



**PRELIMINARY STATEMENT OF THE AFRICAN UNION
OBSERVER MISSION ON THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (NASS)
ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA**

9 APRIL 2011

A. INTRODUCTION

In response to the invitation of the Independent National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (INEC), H. E. Jean Ping, Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission, dispatched an Observer Mission to Nigeria to observe the country's National Assembly (House of Representatives and Senate) and Presidential Elections, then scheduled for 2 and 9 April, 2011 respectively.

The AU Observer Mission to the NASS election was led by Mr. Ahmed Issack Hassan, the Chairperson of the Interim Independent Electoral Commission of Kenya (IIEC). The Mission comprised 40 members drawn from Elections Management Bodies (EMBs), National Parliaments, the Pan African Parliament, Ambassadors, eminent persons and members of civil societies from various African countries. Egypt, Kenya, Malawi, Uganda and Zimbabwe also sponsored delegates to the Mission. The Mission is assisted by a team of technical staff from the AU Commission Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; the Pan-African Parliament in Midrand, South Africa; and the Electoral Institute for the Sustainability of Democracy in Africa (EISA).

The Mission Observers are from Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The Mission attended a briefing for national and international observers organized by the Independent National Electoral Commission of Nigeria. The Mission also met and consulted with political parties (the Peoples Democratic Party, Action Congress of Nigeria and the Labour Party), civil society actors [the Gender and Affirmative Action (GAA) and the Center for Democracy and Development (CDD)], as well as national observer groups [Project 2011 Swift Count, Transition Monitoring Group (TMG)], the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

After a 2-day briefing and orientation for its members, the AU Mission deployed Teams to various States in 4 of the 6 geo-political zones of the country for the 2 April, 2011 elections. However, due to logistical challenges related to election materials, the elections were postponed to Monday 4 April, 2011 and again to Saturday 9 April, 2011. Consequently, the observer teams were recalled on Monday 4 April, 2011.

B. DEPLOYMENT FOR THE 9 APRIL, 2011 NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

On Friday 8 April, 2011 the AU Mission deployed 17 observer teams to the Federal Capital Territory and the following States: Kaduna, Niger, Kano, Oyo, Osun, Kogi, Lagos, Ogun, Katsina, Ekiti, Ondo and Imo.

Upon arrival, the teams visited INEC state offices to ascertain the level of preparedness of the Commission for the rescheduled elections, in view of the challenges observed at the postponed elections; particularly the late arrival and non-availability of election materials and omission of some names from the voters' registers. The Resident Electoral Commissioners (RECs) visited gave assurance of the Commission's readiness.

C. OBSERVATIONS

I. PREPAREDNESS OF INEC

- i. It was observed that generally essential election materials were available in the required quantities in all distribution centres visited. While some polling units had 2 ballot boxes, others had 1. It was also noted that polling booths were not provided in some polling stations even where both House of Representatives and Senate Elections were being conducted; in Katsina Central Constituency for example, out of the 30 polling stations visited, only one station had polling booths.
- ii. Since the distribution of materials commenced early in the day, it was observed that most distribution centers were not well lit. The Commission did not make any provision for alternative sources of light.
- iii. In some parts of the towns visited like in Lokoja, Ibadan, Abeokuta and Kano, it was observed that there was no security provided for election officials and materials after the distribution exercise.

- iv. The polling stations visited by the AU teams were in most cases located in public places. In some cases, polling stations were located by the road side, thus giving very limited space for the officials to comply with the layout of the polling area as stipulated in the INEC manual.
- v. The Mission also observed that polling stations located in open spaces exposed polling officials, electoral materials and the electorate to the harsh weather conditions. This was the case in Osun State where rain interrupted the process.
- vi. Generally, polling stations were not clearly demarcated nor marked for ease of identification.

II. OPENING OF THE POLLS

- vii. The AU teams noted that election officials arrived before 8:00am in most of the polling stations visited and accreditation started on time. However, in some stations in Imo, Ogun, Niger and Kano States, the distribution of materials was delayed and, consequently, the opening of the polls.
- viii. It was also observed that in some polling stations where election officials arrived early, the polls opened late because the officials were unable to set up and call the voters to order in good time.
- ix. The teams observed the voluntary assistance of community leaders to polling officials in the setting up, opening the polls and maintenance of order.

