

PRESS STATEMENT

Media Contact
Jerry Abuga | Lorine Achieng
Media Council of Kenya
Tel: +254-20-2737058 | +254 723 999 158 | +254 723 795 020
Email: communications@mediacouncil.or.ke

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA COUNCIL OF KENYA AND GOVERNMENT ROLE IN PRESIDENTIAL AND LOCAL DEBATES IN MEDIA

The Media Council of Kenya (MCK) is an independent national institution established by the Media Council Act, No. 20 of 2013 for purposes of setting of media standards and ensuring compliance with those standards as set out in Article 34(5) of the Constitution and for connected purposes.

In order to promote citizen participation, democracy and issue-based election campaigns, the Media Council of Kenya, the Media Owners Association (MOA) and the Kenya Editors' Guild (KEG) launched a steering committee for the Presidential and Running Mate debates on March 2, 2022. A secretariat headed by Mr Clifford Machoka of Nation Media Group, Mr Leo Mutisya of the Media Council of Kenya and Ms Rosalia Omungo of Kenya Editors' Guild was also launched. Preparations for the debates are at an advanced stage and the secretariat meets regularly in the MCK boardroom to plan for the same.

In the MCK election preparedness work plan, supported and funded by the Government of Kenya and other local and international partners, MCK seeks to undertake several activities to support the sector through various stakeholders and approaches including support to the Presidential and Running Mates debates and local based debates through county-based media outlets on Governorship, Senatorial and Woman representative debates.

It is worth noting that more than 200 radios and television stations and digital media outlets though legally recognised by MCK are not members of the Editors Guild or the Media Owners Association are therefore not part of the national debates.

Having received requests from several media associations and professional groups to assist in organising local language debates for gubernatorial, senatorial and women representative debates, MCK requested some of them to nominate persons to sit in a technical group to coordinate themselves and approached other interest groups and individuals to join the initiative.

In furtherance of its mandate as guided by Subsection 5(2) of the MCK Act and to allow it to draw from public funds to support this initiative, the Council wrote to the Cabinet Secretary for ICT, Innovation and Youth Affairs on March 7, 22, forwarding names from a cross-section of the media landscape and requesting for gazettelement of the same. This was eventually done vide Kenya Gazette 3833 of April 8, 2022. The Cabinet Secretary did not alter the list forwarded to his office.

The Media Council is therefore co-convenor and member to both the Presidential debates secretariat and local media debates working group where both logistical and financial resources have been dedicated.

Pursuant to its mandate as an independent regulator established by an Act of Parliament, MCK works closely and is guided by several laws and institutions established by the Constitution of Kenya among them the Ministry of ICT, through which the Council reports to the National Assembly and other oversight bodies. None of these public institutions have attempted to interfere with the independence of the MCK or indeed the Media Complaints Commission.

The Media Council of Kenya recognises 28 media Associations, support groups and societies in addition to 6,500 accredited journalists and more than 550 recognised media houses. The Council works with these groups individually and in different thematic groups, regions and needs, and engages all on equal terms.

The Media Council of Kenya remains committed to working closely with and bringing together industry stakeholders to promote press freedom and to ensure professionalism in reportage of matters of national interest.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Omwoyo Omwoyo". The signature is stylized with large, overlapping loops and flourishes.

David Omwoyo Omwoyo

Chief Executive Officer & Secretary to the Council