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For Immediate Release

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PRELIMINARY STATEMENT ON THE 2018 EKITI GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION (Voting Process)

Against all the odds, the voting process of the ongoing 2018 governorship election in Ekiti State commenced without significant logistical hitches. This may be attributed to the well-coordinated arrangements of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) ahead of the election to ensure early arrival of election officials and sensitive materials to various Registration Area Centres (RACs) across the existing 16 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the State. The commission is congratulated for the introduction of E-track to track the location and movement of vehicles carrying sensitive election materials in real time to their locations.

While it is too early to ascertain the level of voter turnout across the State, the electorate has shown a high level of enthusiasm in exercising their franchise, as most polling units visited in the early hours of Election Day had voters already waiting for INEC officials to arrive and commence accreditation and voting by 8.00am. At the start, the voting process was conducted peacefully in most polling units visited by our observers. A few hours into the vote, however, there were few reported cases of violent-related incidents. In some of the polling units visited, we observed that the security personnel conducted themselves responsibly concerning their response to curtailing vote trading.

Correctly, we observed security agents preventing voters from taking their phones into voting cubicles. It had been noted that some voters were taking pictures of their ballot papers as evidence of their vote to claim incentives from agents of political parties at polling units. It was reported that in Ijero Local Governance Area (LGA), Ward A, Polling Unite (PU) 003, the Department for State Security (DSS) asked that no one should go with his or her phones into any voting cubicle.

Our observation revealed that Voting commenced between 8 am, and 9 am, with relatively few delays experienced across the state.

However, the voting process suffered a few hitches due to a couple of factors. Most prominent is the smart card reader challenge. In some polling units, the Card readers failed to read the fingerprints of voters correctly. To address this challenge, some of the INEC officials requested that voters clean their hands with spirits to make their prints more visible. In the same vein, some voters were initially rejected for invalid biometrics. The Candidate of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), Professor Olusola Eleka, was widely reported to have had trouble voting following a failed card reader in his PU.

The election witnessed an unprecedented level of vote trading, a trend which is fast becoming a norm in Nigeria' elections. While we earlier noted, attempts by security operatives to curb vote buying and selling. This phenomenon still prevailed with observers reporting the dolling out cash to voters. For example, one party agent was caught on video by [PTCIJ](#)'s and CDD's observer sharing N5, 000 to voters in PU012, Igbemo Ward of Irepodun-Ifelodun LGA. Another party agent in Ward C, Olanrewaju, PU 6, was photographed by one of our observers giving money to voters who already cast their votes.

There were also incidences recorded of attempts by thugs affiliated to two leading political parties to hijack voting materials. Our observers witnessed efforts made by some party thugs in Ward 3 PU004, Ikole LGA to snatch ballot boxes. Our observers confirmed that one of the thugs was taken away in NSCDC vehicle. At Efon LGA, a ballot box was seized in Ward 6 PU 12, by political thugs and, in a similar vein, a gunshot by unknown gunmen was reported in Ward 9 PU5 at Olumushe in Ado Ekiti.

The Partners are now processing observations from the counting and collation phase of the election.

The Centre for Democracy and Development together with Premium Times/PCTIJ deployed trained journalists and citizens observers to observe the election.

Signed
Idayat Hassan
Director

Signed
Dapo Olorunyomi
CEO & Publisher