

## FROM AROUND THE WORLD

**Washington, DC** - "In the wake of the April Nigerian elections, which international and domestic observers have judged to be deeply flawed, opposition leaders have wisely decided to take their complaints to the courts, rather than to the streets. I urge both Nigerians and the greater international community to allow the legal process to continue to its conclusion, peacefully and patiently. I, along with many of my colleagues in the United States Congress, was disappointed that the most recent test of Nigeria's democratic institutions—national elections—failed that country's citizens. It is my hope that the judicial decisions regarding the outcome of these elections will be made expeditiously so that Nigerians from all political persuasions can move forward in their efforts to fully institutionalize the hallmarks of democratic governance, progress which I welcome and encourage. Nigeria is a country of great importance to the United States, and I hope that as Nigeria's democracy strengthens, so too will our bilateral relationship."

*Statement Of Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton On Recent Developments In Nigeria's Elections  
May 14, 2007*

**Betraying a Democratic Legacy** - Last Saturday's presidential election should have marked a major consolidation of democracy in Nigeria, Africa's most populous country and biggest oil producer: the first free choice of one elected civilian leader to succeed another. Instead, it was an ugly travesty — not just procedurally flawed, but completely lacking in basic democratic plausibility.

That, sadly, is the verdict of an impressive array of neutral observers, including the United States State Department, the European Union and Nigeria's own Transition Monitoring Group. Election monitors report that ballot boxes were stuffed and stolen, ballot papers missing or late, and voters unable to mark their choices in private. That capped a campaign marked by violence and intimidation and government-inspired efforts to keep credible opposition figures off the ballot illegally.

Nigerians are understandably angry and frustrated. But the last thing the country needs now is yet another in its long line of military saviors. It will now be up to Nigeria's judiciary, beginning with the special election tribunals, to try to repair as much of the damage as possible. Nigeria's courts have recently demonstrated a willingness to stand up to government meddling. By tackling the post election confusion swiftly and judiciously, they can help restore public confidence and hold the military at bay.

Most of the blame for this disgrace goes to Nigeria's outgoing president, Olusegun Obasanjo, who tried to amend the Constitution to be able to run for a third term

and has since been willing to manipulate Nigeria's fragile democracy to keep his party in power. What makes it all the more poignant is that Nigerians — and much of the world — once admired Mr. Obasanjo precisely because he knew how to exit from power wisely and gracefully, becoming the first of Nigeria's military rulers to organize an admirably democratic civilian succession.

The quality of Nigerian democracy is not a theoretical issue. Nigeria's sharp ethnic and religious divides have been at the root of decades of corruption, violence and dictatorship. Only a scrupulously fair and transparent federal democracy offers any hope of steering Nigeria on a healthy course.

New York Times Editorial  
April 25, 2007

### **Enter Country's Worst Election Ever**

Amid protests, the Independent National Electoral Commission has declared the presidential candidate of the ruling PDP, Governor Umaru Musa Yar'Adua winner of last Saturday's presidential election. However, the United States has said that, Nigeria's presidential election was flawed but stopped short of calling for the poll to be overturned or for a re-run. The ballot for the first handover of power from one civilian leader to another in Nigeria was undermined by ballot-stuffing, violence and a shortage of millions of voting papers. Also, the former US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright believes that INEC has failed. She berated Iwu for deceiving Nigerians that everything was under control prior to the elections, and for concealing information from political parties.

It also accused INEC of failure to display the voter register, allocations of voters per polling station that were greatly in excess of the standard 500 voters per polling station announced by commission, accommodating under-aged voting, delay in distribution of balloting materials, inadequate locations and facilities for voting and collation. Also, unhappy over the conduct of the polls, the European Union Election Observation Mission said the elections fell short of basic international and regional standards for democratic elections. It expressed disappointment that the elections have not lived up to the hopes and expectations of the Nigerian people and that the process cannot be considered to have been credible. It accused INEC of being selective and inconsistent in the application and enforcement of electoral legislation. INEC which was financially dependent on the executive did not prepare well for the elections and experienced widespread lack of confidence among election stakeholders in relation to its capacity and impartiality. The foreign observers under the aegis of the International Republican Institute equally condemned in very clear terms the sham called elections in Nigeria.

In the same respect, both Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, the presidential candidate of Action Congress and General Buhari of ANPP have both taken a swipe at INEC and the 2007 election as a massive fraud, as it does not represent the wishes, hopes and expectations of the Nigerian people. Similarly, The New York Times in one of its editorial features titled Africa's crisis of democracy remarked that Nigeria's troubled presidential election, which came under fire from local and international observers and was rejected by two leading opposition candidates, represents a significant setback for democracy in sub-Saharan Africa.

Analysts said the Nigerian vote was the starkest example of a worrying trend—even as African countries hold more elections many of their citizens are steadily losing confidence in their democracies. In the same way, both the Transition Monitoring Group and the Alliance for Credible Election, which are local observers in the just concluded election, have said that the elections in Nigeria should be cancelled, because they were a big sham. The Nation in its editorial reasoned that, "April 21 did not only reflect an electoral day of lies, aberration and gangsterism, it provides a window not only on the presidential polls, but also on the shameless bravado of the INEC and a president at peace with high-handedness and deception. Essentially, it casts a dark pall on the fragility of our democracy, Nigeria's image abroad and lack of rectitude as a people. Rather than refurbish us in the eyes of the world, we have been the laughing stock among world commentators and target of indignant scorn from newspapers of record in the western world...The result (of the presidential election) was not the people's but the calibrated desire of a cabal. Democracy hinges on the idea of a collective will, not the calculations of a few. So, the presidential election should be voided". The world will understandably be appalled by Nigeria's inability to organize flawless general elections.

We couldn't organize a fair election, we couldn't even organize one that matched previous elections under other regimes. Since 2003, no election conducted has enjoyed the confidence of the electorate. Apart from outright rigging, the administrative structures under-girding the election have been almost inexistent. Under the current government, any event that requires skills in organizing election has invariably suffered. The 2007 elections are the worst ever. The election can therefore not truly stand the test of time, it will definitely crumble like a pack of cards, and elections were not conducted in several places in the country. Elections were merely confined only to few places in the urban centers, while no elections took place in the rural areas, as a matter of fact, over 92 per cent of the so-called registered voters did not vote, figures were merely awarded, and this is why violence and varying degrees of condemnation greeted the results announced by INEC. INEC has not discharged its duties creditably well, it has been conspicuously partisan, and become an extension of Aso Rock and indeed, the mouth organ of the PDP.

Hence, Obasanjo has squandered all the goodwill he has left, if he has any. Nigerians can now see what the president meant when he said that politics/elections is a do or die affair. He is bent on turning Nigeria into one big jungle, where Paddy-Paddy government will be the order of the day. That is why

he has ruled Nigeria like a military dictator and succeeded in bringing the country to her knees. Obasanjo is undoubtedly an unmitigated disaster, he should go and these fraudulent elections must be jettisoned.

*Daily Trust*

*April 28, 2007 Saturday*

## **ENTER COUNTRY'S WORST ELECTION EVER**

Jide Ayobolu

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*The Daily Trust (Nigeria) - AAGM April 28, 2007 Saturday*

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**Nigeria: Election Monitors Question Validity of Voters' Lists**

At polling stations across Nigeria, officials discarded the new voters register on which the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) spent millions of dollars. Instead, they used the low-tech manual list, where people's names are entered in pen next to a thumbprint that is supposed to verify the voter's identity.

This raises important questions about the contracts INEC signed with four companies to computerise the register. INEC spent over \$70 million on machines and software that would generate voting cards with identity photos to prevent the kind of vote selling, underage registration and gerrymandering that undermined previous elections.

In August 2006, INEC contracted three companies to provide the machines that would take voters' pictures, record their personal details and give them a unique Voter Identification Number (VIN). INEC ordered 33,000 Direct Data Capture (DDC) machines.

Trenko International, an Israeli owned company registered in Britain was contracted to provide 23,000 DDC machines for \$50 million. Australia's Inter Security Systems were contracted to provide 5,000 DDC machines for \$11 million. Mage Technologies Ltd a US event management company was also contracted to supply DDC machines.

For reasons unclear, the machines were delivered late and inadequate numbers. The shortage of machines effectively reduced the time for voter registration because machines had to be shared between several different polling stations.

The 33,000 DDC machines had to service 120,000 polling stations. To make up the shortfall, INEC contracted a Nigerian computer manufacturer Zinox to provide 10,000 laptops.

Nigerian Election Hotline understands that none of these deals were subjected to competitive bidding. Last August, President Olusegun Obasanjo acceded to an INEC request that the contracts be 'fast-tracked' because of the urgency of getting the voters register completed.

The software used to create the voters register was a database programme designed by a consultant working for Inter Security Systems. INEC officials took the programme off the machines the Australian company provided and downloaded pirated versions onto the laptops bought from Zinox, INEC sources say.

The result was a programme that could be taken from the laptop and placed on any other computer. Photos and fake voter records could be dropped in because the 'cracked' version of the software had no encryption on the record files.

In theory, ghost registers could be created by anyone who had access to the machines for even a few minutes. The whole database programme could be copied onto a portable disk drive and transferred to another computer.

Civil society groups such as the Transition Monitoring Group warned about serious problems at INEC, pointing out that the registration timetable had fallen behind schedule and the technology was not working properly. The registration

period had to be extended twice and there were grave suspicions about the validity of ten million voters' names added in the last week of registration. The new technology should have enabled INEC to run the new voters list through its headquarters' computers to check for duplicate names and false thumbprints etc before the list was published. This wasn't done and neither were the voters' lists displayed at the local polling stations prior to voting as Nigeria's electoral law requires.

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Africa News  
April 24, 2007 Tuesday*

## **The operating environment: Political conditions**

**SERIES:** Country Commerce Nigeria 2007 - Part 5 of 105

Military rule in Nigeria ended in May 1999 when a new constitution established a US-style presidential system. The bicameral National Assembly comprises a Senate and a House of Representatives, both elected for four-year terms. Each of the 36 states has an elected state governor and state legislature. However, the constitution has been a source of tension; critics claim that it gives too much power to the central government. In May 2006, the Senate voted to throw out a constitutional amendment designed to give former President Olusegun Obasanjo the option to seek a third 4-year term.

