



## **Media Capacity Building Workshop on Serious and Organised Crime (SOC) Threats During Elections; 7 February 2024.**

### **COMMUNIQUE**

#### **PREAMBLE**

**WE**, media practitioners and civil society actors, who participated in the one-day workshop on SOC Threats During Elections held on Wednesday, 7 February 2024 at the Fiesta Royale Hotel in Accra; organised by the Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition (GACC), Africa Centre for Energy Policy (ACEP), and Ghana Integrity Initiative (GII);

**Noting** that the workshop themed "To Enhance the Media's Capacity to Contribute to the Fight against Serious and Organised Crime (SOC) Threats in the Lead-up to the 2024 elections," provided a platform for more than 65 practitioners selected from various public and private-owned media organisations as well as some civil society organisations to increase awareness and interest in the issues of elections and SOC;

**Noting** that the workshop formed part of the project titled "Safeguarding Ghana's Stability in the Face of Serious and Organised Crime (SOC) Threats During the Elections" which has the objective of deepening public understanding through the media, enhance monitoring mechanisms, and garner commitment from both the public and political actors to combat SOC;

**Recognising** that media practitioners are entrusted with power as the fourth estate of the political realm to play a pivotal role in shaping the country's democratic narrative. Hence, the workshop was important for equipping media professionals with the knowledge necessary to effectively integrate the combatting of SOC threats into their coverage and preparations for the 2024 elections;

**Acknowledging** that there are policies and laws in place that prohibit the perpetration of SOC activities in Ghana;

**Worried** that the spectre of SOC looms, presenting a real and present danger to the integrity of elections in Ghana due to the potential use of illicit methods to achieve victory during elections;

**Identifying** that there are weaknesses and gaps in existing legal, policy and operational regimes, which hamper effective investigation and prosecution of SOC-related crimes,

including the fact that law enforcement often lags behind social and technological changes, creating legal challenges to law enforcement agencies;

**Concerned** that profit-seeking organised crime groups currently enjoy stronger and more widespread opportunities to interfere with electoral processes driven by electoral trends such as increasing competitiveness of electoral campaigns and polarisation of politics.

We, therefore, resolve as follows:

- i. To use our media platforms to support the commitment to confront the grave issues of SOC that threaten the very core of Ghana's democratic fabric;
- ii. Factor the needs of state enforcement bodies into our reportage on SOC and electoral issues; and
- iii. To be more deliberate and diligent when covering SOC and electoral issues.

**As a way forward, we recommend the following:**

- i. Government must equip law enforcement and investigative bodies with appropriate high-tech crime units that respond to quick investigations to assist law enforcement agencies;
- ii. Law Enforcement officials have to be made cyber sensitive through adequate training and supported by an expert group with specialised knowledge in the relevant fields;
- iii. NCE should collaborate with the media, CSOs, and other stakeholders to undertake comprehensive public education on SOC issues; and
- iv. Government should ensure that state agencies are properly resourced to carry out their functions innovatively.
- v. The Electoral Commission must undertake the requisite legal reforms to ensure that political parties capture donations to candidates and expenditures by candidates who represent their party in public elections in order to guarantee comprehensive accountability with regards to the financing of electoral campaigns.