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**For Immediate Release**

**USING GHANA CARD AS THE SOLE ID FOR VOTER REGISTRATION WOULD BE A RECIPE FOR DISASTER**

The NDC Proforum – North America wishes to add to concerns raised by well-meaning Ghanaians on the dangers of using the Ghana Card as the sole source of identification for the limited voter registration exercise. The principle and concept of Ghanaians having one dedicated form of ID to transact official activities is great. However, the timing and implementation of this decision in relation to our upcoming elections in 2024, is completely not a smart decision.

It must be established that the functions of both the National Identification Authority (NIA) and that of the Electoral Commission differ. Whereas the NIA is not time-bound with receiving applications and issuing of ID cards to Ghanaians, the EC is time-bound to close its register at some point and proceed with the conduct of elections. The timelines, approach, procedures, and rules of engagement with the NIA cannot be the same as the EC. Therefore, the EC must not be seen dictating or mounting pressure indirectly on the NIA to use desperate measures to force Ghanaians to acquire the Ghana Card.

The entire process for the acquisition of the Ghana has been characterized by major technical challenges that require time and strategic methods to address. As we speak, the cards are not accessible, affordable, and even available in various communities, cities, and towns. There are those who would have to commute for over an hour just to register. Others do not have the means to pay for express individual or premium services to facilitate acquisition of the card due to the high cost of living in Ghana at the moment. Some Ghanaians who have sacrificed to register also cannot get the cards due to internal issues with the NIA. All these major issues, amongst others, create unwelcoming situations to motivate some Ghanaians to apply and get the card. It has become such a hassle to deal with.

Obviously, it appears that the whole exercise of using the Ghana card as the sole ID for voter registration is a means of getting a sizeable number of Ghanaians disenfranchised. With the current situation on the ground, one would have thought that the last thing for the EC to do is to decide or conclude that it is appropriate to tie its source of verifying Ghanaians to be on the voters list with the Ghana Card. There are just too many problems with access to the card at the moment. Why can't the EC be patient and wait for the NIA to address the numerous challenges with the acquisition of the Ghana Card before even thinking about using it as the sole form of ID for registration in the upcoming elections? Why the rush? Why can't





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Ghanaians use other forms of ID such as a passport and driver's license as a form of identification? Indeed, the Ghana passport is recognized worldwide as a means of Identification as compared to the Ghana Card which is yet to attain that standard. Clearly, there are more explanations to be offered in this regard. The haste makes the whole process questionable and raises doubts in the minds of well-meaning Ghanaians about the genuineness of the whole process.

A very important and critical dimension of the whole exercise has to do with data integrity in terms of ascertaining the credentials of an individual with a Ghana Card at the offices of the Electoral Commission. Does the EC have its own checks and balances to verify potential candidates? Or is the EC database linked with that of the NIA for authenticating Ghanaians with the Ghana Card? Further explanation and investigation are needed in this regard. Also, in case of a system failure or issues that may not allow the NIA to proceed effectively with the registration and issuing of Ghana Cards, what will be the fate of both EC and Ghanaians in terms of getting verified to vote? Suffice to note that the most sensitive task of the EC is being shifted to another agency that does not have the same mandate as the EC, and hence, avoiding accountability in terms of future problems which are bound to occur.

Regarding these challenges, the NDC Professionals Forum – USA, would want to suggest to the Chairperson of the Electoral Commission of Ghana, Madam Jean Mensah to postpone the idea of using the Ghana card as the only form of ID in the upcoming elections and consider the other statutory forms of IDs issued by state institutions like the DVLA and the Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration Ministry, which is the Passport.

Last but not the least, the amount of Ghc 30.00 for the replacement of missing cards must be looked into as well, since the economic conditions in Ghana have made it impossible for some people to afford even 2 square meals a day. Furthermore, the mode of payment also seeks to demotivate Ghanaians especially those in the rural and peri-urban towns. The designation of Cal Bank as the only institution for this exercise must be reviewed since it does not have the national appeal and presence that GCB bank has. And we must acknowledge that it is a significant challenge for many Ghanaians to pay the fee online. Once again, PROFORUM - USA seeks to suggest to the EC to take a second look at its proposal to make the Ghana card the sole form of ID for the voter registration exercise.

**Signed**

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