Mr Obasanjo (a retired army general) came into power in 1999 and was re-elected in April 2003. However, allegations that his People's Democratic Party (PDP) had engaged in ballot-rigging and intimidation to gain power marred the 2003 elections. The PDP dominates the Senate and the House of Representatives. The PDP also won control of most local governments in the March 2004 state elections.

Umaru Yar'Adua, the candidate of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP), won a substantial majority (70% of the vote) in Nigeria's controversial presidential polls held in April 2007, according to official results announced by the Independent National Electoral Commission (Inec). Mr Yar'Adua's nearest challenger, Muhammadu Buhari, a former military ruler who stood for the All Nigeria People's Party, gained just over 18% and Atiku Abubakar, the vice-president, some 7%. Local election monitors the Transition Monitoring Group believe that the poll was so flawed it should be held again, while EU observers describe the elections as a fraud. Even observers from the Economic Community of West African States, which tends to take a more charitable view of African elections, describe the polls as "fairly acceptable" rather than "free and fair". The main opposition candidates have rejected the result. At least 200 people have been killed in election-related unrest in recent weeks, and Inec's headquarters was targeted by attackers using an unmanned petrol tanker.

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Country Commerce Select  
April 24, 2007 Tuesday*

## **Election 2007: Yar'Adua Declared Winner of Nigeria's Disputed Presidential Election**

Kissy Agyeman

Umaru Yar Adua was announced yesterday as the winner of Nigeria's presidential election by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), confirming an unsurprising victory for the governor of Katsina State. According to INEC figures, Yar Adua came away from the 21 April vote with a landslide victory (see Nigeria: 23 April 2007: ), garnering 24.6 million votes (70%), leaving Muhamadu Buhari and Vice-President Atiku Abubakar trailing behind, with 6.6 million votes (18%) and 2.6 million votes (7%), respectively. The result has been widely disputed, not only by the opposition candidates but also by the international election observers; the BBC reports that the European Union (EU) has called the election "a charade". Both Buhari and Abubakar have accused the ruling People s Democratic Party of vote-rigging, and the country s largest local electoral monitoring agency, the Transition Monitoring Group, is calling for a revote. Meanwhile, outgoing president Olusegun Obasanjo made a televised address to the nation, admitting that the polls had not been perfect but saying that it is his "fervent wish that Nigerians will consider this experience as a necessary step in [its] journey as a people towards consolidating [their] democracy," BBC reports.

Significance: The way in which the election was conducted was a disappointment for Nigeria and indeed Africa as a whole, for Nigeria, as Africa's most populous country and foremost oil producer, should have led by example in the momentous polls, which saw the transfer of power from one civilian ruler to another. The EU has said that at least 200 people have died in election-related violence between 14 April and 21 April, the dates for the gubernatorial and presidential elections, respectively. Voter turnout was low although no independent figures have yet been released largely because of a huge shortage of ballot papers in some areas. While Yar Adua expressed his joy at winning on state television, telling the nation that he feels "greatly humbled by the events of today and this mandate", Abubakar and Buhari have vowed to take the matter to court over allegations of fraud. Disputes over voter irregularities must be settled in the courts by the time Obasanjo steps down from office on 29 May.

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**World Markets**  
 Research Centre

*Global Insight*  
 April 24, 2007

## **Election 2007: Violence Mars Nigeria's Election as Opposition Calls for Rerun; Oil Region Restive**

Thomas Pearmain

Nigeria's highly anticipated presidential election has been clouded by voter irregularities and violence, causing the opposition to condemn the whole process and call for a rerun.

Nigerians went to the polls on Saturday (21 April), in a landmark election that would see the first time that power is transferred from one democratically elected leader to another in the country. However, despite insistence by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) that the election had gone reasonably well, reports from international election observers as well as opposition parties are that the election was severely marred by voter irregularities and violence. This is a disappointing outcome for Nigeria, which boasts impressive oil reserves and is Africa's most populous country. With opposition parties and the country's largest local observer body, the Transition Monitoring Group, calling for a rerun of the presidential polls even before the official result is declared, and with 39 people having been killed in election-related violence, according to Agence France-Presse, the aftermath is somewhat unpredictable. What is certain, however, is that the polls were not credible and that the way the process was conducted will dent Nigeria's image not only domestically but also internationally. The official result is expected to be announced later today, according to the INEC.

Muddled and Confused

**Global Insight**  
**Perspective**  
**Significance**

The presidential election was marred by fraud and violence, which is a disappointing outcome for Africa's most populous nation.

**Implications**

International observers have questioned the credibility of the polls and opposition members are calling for a rerun.

**Outlook**

If the government's security forces fail to get a strong hold over the situation, then a descent into chaos can be expected, as people will likely protest the result, which is to be announced later on today. Many legal battles contesting the result can be

**Global  
Perspective**                      **Insight**

anticipated. The new president will face numerous challenges, not least of all the insecurity in the restive Niger Delta, to keep investor confidence from falling to an all-time low.

The weeks leading up to the presidential election did not bode well as Nigeria, twice the size of France, was beset with logistical problems. The voter-registration process was one such problem. The head of the INEC was resolute that electronic registration of the 61.5 million voters would facilitate the polls and eradicate any hint of fraud, in spite of numerous reports that the machines used were either faulty or inadequate in number. Once the voter population was registered the next step was to decide which contestants would be taking part, with the final number of presidential aspirants numbering 25, although this, too, was surrounded by uncertainty. One of the main presidential challengers, Vice-President Atiku Abubakar, was left off the list when the INEC initially announced who would be in the line-up, on the grounds that he was too corrupt to contest in light of a pending legal case against him. Abubakar vehemently denies the allegation involved in that case and he challenged his disqualification in the courts. His challenge found favour with the Supreme Court of Nigeria, which announced just last week that the INEC did not have the legal standing to disqualify candidates in the race and thus reinstated Abubakar as a challenger for the polls (see Nigeria: 17 April 2007: ). For Abubakar, his inclusion may have been too little too late, and it was unclear until just a few days prior to the polls if he would choose to stand (see Nigeria: 18 April 2007: ). Abubakar decided to contest, even though it was safe to say that his chances of victory were slim. Without his participation, however, he would have been unable to contest the election result, which he most likely will do. Abubakar's inclusion also meant that new ballot lists which were printed in South Africa only arrived the night before the election and thus, logistically, their dissemination to all 120,000 voting centres was a tall order. There are reports of some voting centres opening late if at all and furthermore, international observers and locals alike have reported that ballot-box stuffing and underage voting were common in certain areas.

**Election Violence**

Voter irregularities had a knock-on effect on the country's security situation. The security forces had been put on high alert, and after the previous weekend's gubernatorial election saw a number of people killed (see Nigeria: 16 April 2007: ), it was anticipated that there would be pockets of violence this time also. The night before the presidential election, Goodluck Jonathan, the running mate for the ruling People's Democratic Party presidential candidate, escaped an assassination attempt in Yenagoa, the capital of oil-producing Bayelsa state. The following morning election day reports emerged that armed militants had launched an

attack on a military base close to Yenagoa; in the country's capital of Abuja, police uncovered a foiled attempt to attack the INEC offices a truck filled with petrol and voluminous amounts of gas was stationed close to the INEC office, presumably in a bid to blow up the building.

### Back to the Future

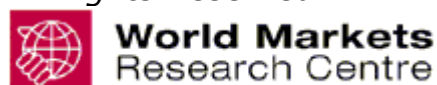
The man who is tipped to become Nigeria's next leader, Umaru Yar Adua, the anointed successor of the outgoing president, Olusegun Obasanjo, has said on a number of occasions that he hopes to continue with the policy reforms that Obasanjo started. One of Obasanjo's strongest legacies will be the shake-up that he has brought to the country's banking system, which, under the guidance of central bank governor Charles Soludo, has been streamlined. Furthermore, Obasanjo can be credited with spearheading the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, the body responsible for rooting out corruption within government ranks. However, there is criticism that this institution has become little more than a way for the president to target his adversaries, thereby undermining its efficacy to a degree. The challenges that Yar Adua faces, if elected, are colossal. He will be forced to show his muscle when dealing with the restive Niger Delta's security question, which has now become something of a thorn in Nigeria's side. There was violence in the Niger Delta last Friday (20 April), with the government house in Yenagoa reportedly coming under fire. A group of ethnic Ijaws contacted Vanguard newspaper stating it would wage further attacks and demanding the release of Alhaji Asari-Dokubo, the leader of the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force; former governor Diepreye Alamieyeseigha; and all Ijaws held by the security forces. The group stated it would not accept any election results because of the massive alleged vote-rigging in all Ijaw territories in the six states of the Niger Delta. The extent of the region's insecurity was highlighted by the fact that the European Union decided against deploying its observers to the oil-producing Delta, in light of the number of foreigners who have been kidnapped already in 2007.

### Outlook and Implications

In light of the numerous claims of voter irregularities, coupled with election-related violence, Global Insight expects there to be legal battles and challenges to the outcome of the vote, as members of the opposition, election observers, and ordinary voters contest the election's legitimacy. The way in which Nigeria handles the election's aftermath will need to be delicate, and the country will need to be seen doing the right thing to try to redeem itself for the disappointing handling of the process. Security forces will likely be on high alert once again in anticipation of continued violence, notably at the time of the official result's announcement. Foreign investors and the international community will be watching very closely as events unfold, with increased violence potentially having a negative effect on investor confidence. The security environment in the Niger Delta will also need to be handled carefully. It is paramount that Nigeria remains stable with several bouts of violence occurring across the country and in the Delta, Nigeria cannot

afford to avoid taking a firm stance on security. Nigeria is dependent on its oil exports and if the election disputes give rise to a renewal in militant attacks this could disrupt energy supplies to the Atlantic Basin markets. Nigeria is currently shutting in 477,000 barrels per day, which has been offline for almost 15 months now. However, Shell recently stated that it hoped to bring this production back in the near term; this will only be possible if there is a sense of stability in the Niger Delta. What is needed is more international mediation on the crisis, and perhaps open dialogue between the militant operatives and those in power, as well as greater pressure on oil companies to act responsibly and to halt practices such as gas flaring, which have had major environmental drawbacks. Nigeria's new president must take a new approach to the crisis in the Delta and security in general across the country, to ensure a safer working environment for the oil companies and other investors operating in the country. A failure to do so will lead to a downgrading of the security and political environment in the country by Global Insight.

