



European Union Election Observation Mission
Federal Republic of Nigeria
Presidential, Gubernatorial, National and State Assembly
Elections 14/21 April 2007

European Union Election Observation Mission urges significant improvements in advance of federal elections next weekend

Abuja, 16 April 2007 – The European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) to Nigeria is encouraged by the commitment and engagement of the Nigerian people in the democratic process, but has a number of serious concerns about the conduct of the state elections on 14 April. It urges the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to work closely with all election stakeholders to ensure that significant improvements are made in advance of the federal elections.

“The people of Nigeria deserve credit for the admirable way in which they conducted themselves on Saturday and demonstrated their commitment to democracy by patiently waiting to vote in often difficult circumstances”, said Max van den Berg, Chief Observer of the EU EOM, “however, preparations for the elections should have been of a higher standard and must be substantially improved in the coming days to deliver a credible and secure process at the federal elections”.

EU observers, deployed to 33 of the country’s 36 states, as well as the Federal Capital Territory, reported that polling stations opened very late throughout much of the country. In most cases, this was due to the late arrival of polling station officials and the insufficient or non-delivery of polling materials, including ballot papers. In a number of areas polling stations did not open at all. These factors led to voter disenfranchisement.

In many polling stations, only two election officials were present rather than the three foreseen by INEC regulations, which often led party agents to become involved in administering the process. Procedures were often not followed correctly and secrecy of the ballot was frequently not guaranteed due to the absence of polling booths and poor layout of polling stations. Under age voting was witnessed in a number of states. Last minute court rulings created uncertainty about the final list of candidates on ballot papers in a number of states.

These problems led to tension and confusion, that at times resulted in violence, which regrettably, according to official reports, resulted in at least 50 people being killed over the election day period, and chaos, including incidents of hijacking of ballot boxes by groups of thugs. EU observers have also reported irregularities during the counting and collation processes, including incidents of disruption and absence of counting at polling

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stations and examples of significant discrepancies between results at polling station and LGA collation level.

In view of the federal elections, scheduled to take place on 21 April, the EU EOM urges INEC to take swift action, in co-operation with election stakeholders, to address these problems, in particular to ensure that polling stations are provided with all materials in sufficient time to enable them to open at 08:00 and are that they are staffed throughout the day by three polling officials. Clear instruction and guidance should be given by INEC to promote full adherence to polling, counting and collation procedures. Strenuous efforts must be made to guarantee the secrecy of the ballot, as well as full transparency of the counting and collation processes through a wider distribution of results sheet copies, including to domestic observers, the public posting of result sheets at all polling stations and the swift publication of polling station results at all levels. Concrete steps must be taken by political parties and the police to create a peaceful and stable environment for the conduct of democratic elections.

In several states where serious problems have been reported, INEC should undertake a comprehensive investigation and give serious consideration to re-running the process as has already been announced in Imo state for the gubernatorial election.

The EU EOM was deployed to Nigeria on 14 March to undertake a comprehensive, long-term observation of the state and federal elections in accordance with international standards for democratic elections. Over 150 observers are being deployed over both election periods, including a delegation of Members of the European Parliament, who fully associate themselves with this statement. A preliminary statement assessing the conduct of both elections will be issued on 23 April after the federal elections, followed by a detailed report, containing recommendations for the future, within three months of the completion of the entire election process.

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