

# **Electoral Reforms in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects**

**By**

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## **Introduction**

Given the fact that elections are the major pillar of leadership selection and governance legitimation in liberal democracies, constant and un-seizing effort for the reformation of the electoral process is an imperative in all countries that are democratizing. It is especially necessary in countries in transition to democracy, such as Nigeria, where there is a long history of badly conducted elections; in which elections have been bastardized, and where many voters have become despondent and have virtually given up hope of their votes counting in choosing their elected executives or representatives in legislatures.

A series of badly conducted elections could create perpetual political instability and easily reverse the gains of democratization. If adequate care is not taken, badly conducted elections can totally undermine democratization and replace it with authoritarian rule, of the civilian or military varieties. At best, they can install inept and corrupt leadership that can herald, if not institutionalize bad governance. There are many illustrations or manifestations of this

throughout Africa. But nowhere is this as amply illustrated as in the Nigerian case, especially between 1999 and 2007.

For example, it can be argued that the consequences of badly conducted elections and poorly managed electoral processes are major contributing factors to military interregnum in Nigeria's political history. At inception of the Fourth Republic, the 1999 elections were conducted under military rule. There were fundamental flaws in the elections, but Nigerians wanted to get rid of military rule and have power transferred to civilians. They tolerated and accommodated the outcome, and hoped for future improvements. The 2003 elections, unfortunately, did not represent a substantive improvement over the 1999 elections, in terms of transparency and credibility. Rather, the elections at best represented "business as usual", in terms of inflation of votes, fraudulent declaration of results, use of armed thugs to scare away or assault voters and cart away election materials and many other irregularities and illegalities, which were committed with impunity.

The 2007 elections were manifestly the worst in Nigeria's history, as declared by both domestic and international observers. The EU observer mission, for example, noted that the elections fell "short of basic international standards", and were characterized by violence and crude use of money to buy votes. There was reckless mobilization of ethno-religious cleavages and heightened use of money and thugs to influence results. The pre-electoral processes, such as party primaries were conducted in grossly undemocratic fashion. In many cases, the results were said to have gone to the

highest bidder. The winner of the presidential election, late President Umaru Musa Yar'adua, himself admitted on the day of his inauguration, that there were serious flaws in the election that brought him to power. Arguably, in order to preempt a major crisis of legitimacy, he pledged to embark upon electoral reforms and subsequently inaugurated the Electoral Reform Committee, with the mandate to make wide-ranging recommendations for electoral reform in Nigeria.

The modest effort at electoral reform following the submission of the report of the Justice Muhammadu Uwais Electoral Reform Committee (ERC), as represented by the introduction of new legal and administrative reform measures, and the inauguration of a new Chairman and Commissioners, paved the way for remarkable improvements in the 2011 and especially the 2015 general elections. In this presentation, I try to highlight what the new INEC accomplished in practical terms in the electoral reform processes, to make 2011 and, especially, 2015 general elections “remarkable” and, indeed, substantively much better than previous elections. These elections represented a turning point away from the history of badly conducted elections towards the satisfaction of the aspiration of Nigerians for free, fair, credible and peaceful elections.

However, this notwithstanding, my key argument in this presentation, is that “it is not yet Uhuru”! We are not yet out of the woods. There were many challenges faced in this modest reform effort, much as we tried, there are still many outstanding challenges, which are yet to be successfully addressed. There is, therefore, the

absolute need for a deliberate, purposeful and focused continuation of the reform of the Nigerian electoral process leading to the next general elections in 2019, so as to tackle subsisting challenges, clean up, sanitize or cleanse the political terrain, stabilize the polity and create a solid foundation for consolidating and deepening democracy in Nigeria, as well catalyze economic growth and socioeconomic development.

First, I review the extent and magnitude of the reform efforts between 2010 and 2015; then I review the challenges, which were faced in bringing them about, then I identify subsisting challenges that need to be confronted and overcome in subsequent reforms, and then conclude with the discussion on the prospects of electoral reforms in Nigeria.

## **Electoral Reforms: 2010 - 2015**

### **The Uwais Electoral Reform Committee (ERC)**

The recommendations of the Muhammadu Lawal Uwais Electoral Reform Committee serve as the background and context for the appreciation of the reform measures, which have been implemented and what remains to be done. The recommendations were arrived at after about one year of work, which consisted of gathering of memoranda from the general public, interactions with key stakeholders, public hearings conducted in all the six geopolitical zones, a workshop with a select group of national and international experts, and extensive debates and deliberations by the 23 - member committee.

