

Ref: Intersociety/AN/001/10/017/INEC/AWK

The INEC Resident Electoral Commissioner for Anambra State (Dr. Nkwachukwu Orji)

Anambra INEC's Headquarters

The State House of Assembly Drive

Awka, Anambra State

Sir,

**Beyond Assurances Of Free And Credible Governorship Election In Anambra: Action Should Speaker Louder Than Voice**

(Onitsha Nigeria: 16<sup>th</sup> October 2017)-We are Intø Society for Civil Liberties & the Rule of Law (Intersociety), headquartered in Onitsha and incorporated and established in Nigeria since 2008. We thematically advocate for promotion and advancement of: **democracy and good governance (including governance accountability), civil liberties and rule of law (including civil and criminal justice accountability) and public security and safety.** For more information about our advocacy activities, please see our website: [www.intersociety-ng.org](http://www.intersociety-ng.org).

Sir, we have systematically followed events as they concern the all-important Governorship Election in Anambra State, scheduled for 18<sup>th</sup> November 2017. The all-important poll is only 32 days to go. Part of the followed events was your personal and Commissionø assurances of their readiness to conduct øfree, fair and credible electionø come 18<sup>th</sup> November 2017 in the State. We have also read about your public assurance that the poll would not be øinconclusiveø.

Sir, as tempting and promising as these promises of yours have sounded, it is still correct to say that some critical works and areas are still left undone and unattended to. These critical areas are highlighted and summarized as follows:

- (a) **Voters Eligibility:** Sir, in view of your Commissionø constitutional and statutory powers to register voters, revalidate and clean up (on continuous basis) votersøregister in Nigeria especially Anambra State; what is the total number of certified voters that will vote in the 18<sup>th</sup> November 2017 Governorship Election in Anambra State?

be made public with detailed breakdown of their numbers and polling units in the State. The detailed breakdown being demanded should also include details about the fate of newly captured or registered voters in the State since 2015, number of those involved in voters' cards transfer into the State, those with lost voters' cards (replaced or refused) and those who died or got relocated out of the State since 2015.

In other words, how many voters in the State are expected to vote in the 18<sup>th</sup> November 2017 Governorship Election following the supposedly cleanup of the State Voters' register arising from the above? There is also need to break it down local government by local government and polling unit by polling unit.

- (b) **Electronic Card Reader Controversy:** Sir, following the recent announcement by your Commission of its decision to deploy and use 6,000 electronic voting card readers for the 18<sup>th</sup> November 2017 Governorship Election in Anambra State; translating to average of one card reader for each of the State's 4,608 polling booths; it is our considered view that the number is acutely inadequate or insufficient. Since Anambra State is the only State holding election in the country now, it will be very appropriate for your Commission to reconfigure and triple the number of card readers to ensure that at least three functional card readers are deployed for each of the 4,608 polling booths in the State.

This will not only take care of card reader failure at the peak of the voting, but also quicken the voting exercise and discourage voter impatience and allied malpractices including disruption and violence. Your Commission should also ensure that all the card readers meant to be used in the said all important poll are properly test run and serviced before their deployment as well as ensuring that they are not used to manipulate and technically rig the poll in part or in whole. Their handlers must also be properly scrutinized, mentored and trained, especially in the areas of technical knowhow and public relations.

- (c) **Fate, Safety & Accessibility of Existing 4,608 Polling Booths:** Sir, how authentic or real, safe and accessible is the 4,608 polling booths in Anambra State, especially for the coming poll? Your Commission should ensure that all the 4,608 polling booths are aerielly captured, motorized and computerized. Over-zealous and desperate politicians in the State and their supporters must not be allowed to create and use fictitious and voodooist polling booths; usually cited in politicians' dwelling and abandoned houses or those of traditional rulers or in shrines and isolated places and forests.

Any of the existing 4,608 State polling booths found to have been located in none public arenas such streets, schools, market squares, town squares, town halls, designated vicinities around security barracks, publicly designated and recognized places of worship, etc; must be closed down and barred from being used in the said all important Governorship Poll.

- (d) **Readiness & Neutrality of INEC's ICT Personnel:** Sir, how ready and unbiased are the personnel of your Commission manning the Commission's ICT department at the Commission's Awka headquarters, 4,608 polling booths, 326 electoral wards and LGA collation centers?

personally via public forum give the Anambra voters and the Commission and firm assurance that the likes of Emeka Nnaji (your HOD in charge of ICT), Oge Oranyelu, Christian Okoroigwe, Moses Aniche and Clifford Ugwu (all of Awka INEC's ICT Department) and all your personnel in charge of ICT Department at Awka and 21 LGA INEC offices shall remain unbiased and operate neutrally during and after the all important 18<sup>th</sup> November 2017 Governorship Election. The roles of ICT and its operators, as you know Sir, will make or mar the all important Governorship Poll.

- (e) **Display of Voters' Register & Voter Education:** Sir, how ready are you and your Commission with respect to the above and in line with relevant provisions of the Electoral Act of 2010 as amended? This is bearing in mind want of time and the Electoral Act stipulation of 30 days before the Election as a date for final display of cleaned and updated version of the voters' register to be used for the poll. For the avoidance of doubt sir, Section 20 of the Electoral Act says, "the supplementary voters' list shall be integrated with voters' register and published not later than 30 days before a general election".

It is still our observation Sir, that your Commission has not done enough in terms of voter education concerning the coming poll. Such voter education should not only be strategic, but also incorporate the critical and unresolved issues highlighted above. We respectfully task your Commission to do more on this.

- (f) **Election Security & Voters' Participation:** Sir, how adequately prepared are your Commission and the Anambra State Joint Security Forces to secure all routes leading to the existing 4,608 polling booths and 21 LGAs' collation centers and their surroundings in the State? How secure and accessible are the State's River line areas (formerly Anambra Rigging Fields)?

Some violent and desperate politicians usually make some LGAs, polling booths and electoral wards a no go area during elections. Are there adequate security measures put in place by your Commission and the relevant security agencies in the State to ensure that eligible voters turn out en masse and vote? What adequate security and safety measures are put in place to ensure the custody and safety of your Commission's sensitive voting materials especially voting sheets and voting results forms (i.e. Form EC8As)?

There is need for well planned and arranged security and safety measures to forensically, technologically, scientifically and manually be put in place to create a sense of general security and safety among voting population of the State so as to engender large voters' turnout for the poll. Your Commission in conjunction with heads of various security agencies in the State should make sure that security agencies and operatives selected for the Election Day security are thoroughly oriented, tagged and trained in art of election security.



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that they are for poll security and not for òOperation Python of brigandage and lawlessness. Your Commission and other critical stakeholders are further called upon to ensure that the People of Anambra State come out largely and vote for the governorship candidate of their choice without molestation and intimidation.

**Yours Faithfully,**

**For: Int'l Society for Civil Liberties & the Rule of Law (Intersociety)**

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