



Statement Of The First Joint Ndi/Iri Pre-Election Assessment Mission To Nigeria
July 22, 2022

I. INTRODUCTION

The statement is offered by an international delegation organized jointly by the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI). The delegation visited Nigeria from July 13 to 22, 2022. The goals of the delegation were to:

- Assess the current political and electoral environment in the lead-up to the 2023 general elections;
- Assess preparations for the general elections and offer recommendations to enhance citizen confidence in the process and mitigate the potential for electoral violence; and
- Demonstrate international support for Nigeria’s democratic process.

The delegation was composed of: Honorable Frank LaRose, Secretary of State for Ohio; Honorable Dr. Bernadette Lahai, former Minority Leader of the Sierra Leone Parliament; Albert Kofi Arhin, National Coordinator of the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) and former Director of Elections, Registration and Demarcation at the Electoral Commission of Ghana; Dr. Christopher Fomunyoh, Senior Associate for Africa and Regional Director for Central and West Africa at NDI; and Jenai Cox, Regional Deputy Director for Africa at IRI.

The delegation met with a wide array of election stakeholders, including the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), National Assembly, political parties, civil society, the media, security forces, academia, and the diplomatic missions. In addition, the delegation traveled to Osun State to meet with electoral stakeholders ahead of the off-cycle gubernatorial election on July 16, 2022, and visited 35 polling units across 10 local government areas (LGAs) on election day to witness the conduct of the election within the framework of preparing for the 2023 general elections. The delegation expresses its deep appreciation to everyone with whom it met for sharing their insights, from which the mission benefited greatly. The delegation conducted its activities in accordance with the laws of Nigeria and the *Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation*, which was signed in 2005 at the United Nations.

Since the 1999 transition from military to civilian democratic rule, both NDI and IRI have deployed international election observation missions to all general elections in Nigeria. IRI and NDI are nonpartisan, nongovernmental organizations that support and strengthen democratic institutions and practices worldwide. The Institutes have collectively observed more than 200 elections in more than 50 countries over the last 30 years. NDI and IRI will deploy a second

pre-election assessment delegation later this year and a joint international delegation to observe the 2023 presidential and National Assembly elections.

II. SUMMARY

The 2023 elections present a significant opportunity to consolidate Nigeria's democracy. The 2022 Electoral Act passed in February enjoys wide stakeholder support and has elevated public confidence in INEC's commitment to deliver democratic elections in 2023. By receiving funds and organizing party primaries earlier, INEC is better positioned than in past elections to take on the logistical and administrative arrangements necessary to organize elections for 85 million registered voters. The 2022 Ekiti and Osun gubernatorial elections, the first elections held since the electoral law was passed, demonstrated the positive impact of initiatives implemented by INEC since 2019 to improve results transparency, including the introduction of the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV) and elimination of voting points.¹ Other improvements include the adoption and proper configuration of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) for voter accreditation, which has quickened the voting process and reduced tensions in polling units.²

The recent surge in voter registration numbers and increased voter turnout in the 2022 Osun polls, especially among young people, point to a renewed interest in political participation among Nigerians. However, there are questions about whether the 2022 Electoral Act will be fully implemented and whether political parties will take advantage of this increased enthusiasm to engage Nigerians on issues that matter to them. There are also questions about whether these new technologies – IReV and BVAS – will perform at the same level when scaled up for the national elections.

The 2023 elections are a departure from some of the political dynamics that defined previous polls. For the first time since 2007, the presidential election will be an open contest with no incumbent. The ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) selected former Lagos governor Bola Tinubu as its flag bearer. Former Vice President and 2019 presidential candidate Atiku Abubakar will contest on the ticket of the People's Democratic Party (PDP). However, the emergence of Peter Obi – former Anambra state governor and presidential candidate for the Labour Party (LP) – and Rabiun Kwankwaso – former Kano governor and presidential candidate for the New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP) – as viable "Third Forces" has excited many young Nigerians. If a third party draws sufficient support, a runoff presidential election could be a real possibility for the first time since the transition to democracy, adding complexity to the 2023 elections.³

While there have been some positive changes since the 2019 elections, stakeholders with whom the delegation met expressed concerns about the direction of the country. Confidence in the government and elections has declined over the past 10 years,⁴ as exemplified by the #EndSARS

¹ IReV is an online portal managed by INEC that allows the public to view photos of polling unit-level results. Polling units were previously separated by voting points per 500-750 registered voters to better manage queues; however, they impeded electoral transparency because the results were not announced per voting point.

