

PRESS STATEMENT
From Civil Society Organisations in Election Programming
(For Immediate Release – 7th January 2021)

Political leaders should commit to spirit of compromise and accommodation to preserve Ghana's democratic gains

Today, 7th January 2021, Ghanaians are waking up to video recordings and media reportage of the appalling scenes in the Parliament of Ghana that characterized the sacred and solemn process of electing a Speaker of Parliament and swearing of Members of Parliament.

The scenes witnessed by Ghanaians, and played out before the international community, betrayed our political leaders' proclamations, and expressed commitments, to democratic principles, the rule of law and the pursuit of the public interest. At the height of the disorder that ensued, first the Police were called in, and then Military officers were invited in to restore order. The presence of Military in the Chamber of Parliament was an extremely low point in the proceedings of Parliament. It reflects a recent pattern of excessive use of the Armed forces to deal with civilian matters. As a nation, we must quickly move away from this developing pattern as we move forward. Also, for a temporary period, the unruly antics of Members of Parliament Elect threatened to prolong a dangerous constitutional and governance situation, where there was no Parliament and no President to govern the country. We condemn in no uncertain terms, the snatching of the ballot box and expect the perpetrators of this act to be disciplined by the House.

Fortunately, the political leadership of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) have managed to find a compromise, leading to the election of Algbab Bagbin as the Speaker of the 8th Parliament of the 4th Republic; Joseph Osei Owusu as 1st Deputy Speaker, and Andrew Asiamah Amoako as 2nd Deputy Speaker. The resolution achieved by the two political parties confirms that the only way the 8th Parliament can succeed is by the two sides working together in a spirit of compromise, consensus-building, and accommodation, in the service of all Ghanaians, and in pursuit of development for the country.

It is our expectation that a culture of mediation, negotiation, and compromise will be adopted by Parliament going forward, particularly to conclude the first part of the democratic transition process that will culminate in the inauguration of the President Elect, without prejudice to ongoing judicial processes challenging the 2020 Presidential Election Declaration. In this spirit, we urge the NDC and all other political parties to fully participate in the inauguration to help promote unity and peace in the country.

Lastly, a number of legal and constitutional matters have been uncovered during the fraught process to elect the speaker and require reflection and reform. In due course we hope to fully engage on these matters. We call all well-meaning Ghanaians to add their voice to this call and ensure a smooth and peaceful democratic transition going forward.

In service to God and country.

Signatories:

Civic Forum Initiative (CFI)

Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG)

Centre for Democratic Development (CDD)

Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA)

Norsaac

The Ark Foundation

Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition (GACC)

Ghana Integrity Initiative (GII)

Citizens' Movement Against Corruption (CMAC)

IMANI Africa

Africa Center for Parliamentary Affairs (ACEPA)

SEND Ghana

STAR Ghana Foundation

West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI)