

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS PEACE PACT 2020



Concept Note for Presidential Elections Peace Pact 2020

Theme: “Eradicating Electoral Violence in Ghana’s Democracy; The Role of Political Leadership”.

1.0 Background

Ghana is close to holding its eighth consecutive General Elections on the 7th of December 2020, amidst public concerns over the resurgence of the threat of electoral violence before, during and after the elections. Since 2008, election years in Ghana have been turbulent, owing largely to the evolution of two of the competing parties, i.e. the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC), into dominant political parties, and their affiliation with vigilante groups, which have been described as militias (Short Commission, April 2019). As the country approaches the December general elections, there are concerns that violence could again erupt.

It is against this background that the Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG) will hold the Presidential Elections Peace Pact 2020, during which the presidential candidates of the two largest competing political parties, H.E. President Nana Addo Danquah Akufo Addo, and Former President John Mahama, will publicly sign a Peace Pact, committing to ensuring the peaceful conduct of their party faithfuls and followers during and after the December Elections.

IDEG innovated the concept of Elections Peace Pacts in 2012. IDEG introduced the 2012 Elections Peace Pact as a mechanism to commit leaders of political parties to fostering peaceful conduct by their followers and sympathizers before, during and after presidential and parliamentary elections, and to bind them to adopt judicial adjudication should there be disputes over official presidential election results.

IDEG partnered with the National Peace Council and National House of Chiefs in holding the Elections 2012 Peace Pact. The 2012 Peace Pact was convened by the Asantehene, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II. The signing of the Pact took place at the Great Hall of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, the capital of the Ashanti Region.

The Elections 2012 Peace Pact, also referred to, as the Kumasi Declaration, was themed “*Electoral violence, impunity and injustice*”. The presidential candidates of the eight (8) political parties contesting the elections jointly committed themselves to the maintenance of the rule of law during and after the elections. The Elections 2012 Peace Pact proved to be effective and timely, as the Presidential Elections results were disputed. The leading opposition candidate however sought recourse at the Supreme Court to address the dispute. This course of action protected the peace after the Elections, and eventually triggered electoral reforms by the Electoral Commission and the various political actors.

In 2016, the IDEG again facilitated the signing of a Peace Pact. The Elections 2016 Peace Pact was themed “*Strengthening Ghana’s Democratic Stability, Peace and National Unity*”. Again, the IDEG partnered with the National Peace Council and National House of Chiefs. The signing of the Elections 2016 Peace Pact took place at the Movenpick Hotel in the national capital, Accra. The Elections 2016 Peace Pact was again signed by presidential candidates of all the seven (7) political parties contesting the Elections. The 2016 Peace pact provided a platform for public reaffirmation of the 2012 declaration against electoral violence, impunity and injustice. Although there were no major electoral disputes or a run-off, the Peace Pact committed parties to ensuring peace as previously. The losing candidate gracefully conceded defeat and congratulated the winner.

Achievements of the Peace Pacts

The past Elections Peace Pacts have contributed to the conduct of peaceful Elections in Ghana in the past two elections. They have predisposed leaders of political parties to taking responsibility for maintaining peace during and after elections, and turning their supporters away from violence. The Peace Pacts have helped to strengthen public confidence in the court system's capacity to resolve electoral disputes. Above all, they have contributed to important changes that have strengthened the Electoral Commission's administrative processes.

In spite of the achievements attained through the 2012 and 2016 Peace Pacts, however, recent contextual developments signal an urgent need for an intervention that will achieve the full assurance of public safety during the 2020 Elections. With shifts in the contextual environment, there is now a need for a process that commits political parties to working together to secure electoral peace and security, that ensures the autonomy of the Ghana Police to enforce the law in the face of electoral violence, and that ensures long-term constitutional reforms to eradicate the underlying drivers of electoral violence.

Ghana has in recent months, experienced pockets of electoral related violence, which threaten the safety of citizens during and after the elections. The most disturbing features of these incidents were their perpetuation by vigilante groups associated with the two major political parties, the NPP and NDC; the impunity with which the acts of violence were perpetuated; and the absence of enforcement of punitive action by the Ghana Police Service. It must be noted however that the increasing impunity of vigilante groups led to the government's enactment of the Vigilantism and Related Offences Act, 2019 (Act 999) and the Final Road Map and Code of Conduct by the National Peace Council. Notwithstanding these developments, however, election related violence has persisted and remains a threat as reflected in the incidents in 2020 referred to, above.