² The BVAS is a machine introduced by INEC to electronically accredit voters and transmit results.

³ A runoff election is required when a presidential candidate receiving the most votes does not also receive at least 25 percent of the vote in two-thirds of the states.

⁴ [Nigerians' Confidence in Government Falls to Lowest in Africa \(gallup.com\)](https://www.gallup.com)

movement that gained traction in 2020 to protest security forces abuses.⁵ In addition, insecurity has deepened, spreading to many parts of the country. Extremist and sectarian violence continues to spread, banditry and criminality are endemic, separatist elements are gaining traction, and informal security forces are proliferating. This intensifying violence takes place against a backdrop of increasing religious and regional division permeating the political discourse. If the 2023 polls fail to improve upon past elections, Nigerians may lose faith in the ability of democracy to deliver.

III. NOTABLE IMPROVEMENTS

Electoral Reform. If fully implemented, there is broad consensus among Nigerians that the 2022 Electoral Act will significantly enhance the credibility of electoral processes. The Act clarifies electoral timelines, allows for the use of technology in voting and collation processes, and increases the transparency of results. Other improvements include requiring the election budget to be released to INEC at least one year in advance, granting INEC wide discretionary powers, defining overvoting based on the number of accredited as opposed to number of registered voters, and limiting circumstances under which political parties can substitute candidates.⁶ INEC's initiatives to deregister political parties and increase the number of polling units have also reduced some complexities of voting seen in past elections. Experts noted that the widely supported National Electoral Offenses Commission Bill could pass before the 2023 elections, but there may not be enough time to operationalize the bill before the polls.

Transparency of Election Results. The 2022 Electoral Act mandates INEC to maintain a database of publicly available election results. To comply with this measure and enhance the transparency of results, INEC is now requiring polling unit-level officials to transmit photos of the results posters so that they can be uploaded on the IReV website. The IReV was commended by nearly all stakeholder groups with whom the delegation met because polling unit-level results are made available to the public in real time. Citizen observer groups noted, however, that the photos uploaded to IReV are not always legible, available in due time, or in a format that can be digitally analyzed. Observer groups are also advocating for the expansion of IReV to include images of registration area (RA), LGA, and state level results forms. Stakeholders hope that adding these tools will increase confidence in the credibility of the results; however, concerns remain about whether the IReV will work under the strain of a national election. The delegation also commends INEC for disaggregating voter turnout by the number of permanent voter cards (PVCs) collected and by registered voters for each LGA and polling unit for the Osun election.

Electronic Accreditation of Voters. The 2022 Electoral Act codified INEC's ability to determine technological tools used in the voting process. For the 2023 elections, the BVAS will be used to transmit results electronically and accredit voters by authenticating their identity through fingerprint or facial recognition.⁷ Stakeholders noted to the delegation that the BVAS is an improvement on the SmartCard Readers; however, during the November 2021 Anambra

⁵ The #EndSARS movement started in 2017 in response to human rights abuses and corruption by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), an elite unit of the Nigerian Police Force (NPF). It morphed into a broader movement calling for decentralization of policing and government reform.

⁶ Accredited voters refers to the number of voters accredited to vote at polling units on election day.

