

THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION

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**Key Note Address by Justice Byabakama Mugenyi Simon,
Chairperson/Electoral Commission at the Launch of the Commission
Strategic Plan & Roadmap to the 2020/2021 General Elections**

Tuesday 11th December 2018 - Hotel Africana, Kampala

The Guest of Honour

Hon. Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, and all Ministers Present

Hon. Members of Parliament

Your Excellencies the Ambassadors/ High Commissioners

Other Government of Uganda Representatives/Heads of Institutions

Heads of Security Agencies present

Representatives of Political Parties

Religious leaders

Civil Society Representatives

Electoral Commission Staff

Members of the Press

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Electoral Commission and on my own behalf, I warmly welcome you once again, to this important National event where the Commission is launching its Strategic Plan and Roadmap for the 2020/2021 General Elections.

Let me take this opportunity to thank the Guest of Honour, Rt. Hon. Dr. Ruhakana Rugunda for finding time within your busy schedule to come and preside over this launch. All our distinguished guests, I thank you for honouring our invite to come and attend this important event.

I want to thank the members of my Commission, the Management team and the entire EC fraternity for the affirmative spirit you have always exhibited since my colleagues and I joined almost two years ago, while planning and carrying out Commission assignments, which are characteristically very demanding.

The Electoral Commission is established under Article 60 of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, and is mandated under Article 61 of the same Constitution to, among others, ensure that regular, free and fair elections and referenda are held

Since this Commission assumed duty, we have successfully conducted forty five (45) Parliamentary and Local Government Councils elections, by-elections, and national elections, namely, Administrative Units and Women Councils and Committees elections. I am optimistic that Government will be able to find the funds to enable us conduct the remaining elections in the new Districts and Town Councils.

The Strategic Plan and Roadmap that we are launching today is in fulfilment of the above mandate.

The Strategic Plan is a result of extensive research and stakeholder consultation. After the 2016 General Elections, the Commission with support from UNDP conducted Post-Election Evaluation workshops across the Country with all the key stakeholders in the electoral process. The stakeholders gave us their own honest assessments on how the electoral process and the conduct of 2016 General Elections were done.

The Commission further conducted its own self assessment by engaging its own staff to give their opinions on the conduct of the last General Elections and subsequent elections and by-elections. The recommendations from various national and international election observer reports were keenly studied, as well as the recommendations from the Supreme Court rulings. All this was done to improve our election management.

Some of the strengths identified during these evaluations include:

- a. Government commitment to fund electoral process
- b. Legal framework
- c. Experienced and knowledgeable workforce
- d. Good working relationship between the members of the Commission and Staff
- e. Forward planning through project approach and roadmap for electoral activities
- f. Availability and use of technology

The Commission also identified the following challenges:

- a. Delayed enactment/amendment of electoral laws;

- b. Continuous creation of administrative units which brings about increase in costs;
- c. Inadequate training of temporary election officials as a result of limited funds;
- d. Inadequate voter education because of insufficient funds
- e. Staffing gaps in the organisation which will have an effect on implementing the roadmap
- f. Office premises for Electoral Commission

These evaluations and self assessments have been the practice of the Commission, and it is from this background that the Commission has been able to introduce new innovations and improvements in the election management. To us, every election provides lessons for the next one.

Therefore, the objective of this Strategic Plan and Roadmap is to provide clear communication of priority areas in the Election Cycle with the aim of improving operational efficiency and stakeholder awareness and participation by seeking to build on the positive reforms and innovations introduced in the last general elections.

The Plan and Roadmap also aim at enhancing the organizational and staff capacity planning.

Organising and conducting Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Government Councils Elections is a huge and expensive exercise, particularly when it is funded in one year. The Strategic Plan is, therefore, designed to enable phased funding of key election activities, which will reduce funding pressure on Government and facilitate the Commission to conduct the elections in a smooth manner.

There are six (6) major Strategic Pillars on which this Strategic plan sits:

- i. Free, Fair and Transparent Elections
- ii. Institutionally Strengthened Election Management Body
- iii. Accurate and Accessible National Voters' Register
- iv. Effective and Comprehensive Voter Education, and
- v. An Efficient Service Oriented/Stakeholder Focused Election Management Body; and
- vi. Strengthened Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

As you will be hearing shortly from my technical team, under each of the above strategic pillars, the Commission has formulated Strategic Goals/Activities, Budget Estimates and attached Timeframes.

From the above, the Commission has extracted a detailed Road Map to the 2020/2021 General Elections.

The Roadmap will enable the various stakeholders in the electoral process to achieve the following:

- a. Better planning
- b. Better implementation
- c. Better activity coordination
- d. Timely implementation of scheduled electoral activities
- e. Transparency in implementation of programmes and activities.

The Roadmap is clearly a reminder to all stakeholders in the electoral process to start planning to ensure a smooth democratic process.

To achieve the above, the Commission appeals to Government, particularly Cabinet and the Legislature, to ensure timely amendment and/or enactment of the relevant electoral laws, including consideration of recommendations of the Supreme Court. This is important and urgent, because any amendment in electoral laws will have to take into consideration, the electoral roadmap, the procurement timeframes in accordance with PPDA requirements, the Supreme Court decision which affected the period for candidates' campaign meetings, and the impact on the overall elections budget.

Similarly, the Commission appeals to Government to consider and approve creation of new administrative units in a timely manner, so that the electoral budget is not destabilised. When this is not done, the impact on our preparations, and particularly on voter education, is obvious.

A soft copy of this Strategic Plan and the 2021 General Election Road map will be available on the EC website. (www.ec.or.ug).

Rt. Hon. Prime Minister, you will note that the cost for 2020/2021 General elections has significantly gone up compared to the 2015/2016 General elections. The factors for the significant increase and the cost drivers have already been ably explained by the Secretary in his opening remarks

Please note, the release of this Strategic Plan is in no way an authorization of the campaign activities for interested individuals, parties and organizations by the Commission. While Consultations are provided for in the law, campaigns must follow a programme approved and regulated by the Commission.

I urge Political Parties and Organisations to use the Plan and Roadmap to make adequate preparations for successful participation in the elections. I further urge the political parties to pursue peaceful co-existence before, during and after the electoral process.

The citizens of Uganda in general also have a part to play in ensuring successful implementation of this Plan and Roadmap. I, therefore, appeal to you, fellow Ugandans, to work with the Electoral Commission and ensure a smooth electoral process.

Last but not least, I want to thank the Government of Uganda which has always provided funding to enable the Electoral Commission to fulfil its Constitutional mandate. I wish also, in the same spirit, to thank the UNDP and other Development Partners who have been able to supplement Government by extending electoral support to the Commission.

My appeal is that Government continues to provide adequate funding in a timely manner to enable the Commission to undertake its constitutional obligations. I wish also to request Parliament to enact laws or amendments to electoral laws in time so as not to destabilize the Roadmap.

I strongly believe that WE THE PEOPLE of this bountifully gifted Country, united in the common pursuit of WHAT IS GOOD FOR THIS COUNTRY, can take it to greater heights through peaceful free, fair and transparent elections that guarantee peace and stability of our Nation, which is a prerequisite of economic transformation of our Country.

I thank you all for responding to our invitation on the launch of this important National event and look forward to constructive engagements hereafter.

For God and My Country,



Justice Byabakama Mugenyi Simon
CHAIRPERSON, ELECTORAL COMMISSION