



**STATEMENT OF THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE'S
INTERNATIONAL OBSERVER MISSION TO NIGERIA'S MARCH 28
PRESIDENTIAL AND LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS**

Abuja, March 30, 2015

This preliminary statement is offered by the international observer delegation fielded by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) to Nigeria's March 28, 2015 presidential and legislative elections. The 24-member delegation from seven countries was co-led by: Johnnie Carson, member of the NDI board of directors and former U.S. assistant secretary of state for African affairs; Mahamadou Danda, former prime minister of the Republic of Niger; Bill Ritter, Jr., former governor of Colorado (U.S.); and Christopher Fomunyoh, senior associate for Africa and regional director at NDI. Through this delegation, NDI seeks to: express the international community's interest in and support for a democratic electoral process in Nigeria; provide an accurate and impartial report on the election process to date; and offer recommendations to improve future electoral processes.

The delegation visited Nigeria from March 24-30, 2015. Its work builds upon the findings of the joint pre-election assessment mission conducted by NDI and the International Republican Institute (IRI) from January 15-20, 2015; a March 3, 2015 statement by the Institute on the postponement of the elections co-signed by 14 former leaders of NDI election missions to Nigeria; and regular reports by NDI in-country staff. The mission collaborated with other international observer missions and worked closely with a coalition of over 400 Nigerian civil society groups – the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG)¹ – that deployed more than 4,000 citizen observers on election day. NDI delegates submitted reports based on observations from over 100 polling units in 25 local government areas in nine states in all six geopolitical zones and in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The delegation conducted its activities in accordance with Nigerian law and the *Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation*.

¹ NDI's work with TMG and other civic group is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Department for International Development (DFID).

The delegation notes that the March 28 elections highlighted strong and enthusiastic commitment of Nigerians to democratic processes and the possibility of determining the leadership of the country through peaceful, transparent and credible elections. The delegation recognizes that Nigerian voters conducted themselves in a peaceful and orderly manner on election day and urges politicians across the spectrum to recognize and respect this public manifestation of citizens' commitment to the democratic process. The delegation is grateful for the welcome, hospitality and cooperation it received from all Nigerians it met with, especially voters, election officials, candidates, citizen election observers and civic activists.

The delegation does not seek to render a final judgment on the March 28 presidential and legislative elections at this time. With voting extended into a second day in some polling units, the tabulation process and the announcement of results have not been completed. In the past, serious irregularities have emerged during that phase of the process, delegitimizing electoral outcomes and resulting in post-election violence. Mindful of this fact, the delegation notes again the preliminary nature of this report, the potential for post-election disagreement, and the ongoing importance for the presidential candidates, as well as their followers, to adhere fully to the two Abuja Accords. The Institute does not seek to interfere in the electoral process and recognizes that it is the Nigerian people who will ultimately determine the credibility and legitimacy of their elections.

I. ELECTION DAY OBSERVATIONS

The delegation notes that in mid-2014 the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) adopted technological and other innovations aimed at raising confidence in the integrity of the electoral process. While these innovations were effective in many of the polling stations observed, in other places equipment malfunctioned, which led to significant delays. Voters demonstrated tremendous patience and creativity in overcoming these delays. As a result, voters in these polling stations were largely able to be accredited and cast ballots, and no significant disenfranchisement was observed on election day.

Election administration

- Poll workers took helpful initiatives and exhibited extraordinary patience in overcoming delays in voter accreditation, which needed to be completed before balloting, in order to avoid voter disenfranchisement. Specifically, members of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) serving as ad hoc poll workers were noted as highly professional and effective by NDI

observers around the country. Women were well represented among both INEC and NYSC polling officials.

