

Inter-Religious Council of Uganda



Religions for Peace

THE INTER-RELIGIOUS COUNCIL OF UGANDA (IRCU) ON THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

BRIEFING PAPER 2

Theme: Working Together For Peaceful, Free and Fair Elections

February 4th 2011

1.0. Introduction

I bring you warm greetings from the Council of Presidents of the Inter Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU). Allow me on behalf of the National Task Force on Peace and Conflict Transformation to welcome you.

2.0. Purpose of the Meeting

This meeting is intended to update key stakeholders on the latest efforts of the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda regarding non-violent, peaceful, free and fair elections. This briefing will particularly focus on the planned weekend of nation-wide prayers and peace rallies; the joint message issued by the Council of Presidents (COP) on the electoral process; and, the recently passed Institution of Traditional or Cultural Leaders Bill 2010. This is the second such briefing since this initiative was launched in November last year.

3.0. Appreciation

We wish to express our gratitude to all those who have cooperated with us in our efforts towards non-violent, peaceful, free and fair elections. Special thanks go to the Electoral Commission, the Presidential Candidates, Chief of Defense Forces, the Uganda Police, Uganda Human Rights Commission, the media, the Democracy and Good Governance Group of Ambassadors, and our partner Civil Society Organizations. This cooperation is assurance that together we shall achieve our goal of non-violent, peaceful, free and fair elections.

4.0. Joint Message by IRCU Council of Presidents

As we come closer to the 18 February 2011, IRCU is heightening its message and campaign for peace. The IRCU COP is convinced that it is their cardinal duty and moral obligation to remind all the key actors in the electoral process to learn from our turbulent history and ensure that the elections are permeated by strict observance of rule of law and a spirit of peace, justice, fairness and tolerance. We are persuaded that there can be no tranquility and national peace in our country without respect for the power, will and decision of the people through credible and violence-free elections.

The IRCU COP has found it necessary to speak to the country during this crucial moment when Ugandans are preparing to elect leaders at different levels of governance. The IRCU COP is, therefore, releasing a joint message to all the people of Uganda who seek and strive for peaceful, violence free, secure and safe, and free and fair elections. Copies of this joint message are inserted in your files.

The joint message is about working for violent-free, peaceful, free and fair elections, and addresses some of the critical areas that need our attention, for example;

- The role of religious leaders;

- The credibility of the Electoral Commission and the electoral process;
- The role of political parties and their candidates;
- The role of Police and other Security Agencies;
- Militia groups;
- The media and freedom of expression;
- The announcement of election results; and,
- Electoral corruption.

5.0. The weekend of National Prayers for the Generals elections

In pursuit of a non-violent, peaceful, free and fair electoral period, the IRCU COP has declared the weekend of National Prayers for General Elections on 11th, 12th and 13th February 2011;

- On 11th February 2011, prayers will be conducted in Mosques, and during overnight prayers in Pentecostal, Charismatic, Evangelical, Born Again and other churches;
- On 12th February 2011, prayers will be held in Seventh Day Adventist Uganda Union churches; and,
- On 13th February 2011, prayers will be conducted in Churches of the Uganda Orthodox Church, Roman Catholic Church, Church of Uganda, Pentecostal, Charismatic, Evangelical and Born Again Churches;

On 13th February 2011 at 2.30 p.m., the climax, Peace Marches and Rallies involving all religious leaders and political contestants will be held in designated locations in all 18 IRCU regions. There will be one major rally here in Kampala, at Kololo Airstrip.

The IRCU COP is encouraging the faithful and religious leaders to focus their prayers during the designated weekend and throughout this season on violence-free, peaceful, free and fair elections.

6.0. Guidelines on the announcement of provisional results

The Constitution of Uganda mandates the Electoral Commission to announce the official results from the elections. According to Article 61 (d), the Electoral Commission should ascertain, publish and declare in writing under its seal, the results of elections. We continue to urge all political actors and media to respect this constitutional order. However, as we have observed, the Electoral Law provides for other actors including the media to announce results based on official results from polling stations, provided they clarify the context of the results and clearly indicate that they are only provisional awaiting final results by the Electoral Commission.

Our consultations with the Media Council, the Broadcasting Council, Directorate of Information and National Guidance, Media Proprietors and Editors, and other stakeholders have all pointed to the need for the Electoral Commission to issue clear and definitive guidelines on the announcement of provisional results and the circumstances under which media houses and other actors could be constrained from announcing provisional results. The IRCU COP has urged the Electoral Commission to provide clarification on this matter.

7.0. The Traditional and Cultural leaders' Bill 2010

On February 1st 2011, the Parliament of Uganda passed into law the controversial Institution of Traditional or Cultural leaders Bill 2010. This was done despite plea from the IRCU Council of Presidents on the 31st January 2011 to Parliament to stay debate of the Bill until satisfactory consultations have been made with key

stakeholders, and in any case after the General Elections. The Council maintains its position, that while a law regulating Traditional and Cultural Leaders is essential in pursuance of Article 246 of the Constitution of Uganda, the timing is suspect and the process and some of its provisions are not conciliatory. The IRCU COP is, therefore, appealing to the President not to sign the Bill into law.

Signed for and on behalf of the IRCU Council of Presidents

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