

# Elections of 25th february failed to meet Nigerian's Expectations

*- U.S Ambassador to Nigeria*

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The people of Nigeria demonstrated their dedication to democracy on February 25, but there are many angry and frustrated Nigerians as well as many who are celebrating victories, they believe were hard-fought and well-earned. In the coming days, it will be important for the future of this country that Nigerians not let their differences divide them, and that the legally established process for resolving challenges to the election be allowed to take its course. We commend Mr. Obi and Mr. Abubakar for their recent statements committing to take this path, and Mr. Tinubu, who INEC declared the president-elect under Nigeria's electoral framework, for acknowledging their right to do so.

The United States is no stranger to election-related controversy and conflict. As much as it can be unsatisfying to end an electoral process in a courtroom, in a constitutional democracy bound by the rule of law, that is where electoral conflicts may appropriately conclude.

It is clear that the electoral process as a whole on February 25 failed to meet Nigerians' expectations. As I said numerous times prior to the elections, Nigeria has accomplished much in just the two-plus decades since the return to democracy, and a gradual improvement in the quality of its elections in that time constitutes one of those accomplishments. We recognize that Nigerians want that positive trend to continue, including through the use of new technology intended to make the process of reporting results more transparent. We thus reiterate our call on INEC to address promptly the challenges that can be resolved ahead of the March 11 gubernatorial elections, and to undertake a broader review of the problems that transpired during the last elections and what can be done to fix them. In all cases, INEC should share with the Nigerian public information about the actions it is taking.

I also want to highlight some of the remarkable results from this past election that show how Nigeria's political landscape is indisputably changing. In more than half of the states – 20 – the winning candidate represented a different party than that of the incumbent governor. Twelve of these states

are led by APC governors. For the first time, four presidential candidates won at least one state, and the top three each won 12 states based on these initial results. In the National Assembly elections, even with results still incomplete, we already know that changes are afoot: seven sitting governors lost in their attempts to win election to the Assembly; the Labor Party has won at least seven seats in the Senate; the NNPP has won at least 11 seats in the House of Representatives. The Nigerian people have made clear their desire for responsive and inclusive governance, and we strongly support their ability to express that desire. The United States and Nigeria are the two largest presidential democracies in the world, and longtime partners. As Nigeria goes through these next weeks and months, we stand with you.

. Leonard is the Ambassador of the United States of America to Nigeria.  
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