



**Electoral Commission of Namibia**

**KEYNOTE SPEECH & OFFICIAL LAUNCH  
BY ADV. NOTEMBA TJIPUEJA, CHAIRPERSON OF THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF  
NAMIBIA ON THE OCCASION OF THE 2020 REGIONAL COUNCIL AND LOCAL  
AUTHORITY ELECTIONS VOTER AND CIVIC EDUCATION LAUNCH**

*“Ensuring Inclusive and Credible Elections Amidst COVID-19*

Friday, 07<sup>th</sup> August 2020, Safari Hotel & Conference Center

**Program Director – Commissioner Evaristus Evaristus**

**Fellow Commissioners,**

**Your Excellencies, Heads and Representatives of the Diplomatic Missions accredited to the  
Republic of Namibia,**

**Secretary-Generals, Representatives of Political parties and Associations,**

**Leaders and Representatives of Civil Society Organisations,**

**Distinguished Members of the Media,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of the Electoral Commission, it is my singular honor and privilege to deliver the keynote statement signifying the official launch of the Voter and Civic Education Campaign for the 2020 Regional Council and Local Authority Elections.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We are all gathered here today to accomplish the important task of launching the Voter and Civic Education Campaign Strategy as well as the unveiling of the ECN’s COVID-19 Mitigation Strategy for the forthcoming elections.

The ECN is the exclusive authority mandated to organize, direct, supervise, manage and control the conduct of all elections and referenda in a free, fair, independent, credible, transparent and impartial manner. It is however important to note that in order for elections to be described as free,

fair and transparent they must be preceded by a robust and comprehensive civic and voter education campaign.

The Regional Council and Local Authority Elections are regulated in terms of the Regional Councils Act No. 22 of 1992 and the Local Authority Councils Act No. 23 of 1992, as well as the Electoral Act of 2015. Regional Councils and Local Authority elections are important elements of Namibia's governance system because they enable the delivery of services and facilitate development at the grassroots level. The leadership elected through these elections is meant to complement Governments efforts through the decentralization of services to the citizenry.

**Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

This year's elections are aptly themed "*Ensuring Inclusive and Credible Elections Amidst COVID-19*". As we all know, these elections will take place amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, which threatens not only our livelihood but also the way we conduct personal activities in our daily lives and the impact on how private and public sector organizations transact business.

Against this background the ECN engaged all key stakeholders including the Ministry of Health and Social Services with a view to solicit input in the strategy before it was finally adopted by the Commission. The ECN CEO will provide further details on this issue during his presentation.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The ECN is under no illusion, that conducting elections under the present circumstances will be an easy task. We however believe that this country can hold successful elections if everyone complies with the relevant regulations and requisite health precautions and if all electoral stakeholders play their role to ensure the safety of all involved.

Consultations with the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MOHSS) were key to provide a public health risk assessment in respect of all electoral processes and the transmission risks it may involve. In this connection I applaud the leadership at the Ministry of Health for the commendable efforts under very difficult circumstances, in curbing the further spread of this dangerous pandemic. I also take this moment to thank Civil Society players who have also provided their input on strengthening this strategy document to ensure the safety of the citizenry.

The importance of adhering to the COVID-19 measures is one of the important messages we will be disseminating during the voter and civic education campaign, where we will encourage the voters.

This is the first time in our history as a nation that national elections are being held during a public health crisis. I must thus state that the COVID-19 Strategy adopted by the ECN is not cast in stone and will be continually adjusted as circumstances dictate.

Furthermore, I wish to inform the nation that the ECN is making good progress in regard to preparations for the forthcoming electoral processes. In this regard, training for Regional coordinators, Regional Assistance and Supervisors of Registration commenced on the **03<sup>rd</sup> August 2020** and will be completed during this weekend. Training of electoral staff on the COVID-19 measures during the various electoral processes is an integral part of the ongoing training process.

In our endeavor for inclusivity, specific measures will be adopted, in consultation with the Ministry of Health, to serve the needs of those at risk of discrimination in this respect, such as elderly people or people living with disabilities. The ECN will ensure that special arrangement will be considered, where possible and within the confines of the Electoral Act, to allow people to vote beyond polling places, such as people under quarantine and in health facilities diagnosed with COVID-19, to ensure that no one is disenfranchised. It is important to note that this will only be possible as long as they are still within their local authority or constituency where they have registered.

### **Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;**

As you are aware, the Supreme Court judgement handed down by the Chief Justice on **05<sup>th</sup> February 2020** on the Presidential elections that took place on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2020, declared the use of EVM without paper trail as unconstitutional. The implication of that court judgment means that ECN has reverted back to the manual ballot paper system. Consequently, paper ballots were used during the Opuwo Rural and Otjiwarongo by-elections on the 15<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

The re-introduction of the manual voting system would require a mindset shift which calls for new innovative ways of voter education that ensures that all registered voters are able to cast their votes in confidence, promote secrecy of the vote and reduce rejected ballot papers.

The ECN would ensure that we provide quality voter and civic education by educating the voters in the voting procedures in order to reduce the incidence of spoilt ballots while also giving due consideration to people with special needs including other categories such as the youth. Similarly, the CEO will provide further details regarding our approach on the Voter Education campaign.

Our central message for the forthcoming elections would thus be two-pronged, namely;

- i) Educating the electorate on Voter Registration and Polling processes*
- ii) Informing all stakeholders about compliance with COVID-19 Measures when participating in electoral processes*

To this end, the ECN will strive to build linkages and synergies to enable Political Parties, Associations, civil society organizations and the media to play their part in educating the electorate through the dissemination of information which would complement our efforts to ensure that the electorate receive the required information timeously.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is now my distinct honor, on behalf of the Electoral Commission of Namibia, to declare the Voter and Civic Education Campaign Strategy for the 2020 Regional Council and Local Authority Elections, officially launched.

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