PRESS ADDRESS BY THE CITIZENS' PLATFORM ON CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM (CPCR)

THE CSO POSITION ON THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW PROCESS AND THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION PAPER

Accra, 15 September 2026

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen of the press, stakeholders in support of constitutional reform

On behalf of the Citizens' Platform on Constitutional Reform, I want to warmly welcome you and thank you for honouring our invitation. We deeply appreciate the vital role you play in encouraging public debate and holding our institutions accountable.

It is especially significant that we are meeting today, 15 September 2026, as the world marks the International Day of Democracy. This year's theme emphasizes inclusive dialogue and bringing diverse voices into decision-making. This occasion reminds us that democracy extends beyond elections: it depends on respect for human rights and the rule of law, accountable institutions, meaningful public participation and the inclusion of every voice.

Our pursuit of constitutional reform is therefore an expression of democracy itself. It offers us an opportunity to listen to one another, confront the weaknesses in our constitutional arrangements and build a system of governance that responds more effectively to the needs and aspirations of the people of Ghana.

About the Citizens Platform on Constitutional Reform

Before I go any further, let me take a moment to tell you a little about the Citizens' Platform on Constitutional Reform, who we are, how we came together and why this work matters so deeply to us.

About a year ago, a number of civil society organisations began talking to one another about the constitutional review process. We recognised that this process was far too important for any one organisation, or any small group of people, to follow alone. We therefore decided to come together, combine our experience and build a common platform through which citizens could follow the process, understand what was at stake and make their voices heard.

That was how the Citizens' Platform on Constitutional Reform was born.

The Platform is convened by CDD-Ghana, Democracy Hub and the STAR-Ghana Foundation. Since its formation, it has grown into a broad national coalition of more than one hundred civil society organisations, labour unions and professional bodies. It also brings together individual citizens who care about the future of our democracy and want to play an active part in shaping it.

With the support of our partners, we have organised training programmes across the country. We have developed accessible guides and other public-education materials to help people understand the constitutional review process, the issues being considered and the different ways in which they can participate. We have also created opportunities for citizens and organised groups to discuss the reforms and contribute their perspectives.

Our purpose is to help citizens speak for themselves and to ensure that those leading the reform process hear them clearly.

Our purpose is to help ensure that the constitutional reform process is firmly grounded in the lived realities, needs and aspirations of the Ghanaian people.

We want a process that is open, transparent and genuinely participatory. A process that reaches beyond Accra and gives citizens in every part of the country a meaningful opportunity to be heard.

We believe that the ongoing Constitutional reform must also earn the trust and civic legitimacy that come from genuine public participation. People must understand what is being proposed, be able to express their views freely, and see that their contributions have been taken seriously. That is the only way the final outcome can earn the confidence of the Ghanaian people and stand the test of time.

We can all agree that Ghana's Constitution belongs to the Ghanaian people. It does not belong to the Government of the day. It does not belong to Parliament, political parties, lawyers or experts. All these institutions and groups have important roles to play, but the Constitution ultimately belongs to the people.

And if the Constitution belongs to the people, then the people must be fully involved in every significant step taken to review or change it. They must be informed. They must be consulted. They must be given a genuine opportunity to express their views. Most importantly, they must be able to see how their contributions influence the final outcome.

That is why the Citizens' Platform exists: to follow the reform process closely, promote public understanding and participation, and help safeguard the transparency, credibility and integrity of the process from beginning to end.

Purpose of Today's Press Conference

We are here today to present the Civil Society's Position paper on the ongoing review of the 1992 Constitution. In particular, we will address the process being followed, the recommendations made by the Constitution Review Committee, and the Government's Position Paper responding to those recommendations.

Our detailed views are contained in the Position Paper we are releasing today. We encourage the media, public institutions, civil society organisations and all interested citizens to read it carefully and engage with the issues it raises.

This morning, however, we want to focus on the central concerns at the heart of our position, what we believe is at stake, where we think the process is falling short, and

what must be done to ensure that constitutional reform reflects the will and aspirations of the Ghanaian people.

How We Got Here

Let us begin by recognising how we arrived at this moment, and by giving credit where it is due. In 2025, the President responded to a long-standing national call and established the Constitution Review Committee. The Committee did substantial work across the country and submitted its Final Report on 29 January 2026. On 28 July 2026, the Government published that report together with its own Position Paper, and it has since committed to move from review to implementation through the Constitution Review Implementation Committee.

