COMMUNIQUÉ ISSUED AT ONE DAY NORTH – WEST ZONAL TOWN HALL MEETING ON MONITORING OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE (CONSTITUTION REVIEW) ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY IN NIGERIA HELD AT CITY GUEST INN HOTEL CONFERENCE HALL, G.R.A, BIRNIN KEBBI ON THE 19TH SEPTEMBER, 2013.

PREAMBLE:

The Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC) with support from DGD office of the United Nation Development Program (UNDP) organized one day North West Zonal Town Hall meeting on Monitoring of Democratic Governance (Constitution Review) on Public Accountability in Nigeria. The meeting was attended by participants representing CSOs, CBOs, FBOs, NLC, Disability groups, women organizations and the media. There were 62 participants in attendance drawn from seven states within the zone (Sokoto, Kebbi, Zamfara, Katsina, Jigawa, Kano and Kaduna). After critical brainstorming and discussions among various stakeholders, on the thematic issue 'Examining Critical Issues in the ongoing Constitution amendment with Public Accountability in Perspective', the participants observed as follows:

OBSERVATIONS

- The dwelling corruption in public revenue, expenditure and finance management and due process has adversely affected the accountability framework in the country.
- Lack of accountability in the budgetary process has resulted to weak policies implementation by the State Houses of Assembly.
- Citizens are not well-informed of their roles and responsibilities to hold political leaders accountable for their constitutional mandates.
- Weak nature of the existing laws establishing Local Government administration has paved way for governors to appoint sole administrators rather than elected officials into local government councils.
- Persistent failure in the established Accountant General and Auditor General offices to provide desirable accountability to the people.
• Weaknesses in Code of Conduct Bureau as elected officials have resisted declaration of assets and failed to maintain oath of office.

RECOMMENDATION:

• The National/State Houses of Assembly should carry out more oversights on budget monitoring and avoid allocation penalties to MDAs under any investigation; as this will further put public accountability to question.
• In order to allow for the timely passage of the National/State budgets and discipline in expenditure, it was resolved that budgets must be submitted by the executive to the National/State Assemblies for approval not later than 90 days before the expiration of the fiscal year.
• CSOs should strengthen the fight against impunity by mobilizing and educating the people on areas to interrogate and do evidence-based advocacy as a panacea for sustainable development.
• The Local Government should have the first line charge for the strengthening of local government administrations and push for financial autonomy.
• Clear distinction between Accountant-General of the Federation/State and the Auditor–General to guarantee the independence of the Auditor General’s office.
• In order to stem impunity, immediate removal of immunity clause for president, vice president, governor and deputy governor was strongly recommended.

CONCLUSION:

The participants expressed their appreciation to CISLAC for embarking on the Meeting and to UNDP for providing the support to the important program channeled towards deepening democracy as well as knowledge amongst stakeholders on Public Accountability. They expressed gratitude to the organizers noting that the engagement was revealing and indeed an opportunity to begin to create bigger conversation amongst players in the Constitutional review process.
Signed:

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