



Republic of Namibia

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Minister's Response on Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail

- 1. What is your view on the use of the EVMs without paper trail in all forthcoming elections (i.e. by-elections, Local and Regional Authority elections Presidential and National Assembly elections)?**

The Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN) has officially and successfully used the Electronic Voting Machines (in its current form) in the following elections:

- i) Endola Constituency by-election
- ii) Ohangwena Constituency by-election
- iii) Bukalo local authority election
- iv) Otjinene local authority election
- v) Windhoek West Constituency by-election
- vi) 2014 Presidential and National Assembly elections

The results of all the above mentioned elections were widely accepted by all the contesting political parties and candidates as well as the voters and not one single incident or malfunction of these machines was reported during the said elections. Our experience has shown that voters of all ages have no problem using the EVM's because of its simplicity and a user friendly interface.

- 2. What is your timeline and projection of when Namibia will comply with the peremptory stipulations of the Electoral Act, as cited above?**

First of all, sub sections 3 & 4 of section 97 of the Electoral Act, Act No 4 of 2014, have not come into operation yet, therefore they cannot be considered peremptory stipulations in terms of the law. Most importantly, Honorable Members should bear in mind that the process of acquiring the EVM's started already way back in 2006. At that time the idea of a Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail was not even conceived in India. The Namibian EVM's were designed and manufactured in accordance with our own specifications which did not factor in the use of a Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail.

Let me further state that the Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail is not even being formally used in all parts of India for elections by the Electoral Commission of India. Instead, in line with the Supreme Court of India's decision the Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail is **"introduce the same in gradual stages or geographical-wise in ensuing general elections."** The ECI is only running some trials on an experimental basis with a view to add this functionality to their EVM's in future. Similarly, the Electoral Commission of Namibia will be required to do some preliminary groundwork before advising on a timeline by which such functionality would be implemented.

3. In the light of the Supreme Court ruling of India, in respect of the use of EVMs in India, the country of origin of EVMs, is it not prudent to revert back to the time proven manual system which provides baseline prove in the event of electoral challenges?

A serious misconception has been created by sceptics of the EVM with regard to its ability to produce a paper trail in the event of a dispute. In fact, the EVM can be commanded to produce a printout clearly showing to which candidate or political party each and every vote has been cast. Therefore as stated earlier, we have full confidence in the use of the EVM in its current form, and there is thus no need to revert back to the manual paper based method of casting votes.

This is the 21st century and our election management body is required to maintain a dynamic and vibrant electoral process. For your information, a high profile delegation from the Electoral Commission of Lesotho will be visiting Namibia with a specific objective to learn from our experience with the EVM. The Electoral Commission of Botswana has already shown a high interest in this voting technology and staff members of the ECN recently visited Botswana to share information about the EVM.

4. Do you think that the use of EVMs will provide the voters with the best possible options, in the event of the voter wanting to vote, but with the expressed intention to spoil his or her vote?

The ECN has been conducting a very comprehensive voter education campaign since the time when manual paper based voting was conducted with a specific objective of minimizing of eradicating spoiled ballots. It is thus not in interest of the ECN for a single vote to be spoiled even with the use of the EVM's. During the 2009 Presidential and National Assembly elections the number of spoilt ballots was equivalent to the votes needed for one seat. Do you want this to happen to your political party? Fortunately, with the EVM's the possibility of spoilt ballots is zero!

Thank you.