



## Transition Monitoring Group

(A Coalition of Human Rights, Non-Governmental and Civil Society Organisations)  
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### The 2007 Elections: Dispersing the Climate of Fear, Silence and Intimidation

Press Conference addressed by the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) on the 29th day of March 2007 in Kaduna, Nigeria

In the last three days, operatives of the State Security Service (SSS), acting on the promptings and directives of the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission, Professor Maurice Iwu have swarmed the offices of the member organizations of the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) in all the states of the federation harassing, intimidating and threatening them. 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 Chairman of INEC directed them to screen and verify the credentials of member organizations of TMG before TMG can be given accreditation to monitor the 2007 elections.

These insidious maneuvers, threats, arm-twisting, and intimidation are propelled, directed and funded by the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission who is on a vendetta mission against genuine domestic election monitors. The 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 the 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 TMG and ACE-Nigeria. Having failed in its plan A mission, the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission has resorted to the use of the State Security Service in a most vicious and unpatriotic attempt to screen out the TMG from monitoring the 2007 elections.

The Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) pioneered independent domestic election monitoring in Nigeria. It has monitored elections in Nigeria

since 1999 and issued credible reports that have been used by election management agencies locally and internationally. . The TMG has the pedigree, the experience and expertise in election monitoring and observation. The leadership of the TMG has observed elections in other countries on behalf of the Commonwealth, ECOWAS, NDI, the Carter Center and other international election observers Since 1999 the member organizations of TMG have never applied for accreditation individually.

The National Secretariat of the TMG has always applied for accreditation on behalf of its members. This is exactly what the TMG has done for the 2007 elections. The Justice, Development and Peace Commission did the same thing. The Nigerian Bar Association did the same thing and international election observers did the same thing. It is only the TMG and the Alliance for Credible Elections that the Chairman of the Commission is using the State Security Service to harass and intimidate on flimsy and dubious grounds and considerations.

The TMG as an organization is not really surprised at the actions of the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission. At a meeting he called in his office on Wednesday the 28th day of March, 2007 he threatened to “de-masquerade the masquerade” while his State Security Service counterpart at the meeting insisted that the more than 230 member organizations of the TMG must apply for accreditation individually and submit their registration certificates, membership strength and sources of funding.

This latest attack and the mean attempt to exclude the TMG from monitoring the 2007 elections is a function of the refusal of the leadership of the TMG to play the minion in relation to the shoddy preparations for the 2007 elections. The TMG has creatively, constructively and patriotically engaged the electoral process. We have pointed the way to genuine and credible elections. We have offered suggestions on how to instill confidence in the electoral process. We have tried unsuccessfully to collaborate and work in tandem with INEC but have been rebuffed by the Chairman.

Rather, the Chairman has been fishing and scouting for turn coats in civil society that will sing his praises. He found some and is using them to form shadowy and phantom domestic election observer groups. He has also been projecting these fraudulent groups as the face of civil society in Nigeria. The position of the TMG in relation to the shoddy preparations and empty rhetoric's of the Chairman is clear. The TMG would continue to engage the electoral process through a process of offering constructive and patriotic suggestions on how to instill confidence in the process and enabling Nigerians to have credible

elections. The TMG will continue to mobilize the Nigerian people and empowering them on the need to protect their mandate and deny election riggers a platform to anchor. The TMG will deploy over 10,000 monitors to monitor all aspects of the 2007 elections and issue reports that are factual and credible.

It will also offer concrete suggestions and make proposals on institutional reforms that will enable genuine electoral management agencies conduct credible elections in Nigeria. The members of the TMG are resolved that the 2007 elections must take place and must be seen to be credible. To this end, the TMG and its member organizations will not swallow the bait of the leadership of the Commission to derail the 2007 election through the provocation of critical sectors of the Nigerian society into taking actions that can stall the elections. The TMG is firmly convinced that the optimism of the Chairman of the Commission to conduct free, fair and transparent elections is not grounded on reality and is principally based on empty rhetoric.

Most Nigerians do not have faith in the ability and capacity of INEC to deliver credible elections as the leadership of INEC is acting on the instructions of forces outside the Commission and these forces are bent on instituting a one party state in Nigeria. The TMG will under no circumstance demobilize its forces and become subservient to the leadership of the Independent National Electoral Commission. That will entail a big disservice to the people of Nigeria. The TMG derives its principal source of funds to monitor the 2007 elections from the Joint Donor Basket managed by the UNDP.

The Independent National Electoral Commission draws from these funds and the amount received by the TMG is a matter of common knowledge and can be obtained from the offices of the UNDP and even INEC. The Transition Monitoring Group has therefore: Directed all its member groups and organizations in all the States of the Federation not to submit their certificates, membership list and sources of funding to the State Security Service. All enquires and queries from the State Security Service should be directed to the leadership of the TMG at the Zonal and national levels.

The Independent National Electoral Commission must come out of the closet and explain to the Nigerian people its grouse with the TMG rather than hiding behind the State Security Service to achieve its aim of intimidating member organizations of the Transition Monitoring Group. The Transition Monitoring Group and other domestic election monitors have a constitutional and patriotic right and duty to monitor and observe the 2007 elections with or without accreditation by INEC. It is the patriotic responsibility of every Nigerian to make sure that those

entrusted with the conduct of elections perform their functions in accordance with the law and the constitution.

There are too many incidents and booby traps threatening the security of Nigeria and the 2007 elections and the State Security Service 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 resource for electioneering campaign by the Federal and State Governments; the hawking of electoral violence by the Federal and State Governments and the activities of militant groups in the Niger Delta. The Independent Electoral Commission must confine itself to its constitutional and statutory mandate and functions rather than opening up avenues of controversy, dissention and acrimony that can threaten the smooth conduct of the 2007 elections.

The Independent National Electoral Commission must bow to the rule of law and due process by obeying court orders and decisions and stop the unwholesome resort to dubious interpretation of the law and empty declarations about enforceable and unenforceable orders. The State Security Service must resist the temptation of buying into the personal war of the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission with genuine civil society groups and organizations. The Chairman wants to cover his electoral incompetence and shoddy preparations for the 2007 elections and that is why he wants all genuine domestic election monitors out of the polling stations on Election Day.

The Transition Monitoring Group is a public trust and will continue to work assiduously in the service of the people of Nigeria by ensuring that elections at all levels are genuine and credible. The TMG will continue to engage the Electoral Management Agency, which is a creation of the Constitution and the law, and not the personal agency of an individual or group of persons. The Nigerian people will confer mandate and legitimacy only on candidates that come to power on the genuine votes of the people and not through electoral subterfuge.

Thank you.

Festus Okoye Esq.

Coordinator North West Zone (TMG)

March 29, 2007