

Stakeholders Seek Review Of NBC Act



L-R: (Seated) Mrs. Stella Erhunmwunse, Staff of the National Broadcasting Commission, NBC, Mr. Modibbo Kawu, Director General of the Commission, Dr Akin Akingbulu, Executive Director, Institute for Media and Society, IMS and other participants at the validation of the review of NBC Act in Abuja, recently.

Media stakeholders in the country have called for the review of the National Broadcasting Commission Act to secure the regulatory independence and sustainable funding of the Commission within the ambits of federal law and in consonance with regional and international instruments.

At a workshop in Abuja on the review of the NBC Act organized by the Institute for Media and Society, IMS, on Tuesday, June 5, the stakeholders presented and discussed position papers. This was followed on June 30-31 with a validation meeting which formulated a plan for possible promulgation by the government to create a more resourced, vibrant, robust and independent National Broadcasting Commission, NBC, in the country.

Participants were drawn from stakeholder institutions such as the academia, Broadcasting Organisations of Nigeria (BON), Media NGOs, National Broadcasting Commission, (NBC), Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE), National Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ), Radio, Television and Theatre Arts Workers Union (RATTAWU) and the Nigerian Institute of Journalism (NIJ).

Prior to the meeting, the stakeholders had been primed ahead of time, following the consultative meetings the IMS held with the NBC in Abuja on February, 19 and in Ilorin, Kwara State, on March 7. Issues identified and discussed at the previous meetings included the review of the NBC Act, training of the

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IMS Inaugurates Media Monitoring Centres

As part of its activities under the European Union Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria, EU-SDGN, the Institute for Media and Society, IMS, has inaugurated media monitoring centres in some strategic locations across the country.

The centres would serve as offices for media monitors, who have been selected and trained by professional experts at a three-day training workshop on media monitoring.

At the three-day training workshop held in Ikeja, Lagos, Southwest Nigeria from June 11 to 13, media experts including Mr. Edetaen Ojo, the Executive Director of Media Rights Agenda, MRA,

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and Engr. Segun Bamgbade, took the monitors on various topics dealing with the practicalities and the technicalities of the monitoring process.

The Executive Director of the IMS, Dr. Akin Akingbulu, in his welcome address, told the monitors to justify their selection and training by upholding due diligence, accuracy and conciseness in monitoring media coverage of the in the broadcast media in their areas of coverage of the electoral process ahead of the 2019 general elections.

At the end of the training, the monitors expressed delight with the outcome. They noted that though they had some media experience, the media monitoring training was a completely new exposure for them.

Speaking on behalf of the trainees, Damilola Agbaje told **Media4DemocracyNG** that the training gave them a fresh perspective in media monitoring.

She said: “It was a very great experience. We have had some media experience but we have learnt new things. Though I have monitored the media before, I never took into cognizance the issue of media ownership on objectivity in news reporting. Also, I now know why radio and television stations are rated higher than other media. This is due to the use of sound bites in their reporting”.

The media monitors expressed their gratitude to the Institute for Media and Society and the European Union for the

EU-SDGN Project and pledged to be diligent and decorous in their conduct.

The monitoring centres have since come alive at the various locations in Lagos, Port Harcourt, Yola and Kaduna. There, the monitors will track private and government-owned broadcast stations for contents on political and current affairs programmes broadcast in English and indigenous languages ahead, during and after the 2019 polls.

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Commission’s staff, collaboration between the NBC and the Broadcasting Organizations of Nigeria, BON, on the coverage of the 2019 elections.

Following an exhaustive debate on the issues in line with global best practices, the stakeholders arrived at a broad based consensus on the need to review the enabling law that liberalises the broadcasting sector and recommended amendments for validation.

During the validation exercise on June 30-31, in Abuja, each of the stakeholders took turns to make suggestions and advanced reasons for support of the exercise.

The Broadcasting Organisations of Nigeria, BON, solicited cooperation of members towards the realisation of the review of the NBC Act.

RATTAWU stated that NBC Act must recognize that only media professionals are appointed Chief Executive of broadcast stations.

Dr. Samson Shuaibu, ex-DG of the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, FRCN, stated that the NBC Act, like the FRCN Act, is outdated and praised IMS for organising the stakeholders meeting. According to him, “IMS is laying foundation for broadcast revolution in Nigeria”

The Nigeria Union of Journalists said the NBC will be final beneficiary of the reviewed Act and suggested that the tenure and efficiency of DG of government-owned broadcast media should also be a main focus of the review and validation.

