



Special New Year message from MEC Chairman,

Justice Dr Chifundo Kachale, J

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Greetings my fellow Malawians.

I should start by wishing all of you a happy and prosperous New Year. As a Commission we look forward to the year with vigour, hope and determination to fulfill what we have planned and what the law mandates us to do. Therefore, I wish to take the opportunity of this New Year message to give you an overview of the activities that Commission has planned to implement this year, 2022.

In line with our plan, in 2022 the Commission is expected to finalise the boundary review exercise for both constituencies and wards. This activity started last year, 2021, and so far, we have implemented the following activities:

- a. Conducted meetings in April and May 2021 with electoral stakeholders who included leadership of all active political parties both represented in Parliament and outside, civil society organisations, Honourable Members of Parliament, Public Affairs Committee, and the media to explaining to them what the boundary review process would entail
- b. Conducted sensitisation meetings in August and September 2021 in all the councils. The Commission explained the entire process and encouraged stakeholders to take active part.
- c. Issued a call for submissions of views from all stakeholders. This provided an opportunity for all stakeholders in the country to provide their views for the consideration by the Commission on the boundary review process.
- d. Determined the total number of constituencies for each council for purposes of 2025 elections in line with the provision of the law under section 76(2) of the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi. This meant reviewed boundaries for the 2025 elections
- e. Formed and trained Constituency and Ward Boundary Review Teams (CWBRT) for each council to facilitate the implementation of the Commission's determination for the number of constituencies for the 2025 elections in the respective councils. During the training, it was emphasized to

- the teams to strictly follow the law and the guidelines provided by the Commission.
- f. Conducted meetings in November 2021 with electoral stakeholders who included leaders of all active political parties both represented in Parliament and outside, civil society organisations, Honourable Members of Parliament, Public Affairs Committee, and the media to explaining to them how the determination of the number of constituencies was done
 - g. After desk and field work, the boundary review teams came up with preliminary scenarios of constituency boundaries. The Commission conducted meetings at council level where all stakeholders were given an opportunity to give their views. The teams have come up with more than one scenario of new ward and constituency boundaries that have been submitted to the Commission for review and quality control before producing preliminary maps. This review will take place during this month of January 2022. In the review process, at this stage, the Commission will check if the teams followed the law and guidelines provided, consider representations that the Commission has been and continue to receive from all over the country. Here, let me mention and clarify that the Commission will only consider those representations that backed by the law. I am saying this because we have some representations that clearly show individual (personal) interest. Sadly, some have gone

to the extent of mobilizing chiefs and deliberately twisting facts to buy sympathy by lying to the chiefs that the Commission has taken away some of their subjects into another chief. The Commission has not tampered with any chieftainship boundary and the law does not give the Commission those powers.

I would like to repeat that as we stand today, there are no new boundaries confirmed by the Commission. The process is still on going until after the display of preliminary maps, getting further representations that are within the law and final reflection by the Commission. Still, this will not be the end of the process as you will appreciate when I outline detailed remaining activities.

Upcoming activities on constituency and ward boundary review

Let me repeat that the Commission has not finished the boundary review process. There are still activities planned for this year as follows:

- a. Review of the boundary scenarios by the Commission from the councils and to choose the preliminary map for each council, as stated earlier, is the next activity in January 2022.
- b. Printing of the preliminary maps for each council in January and February 2022
- c. Display and viewing of the preliminary maps in public places including council offices, hospitals, markets and T/A headquarters and other strategic places in February 2022.

- The aim is to offer an opportunity for the public to view how the proposed boundaries will come out like and make representation, if any, that are in line with the law.
- d. Public hearings in all the councils to get feedback from all stakeholders on the preliminary maps which will have been displayed in February 2022. The public hearings will take place between April and May 2022. The Commission will also hold targeted meetings with other stakeholders including political parties and civil society organisations between June and July.
 - e. The feedback from the consultative meetings will be considered by the Commission and incorporated into the first final draft of the boundary review report. Before submission of the report to Parliament, the Commission will hold a meeting with Members of Parliament in July 2022. This will be an opportunity for the Commission to explain, clarify and respond to queries from the MPs regarding the report.
 - f. The Commission will submit final report to the National Assembly for approval in October 2022.

Expectations from stakeholders regarding boundary review

The Commission is encouraging all stakeholders to apprise themselves with the provision of the law regarding the boundary review process so as to make informed contributions. The

Commission is open to views from stakeholders at any point in time during the process as long as they are in conformity with the law.

It is by getting views from all stakeholders that the best can be shaped from this boundary review process. The Commission is, therefore, encouraging members of the public to take interest in the process and express their views and opinions. However, they should participate with keen, sober, and objective interest.

Although so far, the activities have run uninterrupted, there is a funding gap for the Commission to successfully complete the process. The Commission will engage the Government so that there is a provision in the next fiscal year to complete the remaining activities.

Holding of Local Government by-elections

In 2021 there were by-elections in 11 constituencies and five wards. Some of them because of death of the Members of Parliament and councillors elected in 2019 and others due to court nullifications of the 2019 results.

At the moment there are two vacant wards: Shire Ward in Balaka and Lupembe Ward in Karonga. The Commission appreciates the

need for people to have representation either in the National Assembly or Local Council and that is why it is always our interest to hold by-elections as soon as possible when a vacancy arises. For the two wards, the Commission will announce the date when the by-elections will be held once government assurance will be made for funding since by-elections funds for the short fiscal year were depleted. It is important that the by-elections are held so that the people have representation in local councils.

Preparations for 2025 Tripartite Elections

Stakeholders should appreciate that the boundary review process is the foundation for 2025 elections. That is why the Commission is geared and determined to deliver a credible process whose outcome will be accepted by all stakeholders.

That aside, stakeholders should be aware that elections are a cycle. Preparations start now and not in the election's year. In this year 2022 the Commission will develop a calendar and a budget for the 2025 elections. The cost of the elections will be spread over three financial year budgets to avoid exerting pressure on the government budget in the election year. The Commission, as usual, will be giving updates to stakeholders accordingly.

Message of gratitude and best wishes

The Commission wishes to express gratitude to all electoral stakeholders; political parties, candidates, all registered voters, Development Partners, traditional and faith leaders, and everyone,

for their active participation in activities conducted by the Commission in 2021 and specifically during the review of boundaries process which is currently underway.

As we move in this year 2022, we are optimistic of continued support and collaboration. Together we can achieve a lot that can contribute greatly to the consolidation of our democracy.

I wish you a successful and a prosperous 2022

May God bless you.