The major recommendations of the ERC can be summarized as follows:

1. Strengthen and protect the autonomy of INEC from political interference. This is to be done first, by giving the National Judicial Council (NJC) a major role in the appointment of Chairman and National Commissioners of INEC, instead of the current role of the president in nominating these officers; and second, by placing INEC on First Line Charge and granting it relative financial autonomy.
2. Reconstitute the Commission accordingly, and especially so as to remove from it the stigma of the failure of the 2007 elections and improve its integrity.
3. 'Unbundle' INEC. That is, create other agencies to handle responsibilities being undertaken by INEC, which have overburdened it, such as constituency delimitation; registration and regulation of political parties; and prosecution of electoral offenders; and thus allow INEC to focus on its core mandate of organizing, conducting and managing elections.
4. Introduce some form of proportional representation, to promote inclusiveness, especially in National and State legislatures, and improve the representation of women, persons with disabilities and the youths.
5. Improve the transparency and credibility of the conduct of elections, and eliminate persistent fraudulent activities, which are perpetrated with impunity in Nigerian elections.

6. Review and amend the Electoral Act 2006 and the 1999 Constitution to substantially improve the electoral legal framework.

On each of these major recommendations, many specific recommendations were also made. In respect of nos. 3 and 6, for example, model legislations were drafted and submitted along with the general recommendations. While many of the recommendations of the ERC were accepted by the government and the legal framework was accordingly amended, the major ones notably nos. 1-4, were either partially accepted and addressed or simply ignored. For example, while INEC was placed on First Line Charge and thus gained some relative financial autonomy, the mode of appointment of Chairman, National Commissioners and Resident Electoral Commissioners remained the same, and this continued to nurture a deep-seated perception of the Commission as only doing the bidding of the incumbent president who nominated them; under the notion that “he who pays the piper dictates the tune”! In any case, it can be said that there is still unfinished business with regards to the recommendations of the ERC, which subsequent effort at electoral reforms would need to seriously address.

Following the ERC Report, however, the Independent National Electoral Commission was reconstituted and inaugurated in June 2010 and I acquired the honor and the privilege of being the Chairman of the Commission in a five-year tenure that included conducting two general elections and the introduction of many substantive, supplementary reform measures to improve the

integrity of elections in Nigeria. A review of the electoral reform measures introduced by the Commission, which I was privileged to Chair, between June 2010 and June 2015, enables a clearer appreciation of the preparations, which went into the 2011, and especially 2015 general elections, and which made them the resounding success that they have been acknowledged to be. It also paves way to a better understanding of what deliberate, purposeful and focused continuation of the reform of the electoral process towards the 2019 general elections would represent in the quest for democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

There are two phases to the reforms undertaken by INEC between 2010 and 2015. The first phase, was about what was done in the 9 months from the inauguration of the Commission in June 2010 and the conduct of the April 2011 general elections. The second phase covers what was done from May 2011 to the next general elections on March 28, and April 11 2015.

### **Reform Measures Prior to the 2011 General Elections**

In this first phase, INEC focused attention on what I call a return to the basics of preparation and conduct of elections; or “Election 101”! This is essentially because, in Nigeria we abandoned the basics for too long and allowed things to be so bad for so long, that to get things right again, we needed to go back to the basics.

One of the most basic things in any effort to bring about credible elections is the compilation of a credible Register of Voters (Voters Roll). We discovered that we lacked a credible Register of Voters and

had to devote a lot of energy and resources to getting one. We decided to compile afresh a Biometric Register of Voters, with a unique VIN for each registered voter, a photo ID and fingerprints. It was daunting and indeed perceived to be impossible due to time constraint, but we pulled it through, completed the registration in 3 weeks (Mid-January to February 2011) and produced a fairly clean register 30 days before the April elections as required by law.

Another basic thing is ensuring the security of election materials to make them less susceptible to fraudulent activities. We paid attention to improving the security features on our election materials and making adequate arrangements for securing them. For example, we restored serial numbering of ballot papers and ballot boxes, which had been ignored previously; we introduced color-coding of ballot papers; and arranged with the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) for the safe keeping of all sensitive election materials prior to an election.

The third basic thing we did was to make all election-day procedures, modalities and processes more open and transparent. We required that all party agents must be accredited and sorting and counting of results must be done openly witnessed by voters, as well as party agents. We made it mandatory to paste copies of election results in polling units and collation centers so that the general public and election observers would be able to verify the results transmitted to higher levels of collation.

