

**Centre for Transparency Advocacy Gubernatorial and State House of
Assemblies Election Preliminary Statement at Golden Tulip Hotel,
Asaba, Delta State**

Asaba: 18th March, 2023

The Gubernatorial and State House of Assemblies elections, the second and the last of the 2023 General Elections cycle held on the 18th March, 2023. Although, the Gubernatorial elections took place in 28 states of the Federation, the State Houses of Assembly Election, took place in the 36 States of the Federation.

The elections which was shifted from 11th to the 18th of March, 2023 as a result of the court ruling permitting the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to reconfigure the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BIVAS) in readiness for the Gubernatorial and State House of Assemblies elections.

The election was foreshadowed by controversies following the conduct and results of the Presidential elections. This is in addition to the stoking of ethnic, sectional and regional embers by the various political parties and their supporters which in no small measure contributed to the heating-up the polity thereby exacerbating primordial divides across the country.

It is against this background that the Gubernatorial and State Houses of Assembly election was held.

The Centre for Transparency Advocacy (CTA) in the run up to the elections, held a stakeholders meeting and also set up its Situation Room all in Asaba. In addition, the CTA deployed 2000 trained election observers across the length and breadth of the country, for the purpose of getting real time reports on the conduct of the elections from polling units where our observers were stationed across Nigeria.

The following are the preliminary findings from our field observers deployed across the country:

Time of arrival of INEC Officials and materials/ Commencement of voting

There was remarkable improvement on the time of arrival of INEC officials and materials as reported by our field observers. However, there were reports of late arrivals in some polling units across the states but not significant enough to cause delay in early commencement of voting, many polling units were opened around 8.30 am .

In some polling units, INEC ad-hoc personnel were seen waiting for voters to come for commencement of voting activities after set up. We equally noticed at a polling unit by Golden Tulip Hotel, Mariam Babangida Road, Asaba, that polling officials deliberately did not commence

accreditation of voters early, despite setting-up in good time. However, after an intervention from an INEC supervisor, the two voters around were accredited and allowed to vote at about 9:10 am.

Across the states, reporters from our observers showed that in about 82 percent of the polling units, INEC officials and materials arrived between 7am and 8:30

Presence/performance of Security Agents

Just like in the last elections, our observers noted that in most of the polling units, security personnel were not present until about 9 - 10am. On the average, there were about 2 security personnel in most of the polling units where our observers were deployed. Generally, observers reported that the security personnel behaved and conducted themselves professionally. However there were reports of tardiness on the part of security agencies in different parts of the federation.

Voter Turnout/ Conduct of Voters

Reports from our field observers across the country indicated low voter turnout. This may not be unconnected with the mixed feelings generated from the conducts of the February 25 election as well as latent fear of insecurity.

Particularly young persons and first-time voters expressed disappointment in the outcome of the Presidential Election felt that their votes did not count and therefore, may have lost confidence in today election.

Performance of BVAS/Conduct of INEC Officials

INEC officials in line with the electoral guidelines gave preferences to pregnant women, nursing mothers, PLWDs and the elderly. However, our observers also noted that in some cases, INEC ad hoc staff continue to demonstrated insufficient familiarity with the guidelines especially time of opening and closing of polls. Some officials closed polls as early as 1 pm, sorted ballots and announced results before 2:30 pm.

Reports from our observers showed that the BVAS worked well . However, there were reported cases of Ad hoc staff not uploading results at the end of polls as stipulated in the guidelines.

Violence/Disruptions and Voter Suppression

Reports from our observers showed that despite assurances from security agencies, there were widespread violence in many polling units across the country. Instances of thugs attacking

polling officials unit in States like Ogun, Lagos, Imo, Kaduna, Ebonyi, Delta to name a few were recorded.

Conduct of Political Parties/ Political Party Agents

Political party agencies and politicians have continued to act with disdain as if they are above the law.

Vote Buying and Selling and Other Malpractices

Reports from our field observers indicated that vote buying have mutated to a new high.

Conclusion

We note that once again that Nigerian politicians have proven to be impervious to change. On the part of Security agents, there is clear evidence of dereliction of duty and complicity with the politicians to deny Nigerians their rights to choose those who govern them. This has in no small measure emboldened miscreants to snatch, disrupt and destroy election materials. On a final note, INEC is encouraged to become more proactive and put measures in place to mitigate attempts by enemies of credible elections to truncate our democracy.

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