



CHATHAM HOUSE

Chatham House, 10 St James's Square, London SW1Y 4LE

T: +44 (0)20 7957 5700 E: contact@chathamhouse.org.uk

F: +44 (0)20 7957 5710 www.chathamhouse.org.uk

Charity Registration Number: 208223

Type of paper: Transcript

Nigerian Democracy and Prospects for the 2011 Elections

MALLAM NASIR AHMAD EL-RUFAI

Former Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja; Nigeria Leadership Initial Advisory Board

DR ABDUL RAUFU MUSTAPHA

Lecturer in African Politics, University of Oxford

HE AMBASSADOR DOZIE NWANNA

Acting High Commissioner of Nigeria to the UK, Nigeria High Commission

Chair: ALEX VINES

Head, Africa Programme, Chatham House

Thursday 17 March 2011

The views expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of Chatham House, its staff, associates or Council. Chatham House is independent and owes no allegiance to any government or to any political body. It does not take institutional positions on policy issues. This document is issued on the understanding that if any extract is used, the author(s)/speaker(s) and Chatham House should be credited, preferably with the date of the publication or details of the event. Where this document refers to or reports statements made by speakers at an event every effort has been made to provide a fair representation of their views and opinions, but the ultimate responsibility for accuracy lies with this document's author(s). The published text of speeches and presentations may differ from delivery.

NIGERIAN DEMOCRACY AND PROSPECTS FOR THE 2011 ELECTIONS

Introduction: Alex Vines

I'm very glad to see you all today and I'm very happy to be chairing this meeting on Nigerian democracy and prospects for the 2011 elections. With events in the Middle East, the earthquake and tsunami and the nuclear crisis in Japan, global attention is not really on Nigeria and the upcoming elections in April but they are really significant and it's a very important event I think for Nigeria's future so this meeting is both timely and important and is indicative of the importance that we certainly at Chatham House have for Nigeria, Nigeria's politics and Nigeria's future. So this meeting I'm going to be very interested personally in listening to all three speakers looking at how they see the prospects for the elections but more importantly what happens after the elections themselves.

Our first speaker is Mallam Nasir Ahmad El-Rufai, the former Minister for the Federal Capital Territory in Abuja. He has a lengthy bio here but I should just highlight that he is a board member of the Nigeria Leadership Initiative, he's also co-founder of the Good Governance Group - 3G, the Save Nigeria Group – SNG and a variety of other civil society organisations in Nigeria. He has kindly agreed to speak for about 15 minutes before we move on down the panel and I'll introduce each panel member when we get to them.

So Mallam Nasir, I welcome you again to Chatham House. It's good to see you. You were present when we did a conference jointly with the University of Coventry on 50 years of Nigerian independence which also Ambassador Dozie Nwanna was active at that conference too, but welcome you to Chatham House itself rather than at Coventry.

Mallam Nasir Ahmad El-Rufai:

It's a great honour and a pleasure to be back here at Chatham House. My courtesies to the Acting High Commissioner, my elder brother Dr Raufu Mustapha, ladies and gentlemen.

I want to take the next 10-15 minutes to speak briefly about our country, the context for these forthcoming elections and my thoughts about what the situation is on the ground and what is likely to play out various scenarios.

Nigeria of course is an important country. Nigerians like to think so. We like to say that we are the giant of Africa – one out of every five Africans is

Nigerian, we are the eighth most populous country in the world, we are the seventh largest democracy and all that.

We have the largest African Diaspora – 2 million in the US, another 3 million in Europe and as much as 5 million in the Middle East and North Africa. Ambassador Princeton Lyman may not agree that we are as important as we think we are and to some extent I agree with him because I think that Nigeria has for too long been a country of great resources and great potential but at the tipping point when we do much and do something really great we've tended to disappoint.

