

**STATEMENT BY THE NIGERIA CIVIL SOCIETY SITUATION ROOM ON
THE FCT AREA COUNCIL ELECTIONS HELD ON SATURDAY,
9TH APRIL 2016**

Issued: 6.00pm, Saturday, 9th April 2016

The Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room (Situation Room) observed the Area Council elections conducted in the Federal Capital Territory by INEC on Saturday, 9th April 2016. After an analysis of the field reports from its deployed observers, contacts and other election observer networks, makes the following fact-based observations:

1. The election was conducted in a generally peaceful atmosphere across the six area councils and there were adequate security personnel deployed at the various polling units.
2. Most polling centres observed were opened between 8:30am and 9:30am and materials arrived on time except for a few locations.
3. The re-introduced voting process (simultaneous accreditation and voting) led to a significant reduction in tensions usually associated with the previous process of separating accreditation from voting.
4. There was an improvement in the logistics for the election as there were only isolated reports of difficulty of the card reader to read the fingerprints. In such cases, incident forms were readily available for documentation.
5. Situation Room acknowledges reports of special attention granted vulnerable persons such as those with disability, the aged and nursing mothers to vote earlier than others in, Godoji Primary School, Kuje and Gado Nasko Primary School, Gwagwalada.
6. In PU37/06/01/019, Area 10 Council for Arts and Culture, although efforts were made to assist physically challenged voters, this remains a problem. The Situation Room received reports of the difficulty of physically challenged voters accessing the polling unit.
7. There are still isolated reports of adhoc staff not being adequately trained to implement the elections. In PU37/06/02/008, CBN quarters near FCT Police Headquarters, election could not start on time because the INEC adhoc staff were asking questions of observers regarding voting procedures.
8. The publicity and mobilization associated with this election seemed inadequate as many residents got knowledge about the election and restriction of movement too late to the Election Day. We think that the electoral body, the National Orientation Agency and the political parties should have done more in this regard.

9. There was a seeming lack of interest in the elections especially by residents in the more urban centres of the FCT. It was a marked departure from the participation in the last general elections conducted in the territory in 2015.
10. At PU005 Demonstration Primary School, Gwagwalada, potential voters raised concerns about party agents milling too close to the polling booth thus denying secrecy of the vote at this polling unit.
11. Situation Room observes further that the early afternoon showers in many locations in the territory disrupted the conduct of the elections, even if temporarily and exposed the lack of provision by the electoral commission for such eventuality, even during the rainy season.

Recommendations: Based on the above observations, Situation Room recommends as follows:

1. That INEC should devise a comprehensive and permanent solution to the recurring incidents of ad-hoc staff showing poor knowledge of the procedure for the elections, even though it was an isolated report in the present election.
2. More voter education, strategic engagements and enlightenment should be embarked upon by all stakeholders especially the political parties and the National Orientation Agency to ensure wider interests and participation by citizens.
3. The electoral body should always take cognisance of the seasons and weather conditions when deploying logistics for the election.
4. We call on INEC to ensure that all polling units are accessible to all persons especially the physically challenged.

This statement is issued by the Nigerian Civil Society Situation Room, a platform of more than 70 Nigerian civil society organisations working on good governance issues, including: Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre, PLAC, CLEEN Foundation, Action Aid Nigeria, Centre for Democracy and Development, Enough is Enough, JDPC, WANGONET, Election Monitor, YIAGA, CISLAC, Nigerian Women Trust Fund, Stakeholders Democracy Network, Proactive Gender Initiative and several other CSOs

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