

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT BY NIGERIA CIVIL SOCIETY SITUATION ROOM IN RESPECT OF SUPPLEMENTARY ELECTIONS SCHEDULED FOR SATURDAY, 23RD MARCH 2019

Issued: 12:00 pm, 22ND MARCH 2019

As the 2019 general election concludes, Situation Room will be observing the Supplementary Governorship Elections to be conducted by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in the following four States: Bauchi, Benue, Kano, Plateau and Sokoto as well as the Area Council elections in Abuja.

Situation Room and its partner organisations will be deploying observers to the Polling Units where elections will be conducted and follow-up with the collation of results.

To INEC:

Situation Room calls on INEC to ensure that the elections are conducted in a free and fair manner as well as to ensure that its processes are respected and implemented. Situation Room also expects that logistics for the elections are in place and the collation of results conducted in a transparent manner.

To Security Services:

Situation Room calls on arms of security services invited by INEC to assist with the conduct of the supplementary elections to conduct themselves in a non-partisan and professional manner. Situation Room will like to reiterate that s.29 (3) of the Electoral Act defines this role in the elections and that it will be illegal for security services to operate outside of the roles defined for them by INEC.

Situation Room calls further on the security services to demonstrate their commitment to non-partisan support to electoral security. Owing to the close contest and high stakes in the supplementary elections, the potential for serious local instability that may further and dramatically affect the already damaged credibility of Nigeria's as a whole, is real.

The Security Services should take the following steps:

- Publicly commit to steps that will reassure the public on the security of election re-runs; and
- Act on guidance from INEC on deployment of officers for election duties and share all details with the Commission.

Political Parties:

Situation Room calls on political parties and candidates to take part in the elections devoid of perpetrating violence, vote buying or other electoral malpractices.

Role of the Courts:

Situation Room will additionally like to express concern about the emerging trend of escalating judicial involvement in what should ordinarily be matters outside the purview of the courts across the country. The courts have gotten involved in electoral litigations and disputations in a manner that weakens the credibility of our electoral system issuing perplexing orders and injunctions that constrains INECs ability to fulfill its constitutional functions of conducting elections. Situation Room is worried about this trend and its potential of impugning and damaging respect for the courts and justice system in Nigeria as well as derogating on the credibility of elections. Situation Room calls on the courts in the country including the National Judicial Council (NJC) to act on stopping this.

Overall, Situation Room calls on Nigerian citizens in the affected areas where the Supplementary elections will hold to come out and freely exercise their votes.

Clement Nwankwo - Executive Director, Policy a& Legal Advocacy Centre & Convener, Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room

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 YIAGA Africa Others are Development Dynamics, Centre for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) Stakeholders Democracy Network, Human Rights Monitor, Reclaim Naija, CITAD, Alliance for Credible Elections (ACE), CISLAC, and several other CSOs numbering more than seventy.

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