



**SPEECH DURING A PRESS BRIEFING DELIVERED BY COMMISSIONER DR**

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**19<sup>TH</sup> MAY, 2020**

**LILONGWE**

- My Fellow Commissioners
- MEC Chief Elections Officer, Mr. Sam Alfandika, Management and Staff of the Malawi Electoral Commission
- NRB Chief Director, Mr Mackford Somanje, Management and Staff of the NRB
- Members of the press
- Ladies and gentlemen

## Greetings

I wish to thank you all members of the press for making it to this meeting which has been called by the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) in collaboration with the National Registration Bureau (NRB).

The aim of this press briefing is three-fold:

- Firstly, to explain how the voter register is created using NRB data and hence having NRB here to enlighten us on how they go about their operations.
- Secondly, to explain to the media how the new registered voters after 2019 Tripartite Elections will be deleted from the voters' roll; and

- Finally, to clarify on issues that have been misrepresented in the media regarding voter registration

The Commission appreciates the role the media plays in building an informed citizenry and that is why we have full belief that the information shared today will reach the electorate in all corners of the country in right format.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Commission launched the 2020 Fresh Presidential Election on 23 March, 2020 through a press briefing highly patronized by the media in Blantyre.

The Commission proceeded to conduct voter registration. Phase 1 ended prematurely with one day to go because of the impending lockdown. Blantyre City had closed with three days to go because of violence.

When the lockdown was challenged in court, the Commission resumed the process in phase two. Before the end of phase two, the Supreme Court delivered its judgement which had a direct impact on phase two. This is where the Supreme Court directed that the ones to vote should be those that registered for the 2019 Tripartite Elections. With this direction, the Commission immediately stopped registration of new voters. The Commission has continued with this exercise but only assisting those who want transfers or replace lost voter certificates. The Commission also announced that it will not add the new registrants to the voters roll and will also delete those that

registered during the by-elections held in Liwawadzi Ward in Balaka, Matenje Ward in Kasungu and Lilongwe South Constituency.

Ladies and gentlemen, in the course of the preparations for the elections, a number of issues have been raised through the media and also complaints have been filed with the Commission. These issues have enjoyed media limelight, extensive coverage and commentary. This is why the Commission in collaboration with the NRB have organized this press briefing to explain to the media how the voters' register is constructed using the NRB database.

First will be a presentation by the NRB tackling its mandate and operations. Accusations of registration of minors were rife, and this is an opportunity to address them.

Secondly, there have also been doubts expressed on how MEC will be able to delete names of those registrants after the 2019 tripartite elections from the database.

Considering how critical these presentations are, I implore you to pay attention to the presentations and seek clarifications when the floor is opened for that.

Ladies and gentlemen, before I conclude my speech allow me to reiterate the Commitment of the Commission to engage with stakeholders regarding the preparation of the elections. Without suppressing dissent and freedom of expression, it would be advisable if stakeholders engage the commission before making outbursts and misinformed allegations in the media. It is not in the interest of the

Commission to be exposing ignorance of its stakeholders on electoral issues like we will be doing. These scenarios can be avoided if there are constant consultations.

Before I resume my seat, let me take advantage of the gathering today to remind all stakeholders that for voter update we are proceeding as follows:

- Open all centres in councils covered in phase 4 for five days to process transfers and issue duplicate certificates from 23 to 27 May, 2020 and the councils are Nkhata Bay, Kasungu District, Kasungu Municipality, Mangochi Town, Nkhotakota, Mangochi District, Machinga, Chiradzulu and Mwanza.
- The Commission will reopen all centres in councils covered in phase 1 for one day on 1 June, 2020 for people to go and process transfers. This is because phase 1 ended with a day to go. For Blantyre City, where centres were closed prematurely because of violence, the Commission will open centres for three days from 1 to 3 June, 2020 for people to process transfers and get duplicate certificates.

With these few remarks, I thank you for your attention.