



**FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA**

**THE SENATE**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY COMPLEX  
THREE-ARMS ZONE, ABUJA**

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON INDEPENDENT  
NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION (INEC)**

**REPORT**

**ON**

**THE SCREENING OF SEVEN (7) NOMINEES OF  
THE PRESIDENT FOR CONFIRMATION OF  
APPOINTMENT AS COMMISSIONERS OF THE  
INDEPENDENT NATIONAL ELECTORAL  
COMMISSION (INEC)**

**DATED THIS 13<sup>TH</sup> JULY, 2021**

## 1.0 Preamble

The Senate at its sittings on Wednesday, 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020 and Wednesday, 9<sup>th</sup> June, 2021, considered the request of Mr. President and Commander-In-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for the confirmation of **Seven (7)** nominations for appointment as **Commissioners** for the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), and in its wisdom, the Senate referred same to this Committee through a referral Order dated 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2021 for further legislative action.

The confirmation of nominations for the appointment of the nominees, **Professor Abdullahi Abdu Zuru, Prof. Muhammad Sani Kallah (Katsina), Laretta Onochie (Delta), Prof. Kunle Cornelius Ajayi (Ekiti), Saidu Babura Ahmad mni (Jigawa), Prof. Sani Muhammad Adam (North-Central) and Dr. Baba Bila (North-East)** Commissioners of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), was made under the provision of **Section 153 (1) (f)** of the Constitution. Further, this request was made pursuant to the provision of **Section 154 (1)** of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (**as amended**), which requires that the appointments of Chairman and Members of any of the bodies so established under Sections **153 (1) (f)** shall be made by the President and the appointments shall be subject to confirmation by the Senate.

For the avoidance of doubt, the Section 154-(1) provides as follows:-

*“Except in the case of ex-officio members or where other provisions are made in this Constitution, the Chairman and members of any of the bodies so established shall, subject to the provisions of this Constitution, be appointed by the President and the appointments shall be subject to confirmation by the Senate”.*

## **2.0 Methodology**

In furtherance to this legislative mandate, the Committee requested for and received the curriculum vitae, security clearance and other relevant documents of the nominees and invited them to appear before the Committee for screening.

## **3.0 Screening of the Nominees**

The nominees appeared before the Committee on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> November, 2020 and Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> of July, 2021, and were accordingly screened as follows:-

### **3.1 Professor Abdullahi Abdu Zuru**

The Committee interviewed Professor Abdullahi Abdu Zuru and received explanations regarding his personal life, experiences, suitability and integrity for appointment as National Commissioner, North West.

### **3.1.1 Background Information and Educational Qualification**

Professor Abdullahi Abdu Zuru was born 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1956 and hails from Fakai Local Government Area of Kebbi State. He had his early education at Sami Gomo Primary School Zuru, where he obtained his First Leaving School Certificate (FLSC). He proceeded to Government College Bida, Niger State for his Secondary School in 1972, Bachelor of Science in Chemistry in 1977, Masters of Science Chemistry in 1983, Ph.D. Physical Chemistry in 1987.

### **3.1.2 Work Experience/Career Progression**

Professor Abdullahi Abdu Zuru commenced his career as a Graduate Assistant at Usman Danfodio University, Sokoto in 1982-1983. Assistant Lecturer in 1983 and Lecturer in 1987; Senior Lecturer in 1994, Deputy Vice Chancellor (DVC) Academics in 1999, became a Professor of Physical Chemistry in 2001 and later Professor of Petroleum Chemistry. He was the Chairman Petroleum Technology Development Fund, Department of Chemistry in 2002-2009. From 2005-2009 he was Director, Sokoto Energy Research Centre (SERC), Usman Danfodio University, Sokoto. He became the Vice Chancellor of Kebbi State University of Science and Technology, Aliero, Kebbi State in 2011. In 2019 he was the Vice Chancellor of Usman Danfodio University Sokoto. He was the Dean and Head of Department of several Faculties in the University as well as the Chairman and Representatives of several Committees set up by the Government.

He was the member of the Committee that drafted the National Energy Master Plan, for the Energy Commission as well as Member of Nigeria's Vision 20:20:20 Development and Drafting Committee in 2010.