But in spite of this I think even for Nigeria's capacity to bad, I think the world should be concerned about what happens in Nigeria. Nigerian entrepreneurship has manifested itself in ways that I think the world knows about the scam letters and all that. So for good reasons and other reasons Nigeria is important and for many of us Nigerians, after 12 years of democracy, we believe that these forthcoming elections starting in the next 2 or 3 weeks probably are a watershed in our country's history and the next month or so will probably be and we'll remember for a long time one of the most interesting 3/4 weeks in our history.

What is the nature of our democratic experience? Most Nigerians agree that our democratic experience has been disappointing so far. What Nigerians refer to as dividends of democracy have not been realised, our political parties have become either franchises – the PDP is a franchise of 37 state governors and ministers, the other parties are sole proprietorships – most of them, and they practice no democracy internally and therefore incapable of manifesting those principles and practices in day-to-day governance externally. Our politics and governance so far has shown no clear standards of merit or values. Being successful in politics depends a lot on doing very little that benefits the ordinary people and depends more on bribing elites and the loudest stakeholders, and more recently, on chance and simple good luck.

Now with these experiences one would expect that Nigerians would have lost faith in democracy and I think they would have, but for the extended period we experienced military rule and its unintended consequences. Nigerians are very suspicious of military rule, even today. We know that our politicians have issues – we are not too happy with them – but we trust the military even less.

Now chance events which are common with Nigeria, for those that follow Nigeria I'd like to say that one of the frustrations about my country is that we

depend so much on chance and luck instead of conscious effort to shape events that affect our country. It's both good and bad. It's good in the sense that we always somehow get out, when we are at the brink [inaudible] we get out of it. It's bad because Nigerian elites have come to believe that it will all work out and in my view have not put enough effort to really make things work in the right direction.

Chance events like death of Umaru Yar'Adua, the ascension of Goodluck Jonathan to the presidency, his nomination of Attahiru Jega the chairman of the Electoral Commission, Jonathan's denial of zoning practises within the PDP and the strengthened organization and activism by civil society and media as well as the proliferation of new information technologies have combined to give Nigerians some hope that all is not lost in our nation, in our democracy and in our future, not just yet.

What we have seen in the last few months has been an eagerness on the part of Nigerians to register to vote and we all expect a massive turnout of voters in the elections in April. Nigerians are also interested in not only voting but protecting their votes to ensure that their votes count. Some young people organized an NGO called "Enough is Enough" which just campaigns on this basis. They even coined an acronym, RSVP – register, select, vote and protect your votes. Now it has caught on all across Nigeria.

The character of the 2011 elections is that it is the first contest since 1999 without a foregone outcome and this has gingered not only the opposition parties but electrified the electorate as well. For this and other reasons that are referred to in these remarks, there has also emerged a constituency that is not loyal to political parties but interested in the personalities and programmes of the various candidates, not just the fanfare and dancing and music and soapbox theatrics.

So we are once again at a crossroads as I said and this makes it important that the 2011 elections must be transparently fair, such that the legitimacy of the results will be accepted as reflective of the preferences expressed by voters.

In my humble view, and in light of the division in the country today due to the acrimonious debate on zoning, the election is an opportunity for reconciliation but it could also be a fillip to the insecurity, divisions and bitterness fostered in the campaign and the weight of discharging this burden rests primarily on INEC and the agencies involved in providing staff and implementing elections logistics – the Police, the Security Services and other agencies involved like

[inaudible] National Youth Service Corps which provides most of the ad hoc staff for INEC.

Most Nigerians are optimistic that the elections next month will be qualitatively better than the 2003 and 2007 elections - it is nearly impossible to do any election worse than 2007 anyway – but this is evident from their reaction to the appointment of Chairman Jega and other members of the Commission, the speed at which the National Assembly approved the budget for the elections, operations of the Commission and the enthusiasm displayed during the voter registration exercises.

Nigerians cannot en masse register to vote. 73.5 million people have been registered. These numbers have been biometrically validated within states. It is possible still for a person to register in one state and go and register in another state, so that has not been cancelled out yet but it is impossible for you to vote in one state and move to another anyway because on election day there is restriction of movement, so even that is not a big issue.

