

Centre for Transparency Advocacy Pre-Gubernatorial Election Statement on the Bayelsa, Imo and Kogi States November 11, 2023 Governorship Elections at ROCKVIEW HOTELS, Owerri, Imo State

Owerri: 10th November, 2023

Gentlemen of the press,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this Pre- election press conference on the three gubernatorial elections that will take place simultaneously tomorrow, November 11, 2023 in Bayelsa, Imo and Kogi States. This is an off-cycle election no doubt, but importantly, the first set of elections after the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria.

Nigerians in preparations for the 2023 general elections had high hopes given the promises and the incremental improvements witnessed during the off-season elections made possible with the introduction of technological innovations into the electoral process. This technological innovation was also deployed for the presidential and national assembly elections. Energized by the prospect of having their votes count, a new layer of Nigerians especially the youths became politically active in a manner never witnessed in the political history of the country.

It is against this background that the INEC is set to conduct the Gubernatorial Elections on Saturday, 11th November, 2023.

The Centre for Transparency Advocacy (CTA), an independent civic organization that has been actively involved in the observation of the Nigerian electoral process from its inception and an accredited Domestic Observer Group will be deploying 212 observers across the three states of Bayelsa, Imo and Kogi (at least three observers per LGA) who will be sending in reports in real time; making it possible for CTA to have firsthand information as to what happens on election day.

In line with our usual practice, the CTA is opening its Situation Room here in Owerri to coordinate activities from Bayelsa and Kogi. The CTA as earlier stated will deploy 212 trained election observers across the length and breadth of the three states of Bayelsa, Imo and Kogi States. These observers have been trained on Election Observation and adherence to INEC Election Guidelines.

As Citizens of these three states go to the polls again tomorrow, we want to call the attention of all and sundry to the following important issues-

PREPARATIONS OF INEC

- 1. Logistical arrangements:** The hiccups that are usually experienced during elections should not for any reason rear its ugly head during these Governorship Elections on

Saturday. All arrangements to move personnel and materials must be topnotch. Therefore, all hands must be on deck to realize this very important section of the election.

2. **INEC STAFF:** We commend INEC for initiating the process for sanctioning some of its errant election officials for misconduct in the last elections. This is not enough as we expect that more Electoral Officers and Adhoc staff should be sanctioned if they are involved in any form of electoral misconduct during these Saturday elections. Integrity should be the watch word for INEC staff as citizens do not expect anything less. INEC as an institution and its staff must live above board. Finally, it is important that the Electoral Officers at the LGAs be on top of their game by promptly mobilizing members of the NURTW to move personnel and materials to polling units in good time.

PREPARATIONS BY SECURITY AGENCIES AND ELECTORAL VIOLENCE

1. **Electoral violence:** It is hoped that electoral violence and voter suppression that has left a sore taste in our electoral bud will not manifest in these governorship elections in Bayelsa, Imo and Kogi. Political thugs should not be allowed to destroy voting materials and harassing of citizens at polling units. There have been disturbing reports from the three states of violence, fear and intimidation of citizens. However, there are assurances by the supervising Deputy Inspectors Generals of Police deployed to supervise election security in the three states. We implore you to match actions with your assurances.
2. The CTA at this point calls for better synergy between security agencies across board to ensure safety of citizens, INEC personnel and materials before, during and after the elections on Saturday.

VOTER TURNOUT AND PARTICIPATION

1. Citizens should go out and vote candidates of their choice as it is their rights to do so. We consider the Gubernatorial elections very important hence we implore citizens to take it very seriously.
2. We call on citizens to shun vote buying and trading. They should come out in their numbers to exercise their franchise.
3. Citizens should conduct themselves with utmost decorum while ensuring that their votes count.

MISINFORMATION AND DISINFORMATION THROUGH THE MEDIA/SOCIAL MEDIA:

The social media has no doubts made communication easy in real time, but it also has its dark sides. Fake news hatched by unscrupulous elements to distort information and create chaos are often spread through the social media. We appeal that this should not be reinforced by the mainstream media in any guise. Neutrality by the mainstream media is key to dousing the negative effects of misinformation.

POLITICIANS AND THE NEED TO ENSURE A PEACEFUL ELECTION

- 1. MONEY POLITICS/VOTE BUYING:** It has become imperative to say no to money politics, all forms of inducement and money laundering associated with our politics and elections. Citizen's choices must never be subverted by the negative use of money to influence votes including the criminal purchases of PVCs by politicians.
- 2.** We recognize clearly that the symbolic presence of law enforcement agents at polling units on election has not deterred vote buying. It is, therefore, important that a more result-oriented method like covert operations be adopted to curb this menace. An early warning flagging by the Central bank and Commercial institutions will as well alert anti-graft agencies to track illicit money intended to usurp the wills of the people through rigging of elections induced by money.
- 3. Hate speech:** We are just few hours to the election day. Campaigns ended yesterday at midnight across the states. We call on politicians and their supporters to be at their best behaviour and resist any urge to breach the peace.
- 4.** Politicians should resist the urge to indulge voter intimidation and suppression under whatever guise.

PEACE ACCORD: Once again, we remind the politicians of the Peace Accord they voluntarily signed and rein-in their supporters; respect other candidates, desist from using abusive words and above all, shun violence as we have only one state that we can call our own.

CONCLUSION

The CTA encourages citizen to exercise their civic responsibilities by voting candidates of their choice. They should remember that the Gubernatorial candidates are the ones closer to the grassroots, hence utmost care should be taken in choosing those who occupy such positions. We still believe in the ability of INEC to deliver a free, fair, credible and conclusive election. We also insist on the continued deployment of the BVAS and immediate transmission of the results on the IREV which has proven to be a game changer in the conduct of the elections.

Thank you.

Faith Nwadishi (JP)
Executive Director
CTA

For media inquiries or further information, please 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