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HIGH COURT SMS

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High Court Rules Against SMSees

Highway Africa News Agency (Grahamstown)

NEWS
10 October 2007
Posted to the web 10 October 2007

By Noel Kokou Tadégnon

The High authority of audio-visual and communication (HAAC) of Togo has criticesed the use of SMSees in Togo?s election campaign.

In a watershed decision the High Court on Tuesday denounced the publication of short messages by a member of the RPT which is the rulling party in Togo to send SMS messages to potential voters.

The decision was based on information collated from mobile phone subscribers about unsolicited messages from politicians to vote for them during the country?s legislative elections on October 14, 2007. The SMS message that the public have been complaining about reads in part ?to maintain the current dynamics of reconciliation and economic growth and social stability, vote RPT?. The HAAC ruled the SMSing of messages to potential voters as unfair propaganda and as an illicit practice which does not give potential voters an opportunity to make up their minds about who to vote for. The judge said the court had taken into consideration the country?s political climate and the political wishes of many Togolese voters.

According to the HAAC the court has asked the senders of SMSees to be sensitive to the wishes of the public. The has asked the country?s political parties to follow the law or face the wrath of the law.

According to the HAAC, only television, radio broadcasting and newspaper adverts are the only legal means that the parties must use to get access to the voters.

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