Some people have complained that the number of voters is too high but I believe that the figures are more or less authentic and statistically consistent with our current population of about 162 million with a disproportionate percentage of young people. Nearly 55% of the population is below the age of 18 and that has been reflected in the structure of the Voters' Register.

So INEC has done a decent job of that in my view. It is probably the best Voters' Registers we've had in our history and we do not have names like Mike Tyson, Nelson Mandela in the register which I saw in the FCT register in 2007. That gives hope that foundations have been laid to reduce malpractices and so on.

There is one further concern about the number of polling booths. There are about 120,000 polling booths all over Nigeria. There have been complaints from some of the parties that as many as 28,000 of those polling booths don't exist, they are just centres for electoral malpractice, and INEC has looked into it and I believe they are doing something about it because the technology of Britain has not changed from the 1960s. You [inaudible] by first ensuring that there are fictitious polling booths, then you ensure that there are fictitious names on the register and then on election day you try to vote on behalf of those fictitious names in those fictitious polling units. That is how it has been done. Now with what INEC has put in place, it has made it very very difficult for such practises so new technologies have to be thought of.

There are other concerns of course – security issues in some states, like three states in the Niger Delta – Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers – Plateau, Bauchi,

Borno, Gombe, Abia and Imo, [inaudible]. Indeed the NYSC has indicated that unless some issues are addressed they will not provide staff to act as polling officers in those states but I'm sure the security agencies will deal with that.

Election monitors are in the country though in my view they are too little and they have come too late because election monitors to be effective must be in the country long enough to understand the terrain as well as be in locations where the malpractices are more likely to take place and what happens is that most of the malpractices take place in the rural areas, the suburban areas and in the River areas, while the election monitors usually like to stay in the urban areas very close to their 5 Star hotels. So this has to change.

The political parties have had people from the ruling party move into them. The opposition parties now have the benefit of having all PDP people. So they also know how the malpractices are designed and implemented so we hope to see some cancelling out in that regard.

Now the zoning debate has been an issue and in my view it has fundamentally affected how the elections of 2011 will take place because the PDP has zoning in its Constitution but Goodluck Jonathan chose to deny its existence – in my view he could have negotiated an exemption rather than deny its existence - and that has brought about big problems even within the ruling party and a lot of anger among the northern political elite.

Running for president in my view is the right of every Nigerian qualified by age and education but denying zoning made President Jonathan appear dishonourable and untrustworthy in the eyes of all but those who wished to deceive him and zoning, unfortunate as it may appear, is going to be a defining issue in this election and I think that it's the biggest hurdle that President Jonathan faces because politicians generally believe that people that fail to honour verbal agreements don't go far in politics and I think that is a major hurdle for him to cross.

The Voters' Register came out with impressive demographics because it shows the disproportionate weight of voters in the north-west and south-west and north-central zones of the country and that also is reflected in how the presidential candidates of the opposition parties pick their running mates, they're all going to the south-west, and nobody went to any other region because there are I think two [inaudible] million votes in the south-west and again how this will play out is an open question.

Let me just conclude very quickly, and this paper will be available: I think that what is likely to happen in the 2011 elections is that we are going to have

fairly decent elections not only because INEC is a much better organized and better managed organization with credible people that have shown their commitment to getting clean elections but also because Nigerians are organizing to ensure that their votes count. They think Jega is a decent guy but they do not intend to trust him. In every polling booth you will see people going with their Blackberrys, their laptops and as soon as the election results are announced they will be broadcast all over the world and it will be impossible for anyone to change it subsequently.

In the event that we have clean elections, as I am optimistically expecting, I think the winners will be congratulated by the losers and we will go on to build an inclusive nation based on a sound foundation and we'll have people in office that for the first time in a long time know that we elected them and we can vote them out in four years.

