

EU Partners Stakeholders on Democratic Governance in Nigeria

The European Union has expressed its commitment to partner with relevant stakeholders to strengthen democratic governance in Nigeria ahead of the general elections billed for the first quarter of 2019.

The EU Ambassador to Nigeria and West Africa, Amb. Ketil Karlsen disclosed this at the Transcorp Hilton Hotel in Abuja during a press briefing announcing the formal launch of European Union Support for Democratic Governance in Nigeria, a project spanning from 2017 to 2022.

Amb. Karlsen told journalists at the media briefing that the European Union had earmarked 26.5 million Euros under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF) to finance the project with 10 implementing partners in five major components to improve the electoral system in Nigeria.

“Ahead of the 2019 general elections, Nigeria is at a pivotal moment that allows the country to take important steps to consolidate democracy and strengthen the electoral process. The European Union continues to partner with Nigeria in the ongoing reform of the electoral process with a view to strengthening the capacity to conduct well-managed elections and with ample participation of all Nigerians”, he stated.

The EU ambassador further revealed that the project was anchored on the priorities identified by the Nigerian government and the recommendations of the European Union Election Observation Mission made after the 2015 general elections.

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L-R: Mr. Jose Manuel Pinto-Teixeira, ECES Vice President, Mr. Ketil Karlsen, EU Ambassador to Nigeria and ECOWAS, Mr. Bassey Akpannyung, representative of the Minister of Budget and National Planning, Senator Udoma Udo Udoma and Professor Mahmood Yakubu, Chairman, INEC during the launch of EU Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria, in Abuja, recently

EU SDGN: IMS Commences Activities

The activities to successfully implement Component 4A of the European Union Support to Democratic Governance, in Nigeria, EU-SDGN, have commenced with a media stakeholders meeting held in Abuja. The meeting followed the formal launch of the project at the Transcorp Hilton Hotel in Abuja on Thursday, February 1.

The follow-up meeting, held at the Reiz Continental Hotel, Abuja, on February 23, to formally begin IMS activities, had participants and resource persons from the media, academia and civil society

In his welcome address, the Executive Director of the Institute for Media and Society, Dr Akin Akingbulu, emphasised the need for all to join hands to sustain Nigeria's democracy.



Dr. Akin Akingbulu, Executive Director, IMS

He said: “The initiative seeks to strengthen governance institutions so that they can play their appropriate roles in the

electoral process and wider democratic governance. It seeks to reinforce democracy through building strong, effective and legitimate democratic institutions. Hence, one finds in this project, such implementation pillars as INEC, NASS, Political Parties, the Media and Civil Society.

“Like the others, Support to Media is an important component, designed to achieve a specific objective: that the media provide fair, accurate and ethical coverage of the electoral process in Nigeria. Our organization, the Institute for Media and Society has responsibility for the implementation of the pillar called SUPPORT TO MEDIA”.

Within this pillar, the work is to seek to achieve the objective through:

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The areas include: improved quality of electoral administration in Nigeria; effective discharge of legislative function in compliance with democratic principles and standards; enhanced pluralism, tolerance, internal democracy and equal opportunity of political parties and the political system; fair, accurate and ethical coverage of the electoral process by the media; participation of women, youths and marginalized citizens and the involvement of civil society organizations.

In his contribution, the Vice President of European Centre for Electoral Support, ECES, Mr Jose Manuel Pinto-Teixeira, said "Our work revolves around building on the already notable resources and tools developed to safeguard the integrity of the electoral process in Nigeria".

In his goodwill message, the chairman of Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, Prof. Mahmood Yakubu, noted that the EU had contributed immensely to the effectiveness and efficiency of INEC in the conduct of past elections and assured that the 2019 general elections would be the best in the history of Nigeria.

On his part, the Minister of Budget and National Planning, Sen. Udoma Udo Udoma, said the country was committed to ensuring a transparent electoral process. He was represented at the occasion by his Special Adviser on NGO Matters, Mr Bassey Akpanyung.

The ten implementing partners for the EU-SDGN include: European Centre for Electoral Support (ECES), Policy and

Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC), Youth Initiative for Advocacy Growth and Advancement (YIAGA), Nigerian Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPPS), Institute For Media and Society (IMS), International Press Centre (IPC), BBC Media Action, Albino Foundation, CLEEN Foundation and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy.

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- Enhancing professionalism of media practitioners.
- Improving the diversification, deepening and delivery of civic and voter education.
- Strengthening the capacity of the media regulator for improved performance of its mandate.
- Improving media engagement in promoting the participation of women, youths and marginalized groups in politics.

