



**REMARKS**

**BY**

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HIGH COMMISSIONER OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED KINGDOM**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE  
TOWN HALL INTERACTIVE SESSION WITH**

**PROFESSOR MAURICE IWU,  
CHAIRMAN,  
INDEPENDENT NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION (INEC)**

**AT THE NIGERIA HIGH COMMISSION  
LONDON, FRIDAY, 15<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2010**

## **PROTOCOL**

It is an honour and a privilege for me to welcome to our midst, Professor Maurice Iwu, the indefatigable National Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and his team.

Of his own volition, Professor Iwu has come to interact with us, fellow compatriots here in the United Kingdom, to share his experience and insights into electoral matters in Nigeria. This is not only a commendable initiative, but also a timely one that has come as our country begins preparations for another round of elections in 2011. It is also in furtherance of his desire to engage members of the Nigerian Diaspora in Nigeria's democratic process.

With the heavy concentration of Nigerians in the UK, numbering between 1 – 3 million by many accounts, it is only natural that we should host Professor Iwu on an occasion such as this important gathering. No responsible leadership in Nigeria can afford to ignore the collective voice and interests of such a vibrant and resourceful segment of its population that is resident abroad.

Let me commend the learned Professor for the able, responsible and patriotic manner he has continued to discharge his duties as the Chair of INEC. By way of background, I got to know Professor Maurice Iwu well in my capacity as the Senate Majority Leader in 2006. I recall that he proposed a major amendment to the Electoral Act, which was very comprehensive and far-sighted. It was therefore no surprise that the Bill was subsequently adopted by the National Assembly after amendments

as it did contain literally all that we thought were needed to address the conduct of elections in our country.

From my knowledge of Professor Iwu and familiarity with his work therefore, I can confirm that this illustrious son of Nigeria is one of the most grossly misunderstood public officials in our country. A pharmacist by profession, he is a man imbued with the necessary political sagacity and deftness to handle matters as delicate and sensitive as elections in a country as diverse and complex as our own. He understands the complexities and challenges of the Nigerian situation better than many of us are prepared to appreciate.

The Professor has risen to this great challenge with uncommon courage, zeal and commitment to promote peace, progress and stability of our country. Indeed, not many Nigerians understand the political and social complexities of our country better than this erudite Professor. I can only wish him good health and long life in the service of our country.

I need not stress the fact that no electoral system in the world is perfect. There is hardly any of the so-called advanced democracies that have succeeded in organising hitch-free or perfect elections. Yet this has not dented their democratic credentials. Apart from the provision of a good level playing field in electoral matters, what is essential is to ensure that disputes arising from the process of contestation for power are resolved in a peaceful, just and fair manner. Above all, what matters is the extent to which the outcome of elections, meet the democratic yearnings and aspirations of the people.

Rather than running down the system as we often do, I urge my compatriots in this country to take full advantage of this unique occasion to raise cogent issues and proffer workable solutions, capable of moving the process forward. It is an opportunity, for instance, to reflect deeper on the clamour for Diaspora voting, bearing in mind the varied experiences of other countries in this regard and the whole gamut of electoral reform agenda in Nigeria.

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

With these few remarks, I once again welcome you all to the Nigeria High Commission. I sincerely wish you fruitful discussions and interactions on this important issue of electoral reform in our country.

Thank you for coming and God bless.