CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS WORKING ON WORKING GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND GOVERNANCE ADVOCACY IN NIGERIA COMMEND THE APPOINTMENT OF MRS. AMINA ZAKARI AS ACTING INEC CHAIRPERSON

The recent appointment of Mrs. Amina Bala Zakari as the Acting Chairman of Nigeria’s foremost Independent National Electoral Commission after the expiration of Prof. Attahiru Jega’s tenure has generated unnecessary negative comments from the opposition party. It is therefore with dismay that Nigerian Women activists decry the recent hue and cry over this well-deserved appointment by President Muhammadu Buhari.

It must be noted that Mrs. Amina Zakari has been a serving commissioner with the INEC and has shared in the successes of the Prof. Jega led administration which is marked by transparency, fairness and free electoral process. She has also distinguished herself as she is among the six (6) commissioners penciled out for the proposed position of Chairman/chairperson of INEC.

The President’s act of appointing Mrs. Zakari has been characterized as nepotism but as gender activists, we believe that judging by Mrs. Zakari’s antecedent, she was appointed based on merit. It is noteworthy that the integrity of the Acting Chairperson has not been questioned which should be the major consideration given the delicate and politically sensitive role of the institution. Hence, we applaud the effort of the President Muhammed Buhari for taking the first step toward fulfilling his electoral promise to empower Nigerian women. Therefore, the appointment of a woman to head this great institution that has successfully conducted two general elections in 2011 and 2015 is not only unprecedented but shows sensitivity to gender equality.

As has been bandied about by some groups that Mrs. Amina Zakari’s appointment overrules the mandate of Prof. Attahiru Jega, we wish to disabuse the minds of the general populace on this issue as it is the constitutional right of Mr. President to appoint whoever he wishes to steer the hallowed tide of INEC as an acting chairman/chairperson. In the same vein, the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria can also appoint the Chairman of the Commission as a constitutional mandate. Therefore the appointment of a woman to head this
great institution that has done Nigeria proud with two elections conducted since 2011 to 2015 is not only unprecedented by shows sensitivity to gender equality.

The fear that the appointment could lead to tinkering with electoral processes should be allayed as the former Chairman of INEC made great effort to set up strong institution that any attempt by future leaders of the commission to thwart the processes will be easily detected. It is obvious that Mrs. Zakari also has impeccable record that has not been faulted by any including the opposition party. We therefore call on all and sundry to encourage leadership of women by working with Mr. President to show gender sensitivity and strike that equitable balance.

Nigerians should do their best to encourage any effort by President Muhammadu Buhari to include women in governance as this is a new era, and globally gender inclusion to improve social development.

We therefore commend the action of President Muhammadu Buhari in appointing a woman to head INEC in the capacity of an acting Chairperson. We call on the President to live up to the promise of his manifesto to increase the number of women in positions of authority.

We call on all the tiers of government to support the effort of President Muhammadu Buhari to encourage gender inclusiveness in all levels of governments as this is a prerequisite for development.

We therefore call on aggrieved parties to sheath their swords as this act of Mr. President is in good fate and for the good of our land. In the eventuality that Mr. President takes a wrong step, our group will not hesitate to point that out.

We further request that gender inclusiveness should be felt in all the political parties and stress that women be included in party structure leadership positions.

Signed:

1. Auwal Ibrahim Musa (Rafsanjani)
Executive Director
CISLAC

2. Chief Joy Ezeilo
Women Aids Collective (WACOL)

3. Mr. Anya Okeke
State of the Union (SOTU)

4. Dr. Aminu Garba
Accountability for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health in Nigeria (AMHiN)

5. Advocacy Nigeria
Hajiya Bilkisu Yusuf

6. Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA)
Hajiya Saudatu Mahadi

7. Women In Nigeria
Chioma Kanu

8. Women Advocates' Research and Documentation Center (WARDC)
Abiola Akiyode-afolabi

9. West Africa Civil Society Forum (WACSOF-Nigeria)
Salaudeen Hashim

10. Federation of Muslim Women Associations of Nigerian (FOMWAN)
Asmau Adamu

11. Centre for Democracy and Development
Idayat Hassan

12. Partners on Electoral Reform
Ezenwa Nwagwu,

13. Centre for Information Technology And Development (CITAD)
YZ Ya.u