

**AN OVERVIEW OF THE 2015 GENERAL ELECTIONS REPORT, BY JOHN
E. IREM, SECRETARY OF THE REPORT COMMITTEE**

Preamble:

On Wednesday, 22nd April, 2015, the then Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Prof. Attahiru M. Jega, inaugurated a 12-man Committee to produce, within the shortest possible time, the Commission's report on the 2015 General Elections. The Committee had Dr. Chris O. Iyimoga as Chairman and my humble self as member and Secretary. The Committee was given the following terms of reference:

- a) Study the template of the Report on the 2011 General Elections:
 - i) Identify the good aspects of it with a view of retaining them in the 2015 version;
 - ii) Identify the lapses or gaps in the 2011 Report with a view to correcting or filling them up in the 2015 document;
- b) Get inputs from INEC State/FCT Offices as well as the Departments/Directorates at the Headquarters, to ensure a holistic report on the elections;
- c) Ensure that the 2015 Elections Report is produced on or before 30th June, 2015, which would mark the end of tenure of the Jega-led administration of INEC; and
- d) Co-opt into the Committee any other relevant staff whose schedule, input or skills are required to facilitate an efficient discharge of the assignment.

The INEC Chairman further directed the Secretary to the Commission to write to Resident Electoral Commissioners and Directors to cooperate maximally with the Committee, in terms of making available relevant information and data, regarding the 2015 elections, as it concerned their areas of jurisdiction. The report Committee set to work immediately. It is to be noted at this juncture that it would be the first time INEC would be expected to produce a comprehensive report less than three months after the conclusion of general elections.

2. Methodology:

The Committee studied the Report on the 2011 General Elections, adopted its template, but with some modifications. It also adopted a 9-Chapter format to fit in items of the report. The Committee co-opted eight (8) additional members comprising Heads of Department/Directorate and other core desk officers. Also, five (5) more hands were invited to boost the Committee Secretariat. The Committee, subsequently, split into four sub-committees, with chapters assigned to them as follows:

Sub- Committee I:

- a) Conduct of Presidential and National Assembly Elections;
- b) Conduct of Governorship and State House of Assembly Elections; and
- c) Synopsis of Reports from the States/ FCT offices.

Sub- Committee II:

- a) Introduction;
- b) Preparations for the Elections; and

c) Post-Election Issues.

Sub- Committee III:

- a) Public Perception of the 2015 General Elections; and
- b) Emerging Lessons, Conclusions and Way Forward.

Sub- Committee IV: Appropriations for the 2015 General Elections.

The Committee went ahead to design a 23 point questionnaire comprising both structured and non-structured questions. It carefully selected 37 directing staff of the Commission, outside the Report Committee, to harvest information and data on the 2015 Elections from the States /FCT.

Members of the Committee were also sent to the various Departments and Directorates to obtain information and data. The information and data were to be harvested through oral and written interviews with the aid of the questionnaire. The Directing staff were sent to the States/FCT because of the urgency of the assignment and they were instructed not to come back until they obtained the following documents:

- (i) Filled Questionnaire;
- (ii) Compendium of Election Results – Presidential, National Assembly, Senate, House of Representatives, Governorship and State House of Assembly;
- (iii) Comprehensive report on the general elections as compiled by the State/FCT office (in hard and soft copies);

- (iv) Not more than 4-page summary report on the general election as conducted in the State/FCT; and
- (v) Any other useful or relevant information or data peculiar to that State/FCT but not captured in (i) – iv) above.

The Committee actually harvested an avalanche of information/data and was therefore faced with the challenge of analyzing, synthesizing, compressing and re-composing the reports and data from the States/FCT as well as from the Departments/Directorates, at the Headquarters in order to produce a unified INEC report on the Elections.

3. Report Writing Retreats:

The committee organised two report-writing retreats – one sponsored by the UNDP-DGD, while the other was funded by the Commission. At the retreats, each Sub-Committee submitted its report which was subjected to professional and technical scrutiny of the text, context, content and facts. The Secretariat then integrated the sub-committee reports into a draft holistic document which was presented to the General Committee for further scrutiny and editing. Thereafter, the document was handed over to Greg Mbajjorgu, of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, the Consultant Copy Editor, hired for that purpose. The editor went through the copy made his inputs and returned the document to the Committee Secretariat.

