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Why INEC Must Inexcusably Match Its Words With Actions In Anambra Governorship Poll

(Onitsha Nigeria: 17th October 2017)-Our Organization: **Int'l Society for Civil Liberties & the Rule of Law (Intersociety)** has formally written to the Resident Electoral Commissioner for Anambra, Dr. Nkwachukwu Orji, urging him and his Commission to *go beyond assurances of free and credible Governorship Poll in Anambra and ensure that its actions speak louder than its voice.*

The letter to the Anambra INEC and its REC was dated 16th November 2017 and referenced: **Ref: Intersociety/AN/001/10/017/INEC/AWK** and titled: ***Beyond Assurances Of Free And Credible Governorship Election In Anambra: Action Should Speaker Louder Than Voice.*** The said detailed letter was delivered to the REC yesterday, 16th November 2017 at 1:12pm by the Administrative Secretary of our Organization with acknowledgement copy duly signed and stamped.

Intersociety also wrote a forwarding letter, attached with a copy of the main letter to the National Chairman of INEC, Prof Mahmood Yakubu. The forwarding letter was dated 17th October 2017 but dispatched days ago.

The INEC National Chairman and his Commission was specifically urged to pay special attention to the Commission's National Directorate of ICT, headed by Mr. Chidi Nwafor (INEC's National Director of ICT) or any other person positioned in his stead, by ensuring that the important Department and its personnel is not found wanting in discharge of its duties especially as it concerns the role of the ICT Department and personnel in the said all important Anambra Governorship Poll taking place in 31 days time.

In our main letter to the Anambra Resident Electoral Commissioner, the following critical areas requiring urgent and holistic attentions of the Commission in the State and at its National Headquarters were technically and critically highlighted:

- (a) **Voters Eligibility:** The REC and his Commission were reminded of their constitutional and statutory powers to register voters, revalidate and clean up (on continuous basis) voters' register in Nigeria especially Anambra State. The Commission was asked to disclose publicly with graphic details of the total number of certified or approved voters that will vote in the 18th November 2017 Governorship Election in Anambra State.

We further demanded that such be made public with detailed breakdown of the number of voters and their names for each of the 4,608 polling units in the State; which must 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.

Emergency: We demanded for tripling of the 6,000 electronic voting card readers which the Commission said would be deployed for the 18th November 2017 Governorship Election in Anambra State; on average of one card reader for each of the State's 4,608 polling booths. We reasoned that 6000 card readers are acutely inadequate or insufficient for the Poll and specifically requested for average of 3 card readers for each of the 4,608 polling booths in the State so as to prevent card reader failure without available alternatives, decongest the polling booths, ensure speedy voting and ward off poll malpractices and insecurity.

We also demanded for proper training, orientation and scrutiny of the INEC card readers handlers and operators especially in the areas of technical knowhow and public relations. The need for the Commission to 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 was also pointed out.

- (c) **Fate, Safety & Accessibility of Existing 4,608 Polling Booths:** The REC and his Commission was asked to disclose publicly, convincingly and satisfactorily the authenticity, reality, safety and accessibility of the 4,608 polling booths in Anambra State, especially for the coming poll. The Commission was specifically tasked to ensure that all the 4,608 polling booths in the State are aerially captured, motorized and computerized. The need to effectively monitor or checkmate and contain over-zealous and desperate politicians in the State and their supporters especially on election day so as not to 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; was also pointed out.
- (d) **Readiness & Neutrality of INEC's ICT Personnel:** The REC and his Commission was called upon to ensure the readiness and neutrality of the personnel manning the Commission's ICT department at the Commission's Awka headquarters, 4,608 polling booths, 326 electoral wards and LGA collation centers especially during and after the all important Anambra Governorship Poll.

We specifically demanded from the REC to personally via public forum give the Anambra voters and the entire residents of the State specific 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 other 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 18th November 2017 Governorship Election.

Voter Education: We observed that the REC and his Commission were lacking in the area of voter education as provided in the Electoral Act of 2010 as amended. Apart from reminding the Commission through its Anambra REC of want of time, especially with only 31 days to the said poll; we also brought the Commission's attention to 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 in all the 4,608 polling booths to be used for the poll. This is provided in Section 20 of the Electoral Act that says, "the supplementary voters' list shall be integrated with voters' register and published not later than 30 days before a general election".

- (f) **Election Security & Voters' Participation:** The REC and his Commission was tasked on the extreme importance of ensuring adequate security measures by the Commission and the Anambra State Joint Security Forces especially by aerially, forensically and manually securing all routes leading to the existing 4,608 polling booths and 21 LGAs' collation centers and their surroundings in the State as well as security and accessibility of voting and collation centers in the State's River line areas (formerly Anambra Rigging Fields).

This is more so when the criminal and other nefarious activities of violent and desperate politicians who on election day make some LGAs, polling booths and electoral wards in the State a no go area and rigging scenes or arenas has seemingly become intractable and a recurring decimal. The Commission and its security partners was tasked to ensure that adequate security measures are effectively put in place to ensure that all eligible voters in the State turn out en masse and vote freely and peacefully in the 18th November 2018 Governorship Poll. The need to ensure adequate security and safety of INEC's sensitive voting materials including voting sheets and voting results forms (i.e. Form EC8As) was also pointed in the said main letter.

Signed:

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

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