



Securing the Ballot, Sustaining the Economy: Why the Business Community Must Partner in Peaceful Elections and Safeguard Business Continuity Ahead of 2027

By Dr. Anne Nderitu, CBS ~ Commissioner, IEBC

As Kenya prepares for the 2027 General Election, one important question deserves our collective attention: how do we safeguard the integrity of our democratic process while protecting the businesses, jobs and livelihoods that sustain our economy?

This question was central to the National Business and Election Continuity Breakfast Forum, organized by the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KNCCI) in Nairobi, where I participated as one of the speakers representing the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC).

The engagement brought together voices from the electoral and business sectors to deliberate on electoral security, business continuity and economic stability ahead of the next General Election. It provided an important platform to reflect on the shared responsibility of ensuring that Kenya's democratic processes proceed peacefully without undermining the economic activities upon which millions of citizens depend.

The message was clear: peaceful elections and economic stability are closely interconnected, and safeguarding both requires deliberate planning, responsible leadership and collective action.

Why Elections and Business Continuity Matter Together

Elections are a fundamental expression of the people's democratic will. However, their significance extends beyond the ballot box to the broader social and economic environment in which Kenyans live and work.

Businesses depend on stability, investor confidence, functioning markets and predictable operating conditions. When electoral tensions escalate into violence or uncertainty, the consequences can be felt across the economy. Small traders may lose daily income, businesses may scale down operations, supply chains may be disrupted, and workers may face uncertainty about their livelihoods.

For many Kenyans, particularly small-scale entrepreneurs and casual workers, even a brief

disruption can have lasting consequences. Behind every business affected is a person, a family or a community whose well-being depends on economic activity continuing uninterrupted.

This is why engagements between electoral institutions and the business community are particularly important. They help broaden the conversation on electoral preparedness, recognizing that peaceful elections are not only a democratic necessity but also an essential foundation for economic resilience and national development.

Strengthening Preparedness for the 2027 General Election

During my contribution to the forum, I reaffirmed the Commission's commitment to delivering free, fair, credible and transparent elections. I highlighted the Election Operations Plan, the Strategic Plan and the multi-agency Election Security Arrangement Programme (ESAP) as key pillars guiding the Commission's preparedness for the 2027 General Election.

These frameworks support the Commission's efforts to strengthen institutional readiness, coordinate electoral operations and work with relevant agencies to promote a secure environment for the electoral process.

Preparing for a General Election is a substantial undertaking that requires careful planning, effective coordination and sustained engagement with stakeholders. It involves more than the logistical arrangements for polling day; it requires institutions to anticipate challenges, strengthen operational capacity and build public confidence well in advance.

The Commission's preparations must therefore be understood as an ongoing process, supported by institutional planning, cooperation with relevant partners and a shared commitment to protecting the integrity of every stage of the electoral process.

Our objective is to ensure that Kenyans can participate in the election with confidence, knowing that their democratic rights are respected and that the process is conducted in a peaceful, transparent and credible manner.

A Shared Responsibility for Peaceful Elections

One of the key messages I emphasized was that safeguarding electoral integrity cannot be the responsibility of IEBC alone. While the Commission has a constitutional mandate to conduct and supervise elections, the wider electoral environment is shaped by the conduct and decisions of many other actors.

Political leaders, candidates, political parties, security agencies, the media, civil society, the business community and citizens all have an important role to play.

I called on stakeholders to promote peace, reject electoral violence and hate speech, counter misinformation and protect the integrity of the electoral process. As the country moves towards 2027, we must be deliberate in fostering an environment where political competition does not become a source of fear, hostility or division.

As I stated during the engagement:

“Our goal is clear: every Kenyan must vote without fear, candidates must campaign freely, and electoral officials must discharge their duties without interference.”

These principles are fundamental to a credible election. Voters must be free to make their choices without intimidation. Candidates must have the opportunity to engage the electorate freely, while electoral officials must be able to perform their duties impartially and professionally.

Equally important is the need to address misinformation and hate speech. False information and inflammatory messages can undermine public confidence, deepen divisions and create unnecessary tension. Countering these challenges requires responsible communication, timely access to accurate information and cooperation among institutions and members of the public.

Peaceful elections are built not only through security arrangements and institutional preparedness but also through the choices Kenyans make in their daily interactions, public statements and political engagements.

The Business Community’s Stake in Electoral Stability

The contribution of the business community was equally significant during the forum. KNCCI Chief Executive Officer KK Mutai underscored the importance of safeguarding businesses, jobs and livelihoods by minimizing election-related disruptions.

His remarks reinforced the need to recognize business continuity as an important consideration in the broader national conversation on electoral preparedness.

Kenya’s business community plays a central role in economic growth, employment creation, investment and the provision of goods and services. From small traders and family-owned enterprises to large companies and manufacturers, businesses support millions of livelihoods and contribute to the country’s development.

Their ability to operate in a peaceful environment is therefore a matter of national importance.

When businesses remain operational, workers can continue earning, goods can reach markets, services can be delivered and families can sustain their daily needs. Stability also helps preserve investor confidence and allows entrepreneurs to make decisions based on opportunity rather than uncertainty.

The engagement provided an opportunity to reflect on how the business sector can contribute to peaceful elections while protecting its operations and the livelihoods connected to them. It also highlighted the value of continued dialogue between electoral institutions and business leaders in identifying shared concerns and strengthening preparedness.

Partnership Is Essential to Building Public Confidence

What stood out to me about this engagement was the importance of bringing different sectors around the same table to discuss a common national priority.

The electoral process does not take place in isolation from the social, political and economic realities of the country. Its success depends on institutions fulfilling their mandates, stakeholders acting responsibly and citizens having confidence in the process.

Forums such as this create opportunities for constructive dialogue, allowing institutions and the private sector to exchange perspectives, understand one another's concerns and identify areas where cooperation can make a meaningful difference.

Such partnerships are particularly important as Kenya prepares for the 2027 General Election. Early engagement enables stakeholders to discuss potential challenges before they arise and reinforces the understanding that peaceful elections require preparation long before polling day.

For the Commission, continued stakeholder engagement remains an important part of strengthening public confidence and supporting an electoral environment in which democratic participation and economic activity can coexist without fear or disruption.

Looking Ahead to 2027

As we look towards the 2027 General Election, the task ahead requires commitment, cooperation and a shared sense of responsibility. The credibility of the process will depend on effective preparation, respect for the law, responsible political engagement and the ability of all stakeholders to put the country's interests first.

My participation in the KNCCI forum reaffirmed the importance of viewing electoral preparedness through a broader national lens one that recognizes the relationship between democracy, peace, business continuity and the well-being of citizens.

The Commission remains committed to delivering peaceful, transparent, verifiable and inclusive electoral processes that uphold the will of the people. Achieving this objective calls for sustained collaboration with stakeholders and a collective determination to protect the democratic rights of every Kenyan.

Ultimately, the success of the 2027 General Election will be measured not only by the conduct of the electoral process but also by our collective ability to preserve peace, respect democratic choices and maintain the stability necessary for the country to move forward.

A credible election is a victory for democracy, but a peaceful election is also a commitment to protecting livelihoods, sustaining businesses and securing Kenya's shared future.

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