

Press Release

Tuesday, November 15, 2011

Sustaining Ghana's Democracy: The Imperative of Political Tolerance Ahead of 2012 Elections

[Issued by the Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG) and the Civic Forum Initiative (CFI) in Commemoration of 2011 International Day of Tolerance]

Wednesday, November 16 is International Day of Tolerance. On this day earmarked by the UN and adopted by the AU to sensitise people about the need for tolerance in society, we wish to draw the attention of the people of Ghana and indeed the general public to the importance of tolerance in upholding the peace and stability of our nation.

The people of Ghana have over the years demonstrated a sense of tolerance which has ensured the relatively peaceful co-existence of the diverse socio-cultural groupings.

In 2012, Ghana will be organizing its sixth consecutive Presidential and Parliamentary elections since the return to democratic rule. With an enviable record of conducting successful elections, Ghana is widely acclaimed as an oasis of peace and an example of democratic consolidation in Africa. The world is therefore watching and expectant of peaceful elections.

This claim notwithstanding, multi-party elections in Ghana have in recent times been characterised by growing incidence of violence. The growing use of unsavory language in political discourse commonly referred to as "*politics of insults*" mainly by political party functionaries taints the culture of tolerance and threatens the stability of the country's democracy.

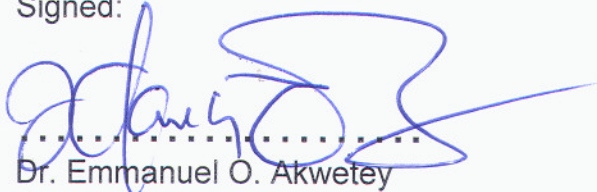
It is the view of IDEG-CFI that if this trend should continue the country will be deeply polarized, not just along political party line but also along ethnic, religious and gender lines. On this International Day of Tolerance, the IDEG-CFI wishes to draw attention to the AU Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance which Ghana has ratified. The Charter enjoins member states including Ghana to "*eliminate all forms of discrimination, especially those based on political opinion, gender, ethnic, religious and*

racial grounds as well as any other form of intolerance” as well as “adopt legislative and administrative measures to guarantee the rights of women, ethnic minorities, migrants, people with disabilities, refugees and displaced persons and other marginalized and vulnerable groups”.

We therefore call on the people of Ghana to renew their commitments to the principles of tolerance and respect for all shades of political opinion, and for our rich political, social and cultural differences.

Finally, we are by this statement also cautioning journalists and media houses to make conscious efforts at discouraging all signs and forms of intolerance in our political, social, religious and cultural life.

Signed:



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