### **3.2 *Prof. Muhammad Sani Kallah (Katsina):***

The Committee interviewed ***Prof. Muhammad Sani Kallah (Katsina)*** and received explanations regarding his personal life, work experiences, suitability, competence and integrity for appointment as a Commissioner of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC),

#### **3.2.1 Background Information and Educational Qualifications**

***Prof. Muhammad Sani Kallah (Katsina)*** is a married man with children, born on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1947 and hails from Daura in Zango L.G.A. of Katsina State. He had his early education at Provincial Secondary School, Katsina where he obtained his West African School Certificate (Division One) between 1961 and 1965. Other qualifications obtained by the nominee include a Bachelor of Science (Agric.) *Magna cum laude* (high Honors) 1966-1970 from the New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, N. M. U.S.A; Master Science (Range Animal Nutrition) 1973 from Texas A & M, University, College Station, Texas, U.S.A.; and Doctor of Philosophy in 1980 from Colorado State University, Ft. Collins, Co, USA.

#### **3.2.2 Work Experience**

Professor Mohammad Sani Kallah worked in several places which include, amongst others, Range Management Officer, Ministry of Animal and Forest Resources Northern Nigeria Government from 1966-1968; Field Trainee/Apprentice with US Bureau of Land Management and Tutor (Range Management) and Officer in charge of Range and Pasture Development, Grazing Control and Livestock Management, College of Agriculture, between 1970 and 1971. He also has to his credit over 100 academic publications.

### **3.2.3 Associations**

He is a member of Society for Range Management, USA and other Professional Service/Honour Societies as well as Community Services both Nationally and at State level in Nigeria.

### **3.2.4 Award**

The nominee received Seven (7) merit awards from renown bodies both Nationally and Internationally.

## **3.3 Prof. Kunle Cornelius Ajayi (Ekiti):**

The Committee interviewed **Prof. Kunle Cornelius Ajayi (Ekiti)** and received explanations regarding his personal life, work experiences, suitability, competence and integrity for appointment as a Commissioner of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) representing Ekiti State.

### **3.3.1 Background Information and Educational Qualifications**

Prof. Kunle Cornelius Ajayi is a married man with children and grandchildren, born on 18<sup>h</sup> March 1959 in Gbonyin (Aiyekire) L.G.A. and Ekiti South Senatorial District of Ekiti State. He had his Primary School Education at the St. Paul's Anglican Primary School, Ijan-Ekiti, obtained his West African School Certificate from Iju-Itaogbolu Anglican Grammar School in 1980.; Bachelor of Science (Political Science), Masters of Science (Political Science) and Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science which he obtained from Ondo State University, Ado-Ekiti and University of Ibadan, Ibadan, respectively. The nominee also had an Advanced Fellowship Scholarship at the Institute of Child and Youth Studies, Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) Dakar, Senegal, and the Centre for Women Studies and Gender Relations, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada.

### **3.3.2 Work Experience**

Prof. Kunle Cornelius Ajayi has a teaching and research working experience from 1991- date in Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, and Ondo State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria. Prof. Kunle Cornelius Ajayi has written over 100 publications and academic articles and journals

### **3.3.3 Associations**

The Nominee is a Member of seven (7) Professional Bodies both in Nigeria, United States of America and Canada.

### **3.3.4 Award**

The nominee numerous merit awards, commendations, academic distinctions, fellowships and honours from renowned bodies both nationally and internationally.

### **3.4 Dr. Baba Bila (North-East):**

The Committee interviewed **Dr. Baba Bila** and received explanations regarding his personal life, work experiences, suitability, competence and integrity for appointment as a Commissioner of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) representing the North-East Geo-political Zone.

#### **3.4.1 Background Information and Educational Qualifications**

**Dr. Baba Bila** is a married man with children, born on 9<sup>th</sup> February 1958 in Fune L.G.A. of Yobe State. He has a B.Sc. Accounting (1986), Master of Public Administration (Public Administration) (1991), Master of Business Administration (Financial Management) (2000), Doctor of Philosophy (Management Studies) (2012), and Certificate in Financial Decision-Making (1998). He obtained these Certificates from Usman Danfodio University, Sokoto, Lagos State University, Ojo, University of Maiduguri, Maiduguri and World Trade Institute, Pace University, New York.



