



## Transition Monitoring Group

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### **2007 GENERAL ELECTIONS: THE NEED TO KEEP TO THE TIME-TABLE SET BY THE ELECTORAL ACT 2006 FOR ACTIVITIES**

The 2007 general elections will hold in less than two weeks time yet the Independent National Electoral Commission has not yet complied with the time stipulations under the Electoral Act 2006 for certain activities relating to the election. The following instances will suffice.

Section 20(1) of the Electoral Act 2006 provides as follows.

- 20(1) Subject to the provisions of section 17(1) of this Act, the Commission shall, by notice appoint a period of not less than 5 days and not exceeding 14 days during which a copy of the voters' register for each Local Government and Area Council or Ward shall be displayed for public scrutiny and during which period any objection or complaint in relation to the names omitted or included in the voters' register or in relation to any necessary correction, shall be raised or filed.

The significance of the claims and objections exercise goes without saying. It enables errors in the particulars of registered voters to be corrected. Persons whose names were inadvertently omitted from the register will also use the opportunity to get their names included in the register. More significantly, it provides opportunity for objections to be raised against fictitious and ghost names in the register. In the light of the allegation that registration equipment was found in private homes, the claims and objection exercise become more crucial.

Section 21 of the Electoral Act also provides as follows:

- 21. Not later than 60 days before a general election, the Supplementary voters' list shall be integrated with the voters' register and published.

The combined effect of sections 20 and 21 of the Electoral Act therefore is that the voters' register ought to be published at least 60 days before any general election.

Section 47 of the Electoral Act 2006 also provides as follows:

- S. 47. The Commission shall, not later than 14 days before the day of the election, cause to be published, in such manner as it may deem fit, a notice specifying the following matters:
  - (a) The day and hours fixed for the poll
  - (b) By way of indication, the persons entitled to vote; and
  - (c) The location of the polling stations.

Less than 14 days to the elections the above provisions have not been complied with. It may be pertinent to state that the 2007 general elections are no fortuitous events. About four years back the Federal Government and the Independent National Electoral Commission were already aware about the possible dates of the elections and therefore should have prepared adequately for the elections. There is no doubt that the failure to comply with the above provisions of the Electoral Act will affect the transparency of the electoral process, to say the least. President Olusegun Obasanjo tried to excuse the shortcomings of the 2003 general elections on the ground that we were still in the learning process. A four-year period is enough time for us to learn and do the right thing we regard to the conduct of elections. The failure to comply with section 10(5) of the Electoral Act has necessitated the amendment of the section through an Act of the National Assembly. Unfortunately, the President has for inexplicable reason not yet assented to the bill for the amendment of the section.

Signed Mabel Ade