

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

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INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

“NIGERIA AT A CROSSROADS: THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS”

DECEMBER 13, 2018

## **Introduction**

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass, and distinguished Members of the Sub-Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the upcoming elections in Nigeria. I also want to thank my State Department colleague, Ambassador and Assistant Secretary Tibor Nagy for his excellent description of our concerns and challenges in supporting Nigeria's electoral processes.

USAID is deeply committed to supporting free, fair, transparent, and peaceful elections in Nigeria. We know that Nigeria's success in achieving sustained, broad-based advancements in economic and social development for its people can only be achieved if good governance is a daily reality for all Nigerians. Since the 2015 election, our support has provided continuity in assisting with gubernatorial, off-cycle elections, and in the lead up preparations to the 2019 general elections. Our programmatic efforts have been in partnership with the UK's Department for International Development, in addition to regular coordination with civil society groups, as well as multilateral and bilateral donors.

## **Elections Support**

USAID's programs align with the three objectives that Assistant Secretary Nagy described; a credible process, a peaceful election, and an inclusive process monitored by Nigerian civil society.

On the first objective of a credible process, we assist Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to institutionalize key reforms that ensure more credible and accountable electoral processes. Consistent with our State Department colleagues, we assess that INEC is progressing as expected for 2019. There are over a dozen highly qualified INEC commissioners

and INEC has several board members who also served in that role in 2015. Administrator Mark Green and I met with INEC Chairman Yakubu to discuss INEC's strategic plan for the 2019 elections, which was developed with support from USAID. Mr. Yakubu also acknowledged the importance of the National Peace Committee's role in the 2015 elections, and noted that the Committee is re-convening for the upcoming elections. USAID continues to work with its partners to support INEC through training of both Resident Electoral Commissioners regarding alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, and of judges who will serve on election petition tribunals to adjudicate suits brought after the elections; in addition to working with civil society organizations on live conflict mapping.

As Assistant Secretary Nagy indicated, we do not expect large-scale nationwide violence, though history does tell us that there will likely be some localized violence around the elections period-- particularly in places that are already suffering from violence. USAID's long-term domestic observers are already reporting isolated cases of pre-election violence and hate speech. We continue to work with local organizations, international development partners, and Nigerian counterparts through public and private messaging, to encourage peaceful participation and tolerance.

To mitigate the risk of violence, our second objective, we have woven efforts to prevent electoral violence into all of our elections programs. Examples include "Vote Not Fight, Election No Be War"--whose Peace Ambassador is a leading Nigerian performing artist-- and "Stop Violence Against Women in Elections" campaigns, both of which work with local civil society organizations. These campaigns are part of USAID's Electoral Empowerment of Civil Society project, with public messaging campaigns utilizing the aforementioned slogans. "Vote Not

Fight” is working specifically in Kaduna and Rivers states encouraging the establishment of peace accords for the 2019 general elections. Our support of the “#WatchTheVote” campaign--a campaign created by a local civil society organizations that promotes citizens in elections and electoral integrity--has already led to the deployment of long-term observers in advance of February 16 who are reporting on INEC’s preparedness, as well as isolated incidences of pre-election violence. In addition, USAID is engaging civil society organizations in each geopolitical zone to do live conflict mapping and engage in real time with elections stakeholders, including INEC. USAID is also looking for ways to complement the recently reconstituted National Peace Committee.

To advance the third objective, an inclusive elections process monitored by Nigerian civil society, USAID programs also strengthen Nigerian civil society’s capacity to monitor elections. Local partners are preparing to field 3,000 domestic monitors for the 2019 general elections. These monitors are trained in conducting parallel vote tabulations, or PVTs, often known as “quick counts,” using a systematic monitoring methodology that independently measures the quality of election-day processes and official voting results. When PVTs confirm official election results, they can increase confidence in the electoral process and reduce political tensions that can lead to post-election violence.

Our programs work with Nigeria’s major political parties to strengthen constituent engagement and promote party involvement in governance processes, by assisting them to become more representative and responsive to citizens, and to increase their oversight of government programs.

USAID is also funding an International Election Observation Mission to provide impartial observation of the electoral process, enhance the credibility of the elections, and to support the peaceful transition of power. In addition, the program will highlight the need for inclusivity, so that women, youth, persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons, and other marginalized groups are provided as full access as possible to participate in electoral processes.

### **Conclusion**

USAID is committed to assisting Nigeria with its electoral processes, and to encouraging peaceful elections. The 2015 election was historic. It marked the first time in Nigeria's history that there was a peaceful transfer of power to a non-incumbent party; an illustration of Nigeria's commitment to democracy. Our interest is, and always will be, in the integrity of the electoral process, and in ensuring that the process accurately reflects the will of the Nigerian people.