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**PRESS CONFERENCE BY THE CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS (CSOs)
PLATFORM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS), SUB-
PLATFORM 16 (SDG16) IN COMMEMORATION OF THE ONE YEAR
ANNIVERSARY OF THE AYAWASO WEST WUOGON BYE-ELECTION
VIOLENCE**

Friends of the Media, Ladies and Gentlemen, Good morning. On behalf of the CSOs Platform on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Sub-Platform 16 (SDG16), we are pleased to welcome you to today's Press briefing.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it will be recalled that on 31st January, 2019, there was violent attacks on innocent Ghanaians by masked and uniformed personnel of the National Security resulting in several casualties during the Ayawaso West Wuogon Bye-Elections. The brazen acts of violence perpetrated against law abiding citizens were condemned by well-meaning Ghanaians and the international community.

Today is exactly one year since this unfortunate incident. The CSOs SDG Sub-Platform on Goal 16 believes that it is imperative we commemorate the day, take stock of lessons learnt and call on all stakeholders to ensure that there will never be another Ayawaso West Wuogon incident in any of our electoral areas.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the issue of violence during elections needs to be looked at holistically. In recent times we have had a culture of political parties forming and using vigilante groups to perpetrate mayhem on persons or groups considered as opponents. Ruling parties over the years have also attempted to use state security agencies as their own private vigilante groups.

The peace and security of Ghana, a country touted as a beacon of democracy in Africa is continuously being threatened by partisan vigilantism, which rears its ugly head particularly during elections. We use this opportunity to remind the political parties that the peace and stability of this country is bigger than their ideological and personal ambitions. The good people of Ghana have chosen a system of governance and a system of electing their leaders, characterized by fair, free and open elections. We already have institutions of state that have the mandate, capacity and integrity to ensure security during elections. Vigilantes have no place in our electoral set up.

Friends from the media, Ladies and Gentlemen, whilst we acknowledge the President's good decision of setting up the Commission of Enquiry to investigate the violence and the good work by the commission, our worry has to do with implementation of key recommendations. Not much has been heard of implementation after government issued its white paper on the Commission of Inquiry's report. The culture of impunity related to electoral violence persists because culprits are not made to face the full rigours of the law.

We are urging government and the leadership of political parties to:

1. Implement the Vigilantism and Related Offences Law by making examples of persons or groups affiliated to political parties to send a strong signal to potential offenders.

2. Allow the state security agencies with responsibilities during elections to undertake their duty without influence.
3. Political parties should not incite their supporters to be violent but rather support the state institutions to do their work and channel complains and grievances to the appropriate quarters.
4. We would like to remind our state security institutions that they serve at the pleasure of the people. They should resist partisan influence and show themselves to be neutral, fair and committed to the colours of Ghana, and none other.

Ladies and Gentlemen, CSOs Platform on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Sub-Platform 16 (SDG16) which advocates for ‘Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions’ recognizes the onus of all stakeholders towards a peaceful election in 2020 and beyond.

Thank you for coming.

Signed by the UNDERLISTED ORGANIZATIONS

1. Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition (GACC)
2. Community Focus Foundation Ghana (CFF-Ghana)
3. West Africa Network for Peace Building (WANEP-Ghana)
4. Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana)
5. Ghana Integrity Initiative (GII)
6. SEND-Ghana
7. Renel Ghana Foundation
8. Youth Research Network of Ghana (YORNG)
9. CSOs against Political Vigilantism (CCSAPV)
10. Sisters Next Door
11. WUZDA Ghana (WUZDA)
12. ABAK Foundation
13. PACKS Africa
14. Foundation for Security and Development in Africa (FOSDA)
15. Positive Action Against Poverty
16. Access to Life Foundation
17. Institute for Liberty & Policy Innovation
18. Lamaconsult Foundation
19. NORSAAC
20. Democratic Credentials Network Ghana (DCN-Ghana)
21. Federation of Muslim Women’s Associations in Ghana (FOMWAG)
22. CODAC