



**PRESENTATION OF THE OFFICIAL THEME FOR THE 2025 GENERAL  
ELECTION**

**AND**

**AN UPDATE ON THE COMMENCEMENT OF NATIONAL REGISTRATION OF  
VOTERS**

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY JUSTICE ANNABEL MTALIMANJA,  
CHAIRPERSON,**

**16<sup>th</sup> July 2024.**

**Lilongwe.**

## Salutations

- My Fellow Commissioners
- the Chief Elections Officer, Mr. Andrew Mpesi
- Management and staff from MEC, present
- Members of the Press
- Ladies and gentlemen present here and all Malawians that are watching and listening to us out there

Greetings,

The Commission is holding this national update to apprise stakeholders and the public on the state of preparedness for the General Election that will be held on 16 September 2025, whereby Malawians will go to the polls to elect the President, Members of Parliament and Ward Councillors. As we speak today, there are 427 days to the polling day. With time fast counting down to this important date, it is critical for the Commission to be giving regular updates on key milestones and sharing pertinent information with stakeholders so that they can be aware of the processes and be equipped to effectively participate in the electoral process.

As such, during this briefing I will present the official Theme for the 2025 General Election, announce the date for the official launch of the elections, and also give an update on the state of preparedness for the elections and for this specific time, focusing on the programme for the fresh Voter registration.

## **Theme for 2025 General Election**

Ladies and gentlemen, the Commission has designated the Theme for the 2025 General Election as: "**Promoting Democratic Leadership Through Your Vote**".

This Theme is a powerful reminder to all Malawians of the foundational role that voting plays in a democracy. As it is often emphasized, voting is not only a right but also civic duty that both empowers and obligates citizens to influence the direction of their country. It is not any other ordinary activity. By casting a vote, citizens actively participate in the democratic process, ensuring that their voices are heard and their preferences are considered in the governance of their nation. This theme emphasizes the importance that each individual vote has in shaping the leadership that will guide our communities and the Nation forward.

In addition, the Theme "**Promoting Democratic Leadership Through Your Vote**" serves as a call to action for all eligible voters to participate in the upcoming General Election. Voter turnout is a key indicator of the health of a democratic electoral process, and higher participation rates lead to more representative and legitimate outcomes. This Theme further reminds citizens that their participation is essential for the success and stability of democratic governance and in this way is aimed at encouraging citizens to take an active role in the democratic process, ensuring that the elected leadership truly reflects the will of the people. The Commission is very optimistic that with active involvement of other electoral stakeholders, it is possible for the 2025 General Election to register a higher

turnout than in the past elections. The Theme is a clarion call for all Malawians to register and vote in the upcoming General Election.

As a Commission, we are saying “**your vote**” because it is your free will choice. As a voter you have the freedom and right to choose whoever you want to serve you without anyone intimidating or imposing their decision on you. Your vote should count and will count in deciding who wins an election.

Henceforth, the Commission will reference this Theme in all its subsequent communications regarding the 2025 General Election. We also request that all electoral stakeholders should, to the extent possible, reference, distribute and make use of this Theme widely in all election-related programmes and activities.

### **Launch of 2025 General Elections**

The Commission will launch the General Election on 2 August 2024 in Lilongwe. At the launch event, the Commission will engage with stakeholders and update them on the range of preparations conducted to date for the General Elections as well as all the remaining major activities up to and including polling and results announcement dates. In keeping with the Commission’s standing commitment to transparent and wider stakeholder involvement, we shall invite to the launch all registered political parties, Civil Society Organisations, traditional and faith leaders, academia, media, government departments and agencies, among others.

## **Demonstration to stakeholders and Pilot voter registration**

My fellow Malawians, the Commission has planned for meetings with leaders of political parties and their members, the media, Development Partners, Civil Society Organisations and ICT experts to demonstrate how registration of voters for the 2025 General Elections will be done using the Election Management Devices (EMD). These meetings are planned to start from 31 July 2024 and run up to 16 August 2024.

The Commission will in the same month of August this year also conduct pilot voter registration in selected sites across the country. The Pilot Voter registration process is intended to test the devices, solidify their usability and agility and draw lessons before the commencement of voter registration.

I should say, with emphasis, that everyone who will participate in the pilot voter registration will also be required to register as a voter when the actual voter registration starts. Leaders of political parties will be advised accordingly regarding their roles in this exercise.

## **Fresh Registration of Voters for 2025 General Election**

My fellow Malawians, as you will recall, the Commission conducted constituency and ward boundary re-demarcation exercise. The National Assembly endorsed the new wards and constituencies. The creation of the new constituencies and wards practically means that the constituencies and wards used in 2019 elections were dissolved. This has resulted in a complete change of electoral map (geography,) comprising constituencies and wards across the country in terms of their size, location,

boundaries, number and in turn the number of eligible voters. The Commission, therefore, resolved that for the 2025 General Election, it will construct a fresh voters' register. This effectively means that everyone has to go and register as a voter to participate in the 2025 General Election.

As a result of the review of Constituency and Ward boundaries, starting from the 2025 General Election, the country will have 229 Constituencies, up from 193 and 509 wards, up from 462. The review of boundaries exercise therefore automatically moved some voters and centres from one constituency or ward to another. Theoretically, this means that voters that registered in 2019 need to be allocated to their new wards and constituencies. However, this cannot be achieved effectively through transfers alone. Fresh registration of voters would therefore accord the Commission an opportunity to have a voters' register that has a lot of benefits, some of which I will mention, later in my statement.

You will further recall that on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2024, the Commission published in the Gazette, descriptions of the new constituency and ward boundaries. The Gazette further published a total of 6,344 voter registration centres, up from 5,002 in 2019. This, therefore, means that over 1,000 centres, or over 20 percent of the centres will be new and will need to be populated with voters. The 6,344 centres were identified after an exhaustive and inclusive consultation process with stakeholders in the Councils.

Allow me at this juncture to mention that following the publication in the Gazette of the list of centres as aligned to the new wards and

constituencies, the Commission received a number of observations and question on the names and location of the centres and some centres that were apparently skipped from the list. The Commission is currently in the process of resolving the issues and drawing a final list of voter registration centres, that will eventually evolve into polling centres on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2025. On account of this on-going exercise, the final figure of centres is likely going to change slightly, either upwards or downwards from the 6,344 that were published. The Commission will issue in the Gazette, a corrigendum of the voter registration centres.

The advantages of a fresh voter registration are that:

1. it will eliminate deceased voters (those that would have died before the commencement of registration) in the voter register thus ensuring accuracy and integrity of the register;
2. It will give true figures of registered voters in the respective centres, wards and constituencies, as those who moved to different locations will register where they are currently residing. This will be good for planning purposes for procurement and deployment of staff;
3. There will be no mass transfers to relocate voters that have been affected by the Review of Constituency and Ward Boundaries, since people will register afresh in their rightful centres;
4. Cost associated with polling staff will be actual as the allocation of these resources will be based on real figures of registered voters.

## **Who is Eligible to Register?**

Section 77 of the Constitution which provides for universal franchise read together with section 3(1) of the PPLGE Act states that:

*“A person shall be eligible to register as a voter in an election if he or she—*

- a) is a citizen of Malawi or, if not a citizen, has been ordinarily resident in the Republic for seven years;*
- b) has attained the age of eighteen years or provides proof that on or before the polling day, he or she shall have attained the age of eighteen years; and*
- c) is ordinarily resident in an area, or was born in that area, or is employed or carries on business in that area”.*

Therefore, for 2025, we can put it that every Malawian who was born before or by 16 September 2007 will be eligible to register as a voter.

## **Phases for voter registration**

My fellow Malawians, please recall that the Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Government Elections Act (PPLGEA), among others, specifies in:

- i. section 4(1) that Voter registration shall be conducted within the year of holding a general election;



- ii. section 4(3) that Registration shall be conducted in a minimum of seven days and a maximum of 14 days and the mandate to determine the period is given to the Commission;
- iii. section 10 (1) that Voter registration shall take place in centres established by the Commission, in constituencies and wards;
- iv. section 7 that an eligible person shall only register once, for them to vote in an election;

Accordingly, the Commission has resolved to implement voter registration in three phases, each lasting 14 days, as specified by section 4(3) of the PPLGE Act.

The Commission will be announcing specific dates for each phase through radio and television stations, newspapers and other web and Internet based platforms. We therefore wish to our appeal to all political parties and civil society leaders to help inform the public about these dates.

Political party leaders, aspiring candidates and civil society organizations should further be informed that the Commission will from 1 August 2024, start receiving for accreditation names of representatives and observers for the voter registration process.

### **Proof for identification during voter registration**

The Commission wishes to state that the right to vote accrues to every person as an individual. As such there are steps that eligible persons must take to claim and exercise it. The first step is to register as a voter. In accordance with Section 12 of the Presidential, Parliamentary and Local

Government Elections Act, a person who is eligible to be registered as a voter in an election shall, as proof of eligibility, present in person to a registration officer, proof of his or her national registration issued by the National Registration Bureau. In terms of the National Registration Act, this is the National ID.

The Commission wishes to emphasise that its mandate does not extend to registration of citizens. This remains in the purview of the National Registration Bureau. The Commission, just like other institutions, both public and private, is a beneficiary of the national document. The National ID issued by the Bureau is solely used to facilitate the registration of eligible voters in keeping with the statutory requirement in the PPLGE Act. The Commission, therefore, urges all eligible voters to ensure that they have duly registered with the National Registration Bureau prior to registration for voting. For those whose national IDs expired, they should not despair as they will be able to register as voters as government resolved that expired IDs should be valid until 1 January 2026.

### **Preparation For Voter Registration and migration to EMDs**

In preparation for voter registration, the Commission has planned to migrate from the Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) Kits to the Election Management Devices (EMDs). To this end and as it has been regularly updated to stakeholders, the Commission has procured a total of 6,500 gadgets and power banks. These have already been procured and delivered. The EMDs are portable state of the art devices which will be used to conduct voter registration, transfer of voters and inspection of the

voters' register. The introduction of the EMDs is part of the strategy of the Commission to modernize and enhance efficiency in electoral processes.

The Commission is also in the process of recruiting temporary staff in readiness for the voter registration exercise. Shortly we will be conducting interviews and training in readiness for voter registration.

### **Accreditation of CSO for voter education**

According to the Malawi Electoral Commission Act, section 21(B), a person shall not conduct voter education without being accredited by the Commission. In that effect, the Commission had issued a call for applications for accreditation from CSOs. As of now, we have finalized the accreditation process which had to involve physical verification of some of the applicants just to ensure that we do not accredit institutions that exist on paper only. For 2025 General Elections the Commission has accredited 116 civil society organisations.

### **Misinformation, disinformation and fake news**

At this point, the Commission wishes to express its deep and growing concern with the potential for prevalence of disinformation and fake news as we prepare for the 2025 General Election. Disinformation and misinformation, whether spread innocently or maliciously, can undermine the democratic process and erode public trust.

Our appeal is to all leaders, political parties aspiring candidates and the general citizenry to be conscious and avoid spreading wrong information. We urge everyone to verify the accuracy of information before sharing it,

especially on digital platforms and social media forums. The Commission will work diligently to provide accurate and timely information to the public to ensure that stakeholders and the public have clear understanding of the Commission's programmes and decision positions. While we may undertake measures to counteract false electoral narratives, we urge stakeholders and the general public to also take an active role to preserve the democratic process. Should anyone come across any information purported to be from the Commission, always pause check to verify with us through our designated information outlets before forwarding or posting. If you do not find it on any of our pages, treat it with caution and be circumspect with how you proceed with placing such information.

## **In Conclusion**

The Commission is calling upon all eligible Malawians to prepare for the voter registration process. Your participation is crucial for a democratic and representative election. Please ensure that you stay informed about the registration dates and locations. If you do not have the national ID go and register now to have one. Those without proof of registration with the National Registration Bureau will not register as voters.

As we move closer to the election date, we will continue to work diligently to address emerging issues and challenges and also ensure that the electoral process is efficient, transparent, and credible.

We thank electoral stakeholders and the Malawian public for their continued support and engagement. Together, we can ensure that the

2025 General Election is a success and a true reflection of the democratic will of the people.

I thank you all for listening.

Thank you, members of the media, for coming.

God bless Malawi.