



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **The future of Ghana's democracy is INCLUSION: LEAVING NO VOICE BEHIND!**

Since 1992 when Ghana chose the path of multiparty democracy, great strides have been made in creating for herself a model that would be inclusive, participatory and proactive in political governance as well as in the creation and distribution of the national wealth.

An uneasy transition from a dictatorial regime with its culture of silence to a vibrant competitive political industry propped by a liberalised media landscape; the monopoly of power in the past which was structured as a centralized system of governance to today's locally empowered administrations complementing central government development efforts through decentralisation remain few of very strong evidence of how far Ghana has come on its democratization journey.

Today, among the comity of nations whether continentally or globally, the nation GHANA is a reference point as a thriving case of a transitioning democracy in a region plagued by civil conflicts, poverty, political unrest, etc.

On a day for marking democracy all around the world, it's worth reflecting on the humble gains we have made in this 27 year journey – still in the context of taking stock of our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to attaining the ideal democratic status as a polity.

We can pat our backs for 6 successful multiparty elections; celebrate the 2016 Election Petition as it demonstrated our collective respect for the rule of law in resolving our electoral disputes; highly politically active populations interested in the governance of the nation; our evolving governance institutions, systems and structures and indeed the relative peaceful co-existence of our diverse ethnic, religious, political, social etc. persuasions over the period.

These notwithstanding, we must also recognize the sporadic turbulence in our body politics; the weak, resource-starved and sometimes unresponsive state institutions struggle to live up to their full remit of guaranteeing and protecting democratic rights; rising disaffection among the population due to limited opportunities for meaningful participation, frustration with the hijack of governance by the political class and yet still their inability to find solutions to myriad development challenges threatening the well-being of citizens; acrimony and militancy creeping into our politics and elections and a host of urgent issues that undermine the gains made so far.

Clearly the biggest platform to consolidate our democratic gains will be through constitutional review efforts to update the legal frame work for improving our democratic experience and responding adequately to new threats. Issues on inclusion, accountability, separation of powers and checks and balances, equitable and equal distribution of national resources, empowering state institutions and insulating governance systems from political influence and a host of critical areas stand to be addressed through this process.

So in our March forward, it is thus important to -

1. Ask ourselves why the Report and Government's White Paper on the Constitution Review Commission are still not being implemented years after they were adopted. At best, Government seem to be selective in its implementation. But that is not enough.

2. Question both State and Political Parties' commitment to dealing with political thuggery. Though Government has already successfully championed the Vigilantism and other Related Offences Act, and released for publication the Report of the Short Commission of Inquiry into the Ayawaso West Wuogon electoral violence (as communicated by the Minister for Information),

- ✓ the Political Parties must demonstrate their commitment through the one-party dialogue on ending vigilantism
- ✓ and the State must expressly punish all persons indicted by the Short Commission

3. Persist in our quest to protect the independence, credibility, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness of state governance institutions critical among them being the Electoral Commission for the purpose of our election year.

4. Demand inclusion in its totality to be given expression in all governance processes and decisions deemed as taken by the people, for the people and with the people.

There have been varied media reports of growing public dissent over politics as usual and this must serve as a wake-up call for all stakeholders to start revising our notes and procedures for engaging our publics.

The forward look on Ghana's democracy must be truly INCLUSIVE – captured in the theme for this year's International Democracy Day – “PARTICIPATION”.

It's a sacred position the Election Community of Learning and Practice in Ghana (ECOPL) holds that if democracy matters then every voice within the democratic space matters. When decisions taken without citizens fail, they must not be forced to bear the brunt while leaders just walk away as if nothing really happened. The power of voters and for that matter citizens must be more meaningful than merely taking turns to vote every election season. All over the world the era of the spectating citizen is over and Ghana cannot afford the threat of apathy looming among many hitherto politically active citizens. Rising economic and political challenges calls for innovative ways of opening up a participatory space, incentivising broader section of citizens (not just political party actors) to be deeply involved while bringing them to the decision-making tables irrespective of their ability or disability, political colour, class, gender, ethnic orientation, age, religion or geographic location, etc.

As members of the ECOPL, we are most inspired by the UN Secretary General, António Guterres' commemorative message for the day which cogently underlines our very concerns - “At heart, democracy is about people, it is built on inclusion, equal treatment and participation, and it is a fundamental building block for peace, sustainable development and human rights. As we mark

Democracy Day, I urge all Governments to respect the right to active, substantive and meaningful participation”.

On such an important day we congratulate the people of Ghana for keeping alive the flames of democracy. **May God Bless our Homeland Ghana, And Make our Nation Great and Strong!**

The ECOPL is a coalition of 20+ highly recognized civil society organizations, media houses and activists including the National Civic Commission on Education (NCCE), Centre for Democratic Development (CDD), Media General, SocioServe, Odekro, IDEG, Convention People’s Party (CPP), Citi FM/Citi TV, West African Network for Peace (WANEP), The Ghana Journalist Association (GJA), NORSAAC, EIB Network, MUSIGA, Amnesty International among others working together to positively influence elections planning, administration and systems in Ghana in promoting the ideals of Inclusion, Transparency, Accountability and Efficiency in Good Governance. ECOPL members hold the view that there is strength in a critical mass – that irrespective of individual organization’s resources and reputation, much will not be achieved when we work in silos. ECOPL has four (4) priority areas. They are as follows: Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) Watch initiative; Peace and Security; Election Credibility and Inclusivity; and ICT tools in elections management. The Coalition is currently facilitating a public education and national dialogue on the Constitutional Review Commission’s work and its way forward.

For more enquiries kindly log on to our website [www.ecoplghana.org](http://www.ecoplghana.org) or contact our team on 0246742348, 0277246658 & 0243823823.