



DRAFT FINAL STATEMENT

OF THE

**PRESIDENTIAL AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
ELECTIONS OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF
NIGERIA HELD ON 25 FEBRUARY 2023**

1 MARCH 2023

GENERAL ELECTIONS HELD; NIGERIA MUST TOE THE PATH OF PEACE IRRESPECTIVE OF PERCEIVED LACK OF TRANSPARENCY AND TRUST IN THE SYSTEM TO AVOID VIOLENCE

INTRODUCTION

On 25 February 2023, Nigeria held the Presidential and National Assembly elections. This was the seventh successive general elections since the return to multiparty democracy in 1999. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in preparation for the elections, among the key reforms in the Electoral Act, 2022 included the conduct of early primaries by political parties, introduction of the Bi- Modal Voters Accreditation System (BIVAs) and the INEC Results Viewing Portal (IReV) to ensure the integrity and credibility of the elections.

To further enhance the process, amongst the 93.4 million registered voters, 9.5 million voters were registered ahead of the 2023 elections of whom two- third were young persons and 47.5% were women. This marked an 11.3% increase from the 84,004,084 voters recorded in the 2019 general elections. Other provisions by INEC included the training of technical personnel and provision of logistics to ensure smooth outcome of the elections.

However, the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding Nigeria (WANEP- Nigeria) on behalf of its over 250 member organizations spread across the six geo -political zones wish to express deep concern over the conduct of just concluded Presidential and National Assembly Elections conducted across the 36 states in the country. WANEP–Nigeria, a network established to provide an organized platform for collaborative peacebuilding in Nigeria by indigenous Non-Governmental Organizations working in the area of conflict, peace and security implores the government to take urgent action to douse the tensions building up due to citizens dissatisfaction of the conduct of the general elections with pocket of protests being witnessed in Abuja and other parts of the country.

Although, candidates of the political parties competing in the elections had come together to sign two Peace Accords committing fully to supporting all efforts that will ensure a peaceful transition, pre -electoral violence had continued to bedevil the country. Among its most worrisome manifestations were the attacks on offices of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), which clearly aim to undermine the electoral process itself. In Kano, Enugu and Ebonyi States pre- electoral violence had left 15 reportedly killed by unknown gunmen two days to the elections with the Nigerian Police Force and Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC) committing to deploying massive personnel across the country to avert threats of violence that could impact the peaceful conduct of elections. The elections took place amidst general insecurity in the Northwest, Northeast, Southeast, and South-South geopolitical zones.

As contribution towards ensuring credible and violence free elections, WANEP- Nigeria created a **Social Media Platform and Organized a Virtual Election Situation Room** on February 25, 2023. The situation room comprised of 12 conflict analysts linking with over 500 domestic observers across the 36 states of the federation. The analysts and observers gave real time incidence reports and situation updates of the election. The observations and situational updates on electoral violence in the over 900 electoral wards comprising of different polling units during the voting process has generated lots of tension.

The main objective of **Virtual Election Situation Room** was to monitor the elections and ensure impartial assessment of the electoral process. The analysts and observers engaged with key stakeholders including INEC officials, security agencies, party agents, international observers, civil society organisations, the media and voters among others to get situational updates at the different polling units across the country.

Through this final statement, WANEP offers a summary of its key findings and recommendations on the electoral process. This statement is issued after the collation of election results. WANEP will continue to closely monitor the electoral process and provide a detailed report of post electoral updates across the country.

ELECTION DAY OBSERVATIONS

Reports from the analysts and observers have revealed that the election procedure as designated by INEC was between 8.30am and 2.30pm as the voting time but in some polling units the voting process began later than scheduled. The key incidences that occurred in most of the Polling Units. Late arrival of INEC Officers and election materials to Polling Units as reported in Abuja Lagos, Ibadan, Plateau and other states of Nigeria; Limited presence of Security officers reported at some polling units in Lagos , Plateau, Gombe, Oyo States; Due to creation of new polling units by INEC, some voters were unable to identify their polling units on time; Faulty **Bi-Modal Voters Accreditation System (BIVAs)** Machines were recorded in some polling units; Snatching of BIVAs machines, ballot boxes and ballot papers by thugs; inadequate ballot papers brought to polling units thus leaving a large number of person disenfranchised and inability to upload election results on INEC portal to mention but a few.

However, to ensure peaceful process, we commend the voters who came out in large number to cast their votes and demonstrated patience by waiting for INEC officials in locations where they arrived late. The presence of domestic and foreign observers monitoring the conduct of the election at different polling units was good and re- assuring of free and fair elections.

