

PRESS RELEASE

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Formation of task force on preparations for 2014 presidential candidates debates

BLANTYRE - As Malawi moves closer to the May 20, 2014, the date for holding Tripartite Elections, the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) is pleased to announce the formation of a task force for presidential candidates' debates.

With technical support from the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the taskforce will work on all preparatory, organizational and production aspects of the Presidential Candidates Debates.

Members of the task force have been drawn from various civil society organizations and broadcast media houses basing on the expertise and some already had plans to conduct presidential debates.

The task force has been formulated in line with MEC's 2014 electoral calendar which includes presidential debates as one of the key activities ahead of the elections. Around the world, presidential candidate debates are used to enable citizens to learn more about

their candidates and policies in order to make informed electoral choices.

In addition, we anticipate the presidential candidates' debates will provide an important public space to generate dialogue on citizen interests regarding the future and direction of Malawi.

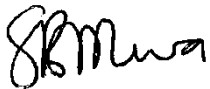
The taskforce under the Chairmanship of MEC will operate independently to undertake the following responsibilities:

- Discuss and agree on the modalities of holding presidential candidates debates;
- Decide, in collaboration with the Malawi Electoral Commission, the dates and venue of the debates ;
- Agree on the number of debates to be conducted, themes and the duration of each debate;
- Develop parameters for media outlets/ media mix to be used for airing the debates;
- Agree on the format of the debate; whether the debates will be held live or will be prerecorded and broadcast later and whether spectators/audiences will ask questions directly or all moderator will ask all questions;
- Work out the budget for hosting the debates;
- Determine logistics of the debates such as travel and accommodation; and determine the extent to which supporters of candidates/contestants will be involved.

Below is a complete list of organizations that are forming the task force.

- Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC)
- National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI)
- Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP)
- Public Affairs Committee (PAC)
- National Initiative for Civic Education Trust (NICE)
- Centre for Multiparty Democracy (CMD)
- Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA)-Malawi Chapter
- Malawi Electoral Support Network (MESN)
- Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC)
- Zodiak Broadcasting Station (ZBS)
- Malawi Human Rights Commission

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