Resource persons, including Professor Ayobami Ojebode of the University of Ibadan, Professor Umaru Pate of Bayero University, Kano and Mr. Edetaen Ojo, the Executive Director of Media Rights Agenda, spoke on various topics aimed at improving coverage of the electoral process by the media.

Following the successful completion of the stakeholders meeting, IMS organized an Audience Level Research Training for 15 senior media managers drawn from the six

geo-political zones of the country. The training took place on February 26-27 in Abuja.

Dr. Akingbulu, in his remarks at the opening of the two-day training workshop on **Broadcast Media Audience Research**, gave an overview of the European Union – Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria (EU-SDGN) project.

He pointed out that IMS was working in collaboration with other project partners to implement different components of the EU-SDGN project, with a view to strengthening democratic governance.

He noted that IMS was implementing the Support to Media component which aims at strengthening media capacity to provide a fair, accurate and ethical coverage of the electoral process.

The Executive Director informed participants that activities were currently on-going in the EU – SDGN project components, with immediate focus on the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

The Audience Research Training Workshop organized by IMS provided the broadcast media with the opportunity of improving their capacity to understand their audience(s) and reposition adequately, by improving programming, particularly during the electoral process and beyond. Identified roles to be played by the media in the electoral process include:

- providing a platform of communication to the various political institutions which are involved in the process.
- informing and educating citizens, particularly the marginalized, so that they could participate in the process and make informed choices during elections.

IMS has also, in the meantime, held meetings with the management of National Broadcasting Commission, NBC with the aim of strengthening the regulatory body to enable it perform its functions.

Earlier, the project staff attended a three-day training and orientation programme in Ibadan. The training was to equip the project staff with capacity to execute the program. Resource persons from the academia and civil society gave lectures on different aspect at the

training.



L-R: Mr. Jose Manuel Pinto-Teixeira, ECES VP; Mr. Ketil Karlsen, EU Amb to Nigeria and ECOWAS; Mr. Bassey Akpanyung, representative of the Minister of Budget and National Planning; Professor Mahmood Yakubu, Chairman, INEC and Jake Ekpelle, Founder, Albino Foundation, during the launch in Abuja.



EU-SDGN Aims to Reinforce Democracy In Nigeria, -Karlsen

“The overall objective of the EU-SDGN is to contribute to the reinforcement of democracy in Nigeria through building strong, effective and legitimate democratic institutions.”

With that declaration, Mr Ketil Karlsen, the EU Ambassador to Nigeria and the ECOWAS went on to explain the content and context of the EU Support Programme to Democratic Governance in Nigeria, EU-SDGN, during the formal launch of the scheme in Abuja on February 1, 2018.

The plan which would be funded with a 26.5m Euros grant, spread over a five-year period, 2017-2022, aims to promote transparent, inclusive and credible elections in the country. Pivotal to the implementation of the EU-SDGN are key stakeholders, namely the Independent Electoral Commission, INEC, National Assembly, political parties, CSOs and the media, all of which need support in the area of capacity building, improved quality of electoral administration, enlightenment towards the effective and efficient discharge of their professional and legislative roles.

Mr Karlsen said: “Ahead of the 2019 general elections, Nigeria is at a pivotal moment that allows the country to take important steps to consolidate democracy and strengthen the electoral process. The EU continues to partner with Nigeria in the



Mr. Ketil Karlsen, EU Ambassador to Nigeria and ECOWAS

on-going reform process with a view to strengthening the capacity to conduct well-managed elections with ample participation of all Nigerians. For this to happen, all must contribute, from the key institutions to the political parties, candidates, media and civil society.”

Noting that the programme would be done around primary areas identified by the Nigerian government and the recommendations of the EU Election Observation Mission, EU-EOM, made after the 2015 elections as well as those of the EU Expert Identification Formulation Mission to Nigeria, he said the programme would also focus on improving pluralism, tolerance, internal democracy and equal opportunity for political parties, fair, accurate and ethical coverage of the electoral process by the media.

He said: “Since 1999, we have provided 100 million Euros to support the democratic process which translates to N44.5 billion at the present exchange rate. Building democracy is a painstaking task but we'll get there. There's no doubt that in our collaboration with the country, this is our flagship project, it's our crown jewel in our support and in our partnership”.

“We have supported democratic building in Nigeria since 1999. We are partnering with

10 different national and international institutions in this project to make sure it's a big success. The European Union will continue to support democratic consolidation in the country”, he concluded.