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*Global Insight  
April 23, 2007*

### **Nigeria: Vice-president, opposition candidate drop plan to boycott poll**

Excerpt from report by Martins Oloja, Alifa Daniel and Mohammed Abubakar entitled "ANPP, AC drop plan to boycott presidential polls Utomi's party wants NBA to okay result sheets" published by Nigerian newspaper The Guardian website on 20 April

Two key members of the Nigerian coalition of opposition parties yesterday jettisoned their group's resolve to boycott tomorrow's presidential and National Assembly elections.

First to pull out of the resolution was the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), which had on Tuesday convened a meeting of the 18-member coalition. And, in apparent anger, the Action Congress (AC) followed suit. But the African Democratic Congress (ADC) of Prof Pat Utomi insisted on boycotting the exercise, except the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) agreed to engage the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) and the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) in counter-signing all election result sheets. The Federal Government has, however, described the proponents of polls boycott as saboteurs, who must be treated as such.

ANPP's presidential candidate, Maj-Gen Muhammadu Buhari, in a press statement disclosed that his party's new position was because boycotting the election would make it easier for the federal government "to manipulate the process."

He also noted that the ANPP would lose the legal right to challenge any electoral fraud in court or the tribunal if it did not participate in the exercise.

ADC chairman, Mr Okey Nwosu, told The Guardian on phone yesterday that participating in tomorrow's election would amount to supporting "their fraud." He however said the party would participate if another organization other than INEC conducts the election.

He explained that the decision of the ANPP and AC to continue participating in the election might be to gather more evidence to use at election tribunals. "They just want to gather more evidence to strengthen their hands in the court when they go to contest the results of the elections," Nwosu said. He also announced that his party, among others, had decided to align with the National Democratic Party (NDP) in its suit to have the elections cancelled. Reminded that the courts would not sit today because of the public holidays, the ADC chairman said: "Don't worry, we know what we are doing."

Gen Buhari argued that last Saturday's governorship and state Assembly elections were fraught with malpractice, allegedly perpetrated by the government and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Indications that all might not be well among the ranks of the opposition candidates emerged very early in the morning, as the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) addressed the media, where it dissociated itself from the proposal to boycott the elections.

The party's chairman, Chief Edwin Ume-Ezeoke, addressed the press on ANPP's position about two hours before the reconvening of the meeting by the coalition of opposition parties at the Transcorp Hilton Hotel, Abuja. Similarly, the absence of key figures of the alliance, like Vice-President Atiku Abubakar, Buhari, Utomi and Dalhatu Attahiru Bafarawa of the Democratic Peoples Party (DPP), was a clear sign that the coalition had collapsed.

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The former military ruler argued that last Saturday's governorship and state Assembly elections were fraught with malpractice, allegedly perpetrated by the government and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). He said: "The government and INEC, in spite of concerted national and international pressure to conduct free and fair elections accepted nationally and internationally, have conducted the worst elections yet witnessed in Nigeria."

Buhari added: "Rigging, manifested in snatching of ballot boxes in Police offices, traditional rulers' palaces and private residences has been reported in all states. In addition, INEC committed brazen acts of injustice such as changing

results after they had become public knowledge such as Oyo, Edo, Ogun, Osun, Jigawa and Nasarawa States."

He specifically accused INEC of awarding phoney results to the candidates of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). In Anambra State, for instance, "INEC awarded the governorship to PDP with 1.9million votes against the 1.84 million registered voters," Buhari said. He added that in Rivers State, the electoral Commission claimed that 1.8 million votes were cast "more than the whole of the votes cast in Lagos State."

The ANPP presidential candidate however urged all registered voters, "men and women to come out in great numbers and vote for the candidate of their choice." He also urged the electorate to "guard and protect their votes at the polling booths, at coalition centres and at INEC headquarters until the correct results are announced." Buhari also urged the citizens to "strongly reject false results in any locality." [Passage omitted]

*Source: The Guardian website, Lagos, in English 20 Apr 07*

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## **NIGERIA VICE-PRESIDENT, OPPOSITION CANDIDATE DROP PLAN TO BOYCOTT POLL**

Excerpt from report by Martins Oloja, Alifa Daniel and Mohammed Abubakar entitled "ANPP, AC drop plan to boycott presidential polls Utomi's party wants NBA to okay result sheets" published by Nigerian newspaper The Guardian website on 20 April

Two key members of the Nigerian coalition of opposition parties yesterday jettisoned their group's resolve to boycott tomorrow's presidential and National Assembly elections.

First to pull out of the resolution was the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), which had on Tuesday convened a meeting of the 18-member coalition. And, in apparent anger, the Action Congress (AC) followed suit. But the African Democratic Congress (ADC) of Prof Pat Utomi insisted on boycotting the exercise, except the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) agreed to engage the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) and the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) in counter-signing all election result sheets. The Federal Government has, however, described the proponents of polls boycott as saboteurs, who must be treated as such.

ANPP's presidential candidate, Maj-Gen Muhammadu Buhari, in a press statement disclosed that his party's new position was because boycotting the

election would make it easier for the federal government "to manipulate the process."

He also noted that the ANPP would lose the legal right to challenge any electoral fraud in court or the tribunal if it did not participate in the exercise.

ADC chairman, Mr Okey Nwosu, told The Guardian on phone yesterday that participating in tomorrow's election would amount to supporting "their fraud." He however said the party would participate if another organization other than INEC conducts the election.

He explained that the decision of the ANPP and AC to continue participating in the election might be to gather more evidence to use at election tribunals. "They just want to gather more evidence to strengthen their hands in the court when they go to contest the results of the elections," Nwosu said. He also announced that his party, among others, had decided to align with the National Democratic Party (NDP) in its suit to have the elections cancelled. Reminded that the courts would not sit today because of the public holidays, the ADC chairman said: "Don't worry, we know what we are doing."

Gen Buhari argued that last Saturday's governorship and state Assembly elections were fraught with malpractice, allegedly perpetrated by the government and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Indications that all might not be well among the ranks of the opposition candidates emerged very early in the morning, as the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) addressed the media, where it dissociated itself from the proposal to boycott the elections.

The party's chairman, Chief Edwin Ume-Ezeoke, addressed the press on ANPP's position about two hours before the reconvening of the meeting by the coalition of opposition parties at the Transcorp Hilton Hotel, Abuja. Similarly, the absence of key figures of the alliance, like Vice-President Atiku Abubakar, Buhari, Utomi and Dalhatu Attahiru Bafarawa of the Democratic Peoples Party (DPP), was a clear sign that the coalition had collapsed.

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The former military ruler argued that last Saturday's governorship and state Assembly elections were fraught with malpractice, allegedly perpetrated by the government and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). He said: "The government and INEC, in spite of concerted national and international pressure to conduct free and fair elections accepted nationally and internationally, have conducted the worst elections yet witnessed in Nigeria."

Buhari added: "Rigging, manifested in snatching of ballot boxes in Police offices, traditional rulers' palaces and private residences has been reported in all states. In addition, INEC committed brazen acts of injustice such as changing results after they had become public knowledge such as Oyo, Edo, Ogun, Osun, Jigawa and Nasarawa States."

He specifically accused INEC of awarding phoney results to the candidates of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). In Anambra State, for instance, "INEC awarded the governorship to PDP with 1.9million votes against the 1.84 million registered voters," Buhari said. He added that in Rivers State, the electoral Commission claimed that 1.8 million votes were cast "more than the whole of the votes cast in Lagos State."

The ANPP presidential candidate however urged all registered voters, "men and women to come out in great numbers and vote for the candidate of their choice." He also urged the electorate to "guard and protect their votes at the polling booths, at coalition centres and at INEC headquarters until the correct results are announced." Buhari also urged the citizens to "strongly reject false results in any locality." [Passage omitted]

*Source: The Guardian website, Lagos, in English 20 Apr 07*

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*BBC Monitoring International Reports*

*April*

*20,*

*2007*

*Friday*

## **Nigeria:INEC And Election Observers**

This Day

Election monitoring and observation are now acknowledged all over the world as critical to the strengthening of democracy. It is, therefore, important for the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to take advantage of the presence of both domestic and foreign observers to prove to Nigerians and the international community that it is committed to conducting credible polls.

The verdict of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Observer Mission, one of the key monitoring groups, after last Saturday's House of Assembly and governorship elections, should serve as a booster for the commission. The Mission's leader, Dr. Dauda Jawara, declared: "Against the backdrop of earlier concerns in the months leading up to the elections expressed by ECOWAS and discussed with relevant authorities, and despite the logistic challenges that threatened the smooth conduct of the polls, we observed on election day that majority of voters were able to cast their ballots in a tranquil and orderly manner. The elections were also relatively free and fair."

Despite this controversial verdict, the INEC should not rest on its oars. Rather, it should accommodate dissenting opinions, like those expressed by local observers, and correct its shortcomings as it gets set to prosecute the National Assembly and presidential elections this weekend. That way, the electoral body would meet the expectation of the various stakeholders in the exercise and justify the enormous logistic and financial contributions of both local and external governments and organisations. For instance, the United States provided \$15 million over the past three years for the training of INEC's staff, political parties

and the civil society in readiness for the general election. The European Union (EU) initially trained 66 Long Term Observers (LTOs) from the European Union Election Observation Mission (EUEOM) but just before the elections, the number of EU observers increased to 150, in addition to members of the European Parliament. The Commonwealth Monitoring Group (CMG) has also enriched the profile of the organisations that are watching the elections in the country.

While these foreign-based groups have been accorded respect by INEC, its perception and, consequently, treatment of their Nigerian counterparts are unsatisfactory. The Commission's information and publicity boss, Mr. Philip Umeadi, may have his reason for arguing that "some of the groups might only be there to protect interests that are not national." However, it would be unfortunate to hold the local observers in distrust and contempt.

The accusation of bribe-taking levelled against some of them is not strong enough to deny them accreditation or cooperation. Complaints by notable and tested institutions like the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) of being sidelined should also be rectified as they could further dent the impartiality of INEC.

The INEC and the security agencies that police the election should be mindful of Nigeria's growing position in African and world affairs. They should also realise that these observers and monitors are the windows through which the world community sees the nation as it strives to enthrone lasting democracy. Saturday's presidential election, arguably the most sensitive, presents yet another opportunity to showcase to the globe that the country is indeed serious with institutionalising the supremacy of the ballot.