### **3.4.2 Work Experience**

**Dr. Baba Bila** has a teaching and research working experience from 1991- date in Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, and Ondo State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria. He has written over 11 publications mostly in the area of financial subjects.

### **3.4.3 Associations**

The Nominee is a Member of seven (6) Professional Bodies both in Nigeria and the United States of America.

### **3.4.4 Achievements**

The nominee has proven records achievements in Remuneration Management, Financial Management, Privatization, Public Policy Analysis, Internal Control measures with strong project management initiatives, financial decision-making skills and human capital management experience built on his qualifications.

## **3.5 Professor Sai'du Babura Ahmad**

The Committee interviewed **Professor Sai'du Babura Ahmad** and received explanations regarding his personal life, work experience, suitability, competence and integrity for appointment as National Electoral Commissioner representing Jigawa State.

### **3.5.1 Background Information and Educational Qualifications:**

**Professor Sai'du Babura Ahmad** was born on 12<sup>th</sup> June, 1953 and hails from Babura Local Government Area of Jigawa State. He attended Babura Special Primary School and obtained his Certificate of Primary Education in 1967. He also obtained his Senior Secondary School Certificate. He further proceeded to Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Kaduna where he had his Graduate Certificate of Education in 1978. In the same year 1978, he bagged a Bachelor of Arts (B.A) degree from the same University. He proceeded to the Bayero University Kano where he obtained a Master of Arts (M.A) from the Department of English and Literary Studies. He further attended the University of London, England and obtained a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) in English and Literary Studies.

The nominee is presently a Professor at Bayero University, Kano.

### **3.5.2 Work Experience:**

**Professor Sai'du Babura Ahmad** has several years of working experience as an academician and an administrator in the public sector: Graduate Assistant, Department of English and Literary Studies Bayero University, Kano. 1979 – 1980; Assistant Lecturer, Department of English and Literary Studies Bayero University, Kano. 1980 – 1982; Lecturer II, Department of English and Literary Studies Bayero University, Kano. 1982 – 1986; Lecturer I, Department of English and Literary Studies Bayero University, Kano. 1986 – 1988; Senior Lecturer, Department of English and Literary Studies Bayero

University, Kano. 1998 – 2003; and Professor, Department of English and Literary Studies Bayero University, Kano. 2003 – date among others. He has published over 12 academic articles and journals in the area of Literary and Contemporary Studies

### **3.5.3 Awards:**

The nominee was awarded the Certificate of Membership of the National Institute (mni)

## **3.6 Professor Sani Muhammad Adam (SAN)**

The Committee interviewed **Professor Sani Muhammad Adam (SAN)** and received explanations regarding his personal life, work experience, suitability, competence and integrity for appointment as National Electoral Commissioner representing the North-Central Geopolitical Zone.

### **3.6.1 Background Information and Educational Qualifications:**

**Professor Sani Muhammad Adam (SAN)** was born on 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 1966 and hails from Barkin Ladi Local Government Area of Plateau State. He is a graduate of the Faculty of Law Bayero University (1991), Kano; was called to Bar in December 1992; obtained an LL.M and Ph.D degrees from the University of Jos in 1996 and 2006 respectively.

The nominee is also a re-known specialist in Environmental and Planning Laws, Climate Change Law and Litigation.

Worthy of note is the fact that the nominee was promoted to the rank of Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) on the 14<sup>th</sup> of December, 2020 and was appointed a Professor of Law in November, 2013 by the Nigerian Police Academy, Wudil, Kano State.

### **3.6.2 Work Experience:**

**Professor Sani Muhammad Adam (SAN)** has a working experience in 27 capacities including being a Lecturer and visiting Professor at the University of Jos, University of Abuja and Baze University respectively. He was also Head of Department on Private and Islamic Law, Faculty of Law, University of Abuja, External Assessor/Examiner to the National Defence College, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and Nasarawa State University as well as mentorship and supervision of thesis/dissertation of undergraduates and post graduates students, among others. He has published about 94 academic articles, conference materials and journals in different fields especially in Law and Islamic Banking.