- Many polling units observed opened with more than a two-hour delay due to late arrival of either INEC staff or requisite voting materials. Notably, in Edo, Enugu, Kaduna, Kano, Lagos, Nasarawa and Rivers states and in the FCT, the majority of polling units observed opened late, while the delegation witnessed more timely opening of polling units in Adamawa and Niger states. The most frequent late or missing election materials observed by the delegation included accreditation tags, incident forms, results forms and card readers.
- Electronic readers of biometric permanent voter cards (PVCs) failed to verify fingerprints in many instances and resulted in delays in voter accreditation in a high number of polling stations observed. Where fingerprint scanning failed, there did not appear to be uniform understanding of contingency planning among polling officials, including requirements for large-scale manual verification of voters' identities against the printed voter registry and the issuance of incident forms. When incident forms were diligently completed by INEC officials, accreditation was often delayed even further due to the time required to fill out a form for each voter whose fingerprints could not be read. Many polling officials instead opted out of this requirement, while other polling units observed simply did not receive incident forms in their materials.
- Despite challenges in fingerprint verification, the card readers would appear to have contributed to curbing electoral fraud. Data on the number of accredited voters collected by the card readers would allow for the verification of votes cast per polling unit if needed and would hinder multiple voting.
- Voting, closing and counting in polling units observed showed marked improvements in efficiency, adherence to procedures and in the overall atmosphere compared to accreditation. Polling officials executed voting in a swift and transparent manner, though in certain locations officials prioritized speed, leaving room for procedural lapses. Observers in Kano state noted more significant procedural violations, such as compromised ballot secrecy due in part to large crowds in certain polling units and voting points. Overall, observers commended INEC officials for successfully completing the count under difficult circumstances, often with little to no lighting, as well as voters for protecting their mandates in all polling units observed.
- Reportedly, a disagreement between INEC and the Nigerian Union of Road Transport Workers affected the timely transportation of election

materials and poll workers, contributing to the severe delays in the opening of the polls in many locations.

- A group hacked INEC's website in mid-morning on election day and placed a threatening message on the site. While the issue was quickly resolved, it created concerns among some voters that INEC results tabulation systems could also be vulnerable to a cyber-attack.

Participation

- Voter turn-out varied across polling units visited, but overall voters were keen to exercise their right to vote and election day was largely peaceful. In many instances, during the period prior to the arrival of poll workers and materials, citizen volunteers organized the crowd by handing out slips of paper with numbers in the order in which voters arrived so as to facilitate crowd control and orderly conduct once the accreditation process began.
- Teams across the country noted moderate to high numbers of women in queues observed, mostly ranging from 30-50 percent of voters present. Youth were also well represented in voting lines observed by NDI delegates. The delegation also noted that special consideration was given to facilitate speedy accreditation and voting for pregnant and nursing women, the elderly and persons with disabilities.
- For the most part, in the polling sites in which card readers either did not function in a timely manner or did not properly read fingerprints, NDI teams observed that voters remained patient and calm, except in the case of certain polling units in Kano, Nasarawa and Lagos at which voters became increasingly unruly. Most NDI delegates noted positive improvements once processing of accredited voters and balloting began.
- The delegation notes that voting locations were opened for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Adamawa state, although turnout in the sites visited by the NDI team was very low, with variation across voting centers.
- Party agents from the two major parties, the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), were well represented in most polling units observed and behaved in a mutually respectful manner.
- Despite reported challenges with obtaining proper, timely accreditation to observe from INEC, the delegation witnessed nonpartisan citizen observers deployed in significant numbers and carrying out their observation efforts without restrictions. TMG used the parallel vote tabulation (PVT) methodology or "Quick Count" to systematically observe opening, voting and counting processes at a representative random sample of 1,507 polling stations in all 774 local government areas (LGAs) located in all 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory. Many Nigerians stated that the PVT

methodology enhanced confidence in the electoral process as it would allow TMG to verify official results to be released by INEC.

- Civic organizations also played a vital role in promoting inclusive electoral participation and mitigating election violence. Notable efforts included the *Vote Not Fight: Election No Be War* campaign, which trended at the top of Twitter feeds on election day, and the rapid response mechanism adopted by the civil society platform Situation Room and by the Women's Situation Room to collect and share reports of violence and other incidents to the appropriate authorities for immediate remedial action.

