



Address By

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At the

Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room's Stakeholders' Forum

Transcorp Hilton Hotel, Abuja

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Protocol

Introduction

1. Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, once again, I am very pleased to give the keynote address at the opening of this Stakeholders Forum on Elections organized by the Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room. The Civil Society Situation Room is a critical partner in the efforts to improve our electoral institutions to attain the level of effectiveness and responsiveness commensurate to the status of our nation as the giant of Africa.

1.2. Given that the thrust of democracy as a system of government is hinged on the participation of the people in the election of their government, we cannot go far in this quest for good governance if our electoral system is still weak. I am therefore grateful to the Situation Room for stimulating these discussions that will help strengthen the incremental body of works that will lead to electoral integrity in Nigeria.

Ongoing Efforts To Improve the Electoral Environment in Nigeria

2. Earlier this year, at this same forum, I made a commitment to lay a solid foundation for a sustainable reform of the justice sector where rule of law takes pre-eminence over and above the rule of man. The amendment of the Electoral Act in order to empower INEC and the Judiciary to deal with perpetrators of serious offences was identified as top priority.

3.It is in furtherance of this that on Tuesday, 4th October 2016, I set up the Constitution and Electoral Reform Committee (CERC) in order to take a holistic look at the electoral environment and make recommendations on needed reforms. The inauguration of the CERC is the first major step in the series of reforms that will be carried out to advance our electoral environment.

4.The terms of reference of the Committee includes the review of the Justice Uwais Electoral Reform Committee, review of recent judicial decisions on election petitions as they relate to conflicting judgments and absence of consequential orders as well as the review of the laws impacting on credible elections in Nigeria, including relevant provision of the 1999 Constitution and the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended).

5.The Committee led by the well-respected former Senate President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Dr Ken Nnamani is consulting broadly across the country, and with the National Assembly and the Judiciary. I wish to promise that we will implement the recommendations from the Committee very swiftly.

6.In addition to the work of the National Assembly in this regard, the Executive arm of government is doing its part by preparing various proposals for the amendments of the Constitution towards an improved electoral system in Nigeria. You would also recall that recently, Mr. President appointed, and after legislative confirmation, swore in Commissioners of the Independent National Electoral Commission to further enable the Commission to carry out its constitutional and statutory mandates.

7. I thank the Situation Room once again, and Mr. Clement Nwankwo, the Executive Director of PLAC for this invitation. I assure you all that we recognize the important work you are doing.

8. I am also grateful to the INEC Chairman and the Chairman and members of the Constitution and Electoral Reform Committee for their commitment towards improving the electoral environment. I must not fail to recognize the role of our development partners, particularly the British Department for International Development and the United States based National Democratic Institute for your support towards a strong and enduring electoral system in Nigeria.

Thank you all for your attention

Abubakar Malami, SAN.

Honourable Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice