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## Proposal to change census dates already submitted to the Government

The postponement of voter registration and a punctual review of the Electoral Law seem inevitable, but it all depends on the Government. The National Electoral Commission (CNE) has already submitted the proposal, the solution to which may involve revising the deadlines for the phases of the electoral process. October 11 will remain untouched.

In the CNE argumentation, prepared by STAE (Technical Secretariat for Electoral Administration) technicians, two scenarios were presented about the impracticality of conducting voter registration on 20 February (two months from now). The first scenario is that February is a rainy season. Holding registration in this period would violate the electoral legislation and the jurisprudence of the Constitutional Council, which state that electoral events must be held in dry times.

The National Institute of Meteorology, requested by the CNE, indicates that there is a strong possibility of flooding starting in February 2023 in several regions of the country.

The second scenario is related to the production of equipment, its transport and the training of technicians, at central, national, provincial and district levels, on how to operate the equipment. This scenario means significantly tinkering with deadlines. Whoever does this is the Parliament, under proposal of the Government. The CNE has already done this and submitted the proposal to the Government.

When in 2021 the CNE proposed to the government that voter registration begin in February and elections be held in October, it was already aware that registration in this month would not be

feasible, but it had to do so to meet legal deadlines. The law states that elections must be scheduled 18 months in advance (article 6, of Law 8/2013, February 27). The same legislation establishes that the number of mandates must be announced 180 days before the elections and candidates must be presented no later than 75 days before the elections.

The Council of Ministers approved in March this year this proposal for a census, for 20 February, and elections, for 11 October. The CNE started working on the basis of these dates, even though it recognized their impracticality. Today, the potato is in the Government's hands. It is up to the Government to decide whether to violate the law and force registration for February, or to proceed with a punctual review of the Electoral Law. What is certain is that, if it moves forward to a punctual review, the Government will have to propose to Parliament a reduction of the deadlines for the phases of the electoral process such as: the deadlines for announcing mandates, for presenting candidacies, and for electoral campaigns.

## Other problems

The late disbursement of funds by the Government (it only happened in late September and early October) was the main cause for the delay of the whole process. The consortium that will produce the material proposed two means of transport to get it into the country: sea and air ([see bulletin 5 here](#)). However, the most ideal scenario (air transport) has its problems: the substantial budget increase and the sensitivity of the equipment, which makes its transport require special licenses. In other words, the option for air transport forces an increase in the electoral budget. The transport of this type of material requires special care, which imposes the need to adapt the means of transport itself for this purpose. The fact is that this type of cargo is considered heavy and dangerous due to the fact that the batteries in this equipment are potentially explosive. This is why, according to a member of the CNE, there are countries that do not allow airplanes containing this type of equipment to cross their airspace. For this to happen, a license must be obtained to cross the airspace of certain countries.


The other problem is related to the timings of the training of technicians to operate the equipment. On training, STAE technicians will have to go to the factory (outside the country) to receive training on the handling and operationalization of the equipment. On their return, they will have to start training national technicians who will train the national trainers. The national trainers will have to train the provincial technicians and the district technicians, who will carry out the census. Enough time must be provided for a proper voter registration.

The CNE chairman, Carlos Matsinhe, admitted last week that there is a need to change the dates of the census for better organization.

## CNE to hear from political parties

The CNE will begin meetings in the next few days with the political parties to show the scenario of the need to move the voter registration dates, without moving the date of the elections.

The meetings will determine the final decision of the government and parliament. It seems that the political parties are already aware of the problem and are receptive to a punctual review. The final decision is in the hands of the government and parliament.

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