⁷ INEC is using the same devices to register voters during the CVR.

gubernatorial and February 2022 Federal Capital Territory (FCT) local council elections, observers reported challenges with the machines malfunctioning or failing to authenticate voters' fingerprints.⁸ During the 2022 Ekiti and Osun gubernatorial elections, civil society observed that the BVAS appeared to function better. However, the delegation noticed that the machines are light-sensitive, raising concerns about the ability of BVAS to accredit voters during the night as the facial recognition worked better than the fingerprint function. INEC hopes to conduct more intensive training with National Youth Service Corps members who serve as the ad hoc polling officials on election day to build their confidence in utilizing the BVAS ahead of the 2023 polls.

Electoral Disputes. In 2019, over 800 pre-election litigations contributed to tensions and administrative delays. Most stakeholders with whom the delegation met believe that by holding party primaries earlier, most pre-election cases will be resolved by election day so there will be fewer instances in which the courts will decide election results. According to INEC, disputes arising from the 2022 primaries have fallen by at least 40 percent, thus allowing the Commission to focus efforts on improving elections operations and logistics.

Nigerian experts have raised concerns, however, about whether the courts will receive sufficient funding from the executive branch to pay for lodging, transport, training, and adequate security of tribunal judges. Concerns were also raised by the interlocuteurs that a lack of adequate funding might make some judges susceptible to bribery.

Continuous Voter Registration (CVR). The CVR process for the 2023 election cycle commenced in June 2021. INEC introduced an online pre-registration process that allows applicants to fill out the registration form online and present themselves at a physical registration center to provide their biometric information. Civil society has cited challenges with this process, particularly the burden on citizens to return at a later date to retrieve their permanent voters cards (PVCs). On June 27, 2022, INEC announced that they have received nearly 10.5 million new registration applications, of which 8.6 million have been completed. INEC also received an additional 23.6 million applications for voter transfer, PVC replacement, or voter information updates.⁹ INEC intended to conclude CVR on June 30, but extended the process by 30 days in compliance with a court injunction. Osun has seen the second highest number of new registrants per capita of any state in the country (15 percent).¹⁰ However, it is not guaranteed that Osun's level of turnout will be replicated on a national level without a commensurate availability of voter registration closer to election day.

Promoting Peaceful Elections. As in the 2019 elections, the National Peace Committee (NPC), a body composed of eminent Nigerians under the leadership of former head of state General Abdulsalami Abubakar, plans to bring together political parties and candidates to sign two peace accords, the first in November 2022 and the second in January 2023. The NPC aims to gain the support of political parties for a mechanism that would hold signatories to account for violations of the peace accords. The NPC has plans to continue its partnership with INEC, which was formally established in 2020 after the Kogi and Bayelsa gubernatorial elections, to avoid duplicate peace accords and add weight to the commitments of signatories.

⁸ SmartCard Readers are the machines used in previous elections to accredit voters electronically.

⁹ There were 84 million registered voters for the 2019 elections.

¹⁰ INEC numbers published June 27, 2022. [INEC Nigeria \(@inecnigeria\) / Twitter](https://twitter.com/inecnigeria)

Party Primaries. Stakeholders noted to the delegation that the 2022 primaries were more transparent, inclusive, and peaceful than in the past. Despite persistent incidents of vote buying and interference by some governors, the use of ad hoc as opposed to statutory delegates reduced the influence of party leadership members on the selection of candidates, leading to more transparency in voting and less violence than in 2018. The two major parties also mandated an increase in the representation of marginalized groups in the selection of delegates: the APC required that two out of the five delegates selected per ward be women; and the PDP required that one person with a disability (PWD) per state be a delegate at the national convention. The APC and PDP also elected more women to national party executive positions at the national conventions.

IV. REMAINING CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS

New Polling Units and Distribution of Voters. In accordance with Article 40(2) of the 2022 Electoral Act, INEC noted to the delegation that it plans to increase the number of polling units from approximately 119,973 in 2019 to 176,846 for the 2023 polls. The elimination of voting points has increased the transparency of results. However, instead of transitioning the previous voting points into new polling units, INEC has largely established the new polling units in new locations. Recognizing that moving voters to a new location presents a challenge, INEC has plans only to include new voters or voters who choose to transfer their registration at these new polling units. This approach is unlikely to address the anomaly of overcrowding in existing polling units. For example, in Osun, the delegation noted that this resulted in some instances where overcrowded polling units were located yards from a new polling unit with only a handful of registered voters. Overcrowding at polling units also creates challenges for set-up, crowd management, and ensuring voter privacy.

