

FIRST PRELIMINARY STATEMENT BY NIGERIA CIVIL SOCIETY SITUATION ROOM ON THE GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION IN ONDO STATE FOR SATURDAY, 26TH NOVEMBER 2016

Issued: 11:00 am, Friday, 25th November 2016

The Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room (Situation Room) is deployed to observe the Ondo State Governorship election scheduled for Saturday, November 26th 2016. Situation Room's observation of the election will cover the entire Ondo State and will be following every process of the election from deployment of materials and personnel through to commencement of polls, voting, collation and announcement of results.

Our general observations will focus on INECs preparedness for the election, deployment of security personnel and operations, during the election and the conduct of political parties.

INEC:

Situation Room notes that INEC has indicated its readiness to conduct the elections and we will like to state that as part of its observation, Situation Room will observe the following:

1. Early distribution and deployment of personnel and materials: particular attention should be paid to early deployment of materials to the Registration Area Centres in order to enable a smooth distribution process.
2. Timely opening of poll: Situation Room is concerned with the terrain of Ondo State and hopes that INECs logistics plan takes this into adequate consideration.
3. Knowledge of procedures by personnel of INEC.
4. Voting procedures: particularly the efficacy of the Smart Card Readers and emphasis on the secrecy of the ballot. Ballot boxes must be placed in such a way that ensures the secrecy of the process; and
5. The Collation process: which must be open and transparent at all times to members of the public especially the Media and Civil Society.

INEC also has a responsibility to communicate clearly and timely on the progress and process of the elections so that the people of Ondo State do not feel at any time that their votes may be compromised.

SECURITY AGENCIES:

Situation Room also notes the statement of the Nigeria Police that it is prepared for the elections and has deployed adequate personnel and materials for the exercise. We also note that other arms of the security services have indicated their preparedness for the election. Situation Room's observation of the performance of the security agencies will include:

1. Conduct of the security personnel in carrying out their duties. Security personnel should not act in any way that will restrict the process.
2. Actual presence and deployment of personnel reflective of the 26,000 personnel said to be deployed by the security agencies for the election; and
3. Welfare of security personnel deployed for the election.

In addition, the Situation Room will be observing the Police and their actions in response to acts that flout the Electoral Act and threats of violence, taking particular care for the interest of women, children and vulnerable persons. Electoral offenders who violate the law must be held accountable for offences committed no matter how highly placed.

POLITICAL PARTIES:

The Situation Room also calls on the political parties to prepare to participate in the elections. Calls for postponement of the elections by any stakeholder runs against the spirit of the electoral process and is not supported by the provisions of the Electoral Act as every political party was given adequate notice of the election, and the internal crisis of political parties should not be allowed to affect the timeline for the election.

Political parties and their candidates should conduct themselves in a way that does not trigger violence and obstruct the conduct of elections.

We urge the citizens of Ondo State to go out and peacefully cast their vote in exercise of their constitutional right to be part of the democratic process. It is also important that citizens guard their votes and ensure that they do not participate in the electoral offence of vote buying and avoid selling their votes.

The Situation Room, on its part, commits to the highest possible standards of election observation and support to the electoral process.

The Situation Room is made up of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) working in support of credible and transparent elections in Nigeria and includes such groups as Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC), CLEEN Foundation, Action Aid Nigeria, Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), Proactive Gender Initiative (PGI) Enough is Enough Nigeria, WANGONET, Partners for Electoral Reform, JDPC and Youth Initiative for Advocacy, Growth & Advancement (YIAGA). Others are Development Dynamics, Centre for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) Stakeholders Democracy Network, Human Rights Monitor, Election Monitor, Reclaim Naija, Institute for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, CITAD, Alliance for Credible Elections (ACE) CISLAC, and several other CSOs numbering more than seventy.

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