



**NATIONAL ADDRESS BY MEC CHAIRMAN JUSTICE DR CHIFUNDO
KACHALI ON THE LAUNCH OF THE NOVEMBER 2020 BY-ELECTIONS**

- 1. Mangochi West,**
- 2. Mangochi North East**
- 3. Phalombe North**
- 4. Lilongwe North West**
- 5. Karonga Central**

5th SEPTEMBER, 2020

My Fellow Malawians

Greetings

Today I come before you to announce that the Commission has planned to hold by-elections on 10th November, 2020 to fill five constituencies that are currently vacant. Three of the constituencies fell vacant because the court nullified their 2019 election results. One constituency fell vacant due to resignation while the last one, it is because of death of its Member of Parliament.

The Constituencies that are vacant are as follows:

1. Mangochi West which fell vacant on 20th December, 2019
2. Mangochi North East which fell vacant on 8th June, 2020
3. Phalombe North which fell vacant on 22nd June, 2020
4. Lilongwe North West which fell vacant on 8th May, 2020, and
5. Karonga Central which fell vacant on 16th July, 2020

Having done all the preparatory work, I am pleased to announce to you that the process of holding by-elections in these areas will be as follows:

Voter Verification and Registration

The Commission will open centres for two weeks for registration and voter verification from 14 to 27th September, 2020 in all the five

constituencies. Centres will be open from 8AM to 4PM throughout the period.

The Commission will register those who are 18 and above or will attain the voting age by the last date of voter registration for these by-elections which is 27th September, 2020.

When going for registration, all new registrants are encouraged to take their national IDs. Those that have not registered for the national ID should do so now at the District Commissioner's office and designated post offices. When coming to register as a voter they should bring the slip they will be given as proof of national registration.

All those that registered for the 2019 Tripartite Elections, whether they voted or not, they need not to register again but rather go and verify their names in the voters' register from 14 to 27th September, 2020. No transfers will be accepted.

All registered voters in these five constituencies who lost their voter certificates should go to the centre where they registered to get a duplicate certificate that will enable them to vote on 10th November, 2020.

The Commission is informing all political parties, aspiring candidates, and all stakeholders that the last date for submission of names of representatives and observers for voter registration is 10th September, 2020.

During this exercise, all covid-19 preventive measures will be followed. No one will be accepted to be present at the centres without a face mask, queuing should be at two arms' length and there will be hand washing.

Nomination of candidates

Nomination papers will be available for collection from the respective District Commissioners' office and Constituency Returning Officers from 10th September, 2020.

All candidates, including those who participated in 2019 elections, should get the nomination papers again.

The Commission has put a specific day in the by-elections' calendar (6th October, 2020) to give opportunity to aspiring candidates or their representatives to come to their respective Returning Officer for pre-examination of nomination papers. This arrangement does not preclude candidates from requesting the Returning Officers at any other point to examine the nomination papers and supporting documents before they are submitted. There have been cases in past whereby candidates have been returned on the nomination day due to deficiencies in their nomination papers. This is an attempt by the Commission to ensure that irregularities and shortfalls on nomination requirements are spotted and corrected before the nomination day.

Nominations of candidates shall take place on 7th October, 2020. Due to Covid-19 pandemic candidates will be allowed to come with only 10 members. No other supporters will be allowed to escort the candidate or be present within 100-meter radius of the nomination venue. Candidate and their entourage will need to wear face masks. Other Covid-19 preventive measures will include hand washing and physical distancing.

The nomination fee for parliamentary elections is K500,000 for male candidates while female candidates and people with disabilities is K250,000. The Commission also recognized youth as a special group/ Using the National Youth Policy that puts the youth age-limit at 35, therefore, candidates under this age shall pay nomination fee amounting to K375,000.

People with disabilities need to bring a letter of endorsement from the Federation of Disability Organisations in Malawi (FEDOMA) together with their nomination papers.

Candidates are advised to deposit their nomination fees with FDH Bank using the special deposit slips that will be provided during collection of nomination papers. The deposit should be done before submission of nomination papers to the Returning Officer.

Official Campaign period

The official campaign period shall start on 10th September 2020. As per requirement of the law, campaign shall end at 06.00AM on 8th November, 2020. Any campaign activity conducted after this period is illegal and the Commission will not hesitate to take necessary measures against those who indulge in such violations.

During this campaign period, the Commission is urging all candidates, political parties and their followers to refrain from inflammatory language because this stirs violence and infringes on other people's rights to campaign freely. Candidates should practice issue-based campaign and express themselves within the precinct of law. People will not vote for you for using improper language during elections but your candid manifesto.

The Commission is also advising political parties and candidates to ensure that Covid-19 regulations as gazetted by government are strictly followed. All people attending rallies are also reminded that it is their personal responsibility to ensure that they take precautionary measures to protect themselves by wearing face masks, standing at a distance and washing their hands while attending campaign activities.

Pre-checking of polling materials

The Commission has included a date on the calendar for pre-checking of polling materials. For these by-elections this will be on 9th November, 2020 from 9AM in all polling stations. On this date the Presiding Officers are allowed to open and check all the election materials, including cartons for ballot papers, to ensure that they are correct and in right quantities. Representatives for all candidates and contesting parties are encouraged to be present. This is part of the Commission's efforts towards enhancing transparency in the electoral processes and ensuring that all materials are available before polling. However, I should state it clearly here that this exercise shall proceed even in the absence of political party representatives should they fail or delay to show up.

Polling, vote counting and results announcement

My fellow Malawians, polling will take place on 10th November, 2020 starting from 6.00AM up to 6.00PM. When going for voting remember to take your voter certificate for easy identification. If you happen to have lost your voter registration certificate, you should still go to the centre where you registered and the presiding officer will assist you to vote.

Vote counting will start immediately after polling at the polling station. Results for each polling station will be presented to the District Commissioner who will in the end deliver the results physically to the

Commission in Blantyre. The Commission is expected to announce the results by 11th November, 2020 in Blantyre.

Special message on Covid-19

My fellow Malawians, the Commission engaged the Presidential Task Force on Covid-19 and also leaders of political parties through the Centre for Multiparty Democracy (CMD) regarding holding of by-elections amidst the pandemic. From the technical advice provided by the Task Force on Covid-19, we need to follow all Covid-19 preventive measures.

My appeal goes to political parties and candidates to ensure that they observe the Covid-19 regulations and put every measure to protect their followers and supporters.

My special appeal goes to individual Malawians that will participate in these by-elections in whatever way, that they should take personal measures to protect themselves from contracting or spreading the Covid-19 virus.

The Commission will be monitoring all processes diligently. Should the situation warrant, measures will be taken which might include postponing the by-elections, in case of emergency.

My fellow Malawians, let me also at this point encourage women to take part in these by-elections by contesting as candidates. MEC has still maintained 50 percent lower nomination fees for women

candidates as one way of encouraging their participation in elections. I urge political parties to take affirmative steps to support the candidature of women. Since May 2019, the Commission has conducted three by-elections but in all these areas there has never been a female candidate. By-elections offer an opportunity to improve the statistics regarding women representation.

A special appeal goes to traditional, religious and faith leaders, media houses, head teachers and all others leaders, whether elected or hereditary, to ensure that they encourage eligible voters to participate in electoral activities. They should encourage them to register, patronize political rallies of all candidates during the campaign period and to cast their vote on the polling day.

May God, the Almighty bless you

May He bless our nation.

Thank you.