We do not take this lightly. Ghana has attempted constitutional reform before and allowed good work to gather dust. That the Government has engaged the Committee's recommendations seriously, accepted several of them, and set out to carry them into law, is itself an achievement. We acknowledge it, and we thank the Government for it.

We come to this exercise as partners, and our purpose is to help the reform succeed.

We also come with one caution, and we hope that you the media present here can carry it clearly. We believe that how we make this Constitution matters as much as what we put inside it.

And so, we begin where any credible constitutional reform exercise must begin. That is by looking at the implementation process itself before we come to the content of the recommendations

Process Guarantees We are Asking for.

As we are all aware, the recommendations on the table are some of the most far-reaching proposals for constitutional reform since 1992. More than fifty provisions of the Constitution are affected. More than twenty of them touch the entrenched clauses, the parts that only the people can change, at a referendum.

I think we can all agree that before we debate which provisions should be changed, what new rules should be introduced or what powers should be limited, we must first agree on how those decisions will be made. Who will be heard? How will the competing views be considered? In what order will the reforms proceed? And how will the Ghanaian people ultimately give their consent?

These may seem like some routine procedural concerns. But we can assure you that they go to the legitimacy of the entire exercise. That is why our first concern is to ensure that the constitutional reform process is clear, inclusive, transparent and protected from partisan control.

This is why we are asking that the Government commits to **four key guarantees** with respect to how the implementation process will be rolled out.

a. ***Demand for a Constitutional Reform Implementation and Roadmap Act***

1. The first guarantee we are calling for is a clear implementation roadmap backed by law in order to safeguard the process. As the very first step in this process, we ask the Government to introduce and secure the passage of a Constitutional Reform Implementation and Roadmap Act.

2. Based on past experiences, we believe that the implementation process should not remain a statement of good intentions or a process that can be changed at any time. This is why are asking that the process should have the force of law.

3. Many of you will remember that this is not the first time we have put in place an implementation committee to implement constitutional reforms. In 2012, an Implementation Committee chaired by Professor E. V. O. Dankwa was set up to carry forward the recommendations of the earlier Professor Fiadjoe constitutional review exercise. We didn't follow through with the amendments that that Implementation Committee drafted.

4. After that, we saw something similar happen again in 2019. This time, the proposed amendments concerned local government reforms. A referendum was announced and preparations began. When the whole country appeared ready to move forward, the entire process was called off because we couldn't achieve consensus among the two main political parties.

5. We believe that as a country, we must all learn from those lessons and act differently now to safeguard the process.

6. So, what do these experiences teach us? They teach us that setting up a committee is not enough. Preparing bills is not enough. And announcing a referendum is not enough. Without clear rules, firm timelines and broad national agreement, even the most promising reform process can lose momentum and eventually come to nothing.

7. This is why we are asking that the Implementation Roadmap law should set out, in clear terms, the order in which the reforms will be undertaken, the institution responsible for each stage, and the time within which every stage must be completed. It should establish firm milestones from public consultation and the preparation of legislation to parliamentary consideration, civic education and, where required, a referendum. In short, every Ghanaian should be able to see what is to be done, who is responsible for doing it and when it must be completed.

8. In addition, we are aware that there are over 50 amendments contemplated; as well as over 14 bills that must be prepared, including both new and amendment bills. A reform programme of this scale cannot realistically be completed within the life of a single Parliament; and could possibly extend beyond the 2024 election. In other words, the process will have to continue across parliamentary terms and possibly under a different government.

9. Without a legally binding timetable, the risk is that the process can either be called off or the work of the Implementation Committee would not be carried forward.

10. That is why we believe the roadmap must be backed by a law that clearly sets out the sequence, responsibilities and timelines would keep the reform programme on track across any election or change of government. It would also ensure that the process does not depend on the political will or priorities of any one government. It would also give the public a clear standard against which the government and the other political actors can be held accountable.

11. We cannot emphasize enough that Constitutional reform is a national undertaking and so its success must not depend on the political calendar.

b. Clarify the Mandate of the Implementation Committee

12. The second process guarantee we are asking for is a clear qualification of the mandate for the Implementation Committee.

13. We believe that the Committee should not be limited to copying only the Government's Position Paper into amendment bills.

14. We are asking that its mandate be openly defined as one of genuine consensus-building, with the authority to recommend changes to the Government's own positions where the national interest requires it. And we ask that any bill which runs ahead of this work be paused, including the Conduct of Public Officers Bill, which is already moving before the Committee has consulted and reported.

15. So far, organised labour and other civil society actors have presented serious positions on these reforms. We understand that some Political parties will also soon issue their own position papers on the proposals. These are important voices and stakeholders that cannot simply be ignored.

16. This is why we believe that if the Governments restricts the Committee, such that the entire process simply enacts what the government has chosen and the rest are set aside, the reform can begin to feel like it has been hijacked by a political party. We are afraid that this will turn this important national exercise turns into a partisan one, and we could lose the public confidence that is critical to the success of the effort.

c. Fairness of the Referendum

17. The third commitment we are asking of the Government concerns the referendum itself. When the time comes for Ghanaians to vote on the entrenched provisions, the referendum must give them a fair and meaningful choice.

18. We are therefore asking the Government to commit, now, that it will not place more than twenty different amendments before the country as one package, with one "Yes" or "No" answer. These amendments deal with very different questions, ranging from the term of the President to the funding of local government.

19. It is probable that a person may support one of these changes and strongly oppose another. This is why the referendum must allow that person's vote to reflect those different views.

20. To be clear, we are not suggesting that there must be a separate ballot question for every individual amendment. That can be impractical. What we are asking for is a manageable number of clear questions, with amendments grouped only where they genuinely deal with the same subject. Unrelated proposals must not be bundled together for convenience.

21. In addition, the questions must also be written in plain language. This would ensure that every voter would be able to understand exactly what each vote will change and what it will leave untouched.

d. Ringfenced Funding for Civic education

22. The fourth guarantee we are asking for is for the Government to announce and ringfence real funding for civic education.

23. We are asking that the money for civic education be set aside and protected in law, led by the National Commission for Civic Education, and released well before the referendum.

24. Why does this matter?

25. Because for the referendum to succeed, the Constitution requires that at least 40% of all registered voters take part, and that 75% approve the proposals. Those are very high thresholds which cannot be cleared by a campaign squeezed into the final weeks.

26. The public must have enough time to consider each question before the referendum is held.

27. We believe that no Ghanaian should be asked to decide the future of the Constitution without a fair chance to understand what is being asked. We also believe that Civic education is the ground on which the legitimacy of this reform will stand. This is why we must recognize their importance and treat them that way from the very beginning.

Second: Where We Agree with the Government

28. Having set out our concerns about the process, let me now turn to the substance of the proposed reforms. We want to be equally clear about the many areas in which we agree with the Government.

29. Our intervention today is not about taking contrary positions to the Government. On the contrary, there are a lot of proposals in the Government's Position Paper that we welcome and support. While I cannot address every area of agreement today, I will highlight just16 of the more prominent areas of agreement. This is by no means an exhaustive list.

30. We support:

a. Creating an independent Political Parties Regulatory Commission to regulate political parties and campaigns, while maintaining our position that the Commission must be established and protected under the Constitution rather than left to ordinary legislation; allowing every party member in good standing to vote in the election of party executives and the selection of parliamentary and presidential candidates; and regulating campaign periods, expenditure, financial disclosure and the abuse of incumbency.

b. Moving the presidential election to the first week of November, so as to extend the transition period from one month to two, and confirming in the Constitution that presidential and parliamentary elections must be held on the same day.

c. Placing binding constitutional safeguards on the use of certificates of urgency, so that they are limited to genuine emergencies, supported by publicly available reasons and subject to cross-party approval, adequate parliamentary scrutiny and public consultation.

d. Introducing proportional representation in Parliament to broaden political participation and improve the representation of women, young people and persons with disabilities, while maintaining our objection to the Government's proposal to simply add twenty-four seats to the existing constituency seats.

e. Allowing a Ghanaian citizen by birth to serve in Parliament without being disqualified simply because that person also holds the citizenship of another country.

f. Giving ordinary Members of Parliament the power to introduce bills. Clarifying the limitations placed on Private Members' Bills by defining what qualifies as a money bill, so that Members of Parliament have broader power to introduce bills and motions.

g. Making a parliamentary vote of censure binding, so that a Minister censured by the required majority must be removed from office and cannot be reappointed during the same term.

h. Placing clear limits on what the President and Government can do between election day and the swearing-in of the next President, including preventing last-minute appointments, unbudgeted contracts or wage increases, dealings in public lands or assets, and bills introduced under certificates of urgency, and making any action taken in breach of those limits void.