Also, we commend the electoral officers for giving preference to the elder persons, pregnant women, lactating mothers and Persons Living with Disabilities (PLWD) to cast their votes early and leave the polling units. This was a clear indication of cultural sensitivity and appreciable gender sensitivity on the part of the electoral officers. We appreciate the efforts of INEC and security agencies for being gender sensitive in their deployment of officers to polling units.

In all of these, violence was witnessed in Akwa- Ibom State as thugs suspected to be supporters of a political party in Akwa Ibom State inflicted machet wounds on two voters before carting away with one of the BIVAS machine for polling units 11 and 12 at Oniong West Ward one in Onna Local Government Area of the state. In Odaba polling unit 05 in Dekina ward in Kogi State, operatives of the Nigerian Army reportedly gunned down an unknown ballot thief who came in the company of alleged political thugs to disrupt election activities. At Lugbe, FCT, over 8000 registered voters became restive when they found that an inadequate number of BIVAs machines were brought to the PUs. Many feared that they risked being disenfranchised and decided that they would not vote and would not allow INEC officials to leave the location either, until their demands were met to mention but a few. These incidences of violence necessitated INEC to announce an extension of the voting in affected areas/ states for the Presidential and National Assembly elections

to February 26, 2023. (Attached is a chronology of incidences witnessed in the 36 states across Nigeria as reported to the WANEP- Nigeria Virtual Election Situation Room).

ELECTION RESULTS

As the results of the general elections conducted in the 36 states and the FCT have been released by INEC, the ruling party the All Progressive Congress (APC) presidential candidate has taken the lead with a total of 8,794,726 votes, the highest of all the 17 other candidates, with the Presidential candidates of People's Democratic Party (PDP) having a total of 6,984,520 votes in the election. The Labour Party had a total of 6,101,533 votes while the candidate of the New Nigeria's People's Party (NNPP) followed with 1,496,687 votes.

The election results that threaten the eruption of violence in the country is the wining of Lagos State – the economic center of the country and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja by the Labour Party (LP) defeating the All-Progressive Congress (APC) party which has held sway in these locations in the past years.

Notably, election results for Lagos State reveal that LP had 582,354 votes, APC 572,606 votes, PDP got 75,750 votes, while the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) had 8,442 votes. Lagos State had a total of 6,942,885 registered voters; accredited voters at the polls were 1,347,152, total votes cast was 1,335,729, with valid votes at 1,271,451 and rejected votes at 64,278.

WANEP Nigeria uses this platform to call on all Nigerians to remain calm and exercise restraint in expressing grievances while seeking constitutional options where necessary.

CONCLUSION AND PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the challenging economic, operational and security environment, the elections were generally well-adminstered in a transparent, and peaceful atmosphere. Amidst significant challenge posed by the cash crisis and the volatile security context in some areas, WANEP noted the willingness of voters to exercise their civic rights in electing the leaders of their choice as evidence in the large turnout at many of the polling units visited by observers across the country.

The 25 February 2023 election was crucial in consolidating democracy, peace and stability in Nigeria. The efforts put in by INEC and other key stakeholders to ensure a violent free and fair elections to support peaceful and democratic political transition is laudable. With collation and announcement of the results by INEC, WANEP Nigeria urges all stakeholders to remain committed to democratic principles and embrace a culture of peace to ensure a seamless political transition.

We use this platform to call on all stakeholders to intervene proactively to calm all tensions and avoid any form of violence as the electoral processes continue with the Gubernatorial and State Houses of Assembly elections.

WANEP further proffers the following recommendations to improve future electoral processes:

The Federal Government:

- Uphold peace and rule of law throughout the electoral process – pre, during and post elections;
- Implement the 35% affirmative action in the electoral system for women and introduce 20% for persons living with disabilities and youth. Such measures would allow for an inclusive approach to the democratic process.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC):

- **Should** review the electoral logistics operations strategy to ensure sufficient training of ad-hoc officers to enable them to understand and effectively operate the electronic voting machines; timely deployment of adequate electoral material and personnel as well as ensure optimal server connections during voting time.
- To review of voting time with a view to increasing it beyond the currently designated six hours (8:30 am to 2:30 pm). It is anticipated that such an amendment will encourage greater participation and address the issue of disenfranchisement of voters.
- Notify affected voters and electoral officers of newly created polling units to ensure timely identification and commencement of voting exercises.
- Regulate the number of BIVAs machines deployed at each polling unit to match the number of voters.
- Review the ballot papers to ensure uniformity and that all contesting political parties logos are documented accordingly to minimize election malpractices.

The Security Agencies:

- The Nigerian Police, the Nigeria Civil Defense Corps and other security agencies should coordinate activities towards promoting civil-security relationship to forestall violence at polling units.

WANEP CALLS FOR PEACE IN NIGERIA!!!