

NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS STATEMENT ON NPP CLAIMS ON VOTERS' REGISTER

18th August, 2015

Good morning ladies and gentlemen of the media,

Thank you for responding to our invitation this morning. We have called you here to discuss an important subject relating to a number of claims made by the New Patriotic Party (NPP) on the Electoral Register compiled for the 2012 elections.

The NPP at a press conference addressed by Dr Mahamadu Bawumia made five allegations bordering on the following;

1. Voter population as a percentage of the national population.
2. The validity of voter registration with NHIS cards
3. Minors on the voters register
4. Aliens on the register and;
5. Loss of confidence in the electoral system.

Ladies and gentlemen of the media we have prepared a comprehensive response to the allegations made by the NPP for submission to various stakeholders and partners to whom the NPP sent their complaints.

We wish however to engage the Ghanaian public through you in order to dispel what are clear falsehoods designed to cast doubts about the credibility of our electoral system. For the avoidance of doubt the claims made by the NPP lack merit and cannot constitute a basis for the compilation of a new voters' register. A cursory assessment of the claims reveal a desperate attempt by a party bedevilled by strife, deep division, violence and general lawlessness

to prepare the grounds for a rejection of their imminent defeat in the 2016 elections.

It is the latest instalment in a series of efforts to shift blame onto others whenever their incompetent and mediocre campaigns bring them defeat at elections. In our view, the press conference addressed by Mahamadu Bawumia bore an uncanny resemblance to the hoopla that preceded their filing of a petition at the Supreme Court purporting to challenge the validity of the victory chalked by President John Dramani Mahama and the NDC in the 2012 elections. We submit that these latest claims about the register are as fraudulent and frivolous as the Supreme Court case and we will demonstrate this presently.

1. Voter population as a percentage of the national population.

The NPP claimed at yesterday's event that Ghana's voter population of 14 million indicates a bloated register because the 2010 population and housing census conducted by the Ghana Statistical Service pegged the country's population at 25 million out of which 50% or 12.5 million were 18 years and above.

This argument is deeply flawed because the use of the 2010 population of 25 million as basis for determining what percentage of that population should be on the register ignores population growth between 2010 and 2012. The rate of growth of our population is estimated at 2.5 per annum. To estimate Ghana's population as of 2012 and proceed to determine if a 14 million voter population is accurate, there is the need to adjust the 2010 figure by 2.5% to know the population for 2011 and proceed to adjust that by 2.5% to arrive at the population of Ghana as of 2012. It is after this that one can make a valid and sensible comparison between the voter population as of 2012 and the national population in that same year. To compare

the voter population of 2012 to the national population as of 2010 assumes that our population has been static since the last census was conducted and that there has been no movement in the ages of those captured. It also assumes that no one has been born or died in between the time of the census and the time of compilation of the register.

Furthermore we are at a loss as to what logic informed the NPP's decision to hold the Statistical Service's population figures as accurate and doubt the accuracy of the Electoral Commission's figures given that the mode of capture of both sets of data differ considerably. In view of the fact that all stakeholders in elections in Ghana participate in the compilation of the voter's register and the fact that the Electoral Commission deployed latest biometric technology in the compilation same, we are inclined to believe in the accuracy of the EC's figures.

Dr Bawumia's sudden belief in and reliance on data by the Ghana Statistical Service to back his claims evinces clear duplicity given his well-documented attacks on the same institution whose figures he has constantly sought to bastardize. While the NPP is known to practice the politics of convenience, this will surely go down as a new low in shallow opportunism.

The singling out of constituencies in the Volta Region for accusations of extraordinary increases in numbers of registered voters between 2008 and 2012 is reminiscent of the disrespect and disdain with which the NPP has treated persons of certain tribal and ethnic extraction.

2.The validity of registration with NHIS cards

Regulation 1(3) of the Public Elections (Registration of voters) Regulations 2012 Cl. 72 states as follows:

“A person who applies for registration as a voter shall provide as evidence of identification one of the following:

- (a) a passport;**
- (b) a driver’s licence;**
- (c) a national identification card;**
- (d) a National Health Insurance card;**
- (e) an existing voter identification card; or**
- (f) one voter registration identification guarantee form as set out in Form One of the Schedule that has been completed and signed by two registered voters”**

Subsequent to this a Supreme Court ruling made the continuous use of the NHIA card for the purpose of identification invalid. The NPP is therefore arguing that since this regulation was used in the compilation of the 2012 register, there exists the possibility that a number of voters registered by means of NHIA cards and such persons should have their names expunged from the register.

This argument is flawed because what they are calling for is retroactive legislation which is not permitted by the 1992 constitution or for that matter any proper-functioning democracy. More tellingly this demand is speculative in that the NPP would be hard pressed to furnish the Electoral Commission with a list of such persons as no such list exists.

Expunging the names of persons who registered with NHIA cards in 2012 even if they were to be identified is not the solution to such an occurrence. In the event that this were to happen, affected persons would have to be given the opportunity to use the remaining valid

forms of identification to register as failure to do so would amount to disenfranchising them.

Simplistic calls have been made by the NPP for the compilation of a new register as way of addressing this problem. We beg to differ on this point as well. One of the forms of identification for registration under Regulation 1(3) of CI 72 is an existing voter identification card. This means that if the registration of a person by means of an NHIA card were to be declared invalid for which reason a new register is to be drawn up for the 2016 elections, such a person would be entitled by law to be registered if he produced a 2012 voter identification card which he obtained by means of an invalid NHIA card. The perceived invalidity of his registration would therefore not be have been cured.