III. ACCREDITATION OF VOTERS

- x. In line with the legal framework, accreditation of voters took place within the hours of 8:00am and 12:00pm in most of the polling stations. However, the accreditation process was extended beyond 12:00pm in a number of polling stations where the process did not commence on time.
- xi. There were inconsistencies observed in the procedures for identification of accredited voters. In some stations, the left thumb cuticle was marked while in other stations, the right thumb cuticle was marked.
- xii. In some stations visited in Kano, Katsina and Kaduna States, cases of under-age persons in possession of voter's cards were accredited.
- xiii. The challenge of missing names from the voters register persisted in some of the areas visited.

- xiv. In general, the ratio of accredited to registered voters was generally low. The teams observed that in some stations, the number of women was lower than that of men.

IV. BALLOTING

- xv. In most polling stations, voting commenced immediately after accreditation. The process was orderly and peaceful.
- xvi. The teams observed inconsistencies in the commencement of the voting process. In some stations, presiding officers complied with the stipulated procedure of counting accredited voters before commencement of the polls while, in other stations, this procedure was not complied with.
- xvii. Contrary to the directives of INEC that each polling unit should have a maximum of 300 voters, many of the polling units visited had over a thousand voters registered and these units were not sub-divided in additional sub-units as directed.
- xviii. The stipulated procedure for voting by thumb printing constituted a challenge because there was spillage of ink onto unintended parts of the ballot, thus invalidating a number of votes.

V. COUNTING AND COLLATION

- xix. The counting of votes was publicly done in the presence of party agents, security personnel, national and international observers and voters who stayed behind after casting their votes. The process was orderly and peaceful..
- xx. Due to the delay in commencement of voting in some polling areas of Osun, Oyo and Katsina States, the counting of votes also commenced late and went on until late in the day. As a consequence, counting was done in the dark and there was no provision made by INEC for adequate lighting during the process. However, the community provided generators for the process.
- xxi. After the counting, party agents and security agents present at the polling stations signed copies of the results' forms. The results were announced at the polling stations and copies of the results' forms were posted at some polling stations.
- xxii. There was limited or no security escort for the transportation of sensitive ballot materials and election officials to the collation centers in some States.

- xxiii. The teams observed that the collation procedures were tedious, as collation of results was manually done, thus leaving room for human error.

VI. POLLING OFFICIALS

- xxiv. In spite of the challenges, the efforts and commitment of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) members is highly commendable even after the loss of their colleagues in the bomb blast in Suleja, Niger States.
- xxv. However, in some stations, the teams noted that the number of polling officials was not commensurate with the number of registered voters.
- xxvi. The teams also observed inconsistencies in the way elections were handled by the polling officials.

VII. SECURITY

- xxvii. Security agents were visible in all polling stations and they conducted themselves in a professional manner.
- xxviii. There was also heavy deployment of security along the major roads nationwide.

D. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the observations and findings made by its different teams, the African Union Observer Mission recommends that:

- INEC and relevant stakeholders should undertake extensive and continuous voter education initiatives to enable the electorate to understand their rights and obligations, and the whole electoral process.
- The electoral legislation should be reviewed to provide for alternative voting procedures in place of thumb printing.
- INEC should make a deliberate effort to provide sufficient training for polling officials to ensure uniformity in the management of the election procedures.
- In the subsequent elections, INEC should provide polling booths at all polling stations to ensure the secrecy of the ballot.
- For the presidential and governorship elections, INEC should put in place measures for proper screening to address under-aged voting.
- Polling stations should be clearly marked for ease of identification in subsequent elections.

- The electoral legislation should be reviewed to permit the use of ICT in the biometric identification of voters and collation of election results.
- Election Security escorts should be provided for polling officials and materials from and to the distribution and collation centers respectively.
- The initial plan by INEC to have 300 voters per polling unit is commendable. INEC should make provisions for the full implementation of this plan.

E. CONCLUSION

The challenges highlighted above notwithstanding, the AU Observer Mission, having observed the NASS Elections in 4 out of the 6 geo-political zones covering 12 of the 36 States, is of the view that the elections conformed to the AU Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa. The results reflect ion of the will of the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The Mission commends INEC for the conduct of a credible, transparent electoral process in the NASS Elections.

The Mission further commends the people of Nigeria for their commitment and dedication to the electoral process.

The Mission notes with regret the loss of lives due to electoral violence and the bomb blasts in Niger and Borno States and sends its condolences with the families of the deceased.

The Mission looks forward to a higher turnout in the forthcoming elections.

**Issued at the AU Observer Mission Office
Sheraton Hotel Abuja, Federal Republic of Nigeria
12 April, 2011**

**Mr. Ahmed Issack Hassan
Chairperson: Interim Independent Electoral Commission of Kenya (IIEC)
NASS Elections AU Observer Mission Leader**