4. **Validation Adoption and Approval of Report:**

The Secretariat then prepared the document for official validation by INEC at the Commission's Retreat held in Uyo 16th – 19th June, 2015. At the Validation Conference, the chairman, members and secretary of the Commission, RECs, Directors and some stakeholders went through the document, made their contributions, by way of suggestions, corrections, re-alignments of content and text, before the document reverted to the Committee Secretariat for further action; there after the Validation Conference adopted the draft report in principle. The Committee produced the corrected draft report as validated at the Uyo Conference and submitted same to the Commission.

The INEC, under the leadership of Prof. Attahiru Jega approved the 2015 General Elections Report on 26th June, 2015. Subsequently, the approved report was presented to Resident Electoral Commissioners by the Acting Chairman of the Commission, Mrs Amina Zakari, on 13th August, 2015. The Acting Chairman directed the Secretariat to pass on the report to the Director-General of the Electoral Institute, Prof. Abubakar Momoh for the final editing and he (the DG-TEI) did a yeoman's job of it.

5. **Overview of the 2015 General Elections Report:**

The publication under review, namely, the INEC 2015 General Elections Report, is a 238 – page document with nine (9) chapters. The first 25 pages carry the preliminary items, including photographs of the Chairman, Members and Secretary of the

Commission as well as those of RECs of the 36 States and the FCT. Other items in the opening pages include the table of contents; list of figures, tables, charts and annexures; acronyms/abbreviations, foreword; acknowledgements as well as the executive summary.

Chapter One of the Report contains the introduction, with a review of the reforms carried out by the Commission, preparatory to the 2015 General Elections; based on the lessons learned from previous elections. It also contains an overview of preparations for the 2015 polls, an analysis of the INEC Gender Implementation Framework as well as the challenges encountered in the course of preparing for the elections.

Chapter Two highlights the policies and initiatives evolved to lay a solid foundation for free, fair and credible polls. It also x-rays the major activities preparatory to the 2015 elections, as well as revisits the factors that led to the re-scheduling the elections and the nightmare of handling internally displaced persons (IDPs). The Chapter also examines the concept and practice of a National Collation Centre/Situation Room as well as the role of development partners in the run-up to and during the elections.

Chapters Three and Four zero in on the actual conduct of the series of elections – Presidential, National Assembly (Senate and House of Representatives), Governorship as well as the State House of Assembly. Issues like deployment of electoral personnel and materials, monitoring and supervision of the polls, use of the Electoral Operations Support Centre, workings of the Situation

Room and the voting process were examined. Others include, collation and declaration of results, challenges encountered during the polls and the solutions proffered. The chapter also identifies the success factors, role of security agencies and the engagement with other relevant stakeholders.

Chapter five addresses post-election issues such as reverse logistics, storage and security of election materials, handling and publication of election results, post-election violence and other offences, honoraria for electoral personnel, post-election audit and election petitions.

Whereas Chapter Six deals with reports of election observers; Chapter Seven handles appropriations for the 2015 General Elections. It gives a breakdown of the budgetary provisions for the elections, the contribution of development partners as well as the projected cost of the Elections.

Chapter Eight offers streamlined synopses of reports on the Elections from the perspective of the 36 States and the FCT (as it applies to their localities); while Chapter Nine covers the general lessons and challenges and the Commission's responses to them; areas of consolidation, the place of e-voting in future polls as well as the way forward and future reforms.

The publication is embellished with some action pictures on the elections as well as 34 annexures made up of tables, figures and charts. It also contains quotable reflections on the polls by

prominent personages who actually participated in the 2015 General Elections.

6. **Conclusion:**

The Hon. Chairman, INEC; if harvesting information and data from the Commission's Headquarters, the States and FCT Offices was an arduous task, analyzing, compiling, synthesizing the materials, then writing a holistic report on the 2015 General Elections, was most challenging. However, in spite of the odds (especially the exigencies of time) the Commission now has a report to present to the public. On behalf of the Chairman and members of the report Committee, I express our gratitude to the erstwhile Chairman of the Commission, Prof. Attahiru Jega for finding us worthy to serve in that capacity. We are indebted to the UNDP-DGD for their invaluable assistance in the production and printing of this report

We thank also the Acting Chairman, Mrs Amina Zakari, for her guidance in the final push for the production of the Report. We extend our gratitude to all those who, in one way or another, contributed ideas of facts, grammar and aesthetics in the course of discharging this assignment.

Thank you.