

NATIONAL HOUSE OF CHIEFS

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NATIONAL HOUSE OF CHIEFS



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Our Ref:.....

PRESS STATEMENT ON THE REFERENDUM TO INTRODUCE PARTISAN POLITICS INTO LOCAL ELECTIONS

Article 55(3) of the 1992 Constitution prohibits the sponsoring by political parties of candidates for election to District Assemblies or Local Government Units.

The Government seeks to amend Article 55(3), and is preparing to organize a referendum for the amendment because it is an entrenched provision of the Constitution.

The object of the upcoming referendum on Article 55(3), which is entrenched, is to remove this prohibition and introduce partisan politics into local government including the election of district, municipal and metropolitan chief executives.

The efficacy and utility of introducing partisan politics into local government is questionable. The development implications of such reforms are by no means self-evident. The framers of the 1992 Constitution had good reasons for protecting our local government system from partisan politics, and the rationale for the new reforms has not sufficiently addressed the grounds for the exclusion.

All the partisanship that resulted from the Presidential appointment of the chief executives would be worsened with the amendment of Article 55(3), because the amendment itself is designed to introduce partisan politics into the election after the removal of the President's power of appointment of the chief executives of the assemblies.

The House, based on the recommendation of its Legal Committee, strongly objects to the proposal that membership of local assemblies should exclusively comprise representatives of political parties, as in the case of Parliament. We are therefore advocating for the outright rejection of the proposal to amend Article 55(3) of the Constitution because of the following:

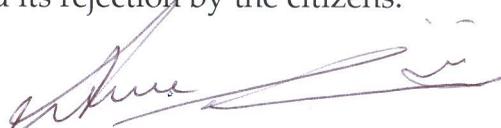
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- a. While we are aware that the election of chief executives of districts etc. could result in the coexistence of central government and local government controlled by different political parties, experience clearly demonstrates that the culture of “winner takes all” would prevail at the local level to the detriment of our united development endeavours.
- b. We are concerned that the introduction of partisan policies into local government will be accompanied by the unwholesome political culture and the corruption associated with partisan politics, which has already done a lot of harm to our society and economy.
- c. The incidence of exclusiveness, the unhealthy politicization of all issues, the marginalization of citizens who do not belong to the ruling party, and the exclusion of skilled manpower on partisan grounds would be detrimental to development and good governance at the local level.
- d. Currently the appointment of 30% Government nominees to local assemblies has been totally vitiated by partisan politics, with the result that appointments are determined by party membership to the virtual exclusion of traditional authorities and other non-political groups – a total travesty of principles of good governance.
- e. By every democratic principle, traditional authorities and other non-political groups must have a legitimate say in the use of their resources and the selection and location of development projects financed by such resources.
- f. Effective decentralization would be adversely affected by the control of local parties by the headquarters of national political parties.

We want the citizenry to know that the referendum is meant to permit unbridled partisan politics into local government, and so the merits of the proposed reform should be assessed on that basis. We strongly recommend its rejection by the citizens.



Togbe Afede XIV, President
Nov. 14, 2019



Daasebre Nana Kwebu Ewusi VII, Vice President