i. Separating the office of Attorney-General from the Cabinet and creating a separate Minister of Justice, while maintaining our principled position that responsibility for investigating and prosecuting corruption should still be transferred to an independent, constitutionally established Anti-Corruption and Ethics Commission.

j. Reducing to fourteen days the period for filing a presidential election petition, requiring the Supreme Court to determine it within thirty days,

and requiring the Electoral Commission to promptly disclose all relevant election data.

k. Allowing citizens to elect their Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives, while maintaining our position that the elections must be open and unfiltered, without presidential nomination, shortlisting or vetting by institutions under the Executive; and reforming the process for electing Presiding Members of District Assemblies.

l. Establishing an Independent Public Emoluments Commission with a clear constitutional mandate to determine pay and benefits across the public sector, including those of the President and Article 71 officeholders, so that officeholders no longer effectively determine their own remuneration.

m. Giving citizens a direct route to propose amendments to the Constitution, while maintaining our position that the signature threshold should remain between five and seven-and-a-half per cent of registered voters, so that the mechanism is demanding but not placed beyond practical reach.

n. Expanding the functions of the National Commission for Civic Education to include organising national presidential debates and convening civic forums and town hall meetings, under independent and impartial rules and with adequate, protected funding.

o. Passing a comprehensive and enforceable Human Rights Act before, or at the same time as, the constitutional amendments, ensuring that it carries the full range of rights proposed and does not delay, narrow or weaken any right Ghanaians already enjoy.

p. Completing the abolition of the death penalty by removing its remaining constitutional references and making all consequential amendments, including the required amendment to Article 94.

31. This list represents a considerable amount of common ground, between us and the Government. We also acknowledge the Government's willingness to accept many of the Committee's recommendations and to recognise the need for change in these important areas.

32. This common ground gives the country a strong foundation on which to move the reform process forward. It also shows that, despite the areas in which we disagree, there is still considerable room for national consensus.

Third: Where We Do Not Agree, and Ask for a Change of Course

33. Let me now turn to the areas where we do not agree with the Government's Position Paper and where we are asking for a change of course.

34. Our disagreements concern some of the central questions that brought Ghanaians to the constitutional reform process in the first place: the concentration of power in the presidency, the independence of institutions, the accountability of public officers, the protection of public resources, and the ability of citizens to participate meaningfully in government.

35. In some cases, the Government has rejected the Committee's recommendations. In others, it has accepted the objective but proposed a different approach, one which, in our view, does not adequately address the underlying problem. There are also instances where the Government has chosen to leave important protections to ordinary legislation when we believe they should be secured in the Constitution itself.

36. We have identified sixteen areas in which we are asking the Government to reconsider its position. We will take them one by one, explain our concern and state clearly the change we believe is required.

37. We ask the Government to reconsider its Position to:

    a. Extend the term of office of the President and Parliament from four years to five years. We believe the four-year term should be retained, particularly because the reforms already accepted on the election date, the transition period and the powers of an outgoing administration address many of the concerns used to justify the extension. Moreover, if government reconsiders its opposition to proposals to limit presidential power, protect the independence of institutions, promote inter-branch accountability, the current four-year term will be sufficient.

    b. Reject the proposed framework for limiting presidential appointing powers. We believe appointments should be made according to the character of the office, with independent and oversight institutions filled through transparent, competitive and merit-based processes rather than remaining under the broad discretion of the President.

    c. Continue allowing Members of Parliament to serve at the same time as Ministers, Deputy Ministers or Regional Ministers. We support a clear separation between the Executive and Parliament and also believe that Members of Parliament should be constitutionally prohibited from serving on the boards, governing councils and procurement committees of publicly funded institutions.

    d. Increase the size of Parliament to 300 by adding only twenty-four proportional-representation seats. We believe the proposed study on proportional representation should be conducted now and used to design a meaningful system within the existing ceiling of 276 Members of Parliament.

    e. Refuse to establish the proposed Devolution Commission as an independent constitutional body. We believe such a Commission is necessary to coordinate fiscal and administrative decentralisation, assess the viability of districts and prepare the country properly for the election of local chief executives.

    f. Make the election of Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives subject to presidential nomination, shortlisting and vetting by institutions under the Executive. We believe the elections must be open and unfiltered, so that every qualified citizen has a fair opportunity to contest.

g. Refuse to recognise a constitutional right to meaningful public participation in law-making. We believe Parliament should have a clear constitutional duty to consult the public and give citizens a genuine opportunity to contribute before important laws are passed.