In addition to restoration of the basics in the conduct of elections, we introduced new measures aimed at improving the integrity of the



electoral process. For example, we revised the framework of recruitment / engagement of *ad hoc* election-day staff. Instead of using primary / secondary school teachers and other junior cadres in the civil services of state governments, we engaged NYSC members and students in federal tertiary institutions, thus minimizing the impact of incumbency in influencing outcome of elections. We also removed INEC staff from playing any role in result collation and making returns. Instead, we brought in University Vice-Chancellors, Professors and Lecturers from federal tertiary institutions to handle those aspects. And we introduced what we called a Re-modified Open Ballot System (REMOBS), whose distinctive feature was the clear separation of the period of accreditation from that of the actual voting.

In addition, we intensified training and re-training of both permanent INEC staff and temporary election workers; we enhanced voter education and citizen engagement; and we forged closer collaborations and partnerships with a range of stakeholders; from civil society organizations (CSOs), to political parties, the media, respected opinion molders, such as religious leaders and traditional rulers, development partners and security agencies. With regards to the security agencies, in view of the security challenges associated with the conduct of elections in Nigeria and the negative perception of the role of these agencies, we created the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on election Security (ICCES), to ensure a transparent, seamless and coordinated engagement of security personnel in securing election day environment.

All of these measures combined to make the 2011 elections remarkably much better than previous elections. Many domestic and internal observers have noted that even though the 2011 general elections were not perfect, and were indeed constrained by many challenges and lapses, they nonetheless represented a significant lifting of the bar of electoral integrity in Nigeria.

For us in INEC, the outcome of the 2011 elections made us realize that, if within a maximum of 9 months, we could do so much to make the 2011 elections remarkable, having 4 years to prepare for the 2015 general elections must make things even much better. In those 9 months, we literally hit the ground running. We had no time to do thorough studies and evaluation, no time to plan well; all we had to do was focused pragmatic addressing of identified key persistent challenges.

### **Reform Measures from 2011 to 2015**

Preparations for the 2015 general elections commenced, literally, the day after we completed the 2011 general elections. From May 2011, the Commission spent a tremendous amount of time reflecting on the conduct of the elections, through: In-house reviews; security review by ICCES; External and independent review by RERC; and Structural Organization review by Pwc, a top-rated management consulting firm. We learned many lessons from these reviews, which include the following:

1. Good elections require adequate and timely planning

2. Good elections are about effective partnerships and cooperation between the election management body and a range of stakeholders
3. Good elections are about openness and transparency
4. Getting our elections right is still work-in-progress because, despite all the encomiums which accompanied the 2011 elections, they were by no means perfect and there was a tremendous scope for improvement

Drawing from these lessons, as we commenced preparations for the 2015 general elections, we identified three focal points, namely: **structure, policy and plan**. With regards to structure, we took a long and comprehensive look at INEC as an institution - its structure and processes, as well as its human resources - and focused on what is required to make it strong, efficient and effective as an EMB. With regards to policy, we focused on developing new policies to guide the work of the Commission and create the right normative framework for successful election management in Nigeria. And with regards to planning, we focused on both strategic and election-specific planning. The following are some of the reform measures the Commission has undertaken (in addition to what was done prior to 2011 elections, which were retained and improved upon), as it prepared for the 2015 general elections:

1. A strategic Plan (2012-2016) with a detailed Strategic Program of Action was designed and put to use.
2. A detailed Election Project Plan was designed and put to use to ensure seamless execution of specific tasks leading to the 2015 general elections.

3. An Election Management System (EMS) was established and the mapping and re-engineering of the Commission's Business Process was accomplished.
4. A comprehensive restructuring and reorganization of the Commission was completed, drawing from the recommendations of a highly rated management / consulting Firm. It helped to achieve a defined optimal structure for INEC; eliminate duplications and overlaps in roles and responsibilities; streamline departments, divisions and units; clarify job descriptions and manning levels; identify gaps in skills and competencies and address them; and enhance the conditions of service and of work of staff in the Commission.
5. The compiled Biometric register of Voters was taken through a process of consolidation and de-duplication, which increased its integrity and paved the way for production of the Permanent Voters Card (PVC). For example, through this process, and notwithstanding the updating of the Register of Voters through Continuous Voters Registration (CVR), the number of registered voters dropped from 73.5 million in 2011 to about 69 million.
6. Production and issuance of the PVC to registered voters on the cleaned up register. By the time of the rescheduled presidential elections on March 28, 2015, about 68.6 million of the PVCs have been produced and sent to the states for distribution. However, only about 58 million PVCs were collected.
7. Production and deployment of Smart card Readers (SCRs) for verification and authentication of voters during accreditation. INEC procured and deployed 182,000 SCRs for the elections.

