



ACCEPTANCE SPEECH BY IEBC CHAIRPERSON

WAFULA CHEBUKATI

AT THE SUPREME COURT OF KENYA ON 20TH JANUARY, 2017

Hon. the Chief Justice David Maraga

Hon. the Attorney General Githu Muigai

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am greatly humbled today as I accept the position of the Chairperson of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC). This acceptance is tempered with gratitude and humility because it is indeed an honour and privilege to be vetted, nominated and appointed to lead this great institution.

IEBC, as we all know, plays a critical role in strengthening democracy in our country and it is my commitment to ensure that democracy works and serves the interests of all. Therefore, I pledge to serve Kenya as a country and Kenyans with utmost dedication, faithfulness and integrity as expected of all public and state officers under our constitution.

I would like to sincerely thank His Excellency the President Uhuru Kenyatta for the appointment, the Justice and Legal Affairs Committee for their vetting and our National Assembly for their resounding approval of my nomination. Thanks to the shortlisting and interviewing panel for their confidence in my candidature.

I also recognize all Kenyans who supported me especially through prayers. To all of you I say *Asante Sana*.

To the wonderful people of Kenya- I applied for this position out of my own desire to give back to my beloved country. **In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, “The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”** Thus, I offer my professional, academic and administrative service to this country.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I further assure you that under my leadership at the IEBC, the Commission will exercise impartiality and independence as provided for under Section 26 of the IEBC Act, and I quote, **“Except as provided in the Constitution, the Commission shall, in the performance of its functions, not be subject to the direction or control of any person or authority but shall observe the principle of public participation and the requirement for consultation with stakeholders”**. In this regard, I pledge to work with all Stakeholders within the law to ensure that we have a Free, Fair and Credible Election come August 8th this year.

As a country, we have gone through past polls, at times characterized by violence, voter apathy and unending electoral disputes. As a collective responsibility, we must put a stop to the connection between elections and electoral malpractices; the worst of them all: electoral violence. As a Commission, we shall strive to do what is right for this great country. Those found culpable of election offences shall face the full force of the law.

My first commitment is to the people of Kenya who hold the sovereign power as provided for in Article 1 of our Constitution. This power is exercised through your vote. Fellow Kenyans, your vote counts. **As Abraham Lincoln said: “The ballot is stronger than the bullet.”** My assurance is to all

those seeking elective offices that the Commission will be an impartial umpire who will monitor their political activities and firmly enforce the electoral laws.

Our short-term goal is to deliver a free, fair and credible election which is 200 days away. Therefore, we must hit the ground running by ensuring that all the processes and systems involved are in place. Our long-term goal is to transform the processes and systems of IEBC to make them sustainable to gain public trust and confidence. The Commission will pay special attention to an in-depth review and status update of its Strategic Plan with a view to tap new ideas and suggestions from the new Commissioners who bring on board diverse skills and competencies acquired locally and internationally- herein lies the strength of this commission.

My Commission shall operate an open door policy. Those stakeholders with current and future disputes against the Commission's operations are encouraged to discuss the same with us with a view to finding an amicable solution instead of going to court as their first option. I also appeal to the Judiciary to fastrack current court cases which directly affect the tight timelines set for the preparation of the August 8th General Election.

The process of selection of the Commissioners and I was borne out of intervention by religious leaders following street protests, violence and death. This led to the formation of a multi-sectoral forum that led to mediation culminating to our appointment. Thus, the journey was spiritually driven. In this regard, I have invited the said religious leaders to attend a prayer breakfast on Monday 23rd January to pray for the new Commission before we embark on the onerous task ahead of us. I also call upon Kenyans to pray for this team as we proceed on this journey.

As I conclude I urge us all to play our respective roles as we gear up for the August 8th elections. IEBC shall play its role in managing the elections; aspirants and politicians should campaign peacefully and observe the code of conduct; Kenyan people- register and vote.

As voter registration continues, may I remind my Fellow Kenyans that your vote counts.

Thank you and God Bless Kenya.

Thank you,