These incidences are symptoms of a deeper problem which requires structural change. Such change may only be executed by a constitutional amendment. The NPP and NDC have in their manifestos indicated their readiness to implement constitutional amendments. The 2020 Elections Peace Pact presents an opportunity to cement these commitments. It is indeed the considered opinion of the IDEG that the Constitutional amendments pledged by the NPP and NDC would finally put to rest the threat of election-related threat by providing a solution to the structural challenges at its root.

2.0 Justification of the design of the Presidential Elections Peace Pact 2020

2.1 Choice of a Convener

The Chief Imam of Ghana, Sheikh Osman Nuhu Sharubutu will convene the Presidential Elections Peace Pact 2020. The role of Convener is of critical importance to the Peace Pact. A Convener must inspire absolute trust and confidence of the signatories, and deference to his/her authority. To this end, a Convener must be perceived by the signatories to a Peace Pact, as indisputably impartial politically, as a unifying force, and as a revered national figure.

As the Chief Imam of Ghana, Sheikh Osman Nuhu Sharubutu bears the stature of a national figure. He is recognized as a symbol of peace, having maintained peace within the Ghanaian Moslem community throughout his tenure of office. He commands inter-faith appeal, a quality which was strengthened further with his celebration of his 100th birthday in the Catholic Church, in April, 2019. He represents the interests of the large segment of Ghanaians of northern ethnicity and Moslem religion, but nonetheless, has in several active ways pursued collaboration between Moslems and Christians and

across Ghana's northern and southern ethnic divides. Within Ghana's present political and social environment, few, if any other national figures exude the air of political neutrality, religious accommodation and ethnic unity that the National Imam does, justifying his selection as Convener of the event. The National House Chiefs and National Peace Council will play key roles as co-conveners.

2.2 Signatories to the Peace pact

In 2012 and 2016, all presidential candidates signed the peace pacts. With the 2020 Peace Pact however, signing will only be done by the presidential candidates for the NPP and NDC. The decision to have only the two largest political parties as the signatories is based upon the following considerations.

Electoral violence remains the biggest threat to peace and security during and after the 2020 Elections. Vigilante groups have been the perpetrators of the incidents of violence earlier-referred to, and could instigate the youth and other party sympathizers to violence during and after the 2020 Elections. These vigilante groups are closely associated with the two political parties, the NPP and the NDC. The 2020 Peace Pact therefore targets the leadership of the two parties, as the most influential personalities in the bid to forestall acts of violence by party-related vigilante groups and by the youth who could easily be incited to violence by the actions of vigilante groups. The public signing of the Peace Pact by the two leaders would ingrain a deep and indelible symbol of a commitment to peace and zero intolerance for electoral violence, on the minds of vigilante groups, party supporters and impressionable youths.

Again, both leaders' political party manifestos indicate their commitment to Constitutional reforms which would address the underlying causes of the recurrent threats of election-related violence. It is this joint responsibility, shared influence, and common intention therefore which IDEG seeks to symbolize and capitalize upon with their sole co-signing of the 2020 Peace Pact.

2.3 Date for the Peace Pact Event

December 3rd, 2020 has been chosen as the date for the Peace Pact event. This date is close enough to the election date of December 7th, so as to maintain the symbolism of the event in the minds of all members of the public, particularly political party faithful's, the youth, and members of the vigilante groups, during and after the elections. With the short period of time available to IDEG to organize the event, this date provides IDEG with just sufficient time to notify participants and stakeholders in the event and also provides Ghana's security agencies with just enough time to prepare for the event.

2.4 Venue

The Election 2020 Peace Pact will take place at the Movenpick Hotel in Accra. This was the venue adopted for the 2016 Peace Pact. This venue therefore offers the benefit of institutional memory and experience in hosting an event of this stature. Again, the Movenpick Hotel has the benefits of a central location and easy accessibility. It offers the larger of conference room space as compared with hotels within its peerage. Spaciousness is a major consideration owing to the social distancing requirements made necessary by the Covid19 pandemic. Movenpick's conference room has a capacity of 800, which almost doubles the seating capacity of other hotels considered for the venue. Again, the Movenpick Hotel provides four (4) large LCD screens as part of the conference package, to further support social distancing, as against other similar hotels which did not provide LCD screens as part of their package.

3. Objectives

- i. To mobilize political leaders for peace.
- ii. To promote the amicable settlement of election related disputes.
- iii. To expedite the process of the implementation of constitutional amendments.