The SCRs were deployed for the 2015 general elections, one for each of the 155,000 Voting Points, with an average of 3 additional ones as redundancies in each senatorial zone.

8. An Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanism was established to help manage and resolve election disputes without recourse to litigation. Some political parties put this to good use to resolve intra-party conflicts and disputes.
9. A Communication Policy and Strategy was made, aimed at improving both internal and external communication by the Commission.
10. A Gender Policy was put in place to make the Commission's work more gender sensitive in line with global best practice, and to improve the participation of women in elections and in politics.
11. Comprehensive recommendations were submitted to the National Assembly for the review of the legal framework for elections so as to improve the conduct of the 2015 general elections and subsequent ones. Although this was done as far back as early 2013, and even though international best practice is to complete all reviews of / amendments to, the legal framework for elections at least 6 months before elections, neither the electoral Act nor the Constitution were amended before the elections.
12. An Election Risk Management Tool (ERM Tool) was deployed, meant to enable gathering of data and analyses of risk factors constraining preparations for elections that could result in electoral conflict or violence, and the deployment of preventive and/or mitigation measures.

13. A Comprehensive review and revision of all Guidelines and Regulations on the electoral process was undertaken.
14. An independent Committee of lawyers reviewed all cases of election related litigation and court judgment, involving the Commission since 2007, identified where, how and why either the Commission or its staff were reprimanded or indicted, and made appropriate recommendations on how to prevent recurrence.
15. The Commission established a Graphic Design Center, with the support of International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) to help build in-house capacity in the designing, production and printing of election materials, from ballot papers and result sheets to manuals and voter education and other IEC materials.

It is therefore, clear that the period from 2011 leading to the 2015 general elections was full of carefully planned reform initiatives, some innovative and transformative, by INEC all targeted at making the 2015 general elections remarkably much better than the 2011 elections, and getting Nigeria out of the perpetual circle of poorly or badly conducted elections. No doubt, all these combined to add value to the now widely acclaimed integrity of the 2015 general elections. Indeed, given my knowledge and appreciation of the enormous work that INEC had accomplished preceding the elections, as far back as August 7, 2014, while addressing a gathering of key stakeholders, I had this to say:

As far as INEC is concerned, the 2015 general elections will see Nigeria take its rightful place in the global comity of nations

where electoral democracy is being consolidated (Jega, August 2014, p. 23).

Both domestic and international observers have acclaimed the 2015 general elections as free, fair, credible and peaceful. For example, the European Union, said: “The 2015 elections were historic... The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) made commendable attempts to strengthen electoral arrangements...” (EU, July 2015, p. 4). A Multi-Stakeholder Conference consisting reputable local CSOs, such as CDD, TMG, CISLAC, YIAGA and international NGOs, such as the NDI, had this to say: “Nigerians are generally pleased with the conduct of the 2015 general elections” (Communiqué, October 2, 2015).

We should not underestimate the significance of the successful conduct of the 2015 general elections for Nigeria and for Africa generally, as well as the challenges that lie ahead. As Secretary of State Kerry recently stated, “A free, fair and peaceful presidential election does not guarantee a successful democracy, but it is one of the most important measuring sticks for progress in any developing nation” (October 2015).

For one, the 2015 Nigerian general elections may have set a new standard for democracy across the African continent. All countries with elections slated for this year and early next year, and perhaps even beyond, are now challenged to make theirs at least as free, fair and peaceful as Nigeria’s. And indeed, there are many useful lessons that others can learn from our experiences, especially in forging

stakeholder collaborations, in resisting pressures of incumbency and in the adaptive use of technology and other innovative ideas.

But, we should also not underestimate the enormous challenges, which were faced in preparing and conducting the 2015 general elections, as well as the outstanding profound challenges, which need to be targeted and addressed in continuous reform initiatives and efforts, henceforth, towards 2019 and beyond.