### **3.7 *Ms. Laretta Onochie (Delta)***

The Committee interviewed ***Ms. Laretta Onochie (Delta)*** and received explanations regarding his personal life, work experiences,

suitability, competence and integrity for appointment as a Commissioner of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC),

### **3.7.1 Background Information and Educational Qualifications**

*Ms. Laretta Onochie (Delta)* is mother of two children, born in Wusasa in Zaria and hails from Anioch North L.G.A. of Delta State. She had her early education at St. Mary's Catholic School where she obtained her (West African School Certificate (WASC). Other qualifications obtained by the nominee include a National Certificate in Education (NCE), several courses which include Special Child Education, Psychology, Sociology and methods of teaching

### **3.7.2 Work Experience**

*Ms. Laretta Onochie* worked in several places which include, amongst others, Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria between 1972-1978, Savannah Bank of Nigeria in 1979 and Teaching in several Schools both home and abroad. She is currently serving as a Senior Special Assistant on Social Media to the President.

## **4.0 Questions to Nominees and their Responses**

To determine their suitability for the positions for which they were nominated the nominees were asked questions that bothered mostly on their integrity, Electronic Voting and Transmission of Results, partisanship, card-carrying membership of political parties, and how

they hoped to improve the electoral process through fairness and transparency if and when their nominations for appointments is confirmed.

All the nominees responded by assuring the Committee of their integrity, non-partisanship, non-card-carrying membership of any political party and promised to discharge their assignments diligently and in accordance with extant laws and laid down rules as well as to also contribute their quota towards changing the negative perception about the Electoral Umpire.

## **5.0 Petitions against Two (2) Nominees**

The Committee received several petitions against the nomination of Ms. Laretta Onochie and one against Professor Sani Muhammad Adam (North-Central); and in compliance with the provisions of **Section 36** of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria **(as amended)** on **right to fair-hearing**, the two nominees were given the opportunity to defend themselves.

### **5.1 Petition against Ms. Laretta Onochie**

The following petitions were made against Ms. Laretta Onochie among others:

- i. **Violation of Federal Character Principle:** There is already a Serving National Electoral Commissioners (**NEC**) from Delta State, Barr. May Agbamuche-Mbu who was screened by the Senate Committee on INEC and confirmed by the 8<sup>th</sup> Senate.

- ii. **Partisanship:** Section 154(1)(a) of the of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (As Amended) clearly prohibits the appointment of any person who is a Member of a Political Party as a Member of INEC.

To further ensure neutrality of the Member of INEC, the Constitution clearly mandates in the Third Schedule, Part 1, Item I, Paragraph 14(1) that a National Commissioner shall be non-partisan and a person of unquestionable integrity.

- iii. **Card-Carrying Member:** The Constitution clearly mandates against any INEC Member being a Card-Carrying Member of any Political Party in the Third Schedule, Part 1, Item I, Paragraph 14(1).
- iv. **Social Media Campaign:** The Petitioner attached picture evidences and antics of the nominee using the Social Media Publication account using fake news campaign strategies online.

### **5.1.1 Nominee's Response to Petitions**

In her defense, Ms. Laretta Onochie debunked the following claims against her nomination:

- 1. **CARD CARRYING MEMBER OF THE APC:** While admitting to being a one-time registered and card-carrying Member of the All Progressives Congress (**APC**) and member of the "Buhari Support Organisation", she said she is presently neither a registered nor card-carrying Member of the All Progressives Congress (**APC**), since she did not register as an **APC** Member during the last **APC** re-validation exercise.

