RESCHEDULING OF GOVERNORSHIP AND STATE HOUSES OF ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

Following today’s ruling by the Presidential Election Petition Tribunal (EPT) on the reconfiguration of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) used for the Presidential election held on 25th February 2023, the Commission met to assess its impact on the Commission’s preparations for the Governorship and State Houses of Assembly elections scheduled for Saturday, 11th March 2023.

Nigerians would recall that on 3rd March 2023, the Presidential EPT had given an ex-parte order for some political parties to inspect materials used for the Presidential election, including the forensic inspection of over 176,000 BVAS used in the election which are located in INEC LGA offices across the country. The Commission approached the Tribunal to reconsider the order, given that the BVAS Systems were to be deployed for the Governorship and State Assembly elections and that the lack of a clearly defined timeframe for the inspection could disrupt the Commission’s ability to conduct the outstanding elections. For instance, the BVAS can only be activated on the specific date and time of an election. Having been used for the Presidential and National Assembly elections on 25th February 2023, it is necessary to reconfigure the BVAS for activation on the date of the Governorship and State Assembly elections.

While the ruling of the Tribunal makes it possible for the Commission to commence the preparation of the BVAS for the Governorship and State Assembly elections, it has come far too late for the reconfiguration to be concluded. Consequently, the Commission has taken the difficult but necessary decision to reschedule the Governorship and State Assembly elections which will now take place on Saturday 18th March 2023. By this decision, campaigns will continue until midnight of Thursday 16th March 2023 i.e. 24 hours before the new date for the election.

This decision has not been taken lightly but it is necessary to ensure that there is adequate time to back up the data stored on the over 176,000 BVAS machines from the Presidential and National Assembly elections held on 25th February 2023 and then to reconfigure them for the Governorship and State Assembly elections. This has been the practice for all elections, including the period when the Commission was using the Smart Card Readers.
However, we wish to reiterate that the Commission is not against litigants inspecting election materials. Consequently, it will continue to grant all litigants access to the materials they require to pursue their cases in court.

We wish to reassure all political parties and candidates that the data from the Presidential and National Assembly elections will be backed up and available in INEC cloud facilities, including the INEC Results Viewing Portal (IReV). Political parties can apply for Certified True Copies of the backend data of the BVAS. Also, the results on the BVAS will continue to be available on the IReV for interested parties to access.

We thank Nigerians and friends of Nigeria for their understanding as we continue to deal with these difficult issues and navigate these challenging times.

Barr. Festus Okoye  
National Commissioner & Chairman  
Information and Voter Education Committee  
Wednesday 8th March 2023