

SITUATION ROOM'S STATEMENT ON STATE OF THE NATION

Issued in Abuja at 3.00pm: Wednesday, 24th March 2021

The Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room (Situation Room) held a strategy meeting in Abuja on Tuesday, 23rd March 2021 to review its Threshold Document for the 2023 General Elections. The meeting also reviewed the State of the Nigerian nation and reached the following decisions:

Insecurity

The security situation in Nigeria is deteriorating and manifesting in the form of banditry, kidnappings, etc posing a major threat for the 2023 general elections. The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) occasioned by insecurity is increasing beyond the North, into other parts of the country. This is further fuelled by the repatriation and resettling of Nigerian refugees from neighbouring countries. Situation Room questions the actors behind the insecurity situation, which appears to be strategic, organised and lucrative. Particularly the possible involvement or complicity of political leaders in these recurring incidents, which have been carried out unrepelled. Situation Room is worried that the government has not demonstrated competence and political will to tackle insecurity threatening the corporate existence of Nigeria.

Other insecurity concerns are:

- i. Insecurity is also linked to the high rate of unemployment in the country.
- ii. Economy: With agriculture being a major potential for the much-needed economic diversification, farmers are unable to visit their farms in some parts of the country owing to insecurity.
- iii. Security & Governance challenges and general upsurge of violence in the South East, occasioned by the communal crisis in

Effium and Ezza communities in Ebonyi State, and the recent clash in Orlu LGA between the Eastern Security Network (ESN) and Soldiers were among the most violent in recent times. The clash between ESN operatives and security forces resulted in deaths, sustenance of injuries and a dusk to dawn curfew imposed by the Governor of Imo State, across Orlu, Orsu, Oru-East, Oru West, Ideato North, Ideato South, Njaba, Isu, Nwagele and Nkwerre local government areas. Also worrisome is the burning of three police stations in Abia State. These have also spread to Anambra State where Naval, Police and Prison officers were recently killed in separate incidents.

Situation Room calls on the Federal Government to take immediate and effective steps and action to improve public safety and security as well as reassure vulnerable communities of credible measures of their protection. State Governors should be accountable regarding their utterances on the security situation, as well as the use of their state budgets to tackle insecurity. It is imperative to hold state governors to account on the use of their security votes at this time. Leaders who are no longer able to guarantee the welfare and security of citizens should resign from government.

Elections and Governance:

Accountability, transparency and security are at an all-time low in Nigeria. Situation Room calls on the Federal Government to take agitations from the various regions of the country, seriously. Political leaders should be reminded that they serve the entire populace and as such, should desist from victimising their opponents in the course of governance. The violence that erupted in the bye-election in Ekiti State on Saturday, 20th March 2021 is indicative of worse violent occurrences in future elections if it remains unaddressed. With exactly two years to the general elections in 2023, Situation Room is concerned that there are several gaps in election preparations and a lot of work is still required to achieve acceptable and credible general elections. Situation Room calls on the National Assembly to expedite

the amendment of the Electoral Act to enable urgent electoral reforms well ahead of the 2023 General Elections.

Economy

As at 31st December 2020, the Debt Management Office (DMO) showcased the nation's total debt stock at N32,915,514.85 (\$86,392.54b). The upward trend is becoming worrisome. As the debts keep piling up, it closes the fiscal space for effective delivery of public goods and services, especially gender responsive service delivery, thus exacerbating poverty and inequality. As reported by the World Poverty Clock, Nigeria has overtaken India as the poverty capital of the world and the most vulnerable groups include women and children. It is also a challenge that the borrowed funds are not being used to address our development objectives.

Continued borrowing is clearly not sustainable both in the short and the long-term but rather enslaving the citizens and the unborn future generation. Nigerian government needs to proactively garner the political will to reduce the size and cost of governance, close up leakages in the revenue generation and utilization. It makes no sense at all giving away large chunks of our resources on tax incentives but continue to seek funding abroad and locally.

Education

The number of out-of-school girl children is increasing, particularly in the North as a result of insecurity. This raises an urgent need to protect girl child education in Nigeria. Situation Room calls on the Federal Government to address the interruption to education occasioned by the closure of schools by governors in reaction to attacks on schools and abduction of students, as opposed to tackling the incidents decisively. This is in addition to the setback already suffered by the education sector, occasioned by the COVID-19 lockdown.

Sexual Violence

With the increased incidence of sexual offences, particularly against minors, several States are yet to domesticate the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, 2015. Situation Room calls on the State governors to prevail on their Houses of Assembly to domesticate the law. There has also been an increased violence against women from the activities of bandits, terrorists and other criminals. Situation Room calls on President Buhari to prevail on the Security Chiefs to take urgent steps in addressing the growing insecurity in Nigeria.

SIGNED:

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The Situation Room is made up of over seventy Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) working in support of credible and transparent elections in Nigeria. The Steering Committee is made up of: Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC), CLEEN Foundation, Action Aid Nigeria, Centre for Women and Adolescent Empowerment, Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), Centre for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD), African Centre for Entrepreneurship and Information Development (ACEIDEV), Justice Development and Peace Commission (JPDC) Nnewi, ASPILOS Foundation, Rule of Law and Accountability Advocacy Centre (RULAAC), MacJim Foundation, Kimpact Development Initiative, Democratic Action Group (DAG), Women's Rights to Education Programme, EDO CSOs, Young Innovators and Vocational Training Initiative (YVITI), New Initiative for Social Development (NISD).

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