The Nigerian Guild of Editors, NGE expressed full support for the recommendations for the review of NBC Act, while the NBC DG, Modibo Kawu, expressed the hope that the Act would be reviewed in accordance with the recommendations of the Abuja meeting.

In addition to validating the recommendations, the stakeholders also generated and approved an advocacy plan for the review process under three pillars targeted at the media, academia, civil society groups, lawmakers, broadcasting regulators, strategic government officials as well as the production, publication and dissemination of the reviewed act document.

All agreed that if the validated recommendations become substantive law, the stakeholders meeting would have achieved its objective, which is to insulate the NBC from political interference, assure secured funding and independence for the Commission.

This will lead to the achievement of the third specific objective: ‘Enhanced capacity of media regulator to perform its mandate.’

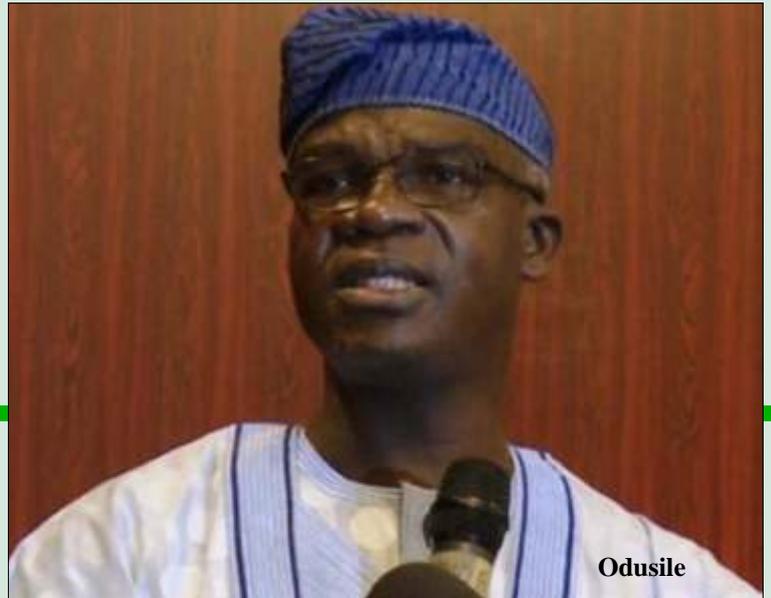


Media monitors at the Port Harcourt centre.

The Media Is Ready for 2019 Polls Coverage, Says Odusile, NUJ President

Mr Waheed Odusile wears three powerful caps as a journalist; he works for The Nation Newspaper where he is the Managing Editor; he is the President of the Nigeria Union of Journalists, NUJ and President of the Federation of African Journalists, FAJ, a regional association with 50,000 journalists in Africa.

In this interview with Media4DemocracyNG, he speaks on the challenges facing the profession, the ongoing plans to address them and the readiness of the media to professionally cover the 2019 polls. Excerpts:



Odusile

You attended a recent stakeholders' confab on the media and gender sensitiveness. As an experienced journalist, would you say the media is gender sensitive in terms of reportage and appointments?

To a large extent I would say yes because the media do not discriminate in the reportage of people and events as long as such events and personalities are of public interest. In terms of appointments, subject to availability and competence, I would also say yes.

In press parlance, journalists are usually addressed as gentlemen of the press. Isn't that an indication that the profession is gender biased?

That is just an old cliché whose origin is probably as old as the press itself. It could be due to the fact that there are more males than females in the media. Does it then mean that journalism is gender neutral? To the extent that there is no preferential treatment for any of the sexes, one can say yes.

Are there instances you can cite from experience, which appears to validate or challenge the view that the media plays a big role in gender mainstreaming as it affects the women folk.?

I can't recall any now but I believe the media plays a big role in gender mainstreaming but may be not consciously

What would you suggest as way out?

Re-orientation of the media, especially the managers. Also get more women involved.

The 2019 polls would take place in six months time. Would you say the media is prepared professionally for effective coverage?

Though there can never be enough preparation on the part of the media for the coverage of the 2019 election, I believe the mainstream media is well prepared. Don't forget 2019 would be the 6th general election in Nigeria since the advent of this democracy and the media has been part of the exercise since the first one and every election cycle we improve. So we are ready.

During the 2015 polls, media coverage, especially by some broadcasting organizations carried libelous and defamatory stories. Some stakeholders have put it down to reportorial inexperience, while others say it has to do with the ownership structure. As the 2019 polls approach there are fears of a repeat performance on a worse scale. Do you share this view and if so what can be done?

We have learnt our lessons in the media from the 2015 experience and I am optimistic that 2019 would be different. Stakeholders are really prepared. A revised media code of ethics for election coverage put together by the stakeholders was

recently launched to guide against such ethical misconduct noted in the media in the buildup to the 2015 elections.

