

PRESS CONFERENCE ADDRESSED BY THE NATIONAL CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS (NDC) ON THE NEED FOR THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF GHANA TO LEARN LESSONS FROM THE DISTRICT LEVEL ELECTIONS AND PREPARE ADEQUATELY FOR THE DECEMBER 07, 2024 PRESIDENTIAL AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS.

Date: Monday, January 8, 2024

Venue: NDC Headquarters

Introduction

Ladies and Gentlemen of the press,

Our dearly beloved Ghanaians,

We wish you a blessed New Year, 2024.

From all indications and deducing from the uninspiring 2024 Budget statement and economic policy prepared by Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia and Ken Ofori Atta, we are convinced 2024 will be a difficult year filled with economic hardships. This is because the NPP government has once again and in their final year piled more taxes on businesses and Ghanaians.

Having pushed 850, 000 Ghanaians into poverty in 2022 alone due to mismanagement of the economy and uncontrolled corruption, one would have expected the government to have given suffering Ghanaians some reprieve at least in its final year.

Unfortunately, there is no joy because Ghanaians are suffering:

- The economy is bankrupt, and Ghana has defaulted;
- Prices of commodities have skyrocketed;
- The cocoa sector has collapsed; and
- Pensioners have been tortured with some sent to their early graves through the crude and painful financial haircuts meted out to many families.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On one hand, even though 2024 will be a difficult year filled with economic hardships because of the mismanagement of the economy, on the other hand 2024 also brings hope. Hope because the non-performing NPP government is on its way out of office.

Again, 2024 brings hope because on December 07 you will have the singular opportunity to vote for the experienced and visionary flag bearer of the NDC, John Dramani Mahama as the next president of Ghana. He is the man who handed over to this government:

- Three (3) active oil producing and revenue generating fields;
- Robust revenue streams including ESLA;
- Strong economic buffers including; Sinking Fund and Stabilization Fund;
- Strong economic growth poles;
- The Ghana Infrastructure Investment Fund (GIIF); and an
- Impressive credit and economic rating of B+

NDC winning 2024 elections – No complacency!

Sadly, on January 07, 2025, the incompetent government will be handing over an economy on the verge of collapse to Mahama. We know Mahama will fix it!

I urge you to vote massively and convincingly for John Mahama because he is the man with the vision, the experience and the empathy to restore Ghana's economy to good health; and create well-paying jobs for all Ghanaians including the youth.

Creating opportunities for all is one of the key reasons we are determined to win this election in order to implement the 24-hour economy policy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Every evidence and indicator shows the NDC will win the 2024 elections. Beyond the polls published by pollsters, our series of internal research consistently point to a one touch victory for John Dramani Mahama with a convincing working majority in Parliament.

However, we are not complacent because polls alone does not confere victory on a political party in a election. Moreover , it is being said that those who vote decide nothing but who count decide everything. We are conscious of the fact that our opponent who control the machinery of state do not believe in fairness.

We will not rest! We will not tire! We will not falter!

And we will not relent until every vote is cast, every vote is counted and every vote is made to count by the Jean Mensah led Electoral Commission (EC).

We will also not rest until we ensure every single Ghanaian is protected!

The dastardly murder of eight (8) Ghanaians to make Akufo-Addo president in 2020 must not be repeated in 2024. The blood of the murdered eight shall stain the Akufo-Addo-Bawumia second term forever!

Instead of President Akufo-Addo demanding congratulations from President John Dramani Mahama, he must listen to his predecessor when he says, “*The use of thugs and rogue elements within the security agencies to disrupt elections in some parts of the country as occurred in the 2020 elections, leading to the loss of eight (8) lives, will forever be remembered as Ghana's day of infamy...*”

Nana Addo must also take a cue from Mr Mahama when he adds that, “*...it is unconscionable that three years after these tragic events, our President, Nana Akufo-Addo, has not uttered even a word of sympathy to the bereaved families...*”

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Akufo-Addo should rather be implementing the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry that interrogated the actors and victims of the Ayawaso West Wuogon by-election violence; and not be worried over congratulations from our Flag bearer.

Similarly, he must not only be apologising to the people of Santrokofi, Akpafu, Likpe and Lolobi (SALL) for disenfranchising them in 2020, but also he must be ensuring their representation in Parliament is restored.

Let me assure you – as we commemorate 31 years of the 1992 Constitution that restored Ghana to democratic governance – that, the next NDC government shall deliver justice to all the victims of this government’s misrule.

