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INTRODUCTION

This Strategic Plan of the National Electoral Commission (NEC) is principally focused on our activities for 2001. Accordingly, as a technical document, the plan sets out our specific goals and objectives to be achieved in the shorter-term. Upon careful consideration of the current situation in Sierra Leone, we have included a proposed timeline for the conduct of the presidential and parliamentary elections. However, this Strategic Plan is a "living plan" to be revised periodically by the Commission. We have also defined our longer-term vision and guiding principles, which will underpin the performance of our functions.

The Strategic Plan is a result of discussions held by the Commission and its staff at a retreat in January 2001. To prepare for the retreat, the Commission appointed a Strategic Planning Committee, comprising the Commissioner for the Northern Region, the Executive Secretary, the Deputy Secretary, the Acting Principal Elections Officer and all Senior Elections Officers. The Manager of the IFES Project in Sierra Leone supported the work of the Committee.

To focus the discussions at the retreat, the planning committee developed and distributed an "Organisational Assessment Survey" to all NEC staff and Commission members. The survey was designed to provide baseline information about what the respondents felt about the NEC as an institution, and how it operates. The survey was also used to identify the issues to be discussed, how the NEC should develop as an institution and the principles that should guide its activities.

Additionally, all participants for the retreat received a manual entitled *Strategic Planning for Election Organisations* written by Joe Baxter, IFES Senior Adviser for Election Administration and IFES Project Manager in Nigeria. This manual provided all participants with background information on the nature of

strategic planning, together with step-by-step guidance on how an election management body could produce a strategic plan.

The four-day residential strategic planning retreat was conducted from 23-26 January 2001 at Javouhey House, Leicester Peak. The 31 participants at the retreat were: the Chief Electoral Commissioner and Chairman, the four other Commission members, the Executive Secretary, the Deputy Secretary, the Acting Principal Elections Officer, all Senior Elections Officers, all Elections Officers, two Assistant Elections Officers, the Publicity Officer, the Utility Officer, the Staff Superintendent (representing all clerks and support staff), the Sub-Accountant and the Storekeeper.

The retreat was facilitated by Joe Baxter, IFES; Dr. K. Afari-Gyan, Commonwealth Special Adviser to NEC and Chairman of the Electoral Commission of Ghana; and Simon Clarke, IFES Project Manager in Sierra Leone.

The aim of the retreat was to lay the foundation for the compilation of the Strategic Plan. The participants first developed a Vision Statement, Mission Statement and Guiding Principles for the NEC. Following that, the participants were divided into sector groups on: 1) Institution Building; 2) Organisational Outreach; 3) Voter Education; 4) Voter Registration; and 5) the Electoral Process. Each group was chaired by an Electoral Commissioner and, in one case, the Executive Secretary. The NEC Chairman, Afari-Gyan, Baxter and Clarke acted as facilitators.

Each sector group identified the strategic issues to be analysed, developed Goals and then defined the Objectives required to reach those goals, all within the framework of our Mission, Vision and Guiding Principles. The sector groups then reported back to the plenary, where the whole group discussed the presentations. At the end of the retreat, the Planning Committee was charged with the responsibility of amalgamating the sector groups' recommendations and finalising the Strategic Plan for the Commission's approval.

In addition to the Mission and Vision Statements and the Guiding Principles, the Strategic Plan presents the Strategic Issues that affect the work of the Commission and identifies five Strategic Goals and 30 Strategic Objectives for achieving the goals. Based on these considerations, the Commission will develop detailed operational plans and budget estimates by mid-April 2001.

The Commission is determined to achieve every goal and meet all the objectives that we have set. In order to succeed, we will need the co-operation of the Government of Sierra Leone and our international partners/donors, particularly in the areas of funding and technical assistance. We will also consult with the political parties, civil society and the Sierra Leonean people and solicit their full collaboration towards the achievement of our goals.

This Strategic Plan was developed with the assistance of the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) through funding provided by the British Department for International Development (DFID) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). We are grateful for their continued support to the Commission.

BRIEF HISTORY AND PROFILE OF THE NEC

Sierra Leone has always had a Commission responsible for the management of election since

independence in 1961. Even during periods of military rule, when the members of the Commission were removed, the technical and support staff remained in place, thus making it possible to build a reservoir of considerable experience in election administration within the institution.