Security

- Overall, security service personnel played a positive and professional role in the majority of polling stations that the delegation observed. Nearly without exception, police and other security services deployed within polling units maintained a low, non-intrusive profile and managed both queues and disputes in a calm, professional manner. Women were well represented in the security services.
- The mission heard media and secondhand reports of isolated incidents of terrorist attacks in Gombe, Adamawa and Yobe states, of bomb blasts at polling units in Anambra and Enugu states, and of sporadic violence in Rivers state. On election day, the delegation did not see any incidences of interference by the military in the electoral process.

II. THE POLITICAL AND SECURITY CONTEXT

The March 28 elections were the most competitive polls since the country's transition to democratic rule in 1999. They also were conducted within a political context that has been impacted by several negative factors over the years. These include:

Money in politics. Many political elites dispense public and private resources and services through patronage networks that perpetuate political exclusion. The "winner-takes-all" style of politics raises the stakes and encourages politicians to exploit ethnic, religious and regional identities to achieve political office and power. Moreover, the absence of internal party democracy and opaque candidate selection processes in some cases are a noted disadvantage to women, especially as party leadership in Nigeria is predominantly male.

History of past elections. Since the end of military rule, Nigeria has conducted four nation-wide electoral contests – in 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011. The successful conduct of the 2011 elections marked a turning point in the country's democratic trajectory, as it contrasted sharply with the electoral mismanagement and widespread fraud of previous polls. Even then, violence in some northern

cities in the immediate aftermath of the announcement of election results in 2011 caused over 800 deaths and substantial destruction of property. Many Nigerians began to feel that their votes did not count. Moreover, few electoral offenders have been prosecuted. Recommendations made in December 2008 by the Electoral Reform Panel chaired by former Chief Justice Muhammad Uwais, designed to support the timely and effective resolution of electoral disputes, have not been fully implemented.

Insecurity and polarization. The Boko Haram insurgency that has plagued the country since 2009 peaked by the end of last year, and by January 2015 its leader made direct threats to disrupt the elections. Recent efforts by the Nigerian military, in concert with multinational interventions by security forces from Benin, Cameroon, Chad and Niger, flushed out the Boko Haram insurgents from Yobe and Adamawa states. By election day, only limited territory in Borno state remained under insurgency control. Still, the fear of sporadic attacks by insurgents raised anxiety among voters, some of whom have returned to their states of origin to avoid violence. In a few towns in the North East geopolitical zone of the country, isolated attacks attributed to Boko Haram occurred on election day. Media reports also alleged an increase in the circulation of small arms and light weapons in parts of the Niger Delta, while intercommunal violence between herdsmen and farmers in Plateau state seemed to hinge on a tenuous truce. Overall, on the eve of the March elections, the country was fairly polarized along partisan, regional and religious lines.

Economic indicators. As Nigerians went to the polls, the economic indicators for the country looked grim. The drop in world oil prices for a country so dependent on petroleum revenues, the sharp depreciation of the Naira, tighter credit and unpaid government subsidies on gasoline increased economic hardship on citizens. These mounting economic pressures on the average consumer contributed to popular dissatisfaction with public service delivery and heightened tensions.

III. PARTICULARITIES OF THE MARCH 2015 POLLS

In this general context, the March 28 national elections were characterized by a number of specific issues:

Emergence of a viable opposition party. By most accounts, the 2015 presidential and legislative polls are the most competitive since the return to civilian rule in 1999. Many Nigerians attribute this newfound competitiveness to fissures within the ruling PDP and the emergence of a viable opposition party – the APC – resulting from a merger in 2013 of four main opposition parties. Although 12 other candidates were on the ballot for the presidential election, the ultimate race was between incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan and the

APC's Major General (rtd.) Muhammadu Buhari and their respective running mates, current Vice President Namadi Sambo and Professor Yemi Osinbajo.

The increasingly polarized political context led some supporters of both parties to frequently question INEC's state of preparedness to administer the polls and measures instituted to strengthen the integrity of the process to combat fraud. For example, INEC's decision to identify additional polling units to reflect population growth since the 1999 census, the introduction of new biometric voter registration and verification technologies, efforts to clean the voters' register, the February 7 decision to postpone the national and state elections by six weeks, and the tenure of the chairman of the commission generated significant controversy and debate, often along partisan lines.

