



Electoral Commission of Namibia

PRESS STATEMENT

(11 November 2021)

Mrs. Elsie Nghikembua

PRESS STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF NAMIBIA MRS. ELSIE NGHIKEMBUA ON THE STRATEGIC INTENT OF THE NEW COMMISSION

**Fellow Commissioners,
The Chief Electoral Officer – Mr. Theo Mujoro,
Distinguished members of the Media Fraternity,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

My name is Elsie Tuleingepo Nghikembua and it is a great honor and privilege for me to welcome you all at the Election House for this very important media briefing in my capacity as Chairperson. Before I start with the business of today, I would like to state that the Commission has learnt with sadness, about the death of Honourable Ignatius Shixwameni on the 10th November 2021. On behalf of the Commission, I would like to extend our heartfelt condolences to the family of late Shixwameni, the All People's Party and entire Namibian nation. We wish you God's guidance, comfort & strength during this trying moment. May his soul rest in eternal peace.

Appearing with me are Commissioner Gerson Uaripi Tjihenuna and Commissioner Evaristus Evaristus who both have been members of the Commission since the 15th March 2019.

I am equally very pleased to introduce & welcome Commissioner Dr. Emmerentia Leonard appointed by his Excellency the President as a member of the Commission for a period of five years, effective from 16th September 2021. Dr. Leonard and Mr. Joram Rukambe were the new additions to the Commission, however, a vacancy has

now been created as result of Mr. Rukambe having recently expressed his unavailability to serve on the Commission due to other international obligations. The Commission has therefore initiated the process of filling the vacancy as per the provisions of the Electoral Act.

Ladies and Gentlemen the purpose of this media briefing is to share with you - the media houses - and, by extension, the Namibian nation at large, the current undertakings of the Commission as well as our strategic priorities and vision for the institution over the next five years as we work towards the next electoral cycle which includes the 2024 General Registration of Voters and the 2024 Presidential and National Assembly elections.

The mandate of the ECN emanates from Article 94B of the Namibian Constitution, which establishes the ECN as an independent Constitutional Body exclusively mandated to direct, supervise, manage and control the conduct of elections and referenda, subject to the Constitution.

As we prepare for our next electoral cycle, it is important that we review critical aspects of our operations, including the necessary systems and processes to ensure operational efficiency and the successful implementation of programmes. These would also require the enhancement of some of our electoral processes and procedures to make them more responsive to voter's needs.

Since this Commission assumed duty on 16 September 2021, we held a four-day Commission Strategic Retreat to review our key institutional strategic priorities in preparations for the 2024 General Registration of Voters (GRV) and the Presidential and National Assembly elections, as well as the 2025 Regional Councils & Local Authorities Elections.

The objectives of the Commission retreat were amongst others, to review proposed amendments to the Electoral Act, deliberate on & adopt the draft Institutional Decentralization Strategy, discuss matters regarding the ECN's Governance Framework, as well as, to discuss the ECN's 2022-2027 draft Strategic Plan and the issue of operationalization of the independence of the Electoral Commission.

Ladies and Gentlemen, please allow me at this juncture, to share with you the strategic intent of this Commission over the next five years to ensure operational efficiency and the successful implementation of our mandate.

Firstly, as alluded to earlier, the ECN is currently busy with efforts to strengthen our legal framework in order to improve a number of provisions within the Act that were proposed by the Commission for amendment. We are also currently reviewing the existing framework on the electoral codes of conduct, regulations and electoral forms.

Secondly, the Commission has embarked on an initiative whose ultimate goal seeks to operationalise its institutional, administrative and financial independence as provided for in Article 94B of the Namibian Constitution. As such, we will be examining all aspects as they pertain to the ECNs independence, both administrative, operational and financial with the ultimate goal of repositioning the ECN correctly within the Namibian state structure in line with the Namibian Constitution.

The Commission will also be looking into our electoral management processes with the intention to review and strengthen amongst others, our voters register management systems, strengthening collaboration with key state agencies/stakeholders, enhancing our voters' verification processes and logistics management framework as well as harmonising and enhancing our election result management framework.

We are also looking into improving our current communication efforts through improving our customer service function and strengthening our stakeholder engagement efforts.