But there is another possibility, a possibility that the incumbents but clearly the ruling party decide that they must win at all costs and cheat, in which case we'll have a lot of violence and in the event that the ruling party unfairly declares itself the winner of the elections I think we'll have protest on the street. This will not be resolved in the courts because one of the presidential candidates, Muhammadu Buhari [inaudible], has already said that he does not intend to go to court because he has no confidence in the Nigerian judiciary. The Nigerian judiciary has gone through some challenges in the last few months and our concern is that without a commitment to resolve these issues in the courts they will only be resolved in the streets and God help us, we don't want a situation like Egypt but it is likely to happen if the elections are not free and fair. Thank you.

Alex Vines

May I invite now Abdul Raufu Mustapha who's a lecturer in African politics at the University of Oxford.

Dr Abdul Raufu Mustapha:

Much of what I have to say basically echoes some of the themes that Mallam Nasir has pointed out.

I want to start by putting before us the fact that we are confronted by some of the legacies of the 2007 elections, legacies that remain unresolved and are likely to impact on this election. As you all remember that election was particularly widely recognised as flawed. Yar'Adua himself, the winner,

promised electoral reforms. That reform was never carried through. A committee was set up, the Uwais committee, which issued a report, where systematically the Attorney General of the Federation on Yar'Adua undermined that committee report. Fundamental sections of it were rejected on political or constitutional grounds and when he finally put six Bills before the National Assembly to implement sections of the reform the Bills were so defective that some people felt they were deliberately designed as such and it was hardly surprising that the National Assembly threw out every single one of those six Bills.

In effect we are entering the 2011 elections with what can be described as a broken electoral system. That system has not been reformed. The only thing that has happened is that the top of it has been changed by the appointment of Jega, as Mallam Nasir pointed out, but Jega, honourable as he is, sits on top of an institution that is hardly reformed and he recognises this himself. Below him are three other layers of bureaucracy that are practically the same as ran the 2007 elections. So that's one legacy of the past that I think we need to keep in view as we move towards the elections.

The second one is the situation of the courts; again something Mallam El-Rufai has drawn our attention to. In the past two elections Buhari went to the courts. Now he has indicated very clearly that he's not going to the courts at all but Buhari's position is not the only warning signal about the lack of judicial, if you like oversight to the process.

When the Supreme Court ruled on the 2007 elections they ruled by a majority of 3-4 in Yar'Adua's favour. Considering the weight of incumbents in Nigeria that's quite telling, that three Supreme Court judges could rule against a sitting President in that regard. But equally interesting is the fact that it has soon come into the open from the *Wikileaks* rumours or whatever we want to call them that leading members of the ruling party were telling American officials that those judges who voted for Yar'Adua were bribed. So there's a fundamental undermining of confidence in the judicial system which is not just Buhari's personal if you like position; you also see it in the nature of even the ruling of the Supreme Court itself. The four who voted for Yar'Adua argued that there was a substantial non-compliance with the Electoral Act but Buhari had failed to prove that that affected the result and I think that was a bit kind of being smart by half as it were given the wealth of evidence that the international community and Nigerians had put before the world.

If you compare the rulings of both the four who voted for Yar'Adua and the three who voted against I think the legal argument is so clear. The three who

voted against for instance pointed out that by law the ballot papers should have serial numbers; they didn't have any, so technically there was no election. But all of these were overlooked. So in a sense there's a weight of evidence that has undermined peoples' confidence in the judiciary and this is made worse by the current argument between the two leading officials of the judiciary in the country and when you look at the way people are reacting now – Falana, one of the leading human-rights lawyers in the country, he made a statement last week, that whatever problems come out of these elections will be settled on the streets not in the courts. So when human-rights lawyers are advocating for non-judicial resolution of issues we begin to see the level of challenge. These two deficits about the lack of reform of the electoral system, about the lack of confidence in the judiciary, they derive directly from our experience of the 2007 elections.

In effect we're going to the elections with less than, if you like, good institutional framework that we could have. There are lots of other things about the judicial system which we could go into in the Question & Answer series which brings out the particular problem we have.

