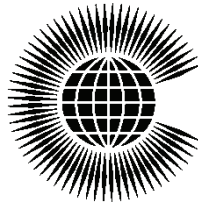


ANNEX VI: Public Statement by the Chair on 11 April 2011



COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP TO THE NIGERIA ELECTIONS

STATEMENT BY H. E. FESTUS MOGAE, CHAIRMAN OF COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP ON THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

Our Group observed the National Assembly elections held on 9 April 2011. We were pleased that, following the problems experienced on 2 April and the postponement of the elections on two successive occasions, the National Assembly elections did take place in the vast majority of constituencies in Nigeria.

In our experience the National Assembly elections generally took place in a peaceful and orderly manner. The required staff and stakeholders were present and the various stages of the electoral process on polling day – including accreditation, voting, counting, tabulation and declaration of results – broadly proceeded smoothly and transparently. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) deserves commendation for this. Appreciation should also go to the young recruits from the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) in this regard.

Those who turned out to vote last Saturday behaved with decorum and dignity. We commend their enthusiasm, patience and commitment, which clearly reflected a genuine desire for a credible electoral process. We were concerned, however, to see the relatively low turnout in many places and hope that this will be reversed for the upcoming elections.

The bomb blasts in Niger and Borno States, and other isolated incidents of violence, marred the otherwise peaceful atmosphere that prevailed. We condemn the cowardly attacks that claimed the lives of so many innocent people, including INEC staff, and injured others. Such violence has no place in a democratic society.

We appreciated the important contribution made by the security agencies in maintaining peace and order on election day.

We noted several logistical deficiencies and procedural inconsistencies across the country. We do not believe that these called into question the overall credibility of the process. I will be drawing these to the attention of the Chairman of INEC. We

feel that there is scope and time for certain measures to be taken to improve the conduct of the elections at the next round, especially if the turnout is larger – which we fully hope and expect to be the case.

We believe that an important step forward has been taken in Nigeria with the successful conduct of the National Assembly elections. We hope that the necessary lessons will be learned from the exercise and that the remaining elements of the electoral timetable will be even better organised. We urge Nigerians to continue to behave with a sense of responsibility, maintain public order and turn out in larger numbers to demonstrate their faith in democracy.

Abuja, 11 April 2011

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