Election-related violence. Since 1999, national elections in Nigeria have experienced election-related violence in the pre- or post-election periods. That concern was on the minds of many Nigerians in the lead-up to the March 28 polls. According to an Afrobarometer poll released last January, 50 percent of respondents personally feared becoming a victim of violence during the polls as compared to 24 percent of respondents in 2011, with fears that women would be more likely than men to experience personal victimization at the polls.² These fears were exacerbated by virulent rhetoric and hate speech by candidate surrogates during the campaign period. In a few noted incidents, campaign buses of the APC and PDP were burned in Kano, the APC Secretariat in Rivers was attacked and fights between the two rival groups of supporters regularly broke out in both Kano and Rivers in February. Gender-based hate speech posed a particular problem for female candidates in Abia, Borno, Ebonyi and Imo states, according to citizen observers from TMG. The National Human Rights Commission of Nigeria reported that 58 Nigerians lost their lives in election-related violence last December and in January, and violence spiked in Rivers state where 20 people were killed between January and March. Rivers state also experienced incidents of violence on election day.

Internally displaced persons (IDPs). Nigeria faced an IDP problem triggered by the Boko Haram insurgency. In Adamawa, Borno and Yobe, attacks by Boko Haram extremists resulted in the internal displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. To enable IDPs to exercise their constitutional right to vote, INEC established designated IDP voting centers for IDPs registered within that state. IDPs who left their home states of registration and refugees in neighboring countries could not vote. Prior to INEC adopting administrative measures to allow IDPs to vote, the protracted debate on whether to enact new legislation by

² Nengak Daniel, Raphael Mbaegbu and Peter Lewis, "Nigeria Heads for Closest Election on Record," Afrobarometer Dispatch Number 11, 27 January 2015, 3.

amending the Electoral Act or to use INEC guidelines almost created a political stalemate on the issue.

Election-related litigation. The multiplicity of court cases in the lead-up to the elections contributed to uncertainty as to election day procedures. For example, several cases were brought before the Federal High Courts of Abuja and Lagos alleging that the introduction of the PVC and smart card reader violated the 2010 Electoral Act (as amended), which prohibits the use of electronic voting. On March 18, the Federal High Court of Abuja rejected a suit to rule the permanent voters' card illegal. The Court also granted an order of stay of proceedings in a suit challenging the plan by INEC to use the smart card reader in the general elections. The court rulings set the stage for INEC to move forward with the use of PVCs and card readers. Similarly, as late as March 24 (three days before election day), the High Court of Abuja still heard cases seeking to disqualify the candidacies of Buhari and Osinbajo. Although the matter was adjourned until April 22 and 23, the judge stated that the court could still annul the candidacies even after election day. In addition, Federal High Courts in Lagos and Sokoto ruled unconstitutional the deployment of military personnel for election purposes, in March and January respectively, which raised questions about the appropriate responsibilities of the military on election day and whether military reinforcements could be called upon in cases of election-related violence.

Concerns regarding the functionality of new election technology. In preparation for 2015, INEC introduced technological innovations designed to prevent election irregularities or fraud. These included a biometric PVC and smart card reader machine intended to ensure that each voter cast only one ballot and voted in the ward where he or she was registered. By February 2015, INEC experienced delays in procurement and distribution of PVCs and smart card reader machines, thereby raising concerns that a significant number of voters could be disenfranchised. Also, many Nigerians were apprehensive that, because the new election technology had not been tested in gubernatorial races prior to the national elections, failure of card reader machines on election day could significantly delay the voter accreditation process and lead to disenfranchisement.

Women's participation. The low number of women candidates in Nigerian elections constitutes a weak link in the country's democratization efforts. One female candidate ran for president sponsored by the KOWA party. In addition, four parties nominated female vice presidential candidates -- the Allied Congress Party of Nigeria (ACPN), the African Peoples Alliance (APA), the Citizens Popular Party (CPP), and the Peoples Party of Nigeria (PPN). According to INEC, of the 1,774 candidates competing for seats in the House of Representatives only 15 percent were women. In the Senate race only 17 percent

of the 747 candidates were women. Increasing women's candidacy in competitive races would require Nigerian political parties at a minimum to reform internal party patronage structures, introduce affirmative action in the selection of candidates, and adopt spending limits on campaign financing. All of these changes would promote greater inclusion for women, young people and other politically marginalized groups.

