

FIRST PRELIMINARY STATEMENT BY NIGERIA CIVIL SOCIETY SITUATION ROOM ON THE ANAMBRA STATE GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION HOLDING SATURDAY, 18TH NOVEMBER 2017

Issued: 2:00 pm, Thursday, 16th November 2017

The Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room (Situation Room) is presently deployed for the Anambra State Governorship election scheduled for Saturday, November 18, 2017. With more than 70 Civil Society Organizations represented in the Situation Room and observers distributed across the 21 local government areas of the State, Situation Room plans to have a very wide coverage and observation of the election.

The Situation Room will be observing the elections looking at the activities of key election stakeholders as well as receiving reports of observation and incidents from the field.

At this stage, Situation Room will like to state as follows:

POLICE AND SECURITY:

Situation Room commends the Nigeria Police for deploying its personnel to provide security for the Anambra State Governorship Election. However, the Situation Room is very concerned about the massive redeployment of Police personnel from the State, starting from the Commissioner of Police right down to Divisional Police Officers (DPOs). These redeployments ostensibly brings in new Police personnel who are put out as non-partisan, but raises questions about whether they have new loyalties that could undermine the impartiality of the Police.

In addition it has disoriented INEC's preparations for the elections, especially since they are not trained on election duties are come from outside the State with little or no knowledge of the geography of Anambra State. This apparently indicates that the Police may not be working in tandem with INEC to determine its security needs and priorities.

Situation Room has also received reports, for instance, that the Nigeria Police without invitation entered INEC premises on Monday November 13, 2017 and barricaded it, ostensibly on a report of bomb scare that turned out to be a hoax.

Although the Nigeria Police vacated the premises shortly thereafter, we are concerned that the Police did not consult or explain to INEC, the reason or justification for entering its premises without invitation. Apparently the Inter-Agency Committee on Election Security may have collapsed.

INEC PREPARATIONS

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has expressed confidence that it is ready for the election. Situation Room will observe INEC's administration of the electoral process, including, but not limited to:

1. Distribution of materials and deployment of INEC personnel;
2. Timeliness of Opening of poll;
3. Compliance with election procedures by personnel;
4. The Voting process particularly the efficiency of the Smart Card Readers, Set-up of the polling units; and

5. Collation and Results tabulation process, particularly access to Collation Centres and transparency of the process.

CONCLUSION

1. Situation Room calls on all eligible voters in Anambra State to come out on Saturday 18 November to freely exercise their franchise.
2. Situation Room calls on INEC to deliver on its promise of conducting credible elections in line with its Constitutional responsibility.
3. The Nigeria Police is also called upon to demonstrate to a high level of professionalism and non-partisanship.
4. While Situation Room recognizes the threat posed by calls for election boycott by some groups, we believe that this should not necessarily provide the excuse for over-policing aimed at discouraging unhindered and free exercise of votes by citizens.
5. Situation Room also calls on the Nigeria Police to exercise restraint in dealing with voters and avoid acts of intimidation, inappropriate use of force and other acts capable of undermining the electoral process;
6. Situation Room calls on the political parties to conduct themselves in a manner that does not encourage violence by their supporters, as they will be held liable for their activities that trigger violence.

In conclusion, Situation Room will take every step to ensure unbiased observation of the Anambra State Governorship election and will maintain 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, 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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