

REMARKS BY POLICE SPOKESPERSON MR. BRUNO ISOHI SHIOSO, OGW, AIG, DURING A REFLECTION MEETING ON MEDIA ACCESS TO INFORMATION POST THE 2022 GENERAL ELECTION ON 15TH OCTOBER 2022 AT SEWELA LODGE, NAIVASHA.

**The CEO – Media Council of Kenya,
Distinguished Guests,
Esteemed Members of the Fourth Estate,
All Protocols Observed,
Ladies and Gentlemen.**

Good Morning.

It is with great pleasure that I stand before you in honor of an invitation by the Media Council of Kenya to be part of this esteemed gathering, and more, to share some reflections on our longstanding partnerships. Such reflections become more relevant at this time when we are emerging from a national exercise of a General Elections in which both the media and police were critical stakeholders.

Therefore, after a momentous event such as a General Election, it is not only fair and good manners to reconvene as key players in reflection, take stock and learn, but more importantly, decide on how to use such lessons learned and accruing knowledge in aid on how we can better plan for the future and improve our individual and collective performances and outcomes.

Firstly, let me acknowledge that I am here as the representative of the National Police Service, an agency loved and loathed in equal measure. Many say, and rightful so, that police are *“damn if they do, and damn if they don’t”*! But for us police practitioners, we have come to terms with this conflicting situation, do take everything in stride, and continue to serve and protect with passion. And we are not stoic and indifferent due to professional pride, but well-knowing that the territory that we serve in is a wicked one. This is why, as police are wont to say, we are the *“thin-blue-line”* of humanity, standing between virtue and evil. As such, and as a consequence of our service delivery aspirations, we please some, and we rub some the wrong way!

This reality has in the past sadly brought about many regrettable conflicts between police and the public, more so the media. We have oftentimes pulled from opposing sides than from the same end of the rope. And most of these unnecessary conflicts have occurred during elections - a time of high-octane emotions with limited tolerance levels.

With the above knowledge firmly in place, the National Police Service purposed to approach the 2022 elections with a different policing mindset. Firstly, we understood the onerous role played by media to inform, educate and generally shape public discourse around critical electoral agendas. Secondly, we appreciated that we as police - and I borrow a quote from President Lyndon Baines Johnson in reference to then director of FBI Edgar Hoover to stress this – are better off with the media being *“inside the tent pissing out, than outside the tent pissing in.”* Armed with this fore knowledge and decision-making, we as NPS designed an

inclusive media liaison strategy. This strategy was ably communicated across the length and breadth of the Service, and through which we unequivocally clarified the need to embrace and work with the media as valued partners to our policing course and objectives.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I will therefore proudly affirm that as the country held peaceful elections, and as the police played their integral part and were eventually celebrated for their proactive role of keeping the peace and security, the media too was part of this great success story and thus need to be feted too.

Through the Office of the Police Spokesperson, police worked closely and tirelessly with all Media Houses, social media practitioners, including mainstreaming such efforts through the liaison of Media Council of Kenya. We shared all information for public consumption through media outlets, carried out a robust peace messaging campaign jointly, and literally compared our notes with our media sources on virtually everything. We even went a step further, through the Office of the Police Spokesperson, and remained on call, having the backs of all our media colleagues. Through this act of benevolence, we managed to resolve some work-related conflicts encountered by journalist with the police whilst on their news gathering beats. And this, we did through the able facilitation of MCK, and more specifically, Ms. Dinah Ondari.

These are great success stories of collaboration and partnerships that we must tell. They are stories that we should also archive, and reference in future. Simply put, they are stories that shall give us a rich foundational baseline to ensconce future relationships between police and media.

I am also happy to note, that as an indicator of improved police-media relations in the context of elections and beyond, we recorded insignificant, if not no major incidents pitting police against the media. This is a laudable outcome of our deliberate strategy of police professionalism and responsiveness towards core issues. But should there be any unresolved issues that I may not be aware of, I give a personal assurance to attend to such matters once brought to my attention.

Moving forward, and with a focus to deepen our relationships further, we as NPS shall continue to align our work philosophy and training doctrine to the dictates of and adherence to human rights, inclusive of the right to information as facilitated by a free media. We shall continue to calibrate and improve on our training curriculum to focus more on police-media relations; and contribute more and meaningfully to a free and fair society through a universal access to information. This is because an informed society is an empowered one, hence an asset also to law enforcement efforts, since it is only through ignorance that crime thrives.

Last but not the least, dear colleagues, on behalf of the NPS, allow me to underscore a message of hope, fraternity and service to the nation by all of us who are charged with the courage of doing the tough business: the business of securing people and their properties

on one hand and the business of searching for and telling the tough stories that need to be told for the betterment of society and humanity on the other.

Thank you all.

**BRUNO ISOHI SHIOSO, OGW
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