Another key area is that of developing a Corporate Governance Framework with which the Commission will ensure accountability, fairness and transparency. The framework will give guidance to the Commission to enhance oversight and accountability, strengthen the operations of the Political Party Liaison Committee and the capacity of employees in identifying and mitigating risks as well as in the development of internal audit mechanisms. In order to expedite this process, the Commission has commenced with the development of its various governance policy documents such as ICT policy, Performance management policy, Risk management policy, Electoral operations policy and the Corporate communications policy

In order to improve citizens' participation in electoral processes, the Commission will focus on public outreach programmes as another of its key focus areas. We would like to strengthen our civic education component in a way that civic education is conducted consistently including during off peak periods.

The Commission has developed a Decentralisation Plan, the purpose of this plan is to have all key electoral functions decentralised to all regions by 2024. This will give impetus to our operational efficiency in terms of polling/registration process, the nomination of candidates and the voter and civic education component.

The decentralisation of key functions will be implemented through a phased approach. In terms of administration, we are looking to implementing the new institutional structure and enhancing adherence to statutory legal frameworks.

Lastly, as part of our strategic initiatives, the Commission intends to undertake research aimed at uncovering causes of voter apathy experienced mostly during the Regional Council Elections and subsequent by-elections; and Local Authority Elections. Hoping that we will secure the necessary funds, ideally the Commission is planning to conduct this research in the Financial Year 2022/23.

Distinguished members of the Media Fraternity, the key focus areas shared today are some of the strategic initiatives that the Commission will focus on over the next five years and form part of our 2022-2027 strategic plan. Careful consideration was given to the dynamic nature of the electoral environment as well as the expectations of all key stakeholders. In addition, the Commission will be conducting a series of consultations with all its key external stakeholders in order to gather input and feedback on the proposed strategic plan at an appropriate time.

Ladies and Gentlemen, on Tuesday, 9th November 2021, the Commission convened a meeting with political parties, which was also my first engagement with political parties as the Chairperson to discuss amongst others, compliance of political parties with Sections 139,140,121 and 158 that pertain to political party funding as prescribed in the Electoral Act. The Commission has noted, with grave concern that political parties are not complying with regulations in place.

The Electoral Commission has a legal obligation to ensure that these measures & requirements are implemented. We are once again appealing to political parties who

have not submitted these statements to heed to this call as soon as possible. Our perceived leniency in fully enforcing these measures has to come to an end as this Commission cannot allow this trend to continue.

The issue of political party funding has recently also become a topical issue and the fact that some political parties are not complying is defeating the purpose and undermining national efforts of anti-corruption as highlighted in the Final Draft National Anti-Corruption Strategy and Action Plan which placed as its first Strategic Objective “increasing the level of political accountability and transparency”.

Publications such as the 2021 African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) Country Self-Assessment report for Namibia and the Institute for Public Policy Research in their October 2021 “Democracy Report” publication have flagged the enforcement and compliance thereof by political parties as a concern as most of the provisions relating to political party financing have not been fully adhered to since the promulgation of the Electoral Act in 2014.

On another note, the Commission recently executed the Electoral Court order for the recount of the Ndonga Linena Constituency elections. We also successfully conducted the Opuwo Rural and Katima Mulilo Urban constituency by-elections on 02nd July 2021 and 25th August 2021 respectively. We are now at an advanced stage with implementing the by-election schedule for the Ncamagoro constituency, in the Kavango West Region, slated for 17th December 2021.

The Supplementary Registration of Voters (SRV) exercise was conducted in the Constituency from 12th – 14th October 2021. The nomination of candidates was concluded on 05th November 2021. The final voters register for the Ncamagoro constituency will be available on 22nd November 2021 while the awarding of the bid for printing of ballot papers will be finalised on 26th November 2021. In terms of training, the training of election agents and police officers is scheduled for 08th – 09th December 2021 and the training of polling officials will be conducted from 10th – 14th December 2021. Deployment of teams will be completed on 16th December 2021.

I hope through this media briefing, the Commission has been able to shed light on some of our current activities and envisioned strategic intentions for the institution over

the next five years. I trust that all our stakeholders will take this journey with us as we work towards improving the quality of our electoral processes.

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to assure the Namibian nation at large of the Commission's unwavering commitment to executing its mandate in a free, fair, transparent and credible manner.

I THANK YOU
