Press Statement for Immediate Release


Following from our 1pm statement, NEW continued the observation of the voting, closing and counting of the re-run and bye-elections in the 5 election locations.

Polling was generally peaceful and orderly with isolated incidents in some polling stations. NEC staff across polling stations observed were professional and they made efforts to verify voters as a way to avert impersonation. Whilst in most polling stations the secrecy of the ballots was guaranteed, NEC Staff in all polling stations followed the procedures for closing and counting. Senior officials of NEC including the Chief Electoral Commissioner (CEC) were seen moving round polling stations to make on the spot checks. Social distancing especially at the close of polls and counting was not enforced. NEW commends the overwhelming participation of young people as NEC staff, party agents, observers and voters.

Police presence was observed in all polling stations in all 5 election locations and for the most part was professional in managing incidents that were security related.

NEW condemns the presence of unaccredited political stalwarts who threatened the peace of the electoral process especially in constituency 110. The use of vehicles with no registration or covered registration plates by the SLPP and APC continues to undermine electoral peace and security.

Findings:

Voting, closing and counting

- **Inking of voters:** In all polling stations observed, voters were verified and inked. Voters whose names were not found in the register were not allowed to vote. In some instances, ID cards were forged to impersonate as voters. NEW observed that these attempts were countered by the NEC staff.

- **Campaigning at polling stations:** 26.8% of NEW observers reported that there were campaign materials within polling stations and active campaigning outside polling stations and 0.8% reported some campaign materials found near polling stations, 72.4% reported no campaigning in the polling stations in Constituency 110, no campaigning in Constituency 078, but campaign posters seen near the polling stations in Ward 287 and Ward 348.

- **Voting Procedures:** In all the polling stations observed, voting procedures were followed. NEC staff provided needed help to pregnant women, women with babies, persons with disability and the aged.

- **Voter Education:** In all polling stations observed, NEW observers reported voting procedures were explained to voters.
• **Orderly Voting:** Voting for the most part in all polling stations was orderly and peaceful.

• In polling centre 15085, R.E.C Primary School, polling stations 3 and 4, Adonkia, NEW observed some confusion over the handling of the Result Reconciliation Form (RRF). The polling staff after counting placed the RRF into the ballot box and sealed it. Reopening the ballot box to retrieve the RRF resulted in confusion and warranted the security personnel to escort both the ballot box and election staff to the Adonkia police station for protection.

NEW has deployed observers in all tally centres and will report its findings accordingly.

*National Election Watch (NEW) is a coalition of local and international organizations in Sierra Leone with a common objective of supporting free, fair and peaceful elections.*

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