



SPEECH DELIVERD BY MEC CHAIRMAN,

JUSTICE DR CHIFUNDO KACHALE

DURING OPENING OF NECOF TO REVIEW THE 2020 FRESH PRESH
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

CROSSROADS HOTEL, LILONGWE

7TH OCTOBER, 2020

- MEC Commissioners
- MEC Chief Elections Officer, Mr Sam Alfandika and your two deputies:
 - Mr Harris Potani (DCEO Operations)
 - Mr Phaniel Hamsini (Finance and Administration)
- Mr Cliff Chiunda, Principal Secretary (Administration) in the Office of the President and Cabinet
- Principal Secretaries and Representatives of various government ministries, departments and agencies
- Mr Richard Cox, Chief Technical Advisor at UNDP
- Representatives of Diplomatic Missions accredited to Malawi and all representatives of Development Partners
- Secretaries General, Directors of Elections and all leaders of various political parties
- Brigadier Kalisha, Representing the Commander of the Malawi Defence Force
- Representative of the Inspector General of Malawi Police Service,
- Chairperson of the Women Caucus of the Parliament, Hon Lonnie Chijere Phiri
- Hon Yusufu Nthenda, the Chairperson of the Parliamentary Legal Affairs Committee
- Mr Rashid Ntelera, chairperson of the Electoral Transport Task Force
- Mr. Joseph Chintolo, Registrar of Political Parties
- Mr Moses Chiwoni representing the registrar of the National Registration Bureau (NRB)

- Mr Kizito Tenthani, Executive Director of the Centre for Multiparty Democracy (CMD)
- Paramount Chiefs, Senior Chiefs and all chiefs present here
- The Executive Director of National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE), Mr Ollen Mwalubunju
- Mr Ezekiel Kumwenda, Executive Director for VIHEMA
- The representatives of various civil society organizations
- Officiating clergy, Reverend Fanuel Magangani and all faith and religious leaders present here
- Members of the press
- Staff from Malawi Electoral Commission
- Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning

I would like to welcome to yet another National Elections Consultative Forum (NECOF) meeting. As you are all aware, the NECOF is our flagship platform which the Commission utilises to easily engage stakeholders on all electoral issues. We, the Electoral Commission are always grateful that whenever we call for a NECOF meeting, you always respond with vigour and enthusiasm which renders credence to the whole notion of having a forum where we can meet together and discuss issues of common interest.

Today, as the Chief Elections Officer already alluded to the meeting is focusing on review of the Fresh Presidential Elections which we had on 23 June, 2020. There are several activities which the Commission

has undertaken in order to do a comprehensive review of the elections. The Commission is fully aware that every tier of elections management has its own unique experiences. That is why we have undertaken to hold internal review meeting involving MEC staff as well as other implementing entities who worked with us in delivering that election. There were also meetings with stakeholders at the district level which included the members of the Multiparty Liaison Committees, Officers in-Charge of the Police, Traditional Leaders, Civil Society Organisations, Constituency Coordinators, among many who played a role at the district level.

Honourable Ladies and Gentlemen, the Commission has received very useful feedback from all these meetings that we believe will help improve the conduct of future elections. However, we also appreciate the roles that you as members of the NECOF play in that process of elections. We therefore that felt we could not wind up the process without getting your feedback on the issues for which we have gathered today for. In a way, you are the critical policy makers, decision makers and opinion leaders at national level. Your feedback therefore on the 2020 Fresh Presidential Election process is very much valued and we have arranged this gathering in order to provide an opportunity for that engagement.

In our program we have prepared two presentations from the Electoral Commission. The first one will give excerpts from the High Court and Supreme Court judgements on the elections case. As the

previous speaker has already highlighted the process that Malawi underwent after holding the elections in May, 2019 provides a very useful opportunity for us as a people to reflect upon some of the social assumptions that we make about our society and indeed about the robustness of our institutional capacities to harness the democratic project which we embarked on as a people and therefore the court cases provide some unique insights into some of the challenges that were highlighted through that process and the proposed remedies from the courts and what we may have done in order to comply with those edicts.

The second one will give an overview of the Management of the Fresh Presidential Election simply to refresh your memories. Thereafter, participants will go into groups to do a review of the 2020 Fresh Presidential Election. Allow me on behalf of my fellow Commissioners to plea with honourable members to take full opportunity of that breakup session so that you can give us the feedback that we need as the Electoral Commission that can feed into building a more credible, fair and aspiring process as we move forward. If you withhold your ideas now, we may indeed have similar challenges as arose previously, assuming that there are areas that will require improvement during the next election cycle.

Before I conclude my remarks allow me to update you on the upcoming 10 November by-elections. We conducted voter registration and verification exercise from the 14 to 27th September, 2020 in the five constituencies and one ward that are due for the by-elections in November. And in the course of the exercise, the Commission was served with an injunction in Mangochi North East restraining us from continuing with the voter registration exercise, restraining us from receiving nomination papers from candidates and also restraining us from engaging certain presiding officers that worked with us during the 2019 elections which were nullified in that particular constituency. As we speak, the matter is in court, it has been heard and we are awaiting judgement in due course. For the new voters that were registered before the injunction, those registrations have been quarantined until the matter is concluded, we await the direction of the court in that regards.

But besides the Mangochi North-East situation, the Commission is today actually receiving nomination papers in all the five areas where the by-elections are going ahead as originally planned on the 10th of November, 2020.

In conclusion, allow me to echo the sentiments of Mr. Richard Cox to underscore that the 2020 elections process, from my perspective as a Malawian patriot, whatever the circumstances that led to the lack of greater involvement and investment from our development

partners in the various processes leading up to the actual election, I do believe the whole experience underscores the capacity that we have as a people to resolve our constitutional challenges in a legally sound manner and also to implement court directions in a lawful and timely manner. And therefore as we reflect upon the challenges that we may have encountered in that event and propose ways to consolidate our democracy, I believe we can do so with a sense of pride in that as a people we have demonstrated that it is possible to do certain things without requiring the kind of support that we believe we cannot do without . and I think moving forward therefore, our engagement even with our development partners has to be done in that kind of spirit of mutuality as opposed to the spirit of dependence. We are growing as a democracy, I would like to say democracy is a process its not an event, you don't attain democracy by just studying books, democracy requires a transformation of so many cultural values including political culture and on the whole, I believe our trajectory is towards the right direction and needs protocols to build upon the gains that we have so far attained and deliver a stronger and better democracy for future generations.

I wish you all very fruitful deliberations, I declare this meeting officially opened.

May God bless you all,

May God bless Malawi,

Thank you.