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Africa News  
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*This Day (Nigeria) - AAGM*

*April 18, 2007 Wednesday*

## **Nigeria: Urgent Action Needed to Rescue Election**

allAfrica.com

The month of April 2007 once seemed to hold great historic promise for Nigeria. The general elections offered a possibility for the country to experience its first

ever transition of power from one civilian leadership to another. So far, however, it only seems to be an unfolding disaster.

The process was marred from the start: preparations for the elections produced dubious and shoddy voter registration lists; the parties' primaries selected candidates using stolen state funds and violence; and the campaign itself was the most violent in the country's 47-year history, devoid of any new ideas for improving governance.

Things went from bad to worse during the first phase of actual voting, the elections for governorships and state assemblies, held on 14 April. Three areas of vital weakness were revealed.

First, the elections demonstrated that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) -- always uncomfortably close to President Olusegun Obasanjo -- cannot meet the organisational and logistical challenges it faces. In most parts of the country, election officers and materials did not arrive in time, leading to delayed voting or no voting at all. In some areas, Commission officials simply failed to turn up or materials ran out before all voters had cast their ballots. One community within the Federal Capital territory, Kuchingoro, had no list of voters at all.

On account of these lapses, even some senior government officials, such as Senate President Ken Nnamani and Anambra state governor Peter Obi, were unable to vote in their states. Both have judged the elections unfair and have called for the polls to be cancelled and held afresh in Enugu and Anambra states respectively. Similar protests and calls for the cancellation of the elections have been made by candidates in other states, because their photographs or names were omitted on the ballot papers.

Second, credibly independent monitoring of the elections was so hampered on 14 April that few in the country will see the results as legitimate. The Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), widely acknowledged as the leading election watchdog in the country, was largely denied accreditation and virtually barred from monitoring the exercise. While the TMG mobilised over 10,000 members to observe the voting in all 36 states, the INEC provided less than 1,000 identification badges for them.

In Lagos, for instance, with a population variously estimated at 9 to 17 million, the INEC provided only 20 identification badges for the group's monitors. This suggests a worrying level of either incompetence or malice: either the INEC or the UN Development Programme which was contracted to produce the materials under a joint donor arrangement were simply unable to do so, or this was part of a wider INEC design to keep local monitors from witnessing expected irregularities.

The third, and most serious, problem of the first round of voting was the widespread violence and insecurity. Reports from virtually every state speak of electoral materials being stolen in transit, polling stations invaded and ballots seized. And despite the government's arrangements for the massive deployment of the police, army and state security services, the elections left a number of people dead even before the vote-counting began, sometimes even before any votes were cast.

In Port Harcourt two major police stations were attacked a few hours before the elections and burnt down by youths screaming that there would be no poll. Seven policemen were killed. It was hardly an isolated incident: collecting reports from several states, it appears at least 60 people were killed and as many wounded in election-related violence on 14 April. About half of the deaths occurred in three states in particular: Rivers, Delta and Edo, all in the Niger Delta region. And these figures are in addition to those, estimated at nearly 100 people, killed across Nigeria during the campaign.

While it is too early to make any generalisations about the perpetrators of the violence, it can at the very least be said that the elections were conducted in an atmosphere of voter insecurity and fear in many areas, and were therefore not free and fair in those parts of the country. The electoral commission concedes that its arrangements for security of materials did not anticipate that ballot boxes could be attacked and stolen even before the votes were cast -- yet further evidence of the INEC's poor preparation.

The Commission's reported electoral results are also causing concern. Of the sixteen states for which results had been announced by Sunday night, Obasanjo's PDP claimed thirteen, with one victory for the main opposition All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP), one for Action Congress (AC) and one also for the Progressive People's Alliance. If this trend leads to a landslide victory for the PDP, it would run very much contrary to public sentiments, thus confirming in the public's mind that there must have been large-scale rigging. Violent responses to these results have already been reported in such states as Delta, Bauchi and Benue.

How the INEC treats protests and disputes will also be critical to public reaction. Initial signs are not encouraging. On Sunday, citing electoral irregularities and violence, it cancelled the governorship elections held in Imo state, where a candidate recently expelled from the PDP could have won. At the same time, it upheld the votes for the assembly elections in the same state, and has allowed results in some other states where the exercise was even more controversial. This seemingly pro-PDP pattern of response to disputed polls will seriously undermine whatever is left of the credibility of the elections.

Political leaders are trying to spin the weekend's events their way. President Obasanjo has applauded the 14 April exercise, a judgment predictably echoed by the chair of the electoral commission, Professor Maurice Iwu. But few Nigerians share that view, and they are joined even by some senior members of the ruling PDP.

Muhammadu Buhari, the opposition ANPP presidential candidate, has expressed serious misgivings about the credibility of the election and the acceptability of its final results. The Action Congress (AC) of Vice President, Atiku Abubakar -- whom Obasanjo has tried to keep off the presidential ballot by every conceivable means, including selective corruption charges -- has alleged that many of the results being announced are merely "concocted" by the INEC under heavy influence from Obasanjo and his PDP. In Rivers State, the Joint Revolutionary Council (JRC), the umbrella militant group which includes the insurgent Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), has denounced the elections as "a

sham... the worst in the history of Black Africa." It has threatened to "unleash terror in infinite terms" in response.

Explosive tensions are now mounting, especially between supporters of Obasanjo, Abubakar and Buhari, as this Saturday's presidential election approaches. Clearly, a repeat of last weekend's lapses would spark further violence and deepen the crisis of legitimacy for whoever is elected. What can be done to improve the situation in the few short days remaining is clearly limited, but there are some urgent steps that can and should be undertaken.

First, the INEC needs to address its serious organisational lapses. One simple -- even if partial -- solution to some logistical problems would be for the INEC to use vehicles of other government departments that have large pools available, such as the National Population Commission, to facilitate the movement of election staff and materials.

The INEC, working with the UNDP, should also allow the accreditation of much larger numbers of independent election monitors from the TMG in order to ensure effective monitoring of the polls, and thus the credibility of results. The Commission also needs to show full transparency and impartiality in addressing the many controversies that are arising from the voting.

Second, the police and other security agencies must act more pro-actively to pre-empt or contain violence, especially in the Niger Delta region, but also in all states that are on the INEC's security watchlist. Those responsible for violence over the weekend should be arrested and prosecuted speedily, impartially and transparently. Police and army authorities should also direct their personnel to respond to post-election protests with restraint so as not to exacerbate the situation.

Third, the feud between Obasanjo and Abubakar needs to be dealt with right away. The Supreme Court ruled on Monday to allow Abubakar to run for the presidential elections, and while this may defuse some tensions, it could easily spark others. The Court's decision essentially undermined the role of the INEC in determining who can stand, calling into question some of the Commission's earlier moves and thus handing the opposition a strong argument to challenge many election results. In any case, the logistical hurdle of getting new presidential ballots printed and delivered to polling stations in just a few days may be insurmountable.

Nigeria's international partners -- particularly the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States -- have to engage immediately to mediate the Obasanjo-Abubakar conflict. The governments of the United States, the European Union and the Commonwealth could also help by making it absolutely clear that presidential elections as deeply flawed as those of last Saturday will have severe repercussions on their future relations, including Nigeria's quest for a stronger voice at the United Nations.

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How the INEC treats protests and disputes will also be critical to public reaction. Initial signs are not encouraging. On Sunday, citing electoral irregularities and violence, it cancelled the governorship elections held in Imo state, where a candidate recently expelled from the PDP could have won. At the same time, it upheld the votes for the assembly elections in the same state, and has allowed results in some other states where the exercise was even more controversial. This seemingly pro-PDP pattern of response to disputed polls will seriously undermine whatever is left of the credibility of the elections.

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*Africa News*

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How the INEC treats protests and disputes will also be critical to public reaction. Initial signs are not encouraging. On Sunday, citing electoral irregularities and violence, it cancelled the governorship elections held in Imo state, where a candidate recently expelled from the PDP could have won. At the same time, it upheld the votes for the assembly elections in the same state, and has allowed results in some other states where the exercise was even more controversial. This seemingly pro-PDP pattern of response to disputed polls will seriously undermine whatever is left of the credibility of the elections.

Political leaders are trying to spin the weekend's events their way. President Obasanjo has applauded the 14 April exercise, a judgment predictably echoed by the chair of the electoral commission, Professor Maurice Iwu. But few Nigerians share that view, and they are joined even by some senior members of the ruling PDP.

Muhammadu Buhari, the opposition ANPP presidential candidate, has expressed serious misgivings about the credibility of the election and the acceptability of its final results. The Action Congress (AC) of Vice President, Atiku Abubakar -- whom Obasanjo has tried to keep off the presidential ballot by every conceivable means, including selective corruption charges -- has alleged that many of the results being announced are merely "concocted" by the INEC under heavy influence from Obasanjo and his PDP. In Rivers State, the Joint Revolutionary Council (JRC), the umbrella militant group which includes the insurgent Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), has denounced the elections as "a sham... the worst in the history of Black Africa." It has threatened to "unleash terror in infinite terms" in response.

Explosive tensions are now mounting, especially between supporters of Obasanjo, Abubakar and Buhari, as this Saturday's presidential election approaches. Clearly, a repeat of last weekend's lapses would spark further violence and deepen the crisis of legitimacy for whoever is elected. What can be done to improve the situation in the few short days remaining is clearly limited, but there are some urgent steps that can and should be undertaken.

First, the INEC needs to address its serious organisational lapses. One simple -- even if partial -- solution to some logistical problems would be for the INEC to use vehicles of other government departments that have large pools available, such as the National Population Commission, to facilitate the movement of election staff and materials.

The INEC, working with the UNDP, should also allow the accreditation of much larger numbers of independent election monitors from the TMG in order to ensure effective monitoring of the polls, and thus the credibility of results. The Commission also needs to show full transparency and impartiality in addressing the many controversies that are arising from the voting.

Second, the police and other security agencies must act more pro-actively to pre-empt or contain violence, especially in the Niger Delta region, but also in all states that are on the INEC's security watchlist. Those responsible for violence

over the weekend should be arrested and prosecuted speedily, impartially and transparently. Police and army authorities should also direct their personnel to respond to post-election protests with restraint so as not to exacerbate the situation.

Third, the feud between Obasanjo and Abubakar needs to be dealt with right away. The Supreme Court ruled on Monday to allow Abubakar to run for the presidential elections, and while this may defuse some tensions, it could easily spark others. The Court's decision essentially undermined the role of the INEC in determining who can stand, calling into question some of the Commission's earlier moves and thus handing the opposition a strong argument to challenge many election results. In any case, the logistical hurdle of getting new presidential ballots printed and delivered to polling stations in just a few days may be insurmountable.

Nigeria's international partners -- particularly the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States -- have to engage immediately to mediate the Obasanjo-Abubakar conflict. The governments of the United States, the European Union and the Commonwealth could also help by making it absolutely clear that presidential elections as deeply flawed as those of last Saturday will have severe repercussions on their future relations, including Nigeria's quest for a stronger voice at the United Nations.

Nigeria's elections and Obasanjo's coveted reputation as a champion of democracy are greatly endangered. But the country's stability and democracy, as well as Obasanjo's reputation and legacy, can still be rescued if quick action is taken.

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*April 17, 2007 Tuesday*

## **Nigeria Polls: TMG Alleges Shutout Plan By INEC**

Daily Trust

One of the main domestic election observer groups may not participate in this month's general polls after it alleged a planned exclusion by the election regulator.

The 10,000-observer strong Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) is still to be accredited by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) seven days to the first set of elections, TMG's chairman Innocent Chukwuma told Weekly Trust yesterday.

"The truth is that we have not received any official communication from INEC in spite of the fact that we applied over two months ago and the elections are approaching," Chukwuma said. "Feelers close to INEC told us that the commission will not accredit groups that are critical to INEC."

But INEC's spokesman Segun Adeogun denied any plans to refuse TMG accreditation.

"Maybe that is their own imagination," Adeogun said.

Chukwuma said, "We applied for accreditation to our 10,000 observers over two months ago, but we have not received any communication from INEC about this. We wrote a letter seeking audience with the commission's chairman three weeks ago, and our letter was not even acknowledged. So wrote an open letter three days ago. Still we have not received any reply.

"We are also aware that some groups have already started receiving their accreditations. Our fear is that independent groups would be shut out from observing the elections.

"We are optimistic that they will eventually accredit us, even though time is running out. But if they don't, we are all registered voters and we can still observe while going out to cast our votes. If they don't give us, it is just stopping our roving observers. But each of us would observe where we vote," he said.

Asked whether TMG suspected any vote rigging plot in the recent development, Chukwuma said, "You can reach all kind of conclusions. If we were accredited by the military in 1999, and we were accredited in 2003, how can you deny us accreditation in 2007?"

But Adeogun refused to say specifically whether TMG would be accredited or not. Asked whether the group has been accredited to observe the polls, Adeogun said "Why don't you wait and see things tomorrow?" He immediately put off the call.

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*Africa News*

*April 7, 2007 Saturday*

## **Nigeria: Children Found On Voters Register**

Daily Trust

Election regulators have admitted registration teams allowed children -some babies in arms- to be included in the final voters register.

Civil society organisations told Daily Trust yesterday the problem is widespread. Election monitors have seen children on the display of the voters register in three states of the country and Daily Trust has proof of underage registration in a fourth.

Spokesman for the Independent National Electoral Commission, Pastor Segun Adeogun, confirmed pages of the final voters register obtained by Daily Trust showing children, and some registry entries with no picture at all, are genuine.

He said: "We are aware of this problem it is being dealt with. These children will not vote on election day. They are babies!"

But Diego Okenyodo of the Alliance for Credible Elections, said it is a way of rigging the election. He said: "If no one knows exactly how many people are registered at any one polling unit, they will be able to manipulate the figures on voting day."

Riggers need more people registered at polling units than actually vote to disguise the changes, Mr Okenyodo said.

He said ACE members saw children on the voters register in Katsina and he saw children being registered in Kaduna and Oyo states.

Chibuike Mgbеahuruike, programme manager of the Transition Monitoring Group, said INEC should publish the whole voters register so that people could see for themselves. He said: "I myself have not been able to get hold of one. I went to pick one up but they said there was none left." Other election groups have not been given copies of the register which went on display this week in polling units but is not published in its entirety.

Daily Trust has discovered false records bearing the photos of children in Kirfi Local government area.

INEC said the discovery proves the system is working and that no manipulation will be possible on voting day. Pastor Adeogun said: "Every party will have an election agent. They will have a copy of the register they will count off the people who vote and note down the number. If the number of people who voted is not the number of people registered, they will know."

But Mr Okenyodo said: "It is possible that some children would even be able to vote in more remote areas".

The local government area of Kirfi is 70kms away from Bauchi city and is not served by a tarred road. INEC has not displayed any form of voters register in this LGA this week.

The pages of the register clearly show false records have been created, inflating the number of people registered. The examples also show that the most basic checks were not carried out by INEC in order to screen register entries.

Daily Trust has a record which shows a 34-year-old Umaru Musa was registered twice with the same details. The Voter Identification Numbers of the two records are one after the other. It is possible two records were taken by mistake, but thumbprint recognition technology or cross checking for duplicate names in the database did not pick it up.

A page of the register holds 18 records, in one example page, half the records are clearly under 18. One child is obviously a toddler, about 2-years-old. They are listed as "students", aged 18 or 19.

In another example, a snotty-nosed baby has been held up to the camera. His data shows him to be Ismail Gwamna, a 29-year-old public servant.

The record immediately after this, the picture is black, and the name registered as "EETYTY E SDF", all letters close to each other on a normal computer keyboard.

Another example, children can be seen lining up to register in the background.

The register also shows records with "fake" pictures, which appear to be taken in front of illuminated studio backgrounds. One of these is the registration of a man named "Muhammed SK" he is shown wearing dark glasses that hide his identity.

At the polling station in Kadolli Primary School, Kirfi local government area, not one of the 390 entries in the register has a picture attached to it.

Pastor Adeogun said: "The missing pictures may be a technical problem that has already been fixed. The problem of under age registration has been acknowledged by the chairman since. This shows the system is working because none of these people will be able to vote. They will be arrested if they turn up on the day. These people are probably illiterate and don't know any better."

Politicians are responsible for pushing children to be registered, he said: "In 2003, some godfathers put people forward to be registered and then took their cards for N50. They thought that the system would be the same this time but we caught them out."

John Odey, spokesman of the People's Democratic Party said: "Political parties are not responsible for this, registration was INECs responsibility." Senator Saidu Umar Kumo, national secretary of the All Nigeria People's Party said: "It is a clear attempt to rig the election."

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April 6, 2007 Friday

## **Nigeria: Not Sabotage But Incompetence - President Obasanjo**

Daily Trust

"Nowhere in the world can a sitting government be getting ready for election and we have the kind of crisis in the power sector. They (PDP) are taking for granted that they will win every position they contest. So, the present situation shows how much contempt these fellows have for the Nigerian people...I can't imagine in a normal democracy where people are expecting that their votes will count, that a government so close to the election will allow that. What it means is that these people have total disregard for the Nigerian people. They expect that they will rig the elections, so the Nigerian people don't matter"- Prof Pat Utomi

I have often found myself not agreeing with most things that I have read from Pat Utomi, but in the build-up to the elections due in the next couple of days as I have quoted above, I think Utomi has been very apt in his observation of the Nigerian political scene. Last week, most Nigerian newspapers carried the report where Obasanjo attributed the protracted power outage across the country to sabotage. Obasanjo was quoted by the media as saying that "I thought that the measures we are taking in recent times will have put things right. I am not sure...but I am suspecting sabotage. I don't say there is sabotage but I am suspecting. And if I am suspecting, I have to find out. I will send a team out to all

these generation stations and find out what is happening and the report will be made public. And if anybody is involved in the sabotage, they will be seriously dealt with."

There are many things that we have said about Obasanjo in the past: his duplicity, his criminal propensities, barefaced lies, vindictiveness and absolute incompetence as a ruler. But the man never ceases to amaze, and for me the revelations of the past week in respect of power supply crisis in the country only corroborates what Nigeria's greatest writer, Chinua Achebe, said of Obasanjo this week, that the man has taken our country to the lowest level it ever could be. Obasanjo does not seem to have a sense of shame and neither is he a man of honour; and he is clearly a president of the lowest common denominator, otherwise, he would not mount the electioneering rostrum to give as cause of the monumental crisis of power supply in Nigeria "suspected sabotage."

It is clearly unacceptable that after the very tall promises he made during his 1999 inauguration, the constitution of all manners of bodies, the expenditure of over one trillion naira, including the award of multibillion dollar power supply contracts without observation of due process, Obasanjo will not be modest to accept the failure of his leadership of the power sector in particular, but would instead go on a wild goose chase in search of some faceless saboteurs. This is where Pat Utomi's statement at the head of this piece makes such sense. If the PDP regime is not preparing another route to power, it baffles that they would take the record of their negligence, incompetence and outright disrespect of the Nigerian people in vital areas of national development such as electricity supply to the next election due in the next two weeks.

Obasanjo must be living in cloud cuckoo land to imagine that Nigerians will take from him that a faceless group of saboteurs have been responsible for the pains he has inflicted on them over the past eight years, if we just take the power sector alone, where according to the records, over one trillion naira has been expended, in many instances without much transparency, openness or due process. It seems part of the package of the sector that operatives of the regime play their parts in inflicting darkness on the country and get promoted to higher levels; this was the way with former minister, Segun Agagu, who became governor of Ondo State, and Obasanjo's PDP is rewarding Liyel Imoke with the governorship of Cross River State after presiding over darkness for many years on behalf of Obasanjo.

Let us restate the salient points; on the eve of the general elections, Obasanjo will go down in history as the most incompetent, unpatriotic and most arrogant leader Nigeria has ever been saddled with. This 'know-it-all' president casts a know-it-all pall on the country, made very wrong choices of lieutenants to run very vital institutions of state, largely because his choices in many cases were driven by an agenda other than the nation's best interests. The ambience of work did not encourage creative thinking; it subverted competence or patriotic commitment. It is this incompetence which has been at the root of the problems of power supply, not some faceless saboteurs.

