



**SPEECH BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE MALAWI ELECTORAL  
COMMISSION, JUSTICE ANNABEL MTALIMANJA DURING LAUNCH OF  
THE 2025 GENERAL ELECTION**

**02<sup>nd</sup> August 2024.**

**Lilongwe.**

## **SALUTATIONS**

First, I greet you.

Ladies and gentlemen, on July 16, 2024, the Malawi Electoral Commission was in this place to launch the theme we have chosen for the upcoming elections. As a reminder, the theme is **“Promoting Democratic Leadership Through Your Vote.”** This is a call from the Commission everyone to take up our individual responsibility to help advance the democracy of our nation through voting. Therefore, this theme will guide all our election-related activities. Today, we have also launched a song that has been composed based on this theme.

Today, we have gathered to begin preparations for the presidential, parliamentary, and local government elections scheduled for September 16, 2025.

We greatly appreciate your presence and the attention of those who are not in this room but are following the proceedings through the radio, television and online.

As part of the election preparation process, I would like to explain about the election process so that everyone can participate according to the procedures required during this period. The process starts with everyone understanding what will happen and when it will happen. We recognize that a well-managed election requires

everyone to be well-informed. Therefore, for a political party, organization, or individual cannot prepare adequately without knowing what is happening and when it will happen. We are committed to sharing all our activities and plans with all stakeholders, as we are doing today. Prepare for frequent meetings to share all election-related plans with you.

Just as we encourage your participation in this meeting, we hope you will continue to engage actively in all upcoming election-related activities. Successful elections depend not only on the preparation by the Malawi Electoral Commission but also on the involvement of all stakeholders.

### **Eligibility To Register as a voter**

Ladies and gentlemen, as we go towards elections, the Commission will conduct a fresh voter registration exercise. Everyone will have to register as a voter. According to Section 77 of the Constitution and Section 31 of the Presidential, Parliamentary, and Local Government Elections Act, it is explained that:

“A person shall be allowed to register for elections if:

- a) they are a citizen of Malawi, if not a citizen, they must have resided in the country for at least seven consecutive years;

- b) they are eighteen (18) years old or will be eighteen by the time of voting;
- c) they live, were born, or work in the area.

Therefore, in preparation for the 2025 elections, any Malawian citizen born on or before September 16, 2007, will be eligible to register to vote.

### **Voter Registration Phases**

Fellow Malawians, let us remember that the law governing Presidential, Parliamentary, and Local Government elections states that:

- i. Section 4(1): Voter registration shall take place one year before the General Election;
- ii. Section 4(3): Registration shall last at least seven days and not more than fourteen days, with the MEC given the power to determine the duration of the registration period;
- iii. Section 10: Voter registration shall take place at designated centers in constituencies and wards;
- iv. Section 7: Every eligible voter shall register only once in the voter register.

Based on these laws, the MEC has established that voter registration will occur in three phases, each lasting fourteen (14) days, in accordance with Section 4(3) of the Presidential, Parliamentary, and Local Government Elections Act.

The MEC will announce the dates for each phase through various channels, including groups, radio, newspapers, our Facebook page, and the internet. We urge all political parties and Civic Society Organisations leaders to help inform people about this schedule.

Specifically, we want to inform political party leaders, those intending to run for office on a party ticket or as independents, CSO leaders, and other stakeholders that from August 6, 2024, we will begin accepting the names of party monitors who will oversee the voter registration process. The locations where the names should be submitted will be announced clearly.

### **Voter Registration Procedure**

In preparation for the 2025 General Election, the fresh voter registration will use new gadgets. When voter registration starts in your area, go to the center in your ward or constituency with proof of your citizenship.

At the first desk, show your proof of registration, and the voter registration officer will verify your identity. Then, you will be registered in the voter's roll by entering your information into the gadget. You will place two fingers from your right hand and two from your left hand on the voter registration machine, and a photograph of your face will be taken. To ensure everyone can vote comfortably, you will be asked if you have any disabilities that may require special assistance during voting. You have the right to disclose this or not.

The machine will then print two receipts:

- The first will be affixed to the manual voter roll, and you will be required to sign or thumbprint it.
- The second will be given to you as your voter registration certificate.

We would like to encourage every Malawian to register and keep their voter registration certificates safe.

### **Proof for Voter Registration**

Ladies and gentlemen, in accordance with section 12 of the Presidential, Parliamentary, and Local Government Elections Act, every person registering on the voters' roll is required to provide proof of citizenship registration with the National Registration Bureau (NRB). Therefore, I urge all those who have not yet registered for citizenship to do so now and not wait until the voter registration period arrives. For those whose citizenship cards are lost or misplaced, they should go and obtain a replacement card to register on the voters' roll. Those whose citizenship cards have expired should not worry because they will be allowed to register on the voters' roll with the same card even if its validity period has expired.

Let me clarify that as additional proof, the NRB also provides a registration slip that contains the national ID number if it is satisfied that the person is eligible for registration. This receipt is given to those who are approved but the card has not been issued, those who lost their card, but the replacement has not been issued, or those whose card expired, and the replacement has not been issued. Therefore, all three types of proof are valid for use. I will reiterate that the valid proofs are:

1. National ID card
2. Expired National ID card
3. Paper issued by the NRB with the national ID number

### **Preparing for the Fresh Voter Registration**

Ladies and gentlemen, to ensure that the voter registration process runs smoothly, MEC has purchased new elections management devices. These machines will help us maintain a high-quality, error-free register. We will also use these gadgets for other election-related tasks such as verifying names on the voter register, transferring polling locations, candidate information, and election results.

Currently, we are in the process of recruiting staff to work on the elections, and their training will begin soon.

I would like to mention that the MEC has selected several areas where we intend to test the functionality of these machines. We have already tested them at the office, but we want to conduct trials in various areas to identify any location-specific requirements before the actual registration period begins. We have chosen sites in cities, rural areas, hot regions, cold regions, and mountainous and hard-to-reach areas. The sites will be communicated to all stakeholders before the commencement of the exercise.

### **By-Elections in Limbuli and Mikongo Wards**

Ladies and gentlemen, in Mikongo Ward in Mangochi and Limbuli Ward in Mulanje, there are currently no representatives because their councilors have passed away. According to the laws of this country, there is no deadline for holding councilor elections as there is for Members of Parliament. The law states that the MEC should not hold a by-election for a Member of Parliament if less than one year remains before the next general election. While the electoral commission is busy preparing for the 2025 elections, it considers it better for those interested in contesting to focus on the upcoming general election. Therefore, in these two wards, no special election will be held.

### **Voter transfer process for 2025 General Election**



Ladies and gentlemen, according to the new electoral laws, after the voter registration period, MEC will provide an opportunity for those who wish to change their polling locations. Please note that changes to polling locations will occur before the verification of names in the voter register.

The MEC will set dates in December 2024 to January 2025 for those who want to request a change in their polling locations. This process will take place in several stages, and its details will be announced through groups, on the radio, in newspapers, and on our Facebook page and website.

Please be aware that after this period, there will be no other opportunity for a person to change their polling centre.

### **Announcement of nomination fees**

Ladies and gentlemen, according to the law, the MEC is required to consider and announce the fees that those wishing to run for elections must pay. This announcement must be made six months before the election date.

For the 2025 General Elections, the Commission will announce the nomination fees in November 2024. The law does not provide any other method for determining the fees to be paid by the candidates, leaving all authority to the Commission.

Candidates or their representatives will need to pay the fees before collecting or when collecting the nomination papers, and these fees are non-refundable. The nomination papers will be available as follows:

- Local Government Elections: April and May 2025 from the district presiding officer at the TDC
- Parliamentary Elections: April to June 2025 from the district council offices and from district presiding officer at the TDC
- Presidential Election: April to June 2025 from the MEC headquarters

### **Participation in election by persons with disabilities**

Ladies and gentlemen, elections can be free, fair, and credible if all groups of people are given equal opportunities to participate in the process, such as registration, voting, and contesting in the election. MEC has put in place measures to ensure that no one fails to participate in the election due to disability. To help everyone according to their disability, MEC has implemented a procedure to identify if people have any disabilities during voter registration. This is unprecedented. We believe this will help all people with disabilities to go to their centers to vote and get everything they need to cast their votes properly.

### **Involvement of Women and Youth in Elections**

Previous voter registers and numbers have shown that women and young people are the largest demographic. Let us, therefore, take an active role by contesting in the election. MEC is asking parties as well as the Civil society organizations to encourage and civic educate women and young people to take up positions in the upcoming election.

### **Election as a Tool for Peace**

Ladies and gentlemen, elections must be held to ensure the progress of democratic governance. It is sad to see in other countries that the time of elections is marked by worsening situations, such as wars or violence. The MEC is therefore asking every party leader and official to take the 2025 Election as a tool to bring peace and harmony to our country.

As MEC, we know it is likely there will be complaints or issues to be raised with the Commission. So we have procedures in place to receive and address any complaint but our plea is that the complaints should be submitted through the appropriate channel.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Commission established the Multiparty Liaison Committees (MPLCs) in every council as a platform for engagement with political parties and also for resolving disputes before they are submitted to the Commission.

The Commission also uses the National Elections Consultative Forum (NECOF) to engage with stakeholders at national level. Through NECOF, the MEC provides details of everything happening during the election.

## **Conclusion**

Lastly, I would like to conclude by thanking everyone who came today, and we wish that the 2025 elections to be credible.

Reaching this far, allow me to declare the 2025 General Election launched.

God bless our country Malawi.

Thank you very much.