We shall go after the perpetrators who murdered the eight Ghanaians during the 2020 elections. We shall find the perpetrators. And we shall punish the perpetrators when we win power on December 07 this year.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As happens during every election year, we expect our offices to be inundated with invitations to participate in events and activities to promote peaceful elections. While we appreciate the efforts of such Religious Leaders, Traditional Authorities and Civil Society Organizations, NDC believes that the way to solve a problem is to deal with its causes.

We urge them to add their collective voices to our call for State institutions involved in the conduct of the 2024 elections to approach their duties with professionalism, fairness and honesty. The officials serving in these institutions, (Security, Judiciary, and the EC) must constantly be reminded of their oaths of office which impose on them onerous responsibilities to secure and protect the interest of mother Ghana.

Nana Akuffo Addo must also be reminded of his Presidential Oath and his oaths of allegiance on the 7th of January 2017, and 2021 which imposed on him specific duties and responsibilities to ensure Ghana remains peaceful and in one piece.

He must be called out to abandon his partisan commitment which he has expressed publicly – That he will do whatever is in his power during his remaining time in office to hand over power to an NPP successor.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Akufo-Addo is simply undermining the sovereign will of Ghanaians to choose who our president must be. Sovereignty resides with the people and only the people must bestow the right to lead on politicians. Not Akufo-Addo!

My dear people in moral society, we in the NDC are victims of NPP's violent crime. We in the NDC will continue to work for a peaceful Ghana and protect the interests of the masses.

We will not sit unconcern for a repeat of the 2020 election related killings. Never again! We believe it is unfair to call on us, the VICTIMS, to guarantee the peace of the OPPRESSOR.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This government knows its uncountable and unconscionable actions and inactions including corruption, flagrant human right abuses and more. Therefore, they are preparing to hang onto power at all cost in order to escape justice.

But they will fail!

They will fail because no power can defeat an organized and determined people struggling for their freedom. Truth is, Ghanaians have already abandoned the NPP and their followers. Therefore, the NPP ministers must begin preparing their handing over notes.

District Level Elections

Already, thousands of persons affiliated to the NPP have lost the District Level Elections. Yes, NPP people have miserably lost the Assembly and Unit Committee elections to members, supporters and affiliates of the NDC.

Sincere political watchers and analysts know this is another evidence when a government is on its way out of office. They know because even though the processes leading to the District Level Elections are non-partisan, most of the contestants and the voters are aware of where the candidates stand politically.

As an illustration, in Walewale in the North East region, which happens to be the constituency of the sitting Vice President and NPP flagbearer. NDC affiliates won the majority of the Electoral Areas, 18 out of 31. In addition, in Okere in the Eastern region where the Minister of Local Government doubles as their sitting Member of Parliament, NDC members won the majority of assembly seats, 12 out of 21.

Furthermore, in Essikadu-Ketan in the Western region, a stronghold of the NPP, NDC members won majority of the electoral areas, 8 out of 12. Also, in Abura Asebu Kwamankese (AAK) in the Central region, 24 out of 31, and in Hohoe where the seat is illegally held by the NPP with the connivance of the EC in 2020, NDC had 12 out of 17. It was 2 out of 17 in 2019.

Attached are the regional and constituency breakdown of the results of the District Level Elections with pie charts for your perusal.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ashanti and Eastern regions were also very impressive for the NDC compared to 2019 performance. Presently, even though the Electoral Commission unexpectedly postponed voting in some electoral areas in these two stronghold regions of the ruling NPP, NDC members and affiliates secured 34.13% and 45.52% of the electoral areas in Ashanti and Eastern regions respectively.

We have already sent hearty congratulations to all the elected Assembly members and unit committee members. Moreover, we have assured them through our flag bearer that the next NDC government shall pay allowances to Assembly members to enhance their work.

We deem this intervention necessary because socioeconomic development of a country must permeate all aspects of society including the development of local economies in districts, municipal and metropolitan areas.

This is why we urge this government to immediately release outstanding funds due the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies to allow the local government functionaries perform their functions as expected.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Notwithstanding our overwhelming success in the District Level Elections, there are worrying developments which can have grave consequences for the December 07 presidential and parliamentary elections if not checked immediately.

The issues include:

1. No indelible ink.
2. Shortage of ballot papers.
3. Security during elections.

No indelible ink during voting

Let me be abundantly clear one more time. The NDC is diametrically opposed to the Electoral Commission's decision not to use indelible ink during elections. We are all aware of the many unanswered questions about the integrity of the voters register too.

The discontinuation of the use of indelible ink in Ghana's elections at this stage will open the flood gate for nefarious activities that will compromise the integrity of our election. This problem is exacerbated by the many unanswered questions about the integrity of the voters register.

