

03/03/2023.

CENTRE FOR TRANSPARENCY ADVOCACY (CTA)

3RD PRESS CONFERENCE ON THE OBSERVATION OF THE CONDUCT OF THE PRESIDENTIAL AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS HELD ON 25TH FEBRUARY 2023

Gentlemen of the Press,

Colleagues and compatriots

The Presidential and National Assembly Elections held as scheduled across Nigeria on the 25th February 2023. The results have since been announced by the Chief Returning Officer and the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission Professor Mahmood Yakubu.

Fellow compatriots, some incidents during the election and thereafter leading to the collation and announcement of the Presidential Election result have cast doubts on the transparency of the process leading to the emergence of a winner but the gains from this election cannot be wished away.

The Centre for Transparency Advocacy (CTA) mobilized and deployed 2000 field observers across Nigeria.

This elections deployed technology as its safeguard, and according to our observers, the ratio of challenges emanating from the B-VAS was at 24 percent majorly from poor network leading to slowness of the B-VAS,, the inability of the B-VAS to capture finger prints, wrong pass word, low batteries and the refusal of the presiding officers to upload results after elections at the polling units claiming wrong codes among others.

There were reports of tension from polling units arising from late arrival of personnel and materials, incomplete election materials, intimidation by party thugs, forced extension of voting hours, non-availability of result sheets, double voting by some persons, vote canvassing, undue assistance by party agents to aid voters thumb print,

unnecessary hoarding of voting materials by adhoc staff for unjust reasons, insufficient security and poor crowd control among others.

The Good, the Bad, the Ugly: It is important to note that some things went well in this election despite the avoidable challenges. This election could go down in history as staging upsets in areas traditional to certain politicians. Some perceived strong politicians were roundly defeated in their strong holds. Seating governors lost elections to little known politicians and unexpectedly, some less politically fancied Nigerians were elected to the National Assembly.

The surge and enthusiasm shown by Nigerians in deciding who will lead them is worthy of commendation. The resilience of the youth, the dedication of the Civil Society and in fact, the commitment of the media should not be overlooked. This is worthy of commendation too.

The seeming disappointment of the citizens towards the outcome of the election created the bad and ugly face of this election. Due process is key to transparent, free, fair, credible election.

1. **Our Commendation to the resolute Nigerians:** The Centre for Transparency Advocacy commends Nigerians especially the Nigerian youth that thronged various polling units across Nigeria to cast their votes. We align with you in expressing our collective disappointment in the process leading to the final outcome of the Presidential Election (especially) on the 25th of February, 2023. The outcome may not have met with our expectations, however, we call on Nigerians to exercise restraints and eschew any form of violence. Same appeal goes to the political parties that feel shortchanged after entrusting a lot of confidence in the process during the build-up the Presidential Election. Certainly, there are windows for redress and CTA will encourage that you seek for such.
2. **Non- upload of polling unit results through the B-VAS in real time:** The Nigerians hoped strongly on the promises made by Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) on different occasions that elections results will be transmitted via the B-VAS in real time as was done in the last off season elections. Nigerians strongly believed that the B-VAS will be the real game changer. The B-VAS only worked well to the extent of accreditation and perhaps, showing the actual voting strength in Nigeria. Fellow compatriots, to the disappointment of Nigerians, polling unit results were not

uploaded in real time at the end of elections and collations at the polling units as promised. INEC officials on the field claimed they had no codes to transmit the results and in a statement issued by INEC said that there were technical glitches. These explanations did not sway Nigerians from strongly believing that some of the staff of the electoral umpire were compromised. Some results that were uploaded were either mutilated or had people's photographs and in fact, unreadable.