In 1994 the military government, the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC), established the Interim National Electoral Commission (INEC, which subsequently conducted the 1996 presidential and parliamentary elections for a return to constitutional rule. The present National Electoral Commission (NEC) replaced the INEC in March 2000. Like its predecessors, the NEC is made up of a Chief Electoral Commissioner, who serves as the Chairman, and four other members, corresponding to the four administrative regions into which Sierra Leone is divided (Northern, Southern and Eastern Provinces and the Western Area).

The President appoints all the members of the Commission, in consultation with all registered political parties and subject to the approval of Parliament. The tenure of office of the commissioners is five years, and their terms and conditions of service are prescribed by Parliament. The President may remove a member of the Commission from office only on grounds of inability to discharge his or her functions or misbehaviour.

The functions vested in the NEC by the 1991 Constitution include:

- The conduct of all public elections and referenda;
- The registration of voters;
- The demarcation of constituencies with the approval of Parliament; and,
- Making regulations for the efficient performance of its functions.

The Constitution guarantees the independence of the Commission in the performance of its functions by stating that it "shall not be subject to the direction or control of any person or authority."

Civil servants, recruited through the Public Service Commission (PSC), staff the NEC. An executive Secretary to the Commission, a serving senior public officer, exercises direct supervision of the Commission's staff. Besides its head office in Freetown, the Commission also has four regional offices, an office in each of the twelve districts of the country and a sub-office in the rural part of the Western Area. An Elections Officer administers the district office under the direct supervision of a Senior Elections Officer of the respective region. A member of the Commission oversees each of the four administrative regions.

The NEC has the following units: administration, voter registration, voter education and public relations. Proposals have been made to restructure the Commission for a more efficient performance of its functions.

MISSION STATEMENT

The National Electoral Commission (NEC) is a public institution, whose mission is to organise, conduct and supervise all public elections and referenda, register all eligible voters, demarcate constituency boundaries and make regulations for the efficient performance of its functions.

The NEC also seeks to impartially serve all stakeholders in the electoral process, and to undertake voter education programmes for the citizens of Sierra Leone as a means of promoting and sustaining democracy and good governance.

VISION STATEMENT

Our vision of the National Electoral Commission (NEC) in the future is that of an independent, credible and well-resourced institution which promotes democracy and good governance by continually administering elections in such a manner that the results are acceptable to all.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In the attempt to attain our mission and vision, the principles that guide NEC are:

INDEPENDENCE

The Commission will ensure that it operates freely in its own best judgement, without taking directives from or being controlled by any person or authority.

TRANSPARENCY

The Commission will be open at all times in dealing with all stakeholders in the electoral process.

CREDIBILITY

The Commission will endeavour to win the confidence and trust of all Sierra Leoneans and the international community through the quality of its services.

IMPARTIALITY

The Commission will always be non-partisan and fair in all its activities.

PROFESSIONALISM AND DEDICATION

The Commission will endeavour to have well-trained, professionally competent and self-confident staff, dedicated to the delivery of trustworthy elections.

INTEGRITY

The Commission will carry out its activities in an honest and truthful manner, and will take all reasonable measures to prevent wilful wrongdoing by its officials.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The Commission will take full responsibility for its actions and will always be answerable to the people of Sierra Leone and to its partners.

STRATEGIC ISSUES

During the strategic planning retreat, the participants deliberated extensively on issues of strategic importance to the general well being of the NEC as an institution, and to the holding of the next

presidential and parliamentary elections. Obviously, the two concerns are closely interwoven, and they are treated in that way in the strategic areas identified below.

Realistic Election Timeframe: By the time of the retreat, it was clear to the Commission that it would not be possible to hold the presidential and parliamentary elections by the end of March and June 2001, respectively, as originally expected. Three factors affected the election timeframe. First, given that sizeable portions of the country are still under the control of rebels and constitute no-go areas, it was reasonable to expect that the executive and legislature would extend their tenures within the law, as indeed did happen. Secondly, critical matters like the kind of electoral system to be used (the single member constituency system or some form of proportional representation) and consequently whether fresh demarcation of constituencies will need to be done, had still not been determined. Thirdly, to be able to prepare well for a major election requires adequate resources and the NEC simply hasn't had the resources to do so.

