

**ADDRESS BY RT. HON. YAKUBU DOGARA,
SPEAKER, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, FEDERAL
REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA ON THE OCCASION OF THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL AND
POLITICAL PARTIES MATTERS PUBLIC HEARING ON
THE AMENDMENTS TO THE ELECTORAL ACT, ON
MONDAY 22ND MAY, 2017 IN CONFERENCE HALL
231, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES NEW BUILDING,
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY COMPLEX, ABUJA.**

PROTOCOLS:

I am delighted to formally welcome you all to this important Public Hearing following the referrals of twelve (12) Bills proposing amendments to the extant Electoral Act No. 6 of 2010.

2. For purposes of information and reminder, “***a Public Hearing is a mechanism by which Committees in the legislature obtain information, expert opinions and alternative perspectives on a proposed or pending piece of legislation and other matters within its jurisdiction.***” The need to conduct a Public Hearing after a Bill has passed Second Reading and is referred to the Committee for further legislative action is not merely customary but necessary. It is the means by which public participation in the law making process is enabled.

3. This process stimulates public discussion within and outside the legislature on the subject matter under

consideration leading to cross fertilization of ideas for socio-scientific exposure of the subject matter for proper analysis, upon which conclusions arrived at will bring about excellent piece of legislation for the peace and good governance of our people.

4. The twelve Bills before us this morning, seeking to amend the Electoral Act are a consequence of our election experiences as a nation including the 2015 General Elections. Experience has shown that good electoral system governed by an efficient and effective legal framework is an inescapable prerequisite for the conduct of free, fair and credible election, enthronement of good governance which will ensure peace and stability in the polity. Conversely, it is a globally established fact that a flawed electoral system is a huge threat to any democracy and can constitute an invitation to anarchy.

5. While we continue to acknowledge the reasonable improvements recorded during the 2015 general elections in Nigeria where the ruling political party lost the elections and accepted the outcome of the process, we cannot pretend that the election was without flaws some of which bordered on lacunae in the legal framework. The case in Kogi State Governorship election in which a candidate died after the ballot but before the declaration of results present a classical example of such limitations in the Electoral Act, among others, that require reform in the law. The issue of legal framework for electronic accreditation, (Card Reader); Electronic Voting and announcement of

Election Results; the place of INEC Guidelines/Regulations vis a vis the Procedure for elections contained in the Electoral Act itself, Diaspora Voting, the role of Political Parties in the nomination process, etc are some of the matters that should be settled in time before the 2019 General Elections. This Public Hearing is therefore of critical importance in settling these questions. Permit me to use this opportunity also to implore the ***Ad-Hoc Committee on Constitution Review*** to also be guided by the need to conclude all Constitution amendments or alterations relating to electoral matters early enough in order to give the Election Management Body, INEC, enough time to plan the 2019 General Elections.

6. It has also become important for me to call attention to the inchoate consideration of the extant Electoral Act 2010 as amended in 2015. It is observed that very often those amendments made in 2015 are totally overlooked when the Act is being considered. I would urge this gathering to carefully consider the said 2015 amendments as the deliberations on the Bills commence, so that effort is not unduly dissipated on proposed amendments that are already contained in the 2015 amendments. Ignorance of the law is not an excuse, particularly for lawmakers and otherwise informed stakeholders.

7. Finally, let me on behalf of the House of Representatives and particularly the House Committee on Electoral and Political Parties Matters thank the Policy and Advocacy Centre (PLAC) and DFID for their support and

collaborative partnership with the House of Representatives, all the critical stakeholders like INEC, Political Parties, distinguished guests, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), the press and the Sponsors of the Bills for your presence, anticipated participation and firm belief and enthusiasm in partnership with the legislature.

8. Distinguished invited guests, ladies and gentlemen, it is now my singular honour to declare this Public Hearing open and to wish us all most fruitful deliberations.

9. God bless you all and bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.