Polling Unit Layout and Set-up. Polling units should be “controlled spaces” that limit access to only approved individuals and reduce conditions for nefarious behavior. While INEC provides polling officials with a schematic for polling unit set-up, stakeholders noted that polling officials often fail to follow the schematic and utilize the provided tools such as rope to manage access to the polling unit. The design of the voting booths also presents a challenge for ballot secrecy. Additionally, many polling units are situated in locations that make compliance with the established design difficult, as well as not providing accessible locations for PWDs, elderly voters, and pregnant women. The proximity of party agents and voters to the voting booth and ballot box often compromises ballot secrecy and increases risks of vote buying. Observers have noted that security agents rarely proactively contribute to maintaining orderly queues or moving party agents to an appropriate distance.

Intra-party Disputes. Intra-party disputes reportedly contributed to certain parties not meeting the deadlines to organize their primaries and submit candidate lists online to INEC. Intra-party disputes also caused parties to take advantage of a loophole in the electoral law to nominate “placeholder candidates” until the parties could agree on the running mates. Intra-party disputes regularly cause “cross-carpeting,” further weakening parties’ and candidates’ motivation to focus their campaigns on issues as opposed to personalities.¹¹

¹¹ “Cross-carpeting” refers to candidates moving from one party to another.

Party Agents. Stakeholders noted that to date party agents have rarely been held accountable for violations of the 2022 Electoral Act, which contributes to a culture of impunity during the elections. A significant concern raised relates to the accreditation of party agents. While it is positive that INEC now requires party agents to be officially accredited, citizen observers noted to the delegation that some party agents were not wearing proper badges in Osun. In addition, some parties had more than one agent present at the polling unit and some were seen participating in vote buying. These problems could be magnified in a national election where far fewer security forces and observers will be deployed to each state.

Monetization of Politics. High political party nomination fees were required for the 2022 primaries and deterred many qualified aspirants from contesting, particularly women, youth and PWDs. To check undue monetization of the election process, the electoral law mandates political parties to submit their financial reports to INEC at specified intervals. However, INEC has not consistently enforced these provisions, which has made campaigns more susceptible to corruption, undermines equal competition, and stands to further marginalize underrepresented groups in political life. Nigerian experts noted to the delegation that, of the 73 political parties that contested in the 2019 presidential election, only four (not including the APC or PDP) had submitted their financial disclosure forms to INEC as of 2021.

Insecurity. According to data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) project, Nigeria experienced more incidents of political violence, conflict, and protest in 2021 than in any other year since data collection began in 1997.¹² In 2021, ACLED recorded almost 10,000 fatalities in Nigeria from conflict and political violence, more than any other country in Africa. Nigeria faces a renewed insurgency by the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) in the country's South-East; escalating farmer-herder violence, which has now spread to the South-West, South-South, and South-East; the re-emergence of Ansaru, a major violent extremist organization in the North-Central and North-West region; and a dramatic increase in banditry, kidnapping, and criminality across the country. It is therefore likely that the 2023 elections will take place in an environment that is more insecure than previous polls.

In response to the expansion of conflict and the government's inability to address many of these security issues, Nigeria has seen a proliferation of informal state security forces, such as *Amotekun* in the South-West and *Ebube Agu* in the South-East. Additionally, the 2020 #EndSARS protest movement revealed a latent potential for mass mobilization, principally among young people in the south. The demands of this movement remain largely unaddressed and the movement could be quickly reactivated in the face of perceived marginalization. Additionally, the more than 150-day old strike by the Academic Staff of Union of Universities (ASUU) threatens to make students vulnerable to recruitment by cults or gangs, and mobilization for political violence surrounding elections.

