

STATEMENT BY THE WOMEN'S SITUATION ROOM-LIBERIA RUN-OFF PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS 2017

Monrovia, Liberia
December 29, 2017

The Women's Situation Room (WSR) congratulates the people of Liberia for exemplifying our maturity during our elections and having peaceful elections. We are pleased to report that we received no incident of injury or destruction of property in our efforts to elect our next President! Liberians have shown the world that we have grown up politically and can now conduct elections in an atmosphere devoid of threats, intimidations, injury and or death.

We congratulate President-Elect George Weah and his Vice President-Elect Jewel Howard-Taylor on their hard-won victory. The Liberian people have spoken and identified them as their leaders for the next six years.

The WSR also wishes to commend Vice President Joseph Boakai and his running mate Emmanuel Nuquay for their well-run electoral race. But above, all for the Vice President's very dignified and magnanimous concessionary speech, wherein he has indicated that he is ready to avail himself in any way that the newly elected president may find him useful to advance the good of our country. This concessionary speech has been welcomed by all Liberians as a vital instrument that goes towards pulling this country together and healing it in the fastest possible time. Liberia must be first!!

We, Liberians, have now achieved another notch in our step up to democracy by going through the electoral judicial process as mandated by our Constitution and upholding the Rule of Law. Our Supreme Court must be congratulated also for its concise and well thought out opinion in conformity with our laws and for showing us that the use of our courts makes a marked difference in our lives when the rule of law is upheld.

On November 6th, 2017, the Supreme Court issued a Stay Order mandating a stay on the November 10th, 2017 scheduled runoff until the complaint of Liberty Party could be fully heard. This Stay Order (Writ of Prohibition) was in place until the Supreme Court heard Liberty Party's appeal and rendered its Opinion on December 7th, 2017 thus lifting the Order. The direct result of Liberty Party utilizing the legal process clearly demonstrates to Liberians the significance of using the legal process to solve our problems rather than using other means. This action of Liberty Party must be commended.

The Supreme Court's Opinion ordered the National Election Commission, (NEC) to hold a Run-off rather than a Re-run Elections and contained eight (8) major counts that had to be adhered to before elections between the two leading parties could go forward included: stopping all persons who did not appear on the Final Registration Rolls (FRR) from voting; cleaning up of the FRR; publishing the FRR and distributing it to all Magistrate Election Offices and Polling Places; that NEC's Officials stop making biased public statements; restricting voters to vote only where they are registered and where their names appeared on the FRR; publications of the FRR as pronounced in the Supreme Court's decision; and limit any addendum to those listed in the NEC's Polling and Counting Manual.

ECOWAS is thanked and appreciated by the people of Liberia for stepping up to the plate and aiding our National Elections Commission by providing an experienced team of experts to assist NEC in the cleanup of the FRR as per the Supreme Court's Opinion. NEC must also be applauded for complying with the Supreme Court's Mandate in such a short period of time to the satisfaction of both political parties' in time for the re-scheduled December 26th 2017 runoff. We, the Liberian populace, saw the effect of those mandates on election day when our observers reported that there was a marked difference in the efficiency of NEC's poll workers from the first election day of October 10, 2017.

WSR, sponsored by UNMIL, fielded One hundred and sixty (160) women Observers throughout every Electoral District in Liberia for the Run-Off Presidential Elections. They reported that the major issue of voters locating their correct polling station on election day, had been corrected by the Supreme Court's Order that NEC display the FRR at polling stations. Thus, ALL voters could transparently look up their names and ascertain where they were registered to vote. The recruitment by NEC of an additional 385 queue controllers to assist voters in finding the correct place to vote, also added to NEC's efficiency and the cut down on the time it took individual voters to locate their names and vote. This coupled with low voters' turnout (51%) made the wait time inconsequential. Queues were well manned and there was the rapid

processing of voters. By 6pm when our polls closed, there were no lines reported at any voting station.

The **1010 number** of the WSR has been fully operational running 24 hours a day from December 23rd 2017 and will run until December 31st, 2017 at the Millennium Hotel in Sinkor, Monrovia, Liberia. We have received 210 calls from December 23rd until today, December 29, 2017. These calls were mainly inquiries regarding voters' names not on FRR, pictures not on FRR and voters mistakenly putting their voters' card in the ballot box and were unable to retrieve them; as well as requests for elections results.

The rural women participated at a higher level than before in the WSR. They coordinated hubs in various counties, were observers, were advocates, organized peace marches, preached and held the peace; and took responsibility for peaceful elections in their communities throughout Liberia.

Our "Talking Bus" community engagement project is still operational in the Counties of Nimba, Lofa, Maryland and Grand Gedeh. Prior to the run-off, these communities initiated conversations about upholding the Rule of Law by peacefully accepting our Supreme Court's decision for us to have the run-off elections. To accept the results. Post run-off, the Talking Bus is engaging the communities in accepting the results, maintaining the peace and the rule of law. The "Talking Bus" is sponsored by UNMIL and USAID's Liberia Legal Professional Development and Anti-Corruption Activity (LPAC) project from the American Embassy. It is giving us the space for the ordinary Liberian to engage experts like the lawyers provided by the Liberian National Bar Association in its collaboration with the Angie Brooks International Centre and the WSR. The use of interpreters on the "Talking Bus" gives the common people substantial access to both legal and electoral education and thus to justice.

The WSR could not have been so impactful had we not had the youth of Liberia on board to engage in the much-needed peer-to-peer peace advocacy. Liberian youths owned the peace process and saw to it that the peace was not disturbed. From our commercial motorcyclists to our yannah boys, zogos, students and professional youths, they all contributed to this peace. They all understood that this is THEIR Liberia and they are responsible for its stability.

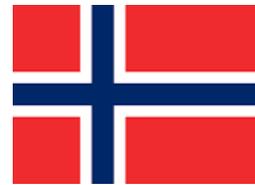
We thank all our sponsors without whom the Women’s Situation Room could not have been so impactful. UNMIL for its immediate and most generous support. We especially thank UNDP and the Norwegian Fund for our initial foundational sponsorship without which the room could not have been implemented. Urgent Action fund for continuing to support us, and USID’s LPAC for co-sponsoring the “Talking Bus”. ECOWAS is appreciated for the yannah boys meeting and participation. Kofi Anan Institute for its training to the Eminent Women. We thank all local our sponsors such as NASSCORP and IB Bank.

Concluding, we at the WSR must finally commend our outgoing President and Champion of the WSR, Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf for having steered the ship of state with all its extraordinary challenges as a post–conflict country, such that Mama Liberia is today positioned to be able to turn over to a duly elected president for the first time in several decades, having preserved the peace for the past twelve years.

THE PEACE IS IN OUR HANDS!!!



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