3. Existence of minors on the register

We are aware that limitations exist in the ability of the biometric registration system to determine the age of persons who apply to register for elections. During the compilation of the 2012 register there were accusations and counter accusations among the parties over the registration of minors in their various strongholds. After the process, pictures of alleged minors were shown to all parties. Though the pictures suggested that the individuals were minors, the existing legal framework does not permit the expunging of the names of such persons in the absence of documentary evidence.

The NPP is also suggesting that the way to get over the registration of minors who were captured in the 2012 register is to compile a new register for 2016. This also flies in the face of reason. We are of the view that any minor who was at least 14 years old in 2012 would have attained the age of 18 years by 2016 and would be qualified anyway if a new register were to be compiled. A new register would

only serve to open the way for the registration of more minors since we do not have age-sensitive technology that will be used to capture new registrants.

4. Aliens on Register

The claim by the NPP that persons from Togo and Cote d'Ivoire are on the Ghanaian electoral register is not only fraudulent but also constitutes a gratuitous attack on the people of the Volta and Brong Ahafo Regions. As far as we are concerned, this claim is a continuation of the NPP's long-standing affinity for tribal politics through which they associate people from certain ethnic and tribal extraction with wrong doing and heap unsavoury commentary on them.

We strongly dispute the authenticity of the so-called Togolese register which the NPP based its porous arguments on. They have a track-record of concocting lies and fabricating evidence like they did at the Supreme Court in a bid to discredit their political opponents.

A close examination of the pictures presented as evidence of registration by Togolese and Ivorians shows a clear case of deceptive manipulation of photographs taken at different times. In many cases the two pictures presented as those of one person bear no resemblance to each other. More importantly the pictures the NPP purports to be samples of a Togolese register do not bear the names of the supposed voters, neither does it bear the age or gender of the supposed voters.

We are convinced beyond any doubt that the NPP deliberately manufactured this lie to justify unfounded calls by them and their surrogates for a new voter's register. We find it curious that days after the NPP in a bizarre press statement claimed that some persons

were going round collecting voter ID cards of unsuspecting Ghanaians with promises of giving them loans and jobs, such dubious claims about the voters register should be made.

Another example of the ridiculousness inherent in the NPP's claims is that the Ghanaian electoral register was compiled in 2012 while that of Togo was compiled in 2015. On what basis can it be said that three years after elections have been held in Ghana voters whose nationality the NPP questions on the basis of a fictitious 2015 Togolese register, influenced the outcome. Is it the case that the NPP is saying that Ghanaians rather registered in Togo to influence the outcome of their elections.

Though we are convinced that these claims are false, even if we were to assume that there was merit in them, elaborate provisions exist in our electoral laws to address issues of unqualified persons who are found on the voter's register. These do not include the compilation of a new register.

Regulations 16 to 25 of CI72 makes provision for challenging the qualification of applicants during the registration and objection after the registration of voters.

If the NPP was sincere about ensuring a credible register and not motivated by malice they would have availed themselves of these provisions in the law to effect the necessary corrections. That they failed to do so is the clearest indication yet that this is only an elaborate ruse devised to raise political tensions to mask the intractable disunity that has afflicted them for months.

This baseless accusation is reckless and has the potential to undermine relations between Ghana and her neighbours. It also seeks to exploit the well-known historical and familial ties that exist between persons living on either side of our borders with our neighbours for partisan and sectarian gain. Worse still, it seeks to cast aspersions on the integrity of our noble compatriots living along those borders.

5. Supposed loss of confidence in Ghana's electoral system

The New Patriotic Party citing a report of the Centre for Democratic Development (CDD), also claimed that the outcome of the frivolous election petition has resulted in the waning of public confidence in our electoral process. This they say is further justification for the need for a new register. This is the most absurd argument that can be made by any political party.

We are unable to come to terms with the thinking behind such a stance. It is incongruous that a party that goes to court with a petition challenging the validity of the results of the 2012 elections and having same dismissed by the Supreme Court would turn round and say that the dismissed petition has resulted in the loss of confidence of the electoral system.

The Supreme Court upheld the results of the 2012 elections and that confirmed its authenticity. Even if we were to accept this insipid argument that public confidence in the electoral system has gone down, it would be due to the lengthy and persistent falsehoods the NPP has peddled about state institutions in a bid to shift blame for their disastrous performance in the elections of 2008 and 2012. The surest way to stem this imaginary slide in confidence in the EC is for the NPP to put an end to their vile propaganda and war of attrition against just about every state institution concerned with elections.

The Supreme Court, the Electoral Commission, prominent traditional rulers and a host of others have all come under attack by the NPP for no justifiable reason.

If these claims are designed to prepare the grounds to hold the country to ransom after their impending defeat at the polls then it has failed because the Ghanaian public is wide awake and is in a position to distinguish between well-grounded and legitimate contributions geared towards further improvement in our electoral system and vacuous claims calculated at shielding the leaders of the NPP from blame when they lose the 2016 elections.

If the NPP is desirous of finding an antidote to the string of poor showings at the polls then it can be found in sober reflection on how to pull that party from the brink and halt its rapid descent into chaos and internecine feud. They must select a viable Presidential candidate, craft a convincing message and build a strong cohesive party machinery to prosecute a credible campaign. The present state of affairs in that party where confusion, mistrust and incessant squabbles reign supreme cannot be masked by baseless fault-finding of the sort engaged in by Dr Bawumia yesterday.

We in the NDC on the other hand are poised to make meaningful contributions to ensure further gains in our electoral processes and systems even as we rally firmly behind President Mahama in his efforts to implement policies and programs that are changing lives and transforming Ghana.

We thank you for coming once again.

You may now ask questions

