

Memorandum Submitted by the Nigerian Women's Trust Fund to the Constitutional and Electoral Reform Committee at the Public Hearing held at Transcorp Hilton Hotel, Abuja on Thursday 30th March, 2017

The Chairman, Committee on Constitutional & Electoral Reform

Introduction: The Nigeria Women's Trust Fund (Women Fund) is an unusual coalition of civil society, government and development partners established in 2011 as a technical and financial resource that works to close the gender gaps in governance at all levels.

Issue: Nigerian women make up almost half of the population according to the 2006 census. However, women, youth and persons with disability occupy less than 10% of positions in public office nationwide including the hallowed chambers which has less than 6% of women in the 8th parliament. This situation is not a fair representation of the citizens of this country, neither is it inclusive. Rather, it shows a clear fundamental and systemic inadequacy in our decision-making process. Men mostly, are currently taking decisions that affect the lives of millions of men, women and children.

Our position: Women Fund recognizes that the committee has the opportunity and privilege to eliminate discrimination through an inclusive electoral law. We therefore urge the distinguished committee members to note the following:

1. That affirmative action is a requirement for encouraging and ensuring the participation of vulnerable groups like women, youth and persons with disability to participate in decision making and governance
2. That paying attention to inclusive representation of candidates on the basis of sex, age and disability by electoral management bodies and political parties is a panacea for effective and participatory governance
3. That open and transparent nomination processes are critical for good governance

Recommendations:

1. *Quotas:* amend the act to compel political parties to submit candidate lists containing not less than 35% for women, 30% for youth and 10% for persons with disability.
2. *Political Party Internal Democracy:* amend the act to adopt open and transparent nomination processes in internal party selections
3. *Funding:* amend the electoral act to compel parties to only raise campaign funds from their party members and reduce the campaign funding significantly
4. *Party Membership:* amend the act to empower INEC to deregister political parties who fail to submit a conclusive list of their membership.

Conclusion: It is important to reiterate that Nigerian women audited the Uwais Committee Report and found it to contain 60% of their aspirations for the actualization of gender parity in Nigeria. The Nigerian Women's Trust Fund therefore stands by the Uwais Report and implores this committee to adopt those recommendations.

Signed

Olufunke Baruwa

Chief Executive Officer, Nigerian Women's Trust Fund

March 29, 2017