One wonders how and why the EC arrived at this decision knowing very well that BVDs fail. And the reality is BVDs do fail.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The NDC strongly opposes the removal of indelible ink because it visibly, transparently and physically verifies voters in addition to biometric verification. Indelible ink marks and identifies voters in order to discourage and prevent them from engaging in multiple voting, particularly when there is apathy.

Why do away with this multi-layered tried and tested verification system that adds additional credibility to Ghana's electoral process?

In the event of a malfunction of the BVD, if a voter attempts to vote twice or more, the surest and quickest way to identify such a criminal is the stain of indelible ink on the person's finger.

The EC must not make life easy for criminals to exploit our electoral process. Moreover, without indelible ink, a pliant EC official can allow a voter to vote whether or not the person is on the register at a particular polling station.

Let me reiterate that so long as manual verification is allowed, and so long as the integrity of the voters register remains questionable, so must indelible ink be applied to voters.

We must not forget that in the District Level Elections some Electoral officers were caught interfering in the voting process.

Shortage of Ballot Papers

It was equally worrying that ballot paper shortages affected the District Level Elections across the country with wide spread incidence of printing errors in some electoral areas. This led to elections being rescheduled and it disenfranchised and inconvenienced some voters. We hope this was not an attempt at voter suppression.

Whatever the reason was, we must work together to avoid any shortage of electoral materials on December 07.

Let us keep in mind and we shall never let go the fact that some printing houses the EC engaged to print ballot papers were discovered to have printed at least one million extra ballot papers. This criminal case is still in the hands of the police for over 3 years now yet, the EC continues to use the services of such printing firms.

Insecurity and intimidation of voters

Insecurity continues to plague our elections. One would have thought that after the killing of eight Ghanaians in 2020 which was preceded by the Ayawaso West Wuogon by-election mayhem, the NPP government and its members would desist from fomenting violence during elections. But as usual you trust the NPP at your own peril.

For instance, on 19th December, 2023 in the Dompim Electoral area in Tarkwa Nsuaem, NPP thugs invaded the collation centre to disrupt the process, just because the NPP aligned aspirant was losing the election.

Likewise, at Abofu Presby Park in Greater Accra, NPP thugs fired guns just because an NPP preferred candidate was losing the election.

We will not tolerate a repeat of the 2020 election related violence and murders. This being the case, we urge all security actors to remain professional for the good of our dear country Ghana.

Return to IPAC and Other Matters

Mrs. Jean Mensa says they miss NDC's contributions at the Interparty Advisory Committee (IPAC) meetings. We miss the ideas she espoused while serving at the Institute of Economic Affairs, IEA. Sometimes we ask, what has happened to all the pro-democracy ideas the IEA churned out under her leadership?

Jean should not allow Akufo-Addo and Bawumia to destroy the opportunity the 2024 elections presents for her to redeem herself and to salvage the little image left of the Electoral Commission of Ghana.

Already, there is an uneasy calm brewing among the EC workers – The worsening working conditions of the EC staff is leading to low morale. But we trust that we can work together for the good of our motherland and build a better Ghana for them and all Ghanaians.

We hope our return to the IPAC will be mutually and nationally beneficial. The National Peace Council has met the EC and the NDC. We have stated our concerns to be addressed.

Hopefully, in the spirit of the New Year, the NDC will hear favourably from the National Peace Council to signal our eventual return to the IPAC.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We strongly and unconditionally call for a special program to replace lost voter ID cards in the areas affected by flood in the Volta Basin. This was an avoidable humanitarian crisis occasioned by mismanagement of the dams. The victims have suffered enough of this government's neglect.

Additionally, the NDC has discovered serious discrepancies between the Final Voters Register the EC issued out to the Political Parties prior to the 2020 election, based upon which ballot papers were printed and the actual register used on the day of voting in selected polling stations in certain constituencies. Currently, this revelation is being studied thoroughly across the country. Our full findings will be made public soon.

There are several outstanding issues to be addressed in this election year. The issues include the EC's proposed closure of polls at 3 pm – which the NDC is opposed to.

The other issues are:

- Ensuring secured printing of quality and accurate ballot papers and electoral materials like collation and summary sheets,
- Restoring missing names in the voters register in our strongholds including Ketu South in the Volta region,
- Resolving late arrival of electoral materials and delayed voting, and
- Seeing to transparency in the electoral processes among others.

For now we will thank you for coming.

But for emphasis, let me re-state that the integrity deficit inherent in the Voters register and possible breakdown of BVDs during elections make the use of indelible ink absolutely indispensable.

Happy New Year.