

# Uganda Human Rights Commission



## Statement on the forth coming National Elections

Friday 12<sup>th</sup> February 2016

Uganda will be conducting Presidential and Parliamentary elections on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> February 2016 and the Local Government elections on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2016. It will hold other elections for special interest groups and other lower council elections on various dates until the 10<sup>th</sup> March 2016. The UHRC commends pronouncements by various groups such as religious leaders, civil society organization and others who have already come out to call for peaceful election. In this regard, the Uganda Human Rights Commission adds its voice to all the other voices of reason to call for peaceful, free and fair elections.

Uganda Human Rights Commission has a very high stake in the coming elections because there is a very strong link between elections and human rights. Elections facilitate the realisation of the right of citizens to participate in the affairs of government individually or through representation as stipulated in Article 38 of the Constitution of Uganda. The right to vote is also expressly provided for under Article 59. Besides that, the exercise of the right to vote has a direct bearing on many other rights including the freedoms of conscience, expression, movement, assembly and association; the right to information; the right to form political parties and political organisations; freedom from discrimination; the right to equality before the law and equal protection of the law; the right to self-determination; and the right to effective legal redress, among others.

In view of this, elections if well managed have the potential of promoting the realisation of human rights. Unfortunately the reverse is also true that mismanaged elections can lead to gross violation of human rights. For this reason, we at the Uganda Human Rights Commission have positioned ourselves to effectively contribute to the on-going interventions to ensure that the elections are peaceful, free and fair. All Staff of the UHRC have already been trained and accredited as Election Observers on the day of polling. Unlike many of the other observers, the UHRC accredited staff will be able to reach anywhere in the country since our mandate is national. The UHRC will on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2016 issue a preliminary observer's report on its findings during the election. The UHRC commends the EC for commencing the accreditation process well in time.

In preparation for protection and promotion of human rights in the run-up to the national elections we started implementing in May 2015 our ongoing Early Warning and Early Response Project (EWERP) which is aimed at pre-empting violence and minimising conflicts during the electoral processes. The project will go on until