Conflict mitigating actions. A number of concrete steps were taken by Nigerians to mitigate the challenges listed above.

Additional preparatory time. On February 7, INEC announced the postponement of national and state-level elections by six weeks from February 14 and 28 until March 28 and April 11, respectively. Security chiefs informed relevant authorities that they would be unable to provide adequate security on election day due to an intensified campaign against Boko Haram, and INEC subsequently announced the delay. Although this decision was controversial at the time, with opinions divided along partisan lines, the postponement appears to have provided INEC with additional time to prepare for the March 28 polls. Whereas 67 percent of PVCs were distributed in early February, 82 percent were distributed a week before election day. INEC and the National Orientation Agency (NOA) provided intensified voter education and information in most areas of the country, tripling the number of public announcements. On March 7, INEC organized a smart card reader test exercise in selected wards in 12 states to pilot the use of the card readers and increase public confidence in the technology. INEC also used the additional time to provide supplementary training for field officers on how to operate card readers.

Facilitation of communication and collaboration between INEC and security services. Unlike during past elections when interagency collaboration among security services supporting the electoral process was a challenge, INEC launched the Interagency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) in December 2010, and closely collaborated with that body in the period leading up to the March 2015 polls. ICCES is co-chaired by the INEC chairman and the national security adviser. ICCES committees have been created at the state and LGA levels as well.

High-profile peace messaging. In January 2015, all 14 presidential candidates signed an agreement, the “Abuja Accord,” in the presence of former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Chief Emeka Anyaoku, former Commonwealth Secretary-General, pledging to conduct issue-based campaigns, peacefully accept the electoral results, refrain from using inflammatory language and denounce acts of violence or incitement to violence during the election campaigns. On March 26, the two leading presidential candidates – President

Jonathan and General Buhari – renewed their commitments to the Abuja Accord by co-signing a joint pledge for peaceful elections and calling on all Nigerian citizens and party supporters to refrain from violence. The signing of the agreement was facilitated by the National Peace Committee composed of, among others, highly respected religious leaders of both the Christian and Muslim faiths, and chaired by former head of state, General Abdulsalami Abubakar.

Citizen Engagement. Numerous Nigerian civil society organizations undertook campaigns to complement INEC and NOA’s voter education efforts. Notable voter education and peace messaging initiatives include: Situation Room and Women’s Situation Room; Enough is Enough’s *Register, Select, Vote and Protect* (RSVP) campaign; the Youth Initiative for Advocacy Growth and Advancement’s *Youth Peace Ambassadors* program; the *Youth Alliance on Constitution and Electoral Reform* (YACORE) and its awareness campaign to educate northern youths on non-violence in electoral participation; and the “*On the Road to 2015*” voter education radio program conducted by the *Partners for Electoral Reforms* (PER). On March 27, Nigeria’s major television and radio outlets successfully organized a Nigeria Media Peace Day – the first-ever such initiative – under the leadership of the Broadcasting Organizations of Nigeria. Media networks in the country broadcast strong, positive nationwide messages in support of peaceful elections and political participation.

The Nigeria National Human Rights Commission's (NHRC) advisory and International Criminal Court (ICC) statement. In February 2015, the NHRC issued a pre-election report and advisory on violence in the electoral period highlighting the high number of incidents, casualties, and the use of hate speech, including that inciting gender-based violence. It reserved the right to indict and prosecute perpetrators involved in any of these actions. Similarly, the ICC Prosecutor visited Nigeria and on March 16 made a statement affirming the institution's "resolve to prosecute individuals responsible for the commission of ICC crimes, whenever necessary". According to many Nigerians, these proactive interventions helped to calm tensions in the days leading up to the polls.