Election Violence. There is broad consensus among Nigerians that electoral violence in 2023 could affect the credibility of the process. Although voting was generally peaceful on election day in the 2022 Ekiti and Osun off-cycle elections, there were concerning cases of violence reported in the lead up to both elections. Party thugs were involved in many of these incidents,

¹² [ACLED \(acleddata.com\)](https://acleddata.com)

but in Ekiti, the involvement of a few National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) in violence was concerning. Osun also witnessed the widespread vandalism of campaign billboards that appeared to occur with impunity, which can create an environment of fear and intimidation. INEC has committed to participating in trainings with security forces to ensure they better understand the election process and their role on election day and are prepared to effectively handle violence and offenses during elections.

Concerns raised by interlocuteurs about electoral violence during the 2023 elections include: a) the ability/willingness of security forces to deter and mitigate violence around polling units; b) the potential for targeted violence by political party supporters aimed at shutting down polling units in party strongholds; c) lack of impartiality of security forces in dealing with electoral violence; d) the potential for the government to use insecurity as an excuse to prevent, suppress, or delay voting in certain locations; e) the impact that non-electoral security dynamics may play in reducing turnout and/or hampering INEC logistics (in particular, the role of IPOB and its factions in the South-East); f) violence against female candidates and their supporters, and g) the role that informal security units (such as *Amotekun* and *Ebube Agu*) may play in the elections.

Electoral Offenses. The 2022 Electoral Act prescribes stiff penalties for electoral offenses, including vote buying, violence, and disruption of the voting process. For example, the maximum penalty for engaging in vote buying or bribery is 12 months of incarceration and/or a fine of 500,000 Naira (1,000 USD). However, enforcement of these provisions is limited, with very few reported arrests and even fewer (if any) reported charges. There is also confusion about who is responsible for election security. Technically, security falls to INEC, and the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Electoral Security (ICCES) plays a coordinating role for all security agencies during elections. In practice, INEC relies on security forces for responding to criminal acts, but security forces noted that they are reluctant to make arrests without explicit direction from INEC presiding officers. The new, stiffer penalties for electoral offenses have not been well-publicized, including during the 2022 Ekiti and Osun gubernatorial elections, where vote buying was witnessed. Lastly, neither INEC nor security forces have publicized numbers of arrests or charges from electoral offenses in the Ekiti or Osun gubernatorial elections, casting doubt among Nigerians about whether there is meaningful enforcement of these provisions.

Gender. Women comprise only 3.6 percent and 7.8 percent of legislators in the House of Representatives and Senate respectively. Not one of Nigeria's 36 governors is a woman, and the North-West geopolitical zone has no women in elected office at any level. In early 2022, the National Assembly rejected five constitutional reform bills that promoted women's rights and political empowerment. These bills were rejected in secret votes, making it impossible for constituents and civil society organizations to hold their representatives accountable. One proposed reform would have created 111 additional reserved seats for women, while another would have instituted a 35 percent quota for women in leadership roles in political parties. Positively, many political parties have instituted policies to reduce the financial burden on women aspirants, such as reducing or eliminating fees for candidate nomination forms. However, these measures alone are insufficient to remove the social and cultural barriers to increased women participation.

Election Funding. Logistical challenges have historically plagued Nigeria’s national elections and contributed to the postponement of the 2011, 2015, and 2019 polls. INEC noted to the delegation that the 2022 Electoral Act and other measures it is undertaking will contribute to overcoming these challenges. While INEC is pleased with the level of funding received thus far, it has not been fully funded by the government as mandated by law. Full funding is essential to ensure logistical preparations can be made as early as possible, especially given global supply chain issues that could delay acquisition of critical materials such as paper. Additionally, the courts have not received full funding from the government for the creation of election tribunals, which requires funds for training, travel and lodging. Lack of adequate funding will significantly impede the ability of judges to perform their duties.

Youth. With surging interest from young people in participating in the election, the voter registration deadline of July 31 could impact prospects for youth participation in the 2023 elections. While INEC needs time to clean the voter register and issue PVCs, closing registration more than six months before the elections threatens to disenfranchise a significant proportion of the population who are only now becoming familiar with the party candidates and interested in participating in the electoral process. Additionally, due to the long running ASUU strike, students have been unable to register for voting in their place of residence. Closing registration before the strike ends could further disenfranchise young people in these elections.

Persons with Disabilities. The 2022 Electoral Act includes new provisions that mandate INEC to take reasonable steps to enhance access for PWDs. The Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018 also mandates that public buildings, where many polling units are located, be constructed or modified to ensure accessibility. Advocacy from disabled persons organizations, including under the banner of the Access Nigeria campaign, has led to INEC adopting provisions for accessibility measures such as the use of a Braille ballot guide, magnifying glass and EC40H form in polling units to track voters with disabilities ahead of the 2019 polls. However, these measures are not evenly implemented because polling officials are not adequately trained, assistive tools are insufficiently distributed and data is limited on the specific needs and locations of PWDs. INEC is reviewing its PWD Framework for the 2023 polls and proposing to introduce a new voting cubicle that accommodates people who use wheelchairs.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Nigeria has at least 3.2 million IDPs, and potentially many more.¹³ The existing framework to guide the specific voting process for IDPs cannot be implemented because it contravenes the law by having IDPs vote in camps that are not necessarily in their place of registration. INEC is currently reviewing its framework for IDP voting in the 2023 elections. Given the record levels of insecurity and displacement, it is critical that INEC update and implement its framework to ensure IDPs are enfranchised universally and equitably across the regions of Nigeria. INEC assured the delegation that it is their intention to promptly and holistically address this issue.

Information Environment. According to a 2021 Afrobarometer survey, 44.8 percent of citizens access news on the radio daily.¹⁴ The same study found that 39.3 percent of Nigerians access news on social media at least a few times a month, while 23 percent do so daily. The Economic

¹³ Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (2021) <https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/nigeria>

¹⁴ Compared to 22.6 percent on television, 5.5 percent through newspapers, and 22.1 percent through the internet

Community of West African States’ Court of Justice ruled during the delegation’s visit that the government’s seven-month suspension of Twitter from June 2021 to January 2022 was unlawful because it violated freedoms of expression and access to information and the media. Journalists noted to the delegation, however, that they generally operate without major restrictions and feel the environment is more open now than in the leadup to the 2019 elections. Journalists admitted that they often “self-censor” or avoid covering divisive or sensitive topics, to not attract negative attention and scrutiny from regulatory bodies overseeing the media. In May, the International Press Institute reported the arrest of 15 journalists; seven of the incidents related to the political party primary process, raising concerns about press freedom and safety ahead of the 2023 polls.¹⁵

Misinformation, Disinformation and Hate Speech. The increased utilization of the internet, social media, and online messaging platforms have increased the volume and speed at which mis/disinformation spread. Civil society, specifically the Center for Democratic Development West Africa, has identified politically sponsored networks of “cyber warriors” who spread false information and divisive rhetoric. These messages are then amplified through bot networks or shared by media influencers with large followings.¹⁶ For the 2023 elections, Nigerian experts told the delegation that they expect political parties to deploy sophisticated media operations and that some party-affiliated actors may intentionally cloud the information environment with mis/disinformation. Stakeholders are also specifically concerned about the role that hate speech may play in fueling violence and polarization.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The actions of electoral stakeholders to prepare for the 2023 polls between now and the end of 2022 are critical to inspiring confidence in the ability of Nigerians to select the candidate of their choice without barriers or hesitations. Therefore, IRI/NDI offer the following actionable recommendations within that timeframe for consideration by stakeholders.

On Election Administration, Civic Participation, and Judicial Matters

1. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should be allocated its remaining funding to ensure they are able to complete procurement processes, training, and deployment of necessary staff and materials.
2. The courts should be allocated sufficient funding to ensure members of Election Tribunals have the necessary resources for training, transportation, and security.
3. INEC should extend the period for voter registration to capitalize on excitement from the Osun and Ekiti elections and nomination of final presidential and vice presidential candidates.
4. INEC and the security forces should enforce and widely publicize the penalties for committing electoral offenses under the new electoral law, particularly vote buying. INEC and the security forces should also communicate to the public the number of arrests, charges, and convictions for the electoral offenses.
5. In line with accepted international best practices, in addition to posting images of the polling unit-level results forms (EC.8A) on the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV),

¹⁵ <https://ipi.media/nigeria-attacks-on-journalists-spike-as-election-season-starts/>.

¹⁶ Hassan, Idayat (2022) “Nigeria’s Fake News Ecosystem” Center for Democratic Development West Africa (CDD) <https://cddwestafrica.org/nigers-fake-news-ecosystem-an-overview/>.

INEC should commit to posting the results' spreadsheets created for each level of collation as well as the Registration Area, local government area and state results forms.

6. INEC should redistribute voters across new and old polling units in the same locales to avoid overcrowding and long queues.
7. INEC and political parties should invest in robust efforts to ensure that the collection of permanent voter cards (PVCs) by citizens is easily accessible to all registered voters.
8. INEC should conduct a more robust stress test of its new systems to troubleshoot potential challenges with the BiModal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and IReV for the 2023 elections. This includes ensuring that BVAS are able to accredit voters in a broad range of real-life settings and light conditions.
9. INEC should commit to increasing training for ad-hoc staff on polling unit layout and ballot secrecy and empower presiding officers to more proactively manage party agents' behavior, including requesting assistance from security agents as appropriate.
10. INEC should take additional measures to enforce requirements for political parties to submit financial reports and monitor campaign expenditures, such as collaborating with the National Broadcasting Commission to track campaign expenditures on media airtime and advertisements.
11. INEC, political parties and civil society should begin voter education efforts early in the election process. INEC should coordinate with other government agencies responsible for voter education, such as the National Orientation Agency, to inform voters about the election process and encourage collection of PVCs.

On Political Parties

12. Political parties should sign and abide by the first peace accord facilitated by the National Peace Committee in November, which include pledges against violence, vandalism, harassment, hate speech, and vote buying.
13. Political parties should hold candidates, party members, and party agents accountable for participating in vote buying or inducement.
14. Political parties should train their agents on proper polling unit layout, prohibited behavior under the law, and their important roles during the collation process, and ensure that all agents have proper INEC credentials.
15. Political parties and candidates should comply with financial disclosure requirements required by the 2022 Electoral Act.

On Women, Youth, Persons with Disabilities, and Internally Displaced Persons

16. INEC should publish disaggregated data on registered persons with disabilities (PWDs) before elections and invest in collecting data to map the location and type of assistance needed for PWDs, and audit polling unit layouts to ensure compliance with the INEC polling unit schema.
17. INEC should also implement assistive voting cubicles for PWDs. With this adjustment, INEC should consider modifications to the voting cubicles that protect ballot secrecy.
18. Parties should implement their own gender inclusivity commitments as they set up their campaign committees.
19. Political parties should prioritize material and financial resources to women and youth candidates who emerge from the 2022 primaries.

20. INEC should invest in assisting internally displaced persons (IDPs) to transfer their registration area to their new location so that they can vote; update the IDP framework, taking into consideration lessons learned from 2019; implement the surveys of IDP camps required in the framework; and prioritize the sensitization of the new framework with government and polling officials.

On Security

21. INEC and security forces should anticipate and plan for areas where violence may be used to suppress votes / change outcomes.
22. The government should formally address the role that informal security outfits (such as *Amotekun* and *Ebube Agu*) may play in the lead up to and during elections.
23. Security forces should enhance training for security agents on election duty to control crowds peacefully, and support the presiding officer in ensuring appropriate voter and party agent behavior and ballot secrecy.
24. The government should resolve the Academic Staff of Union of Universities strike. This is critical for security, as young people unable to study could be easily recruited into cults, gangs, or other groups that could contribute to electoral violence.

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