



INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL AND BOUNDARIES COMMISSION

BRIEF OF THE CHAIRPERSON PRESENTED AT THE KENYA YOUTH FORUM ON THE “STATUS OF YOUTH PREPAREDNESS IN KENYA’S ELECTORAL PROCESS”

**BY MR. AHMED ISSACK HASSAN, EBS
AT HILTON HOTEL 3RD DECEMBER 2012**

**EMAIL: ahmedissack786@yahoo.com
(WEBSITE: <http://ahmedissackhassan.co.ke>)**

Ladies and gentlemen allow me to ask you one very simple question “how many of you have registered?”

Pre-Election Roles

1) Political and Electoral Awareness

Fellow young Kenyans: The youth need to appreciate politics as an integral part of society and to understand the place of politics in their lives

- ✓ What’s politics?
- ✓ Why politics?
- ✓ How does politics affect the youth at the individual and group level?

2) Seeking and Acquiring Adequate and Accurate Relevant Information

Knowing political and electoral rights and obligations as provided for in the Constitution of Kenya, 2010 and specifically Article 38 i.e. the right to:

- Form or participate in forming a political party

- Participate in the activities of a political party e.g. party recruitment and mobilization
- Campaign for a party or political cause
- Stand for elective office
- Be registered as a voter
- Vote in an election or referenda

Relevant information can be obtained from different avenues:

- IEBC: the website, www.iebc.or.ke, sponsored advertisements and programs
- Media (Radio, TV, newspapers: news, discussion programs, call-ins, advertisements etc)
- Social media: Facebook, Twitter, Myspace etc
- Political parties: official parties websites, party manifestos, political rallies
- Candidates (party and independent candidates)

3) Need to Be Informed Adequately

It is important for the youth to know and understand the following:

- The electoral calendar i.e. periods set aside by IEBC for key electoral activities e.g. voter registration, inspection of voter register, nomination as candidates etc
- Requirements for specific electoral activities such as voter registration, voting, vying for elective positions etc
- The venues for obtaining important documents or for exercising electoral activities e.g. National IDs, voter's card, voting etc
- Opportunities for redress where individual and group rights have been negated e.g. failure to acquire a National ID or a voters card

4) Role for the Youth during the Electioneering Period:

- i. *Acquiring National IDs:* the ID is a critical document that enables one to participate in electoral activities e.g. voter registration. Without it, the youth will be disenfranchised.
 - The youth must take the initiative to collect their IDs lying in the National Registration Bureau offices countrywide
 - Those who have attained 18 years and above and who are yet to acquire IDs must present themselves to relevant registration offices to initiate the process
 - The IEBC is liaising with relevant government departments to enable as many eligible youth as possible acquire IDs so as to progress with voter registration drive
- ii. *Registering as Voters:*
 - A voters acknowledgement slip is evidence of registering as a voter and therefore having one's name in the Register of Voters
 - Voter Registration commences today 19th November 2012 and will run for one month at designated registration centers
 - The Youth should take advantage of the period to visit the nearest center and register
 - Those who wish to transfer their registration/voting station for whatever reason will have the opportunity to do so
 - BVR: Biometric Voter Registration is the registration of voters using computers to capture eligible Kenyans' bio-data.
- iii. *Joining and Getting actively involved in Political Parties*
 - Political parties are an essential building block for a genuine and mature democracy

- Ideally, politics should be about competition for power around issues as identified and championed by competing parties
- The youth have a major stake in party politics as they provide the majority of membership
- If the youth desire to be nominated to contest various elective positions under parties, they must be active to merit recognition and party support
- The influence of parties in governance and politics is set to increase. For instance, nominees to Parliament and the county assembly governments will be based on a party list submitted by parties
- These lists will be based on priority. Therefore, it matters a lot the number that an individual holds within the party list submitted to the IEBC i.e. the higher up in the list the higher the chance of actually be nominated subject to the seats won by the party in elections
- Slots reserved for the youth in the Senate (**Article 98, (1) (c) and county assemblies (Article 177 (1) (c)** of the Constitution will likely go to those with visibility within respective parties
- Youth also need to join parties to be able to participate in party primaries where candidates to feature in the ballot are chosen
- The youth should also attend political rallies/campaigns as these are important forums for assessing parties and candidates strengths and therefore the basis for electoral choices.

iv. Standing as Candidates

- The youth can stand for any of the six elective offices either as nominees of political parties or as independents subject to meeting the qualifications specific to each position

v. Voting

- The youth should seize opportunity to influence political leadership in the country by individually voting and encouraging others to vote in elections
- Bad leaders are elected by those who do not vote
- The youth should also vote in party primaries where they are registered as members of political parties

vi. Participation in other electoral-related Activities

The youth can also participate in the following activities:

- Helping in civic and voter education either as volunteers or on hire by recognized groups e.g. the civil society
- Offering services as candidates/party agents
- Preaching peace and reconciliation especially in areas with potential for violence

5) Specific Roles for Youth in Promotion of Peaceful Elections

- Refraining from acts that jeopardize peace e.g. election violence, hate speech, incitement and negative stereotypes
- Reporting to relevant authorities individuals or groups whose actions threaten peace
- Setting good examples e.g. by avoiding negative ethnicity by word and deeds and supporting political parties and candidates on sober basis besides ethnicity and sectarian considerations
- Preaching peace and tolerance- politics do not have to be a do-or-die affair but rather a competition of ideas where the best wins
- Promoting reconciliation and harmonious existence especially in political violence flash points
- Denouncing individuals and groups who promote violence and harmful divisions as a political agenda

- Promoting post-election reconciliation e.g. accepting official results in electoral process- party primaries and general elections and demonstrating willingness to work with winners and losers in an election without widening political differences

Taking the first step: from this forum I hope the youth will make the following pledges to themselves and for and on behalf of the nationwide youth group

- a) That the youth are not the problem in Kenya.* They are the solution, if you give us the chance. It is true that young people-and their militancy, revolutionary energy, boundless idealism, courageous commitment- have been at the forefront of every significant democratic and revolutionary upheaval and transformation in every continent around the world- whether one is talking about the French, American or Russian revolutions or the national liberation struggles in **India and in Africa** were either in their twenties or thirties when they rose to take the reins of national political leadership in their respective liberation and anti-imperialist movements.
- b) That some may have been viewed as troublesome but that is more a product of what has been done to them rather than what they wanted to do.*
- c) That they will be the drivers of our own destiny.* No one will direct or should drive them in a negative way, but they should be able to accept wise guidance and counsel that leads to positive development
- d) That they should not wait for tomorrow to be leaders.* They should get it today by getting out in large numbers to register as voters.

IEBC Call and indeed the entire country looks forward to massive turnout of the youth in the voter registration exercise. Unless one is registered he/she cannot vote or be voted for.

There are all indications that the youth of this country are concerned and engaged to finding ways and means of making this country better. The youth who are gathered here today, are not the flagging out – slacking off lot who fail to show up when it matters. Let's demonstrate this as we come out in large numbers to register.

Thank you