Other international community engagement. Nigerian political party officials cited statements and actions by the country’s development partners in support of peaceful and credible polls. They referred to U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry's January 25 visit to Lagos and his statement that the United States would apply visa restrictions against Nigerians who foment electoral violence as having attracted the attention of senior party leadership on both sides. Also signaling international interest in, and support for a peaceful, credible process were calls between U.S. Vice President Joe Biden and the two main presidential candidates; a joint op-ed by Kerry and the U.K. Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond on March 21 encouraging a peaceful, transparent and fair process; a video message

from U.S. President Barack Obama to the Nigerian people on March 23; and public calls by U.K. Prime Minister David Cameron, former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan and current U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for free and fair polls.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The delegation urges Nigerian stakeholders to address immediate challenges before the April 11 state elections in order to continue to enhance citizen confidence and participation and hence mitigate violence during and after the state polls. In the spirit of international cooperation, the delegation also offers recommendations which it believes would strengthen the Nigerian electoral framework in the medium- to long-term:

Short-Term Recommendations (in the lead-up to April 11 state elections)

To the Government of Nigeria:

- Maintain the same level of heightened security to guarantee that the current electoral cycle is not disrupted in the coming two weeks.

To INEC:

- Review and address the causes of widespread delays in the opening of polling units observed on March 28, including better planning for transportation of poll workers and sufficient voting materials to the polling units.
- Ensure sufficient provision of basic resources to facilitate a smooth and efficient process, such as tables and chairs, food and water for polling staff, and lighting and improved provision of facilities for elderly and disabled voters.
- Reinforce the importance of publicly posting results at the individual polling units.
- Ensure that poll workers conduct the voting process in a way that guarantees voter privacy while casing their ballot.
- More effectively disseminate guidelines on contingency planning in the event of electronic card reader failure, distinguishing between overall failure of the card reader and failure of the machine to read and authenticate voter fingerprints.
- Address any instances of election malfeasance, including tampering with election results during the collation process, swiftly and even-handedly as required by Nigerian law and INEC regulations.

- Ensure better and more consistent communication throughout the day with polling staff and aggrieved voters through contact lists and phone chains, and timely press briefings.
- Provide additional training to poll workers on election day procedures, including set-up, sequencing, communications, and the use of technology in elections.
- Address issues of severe overcrowding observed in some polling units, notably in parts of Kano and Nasarawa states, by selecting polling unit and voting point locations of an appropriate size to expeditiously handle anticipated crowd flow.
- Provide more voter information aimed at displaced populations in the North East geopolitical zone to increase voter turnout among IDPs.
- While the responsibility to obtain PVCs resides with the registered voter, make every effort, in collaboration with political parties and civil society, to encourage the remaining 18 percent of prospective voters who did not collect their voter cards to do so.
- Ensure that citizen observers receive full accreditation to observe in a timely manner.

To political parties and candidates:

- Openly call on their supporters, even as the country awaits election results, to react peacefully to INEC's announcement of election results in keeping with the Abuja Accord.
- Publicly encourage supporters to seek redress, should there be reason for electoral complaints or disputes, through legal avenues.
- Renew public commitments to peaceful, issue-based campaigns during the upcoming April 11 state elections and publicly denounce supporters who engage in hate speech or acts of violence.

To civil society:

- Pursue ongoing efforts for violence-free elections by the National Peace Committee, civil society organizations and religious groups.
- Maintain the high degree of engagement and oversight of the electoral process demonstrated on March 28.

To the Nigerian Police Force:

- Build on and institutionalize best practices used during the March 28 poll, including refresher training and guidance on crowd control and cooperation with INEC.

Medium to Long-Term Recommendations

To the Government of Nigeria (including the National Assembly):

- Initiate electoral reform early in the next legislature to focus on issues such as the establishment of an Electoral Offences Commission empowered to speedily and impartially adjudicate electoral disputes, as well as measures to enhance transparency and accountability in campaign financing.
- Strengthen electoral processes and democratic institutions by implementing constitutional provisions such as those that require updating the delimitation of constituency boundaries every 10 years following the conduct of a national census.
- Extend the time allotted between the first and second rounds of voting beyond seven days in the event of a presidential run-off.
- Actively consider procedures to have polling units transmit final results directly to INEC headquarters to simplify the collation process.