What Obasanjo was doing at the PDP rally was true to character; he was passing the buck of responsibility from himself and hoping that he can send the

Nigerian people on a wild goose chase in search of saboteurs. If ever there was a saboteur, we must look for him within the precincts of Aso Villa, where he has presided over a regime of darkness in the past eight years. So without wishing it, Obasanjo has actually indicted his own regime and has given us one more reason why the Nigerian people should give themselves the pause in their choice of leaders in the coming elections. Obasanjo's tenure is far too damaged, and has become such a liability that even his party men in the PDP must know by now that if elections are truly free and fair, they are most likely to harvest only the wrath of the Nigerian people.

It is this background that has led to very disturbing phenomena in the polity. INEC continues to operate in an openly partisan manner, almost like an extension of the PDP and the Presidency. It appeals against court decisions that do not favour the PDP; the police are posturing like the thuggery department of the Presidency and the PDP, and so brazen have these two institutions become that the Supreme Court was forced to point out their openly partisan posture a few days ago. Hon. Justice Dahiru Musdapher took a look at the counsel representing the police and asked pointedly: "What is the interest of the IGP in this matter? You got nothing to do in this case. What judgement did the Court of Appeal give against the IGP that you are cross-appealing? The Inspector General of Police is to provide security and to maintain law and order and not to be political. In this suit, he is merely a nominal party. What is your business whether the office of the vice president remains vacant or not when a lot of crime is going on?" Justice Sylvester Onu also told INEC's counsel: "You got nothing to do in this case. Your client INEC is supposed to be neutral; if Atiku ceases to be vice president, INEC will not be called upon to conduct election for his replacement, it is duty of the National Assembly."

It has become very clear that INEC appeals in political cases have become a major problem we have to grapple with in the process leading to the elections, and so disturbing is it that the Nigerian Bar Association has come out to appeal to INEC to drop such appeals in order to save the nation's electoral time-table. NBA reminded that as an umpire, INEC lacks the power of appeal. "For example", asked NBA "how does a battle between two candidates for a seat at the Senate directly affect INEC, or disqualification of a candidate reversed by the courts so bother INEC that it enters an appeal"?

This is the chaotic background against which the last two weeks before the elections is unfolding for the Nigerian people. And as if to present us with a Rubik cube-like complexity, two different rulings have further added to the atmosphere of uncertainty in the country in respect of the eligibility of Vice President Atiku Abubakar. But given the partisan posture of Iwu's INEC, your guess is as good as mine the choice that the body will make in respect of the rulings of the courts.

How the events of the next few days pan out will certainly underscore the credibility of an electoral process which has been sceptically received by the Nigerian people in the past couple of months, especially with the partisan stance of INEC in favour of the Presidency and the PDP regime. This scepticism has taken a further nudge given the attitude of the security forces to the civil society

organisations committed to the achievement of a credible electoral process in the next few weeks. The SSS has been reported by the BBC to be harassing the leadership of the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), while there have been concerted efforts to demonize the Alliance for Credible Elections (ACE).

When all is said and done, Nigeria is saddled with a president able to fashion good and evil schemes with equal measure, as a perceptive observer once remarked; as a leader in the process of development, Obasanjo has shown a very shocking incompetence in every sector of national life, and it is that deep-seated incompetence which made it difficult for him and his regime to deliver us from darkness despite expending one trillion naira over the past eight years.

But every tyranny gets comeuppance, no matter how long that takes; Obasanjo is very aware that such a time will come with the electoral process. He knows that the Nigerian people are capable of delivering a very sharp riposte to him and his vote-rigging contraption called the PDP, so he spent the better part of the last four years manufacturing dubious schemes to shroud the electoral process in as much crises and controversies as possible. In the meantime, he is hoping that the time-tested system of manipulating INEC and the security forces will come handy in 2007. Unfortunately for him, the Nigerian people are determined that they will not be victims of the serial rapists of the PDP in 2007; so do-or-die came into the picture as the slogan to steal from the Nigerian people, whether we want or not. As you can see, dear compatriot, these are very ominous days in Nigerian history.

At this point, I will like to go back to Pat Utomi; in the past few weeks, he has played a very patriotic role in trying to build a grand coalition of the opposition. Apart from running one of the most credible, issue-driven campaigns of the current electoral process, Utomi is one of the candidates that possess the depth of understanding of the destructive capacity of the PDP monster and he has tried to educate his colleagues in the opposition accordingly. SATURDAY PUNCH of March 31, 2007, quotes him as saying that "We must stop them. History will not forgive us, our children and grandchildren will not forgive us if we stand by and watch these guys".

Pat Utomi went further that the situation which faces the Nigerian people calls for concerted action. "I have approached my colleagues in the opposition and set up these issues, to say, 'Okay, let us lay down our own ego so that Nigeria will move forward'. That is my goal in this. When I started out, I had a two-point mission. One is to ensure that we build a viable opposition in Nigeria. My top priority is to build a viable opposition to get rid of the current administration that has served the Nigerian people so poorly. The quality of life in Nigeria is worse today than in 1999. I am persuaded that no government has performed more poorly in the history of Nigeria". These indeed are the words of a concerned patriot, and one hopes the opposition will hearken to them to build a formidable platform to decisively defeat the PDP and spare the Nigerian people eight extra years of locust.

Oby Ezekwesili and the World Bank

Oby Ezekwesili is one of the most visible members of the pro-imperialist economic team of the Obasanjo administration. I have written about this self-righteous, reactionary, right-wing and very arrogant woman before on this page. Since 2003, she has especially loomed large on public policy in Nigeria, implementing with a born-again religious zeal policies that were in consonance with the dictates of imperialism. Two weeks ago, she was appointed World Bank Vice President for Africa; it was announced that "her unique blend of first-hand experiences, especially in the more challenging and complex areas of energy sector reform and education, position her as the ideal candidate to serve as the vice president for Africa" New Nigerian newspaper of Monday, 26th March, 2007, quoted the World Bank's President, Paul Wolfowitz. Stripped of subterfuge, Oby is being rewarded for serving the best interests of imperialism in Nigeria in the past few years. And in case you don't know, she has been given the new job by the war criminal, Paul Wolfowitz, president of the World Bank, and former deputy defence secretary of the United States. Paul Wolfowitz was the architect of the illegal invasion of Iraq four years ago, and his project of invasion has led to the death of hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqis, the destruction of the national infrastructure of that country; and ordinarily, Paul Wolfowitz should be in custody in The Hague facing trial for genocide and crimes against humanity. These are the types of people who have inspired the unpatriotic reforms that Oby Ezekwesili and others have rammed down the throat of Nigeria in the past eight years. This is the type of company those who run our country keep, the Paul Wolfowitzs of this world: war criminals in front of whom they shake like lilies! Frankly, I do not think that Oby Ezekwesili represents Nigerian patriotism; she belongs to the stratum of petty-bourgeois intellectuals that come into the public space of underdeveloped countries like Nigeria with the singular purpose of implementing the agenda of imperialism: an agenda that lead to a systematic erosion of the fabric of national development and independent development of the nation's productive forces. Their charity resides in Washington and the imperialist agencies like the IMF and the World Bank. At the end of their service to imperialism, they are rewarded with "juicy appointments". This is the essence of the appointment reported in the past two weeks.

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*Africa News*

*April 5, 2007 Thursday*

## **Nigeria:What Sort of Help Does Iwu Need?**

This Day

Nigeria's electoral history is replete with crisis and malpractices. Without prejudice to this fact, however, the build-up to the next month's elections is remarkably strange. There are too many unsettling developments heralding the important exercise. Why are there still doubts in some quarters about the feasibility of elections that would take place in a matter of days? How do we explain the

seeming climate of uncertainty about the work of the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) under the leadership of Professor Maurice Iwu?

The corollary to all the foregoing is this: the assignment of INEC is crucial to the political future of Nigeria. It is precisely because of the centrality of the job at hand to the development of liberal democracy that Iwu needs all the help he can get to succeed. Iwu should be assisted by all to succeed not for his own sake; he must get through with the job because the consequences of failure in our circumstance are just too frightening to contemplate. Increasingly, perceptive analysts seem to be reaching a consensus that there is no peaceful alternative to the elections holding as scheduled. This nation can simply not afford another debacle caused by manipulated elections.

Senate President Ken Nnamani seemed to capture the conflicting moods in some politically discerning quarters when he explained the fears about the elections:

"If my fear is to be expressed about the elections, it is the general apathy in the minds of Nigerians.

"INEC has repeatedly told us that it is ready for the election and we are doing everything we can, to give INEC the support to conduct the election and for it to be credible enough. Now, we have done this by passing the (Electoral) Act in good time.

"We have done this and we are on stand-by, by the way, to do what is required. Let us think positively and give INEC the benefit of the doubt".

Nnamani should know what he is talking about even though he described himself as a non-professional politician. Since he is not a candidate in any of the elections he is expected to see things dispassionately, at least. His claims about apathy are disputable, of course. The truth is that Nigerians are generally interested in the outcome of the elections. It is difficult to talk of apathy given the enthusiasm shown about the debates among candidates and the questions being asked about the background of those seeking power and what plans they have for the people. The responses at campaign rallies do not also suggest apathy. It is also remarkable that compared to 1999, for instance, more quality candidates are seeking offices at various levels this time round. It would be wrong, therefore, to imagine that Nigerians are not keen about the elections taking place next month according to the timetable.

However, the senator is quite right when he says INEC should be given the benefit of doubt. For INEC to be so trusted by the people it should be wary of some pitfalls. Let us take some examples of the misstep. First, last weekend, the Action Congress governorship candidate in Edo State, Adams Oshiomhole, raised an alarm about the brazen fraternisation between the newly posted INEC Resident Commissioner to the state and the PDP. Oshiomhole has alleged that less than 24 hours after the INEC commissioner got to Benin he was at the home of a PDP chieftain for a meeting. He further alleged that the ad-hoc INEC staff members being recruited in Benin are PDP members. Oshiomhole says this could be the groundwork for rigging.

Besides, some non-governmental organisations committed to monitoring the elections have also alleged that Iwu is hostile to them. This is simply inexplicable.

The Transition Monitoring Group and the Alliance for Credible Elections have been accused by the commission of motives other than election monitoring. Only last week, the State Security Services (SSS) reportedly swooped on these organisations demanding from them their certificates of registration and sources of funding. There is also the unfinished business of many prospective voters claiming they never got registration slips. Some wondered where the voters' registers were ever displayed. There are many complaints about INEC's work.

