

The 2027 elections must be a catalyst for systemic reform

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As Nigeria looks toward its next general elections in 2027, the nation stands at a critical economic and political crossroads. While electoral cycles are often viewed primarily through the lens of political competition, development economists and governance experts increasingly argue that the upcoming polls must be treated as a referendum on structural reform. For Africa's most populous nation and largest economy to achieve sustainable development, the next administration must move beyond cosmetic changes and address the foundational fractures holding the country back. The consensus among policy analysts is clear: Nigeria cannot vote its way to prosperity without a concurrent, aggressive commitment to fixing the country's core systemic failures.

Nigeria's macroeconomic fundamentals require urgent stabilization. Despite recent reforms aimed at unifying exchange rates and removing fuel subsidies, the country continues to grapple with high inflation, currency volatility, and a debt-servicing burden that consumes a massive portion of national revenue. According to data from the World Bank and the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG), sustainable development requires a decisive shift from a rentier, oil-dependent economy to a diversified, production-driven one. The 2027 electoral mandate must prioritize policies that stimulate non-oil exports, support small and medium-sized enterprises, and attract foreign direct investment into manufacturing and agriculture. International investors require predictability; without consistent, pro-business policies that survive political transitions, capital will continue to flow to more stable emerging markets. Beyond macroeconomic stability, no development agenda can succeed in an environment of pervasive insecurity. From the persistent insurgency in the Northeast to the devastating banditry and kidnapping-for-ransom syndicates in the Northwest, and ongoing farmer-herder clashes in the Middle Belt, insecurity acts as a direct tax on Nigeria's GDP. These conflicts have displaced millions, disrupted agricultural supply chains, and driven up food inflation. Fixing the country requires a holistic security overhaul that goes beyond kinetic military responses. It demands investment in community policing, advanced intelligence gathering, border control technology, and, crucially, the economic rehabilitation of conflict zones to prevent the recruitment of disenfranchised youth by criminal or extremist groups.

Furthermore, the credibility of the 2027 elections is itself a fundamental development issue. The Electoral Act of 2022 introduced landmark provisions, including the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and the INEC Result Viewing (IREV) portal, designed to enhance transparency and reduce electoral fraud. However, building enduring institutional trust requires the Independent National Electoral Commission to rigorously enforce these technologies, ensure the autonomy of the judiciary in electoral disputes, and guarantee a level playing field for all political actors. A credible election is the foundation of a legitimate government, and that legitimacy is the essential currency required to implement difficult but necessary economic reforms. Compounding these structural challenges is the urgent crisis of human capital, often referred to as the "Japa"

phenomenon. The mass emigration of skilled professionals, particularly in healthcare, engineering, and technology, has reached critical levels. The Nigerian Medical Association has repeatedly highlighted the severe shortage of doctors as thousands relocate to the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States in search of better working conditions and compensation. To fix the country, the next administration must treat human capital as its most valuable natural resource. This requires tangible investments in public education, the revitalization of teaching hospitals, and the creation of an enabling environment for tech startups and innovators. If Nigeria cannot provide its

brightest minds with safety, fair compensation, and opportunities for growth, no long-term development strategy will succeed.

As political campaigns begin to take shape, the Nigerian electorate is faced with a profound choice. The status quo, characterized by cyclical promises, short-term political calculations, and unresolved structural deficits, is no longer sustainable for a nation of over 220 million people, more than 60% of whom are under the age of 25. Fixing Nigeria requires a new social contract built on transparency, equitable resource distribution, and the strict adherence to the rule of law. It demands leaders who view governance not as a means of wealth extraction, but as a mechanism for nation-building. The 2027 elections should not merely be about choosing a new set of leaders; they must serve as a decisive mandate to repair the foundations of the Nigerian state. Only by fixing the country's systemic flaws can Nigeria finally unlock the immense potential of its people and claim its rightful place as a global economic powerhouse.