A recent study entitled Broadcast Media Readiness and Engagement of Electoral Issues Towards the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria, identified some professional challenges facing the media as inexperienced journalists who cover and report elections and those who need training on hate speech. Apart from regular capacity training, what other way do you think such challenges can be addressed?

I think constant training and re-training of not just the reporters on the field but also the managers back in the office, is very crucial to addressing this problem.

With the advent of social media, fake news appears to be posing challenge to ethical coverage of news, particularly in emerging democracies like ours with low level of education and infrastructural development. What is your take on this?

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L-R: Mr Ayode Longe, Dr Akin Akingbulu, Executive Director, IMS, the facilitator, Mr Edetaen Ojo, Executive Director, Media Rights Agenda, MRA and Mr Segun Bamgbade, during the 3-day training for media monitors in Lagos, recently.



A cross-section of INFC National Commissioners at the Outreach at UNILAG, Lagos



Mr Ketil Karlsen, European Ambassador to Nigeria and W/Africa, at the 2nd INEC Campus Outreach at UNILAG, Lagos



A cross-section of participants at the Validation Seminar on the Review of the NBC Act in Abuja



UNILAG Student Outreach, UNILAG



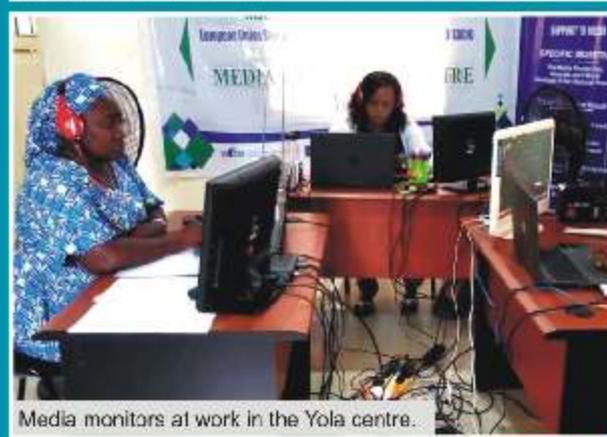
Media monitors undergoing a 3-day training in Lagos.



Media monitors at work in the Kaduna centre.



Professor Mahmood Yakubu, INEC Chairman at the 2nd INEC Campus Outreach at UNILAG, Lagos

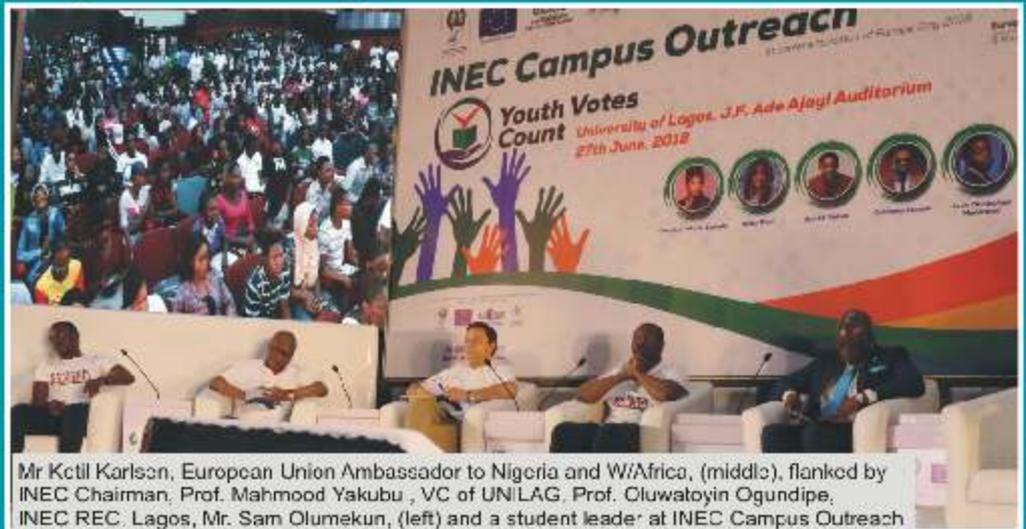


Media monitors at work in the Yola centre.

Participants at Events Organised by DGN Project, in Abuja and Lagos.