h. Guarantee that only eighty per cent of the District Assemblies Common Fund will be transferred directly to the Assemblies. We support increasing the minimum allocation from five to ten per cent of national revenue and transferring the entire amount to the Assemblies without deductions or central government commitments.

i. Continue to allocate a share of the District Assemblies Common Fund to Members of Parliament. We believe this confuses the legislative role of Members of Parliament with the executive and development responsibilities of District Assemblies. All such allocations should therefore end.

j. Establish the proposed Democracy Fund only through ordinary legislation and leaving its funding to annual executive discretion. We believe the Fund, as well as the funding of the Electoral Commission, the NCCE, CHRAJ and other key democratic institutions, should be constitutionally protected and ring-fenced.

k. Establish a statutory Public Ethics Commission instead of the independent, constitutionally established Anti-Corruption and Ethics Commission proposed by the Committee. We believe responsibility for investigating and prosecuting corruption should be consolidated in that independent Commission, with the Office of the Special Prosecutor integrated into it and corruption prosecutions protected from politically influenced discontinuance.

l. Retain the Council of State largely as an advisory body under presidential influence. We believe its composition should be reformed, the tenure of its members separated from that of the President, and its recommendations on the appointment and removal of independent constitutional officeholders made binding and, where appropriate, public.

m. Remove the National Media Commission's constitutional responsibility for protecting the independence of the state-owned media and transferring control to the President and institutions under the Executive. We believe the Commission's authority over the state-owned media, its press-freedom mandate and its funding must remain constitutionally protected.

n. Leave out environmental rights and the principles governing natural-resource management entirely to ordinary legislation. We believe the Constitution should recognise the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and protect the right of affected communities to meaningful participation, including free, prior and informed consent.

o. Reject of an independent mechanism for investigating abuses by the security services. We believe a specialised and functionally independent security-services oversight mechanism should be established within CHRAJ, with the authority and resources to investigate complaints without depending on the institution whose officers are accused.

p. Reject of the Committee's national development-planning framework, and provide for a long-term National Development Plan approved by Parliament and anchored in the Directive Principles of State Policy, with the annual budget and every bill required to demonstrate their alignment with the Plan and the Principles and to explain any deviation, and with political parties and presidential candidates required to submit their programmes to the National Development Planning Commission for certification of formal consistency.

These issues are fundamental to us as civil society organisations. They concern the independence of our institutions, the balance of power among the branches of government, the protection of citizens' rights and the integrity of the constitutional reform process itself. We therefore urge the Government not to brush them aside or treat the positions contained in the Government's Position Paper as the final word.

We recognise that the Government and other stakeholders may not agree with us on every point. That is precisely why dialogue is important. We are asking for genuine avenues through which the Government, civil society, organised labour, political parties and other interested groups can engage openly with one another and work towards positions that can command broad national support.

Over the next few days and weeks, the Citizens' Platform will seek engagements with the President, the leadership of the opposition, the Constitution Review Implementation Committee and the leadership of Parliament. We will also confer with organised labour, professional bodies, civil society organisations and other citizens whose voices must be heard in this process.

We approach these engagements in good faith and with an open mind. Our purpose is to ensure that the disagreements we have identified receive serious consideration and that the final reforms emerge from genuine national dialogue.

Conclusion

This address, together with our full Position Paper and an abridged version of the paper, will be available on our website at www.citizensforreform.org. We will also share these documents directly with the Government, Parliament, political parties, organised labour, professional bodies, civil society organisations, media and other important stakeholders.

We call on all Ghanaians to take an active interest in this process. We encourage you to read the proposals, discuss them in your homes, workplaces and communities, ask questions and make your views known. Constitutional reform cannot be left only to politicians, lawyers or experts. The decisions being considered will affect every citizen and shape the way our country is governed for many years.

We therefore urge Ghanaians not to wait until the referendum before becoming involved. This is the time to follow the process, participate in the discussions and insist that any changes made to our Constitution reflect the considered will of the people.

Signed
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About the Citizens' Platform on Constitutional Reforms
The Citizens' Platform on Constitutional Reforms is a collaborative initiative facilitated by CDD-Ghana, STAR-Ghana Foundation, and Democracy Hub, bringing together diverse organizations, activists, and citizens to coordinate engagement, advocacy, and accountability in Ghana's ongoing constitutional reform process. It comprises over 80 citizen groups. Join us today via citizensforreform.org. You can also follow us on @ConstReformsGh on X (formerly Twitter) and @Citizens Platform on Constitutional Reforms on Facebook.