



STATEMENT ON THE PUBLIC LAUNCH OF THE ELECTORAL FORUM

...promoting electoral knowledge, accountability and integrity!

The public launch of The Electoral Forum was conducted on Tuesday, 31 August 2021, at Grand Pela Hotels and Suites. The Electoral Forum is organised by The Electoral Hub, an organ of the Initiative for Research, Innovation and Advocacy in Development (IRIAD), with the support of the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA). The Forum, chaired by Professor Bayo Olukoshi, pools resource persons from electoral management bodies (EMBs) together with other electoral stakeholders to conceptualise solutions to the unique problems facing the electoral process in Nigeria.

The launch of the Forum was attended physically by over 40 persons, and virtually by over 20 persons. Participants were a combination of civil society members, current and past EMB members, and members of the press. Some notable persons in attendance were the representative of the Deputy Senate President, Distinguished Senator Ovie Omo-Agege; the representative of the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Professor Mahmood Yakubu; and the former Chairman of INEC, Professor Attahiru Jega, OFR.

Also present were the highly distinguished Forum members including retired National Electoral Commissioners, Resident Electoral Commissioners, Deputy Secretaries, and Directors of INEC; the representative of the Chairman of Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC); and the Chairman of the Inter-Party Advisory Council (IPAC) and the African Action Congress (AAC), Dr Leonard Nzenwa.

In her welcome remarks, Director of The Electoral Hub, Ms Princess Hamman-Obels, explained that the Forum had three objectives: to facilitate systematic electoral reform; to promote evidence-based law-making, policymaking and advocacy on elections in Nigeria; and to advance strategies to improve capacities and credibility of electoral management bodies in Nigeria. She expressed hope that by facilitating discussions among different stakeholders, we would be able to deepen understanding of the electoral process in Nigeria, as well as provide solutions to improve electoral integrity and credibility.

Chairman of The Electoral Forum, Professor Bayo Olukoshi, in his opening remarks, also expressed joy that the Forum had in its membership some of the best and experienced individuals who had contributed their own quota in advancing our democratic process in

Nigeria and in strengthening institutions of democratisation, such as the election management process. He stated that he looked forward to working closely with members of the Forum in achieving the objectives for which they had assembled together.

Goodwill messages were given by Ms Catherine Angai, Programme Manager, Democracy and Accountability, OSIWA; Dr Kole Shettima, Africa Director, MacArthur Foundation; and Senator Ovie Omo-Agege, represented by Barrister Daniel Bwala. Senator Omo-Agege stated:

A good electoral process can only be sustained if it is founded on an equally adequate electioneering culture. No matter how good the clauses are in our electoral laws, if the other aspects of the electioneering process are flawed, the electoral process itself will ultimately be flawed.

The keynote address was given by Professor Jibrin Ibrahim, Senior Fellow, Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD). Speaking on the Nigerian political class, he explained that the story has been one of factionalism, fractionalism, fratricidal struggle, and killings. Calling for revolution, he argued:

The revolution will come when Nigerian citizens decide we will overthrow the political class, we will form our own parties, we will be honest, we will be people of integrity, and we will change the playing ground.

After the keynote address was given, the Forum was formally launched by Professor Mahmood Yakubu, represented by Barrister May Agbamuche-Mbu. He expressed hope that the Forum would enrich our knowledge and enhance our understanding of the electoral process in Nigeria. He also expressed hope that the Forum would serve as a good reference point for political parties, voters and the public at large.

Following the launch by the INEC Chairman, Forum members proceeded to a closed session where they reviewed and analysed the Electoral Act Amendment Bill 2021 in close detail. Outputs from this session, including advocacy asks and infographics, will shortly be released on the Forum page: <https://electoralhub.iriad.org/electoralforum>.

Signed

Professor Adebayo Olukoshi, Chairman of The Electoral Forum

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Professor Attahiru Jega, OFR, at the launch of The Electoral Forum



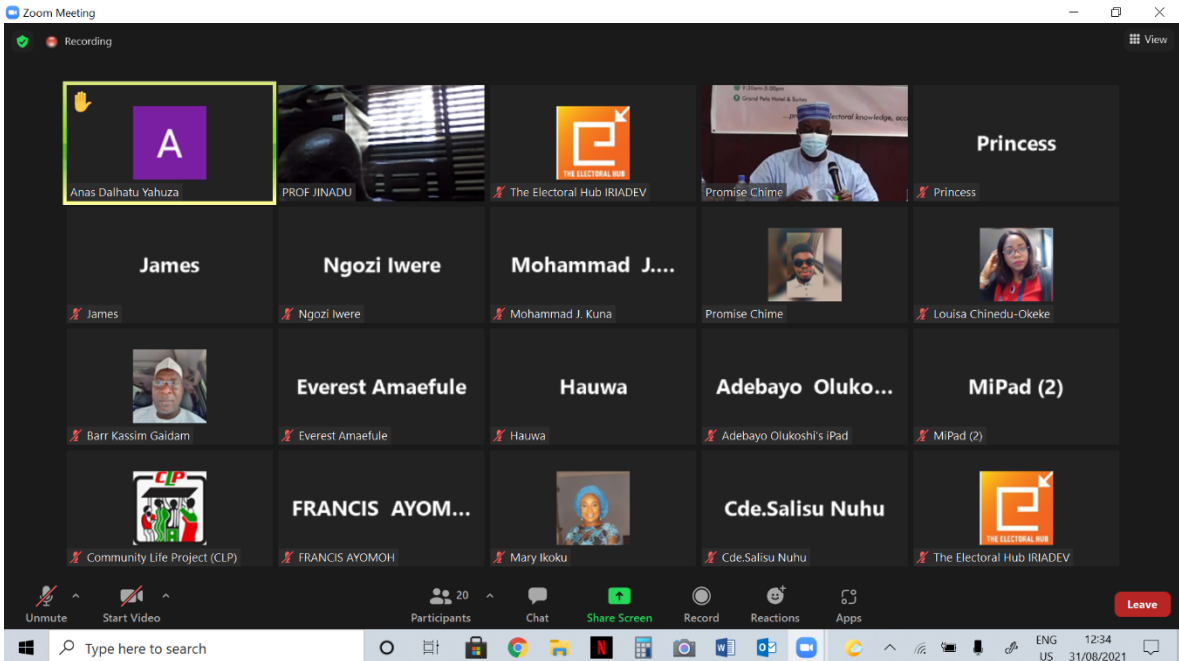
Some members of The Electoral Forum



Honourable National Commissioner, Barrister May Agbamuche-Mbu, representing the INEC Chairman at the launch of The Electoral Forum



Professor Jibrin Ibrahim giving his keynote address at the launch of The Electoral Forum



Virtual participants at the launch of The Electoral Forum