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Leaders of NDI Observation Missions Call for Nigerian Elections to be Held as Planned

WASHINGTON, DC - Fourteen current and former leaders of NDI observation missions to Nigeria from 10 countries have joined the Institute in calling for Nigerian election authorities to adhere to the March 28 date for presidential and legislative elections. The polls were originally scheduled for Feb. 14 but were postponed at the last minute.

"It is our sincere hope that there will be no further delays to the polls as any additional postponement would endanger the credibility of the electoral process and its outcome," the leaders said in their statement. They called on Nigerian authorities and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to commit to "maintaining the dates for the March 28 presidential and legislative polls and the April 11 state elections; providing regular updates on actions undertaken in preparation for the elections; and guaranteeing the polls are credible and inclusive."

See the full statement below:

We stand with the National Democratic Institute (NDI) in expressing our concern about the last-minute postponement of the February 14 and February 28 national elections in Nigeria. All of us have co-led past NDI international election observation missions to the country since 1999.

We care deeply about Nigeria's democratic, economic and social progress. As the most populous nation with the largest economy on the continent, Nigeria serves as an example for its neighbors and other African countries. Developments there impact not only the people of Nigeria but have effects that go far beyond the country's borders.

It is our sincere hope that there will be no further delays to the polls as any additional postponement would endanger the credibility of the electoral process and its outcome.

We therefore urge Nigerian authorities and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to commit to:

- maintaining the dates for the March 28 presidential and legislative polls and the April 11 state elections;
- providing regular updates on actions undertaken in preparation for the elections; and
- guaranteeing the polls are credible and inclusive.

We also call on the security services, which had claimed that they could not guarantee safety nationwide for voters and pollworkers for a February 14 election, to redouble their efforts for March 28 and April 11. At the same time, these services should conduct themselves in a professional and nonpartisan manner in order not to interfere in the country's electoral and political processes.

Candidates and political parties should avoid and reject violence, and should foster tolerance, mutual respect and fair play amongst their supporters as captured in the Abuja Accord signed on January 14 by the presidential candidates and party chairmen.

As noted in the joint pre-election assessment statement by NDI and the International Republican Institute (IRI) on January 20, 2015, in Abuja, the media should elevate civil discourse and report accurately, responsibly and professionally, in line with the media code of ethics, in order to contribute to raising voter awareness and education.

Signatories:

Hon. Madeleine Albright, Chairman of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and former Secretary of State (USA)

Hon. Robin Carnahan, former Secretary of State, Missouri (USA)

Rt. Hon. Joe Clark, former Prime Minister of Canada

Amb. Natasha Stott Despoja, Ambassador for Women and Girls, and former Leader of Liberal Democrats (Australia)

Martin Luther King III, human rights leader (USA)

Amb. Maria Leissner, Secretary-General, Community of Democracies (Sweden)

His Excellency Ket Masire, former President of Botswana

Hon. Yvonne Mokgoro, Emeritus Judge of the Constitutional Court of South Africa

His Excellency Antonio Monteiro, former President of Cape Verde

Amb. George Edward Moose, vice chairman, U.S. Institute of Peace (USA)

His Excellency Karl Offmann, former President of Mauritius

Hon. Nora Owen, former Minister of Justice (Ireland)

Hon. Marietje Schaake, member of the European Parliament (the Netherlands)

Senator Jeanne Shaheen, United States Senate

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