



Press Statement: The EISA International Election Observation Mission concerned about pre-election political rhetoric and intimidation

For Immediate Release

Monrovia (June. 12, 2023): The Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) International Electoral Observation Mission (IEOM) has noted with concern the use of insulting, demeaning and antagonistic language in ongoing public statements and pronouncements by high-level state and political party leaders and the hostile political rhetoric which has entered the public discourse in recent weeks.

EISA-IEOM, which is currently observing the pre-election period through its long-term observers in the counties, has noted the increasing use of inflammatory verbal exchanges in public forums. EISA-IEOM is mindful that the official campaigning period has not yet officially launched, and already the political discourse has seen intemperate utterances and exchanges between contesting persons. While open and unencumbered speech are a critical function of democratic elections, EISA-IEOM was encouraged to witness the recent commitment made by all competing political parties to restraint through the Farmington River Declaration signed by 27 out of 31 political parties on 4 April 2023. In the context of an open and peaceful election, it is regrettable when the right to freedom of speech is used to incite fear, anger or mistrust, which is against the spirit of the Declaration and what the parties have committed to.

EISA-IEOM reminds all parties and public office bearers that their words resonate widely within Liberian society. EISA-IEOM is aware of reports about mobilization of party supporters in response to public statements and encourages all political actors to recognize the unintended consequences that may accrue from their actions. The mobilization of supporters in protest during the biometric voter registration process, notably in Montserrado County, and to disrupt public gatherings are examples of these. The right to protest is a fundamental democratic freedom, but EISA-IEOM is concerned about the conduct reported during several recent incidents, which were described as intimidating and threatening. At all times, protests and demonstrations should occur within the law and in a peaceful and non-threatening manner.

EISA-IEOM call on the leadership of all political parties and their supporters, media, civil society organizations, traditional elders, and all other stakeholders to continue to promote a climate of tolerance, and national unity throughout the electoral process, and encourage their supporters to refrain from political violence, threats and intimidation. To achieve this, the



IEOM calls on the political leaders to take clear positions to denounce all acts of intimidation, threats, and violations of the code of good conduct, as per their commitments under the Farmington River Declaration.

The Mission, therefore, encourages all political parties to commit themselves to democratic principles by calling on their supporters to firmly reject all forms of violence and to refrain from any act or language that could incite their supporters to violent or illegal behavior to ensure a conducive pre-election environment. Election processes that are marred by intimidation and violence will have diminished integrity.

As the NEC commences exhibition exercises of the Provisional Registration Roll (PRR) on June 12, 2023, EISA has been encouraged to witness the ongoing and constructive engagement of Liberian citizens in the process of registering to cast their votes, and the openness and transparency of the National Electoral Commission in providing detailed, disaggregated figures regarding the preliminary Voter's Roll.

EISA-IEOM will continue to observe the 2023 electoral process adhering to internationally accepted principles for election observation. The Mission is diligently tracking all phases of the Election. Long-Term Observers have been on the ground since the end of April 2023, assessing the process against regional and international norms as well as national legislation. EISA has a longstanding commitment to democracy in Liberia and is honored to conduct its International Election Observation Mission in support of the electoral process.

About EISA:

Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA). EISA is a continental not-for-profit organization located in Johannesburg, South Africa, and Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire with field offices in the Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Madagascar, Niger, Liberia Chad, and Sudan. EISA has continental and sub-regional programs. EISA strives for excellence in the promotion of credible elections, citizen participation, and the strengthening of political institutions for sustainable democracy in Africa. EISA is a partner to USAID Liberia and is implementing a project called International Election Observation Mission (EISA-IEOM) for Liberia's 2023 elections. The project is meant to assess the integrity of the Liberia 2023 Presidential and Legislative elections through the deployment of an EISA Election Observer Mission:

For further information on this project, please visit: www.eisa.org

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