3. **Sabotage by Some INEC field officers and Electoral Officers at the Local Government Areas:** These set of Nigerians have always set the clock of democracy back due to their fraudulent activities in connivance with dubious politicians. The role of Resident Electoral Commissioners at this time should be interrogated as some of them are alleged to be partisan and in connivance with politicians to derail due process. You may recall that CTA and other CSOs condemned the appointment of some partisan Resident Electoral commissioners leading up to the election. It appears that these set of INEC officials habitually work at variance with set guidelines and orders from the INEC headquarters. It was alleged that they hoarded result sheets and gave them out to highest bidders who apparently used the result sheets to tamper with actual outcomes of polls from the polling units. It was also alleged that these same group of INEC staff hoarded the codes and access to the B-VAS hence the non-transmission of results from the polling units as stipulated by law. This is unacceptable and should be discouraged.
4. **Violence, Intimidation and voter suppression:** It was most disheartening to watch and see Nigerians die during this election. Mr. Festus Idahosa a 33 year old Nigerian and 43 year old Mrs. Elizabeth Owie , a mother of three lost their lives in Edo State. Security agencies watched to the consternation of citizens while election materials are destroyed, citizens bared from casting their votes and outright intimidation in Lagos and parts of Rivers State. We have seen videos where Youth Corps members and INEC adhoc staff were subjected to physical torture just to force them to change result figures to favour certain candidate. This is unacceptable and highly condemnable. We salute the courage of Mrs. Jennifer Ifedi who was stabbed yet insisted to vote. The CTA most sincerely condole with the families that lost loved ones in this election and those that sustained various degrees of injuries. We wish you all quick recovery and the fortitude to bear the loss.

OUR RESOLUTION

1. The CTA calls on Nigerians especially the youth not to relent but to continue in the march for a new Nigeria where due process is followed, towards the attainment of a free, fair, transparent and peaceful election.
2. We call on aggrieved political parties to seek redress in courts and should not heat up the polity by using inciting words that may lead to breach of peace. Violence of any mode should not be encouraged. We can only have one country that belongs to all of us.
3. The CTA calls on INEC to walk through its talk. That INEC should follow through its guidelines on elections in order not to create the impression of being compromised or partial.
4. That INEC should have conducted fresh election in areas where the rescheduled elections did not hold as was announced by INEC due to voter suppression, voters intimidations and violence also where materials arrived late making it impossible for elections to hold in those areas as scheduled.
5. INEC should as a matter of priority, set up an enquiry to investigate its staff especially some Resident Electoral Commissioners, the Electoral Officers at the LGAs, supervisory presiding officers and dubious adhoc staff. We ask that all those involved in electoral malpractice should be arrested, prosecuted and punished adequately. This will serve as a deterrent.
6. INEC should have the political will to cleanse itself of these putrid impurities that has cast doubts to its integrity and neutrality. The use of B-VAS for upload of polling unit results should be used in the March 11, 2023 Governorship and States Houses of Assembly Elections.
7. Politicians who feel aggrieved should seek legal means for redress and not heat up the polity by making inciting statements and sponsoring crowds to protest.
8. That the security agencies must investigate and prosecute its officers and men found wanting in the breach of electoral laws

Conclusion

We implore Nigerians to be patient. Nigerians should be vigilant as the elections are not yet over. March 11, 2023 is the Governorship and States House of Assembly Elections. Do not be discouraged, go out and vote for candidates of your choice. We believe that INEC will do the right thing. We urge all stakeholders to continue to conduct themselves in a peaceful and responsible manner. Specifically, we call on INEC to hold itself to the highest level of neutrality and accountability and reassure

Nigerians that Osun and Ekiti can be replicated in the forth coming Governorship and House of Assembly elections.

CTA shall be observing the governorship and house of assembly elections and calls on all stakeholders to ensure that the elections are peaceful.

Faith Nwadishi
Executive Director, CTA

For Further Information Contact
Centre for Transparency Advocacy
House A
No 28 A, plot 696/8
Ubiaja Crescent, Garki 2, FCT, Abuja
Tel: 07044414414
SMS/WhatsApp: 08055082255
Email: info@cta.org.ng
Website: www.cta.org.ng