The main difference is that the top of INEC is different. I agree with Mallam Nasir that Attahiru is an honourable man. I believe that he will try and do his best. I don't think Attahiru is corruptible. Certainly the only possible problem there is that Attahiru is a stickler for procedure. If you can corrupt the system further down the line and present him with a result and use the correct procedure he may sign onto that but I don't see Attahiru actually buy in to any of the shenanigans that we are used to in the electoral system. So that is certainly an improvement.

Now when you look at what INEC and Attahiru has done – and I'll quickly go through some of it – Attahiru has been faced with lack of sufficient time with the best of intentions. He hasn't been able to correct the institutions the way he would have liked. They have had to rush through parliament many changes to the Electoral Act. The parliamentarians and the government have taken advantage of those changes; changes basically to shift the election from January to April. They've seized the advantage of those changes to insert all sorts of clauses into the Constitution that are likely to create problems. To cite a few, they tried to put themselves as members of the National Executives of their various parties to contest the franchise of the governors. They have written into the law now that no governor can be removed by law, I mean no governor can be removed and another one replaced by law. So they put in a lot of clauses into the new laws essentially

to serve their personal interests or the interests of the ruling party and I think these are all booby traps that are in the way.

If you look at the various things that Attahiru has done, the Voters' Register, by and large I agree with Mallam El-Rufai, that the Register seems much better than we've had. The whole idea of not using the machine for the actual votes is neither here nor there; it wouldn't affect the results in any way. So the Voters' Register is quite okay. When you look at the party primaries, very little has changed and that is the other consistent thing from 2007 until now. Nigerian politicians remain essentially unreformed by and large and there are various ways in which it can demonstrate this. 50 PDP senators lost nomination for instance many of them basically just shifted camp. There are ... [inaudible] cases now stopping INEC from actually going ahead to print ballot papers because people are contesting the nomination of their opponents. So in very many important respects we have already constituted political class as well.

The campaign so far has been faced with two types of violence, that's the by ground violence in places like Maiduguri, the hot-spots that Mallam El-Rufai pointed out, but then there is the electoral violence also which has been going on for quite a while. Again very little has changed there.

If I could rush very quickly to the issue of outcomes, Attahiru did say that we shouldn't expect perfect elections but that he hopes to run an election that meets minimum international standards. I think this is a very realistic objective in the circumstances I've tried to present and this is clearly what I hope that the Nigerian population can hold INEC up to.

The electoral system that INEC has also adopted, the MOBS – Modified Open Ballot System, is also one that is likely to negate a lot of [inaudible] strategies as well. So with some luck we will get a fairly decent result. If that happens I think this is a very very inconclusive election. There is absolutely no basis to assume that either one or other of the candidates will win but it's quite likely that there will be factions, particularly of the ruling party, that wouldn't contemplate the possibility of losing. Obasanjo said so much in Lagos. He doesn't take part in elections that he won't win.

Now if the dominant faction and the PDP goes down that route then clearly we are in for some very very troubling times - I'll stop there.

Alex Vines:

Finally I'd like to invite His Excellency Ambassador Dozie Nwanna, the Acting High Commissioner of Nigeria here to the United Kingdom to give his presentation:

HE Ambassador Dozie Nwanna:

This afternoon we are speaking on Nigerian democracy and the prospects for the 2011 elections in the country and as I said the two speakers before me have spoken very well from their different perspectives. They are different from me. I hold an office at this moment as Acting High Commissioner of Nigeria and that is why I'm going to try, because I represent all the Nigerians in the UK, I'm going to try as much as possible to be in the centre [inaudible] I propose to discuss the nature of democracy in Nigeria before launching into an exploration of a journey towards the general elections this year in April, [inaudible] the state of preparedness for the elections, the challenges, prospects, with some aspirations for an accountable and popular government in Nigeria through free and fair elections.

Aside from the popular protest and uprising in North Africa and the Middle East, the forthcoming elections in Nigeria represent one of the most significant developments that will take place this year in Africa. Alongside Nigeria, some 18 or so other African countries are supposed to hold elections this year alone. This compares sharply with the past in which the continent was replete with autocratic unelected and military governments that lacked popular support, legitimacy and accountability.

Nigerians, like the rest of the world, believe in democracy as the best form of government. The advantages of democracy are obvious. Among others it offers opportunity for the choice of leaders, it creates the conditions for the enjoyment of fundamental human-rights and freedoms including the atmosphere for citizens to realise [inaudible] their full potentials. By a sudden periodic change of leaders democracy [inaudible] from good accountable government that offers economic opportunities for job and wealth creation and poverty eradication.

While Nigerians have never had such opportunities for a sustained period due to prolonged military rule, they have never failed to give expression to their quest for democratic governance since independence. They were united in their struggle against military dictatorship ensuring that the military remains isolated from politics, preferring civilian rule no matter how imperfect it may be, but they have only seen one form of democracy or the other for just 19 out

of the countries who opposed independence history of 51 turbulent years. It is only from May 1999 to date that Nigeria has witnessed democratic rule for 11 unbroken years. In other words Nigeria's experience of democratic governance and elections is considerably limited when compared to those of other countries, this is not to mention the sheer size and social, religious and ethnic complexities of this country that have continued to serve as impediments to democratic governance in Nigeria.

In the quest for democracy as a process and not an event it has been a steep learning curve for Nigeria. The April 2011 elections are therefore not just important for Nigeria, to Nigeria alone, but to the rest of Africa and indeed the Black race. If Nigeria gets it right, as I'm confident she will, Nigeria will serve as a true symbol and a beacon of hope for the African continent as far as democratic governance is concerned.

This is why the Nigerian Government under the President, under President Goodluck Jonathan, Grand Commander of the Federal Republic, has left no stone unturned in his preparation for free and fair elections in Nigeria in which the vote of every registered citizen is made to count and to count once only. Evidence of these preparations is not far-fetched; in fact they are bound. This began with the reorganization of the Independent National Electoral Commission, otherwise called INEC and the appointment of Attahiru Jega as Chairman. Jega has been mentioned many times here by the earlier speakers. He is a fine man by our standards of judging a human-being.

The antecedents [inaudible] of this university scholar who has shown himself to be a man of good vision, integrity and commitment to public service give much basis for optimism but these [inaudible] new qualities will be brought to bear on the conduct of the elections. This was demonstrated in the conduct of the registration exercise in which some 73.58 million Nigerians were registered to vote in the April elections.

The second area of attention was the reform of the Electoral Act in response to the popular yearnings and drawing inspiration from the Mohammed Uwais report - which one of the speakers mentioned today - the National Assembly proceeded, albeit gingerly, to amend the Electoral Act. It also altered the relevant provisions of the 1999 Constitution to remove notable areas of ambiguity in the electoral process. This included the electoral [inaudible], the resolution of election disputes, petitions and appeals including funding and other related matters. This was the second time that any post independence Nigerian constitution would be amended or altered; the first being the creation of the former mid-western region in 1964.

Though the amendments and the electoral reform may not have gone far enough as some people think, Nigerians and friends of Nigeria must recognise it is significant if incredible changes that are taking place in the country are [inaudible] happening and I must say it is really a significant thing. Amending the Constitution itself is an elaborate process. ... [inaudible] on this particular instance hard to be determined by the judiciary. We need to take due note of these developments.

The third is to ensure that the INEC is properly funded and well resourced to execute its heavy mandate. Despite initial difficulties, hiccups and challenges the registration exercise was largely successful although some have questioned the validity of the outcomes of the exercises. Credit must go to INEC for following the exercise through. Most critics fail to recognise that the electronic registration is biometric data capture, the very first time such technology will be used at any voter registration exercise in Nigeria. What it does is to reveal multiple registrations which have since been detected and deleted from the Register. Without doubt a credible Voters' Register is a basic requirement for credible elections.

In line with the time-table released by INEC the various political parties have concluded their primaries. 18 presidential candidates have since emerged, 8 of them criss-crossing the country campaigning and seeking the support of the people in the forthcoming elections. From the party primaries and nominations for elected offices concerns have been expressed about the lack of internal democracy in the various parties, demonstrated in the manner in which some of the candidates were chosen has been more of the product of elite consensus than by popular elections.

The lead up to the elections has also been marked by violence and bombing in parts of the country as the rivalry and competition for political offices become more intense. Nigerian democracy has truly shown politics as defined by Harold Lasswell, the famous American political scientist who said: Who gets what, when, and how. Because government is the prime mover of the economy and the society at large in Nigeria and controls access to state resources, it has become a hotly contested enterprise in Nigeria. This is why politics in Nigeria has tended to be a fierce often violent competition and vociferous elite rivalry as politicians jostle for positions of relevance and [inaudible].

Once the elections are concluded we are likely to witness a significant reduction in tension and violence as the battleground shifts to the courts. From INEC time-table elections to the National Assembly we hold on April 2,

presidential elections are set up for April 9 to be followed by governorship and state assemblies' election on April 16 but some challenges remain and these include (1) the incidents of violence and bombing; (2) the crisis of confidence between political parties and INEC; (3) sensational media reporting often not based on facts but sentiments; (4) the sheer number of opposition, the parties and candidates and their failure to organise and coalesce; (5) the cost of electioneering campaigns; (6) low-level political education and voter awareness and finally (7) the quality of campaigns not based on clear issues, ideology manifest to amongst various parties. [inaudible]

Let me now talk about the prospects. In terms of prospects it is my considered belief that the April 2011 elections will come and pass. Barring isolated incidents of violence the election will also be free and fair. I am confident that the presidential elections will be conclusive with a clear winner emerging even at the first round of voting. This optimism is based on the objective [inaudible] of the situation on the ground in terms of organization and structure. President Jonathan, having served as Vice President and later as Acting President is the incumbent, who is campaigning on the platform of the Peoples' Democratic Party on the basis of his – as on the record – concrete [inaudible] programmes and personal integrity.

On the other hand, the opposition candidates for the presidential race are seeking the office on the basis of their various visions of the future which some people often say are not very clear. This could be the distinguishing factor.

For an assessment of the conduct of the elections the methodology of the EU for election monitoring and observation remains pertinent as follows; legal framework, the work of the election administration obtained by candidates and political parties, the conduct of the media, voting and counting, the announcement of results and a complaints and appeal process. So far Nigeria is doing pretty well as regards items 1-3. The rest will be determined by the actual conduct of the elections in April. Besides the Voters' Register however a lot will depend on the conduct of politicians, the role of INEC as a non-bias and competent umpire, its overall preparations for the elections in terms of logistics and supplies as well as the role of the media and the judiciary.

As pointed out by the INEC chairman, it is essential that the courts learn from Nigeria's history by resisting from granting all manners of injunctions and ex-parte orders which [inaudible] over the work of the Commission and truncate democratic process. This was our experience in June 1993. In the medium

and long-term we need to build INEC into a strong electoral management institution operated by people of high integrity beyond the chairman. This coincides with what has been said by other speakers. This is essential to the future of democracy in Nigeria.

I would like to end by putting on record, Nigeria is a [inaudible] to all its friends and development partners including the United Kingdom who have given warm form of support towards the conduct of the forthcoming elections. Assistance to different democratic experience in Nigeria is a worthy investment in peace and security as well as the future of the African continent. Given the risks and costs of the democratic process many Nigerians will prefer to be spared the rigors of the process, yet there are no other means of promoting popular participation in government and ensuring that the people freely choose their leaders and determine their own future.

Beyond the formal conduct of elections however Nigerians are more interested in good and accountable governance, a government that delivers on social and economic outcomes that affect their daily lives. This should be the subject and the object of democracy. We believe the forthcoming elections will advance this [inaudible] agenda to a higher level and I thank you all for listening.