



**NATIONAL CIVIL REGISTRATION AUTHORITY (NCRA)**



**2 WALPOLE STREET,**

**FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE**

**ADDRESS TO THE HON. MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT ON**  
**CONCERNS RAISED REGARDING THE CONFIRMATION AND**  
**REGISTRATION EXERCISE**

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members of this noble House, I am delighted to be here today among this esteemed assemblage of the Legislative arm of Government. I am particularly happy that our country is gradually improving in its governance structure as Institutions are now very enthusiastic to discharging their mandate for the good of our people.

The invitation from this Honourable House addressed to me dated 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 is a testament to this fact. So yes, I am very pleased to be given the opportunity to make the necessary clarifications and allay the fears and apprehensions of some members of the public in respect of our Public Notice dated 20<sup>th</sup> February, 2020.

I have particularly taken note of the concern raised by a Honourable Member of this House in respect of the said Public Notice with particular reference to paragraph 2 of same and I would respond as follows;

- I. That I am well aware of the provision of Section 33 of the Constitution which mandates the National Electoral Commission

(NEC) to register eligible voters for public election purposes. For this reason, NEC maintains a Voter Register;

2. That the NCRA is mandated to maintain the National Civil Registration System for vital statistics at Chiefdom, District, Regional and National levels; maintain a register of all citizens and non-citizens resident in Sierra Leone pursuant to **section 15 (1) (d) & (e)** of the National Civil Registration Act, 2016;
3. That since the NCRA started full operations in 2016, it has been registering Sierra Leoneans and foreign residents all over the country and continues to do same consistent with section 27 of the National Civil Registration Act of 2016. The data gathered, collated and maintained in the Civil Register will continue to inform Government and serve other public Institutions in doing their work.
4. That the law (NCR Act) also mandates the Director-General of NCRA to provide information/data to NEC for the purpose of getting an updated register of voters for the conduct of public elections and referenda pursuant to **section 25 (b)** of NCRA Act 2016;

5. That acting in fulfillment of the referred Section 25 (b), NEC extracted data from the National Civil Register in 2018 in order to update its Voter Register for the purposes of the 2018 Multi-tier elections;
6. That from the above, it is clear that the NCRA does not maintain a Voter Register and therefore does not undertake a voter registration (*stricto sensu*) but rather undertakes a civil registration of the general population and in the process, would unavoidably register the voting population – from age 18 and above;
7. That Civil Registration is a continuous, compulsory and permanent process and not an event as is the case for voter registration done every five years (Section 27 of NCRA, 2016).
8. That the NCRA wishes to inform the general public that the proposed Confirmation of Registrants' Personal Details and the Registration exercise was accompanied by many engagements with relevant stakeholders including the Civil Society Organizations, the National Electoral Commission and all registered Political Parties through the Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC) and these engagements were all observed and/or witnessed by our

Development Partners and some Diplomatic Missions with verifiable records available for reference when needed.

9. That in the course of the stakeholder engagements and on the recommendation of the stakeholders, the NCRA sought legal opinion from the Office of the Attorney General on the seeming conflict in the provisions of the 1991 Constitution, the Public Elections Act and the NCRA Act of 2016. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the Attorney General opined that there was no conflict in the mandates of the NEC and the NCRA as the former is required to extract data from the Civil Register to develop and update its Voter Register. The NCRA only drew the attention of the public to the benefits of the Civil Register that relates to the use of the Civil Register by the NEC like many other Public Institutions to update Voter Register where necessary. The NCRA reported the Attorney General's opinion to the Political Parties and other stakeholders accordingly.

10. That the NCRA took into consideration the recommendation of the European Union 2018 Election Observation Mission Report that ***“A permanent, free of charge and constantly updated Civil Register, which would be a basis for the register of voters, could be in a long run a more cost effective and sustainable***

***alternative to the current practice of conducting a fresh voter registration exercise before each election”.***

11. Relying on this recommendation and as all stakeholders associated with the process (NCRA/NEC) work on the above recommendation, the NCRA deemed it fit to equally inform the general public that the exercise is a cost saving venture that will save billions of Leones that can be used on other development projects of the Government of Sierra Leone such as the Human Capital Development covering Education, Health, Agriculture etc including improving the conditions of service of Hon. Members of Parliament whose sacrifice to make our country a better place remains uncontested.

12. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the Government of Sierra Leone is still grappling with payment for the last Mass Civil and Voter Registration exercises done in 2017 which cost Government a staggering \$14,000,000 or Le 140,000,000,000 for the Biometric Registration Kits and a further Le 60,000,000,000 for administrative operations. This Confirmation and Registration exercise is only going to cost Government about Le 44,000,000,000, thereby reducing cost of the registration of voters

by more than half. What can be more fiscally prudent and logical than that Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members?

13. Through this august Assembly Mr. Speaker, the NCRA wishes to remind all of the Authority's statutory mandate and to reiterate that it does not in any way and for any reason intend to renege on its duties nor usurp the authority of the President and the NEC but that it is determined to develop a credible and accurate database on the population of Sierra Leone with **PRECISION** and not by **ESTIMATE** that will inform public administration, good governance and service delivery in the country consistent with international best practice where one data centre exist for the use of all thereby saving costs, guaranteeing reliability of the data as well as easing access to information of its people.

It therefore means that when our Public Notice stated “that only those whose personal details are in the Permanent Civil Register will be eligible to obtain Biometric National Identification Cards and **to vote in all public elections beginning with the 2022 Local Council Elections**”, NCRA was merely helping principal beneficiaries of its data to mobilise their constituents to confirm their personal details as well as register thereby encouraging the population of Sierra Leone including those of voting age to verify their previous registration or to register for the first time where they may not have done so before, so that they will be among those names/data that NEC may be extracting from the

National Civil Register to update their Voter Register. The rationale is that once everyone is registered with the NCRA, Government and its Development Partners will not have to spend billions of Leones as before for the conduct of Voter Registration exercise – this, by our estimation was actually the spirit behind the inclusion of Section 25 (b) of the NCRA Act 2016 by the last Parliament of this Republic. It is worthy to state that NEC has already requested from us for such data to be available to them by 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter of 2020 or early 2021 to be able to prepare for the 2022 Local Council Elections.

In light of all what I have stated, please permit me Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members of Parliament to use this opportunity to assure the people's representatives that I will never usurp the powers and functions of any stakeholder institution let alone the powers of the President. We at the NCRA are committed to play by the rule and laws as per law established.

Through you Mr. Speaker, I therefore call on every member of this House to help us with the Confirmation and Registration process at their various constituencies so that together we succeed as a nation. Already, I am pleased to inform this Honourable House that all registered Political Parties and Civil Society Organizations have committed themselves to cooperate with the NCRA in the implementation of this very important national exercise in consideration of the immense value and benefits of

the final product i.e. the Permanent Civil Register that will serve multiple purpose including but not limited to health interventions, education, tax administration, Social Security benefits, development planning, national security, immigration services among many others

I thank you all for your attention.

**Mohamed M. MASSAQUOI.**

Director-General, NCRA

5<sup>th</sup> March, 2020.