In his contribution during the launch of the programme in Abuja, Mr Jose Pinto-Teixeira, Vice-President of the European Centre for Electoral Support, said the five-year plan centres around the periodic nature of elections. “Our work revolves around building on the already notable resources and tools developed to safeguard the integrity of the electoral process in Nigeria., he said, adding, “this programme is being launched, ahead of the 2019 elections knowing that for many stakeholders, including the electoral management bodies in Nigeria, elections are regular and continuous events given the many by-elections that have been taking place so far.”

“The programme would also focus on improving pluralism, tolerance, internal democracy and equal opportunity for political parties and fair, accurate and ethical coverage of the electoral process by the media”.

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Faces of Dignitaries at the Launch of EU-SDGN Participants at the Audience Level Re



L-R: Mr. Jose Manuel Pinto-Teixeira, Mr. Ketil Karlsen and Professor Mahmood Yakubu



Stakeholders at the Launch of the EU-SDGN project



Team IMS v



Mrs. Lola Oladimeji, Business Manager Silverbird TV, Abuja, delivering a goodwill message during the Media Stakeholders' Meeting



Professor Umaru Pate, at the Media Stakeholders' Meeting



Participants at the Audience Level Research Training



Participants at the Audience Level Research Training in Abuja



Participants during the Media Stakeholders' Meeting



A participant making a contribution at the Audience Level Research Training

Guests at the Media Stakeholders Forum and Search Training all in Abuja, Recently



A resource person during a training session



Mr Jake Epelle, founder of Albino Foundation speaking at the Media Stakeholders' meeting



Participants during the Media Training Workshop



Participants at the Audience Level Research Training in Abuja



Participants and resource persons at the end of the Audience Level Research Training.



Stakeholders Canvass Support for Robust Media

The capacity of the media to discharge its constitutional and legitimate roles without let and hindrance in a democracy informed the resolutions of the stakeholders meeting, organized by the Institute for Media and Society (IMS) with support from the European Union, in Abuja recently.

Recommendations

1. The Media community should be professional in their engagement with politicians, civil society organizations, institutions and agencies involved with elections.
2. NBC and other media regulators are urged to enforce the broadcasting code more forcefully with sanctions meted out to erring organizations.
3. Continuous training and re-training programmes should be prioritized for all categories of media professionals by media organizations.
4. To compete favourably with the international media as sources of credible information for Nigerians, media organizations need to be funded adequately to undertake investigative and research-based reporting.
5. The media community needs to develop and implement enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance with the code on election coverage.
6. There is need to consider developing guidelines for media owners to reduce interference with the work of media professionals working in their institutions.
7. Urgent reform should be undertaken in the operation and management of state-owned media at both federal and state levels.
8. State-owned stations should be removed from government control at all levels to enhance their independence.

9. BBC funding model should be adopted for government-owned media where licence fees are collected from individuals but managed by an independent authority.

10. There is need for legislation to address the challenge of ownership in the editorial content of privately owned media outlets, especially in the light of the current environment where a large number of media organizations are owned by politicians or business persons with clear political interests, links or even affiliations.

11. Training of media professionals should emphasise the difference between government media and public media.

12. Media community needs to drive the process of both the switchover to digital transmission and the subsequent change in the regulatory framework that will guide the media environment.

13. Civil society, broadcast media and training institutions in Nigeria should collaborate to train journalists on

personal safety and security during elections.

14. INEC as one of the key drivers of the electoral process, should work with broadcast stations for effective sensitization of Nigerians on the process leading to the 2019 elections.

The Media needs funding, removal of institutional constraints and the support of key stakeholders to perform professionally



Facilitators and media stakeholders after a meeting in Abuja, recently



Minister Seeks Greater Success for EU-SDGN Plan

Minister of Budget and Planning, Senator Udoma Udo Udoma, spoke eloquently of the commitment and cooperation among stakeholders of EU-SDGN project during the formal launch of the programme in Abuja recently. In his goodwill message, he praised the EU for its commitment to fund projects towards building capacity, strengthening institutions and supporting schemes relevant to the promotion of democratic governance in Nigeria.

He spoke of the rigorous process of consultation and discussions that led to the signing of the agreement in June 2017 and called on all stakeholders involved in the plan to support it with commitment, dedication and cooperation required for its success. He thanked the EU for partnering with the Federal Government since the return to civil rule and for keying into the current administration's objectives on electoral reforms and anti-corruption.

He said: "Let me express the sincere appreciation of the government to the EU in our development efforts and particularly to its contribution to our campaign in the North East. I also want to thank the INEC chairman and implore him to ensure that we achieve a greater success on the SDGN than we did previously. I want to call on other development partners to assist INEC in its heavy task".