The timeline for achieving our strategic objectives clearly indicates in a systematic fashion that the earliest time for the presidential and parliamentary elections could be held would be in December 2001. It is to be emphasised, however, that even this timeframe is based on the following assumptions:

- It will be possible to hold the elections in a violence-free atmosphere.
- A decision on the electoral system to be used will be made in good time for the Commission to institute the appropriate arrangements and educate the electorate.
- Adequate resources will be made available to the Commission to begin and steadily continue to do the necessary preparations for the elections.

Funding: Given the country's current financial state, the government alone cannot fund the impending elections; so, donor assistance will be critical. In this regard, we are most appreciative of the support we have so far received from some friendly countries and organisations, principally in the form of technical assistance. We are hopeful that, as we gear up towards the elections, more support will be forthcoming from more of our friends to enable us to contribute to laying a good foundation for democracy and good governance. We are keenly aware that this calls for the timely preparation of a realistic budget for the elections.

New Voters Register: There is a clear need to undertake fresh registration of eligible voters, if the Commission is to achieve fair and credible elections. Preferably, the registration should be supported with a voter identity (ID) card to facilitate the identification of voters. In any case, due consideration needs to be given to the timing of the registration exercise, as well as the methodology and the technology for doing it. Also, for purposes of compiling a comprehensive register of all eligible Sierra Leoneans, special attention must be paid to internally displaced persons, the disabled and refugees. At the time of making this strategic plan, a worrying problem was the lack of access to the parts of the country under rebel control.

Human Resources: Considerable know-how about the conduct of elections already exists in the Commission. However, for the Commission to achieve a high level of delivery of election services, the existing human resource capacity needs to be augmented in various ways, with special attention to the inclusion of women.

Physical Infrastructure: As a result of the wanton destruction of life and property in the country's civil war, the Commission stands in urgent need of rehabilitating or reconstructing, furnishing and equipping its damaged offices in the regions and districts and acquiring suitable storage facilities nationwide for

election materials.

Transport and Communication: Lack of vehicles and other modes of transportation and lack of an efficient communication network linking the head office to the regions and districts are factors that seriously hinder efficient implementation of the Commission's programmes and activities.

Dialogue and Consultation: The NEC fully recognises the need to build support for the entire election process through dialogue and consultation with various stakeholders. This is made even more imperative against the backdrop of the civil war, which has ravaged and divided our country. We are determined to broaden our dialogue and consultation with a view to building understanding and consensus about electoral matters.

STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

On the basis of the strategic issues outlined above, the following five goals and the accompanying objectives have been set for the Commission to strive to achieve during the strategic plan period.

STRATEGIC GOAL 1

CONDUCT OF ELECTIONS: To organise, conduct and supervise all public elections and referenda, in such a transparent manner that the results are acceptable to all stakeholders. In this regard, the Commission will endeavour to make the Sierra Leonean people view elections as a conflict management mechanism.

Objectives:

- By 28 February 2001, the final draft of the Strategic Plan will have been completed.
- By 31 March 2001, the operational plans will have been developed.
- By 31 March, the UNDP will have been contacted to discuss the establishment of a Trust Fund.
- By 31 March, an inventory of the Commission's office space, equipment and facilities at the regional and district levels will have been conducted.
- By 15 April 2001, the budgeted estimates for the presidential and parliamentary elections and any run-off election will have been developed.
- By 31 May 2001, the laws and regulations for all elections will have been reviewed.
- By 31 May 2001, election day materials to be procured locally and internationally will have been identified.
- By 30 June 2001, a decision concerning the electoral system to be used for the forthcoming elections should have been made.
- By 31 July 2001, the methods, procedures and voting instruments will have been designed, with a view to ensuring accessibility to and by all Sierra Leoneans, including the disabled.
- By 31 October 2001, the nomination of candidates will have been completed.
- By 31 October 2001, election day materials will have been procured.
- By 30 November 2001, election day materials will have been transported to the regional and district offices.

- By 30 November 2001, election day personnel will have been recruited and trained, with special emphasis on the inclusion of women and the disabled.
- By 31 December 2001, the presidential and parliamentary elections and any presidential run-off election will have been conducted.
- By 31 January 2002, election materials will have been retrieved and stored.

