

THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION

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Press Statement

Guidance on Use of Cameras and Other Recording Devices Inside Polling Stations

The Electoral Commission has noted the concerns expressed by various stakeholders over the Commission's restriction on use of cameras and other recording devices inside polling stations on polling day.

The Electoral Commission wishes to guide candidates, their agents, voters and the general public, on the above matter as follows:

- Given the nature of our polling booth, which is an open basin, the presence of cameras inside polling stations may jeopardise the secrecy of the ballot, due to uncontrolled use of cameras and other recording devices;
- Please note that the secrecy of the ballot is aimed at ensuring that a vote is anonymous and cannot be traced back to the person who cast it. Preserving the secrecy of the ballot is, therefore, fundamental in achieving peaceful, free and fair elections;
- While phones are not prohibited at polling stations, they must not be used for recording purposes or taking photographs inside the polling stations (the cordoned-off area);

- A voter must not display his/her choice of a candidate on polling day by taking a photograph, including a selfie, or recording a video of his/her marked ballot paper;
- Similarly, a voter must not display his/her choice of a candidate on polling day by marking his/her choice on the ballot paper in the open, outside the basin which has been provided for secrecy.
- These measures are in line with Article 68(1) of the Constitution which provides that all public elections (Presidential, General Parliamentary and Local Government Councils) shall be by secret ballot, save for Administrative Units (LC 1 and LC II) Elections;
- Media personnel, who have been accredited to cover the elections, will be permitted to access polling stations and may take photographs of the voting process, but outside the cordoned-off area (polling station) in a manner that protects the privacy of voters and the secrecy of the ballot.
- The counting of votes cast at each polling station will be conducted openly, and a voter or candidate's agent may take photographs or recordings of the counting process and/or take a photograph or record the issued Declaration of Results Form.

Clarification on Polling Kits with Broken Seals

The Electoral Commission has noted the concerns of various stakeholders about the condition of some polling kits which have been delivered to districts with broken seals.

The Electoral Commission has established that seals on some of the polling kits broke during the transportation from the Commission's main warehouse in Kampala to the respective district facilities.

The breakage is a result of impact of stacked metal boxes sealed with plastic seals, pressing against each other, during transportation.

As a measure to ensure integrity and transparency of the process, stakeholders in the respective districts are briefed before the offloading begins. Any box that is found with a broken seal gets a replacement, and the serial numbers of both the old and the new seals are recorded. This is done after ascertaining that the contents of the polling kit are all intact.

For avoidance of doubt, the polling kit includes the following items:

- Two (2) spare seals to take care of emergency (breakage) during transportation;
- Ballot Papers (sealed);
- Declaration Results Forms (sealed);

- Polling Register (National Voters' Register for the respective Polling Stations);
- Generic Polling Forms which include Accountability of Ballot Papers, Official Report Book, among others;
- Generic materials such as the ink pad, indelible ink, pens, among others.

The Commission assures all stakeholders that the polling kit remains sealed up to the time of delivery at the polling station where the Presiding Officer will open it, on the morning of polling day, and in the presence of ten (10) registered voters at the respective polling station.

Political parties and candidates are urged to appoint agents to observe the safe custody of the polling kit, until the same is delivered to the respective polling stations on polling day.

Justice Byabakama Mugenyi Simon
Chairperson, Electoral Commission