Participants at the 2nd INEC Campus Outreach



Mr Ketil Karlson, European Union Ambassador to Nigeria and W/Africa, (middle), flanked by INEC Chairman, Prof. Mahmood Yakubu, VC of UNILAG, Prof. Oluwalayin Ogundipe, INEC REC, Lagos, Mr. Sam Olumekun, (left) and a student leader at INEC Campus Outreach



Students at the 2nd INEC Campus Outreach at UNILAG, Lagos



Student volunteers for INEC at the 2nd INEC Campus Outreach at UNILAG, Lagos



L-R: Resource Persons: Comedian, AY, Actress Omotola Jalade Ekeinde, Comedienne/Actress Helen Paul and Comedian Bright Okpocha, aka, Basket Mouth, during the 2nd INEC Campus Outreach at UNILAG, Lagos

'Political Parties Must Cue Into The Not Too Young to Run Act'



Mr. Samson Itodo, ED of YIAGA and Segun Samuel of Media4DemocracyNG during an interview on the sidelines of the INEC Campus Outreach in Lagos.

The Executive Director of Youth Initiative for Advocacy, Growth and Advancement (YIAGA), Samson Itodo has called on political parties to key into the *Not Too Young To Run* law by creatively involving the youths in all their operations and organisations.

According to him, political parties should reserve at least 50 per cent of their elective offices for the youths; this he considered the next step appropriate since the bill became law on May 31, when it was

signed by President Muhammadu Buhari.

Speaking with *Media4DemocracyNG*, he said: “The next step is first for political parties to key into the new bill. Political parties should promote internal democracy and ensure they reserve at least 50 percent of their elective offices for Young people”

While encouraging the youths to be focused and undeterred by the huge cost of running for political office, he also

called on them not to take too seriously Buhari's advice that Youths should wait till 2023 before contesting for elections.

“The President shouldn't be taken too seriously, he was only joking, so, the Youth who feels he or she is qualified to contest for President in 2019 should feel free to do so as the constitution now allows it”

Itodo has also cleared the misconception about the Youth not supporting themselves, especially those who have shown interest in holding political offices.

“I don't think that the Youths are opposed to these young aspirants who are their own. It is the same way the elderly treats other adult aspirants who indicate interest in political office. We have young people who think they have what it takes to provide excellent leadership for the country, so, let them come out and contest so that they can provide the right leadership, Nigeria needs it”

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The earlier we tackled the menace of the social media, the better.

The media is a vital stakeholder of the democratic project in Nigeria. As the current President of the Nigeria Union of Journalists can you give a birds eye view of the challenges facing the profession?

The challenges are many but not insurmountable. They range from poor infrastructure to work with, lack of training and most importantly, poor remuneration. And in some cases, non-payment or late payment of salaries.

What is the umbrella organization of Nigerian journalists doing to solve the

problems?

At the Nigeria Union of Journalists, we are tackling these challenges headlong, especially poor remuneration/late or non-payment of salaries. We are working on a special media salary for all workers in the media, especially journalists, that would take care of the peculiarities of our work. We have been in discussions with government, which remain the biggest employer of journalists in the country, over this. Once we reach an agreement with government on this we would engage the private sector so that we can have a collective agreement signed with all the employers on this. We are hopeful that we shall succeed. We have been sending our members on training both locally and

abroad whenever the opportunity arises, for them to sharpen their skills. We have successfully raised and addressed these issues in some media houses that are in the habit of owing workers salaries, to pay the backlog. Few are still reluctant to do that and we've had cause to drag them to the Ministry of Labour. We are also exploring the legal option.

From experience, would you say the public perception of Nigerian journalist is fair? Or to put it in another way. How would you describe the journalists of today in terms of qualification, work habit and training?

I would say the public perception of the journalist in Nigeria could be better.

Stakeholders Woo Youths On Active Participation in Democratic Process

The clamor for active youth involvement in Nigeria's democratic process has continued to receive a boost with the ongoing organization of sensitization tours of university campuses in the country by stakeholders.

Under the European Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria, EU-SDGN project, the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, the European Centre for Electoral Support, ECES and the Youth Initiative for Advocacy, Growth and Advancement, YIAGA, organized the second campus outreach in the University of Lagos, UNILAG, on Wednesday, May 13.

The tour was tagged, **Youth Votes Count**.

At the well attended event, which attracted the media, NGOS, comedians, actors and actresses, the organizers took turns to enlighten the youths on the social, political and economic implications of

UNILAG undergraduates to register and get their Permanent Voters Card, PVC, ahead of 2019 general election.

“We have registered 9.7 million people since the continuous voters registration exercise commenced last year. And a majority of them are youths. Do not say my vote won't count because this time around your votes will count,” the INEC boss told the gathering.