STRATEGIC GOAL 2

REGISTRATION: To produce a credible and up to date register of all eligible Sierra Leoneans by using appropriate technology and cost-effective methods, and to revise the register as required by law.

Objectives:

- By 30 April 2001, the methods, procedures and registration instruments will have been designed, with a view to ensuring accessibility to and by all Sierra Leoneans, including the disabled.
- By 31 May 2001, registration materials to be procured locally and internationally will have been identified.
- By 31 July 2001, registration materials will have been procured.
- By 31 August 2001, registration personnel will have been recruited and trained, with special emphasis on the inclusion of women and disabled.
- By 31 August 2001, registration materials will have been transported to the regional and district offices.
- By 15 September 2001, voter registration will have started.
- By 30 November 2001, the final register of electors will have been completed.

STRATEGIC GOAL 3

RESOURCE CAPACITY AND RESTRUCTURING: To acquire adequate human and material resources and ensure their continuous maintenance and upgrading through cooperation with other organisations and the training of personnel; and to establish functional divisions in the Commission.

Objectives:

- By 31 March 2001, the two regional offices in Bo and Kenema and the Western area sub-office will have been rehabilitated.
- By 30 April 2001, the proposed staff structure and improved conditions of service will have been developed and the documents submitted to the appropriate authorities.
- By 30 June 2001, additional permanent staff will have been recruited and appointed, with special emphasis on the inclusion of women and the disabled.

- By 30 September 2001, necessary technical assistance for the forthcoming elections will have been identified and acquired.
- By 31 January 2003, the rehabilitation and reconstruction of all affected NEC offices will have been completed.
- By December 2005, staff quarters will have been constructed nationwide..

STRATEGIC GOAL 4

VOTER EDUCATION: To educate Sierra Leoneans with a view to achieving maximum registration of voters, high voter turnouts, the reduction of invalid ballots, and generally to empower them to understand their roles, rights and responsibilities and to make informed choices at elections.

Objectives:

- Through 30 September 2001, target groups will have been identified and appropriate messages and methodologies will have been designed.
- By 30 April 2001, voter education on the postponement of elections and NEC's state of preparedness will have been conducted.
- Between 1 March and 31 May 2001, voter education on the importance of elections and on the issues concerning the choice of the electoral system will have been conducted.
- Between 15 June and 31 October 2001, education on voter registration will have been conducted.
- Between 1 August and 30 September 2001, voter education on candidature will have been conducted.
- Between 1 October and 30 September 2001, voter education on the voting process will have been conducted.

STRATEGIC GOAL 5

CONSULTATION: To meet regularly with political parties, civil society and other stakeholders with a view to building consensus on the electoral system and process; and to institute internal consultation and communication as a means of enhancing institutional performance.

Objectives:

Throughout the election period and when necessary, NEC will:

- Once a month, meet with the National Consultative Committee to discuss issues of common concern. Similarly, in normal times, and where feasible, Commissioners in charge of the provinces

will hold consultative meetings in their respective areas.

- Once a month, meet with its senior staff to review the progress of work as a means of improving the Commission's decision-making, operations and communications.
- Collaborate with non-governmental and other civil society organisations, particularly in voter education.
- Hold discussions with UNHCR, UNAMSIL, the donor community and embassies, and other appropriate agencies.

TIMELINE OF OBJECTIVES (February 2001 — Post-Election Period)

OBJECTIVES	Feb 01	Mar 01	Apr 01	May 01	Jun 01	Jul 01	Aug 01	Sep 01	Oct 01	Nov 01	De
1. Final Draft of Strategic Plan											
2. Consultation: Once a month, NEC to meet with National Consultative Committee, and where feasible, hold consultative meetings in the provinces											
Once a month, NEC to meet with its senior staff											
Collaboration with non-governmental and civil society organisations, particularly in voter education											
3. Rehabilitation and reconstruction of all affected NEC offices											
4. Discussions with UNHCR, UNAMSIL, donor community and embassies, and other appropriate agencies											
5. Identification and acquisition of necessary technical assistance											
6. Rehabilitation of two regional offices in Bo and Kenema and the Western area sub-office.											
7. Contact with UNDP to discuss establishment of Trust Fund											
8. Conduct inventory of NEC's office space, equipment and facilities at the regional and district levels.											
9. Recruitment and appointment of additional permanent staff, with special											