### **Challenges**

Some of the major challenges faced in preparation and conduct of the 2015 general elections relate to the cynicism and skepticism of the Nigerian voters and citizens generally; the peculiar attitudes and mindset of the typical Nigerian politician; those associated with the use of technology in our infrastructure-challenged environment; the constraints imposed by the extant legal framework and those emanating from the prevalence of the phenomenon of weak institutions and other systemic peculiarities of the Nigerian polity.

#### *Apathetic and Skeptical Citizenry*

The average Nigerian has been so profoundly frustrated, disappointed and devastated by the crude manifestations of the mechanics of Nigerian electoral politics, so much so that they have become either apathetic and indifferent, or exceedingly cynical or skeptical. Once bitten, it is said, twice shy. Nigerian citizens and voters have been 'bitten' several times in politics and in elections. The civic duty of going out to vote in elections had become very dangerous, exposing voters to risks of being assaulted or injured or



killed by armed thugs doing the bidding of some politician, or by some deranged militants and terrorists. If they succeeded in casting their votes unscathed, they watch helplessly as the votes were stolen, or the election results purchased from cooked election and security officials, such that for all practical purposes, their votes don't count. In the circumstances, many citizens have withdrawn from the electoral process and/or have become extremely skeptical about the value and utility of elections. While elections were to help institutionalize good, democratic governance, what they see are elected people running amok as reckless despotic rulers, vandalizing public resources and ignoring the core business of government of social provisioning to satisfy the needs and aspirations of the people, and providing protection for lives and property of the citizens. Given this context, it was a herculean task for INEC and its partners to convince citizens that this time around it would not be "business as usual".

#### *Mindset of "do-or-die" Politicians*

INEC faced perhaps its greatest challenge in containing the predisposition and reckless mindset of Nigerian politicians. From my experience, I quite often say that Nigeria has a special breed of politicians (Nee: 'Militicians'). They generally tend to believe that political power through elections has to be "captured", and this has to be done by hook or by crook; and by any means necessary! Them, winning election is, literally, "a do-or-die" affair. Any wonder then, that our political arena increasingly resembled a bloody battlefield,

with maiming, killing, burning, and unimaginable destruction of lives and property. Navigating the 'minefield' of 'do-or-die' politicians as an impartial electoral umpire required nerves of steel, and we had to quickly the requisite thick skin, as well as appropriate containment strategies. Compliance with the laws and insisting on same and respect for due process, as well as being none partisan and transparent, helped the Commission in navigating this 'minefield.' However, this has remained a formidable challenge for the future reformation of the Nigerian electoral process. As long as politicians continue to have this unwholesome mindset, efforts at electoral reform and deepening democracy would remain constrained.

#### *Technology Adaptation in an Infrastructure-challenged environment*

INEC recognized, quite early, the need to increasingly use technology to improve the conduct of elections in Nigeria. One key challenge is associated with the virtual absence of Original Equipment manufacturers (OEMs). Virtually everything has to be sourced through vendors, and imported from abroad, which impose extortionate conditions; arbitrarily review upwards licensing fees on account of 'proprietor' rights. As most technology relies on electricity, inadequacy of power supply requires additional expenses on batteries, spare parts and redundancies. INEC tried to appropriate technology, albeit through vendors, but with effort to curtail their total control, by signing on to contracts with detailed specifications and use of Open Source Software. But doing this also has its own challenges!

There are also other associated challenges. For example, meeting the production deadlines in the production of PVCs was seriously affected by power failures, which damaged equipment, which the vendor could not quickly replace. The use of the SCR was constrained by the fact that some polling units are located in areas where there was no Internet coverage! Or in schools, which used as Super RACs, with no electricity to charge batteries and SCRs!

### *Constraints of Extant Legal Framework*

A good legal framework is a necessary precondition for credible elections. It is international best practice to review an existing legal framework to make it better for the conduct of elections, provided that this is done within the internationally mutually agreed timeframe, i.e. at least six months before a general election. In the Nigerian context, the 2010 Electoral Act (as amended) was no doubt a remarkable improvement over the 2006 Electoral Act. It, along with constitutional provisions on electoral matters was the legal framework for the conduct of the 2011 general elections. Nevertheless, it had many areas requiring improvement and we strove to that long before 2015.