On hand to add spark to the occasion were celebrities including Nollywood actress, Omotola Jalade-Ekeinde, comedienne and actress, Helen Paul, comedian, Bright Okpocha, popularly known as Basketmouth and comedian, AY. They added their voices in calling on the students and all eligible youths to register, get their PVCs and vote in next year's general election. They appealed to them to shun vote buyers who are out to violate the sanctity of the ballot with their tempting, but short-lived 'bags of salt, cash and other

vote in the 2019 general elections.

Inspired by the event, many of the students in attendance gladly submitted themselves to be inaugurated as INEC Volunteers for the voter registration center that was opened on the campus.

The event had in attendance some Resident Electoral Commissioners, other top INEC officials, the Executive Directors of Institute for Media and Society, IMS, Dr Akin Akingbulu and International Press Center, IPC, Mr Lanre Arogundade.

PVC Collection Ends One Week to 2019 General Polls

The Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, has ended the Continuous Voters Registration exercise, effective, Friday, August 31, with the information that voters can still collect their PVC a week to the general elections on February 16, 2019.

An internal memo to Resident Electoral Commissioners, REC, signed by Secretary to the Commission, Mrs. Augusta Ogakwu, disclosed that the decision was taken following consultative meetings with major stakeholders.

INEC, however, made room for late registrants by opening everyday beginning August 1, including weekend and public holidays for voters' registration until the August 31 deadline.

The electoral umpire informed eligible voters that the collection of permanent voters cards would continue until a week before the beginning of the general election in 2019.

The presidential election, according to INEC timetable, would take place on February 16, 2019.

INEC stated that the suspension of the Continuous Voters Registration was to allow the commission process the permanent voters cards of those registered ahead of the 2019 general election.

Giving a breakdown of the data for the exercise, INEC Chairman, Professor Mahmood Yakubu, said “As at June 22, 2018 fresh registration is 9,922,619, PVC Collection, 576,346; request for transfer, 489,354 and request for replacement of PVCs, 766,435. What this means is that since the commencement of CVR on April 27, 2017, about 10 million Nigerians have been registered and this will be added to existing register of 70 million voters”.



Mr Ketil Karlsen, European Union Ambassador to Nigeria and W/Africa, (middle), flanked by INEC Chairman Prof. Mahmood Yakubu , VC of UNILAG, Prof. Oluwatoyin Ogundipe, INEC REC, Lagos, Mr. Sam Olumekun, (left) and a student

their active participation in the democratic process for the growth and development of the country.

Chairman of INEC, Prof. Mahmood Yakubu assured the audience that technology would be deployed during the 2019 general election to ensure free and fair conduct of the polls, especially in the area of the transmission of results from polling to collation centers.

He said the electronic transmission of results would guard against manipulation of election outcome and appealed to the

material attractions', often offered at voting periods.

In his contribution, the European Union Ambassador to Nigeria and West Africa, Mr Ketil Karlsen noted that the EU was committed to the country's democratization and was offering support to ten organizations in Nigeria to strengthen democratic institutions as part of its contribution.

Some of the students, who spoke to our correspondent after the event, expressed their delight and vowed to register and

Electoral Offences: INEC - ECES Train Prosecution Staff, Police

As part of measures to address the controversial issue posed by electoral offences and fine-tune the electoral process towards the conduct of free, fair and credible polls in 2019, the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC with support from the European Centre for Electoral Support, ECES, organised a 2-day training for legal officers of the Commission and police officers in Ilorin, Lagos and Enugu.

In all three locations, the training was to boost the capacity of the Commission's legal officers in charge of handling election petitions and frontloading of evidence and police officers tasked with prosecution of electoral offences.

Proper interpretation and application of the electoral rules in consonance with existing laws and global best practices require constant training for the legal officers who have the primary responsibility of ensuring that elections and indeed other activities of the Commission are conducted legally.

Most recently, the training, funded under the European Union Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria, EU-SDGN project, took place in Enugu on August 6-7.

As usual, the topics addressed at the training were targeted at strengthening the institutional capacity of INEC to address legal issues. The presentations which were exhaustively deliberated are Election Dispute Resolution and Best Practices; Strength and Weaknesses of the 2015 Elections from Legal Perspective; Potential Impact of the 2018 Electoral Act; Modern Drafting Techniques, Opinion Writing, Brief Writing and Election Petitions; Practice, Procedure and Advocacy.

Participants at the Enugu event comprised legal officers from the headquarters and state offices of the Commission as well as police officers charged with prosecution of electoral offences.

Resource persons at the training included former Inspector General of Police, Solomon Arase, Prof. Oritsematosan Edodo-Emore, among others.



ECES and INEC officials during the training for the Commission's legal officers and the police on electoral offences

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