Yes, Iwu needs to get the electorate to trust him to deliver on credible elections. It is by correcting some of the flaws that Nigerians are daily pointing out in the electoral process that Iwu could bolster his credibility. After all, it is elementary to know that manipulation of election does not happen only on the Election Day. The foundation for malpractices is often laid long before the Election Day.

But as a diplomat logically put the matter last week, Iwu should not be "overwhelmed" by destructive criticisms. He should not be discouraged from his proclamation to conduct acceptable elections. He should not be dismissed. The errors should rather be pointed out constructively. What Iwu really needs is a critical support.

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*Africa News*

*April 4, 2007 Wednesday*

## **WHAT SORT OF HELP DOES IWU NEED?**

Kayode Komolafe

Nigeria's electoral history is replete with crisis and malpractices. Without prejudice to this fact, however, the build-up to the next month's elections is remarkably strange. There are too many unsettling developments heralding the important exercise. Why are there still doubts in some quarters about the feasibility of elections that would take place in a matter of days? How do we explain the seeming climate of uncertainty about the work of the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) under the leadership of Professor Maurice Iwu?

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## Nigeria: April Polls - TMG Raises Alarm Over INEC's Attempt to Muzzle Monitors Daily Trust

With less two weeks to the polls, the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), a civil society organization committed to credible elections, has alleged "insidious maneuvers, threats, arm-twisting and intimidation" by the chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Professor Maurice Iwu, to dissuade it from monitoring the elections.

Addressing newsmen in Kaduna yesterday, the former TMG chairman, Barrister Festus Okoye, said INEC's chairman has unleashed operatives of the State Security Service (SSS) on offices of TMG member organizations in all the states of the federation "harassing, intimidating and threatening them."

Okoye who is now TMG's North-west zonal coordinator said, "Some of the operatives are demanding the registration certificates of the member groups and organizations, their membership strength and sources of funding.

"Some of the operatives claim that the INEC chairman directed them to screen and verify the credentials of member organizations of TMG before it can be accredited to monitor the 2007 elections.

"The INEC chairman and his cronies have in the past tried to infiltrate the TMG and failed. They tried to muzzle and intimidate the leadership of the TMG and failed. They formed domestic election monitoring groups to compete with TMG but their outfits could not take off the ground.

"They sponsored and continue to sponsor attacks on the TMG and the Alliance for Credible Elections (ACE-Nigeria) but the Nigerian people have essentially ignored these attacks based on their knowledge of the two organizations."

Okoye said by the latest vicious attack on the TMG, INEC is only trying to hide its shoddy preparations for the polls from the public because "TMG has since 1999 creatively, constructively and patriotically engaged in the electoral process.

"Since 1999, the member organizations of TMG have never applied for accreditation individually. The national secretariat of TMG has always applied for accreditation on behalf of members, the Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC), ACE-Nigeria and the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) all did the same thing but Iwu singled out TMG and ACE-Nigeria for harassment."

TMG therefore directed all its member organizations nationwide not to submit their certificates, membership lists and sources of funding to the SSS adding that all enquiries from the SSS should be directed to TMG at zonal and national levels.

"There are too many incidents and booby traps threatening the security of Nigeria and the 2007 elections and the SSS must direct its attention to them. These include the shoddy preparations for the elections, the serial disobedience of court orders by the leadership of INEC, the use of state resources for electioneering campaigns and hawking of violence by the federal and state governments and the activities of militants in the Niger Delta," said Barrister Okoye.

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## **Nigeria: Ehindero, Main Obstacle - Bafarawa**

This Day

Presidential candidate of the Democratic People's Party (DPP), Sokoto State Governor Alhaji Attahiru Bafarawa, has said that, rather than the INEC; the Police are the real problem to fear in the forthcoming general election

Governor Bafarawa said that contrary to the general anxiety over INEC's conducts, he is of the view that the Inspector General of Police, Mr Sunday Ehindero is being kept in place to ensure that next month's polls are rigged. Alhaji Attahiru Bafarawa made this assertion on Wednesday, 28th March, when he held a lengthy meeting with the Alliance for Credible Elections and the Transition Monitoring Group.

Alhaji Attahiru Bafarawa, explaining his position, said it was common knowledge that the IGP had reached retirement age last year but had his tenure extended by the President in spite of the worsening security situation in the country. At the expiration of that extension, Mr Sunday Ehindero was granted another one that would only expire after the election. The DPP presidential candidate expressed his belief that Mr Ehindero was already showing his gratitude by being unduly hard on opposition party candidates, giving instances of arbitrariness such as the detention of a Gombe State gubernatorial candidate over an offence, which he said was bail able. "Everybody is shouting 'INEC! INEC!! INEC!!!' but I don't see INEC as the problem," he said. "When you register to vote

and you cast your votes, there is nothing else INEC can do. The problem of Nigerian elections is the police."

Bafarawa, while receiving the coalitions of civil society groups, said he was worried that there is a prevalent clamour for credible elections but avowed that credible politicians, which are the ingredients for credible elections, are lacking. He said unlike he who is a career politician, many other Nigerians lacked historical antecedents of service to the people and belief in democratic ideals.

"With all this faulty foundation," His Excellency added, "how can we expect credible elections? This is my own view, my worry. But we shall keep doing our best, in consultation with well-meaning groups like yours."

Governor Bafarawa pledged commitment to issue-based campaigns and specifically stated that the Niger Delta issue was a national sore and not a regional problem as it is being handled by this administration and the ones before it. As a solution to the perennial and worsening conflicts in the Niger Delta, Bafarawa asserted that he had studied the problem closely and that he would scrap the Niger Delta Development Commission or any such agency as soon as he gets into office as president. "NDDC is a commission of corruption," Bafarawa said. "Those who do not have ministerial appointments are given such lucrative commissions so that they can steal money. Niger Delta problem needs a political solution not military solution. I believe that if Obasanjo goes to talk to the youths for one hour, they will listen to him."

On the proposed presidential debate being promoted by the Nigeria Elections Debate Group, of which the Alliance for Credible Elections is a member, Alhaji Bafarawa stated categorically that he wouldn't attend the event. Asked why, he said this was because he was being paired with Habu Fari, the presidential candidate of the NDP, which believes that the elections should not hold.

"Which debate am I going for? They paired me with Habu Fari, someone who took INEC to court saying elections should not hold. It's an insult! There are 419 presidential candidates. If they want me to come, they should pair me with Yar'Adua who is my contemporary as a governor and who wants elections to hold."

He also believes that the opposition parties have not formed a strong coalition against the ruling PDP because of selfish interests but that the reality would dawn on them in the coming days, leading to the formation of the necessary mega coalition.

The Alliance for Credible Elections, led by Mr Emma Ezeazu, has held meetings with the major presidential aspirants in order to ensure that they make commitments to credible, violence-free elections. So far they have visited General Muhammadu Buhari, Vice President Atiku Abubakar and Attahiru Bafarawa. Umaru Musa Yar'Adua is yet to give a date for the meeting.

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*Africa News*

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## **Nigeria: INEC is Angling for a Stalemate -Okoye**

Daily Trust

Barrister Festus Okoye, constitutional lawyer and former chairman of the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) spoke to Weekly Trust on the controversy surrounding INEC's disqualification of Vice-President Atiku Abubakar from the presidential race.

What is your view on the decision of INEC to disqualify Atiku in spite of the court ruling to the contrary?

I think their decision is arrogant. Their decision is going to create confusion within the electoral process. Their decision is not borne out of any genuine desire to sanitize the electoral process. I believe that at this point in time, what the stakeholders should do is to bow to the spirit of the rule of law and due process. The spirit of rule of law and due process presupposes that INEC must concern itself to its constitutionally assigned function and they must also respect the other arm of government that has been assigned the responsibility to interpret both the constitution and the electoral act. Since the court of law has made a pronouncement and issued an order that INEC does not have power to verify or screen any candidate, any other thing they do can only create confusion in the electoral process and ultimately lead to a situation where there would be so many aggrieved parties that whatever the court may pronounce may not be acceptable to the majority of the Nigerian people.

But INEC seems to be clinging to Section 137 subsection (1) (i) of the constitution that talks about an indicted person by an administrative panel?

INEC doesn't have the right and authority, or even the competence to interpret any section or provision of the constitution. The right to interpret any section of the constitution has been given to court of law. If you read Section 32 of the Electoral Act 2006 properly, that particular section takes care of issues of qualification or un-qualification of a candidate. That is why the Section said that any candidate that wants to contest election must swear to an affidavit indicating that he or she has fulfilled all constitutional requirements. If INEC believes that any candidate has not satisfied any section of the constitution, all they need to do is to go to court to challenge the qualification of that particular candidate. If any individual also believes that any candidate does fulfill any provision of the constitution, that individual can also go to court. That is why Section 32 says that any political party that willingly or unwillingly forwards any candidate that is not qualified, there will be a conviction or pay a fine N500,000. That means the law has given political parties, individuals and the courts the capacity and the competence to pick candidates. It had not given the competence and capacity to INEC so what they are trying to do is to usurp powers that have not been given to them. What they are trying to do is to appropriate powers which have not been given to them. What they are trying to do is to appropriate powers that have not

been donated to them and the moment you act outside processes and ultimately lead to either a postponement of the election or confusion in the electoral process.

What is the implication of all these for the 2007 election?

I think that the implications are three-fold. First, no organ of government has the capacity and the authority to question the decision of the court of law. What they are trying to do is to bring the reputation of the court into odium. They are questioning the capacity and competence of a court of law to interpret the constitution. And this did not start today. If you watch the utterances of the chairman of INEC, what he has been doing is what we call differential interpretation of the constitution. He is not trained in the art of judicial dispute resolution. Even if INEC allows a candidate that is not qualified to contest election, at the end of the day, the Court of Appeal that have been given original jurisdiction in relation to this particular matter can still annul the results that have been declared by INEC and therefore return a different candidate to power other than the candidate that has been declared by INEC. For me INEC is simply engaged in meddlesomeness in terms of the electoral act and in terms of what has not been given to them by the constitution. If the whole political class has lost confidence in the ability of INEC to be an umpire and also maintain certain level of balance, then whatever they do will amount to nothing. The election will lose its credibility and the international community will just laugh at us saying that we are a country and a nation that does not have the capacity to conduct free, fair and transparent election. Let the Nigerian people and the court of law be the ones to determine whether a candidate is qualified or not rather than an electoral body exercising a judicial function which they are not empowered to do. Only the court of law has the capacity and the competence to exercise such powers. That is the only way we can have peace and credible election.

