, APPWA, the Women's Forum, MARWOPNET and other women's organizations will work closely with the concerned stakeholders in furthering ongoing efforts at advancing gender equality.

#### K. The Role of the Youth and the National Youth Commission Sierra Leone

33. The National Youth Commission should be pivotal in rallying youth serving organizations and youth organizations in promoting a non - violent culture among youth during the entire electoral process.

34. Sierra Leone's youth remain the greatest source of hope for the future and prosperity of the country. A substantial number of the electorate for the elections remain the youth and their participation could thus have a direct impact on the outcome of the process. While anxieties remain that a small minority could have the potential to engage in violence or other disorderly conduct, the National Youth Coalition and APPYA pledge, on behalf of the youth of Sierra Leone and with the support of all stakeholders, to continue to mobilize the youth in the cause of peace and political tolerance.

#### L. The role of Public Servants and Uniformed Officers

35. Public Servants and Uniformed Officers must refrain from openly supporting any party in any public place.

#### M. United Nations

36. The National Stakeholders Conference on the 2012 Elections and this accompanying Declaration represents the will of Sierra Leone's stakeholders gathered at this Conference to take national ownership and a lead role in addressing issues connected to the 2012 elections. At the request of the stakeholders, the United Nations shall, after due consultations with all concerned and with the aim of realizing the objectives of the Declaration, provide such assistance as maybe mutually agreed.



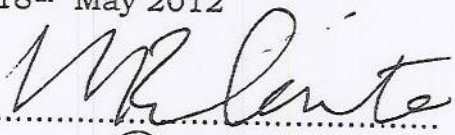
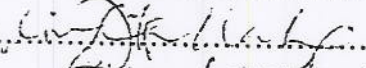
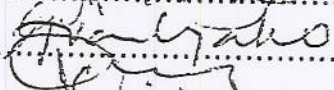

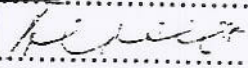
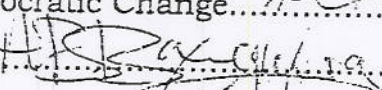
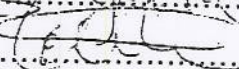
### Follow Up Mechanism

37. In accordance with paragraph 22 of the Code of Conduct of the Political Parties, the Political Parties Registration Commission shall setup a committee comprising representatives of the signatories to present the Declaration to follow-up the implementation of the declaration as well as the Code of Conduct for Political Parties adopted on 20 October 2006. The Committee, which will be hosted by the Political Parties Registration Commission, will meet monthly or at shorter intervals as may be agreed by the Committee. The Political Parties Registration Commission shall provide relevant reports to the Committee on matters concerning the implementation of the Declaration at intervals to be agreed. Committee members shall be: Representatives of the different Political Parties, the Sierra Leone Police, The United Nations, Commissioners of the National Youth Commission, the National Commission for Democracy, National Electoral Commission, Political Parties Registration Commission and Independent Media Commission, SLAJ, the Guild of Editors, and all those directly involved in the working group of the Declaration of the 2012 Elections.

38. At the district levels, the District Code of Conduct Monitoring Committees of the Political Parties Registration Commission shall, as part of their meetings, address matters raised by this Declaration as well as the Code of Conduct for Political Parties. The present composition of the District Code of Conduct Monitoring Committees maybe expanded as necessary to accommodate more stakeholders signatories to the present Declaration.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the aforementioned stakeholders herewith make this Declaration on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2012

#### 1. Political Parties :

- a) All People Congress..... 
- b) Citizen's Democratic Party..... 
- d) National Democratic Alliance..... 
- e) Peace and Liberation Party..... 
- f) Peoples Movement for Democratic Change..... 
- g) Peoples Democratic Party..... 
- h) Revolutionary United Front Party..... 

- i) Sierra Leone Peoples Party.....
- j) United Democratic Movement.....
- k) United National Peoples Party.....

## 2. Other Stakeholders

### a) Media

The Chairman Independent Media Commission .....

The President of Sierra Leone Association of Journalist .....

The Chairman, Guild of Editors .....

### b) Security Sector

Coordinator, Office of National Security .....

Inspector General of Sierra Leone Police .....

### c) Democratic Institutions

Chairman, National Commission for Democracy .....

Chairperson, National Electoral Commission .....

Commissioner, Human Right Commission SL .....

Commissioner, Political Parties Registration Commission .....

### d) Civil Society Organizations

The Chairman, National Elections Watch .....

### e) Women's Organizations

The President, Women's Forum .....

The President, All Political Parties Women's Association .....

The President, Women's Solidarity Support Group .....

### f) Youth Serving Agencies

The Commissioner, National Youth Commission .....

The Director, National Youth Coalition .....

The All Political Parties Youth Association .....



**Witness: United Nations**

*for* ERSG, United Nations Integrated Peace Building Office in Sierra Leone .....  