emphasis on the inclusion of women and the disabled.											
10. Development of operational plans.											
11. Development of budget estimates for presidential and parliamentary elections and any run-off election											
12. Development of proposed staff structure and improved conditions of service and submission of these documents to the appropriate authorities											
13. Decision on the electoral system to be used for the forthcoming elections											
14. Voter Education: Identify target groups and design appropriate messages and methodologies											
On postponement of elections and NEC's state of preparedness											
On importance of elections and electoral system											
On voter registration											
On candidature											
On voting process											
15. Review of laws and regulations for all elections											
16. Design of methods, procedures and registration instruments, with a view to ensuring accessibility to and by all Sierra Leoneans, including the handicapped											
17. Identification of registration and election day materials to be procured locally and internationally											
18. Procurement of registration materials											
19. Procurement of election day materials											
20. Design of methods, procedures and voting instruments, with a view to ensuring accessibility to and by all Sierra Leoneans, including the disabled											
21. Recruitment and training of											

registration personnel, with special emphasis on the inclusion of women and the disabled												
22. Transportation of registration materials to regional and district offices												
23. Start of voter registration exercise												
24. Nomination of candidates												
25. Transportation of election day materials to the regional and district offices												
26. Recruitment and training of election day personnel, with special emphasis on the inclusion of women and the disabled												
27. Production of final register of electors												
28. Conduct of presidential and parliamentary elections and any run-off election												
29. Retrieval and storage of election materials												
30. Construction of staff quarters nationwide												

NB: Local Government and Paramount Chiefdomcy election timetables are to be determined and are the included in the above timetable of objectives.

NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION

Members of the Commission

Mr. Walter O. F. Nicol	Chief Electoral Commissioner and Chairman
Alhaji Mohamad Musa King	Electoral Commissioner - Western Area
Mr. Francis Lissa Hindowa	Electoral Commissioner - Southern Region
Mr. Joseph Buakei Aruna	Electoral Commissioner - Eastern Region
Mr. John Bohbor Paine*	Electoral Commissioner - Northern Region

STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Members of the Strategic Planning Committee are noted by an asterix (*) next to their names.

Participants from the NEC

(Note: All Commission Members participated in the Strategic Planning Retreat)

Mr. David S. Kai-Rogers*	Executive Secretary
Mr. Alimamy Lahai Mansaray*	Deputy Secretary
Mr. Stephen Aiah Mattia*	Acting Principal Elections Officer
Mr. Mohamed N'fah Conteh*	Senior Elections Officer
Mr. Mohamed Kemoh Mansaray*	Senior Elections Officer
M. Jaiah Samuka	Senior Elections Officer
Mr. Mulai Pat Sheriff	Publicity Officer
Mr. Timothy Nelson Bangura	District Elections Officer
Mr. Sheku Cedric Johnny	District Elections Officer
Mr. Ibrahim B. S. Kalleh	District Elections Officer
Mr. Santigie Kargbo	District Elections Officer
Mr. Sahr Samuel Matturi	District Elections Officer
Mr. Martin P. Moriwai	District Elections Officer
Mr. Joseph Robert Vamboi*	District Elections Officer
Mr. Abu Sampha Kamara	Assistant District Elections Officer
Mr. Abu Alpha Bakarr	Acting Asst. District Elections Officer
Mr. Ibrahim I. Bundu	Acting Asst. District Elections Officer
Mr. David J. Momoh	Acting Asst. District Elections Officer
Mr. Issa Saspo Bangura	Temp. Asst. District Elections Officer
Mr. David A. Kabia	Storekeeper
Mrs. Fatmatta B. Coker	Sub-Accountant
Mrs. Fatmatta Z. Kargbo	Staff Superintendent
Mr. Alimamy Dumbuya	Utility Officer

Other Participants

Mr. Simon Clarke*	Project Manager, IFES/Sierra Leone
Dr. K. Afari-Gyan*	Commonwealth special Adviser and Chairman, Electoral Commission of Ghana
Mr. Joe Baxter	Senior Adviser on Election Administration and Project Manager, IFES/Nigeria

