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**INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DEMOCRACY 2024**

*As we reflect on the significance of democracy on this International Day of Democracy, we urge the people of Nigeria to remain committed to building a more just and equitable society. The Edo and Ondo governorship elections are not just a test of our electoral integrity; they are an opportunity for the people of Nigeria to express their aspirations for good governance, accountability, and sustainable development.*

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As we commemorate the International Day of Democracy 2024, the Initiative for Research, Innovation and Advocacy in Development (IRIAD) and The Electoral Hub stands firm in our commitment to promoting democratic values and practices in Nigeria. This year's observance is particularly significant as it coincides with the upcoming Edo and Ondo governorship elections, a critical moment for our democracy and governance.

This year's theme "***Artificial Intelligence as a Tool for Good Governance***" is timely and relevant. As AI transforms government operations, it is crucial to harness its potential for transparency, accountability, and people-centric policies. However, it also raises concerns about bias, privacy, and job displacement. This theme highlights the need for democratic institutions to proactively address these challenges and ensure AI serves the public interest, promoting more inclusive and effective governance.

Democracy is not merely a system of governance; it is a vital framework that empowers citizens, promotes human rights, and fosters sustainable development. In Nigeria, where the democratic journey has been marked by both triumphs and challenges, the upcoming elections present an opportunity to reinforce our commitment to democratic ideals. Participation in governance, as encouraged by democratic principles, is vital for achieving peaceful and inclusive societies, as emphasized in SDG 16. Accountability and transparency among public officials and institutions align with SDG 16 targets to develop effective, accountable, and transparent institutions. Upholding the rule of law is essential for maintaining peace and security, while also ensuring equal access to justice for all, as outlined in SDG 16. Democracy is also linked to the protection of human rights, including gender equity (SDG 5) and reducing inequalities (SDG 10). A democratic framework fosters an environment where marginalized groups can advocate for their rights and participate fully in society.

Despite having a democratic constitution, Nigeria's institutions often struggle with corruption and inefficiency. The electoral process has been marred by allegations of malpractices, violence, and a lack of transparency, undermining public trust in the process. The current political environment in Nigeria has seen a decline in civil liberties, and shrinking civil spaces, with reports of intimidation and violence against civil society activists, civil advocates and journalists. This environment poses a threat to the fundamental human rights that democracy seeks to protect, impacting citizens' ability to engage freely in the political process. Also, women and youth remain underrepresented in political leadership and governance, which limits the diversity of perspectives in governance in Nigeria.

As we approach the Edo and Ondo governorship elections, IRIAD expects the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to conduct transparent and fair elections that reflect the will of the people, ensuring that all eligible voters can participate without barriers. We urge political parties and candidates to engage in ethical campaign practices, focusing on constructive dialogue and the issues that matter to the electorate, while avoiding hate speech and violence. It is imperative that citizens are well-informed about the electoral process, and we call on civil society organizations, the media, National Orientation Agency, and INEC to collaborate in providing accurate information about voting procedures and candidates. Additionally, we expect security agencies to maintain impartiality and ensure a safe environment for voters to exercise their rights without fear of intimidation or violence.

### **Call to Action for Stakeholders**

In light of these expectations, IRIAD and The Electoral Hub issues a call to action for all relevant stakeholders:

- **Government and INEC:** We urge the government and INEC to prioritize the integrity of the electoral process. This includes timely deployment of election materials, adequate training for election officials, and the establishment of mechanisms for addressing electoral grievances.
- **Political Parties and Candidates:** We call on political parties to commit to peaceful campaigns and to respect the democratic process. Candidates should focus on presenting their visions for governance and engaging constructively with their opponents. They should eschew hate speech, disinformation, misinformation and violence.
- **Civil Society Organizations:** We encourage civil society organizations to intensify their efforts in monitoring the electoral process, advocating for voter rights, and promoting civic education.
- **Media:** The media must serve as a watchdog, providing unbiased coverage of the elections and highlighting issues of public interest. Responsible journalism is essential for promoting an informed electorate and holding power to account.
- **Security Agencies:** Security agencies play a crucial role in maintaining peace and order during elections. We call upon them to act professionally, impartially, and with respect for human rights. They must ensure that citizens can exercise their democratic rights without fear of intimidation or violence.
- **Judiciary:** An independent and impartial judiciary is essential for upholding the rule of law and ensuring justice in electoral disputes. We urge the judiciary to remain steadfast in its commitment to fairness and to address electoral grievances in a timely manner and uphold justice.
- **Religious and Traditional Leaders:** Religious and traditional leaders wield significant influence in Nigerian society. We call upon them to promote peaceful coexistence, tolerance, and respect for democratic values among their peoples. Their voices can play a crucial role in facilitating a conducive environment for free and fair elections

As we reflect on the significance of democracy on this International Day of Democracy, we urge Nigerians to remain committed to building a just and equitable society. The Edo and Ondo governorship elections are not just a test of our electoral integrity; they are an opportunity for Nigerians to express their aspirations for good governance, accountability, and sustainable development. IRIAD and The Electoral Hub believes that through collaborative efforts and adherence to democratic principles and values, we can achieve a prosperous, just, and inclusive Nigeria. Let us work together to ensure that these elections are a testament to our commitment to democracy, inclusivity, human rights, social justice, and the rule of law.

*#InternationalDayofDemocracy #DemocracyInNigeria #EdoOndoElections2024 #PeacefulElections  
#DemocracyForAll*

**Signed**

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**ABOUT IRIAD AND THE ELECTORAL HUB**

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We are a not-for-profit, knowledge, policy and advocacy hub registered with the CAC. **IRIAD** ([www.iriadng.org](http://www.iriadng.org)) is focused on developing a critical understanding of governance processes and regimes from research and documentation to inform policies, advocacies, and other forms of development interventions. IRIAD is committed to strengthening democratic governance by advancing public accountability, mobilizing citizens' participation, advocating gender justice, and enhancing the capacities of governance institutions to be effective and ethical.

While **The Electoral Hub** ([www.electoralhub.org](http://www.electoralhub.org)) is the affiliate of IRIAD and works to promote electoral knowledge, accountability and integrity in Nigeria through the provision of solutions to improve electoral integrity and credibility while complementing the roles and activities of different institutions, stakeholders, and drivers of the electoral process and governance.

**Knowledge| Innovation | Inclusion|  
#Advocacy #Results #Impact  
...promoting electoral knowledge, accountability, and integrity**