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## Press Release

for immediate release

### **Strong electoral competition and commitment demonstrated despite systemic problems**

**ABUJA 30 March 2015** – “The European Union Election Observation Mission commends the Nigerian people for their commitment to the overall peaceful and orderly elections this weekend - despite frustration and challenges caused by often late opening of polling sites, failing biometric voter verification, some regrettable violent incidents, and re-polling on Sunday” said the EU EOM Chief Observer Santiago Fisas today during the presentation of the EU EOM’s preliminary statement in a press conference in Abuja.

The EU EOM noted “the appropriate way the security agencies operated and the typically impressive and resourceful efforts of the polling staff.” reads the statement

The Chief Observer commended INEC’s efforts to work impartially, despite difficult circumstances, strong tensions and criticisms. The EU EOM noted positively INEC’s attempts to improve the integrity of voter registration and identification by introducing biometric measures.

“INEC’s efforts to take a strong stand are commendable and particularly important given the systemic challenges”, notes the Chief Observer.

The mission concludes that “various legal shortcomings remain. Reforming the law would strengthen the electoral process and the full enjoyment of democratic rights. These include inadequate legal provisions for the right to stand, campaign finance, transparency, and opportunity for remedy.”

The EU EOM’s media monitoring reveals that “voters were able to access a variety of views through the media. However government-controlled broadcast media failed to comply with legal requirements on equitable coverage, clearly advantaging the incumbent at federal or state level. Such bias remained essentially unchallenged by the regulatory body. Positively some private media offered relatively balanced and diverse coverage of election campaigns.

The Chief Observer called on candidates, parties and citizens to respond peacefully to the announcement of results.

The EU EOM will continue observing the process until May. There will be a Final Report, with recommendations for consideration by the Nigerian authorities, to be presented to the public at a later stage.

#### **Note to Editors:**

*The European Union was invited to deploy an observation mission by the Nigerian authorities and has signed Memorandums of Understanding with the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The EU EOM is independent from any EU institutions or Member States and is committed to remain neutral and abide by the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and the Code of Conduct, as well as the laws of Nigeria. The EU EOM will remain in Nigeria also for the 11 April elections and the petition process in the coming weeks.*

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