

**COMISSÃO DA CEDEAO****ECOWAS OBSERVER MISSION****TO THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS****OF 16 APRIL 2011****IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA****PRELIMINARY DECLARATION**

1. The President of the ECOWAS Commission, **H.E. James Victor Gbeho**, in line with the provisions of the ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, deployed an Observation Mission comprising three hundred (300) persons to observe the Nigerian Presidential Election of 16 April 2011. ECOWAS Observers were deployed in the six geo-political zones of Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).
2. The Mission, headed by **H.E. Amos Claudius Sawyer**, former Head of the Interim National Government of the Republic of Liberia, is part of efforts by ECOWAS to support Member States in the process of consolidating democracy and good governance. The Mission's primary aim, in the case of Nigeria, is to ensure that it meets the criteria of a free, transparent and credible Election.
3. As the Head of ECOWAS Election Observation Mission, **H.E. Amos Sawyer** paid a courtesy call on the incumbent President of Nigeria who is also the Chairman of the ECOWAS Authority. The Head of Mission also called on Vice Presidential candidates of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) and the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the Nigerian Police Force. He also met with representatives of Civil Society Organisations such as the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) and the Swift Count Coalition, as well as the Heads of different Observation Missions including the European Union, African Union and the National Democratic Institute (NDI).

4. Following these talks which centred on preparations for the polls, the Head of Mission was reassured by the commitments made and concrete steps already taken by the different stakeholders in the electoral process, to guarantee that the presidential elections were conducted under the best possible conditions. In particular, the Observation Mission was pleased to note the efforts made by the INEC to resolve some logistical and security problems encountered during the legislative elections of April 9, 2011. As a result of the foregoing, the Mission noted with satisfaction:

- Efforts by the security agencies to ensure that the elections are conducted in a peaceful environment;
- Measures taken to ensure better cooperation and synergy among the various entities involved in the organisation of the elections, especially towards making the voting process secure;
- Concrete steps taken by the INEC to ascertain among inter alia, that electoral officers are in full control of the polling processes especially the responsibility for ensuring the availability of adequate voting materials at polling stations;
- Specific arrangements made to deal with problems that could arise from a high voter turnout on election day and ensure that appropriate conditions exist for the conduct of the polls and to also guarantee transparency throughout the voting process;
- Efforts by the Federal Government to provide adequate finances required to support the electoral process.

5. These measures, in the opinion of ECOWAS, are encouraging and underscore the determination and commitment of all stakeholders to ensure confidence and credibility of the electoral process for a more peaceful atmosphere in the run-up to the elections.

6. As a result of the information obtained by observer teams deployed in the six (6) geopolitical zones, (ie: South-East, South-West, South-South, North Central, North-East, North-West) and the Federal Capital Territory, the Mission made the following preliminary assessment of the accreditation and voting process:

- a. Good turnout of voters although there were lower numbers recorded in some parts of the South;
- b. Manifest enthusiasm of the majority of voters;
- c. Timely availability of all election materials in the majority of polling stations;
- d. The orderly and peaceful atmosphere which prevailed throughout the process;
- e. High participation of women and young people;

- f. Relatively good knowledge of and compliance with voting procedures by election officials and consequently their enhanced capacity to effectively administer the process;
  - g. Presence of representatives of major political parties including the ACN, CPC and PDP in most polling stations;
  - h. The presence of an adequate number of security operatives at polling stations, particularly in sensitive areas;
  - i. Successful conduct of the process of counting at the polling stations in accordance with the Electoral Act.
7. However, some shortcomings were observed during the electoral exercise. They are:
- (i) incomplete voter registers in some polling stations;
  - (ii) differences in the interpretation by INEC officials of procedures for concurrent accreditation and voting;
  - (iii) the closure of a few polling stations before the official closing time resulting in the inability of previously accredited voters to cast their votes; and
  - (iv) slow rate of voting in some stations mainly due to an imbalance in the ratio of voters to electoral officials. The Mission also noted that in some areas especially in the South-South (Akwa Ibom, Delta) observers were not allowed to observe the voting in the precinct at polling stations. It is hoped that appropriate measures will be taken by INEC to avoid a repetition of this in the next tranche of the elections.
8. The shortcomings mentioned require remedial action by the Authorities to further enhance the credibility of the electoral process. However, the ECOWAS Mission is of the view that, notwithstanding these shortcomings, the organisation of the election can be considered as generally acceptable.
9. Having found no major incidents or irregularities, the ECOWAS Observation Mission is persuaded that the presidential election of April 16, 2011 meets the criteria of being free and transparent.
10. Therefore, the ECOWAS Observation Mission would like to commend the Federal Government of Nigeria and all other stakeholders for ensuring a peaceful and orderly election, thus making it a historic step for the strengthening of democracy and good governance in Nigeria.
11. In particular, the Mission congratulates the INEC for its leadership and professionalism. It also pays tribute to the security agencies for their impartial and exemplary conduct during the elections.

12. The Mission also commends the enthusiasm, maturity and sense of civic responsibility demonstrated by the electorate. It hopes that the same spirit of respect for order and discipline will characterize the rest of the electoral process. Voters are also urged to maintain their high sense of responsibility and tolerance during the remaining election period.
13. Similarly, the Mission calls on all candidates in the presidential election, to accept the outcome of the polls and where absolutely necessary, may resort to constitutional and legal channels, for remedy.
14. The Mission regrets the violent incidents that occurred at the end of the voting process, particularly in Maiduguri and Kaduna, which in some cases led to the loss of lives. It, therefore, urges the relevant authorities to take necessary measures to avoid similar occurrences in the future.
15. Finally, the ECOWAS Observation Mission wishes to thank the Federal Government of Nigeria and INEC, for ensuring that adequate security and other measures were put in place to facilitate the successful deployment and observation of the presidential election by the ECOWAS Observation Team.

**The Head of Mission**

**DONE AT ABUJA THIS 17<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF APRIL 2011**