

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT BY NIGERIA CIVIL SOCIETY SITUATION ROOM ON THE RE-RUN ELECTIONS IN RIVERS STATE FOR SATURDAY, 10TH DECEMBER 2016

Issued: 4:00pm, Thursday, 8th December 2016

The Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room (Situation Room) has been closely following the build up to the Rivers re-run polls due on Saturday, December 10th 2016 and will be observing the election alongside local and international observers.

We are gravely concerned that the major political parties have repeated the practice of making incendiary allegations along with direct and indirect threats ahead of the polls. The atmosphere created by the political parties has raised expectations of violence and abuse of the poll process and will undoubtedly reduce public participation and confidence. We call on parties to use the remaining time before Saturday to modify their stances and assure of their commitment to a peaceful poll.

We note the commitment by the security services to provide adequate security with deployment plans that follow the more successful approaches seen in Edo and Ondo States. The commitment by the Deputy Inspector General Police to challenge vote buying is welcome and we hope to observe this effected firmly in a non-partisan manner. INEC has described preparations for the poll that seek to prevent abuse and tackle previous logistics problems. We call on political parties to engage with them positively from the leadership to polling unit level.

Our observations before the poll highlight the following key issues:

- There are high levels of distrust on all sides and it is therefore crucial that INEC and Security Service staff show the highest standards of neutrality at all times.
- Transparency of how INEC manages elections results is crucial – as is political party agent participation and the use of legitimate channels to voice concerns.
- Public Communication is critical – decisions on key sensitive issues such as the Tai LGA court case must be effectively communicated and boost confidence in the fairness of the Rivers poll.

In support of the above we make the following calls:

- The major political parties should deploy Party Agents who engage constructively and civilly thereby boosting public confidence in the checks and balances of the poll.

- INEC should release widely within the minimum time of the poll the breakdown of results from December 10th 2016 and March 19th 2016 polls with ward and unit level results included.
- Security Services should monitor personnel behavior, reiterate internally the need for neutrality, and provide clear public briefings of action against individuals or units who behave in a partisan manner.

The Nigeria Civil society Situation Room will be observing the Re-run Election and commits to providing independent and credible reports on the process. We further encourage voters and the people of Rivers State to have confidence in the process and to actively and peacefully turn out to vote in the Election.

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), Nigeria Women Trust Fund, CISLAC, and several other CSOs numbering more than seventy.

Contact information:

Website: situationroom.placng.org

Email: situationroom@placng.org

Twitter: @situationroomng

#NigeriaSituationRoom

Facebook: [Facebook.com/situationroomnigeria](https://www.facebook.com/situationroomnigeria)

Hotlines: 09095050505,09032999919