



Civil Society Statement on Harmonization of the Electoral Bill by the National Assembly

Feb. 9, 2026
Abuja, Nigeria

- *Harmonization committee should adopt the House of Reps position on mandatory electronic transmission of results, downloadable voter card and retention of electoral timelines*
- *INEC should issue the notice of elections in line with Electoral Act 2022*

This statement is issued in furtherance of our earlier statement issued on February 5 in which we expressed deep concerns over the Senate's rejection of electronic transmission of election results and use of downloaded missing or unissued voter cards for elections, as well as shortening of critical electoral timelines. The Senate also removed the proposed 10-year ban for offences related to the buying and selling of Permanent Voters' Cards (PVC). The divergence between the Senate and the House of Representatives on these amendments has profound implications for the integrity of the 2027 general elections. Electoral reform is not merely a procedural exercise; it is foundational to the credibility, transparency, and predictability of democratic transitions. The protracted amendment process has created legal uncertainty that delays INEC's constitutionally mandated electoral preparations, potentially compromising the Commission's ability to conduct credible elections.

Subsequent to the Senate vote, public discourse has been saturated with conflicting narratives regarding the precise position of the Senate. Three competing narratives have emerged: First, that the Senate approved real-time electronic transmission; Second, that existing Electoral Act 2022 provisions granting INEC discretionary powers over the procedure for results management were retained; and third, that the Senate substituted "transmit" with "transfer" and removed the qualifier "real-time" from its version. It is deeply concerning that legislation of such significance is mired in political contestation.





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Legal Certainty and the Issuance of the 2027 Election Timetable

The delay in concluding the electoral amendment introduces legal uncertainty that may compromise preparations for the 2027 elections. Section 28 (1) Electoral Act 2022 empowers INEC to issue notice of elections 360 days before the date of election. Legal uncertainty created by ongoing amendments has apparently deterred INEC from releasing the timetable for the 2027 elections, placing the Commission in potential violation of the extant law. The 2022 Electoral Act remains operative until amended. The inchoate status of the Electoral Bill does not suspend INEC's statutory obligations. INEC's established policy framework schedules general elections for the third Saturday of February in the election year, a convention designed to provide certainty for electoral stakeholders, facilitate systematic planning, and accommodate potential contingencies such as reruns, runoff elections, and post-election litigation. Applying this framework to the 2027 cycle yields an election date of February 20, 2027, requiring notice issuance by February 24, 2026.

We urge INEC to issue the election timetable and schedule for the 2027 general election in accordance with the provisions of the Electoral Act 2022 without further delay. This action would: (1) fulfil statutory obligations and insulate the Commission from legal challenge; (2) provide political parties, candidates, and civil society with certainty necessary for systematic preparation; and (3) establish baseline timelines that subsequent amendments can modify through transitional provisions if necessary. Indefinite postponement of notice issuance pending legislative resolution creates a vacuum that compounds administrative challenges and legal vulnerabilities.

The Senate's Emergency Plenary

We acknowledge the Senate's decision to convene an emergency plenary session on Tuesday, February 10, 2026. While it is widely believed that the sitting is convened to address matters related to the electoral amendment, we urge the Senate to utilize the opportunity to adopt unambiguous provisions through its Votes and Proceedings that explicitly adopts mandatory, real-time electronic transmission and collation of results, downloadable missing and unissued voter cards and retention of timelines





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for notice of elections, submission of list of nominated candidates and publication of list of candidates by INEC.

Recommendations to the Conference Committee

We have noted the conference committee constituted by the Senate and House of Representatives. As the conference committee commences its deliberation, we advance the following recommendations

1. Electronic transmission of results

With respect to the provision on electronic transmission of results, we strongly recommend that the committee adopts the House of Representatives' position mandating electronic transmission, with a modification addressing technological specificity. As currently drafted, explicit reference to the INEC Result Viewing (IReV) portal creates potential rigidity. Since electoral technology evolves, statutory references to specific platforms require legislative amendment each time technological infrastructure changes. This approach aligns with the existing Electoral Act provisions regarding the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), which permits 'BVAS or any other technological devise' for accreditation, establishing a precedent for technology-neutral legal frameworks that combine mandatory obligations with implementation flexibility.

We hereby proposed the following modification to Clause 60(3);

"The designated election official shall electronically transmit all election results in real time, including the number of accredited voters, directly from the polling units and collation centres to a public portal and the transmitted result shall be used to verify any other result before it is collated".

For the avoidance of doubt, we provide clarity on the concept of 'real-time'. Real-time electronic transmission of results means sending the official polling unit results recorded on Form EC8A electronically from the polling unit directly to a central results portal immediately after voting has ended, ballots have been counted, and the results have been publicly announced at the polling unit. This transmission happens in the presence of party agents, observers, and voters





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at the polling unit. It ensures that the exact results recorded at the polling unit are uploaded and available for public verification before they are physically transported for collation. Real-time transmission creates an electronic copy of the result at the point where it is first declared. Real-time does not mean automatic transmission of votes as voters cast their ballots nor does it mean electronic collation of results.

2. Downloadable Voter Cards and compressed timelines

The conference committee should adopt the position of the House of Representatives which approves downloadable missing and unissued voters' cards. Data from INEC's 2023 general election cycle indicate that approximately 6.2 million registered voters failed to collect their PVCs, resulting in effective disenfranchisement despite completed registration. Downloadable PVCs eliminate such barriers to voter participation.

Regarding electoral timelines, we strongly recommend retaining current provisions: 360 days for notice of elections, 180 days for submission of candidate lists, and 150 days for publication of nominations by INEC. Compressing these timelines increases logistical risk, constrains ballot paper production and distribution, and heightens the chances of operational failures.

3. Restricting the filing of reports to INEC officials to activate the review of election results

Section 65 of the Electoral Bill empowers INEC to review election results within seven days where declarations are made under duress or in violation contrary to procedures for result collation prescribed in the bill. However, the bill provides that all reviews of election shall be conducted only when a report is filed by an INEC official. This provision bars political parties, candidates, accredited observers, and their agents from activating the review process, even where they tender compelling evidence of a manipulated and unlawful results declaration.

Restricting the power of review to reports filed by INEC officials, some of whom may be complicit, is against the spirit behind the power of review vested in INEC. Evidence from recent elections revealed instances of INEC officials actively undermining elections. Election petition tribunal judgments from 2023 include





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multiple findings of Returning Officers announcing results under political pressure, Collation Officers falsifying result sheets, and Presiding Officers colluding with party agents to manipulate figures.

We therefore recommend that the scope of persons eligible to file reports should be broadened to include political parties, candidates, accredited party agents, and observers present during collation of results. This multi-stakeholder approach creates distributed accountability mechanisms that reduce vulnerability to administrative or process capture.

Conclusion

We call on the conference committee members to approach the harmonization deliberations guided by national interest, institutional integrity, and democratic accountability rather than narrow partisan calculations. We reiterate our recommendation that the National Assembly should expeditiously conclude the amendment process and transmit the final bill to the President within two weeks.

As key stakeholders in the electoral process, we urge citizens and all stakeholders to demand accountable representation from their legislators in the National Assembly by pressuring them to prioritise the public interest and the integrity of the elections by passing the provisions on real-time electronic transmission of election results, curtailing the disenfranchisement of voters by introducing downloadable PVCs, and resisting any attempt to weaken established timelines that are crucial for conducting credible elections.

Signed:

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| 1. Centre for Media and Society (CEMESO) | 5. Nigerian Women Trust Fund |
| 2. The Kukah Centre | 6. TAF Africa |
| 3. International Press Centre (IPC) | 7. Yiaga Africa |
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