

26th April 2024

**CLARIFICATION ON THE DISPOSAL OF OBSOLETE BIOMETRIC VERIFICATION
DEVICES (BVDS)**

The Electoral Commission (EC) wishes to address misleading narratives circulating on social media regarding the disposal of obsolete Biometric Verification Devices (BVDs) by the Commission. On Thursday, 18th of April, the Greater Accra Regional Director of the Commission was informed of some BVDs having been found at a recycling plant in Madina. She immediately reported this to the Police who sent a team to the recycling plant and retrieved ten (10) devices. Upon inspection, they were found to be old and obsolete 2012 BVDs which had been legally auctioned to a recycling company.

Here are key facts for the information of the General Public:

1. The obsolete BVDs that were found at the recycling plant, were acquired prior to the 2012 elections and were utilized by the current Commission for the 2019 District Level Elections (DLE).

It is important to note that, the previous administration had earmarked and received approval to invest US\$56 million for the refurbishment of Biometric Verification Devices (BVDs), Biometric Voter Registration Kits (BVRs), a Data Centre and some new equipment as part of preparations towards the 2018 Referendum and the 2019 District Level Elections (DLE). The Managers of the Commission's Biometric Infrastructure had in several correspondence to the EC stated that the Biometric equipment were not only obsolete but had reached their End of Life- meaning, they could no longer be maintained. In spite of this, the then Commission took the decision to refurbish the obsolete BVDs, BVRs, a Data Centre and procure some equipment at the cost of US\$56 million with the plan to use them for the 2018 Referendum and the 2019 District Level Elections (DLE) and thereafter replace the refurbished equipment ahead of the 2020 General Elections. The current Commission however cancelled the contract for the total refurbishment, and conducted the 2019 DLE using the available equipment and without exhausting the US\$56 million.

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2. The replacement of the obsolete 2012 equipment with robust new equipment and infrastructure, rather than refurbishing them for a short-term use, was a decision this Commission took to ensure the prudent use of resources as well as to guarantee the integrity of our electoral processes and elections. This Commission utilised U\$51 Million out of the US\$56 million approved largely for the refurbishment of obsolete equipment, towards the procurement of two (2) new Data Centres, 74,500 new BVDs, and 8,500 new BVR kits. A total of **US\$68,661.912.67** was used to procure the above listed equipment and data centres.
3. The Commission categorically rejects the allegation of sneaking out thousands of devices for recycling at a loss to the State. Such statements are not only false but are designed to mislead the public and cause disaffection for the institution and its leadership. As indicated earlier, the Original Equipment Manufacturers and the Managers of the Commission's biometric infrastructure, HSB Identification BV and STL respectively, informed the former Commission in writing about the obsolete nature of the Commission's Biometric infrastructure. They indicated that the Biometric equipment and other equipment in the Data Centre had reached End of Life-meaning they could no longer be serviced as parts for them were no longer available. Indeed, HSB Identification BV, in a letter to the Commission, distanced itself from the planned repairs of the BVRs. Based on these reports and following our experience with the equipment in the 2019 District Level Election (DLE), this Commission in consultation with relevant agencies and in compliance with legal procedures, auctioned the obsolete 2012 equipment.
4. The auction was conducted transparently and all legal procedures were strictly adhered to. The proceeds from the auction were duly deposited in the Consolidated Fund.
5. The Commission deems it important to address persistent misinformation being peddled by one Bright Simons and his counterparts at Imani. Ghanaians would recall that Imani accused this Commission of acquiring new BVDs and BVRs just for a "procurement gig" when there was no need to procure the new equipment. What

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Ghanaians were not told by Imani is, the previous administration had planned to refurbish obsolete BVDs, BVRs and data centre for millions of dollars for short term use only- namely, to conduct the 2018 Referendum and 2019 DLE.

6. In 2020, Imani alleged that the Commission spent US\$300 million on BVDs and BVRs. They subsequently revised the figure to US\$150 million and have falsely peddled that figure as the cost of the IT infrastructure procured in 2020. For the information of the public, the total cost of two (2) data centres, 74,500 BVDs and 8,500 BVRs amounted to **US\$68,661,912.67**.
US\$51 million out of the **US\$56 million** earmarked by the previous Commission, largely for the refurbishment of obsolete equipment, was allocated to this procurement by the current Commission.
7. The public may recall that as part of Imani's negative campaign against the Commission's decision to compile a new voters register ahead of the 2020 elections, Bright Simons claimed that by his scientific queue management theory, the Commission could not register 12 million voters in 40 days. The Commission proved otherwise, registering over 17 million voters in 38 days, in a rainy season and at the height of the COVID pandemic; this was at a time when several countries postponed their elections due to COVID 19.
8. Again, during the 2020 Voters Registration Exercise, Mr Simons, using selective photographed images of the obsolete BVRs, falsely peddled that the obsolete 2012 BVRs were being used for the registration of voters in Kumasi when this was far from the truth. When challenged to identify the polling centres where the kits were being used, he could not substantiate his claims.
9. It is also important to underscore the fact that the mere physical look of a BVD does not provide any technical assessment of their suitability for voter verification during elections. It is therefore misleading to share photos of obsolete 2012 BVDs, and without providing their technical status and suitability, create the impression to the



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unsuspecting public that devices are in “perfect working condition” and were only discarded to make way for a “procurement gig” by the Electoral Commission.

10. A BVD in “perfect working condition” is not just a physical attribute that can be determined merely by looking at the device or a photo of it. Rather, it is a technical attribute that is determined by technical expertise and technology. If the 2012 devices were in “perfect working condition” as is being claimed by Mr. Simons, why was there a need for the previous administration to budget millions of dollars for their refurbishment so they could be used just for the 2018 Referendum and the 2019 DLE? Would anyone spend millions of dollars to refurbish devices that are in “perfect working condition”?

11. For the information of the public, this Commission through its prudent and transparent procurement methods reduced the per-voter cost of elections from **US\$13 in 2016 to US\$7.70 in 2020**, and saved the nation a substantial amount of **US\$ 90 million-** an achievement that has never been recorded in the history of elections in Ghana.

We call on the public to disregard statements coming from Bright Simons and Imani on this subject matter. They are false and misleading.

The Electoral Commission remains committed to conducting its operations with the highest standards of transparency, fiscal responsibility, prudence and ethical conduct.

Thank you.

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