To INEC:

- Conduct a thorough post-action review of the conduct of the March 28 polls and adopt appropriate recommendations on improvements to be made to the process in order to attain and consolidate best practices.
- Embrace principles of open data with respect to the publication of easily accessible and complete data on election results down to polling unit level.
- Adopt measures to allow civil servants and members of security agencies deployed for election administration purposes to vote on election day.
- Take steps to monitor the commitment of political parties to adopting practices that promote the achievement of the National Gender Policy's 35 percent target for women's representation in all levels of democratic governance, including affirmative action and changes to candidate selection.
- Implement continuous capacity building and improve provision of training to polling officials to ensure sound knowledge of procedures and election management process.

To political parties:

- Strengthen mechanisms for internal democracy and policy development with citizen input.
- Increase the transparency and credibility of candidate nomination processes.
- Embrace voluntary mechanisms for affirmative action that would increase the voice and representation of women in party leadership and as candidates with benchmarks that lead to the achievement of the 35 percent target by 2019.

To civil society:

- Intensify advocacy for electoral reforms.
- Build on the achievements of the 2015 elections to strengthen citizen involvement in the monitoring of political processes beyond elections.
- Media should seek to foster and implement best practices for balanced and unbiased analysis and reporting of facts to ensure equal access to public media and avoid inflammatory reporting.

To the Nigerian Police Force:

- Provide ongoing training for security forces regarding the provision of election-related security.

V. ABOUT THE MISSION

NDI's election observation for the March 2015 elections included a pre-election assessment mission in January, 2015, the statement of which can be found at www.ndi.org. NDI's election day observer delegation met with presidential and legislative candidates; election authorities; political, religious and civil society leaders; representatives of the media; and security and government officials.

NDI conducted its election observation in accordance with Nigerian law and the *Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation*, which is endorsed by 49 intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations. These include the United Nations Secretariat, the African Union, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC-PF), the Francophonie, Economic Community of West African States, the European Union, IRI and NDI. NDI has organized more than 150 delegations to assess pre-election, election day and post-election processes in every region in the world. NDI observed elections in Nigeria in 1998, 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011.

NDI's international election observation mission in Nigeria is funded by a grant from the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor at the U.S. Department of State.

The delegation comprised: Ambassador (rtd) Johnnie Carson, member of the NDI board of directors, former U.S. assistant secretary of state for African Affairs and senior advisor at the U.S. Institute of Peace; Mahamadou Danda, former prime minister of Niger; Bill Ritter, former governor of Colorado (U.S.); Christopher Fomunyoh, senior associate for Africa and regional director at NDI;

Jennifer Cooke, director of the Africa Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies; Ryan Dalton, NDI senior program assistant; Vivian Lowery Derryck, president and CEO at The Bridges Institute; Elizabeth Donnelly, assistant head and research fellow of the Africa Programme at Chatham House; Kathy Gest, director of public affairs at NDI; Joseph Gitari, former senior program officer at The Ford Foundation; Aminata Kassé, former member of parliament in Senegal; Darren Kew, associate professor of conflict resolution and department chair at the University of Massachusetts, Boston; Carl LeVan, assistant professor at American University; Vernon Johnson Mwaanga, former Minister of Foreign Affairs in Zambia; Christopher O'Connor, assistant program officer at the National Endowment for Democracy (NED); Modupe Oshikoya, PhD candidate at the University of Massachusetts at Boston; Sandra Pepera, director of gender, women and democracy at NDI; Dave Peterson, senior director for Africa at NED; Robin R. Sanders, former ambassador from the U.S. to Nigeria; James Shyne, senior fellow at the University of Massachusetts Boston; Elizabeth Tamajong, chairperson of the Africa for Research in Comparative Education Society (AFRICE); Sanford J. Ungar, President Emeritus of Goucher College and distinguished scholar in residence at Georgetown University; Mikatazo Wakumelo, administrative assistant to former president Rupiah Banda of Zambia; and Zev Yaroslavsky, former supervisor at the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors.