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Analysis Centre

**Preliminary Report on Accreditation of Voters for the 2015 Presidential and National
Assembly Elections**

Preamble

The 2015 General Elections commenced on Saturday 28 March, 2015. Preparatory to the election, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the Inspector General of Police and some other stakeholders in the electoral process repeatedly assured Nigerians of the successful conduct of the election. The Federal Government announced the closure of land and sea borders. Also a restriction of movement on Election Day throughout the country was announced. While some efforts were made to ensure election security, there seems to be concern about insecurity in some parts of Northern Nigeria that may hinder the conduct of election in the areas.

Voters' Accreditation

By the provisions of the electoral laws guiding the conduct of elections in respect to voters' accreditation, INEC officials and election materials should be available at the polling units before 8:00am accreditation starting time. The INEC guidelines provides for the accreditation exercise to be conducted between 8:00 am to 1:00 pm. In this regard, election officials and necessary logistics are expected to have deployed before the commencement of the exercise. Generally, the behaviour and conduct of voters are satisfactory. In many parts of the country,

voters were reported to be eagerly waiting for the arrival of INEC officials. Feedback from the field reveals delay in the take-off of the accreditation exercise due to the late arrival of INEC officials and materials at the polling units. Also, in some polling units, party agents were either not available on time or reported late. The controversy surrounding the use of the card reader for the elections resurfaced. At several polling booths, card readers were reported not to be functional. In some cases, it took more than the expected time to verify potential voters. At a polling unit in Otuoke, Bayelsa State, where President Goodluck Jonathan registered to vote, the card reader was reported to have operational challenges which delayed the accreditation of President Jonathan. Also in Lagos, Katsina, Awka, the capital of Anambra State, many card readers are reported not to be functioning.

While the conduct of the verification exercise has been generally peaceful, few incidents have been reported across the geo-political zones. In the South-East, bomb blasts were reported in Awka (ward I) Anambra state around 7:30 am, while the Nigerian Police Force detonated bomb explosives placed inside Honda Accord at the Women Training Centre (WTC) Primary School, Ogui, New Layout in Enugu state. In Biri Bolewa and Biri Fulani in the Nafada local government area of Gombe State, suspected Boko Haram insurgents attacked two polling units which resulted in the death of two persons including a police man. In Ile-Ife south local government, Osun state, one person is reported killed and houses burnt.

Concluding remarks

Voters' behavior across the country during the accreditation exercise has been generally satisfactory. However, INEC officials and party agents need to be more responsive and proactive. The challenge of card readers is a source of serious concern. The hacking of INEC's website is also not a positive development, although INEC has reassured that the incident will not affect the elections. The challenges associated with the card readers in many parts of the country coupled with the delay in the take-off of the accreditation exercise if not addressed urgently, may lead to spill-over of the elections to the next day. The reported cases of attacks and intimidation in some parts of the country are likely to impact on the election process.

Idayat Hassan

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