

# Inter-Religious Council of Uganda



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

### **BRIEFING PAPER 4**

**Theme: Working Together For Peaceful, Free and Fair Elections**

**February 15<sup>th</sup> 2011**

#### **1.0. Introduction**

I bring you warm greetings from the Council of Presidents (COP) 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 to the 4<sup>th</sup> IRCU briefing.

#### **2.0. Purpose of the Meeting**

This meeting is intended to update key stakeholders on the latest efforts and position of the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda regarding non-violent, peaceful, free and fair elections. This briefing will particularly focus on the role of the IRCU during the 2011 electoral process, specifying matters that need action at this stage of the electoral process. Our understanding is that

Elections are a process and not just an event; therefore, we will also share with you some of the initiatives planned after the general elections.

### **3.0. Appreciation**

We continue to express our gratitude to all of you for cooperating with us in our efforts towards non-violent, peaceful, free and fair elections. Special thanks go to the Chief Justice and Principal Judge for making time to meet with the COP yesterday; Electoral Commission and the Uganda Police Force, in particular the Inspector General of Police, for creating space in their very busy schedule to interact with us, as we have sought to bring to their attention various concerns in regard to the management of the Electoral Process; the Presidential Candidates and Chief of Defense Forces, for meeting with the COP; the Uganda Human Rights Commission for collaborating with us in working with other stakeholders; the Media and Broadcasting Councils for working with us on the meeting with media proprietors and editors; the Democracy and Good Governance Group of Ambassadors and the Deepening Democracy Programme for financial support; our partner Civil Society Organizations for collaborative action; and, the media. This cooperation is an assurance that together we shall achieve our goal of deepening democratic governance in our beloved country Uganda.

### **4.0 The role of IRCU during the General Elections**

As you may be aware, the IRCU Council of Presidents put in place mechanisms to coordinate and promote peace-building, mediation, reconciliation, and dialogue among stakeholders during and after the electoral process. As part of this process, the Council has met critical actors and stakeholders over the last

two months, to hear from them their concerns as well as share with them perspectives from the religious leadership. Among the various meetings held include:

- The launch of the National Task Force on Peace and Conflict Transformation by the Council of Presidents of the Inter Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU) on 18<sup>th</sup> November, 2010.
- The follow-up national conference to the September 2009 under the theme *Facing 2011 with Hope and Constructive Action* in December 2010 at which regional task forces and elders' forums were formed;
- Launch of regional task forces and elders forums in December 2010 – January 2011;
- Meetings with the Electoral Commission in December 2010 and January 2011;
- Meeting with all opposition presidential candidates in January 2011;
- Meeting with the Partners for Democracy and Good Governance (PDG) Group of Ambassadors in January 2011;
- Meeting, in collaboration with Uganda Human Rights Commission, with the civil society organizations monitoring human rights during the electoral process in January 2011;
- Meeting with the Police and other security agency heads in January 2011;

- Meeting, in collaboration with Media and Broadcasting Council, with media house proprietors and editors in February 2011;
- Consultative meeting with UN/UNDP on building peace infrastructure in Uganda and civil society organizations in February 2011;
- Meeting with His Excellency the President, the NRM-O Presidential Candidate in February 2011;
- Weekend of National Prayers and Peace Rallies for the General Elections in February 2011; and,
- Meeting with the heads of the Judiciary in February 2011.

Out of these meetings have come various ideas and proposals for promoting violence-free, peaceful, free and fair elections.

## **5.0 Critical Matters at this Stage of the Electoral Process**

The IRCU COP acknowledges all the timely efforts that the various stakeholders and actors have put in place to ensure violence-free, peaceful, free and fair elections. Although the election of the President and Members of Parliament is just three days away, and local government leaders less than one month away, there are actions which need to be undertaken to further enhance confidence in the electoral process and improve on efficiency on the polling days:

- I. Voter Education for the polling day;
- II. Announcement of Provisional results;

- III. Police Uniforms to be used on the polling day;
- IV. The role of the Community Crime Preventers;
- V. Involvement of other Security Agencies;
- VI. Engagement with vigilante groups; and
- VII. Peaceful demonstrations;

### **I. Voter Education for the Polling Day**

Notwithstanding the publicity that the Electoral Commission has engaged in to educate the electorate and the general public about the electoral process, the EC needs to continue with heightened publicity on the requirements, laws and regulations pertaining to the Polling Day. In particular, the IRCU COP urges the EC to educate the electorate on how far people can wait after they have cast their votes on polling day and what 'assisted voting' entails among others.

### **II. 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 and referenda. The COP continues to urge all political parties and other stakeholder agencies to ensure that they respect this constitutional order and instead deploy their respective party agents at every polling station and tallying centers up to the national level in order to ensure transparency and accuracy. The COP is also urging the Electoral Commission

to publish guidelines for the media and political parties on the announcement of provisional results.

### **III. Police Uniforms to be Used on the Polling Day**

The IRCU COP wishes to thank the Inspector General of Police for making time to display to the media the four (4) uniforms to be used during the elections to include: the general duties khaki uniform; the field force unit blue camouflage uniform; the anti-terrorism black; and, the traffic police white uniform. IRCU COP urges the Police to intensify the awareness of the uniforms to be used on the Polling day such that the electorate and general public countrywide are informed.

### **IV. The role of the Community Crime Preventers**

The IRCU COP continues to express gratitude to the Inspector General of Police for clarifying the issue of Community Crime Preventers. The IGP clarified that community policing is a mechanism through which the police and the communities jointly work in partnership to prevent crime. The purpose of community policing is to encourage police-citizen partnership in the course of crime prevention. The basis for community policing in Uganda is both legal and doctrinal. Legally, the Constitution enjoins the Police under Article 212(d) to cooperate with the public, other security organs and the population generally in the performance of its functions. It is also the duty of the citizen under article 17(f) of the Constitution to co-operate with lawful agencies in the maintenance of law and order.

The IRCU COP continues to urge the Police to reinforce the awareness of the Community Crime Preventers initiative such that suspicions from amongst the

masses are no more. The COP further urges the public to report to the appropriate authorities any public officers and politicians who may be abusing this scheme.

## **V. Involvement of other Security Agencies**

Again, the IRCU COP acknowledges that the national security arrangement under the constitution mandates the Police to work with other security organs on day-to-day activities which also apply to the general elections. However, the IRCU COP urges the Police to further clarify to the electorate and the general public under which circumstances such standby forces from other security agencies would be called upon for help during and after the elections.

## **VI. Engagement with Militia Groups**

From the last IRCU briefing we held, we touched upon the issue of militia groups that have allegedly been formed by different political parties and actors to counter electoral malpractices. We urge the Police to make a distinction between groups created for mobilization from those that are militia. The IRCU COP in their joint message on the forthcoming elections appeal to all the leaders to dissociate themselves from the latter. The IRCU COP urges the leadership behind these groups to come out and have dialogue meetings with a view to seeking to address grievances peacefully. The IRCU COP still continues to urge the Police and the Electoral Commission to work hard at instilling confidence in such persons and groups in order to reverse this negative trend in our electoral process.

## **VII. Peaceful Demonstrations**

The IRCU COP recognizes that after the elections, there may be two forms of peaceful demonstrations: those celebrating victory and those mourning their loss. The IRCU COP urges the public to be calm, whatever the circumstance. The Council also urges the Police to publish guidelines on how public order will be managed in case any of such demonstrations take place.

### **6.0 Moving forward**

The IRCU COP recognizes that the forthcoming elections will not deal with all the questions and conflicts that the country faces. The Council would, therefore, like to recommend the following to the political contestants and the wider public:

- Political contestants who are dissatisfied or aggrieved by the management of the Electoral Process and would like to challenge the outcomes, to utilize legally established channels of dispute resolution. We are encouraged that the Judiciary is adequately prepared to judiciously and expeditiously, within the prescribed time-frames, dispose of election petitions;
- Political contestants and the wider public are also encouraged to utilize other alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. The IRCU has devised a mediation mechanism - the Elders Forums. Renown and respected elders of our society have been identified as mediators during this electoral process should there be need. Each of the Elders Forum has the support of trained mediators from the Makerere University Peace and Conflict Studies Center. Mediation as used in law is a form of alternative dispute resolution

through which a third party assists two or more parties to negotiate their own settlement.

- The IRCU COP is in the process of organizing a ‘post-election conference’ scheduled to take place in April 2011, during which critical stakeholders and actors will be given the opportunity to dialogue on matters pertaining to the 2011 and the future of this country.

## **7.0 Conclusion**

We have hope that the elections will be well managed to pave way for more constructive engagements on the future of peace, democracy and good governance in our country. We wish you all and our country God’s blessings during the general elections.

### **Signed for and on behalf of the IRCU Council of Presidents**

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**Rt. Rev. Dr. D. Zac Niringiye**

**Chairperson, National Task Force on Peace and Conflict Transformation**

**INTER-RELIGIOUS COUNCIL OF UGANDA**

**Tel: +256 772 653 977**

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**Joshua Kitakule**

**Secretary General**

**INTER-RELIGIOUS COUNCIL OF UGANDA**

**Tel: +256 782 551 108**