What do you make of the allegation that INEC is only interested in disqualifying those that pose a threat to PDP in the forthcoming election?

I don't think that INEC is disqualifying those that pose threat to the PDP in the forthcoming election. What INEC is doing is that they are deliberately and maliciously programming this process to fail. They want a situation where we are going to have all sort of litigations so that at the end of the day, we are going to have a constitutional cliffhanger that will hang the process of this election. And then we have an interim government or this regime continues. I don't think they are disqualifying a candidate that poses threat to the PDP. What it is doing is trying to create confusion in the process either to return the corrupt one party dictatorship at the end of the day or to programme the process to fail so that there wouldn't be election in the first place. The agenda is not a national agenda. It is not an agenda of the Nigerian people. It is an agenda that is being packaged outside the commission. That is why you have all sorts of disagreement within the commission. The chairman of INEC is taking dictation from some forces outside the commission. Some forces that does not mean well for this country and that is the greatest problem we have with this process as of now.

What is your reaction to the fact that most people have not seen the so-called INEC display of voter's register?

The problem is that right from the beginning INEC was not meant to conduct election. The chairman of INEC was part of those who fought for tenure elongation of this present regime. So he was not preparing to conduct election. He does not seem to have a grip on what is going on as at now. Things have gone out of hand. That is why nobody has seen the voter's register and nobody can confirm whether his or her name is there. Constituencies have not been properly marked out and over 500,000 ad hoc staff that are suppose to conduct this election have not been trained. He is busy engaging in utterances that will put this election into jeopardy. He is busy vying into things that have not been constitutionally given to him and neglecting his core constitutional function and role. All these are deliberate and it is meant to lead to a situation where we will come to the realization that this process cannot work. Then we will be ones begging and calling for interim government. That is exactly where they are going.

If this is the plan of INEC, what should be the next line of action for Nigerians?

Our Resolve is That Nobody in This Present Regime Will Stay in Power One Day More Than It is Constitutionally Given to Them And Nobody Who Participates to Inhibit This Electoral Timeline Would Be Allowed to Cling Unto Power. Whatever Subterfuge They Are Engaged in, On 29th of May, They Must Go. for US, No Matter the Crooked Nature of This Process, Election Must Take Place And It Must Be Seen to Be Free, Fair And Credible. Whatever They Do, At the End of the Day, We Must Have Election.

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*Africa News*

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## **Nigeria:How Rimi, Nwodo, Kokori, Others Tackled INEC**

Daily Champion

AS the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) enters another crucial stage of the April general elections, having concluded the acceptance of nominated candidates from the political parties, there is the need for concerted efforts by all stakeholders of the Nigerian project to work towards making the exercise not only successful but also credible and acceptable to the generality of Nigerians.

Perhaps it is the importance of the election-transition from civilian to civilian, which in Nigerian political history has been problematic that made many Nigerians and non-Nigerians to have expressed their concern about the forthcoming elections.

The Alliance of Political Parties and Civil Society Groups that presented a letter to the Chairman of the INEC, Prof Maurice Iwu, in his office last week may be seen from this light. According to reports the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), Action Congress (AC), Progressives Peoples Alliance (PPA) and African Democratic Congress (ADC) and some civil society groups

presented a letter to the commission's chairman, requesting that the open ballot voting system be adopted in the forthcoming general elections scheduled to hold between April 14 and 21.

Those that led the delegation included the presidential candidate of APGA, Chief Odumegwu Ojukwu; National Chairman of the AC, Chief Bisi Akande; former governor of Kano State, Alhaji Abubakar Rimi, former Enugu State governor, Chief Okwesileze Nwodo, labour activist and AC chieftain, Chief Frank Kokori, former Foreign Affairs Minister, Chief Dubem Onyia, and Col. Emma Nwagboso (rtd).

The politicians under the aegis of National Coalition for Free, Fair and Credible election in 2007, in their letter insisted on the conduct of the general elections, using the parameters of the June 12, 1993 which resulted in the transparency, fairness and credibility of that election, adjudged to be the fairest in Nigeria's election history.

According to reports, the politicians while presenting the letter to the chairman of the INEC reiterated their commitment to the conduct of a credible general elections in April, advising INEC not to collude with any person or group of persons to fail the nation.

In a conference convened by the coalition after the presentation of their letter, Chief Nwodo said that besides their insistence on the adoption of open ballot system, they demanded also for a stoppage to what he called unconstitutional disqualification of candidates seeking elective offices.

"We feel great sense of national duty to alert our nation and the international community of the scheming of the PDP to abort our nascent democracy and plunge our dear country into chaos-following the unbridled rigging of the 2003 general elections, Nigerians have completely lost hope and confidence in the ability of the PDP-led government to conduct a free, fair and credible election in our country", he said.

According to Nwodo, the rigging of the 2003 election was carried out with the collusion of the commission, the ruling government and its agencies, warning that should rigging recur in the April general elections, the alliance in conjunction with the civil society and international community would mobilise the people of Nigeria for a sustained mass action.

While analysts accede to the insistence of the coalition on a credible election, the threat to resort to mass action, they argue should not be the option.

Besides, political analysts note their observation of some set back suffered by the INEC in its preparation to the crucial general election, contending that now is the time for it to not only step up its preparation activities but also to solicit the support, understanding and co-operation of all the stakeholders of the Nigerian project if it must achieve its objective of giving Nigerians credible and acceptable election results in April.

Instructively, the INEC chairman while noting that he did not know any organisation by the name Rimi and Nwodo chairmen however accepted letter presented to him and promised to get back to them after due consultations with his commissioners.

However, analysts note that the commission has the statutory authority to work out the details of how it conducts elections in Nigeria, the issue of open ballot has been contentious. Although it was the system that threw up late Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola (MKO) who was generally acclaimed to have won the presidential election of June 12 1993, the argument against it is that it does not protect the privacy of the electorate's choice.

The Electoral Act 2006, provides that the ballot system would be adopted, a system where the electors thumbprint in a cubicle under the glare of other voters and return to open space to cast his vote. According to analysts, this system has often been referred to as the modified open ballot, a system where voters queue up behind the candidate they want to vote for.

Analysts note that although INEC may not be favourably disposed to the open ballot system in that it may require some amendment of the Electoral Act, the fears expressed by the coalition are genuine. their desire to avert any situation that would lead the country to anomie should be shared by all.

They argued that it is perhaps for this reason that the Nigerian Bar Association promised to deploy about 250 lawyers to assist the INEC for the conduct of the election and post-election cases. Besides, the NBA, there are many other civil society groups, including the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) that have trained their members to monitor the elections.

This is outside the support of the International Community the European Union, Commonwealth among others that have expressed their commitment to support the INEC in the conduct of a credible election.

The Canadian High Commissioner to Nigeria Mr David Angeel buttressed the importance of this sort of collaboration when at a recent stakeholders forum organised by the commission, he noted that public confidence in the electoral process was key to a sustainable democracy. According to him, when people are locked out of the electoral process, democracy becomes endangered because it breeds scepticism and mistrust.

His American counterpart, had recently at the launch of the Good governance and credible Election Monitoring Committee of the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG) emphasised the importance his country attached to the forthcoming election in Nigeria.

He said it was because of its significance that the American government was involved in funding the commission in order for it to conduct a credible election.

Analysts are quick to note that with some innovations introduced by the INEC, the possibility of having a free, fair and credible elections may not be ruled out. However, the opposition by the ruling party to the embossment of candidates' photographs on the ballot papers, analysts observe, may constitute another hindrance towards having a credible election in April.

The implication of this is that the commission has to work harder to extricate itself from the dilemma of alleged obedience to the ruling party and incurring the wrath of the opposition, part of which is represented in the national coalition for free, fair and credible election in 2007, or conceding to their request and attracting the anger of the ruling party.

Analysts argue that here lies the test for the independence of the electoral umpire, especially now that there are clear evidence of attempts by some people to deny others the fundamental human rights of association and freedom, to vote and be voted for.

According to those who hold this position, the photograph embossment is as innovative as the digital direct capture machines which the commission finally used in its voters registration after a lot of controversy and therefore will have to convince the electorate on how the system conduce to the conduct of free, fair and credible elections.

Beyond convincing the Nigerian electorate on how the systems it is going to adopt will result in the expected outcome, analysts believe that the Commission Tows the citizens a duty to a reasonable extent, to assert its independence.

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## **VOA NEWS: NIGERIA'S PRESIDENTIAL RACE GETS MORE COMPLICATED** WASHINGTON

The Voice of America issued the following story:

By Chinedu Offor

Nigeria's president Olusegun Obasanjo says he will turn power over to Vice President Atiku Abubakar If the vice president wins the April elections. But the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) says Abubakar is barred from running because of allegations of corruption.

Instead, INEC has cleared his running mate, Senator Ben Obi, to run in his place. Innocent Chukwuma is chairman of the Transition Monitoring Group, an independent coalition of 250 civil society pro-democracy groups. He says what appear to be conciliatory comments by President Obasanjo are just conflicting signals that do not constitute a shift of his position against Atiku's candidacy.

"The statement is at best a political statement because this is somebody that has done everything humanly possible to stop Atiku from contesting the election," he says.

He says recent comments by the president and actions by INEC may be an admission that Atiku has the law on his side.

"It is one way to look at it because they have been made to eat their words in recent times through declaration of the courts. So in that case you may see it as some welcome development," he says.

Chukwuma says Atiku should not give any serious consideration to what appears to be a softening of positions by the authorities. "The individuals and

institutions behind them have clearly showed powers to go outside of the law to do what they want to do."

Offor Interview on Nigeria mp3:

[http://www.voanews.com/mediaassets/english/2007\\_02/Audio/mp3/Nigeria\\_Pol\\_Update\\_Offor\\_26Feb07\\_Eng2a.mp3](http://www.voanews.com/mediaassets/english/2007_02/Audio/mp3/Nigeria_Pol_Update_Offor_26Feb07_Eng2a.mp3)

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