2. **SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITIES:** Said stated that she is a private individual who rarely talks about herself and ceased all Television and Radio appearances since President Buhari's second term election.
3. **PARTISANSHIP:** She categorically denied to being sympathetic to any political party and stopped all political activities since the year 2019.
4. **DISCIPLINE:** She said she is a trained lecturer and Trainer for Students with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (LDD) which has instilled in her the need to s.
5. **ASSURANCE:** She gave the assurance that if confirmed, there will be no biased bone in her body and acclaimed herself as "Madam Due Process

## 5.2 Prof. Sani Muhammad Adam (SAN)

- i. **A petition was written against** Prof. Sani Muhammad Adam (SAN) on an issue that occurred in 2001, *which requires further investigation by the Committee.*

### 5.2.1 Prof. Sani Muhammad Adam's Response to Petition

In his defense, Prof. Sani Muhammad Adam (SAN) debunked the petition against his nomination with an explanation that the situation occurred on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, 2001, when he was a lecturer in the University of Jos and has nothing to do with his integrity. He supported his claim with a written clearance issued by the Nigerian Bar Association before he was made a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN).



## 6.0 Committee Recommendation

Members of the Committee commended the nominees' impressive Curriculum Vitae (CVs) and satisfactory answers to the questions posed and therefore recommends that:

- i. Professor Abdullahi Abdu Zuru
- ii. Prof. Muhammad Sani Kallah
- iii. Prof. Kunle Cornelius Ajayi
- iv. Saidu Babura Ahmad mni
- v. Dr. Baba Bila

be confirmed by the Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as National Electoral Commissioners (NEC) of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

However, in view of the Petition against Prof. Sani Muhammad Adam (SAN), **the Committee recommends that the confirmation of his nomination for appointment as INEC National Commissioner be stepped down pending further Legislative Action by the Committee.**

In the case of Ms. Laretta Onochie's, having studied her curriculum vitae and other relevant documents, followed by exhaustive interaction around the petitions against her nomination which she responded to accordingly, including attesting that she is not a registered member of any Political Party. However, the Committee, bound by the provisions

of Section 14(3) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as Amendment) on Federal Character Principle which states that:

*“The composition of the Government of the Federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect Federal Character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity and also the command national loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that government or in any of its agencies.”*

In line with the above provisions, the Senate may wish to recall that in 2016, the Senate based on the recommendation of its INEC Committee confirmed ***Barr. May Agbamuche-Mbu from Delta State as a National Commissioner in INEC, who is still serving. Therefore, confirming the nomination of Ms. Laretta Onochie from the same Delta State will be a violation of the Federal Character Principle.***

Therefore, based on the provisions of Section 14(3) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as Amended) on Federal Character Principle as earlier stated, and in order for the Committee and the Senate to achieve fairness to other States and political zones in the country, **the Committee is unable to recommend Ms. Laretta Onochie for confirmation as a National Electoral**

**Commissioner for the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).s**

My Distinguished colleagues, on behalf of the Members of this Committee, I wish to most sincerely thank the President of the Senate, other Principal Officers and indeed the entire Distinguished Members of this Senate, for giving the Senate Committee on Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) the opportunity to serve in this regard.

**I SO MOVE.**

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**Senator (Dr.) Kabiru Ibrahim Gaya**  
*Chairman*

.....  
**Dr. Bello Olatunji Babatunde**  
*Committee Clerk*

**ENDORSEMENT PAGE**

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON INDEPENDENT NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION (INEC)**

**MEMBERSHIP**

1. Senator (Dr.) Kabiru Ibrahim Gaya - Chairman:.....
2. Senator Sahabi Alhaji Y'au - Vice Chairman: .....
3. Senator Ike Ekweremadu - Member: .....
4. Senator Teslim Folarin K. - Member: .....
5. Senator Bala Ibn Na'allah - Member: .....
6. Senator Ibrahim Shekarau - Member: .....
7. Senator Abubakar Kyari - Member: .....
8. Senator Sadiq S. Umar - Member: .....
9. Senator Gyang D. Istafanus - Member: .....
10. Senator Ahmed Baba Kaita - Member: .....
11. Senator Yahaya L. Gumau - Member: .....
12. Senator Michael Opeyemi Bamidele - Member: .....
13. Senator Seriake Dickson - Member: .....
14. Senator Stella Oduah - Member: .....
15. Senator Ifeanyi Ubah - Member: .....
16. Senator Frank Chukwuma Ibezim - Member: .....
- Dr. Bello Olatunji Babatunde - Asst. Dir./C'ttee Clerk:.....

**Dated this 13<sup>th</sup> Day of July, 2021**