



NATIONAL ROUNDTABLE FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

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Communiqué of the Initiatives' Third National Roundtable for Good Governance held on 30th June 2008 on the Theme "Politics and Governance: The Challenges of Electoral Reform"

Preamble

The Third National Roundtable organized by The Initiatives held on Monday, 30th June 2008 at the Executive Hall, International Conference Centre, Abuja. The forum started at 10.38 am and was chaired by Senator Ken Nnamani, GCON, former Senate President, and had in attendance Justice M.L. Uwais, GCON, the former Chief Justice of the Federation and Chairman of the Electoral Reform Commission. Others in attendance were members of the national and state assemblies, members of the Diplomatic Corps, Federal and State government officials, intellectuals, captains of industry, journalists, civil society groups and other stakeholders.

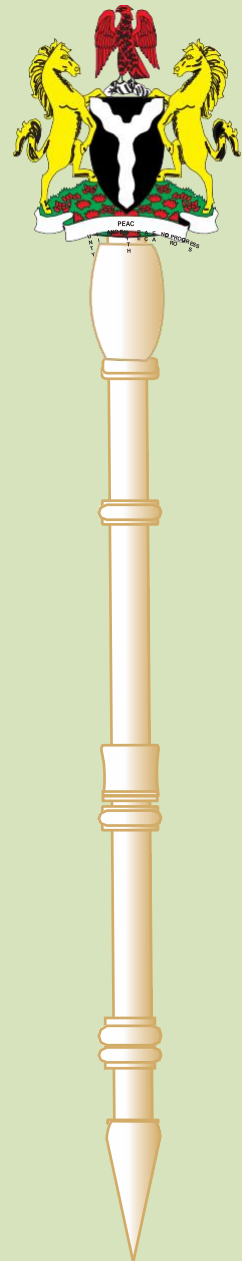
The theme of the third roundtable was Politics and Governance: The Challenges of Electoral Reform in Nigeria" with the objective of seeking inputs and solutions towards improving the much challenged electoral process in the country. The forum received presentations from Chief Wole Olanipekun, SAN, former Chairman of the Nigerian Bar Association, Dr. (Mrs.) Cecilia Ibru, MFR, Managing Director, Oceanic Bank Plc and Prof. Joash Amupitan, Dean, Faculty of Law, University of Jos as well as an address by Hon. Esemey Eyiboh, Dean, Faculty Board of The Initiatives.

GOVERNING BOARD.

Hon. Justice Mohammed Uwais GCON - **Chairman**

His Excellency Sen. Pius Anyim - **Vice Chairman**

Chief Wole Olanipekun SAN - **Advisor**



Observations

Participants after deliberations made the following observations:

1. That the roundtable series was a commendable project and was a testimony to the fact that the National Assembly is concerned about improving governance and service delivery to the people through consultations with a broad spectrum of the Nigerian public. And that information and knowledge generated from the roundtable should be widely disseminated to ensure that best practices become the norm of individuals, institutions and governments involved in the Nigerian democracy and development.
2. That continuous practice of politics even after assumption of office by the leadership at all tiers of government in Nigeria as witnessed by ceaseless politicking by chief executives was having serious negative implications on the quality of governance across the country.
3. That while the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is technically not a people's constitution as it was bequeathed to the nation by the military, it is still the embodiments of national laws from which all democratic and state institutions draw their power from. Be that as it may, however, it was considered that a review of the nation's body of laws was imperative.
4. That the political and legal framework of electoral system as presently obtained had failed to produce credible elections to satisfy the aspirations of Nigerians for free and fair elections with wide degree of acceptability among all stakeholders in electoral process at the national and sub national levels; And that sadly, all the political parties in varying degrees are engaged in perpetrating election malpractice in Nigeria at all electoral phases: pre-election(voters registration), election and post-election periods.
5. That though it was constrained by its reliance on the executive for funding and in the appointment of the Commission's Chairman and electoral commissioners, the Independent National Electoral Commission of Nigeria & political parties performed below par in the conduct of the 2007 General Elections and that several cases of judicial nullification attest to a widely flawed exercise.
6. That the proliferation of political parties in Nigeria was not healthy for the nation's democracy as most of the parties were too weak to present any credible opposition to the ruling Peoples' Democratic Party.
7. That the enactment of good laws by the National Assembly was very critical to good governance and a viable electoral system in Nigeria.
8. That despite the fact that cases before the election tribunals have dragged on for too long, the judiciary has been able to display its independence and has contributed greatly to upholding democracy in the country.
9. That although good laws and electoral reform is crucial to good governance, the development of an enduring and positive political and governance system depends on the commitment of men and women of ideas, integrity and courage working towards bringing about the desired

change that will promote national security and equality of opportunity for all Nigerians.

10. That though the corporate sector is of critical importance to the Nigerian economy through its wealth creation initiatives and the provision of infrastructure through big ticket projects there are emerging issues of promoting the right regulatory framework and policies to encourage conformity with global standards to ensure that good corporate governance contribute to enhancing Nigeria's economy and image nationally and internationally.

Recommendations

Consequent upon the above observations the following recommendations were then made:

1. That given the quality and importance of the discussions and knowledge generated at the roundtables, THE INITIATIVES should ensure dissemination of its reports to stakeholders in governance across the country and should extend participation and cooperation to state assemblies for capacity building at that level.
2. That politicians and public office holders who assume office should separate politics and the act of governance and become statesmen to ensure that leadership is able to respond to the development needs of the people.
3. That the National Assembly should begin the process of reviewing the 1999 Constitution to ensure that it becomes a people's constitution; able to respond to the political and development realities of Nigerians.
4. That the Electoral Reform Committee should consult widely and come out with an electoral system that would guarantee credible elections in the country.
5. That the ongoing electoral reform process be structured as to ensure that INEC is truly independent from the executive in funding and appointments; and that only men of honour, probity and integrity are appointed to manage the electoral agency in future.
6. That to build a strong political party tradition and a culture of viable opposition, the numerous opposition political parties are advised to merge together to provide a credible challenge to the ruling Peoples' Democratic Party so as to prevent the country sliding into a one-party state.
7. That the National Assembly should continue to work towards making Nigeria better by enacting laws that seek to reform the country towards prosperity and the inculcation of the right mores and social values.
8. That the Nigerian judiciary was to be commended and that further enabling policies be legislated to improve their institutional capacity to dispense justice speedier.
9. That men and women of integrity should seek to become involved in the nation's political process so that their ideas, commitment and patriotism to Nigeria will serve as models for change besides mere

adherence to legal provisions. Furthermore, the leadership and citizens should continually be educated and seek to be educated on how they can develop their capacity for effective and people's oriented politics and good governance.

10. That additional legal and corporate reform of the economic sector and the adoption of global best practices by corporate entities, institutions, governments and individuals were required for the Nigerian economy to continue to grow and for the country to meet the targets of Vision 2020.