

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

Issued: 9:30 am, Sunday, 27th November 2016

The Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room (Situation Room) convened in Ondo State and deployed observers for the Governorship election on Saturday, November 26th 2016.

The Situation Room received field reports from its deployed observers and partner election observer networks from across the 18 LGAs, on INECs preparedness for the election, deployment of security personnel and operations during the election, the conduct of political parties and other stakeholders in the election process.

INEC:

Situation Room commends the professionalism displayed by the election management body, INEC during the voting process at the polling units (PU). However, there are concerns about the adequate knowledge of procedures by election personnel, especially ad-hoc staff.

Our observations and reports from the field revealed the following:

1. There was early distribution and deployment of personnel and materials, which led to the commencement of voting at the scheduled time of 8:00am across the State, taking cognizance of the peculiar terrain of the riverine areas of the State.
2. The continued application of the simultaneous accreditation and voting procedure helped in ensuring the early completion of the polls. However, the inability of the Smart Card Readers (SCR) to authenticate fingerprints in a large number of instances is still a sore point in election management. We also observed that some of the SCRs were not fully powered and lacked back up where it became necessary.
3. Although there was significant improvement in the placement of the voting cubicle and ballot boxes to guarantee the secrecy of votes, there was still concern that the general arrangement of some polling units with inadequate floor spaces compromised vote secrecy.
4. Situation Room notes improvements in INEC's collation of results. There were however challenges with receiving collated results from local governments that were distant from Akure – the State collation headquarters. This created delay in the announcement of results from all of the LGAs at the same time. There is need for further work to improve collation time in future elections.

SECURITY AGENCIES:

Situation Room commends the security agencies on the adequate deployment of personnel especially to flashpoints. Situation Room's observation of the performance of the security agencies includes:

1. Security personnel generally carried out their duties in a civil and professional manner although there were isolated incidents of misconduct by some of them. For example, in PU 005, Ward 1, Akoko South East LGA, Situation Room observed an incident where police personnel were collecting envelopes from party agents. In another incident in Irele LGA, we observed a drunk police officer who had pulled his shirt while on duty. In PU 005, Ward 3, Idanre LGA, Situation Room observed party agents giving police personnel money and when questioned, the officers claimed it was for meals.
2. The poor welfare condition of security personnel deployed for elections has become recurring. Situation Room is again concerned that many security personnel still complained of lack of support and welfare package, especially for those who were deployed from distant States of the Federation for the election. Despite assurances given by the Police that all police personnel had been given their entitlements while commenting on deployment for the election at the stakeholders meeting and observers briefing held in Akure, Ondo State, on multiple occasions deployed police personnel lamented that this was not the case. We are constrained to raise concern about the minimum standards of welfare for this assignment.
3. While observing that the Police responded to some incidents of Electoral Act violation such as impersonation, we observed however that cases of vote buying were not adequately responded to.

POLITICAL PARTIES:

The Situation Room acknowledges the full participation of all the political parties in the elections despite media reports of call for postponement by some. We also commend the political parties for adhering to the peace accord they entered into before the elections. However, incidents of vote buying by political parties continued to persist in the election. Reports of parties paying voters to induce support were received and poses a threat to free elections in Nigeria.

COMMENDATION:

Situation Room commends the electorate in Ondo State who largely conducted themselves peacefully during the election process, although initial reports indicate a modest turnout of voters.

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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