The Minister who was represented at the occasion by his Special Adviser on NGO Matters, Mr Bassey Akpanyung, also noted that the EU-SDGN plan is to enhance the performance of civil and democratic institutions through capacity building and support, with particular attention on Nigeria's 2016 to 2019 electoral process. He eulogised staff of the Ministry of Budget and National Planning for their dedication, commitment and contribution to the outcome of the plan.

Recognising the role played by the Ministry in the evolution of the process, Vice

President of the European Centre for Electoral Support (ECES), Mr Jose Manuel Pinto-Teixeira expressed his appreciation to the Minister and his staff.

He said, "I'm honoured to take part in the launch of the democratic programme in Nigeria, Africa's largest democracy. I wish to express our profound appreciation to the European Union and the Ministry of Budget and National Planning".



Senator Udoma Udo Udoma, Minister of Budget and National Planning

The Component Members

The importance of the survival of democracy in Nigeria and its far reaching effect on Africa and the rest of the world served as a point of convergence for stakeholders to evolve the ongoing project, named: European Union Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria, EU SDGN.

To implement the project, the EU Delegation in Nigeria in collaboration with Civil Society Organizations commenced activities, starting from December 2017 to 2022. It is aimed at strengthening democratic institutions and the democratic

process in the country.

The project has been divided into five components, namely:

- Component 1: Support to the Independent National Electoral Commission, to be implemented by the European Centre for Electoral Support (ECES). ECES is the Secretariat of the Programme in Abuja.
- Component 2: Support to the National Assembly, to be implemented by the Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC) and Youth Initiative for Advocacy, Growth and Advancement (YIAGA).
- Component 3: Support to Political Parties, to be implemented by the Political Party Leadership and Policy Development Centre of the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS).
- Component 4: Support to Media, to be implemented by the Institute for Media and Society, IMS and the International Press Centre, IPC.
- Component 5: Support to Civil Society Organisations, to be implemented by the BBC Media Action, CLEEN Foundation, Westminster Foundation for Democracy and the Albino Foundation.

These five component groups are expected to drive the EU-SDGN project for the scheduled period.

The Institute of Media and Society which is implementing Component 4A of the project,

Support to the Media, has since commenced training and orientation programme for staff and resource persons.

Since kick-starting the project with the training of staff in early January, IMS has embarked on implementing some activities of the project which include: consultative meeting with NBC management, media stakeholders meeting and Audience Level Research Training. All, except the second NBC meeting, held in Abuja. The second meeting between NBC management and the IMS held in Ilorin, the Kwara State capital.

As part of its activities, IMS is making efforts to establish four media monitoring centres which would be concluded within the second quarter of the project.

ABOUT EU-SDGN

The EU Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria, EU-SDGN, 2017 -2022 is the outcome of a series of efforts by Nigerians and their foreign partners to collaborate to strengthen democratic institutions, domesticate extant rules and regulations governing democratic elections, build capacities of key actors in the democratic process, open up the democratic space and set agenda for good governance in the most diverse, multi-ethnic and most populous country in African .

Indeed, every elections in Nigeria since the emergence of civil rule in the country in 1999 has been a democratic work in progress. The coming 2019 general elections will be the sixth to be conducted in the country. The previous polls conducted in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 have thrown up observed challenges that create obstacles to the steady growth and development of the desired objective to make government work for the people on a consistent basis.

Notable among these defects are weak institutions and structures, lack of a culture of tolerance and robust debate, latent capacity in key drivers of the processes in need of support to improve pluralism, internal democracy and equality of opportunity, fair, accurate and ethical coverage of the electoral process. Many of these organisations such as the Independent Electoral Commission, INEC, the media, select advocacy groups among the CSOs, political parties need support to effectively discharge their professional and legislative roles in the process.

The 2015 elections threw up a template that need to be built upon. For the first time in the political history of the country, just 19 years down the line since 1999, power changed hands between the ruling and an opposition party, It was a significant milestone in the consolidation of democratic governance in the country. Various stakeholders of the democratic project in Nigeria saw the need to redouble their efforts.

Foremost among them is the EU, a key stakeholder and International donor community that has been supporting the democratisation process since 1999 under its European Union Election Observation Mission, EU-EOM, and funding reform projects through post elections under the period.

Following the EU-EOM report on the 2015 elections and the EU Expert Identification Formulation Mission to Nigeria, the EU formulated key recommendations on a broad range of issues involving the three arms of government, namely the executive, the legislature and the judiciary and the many stakeholders such as political parties, security agencies, media, civil society organisations. They all need to be improved for the successful conduct of the 2019 polls. The broad aim of the EU-SDGN plan is to complement the efforts of the Nigerian Federal Government to improve and strengthen democracy in the country.

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EU-SDGN IMPLEMENTERS:

