



PRESS RELEASE

Abuja, Nigeria, 18th February 2019

ECONEC EXPRESSSES SOLIDARITY WITH NIGERIANS, URGES PERSEVERANCE FOR SUCCESSFUL ELECTIONS

The ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commissions (ECONEC) has expressed its solidarity with the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the Nigeria people calling for perseverance to ensure the success of the country's rescheduled general elections.

"We salute the patience and patriotism of Nigerians and the courage and forthrightness of INEC and its leadership," Mohamed N'fah-Alie Conteh, Sierra Leone's Chief Electoral Commissioner and head of the ECONEC Peer Support and Learning Mission, said during a meeting with Prof Mahmood Yakubu, INEC Chair and President of ECONEC's governing board in his office on Monday 18th February, 2019.

INEC last Saturday, postponed by one week Nigeria's presidential and National Assembly elections from February 16th to 23rd, while State Houses of Assembly polls were also moved from 2nd to 9th March, due to logistical and operational challenges.

"As senior officials of Election Management Bodies (EMBs) in our region, we appreciate what INEC and its leadership are going through at this critical stage of the electoral process, Conteh said, adding: "we are convinced that INEC under your (Prof Yakubu's) able leadership and the Commission's dedicated team will acquit yourselves creditably in delivering elections with integrity to Nigerians."

Given Nigeria's leadership role in the region, he added: "We are at your disposal for any possible assistance to make the electoral process a success for the consolidation of democracy in the country and across our region."

Prof Yakubu thanked the ECONEC team, which includes the leadership of EMBs of Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Ghana, Niger and The Gambia, for the solidarity visit.

He pledged that in spite of the postponement, INEC would redouble its efforts to deliver free, fair, transparent and credible elections based on international best practices.

"It is good to know that in times like this, you have friends who understand that elections are always difficult issues to manage because they have to do with the control of political power."

"We will do our best with very clear conscience and we will never be distracted," he affirmed, explaining that "when we accepted this job, we also accepted to be abused and it is not about knowing it all, because nobody has a monopoly of knowledge."

The INEC chief reiterated the determination and commitment of the Commission to consult widely with stakeholders, and to remain open and transparent in adherence to the process.

The ECONEC Mission also met on Monday with Dr Mohamed Ibn Chambas, United Nations Special Representative and Head of UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel to discuss electoral issues in the region.

It is the first time that the Network is deploying such a mission to a member holding key elections as part of its mandate to promote credible elections in the region in line with international best practices through peer collaboration and support, as well as experience and information sharing.