For example, the constitution requires a runoff election, if or when it becomes necessary, to be held within 7 days after the elections. We were lucky that in 2010 we did not have to do runoff elections even for the governorship elections, because it would have been very difficult to pull it through. A presidential runoff election is almost certainly impossible within 7 days. So INEC recommended an amendment to

that provision to at least 3 weeks, although the international best practice seems to be around 6 weeks. INEC also wanted an amendment to a provision in the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended), Section 31, which contradicted another, Section 87, and which undermined internal party democracy. There are many other areas where amendments would have been consequential and would have added value to the electoral legal framework.

It was very challenging to get the National Assembly to drive the reforms to the electoral legal framework. The approach adopted, which was to first do a whole-sale constitutional amendment before the electoral Act run into hitches, when the constitutional amendment process got embroiled in controversies. By then it seemed too late to separate them and focus on the Electoral Act. Eventually, unfortunately, by the time the National Assembly passed the Amendments and sent the Bill to the president for assent, it was too late for the 2005 general elections. The lesson is that we must commence review of the electoral legal framework quite early and we must also comply with the international Protocols to which Nigeria is a signatory, which require this to be completed at least six months before a general election.

#### *Weak Institutions and Systemic peculiarities*

As a developing third world country Nigeria is bedeviled by institutional weaknesses and systemic challenges, which all impact negatively upon the preparations and conduct of elections. For example, as a new commission, we inherited INEC as a weak institution, with a very negative public image to boot. Some of the

characteristics of a weak institution include, inefficient and personality driven business process; lack of good record-keeping and institutional memory; and susceptibility to petty conflicts by primordial vested interests and cleavages. It is very challenging to routinize work and achieve efficiency and effectiveness in such an organization, because it requires change of attitudes through serious efforts at change management. We tried to do this, but there were time constraints and competing demands on time. And, significantly, there is the complicated matter of the impact/influence of other weak institutions, on an institution being reformed!

General systemic challenges and peculiarities also impose constraints on electoral reforms. For example, Nigeria has a very serious systemic security challenge. There is an upsurge in criminality, committed with impunity and unrestrained by the remarkable weakness of the police as an institution; political thuggery, kidnapping, armed robbery, assassinations, militancy and insurgency, all combined to make the political and electoral terrain very unstable and insecure. There is not much an EMB like INEC can do in the face of such systemic challenges; except what we did: forge closer collaboration and working relationship with all security agencies, in the hope that working together, we could have a more effective strategy in minimizing the challenges. That was why ICCES was formed and it did a very commendable job under the circumstances.

## **Prospects**

Although the challenges of carrying out electoral reforms are very profound and may seem daunting, I believe that the prospects are there and they are very good. And we should all be encouraged to do every thing possible at both the individual and collective levels to contribute to continuation of electoral reforms from very early on, leading to the next general elections in 2019. We must see democracy as having come to stay in Nigeria as a credible substitute to any variety of authoritarian rule, whether of the civilian or military variety. We need to put the past behind us, and look towards the future with optimism and renewed hope.

If in the not so distant past, apathy, skepticism and hopelessness pervaded the Nigerian landscape, there is now some positive vibes emitting from the relative success of the 2015 general elections. There seems to be a growing perception that things like the PVCs and the SCRs combined with our active and participation in the electoral process can indeed, make our votes count! We must seize upon these, and then we must go beyond these. We must remind ourselves, that if these likeable products of electoral reform initiatives can help make our votes count, then more products of un-seizing, continuous electoral reforms would make our votes count even more! Not just in choosing people whom we want to lead us, but more significantly, in making those whom we have elected to be more responsible and responsive to our needs and aspirations.

I therefore urge that we must all, old and young, but especially the youths, embrace electoral reforms and demand for more. We must

put the next for years to even better use by ensuring the implementation of those outstanding very good recommendations of the ERC, which have not been acted upon, the completion of the outstanding amendments to the legal framework, as well as the bringing about of additional reform measures to deepen and consolidate our electoral democracy.

### **Conclusion**

Nigeria is a country in transition to democracy, which is still striving to nurture a democratic political culture after many years of military rule, and amidst the anti-democratic tendencies that rule has fostered and entrenched. Our electoral system is therefore work-in-progress, desirous of un-seizing, continuous improvements through reforms. In this context, it can be said that, among the main tasks, is national commitment to implement reform measures, aimed at incremental positive changes that are substantive as well as sustainable. We must do whatever it takes to avoid and erosion and a reversal of the gains of the reform measures of the past four years. Rather, we must do everything possible to continue to sustain, to refine and to improve upon the integrity of the Nigerian electoral process in the next four years and well beyond.

Thank you.

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