

*For Immediate Release to all Media Houses, 27 November 2019*

**PRESS STATEMENT ON THE UPCOMING DECEMBER 17, 2019 REFERENDUM**

1. In 2017, President Nana Akufo Addo, in his State of the Nation Address announced his government’s determination to ensure the election of Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives on partisan lines.
2. This announcement, though a slight departure from the ruling party’s manifesto that proposed election of MMDCEs, was seen as a step to inter alia, deepen decentralization, promote inclusivity and deal with the feeling of marginalization and sabotage of the national agenda at the local levels, usually associated with winner-takes-all politics, particularly in areas where the ruling government is not popular.
3. Consequently there are arrangements to combine the upcoming non-partisan district level elections with a partisan referendum in a manner that could potentially breed confusion among voters.
4. There also seem to be lack of elite consensus on the need for the referendum to amend Article 55(3) to pave the way for political parties to fully participate in any future election of MMDCEs, should Article 243(1) be amended in addition to other consequential amendments.
5. Youth Bridge Foundation (YBF) believes that such a major move to allow political parties to participate in the election of MMDCEs cannot be carried out successfully without a bipartisan consensus.
6. More importantly, as a youth development organization, we are concerned that even though the Ghanaian voter population is preponderantly youthful, snap checks with our youth constituents, points to limited knowledge about the core issues of the referendum and apathy among the youth. This we maintain will adversely impact on the quality of choice that may be made and also make it difficult for the 40-75 threshold to be achieved for the motion of the referendum to be carried.

**7. We therefore make the following calls:**

- 7.1 Government to put the referendum on hold; build bipartisan consensus; and ensure massive sensitization and education of the citizenry, particularly the youth, to promote youth meaningful participation in democratic processes consistent with Article 11 of African Youth Charter and also in a manner whips up popular enthusiasm as a national and not partisan responsibility.
- 7.2 Development partners to support the relevant civil society organizations, to work in partnership with the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) to undertake a nationwide non-partisan public education on the core issues of the referendum taking cognizance of the varying levels of youth literacy.
- 7.3 Ruling party to genuinely reach out to the opposition to build consensus.
- 7.4 The opposition to cooperate with the government when there are genuine overtures to build bridges on the issues.

**SIGNED**

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