

**BEING A TEXT OF A STATEMENT READ AT THE PRESS  
CONFERENCE ORGANIZED BY THE AFRICA YOUTH GROWTH  
FOUNDATION (AYGF) AND READ BY DR. AROME SALIFU  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AYGF ON TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2023.**

**Protocol**

Good Morning gentlemen and women of the press. I am delighted to welcome you to our organization.

**Highlights**

- **AYGF Tasks INEC, security agencies, and politicians on credible, peaceful polls**
- **Charges youth to vote for the growth and development of Nigeria**

**Introduction**

Africa Youth Growth Foundation (AYGF) is a non-governmental organization set up with the sole purpose of contributing to positive change in the economic and social status of Africans, the poor, the vulnerable, and minorities through effective programs that deliver sustainable outcomes.

Over the years the organization has implemented several projects that address issues around Democratic Governance, Migration, Public Health, Education, Livelihood, Preventing violence & extremism, and climate change. Our Mission is to build an equitable society through constructive engagement with stakeholders, expanding opportunities for self-development and realization among the youths, poor, minorities, and vulnerable population. It is within our mandate as an organization to advocate for democratic governance.

We believe that credible elections are a fundamental requirement for strong democratic governance and respect for human rights, which are critical for sustainable development and lasting peace. Nigeria is currently facing a pandemic of insecurity; rising security threats daily - from the north to the south; east and west. Credible, peaceful, and conclusive elections have a tendency to resolve the myriad of problems faced by the large population of youths and other citizens. Evidence has shown that a failed election could be detrimental to Nigeria and the West African countries.

It is on this premise, we are hosting this press conference to draw the attention of critical stakeholders to the need to conduct a credible, peaceful, and conclusive general election.

As you all are aware, the 2023 general election commences in four (4) days from today. The global communities' attention is on Nigeria as 93.4 million registered voters are expected to vote on February 25 and March 11, 2023 - national and subnational elections respectively. The presidential election is arguably the most important for Nigerians and the global community.

The upcoming general election is an opportunity for citizens to choose a leader with solid determination to steer the direction of the country positively. There is no doubt that the outcome of this election will have a significant impact on the future of the country, its economy, and its people.

As an organization that prioritizes democratic governance and youth growth, AYGf recognizes the need for a peaceful poll. On this note, we wish to commend the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in its quest to deepen democratic governance through transparent elections in Nigeria as reflected in the extensive reforms including the deployment of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System and the INEC Results Viewing Portal (IReV). These are two critical interventions that signal an improvement in the voting and results transmission and collation process for the 2023 elections.

These innovations have implications for promoting transparency and trust in the electoral process. We further acknowledge efforts by INEC to improve access to polling units by increasing the number of polling stations by 56,872 bringing the total number of polling units to 176,846 even though polls will actually be held in 176,606 polling units. As you may be aware, the Commission has informed Nigerians that polls will not hold in 240 polling units for security and other reasons.

During the conduct of the Continuous Voter Registration (CVR), we observed a significant increase in public interest and enthusiasm in the election with the large number of new voters that were registered in the exercise, of particular note was the interest of young people. In this election, youth constitute an estimated 48 million of the total 93.4 million registered voters. This is a huge voting community whose actions throughout the polls will help determine the credibility and peacefulness of the polls.

We unequivocally call on Nigerian youth voters and the citizens in general to remain ready, peaceful, desist from vote selling, and be resolute to participate in the polls and vote for the growth and development of Nigeria.

It is also imperative to call on the security agencies saddled with the responsibility of securing the country to intensify efforts and do more to make the entire electoral process safe for voters, candidates, observers, media, and electoral officers - especially members of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) who are providing support to the process.

However, a peaceful, credible election process is not entirely the task of security agencies alone. INEC, political actors, and other stakeholders have a part to play. INEC must be seen as an umpire indeed and must ensure neutrality, credibility, and acceptability of the electoral process and its outcome.

For the politicians, they ultimately desire to win the elections, they must do so within the ambiance of the law. The promotion of political violence and the spread of disinformation and misinformation, including vote buying, hate speeches, and unguarded statements are capable of undermining the democratic process, public peace, and harmony.

In the few days to the end of the campaign, politicians and their followers must promote their messages with a very high degree of responsibility toward ensuring that the sanctity and integrity of the electoral process are guaranteed. They must eschew violence and avoid all forms of incitement as tools for mobilizing and canvassing for votes.

Finally, Nigeria is our country, we must all work to protect and preserve her heritage. We therefore, task the incoming leaders to address structural and developmental challenges such as high level of insecurity, poor quality of education, dilapidated public health infrastructure and investment, high number of out-of-school children, youth unemployment, poverty, Poor infrastructure and power. Gentlemen of the press, thank you for your attention.

God bless Nigeria