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## **RESTORING TRUST IN NIGERIAN ELECTIONS**

A coalition of Nigerians in the diaspora, along with multi-faith organizations, are standing with Nigerians all over the world and calling on the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to ensure that the 2023 Nigerian Presidential elections are transparent, free, fair, and credible

### **Context**

Nigeria is a Democratic Republic whose leaders are elected through a democratic elections. Those elections must comply with the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and international laws and best practice.

When the voters are able to fairly, transparently, and freely exercise their constitutional rights in and through an electoral process, pursuant to the rule of law, the losing candidates must acknowledge and respect the legitimacy of the electoral process, and respect the will of the electorate by supporting the nation's peaceful transfer of power.

### **Challenges**

The 2023 Electoral process has featured unprecedented allegations of voter fraud, intimidation, violations and lax enforcement of election law, as well as other voting irregularities.

Voter intimidation and manipulation has posed a persistent challenge in previous elections, although its breadth and scope are always disputed and carelessly vindicated. The importance and influence of the 2023 Elections, means that the allegations of fraud and irregularities in this election must be taken very seriously. Particularly because they may exceed those in any previous elections and are crucial to determining Nigeria's future democracy and national unity.

These allegations are nationwide. [CNN.com](https://www.cnn.com) has reported that there is an "unprecedented threat" and many observers (domestic and international) believe that the election process has "[reduced trust in the process and challenged the people's right to vote](#)". Opposition parties have walked out of the venue where results of the presidential elections are being announced because of "[a lack of transparency](#)" including the PDP and LP. Yet, the current administration, and parastatals, apparently do not believe that there is enough to warrant alarm. That should concern us all, as it poses an ongoing threat to the legitimacy of subsequent administrations.

Ideally, INEC, observers (domestic and international), and all those concerned with democracy would be patient enough to hear evidence and resolve these claims of serious election violations. It is incumbent on the current administration to consider these claims before voting on whether to certify the 2023 Election results. That vote is the lone constitutional power remaining to consider and force resolution of the multiple allegations of serious voter fraud.

### **Remedy**

The world cannot ignore these allegations, nor can we permit the media to simply dismiss those raising them as extremists trying to undermine democracy. We welcome former President Olusegun Obasanjo's recommendation that Electoral Committee be formed to investigate these incidents, allegations and review evidence - [comprised of INEC staff, representatives of the four major political parties and the President of Nigerian Bar Association.](#)

An Electoral Committee would have the full investigatory and fact-finding authority, to conduct an emergency audit of the election returns in the disputed polling units. Once completed, individual states would evaluate the Committee's findings and could convene a special legislative session to certify a change in their vote, if needed.

We fully believe that election integrity is a national and international concern. A fair and credible audit, conducted expeditiously and completed well before a specified deadline would improve the faith of Nigeria's electoral process and would significantly enhance the legitimacy of whoever becomes our next President. You owe that to the nation.

These are matters worthy of consideration by the current administration, those vying for a seat and for those entrusted to defend democracy. We cannot take this matter lightly. We are acting not to thwart the democratic process, but rather to protect it. And every one of us should act together to ensure that the election was lawfully conducted under the Constitution and to do everything we can to restore faith in our Democracy.

### **CC:**

- HE President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR Head of State and Commander in Chief
- President of the Senate, Ahmad Ibrahim Lawan, GCON
- Speaker of the House of Representatives, Femi Gbajabamila

### **Signed:**

*[FIRST & LAST NAME, TITLE ORGANISATION]*