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The Nigerian Media Code for Election Coverage

Revised edition 2022





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Preamble

WHEREAS it is an established principle that the ability of citizens to make informed choices during electoral processes strengthens democracy;

WHEREAS it is equally established that democracy thrives on good democratic practices, the kernel of which is the right of the people, to freely and knowledgeably choose their representatives;

RECOGNISING that the media enables voters to make informed choices by providing information that enhances their knowledge of electoral processes;

NOTING that the media as watchdog of the society should be catalysts of transparent electoral processes and credible, free, fair and peaceful elections;

REALISING that this obligation entails the performance of oversight, public education, open forum and conflict management roles by the media during elections;

CONSCIOUS that the effective performance of these important roles requires the observance of the highest standards of professionalism, maximum compliance with regulatory frameworks and deference to the public good and interest;

AGREEING therefore that it is desirable to have a set of guidelines that regulates the professional and ethical conduct of the media and journalists during elections;

MINDFUL of the fact that compliance with the guidelines will contribute to the conduct of credible elections and corresponding social order;

KNOWING that such guidelines should align with international standards, instruments and declarations on best practices in election reporting with the underpinning principles of:

- The right of citizens to freely express themselves and have unfettered access to information on the electoral processes;
- The right of the media to freely access and truthfully disseminate information on the electoral processes;
- The right of media access by parties, candidates and under-represented groups; and
- The promotion of democratic norms and values.

WE, the representatives of Nigerian media organisations, institutions, professional bodies and support groups, hereby agree to adopt and abide by this MEDIA CODE OF ELECTION COVERAGE

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Statement Of Broad Principles

This code is predicated on the principle and expectation that relevant stakeholders, including the Government at all levels, the Law Enforcement and Security Agencies, the Political Parties, the Election Management Body and Civil Society Organisations will contribute to the creation of an enabling environment for the media to perform its professional and social obligations during electoral processes.

I. The Government

- The government at all levels, its agencies and officials, shall ensure the safety of journalists during electoral processes, including refraining from assault or intimidation in any manner whatsoever;
- The government at all levels and its relevant agencies shall ensure prompt investigation and prosecution of any individual or group accused of assault, harassment, intimidation or other crimes against the media and journalists during electoral processes;
- The government at all levels, its agencies and officials shall channel any complaint over the conduct of journalists, including during electoral processes, to the appropriate regulatory or legal institutions and refrain from extra-judicial actions or other forms of self-help;
- The government at all levels, its agencies and officials shall ensure the free movement of journalists in any part of the

country during electoral processes and refrain from any act likely to inhibit such;

- The government at all levels shall abide by institutional, regulatory and legal frameworks requiring equitable access to state media by political parties and candidates contesting elections.

ii. Political parties

- Political parties shall respect the right of journalists to cover and report their activities and, accordingly grant them reasonable access to their events and officials for this purpose, while refraining from harassing or intimidating them in any manner whatsoever;
- Political parties should support the investigation of any act of assault, harassment, intimidation or other crimes against the media and journalists by their members or agents and ensure that alleged perpetrators are promptly brought to justice;
- Political parties shall channel any com-

plaint arising from the conduct of journalists covering their activities to institutions and refrain from extra-judicial actions or any other form of self help;

- Political parties shall provide prompt notification and adequate information about their activities;
- Political parties shall not offer bribes or other forms of inducement to journalists to publish or suppress information about themselves or their activities.

iii. The Election Management Bodies (INEC and SIEC)

- The Election management bodies; (Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and State Independent Electoral Commission (SIEC) in each of the thirty-six States of the federation, shall proactively provide the media and journalists with information on their activities, election timetables, arrangements for the elections, voting procedures and processes, and other information related to the electoral process to aid the factual and credible reporting of electoral processes;
- The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and State Independent Electoral Commission (SIEC) shall provide information and materials to the media to enable them carry out accurate and effective civic and voter education;

- The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and State Independent Electoral Commission (SIEC) should support capacity building for journalists and other media professionals on election reporting;

- The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and State Independent Electoral Commission (SIEC) shall make electoral information freely available to the media to enhance factual and credible reporting of electoral processes;

iv. Civil Society Organisations and Media Support Groups

- CSOs, including Media Support Groups, shall collaborate with the media on the conduct of civic and voter education;
- CSOs, including Media Support Groups, shall support capacity building for Journalists and other media professionals on election reporting;
- CSOs, including Media Support Groups, shall take proactive measures in the defense of the right of the media and journalists to freely report electoral processes without any form of harassment or intimidation;
- CSOs, including Media Support Groups, shall proactively share reports of their observations of the media.



Section 1.

Equitable Access

1.0. Equitable Access

The performance of campaign platform and public forum role of the media during elections requires deference to the right of parties and candidates in elections to equitable media access. This is as envisaged by legislative and institutional frameworks and other relevant instruments, including the Electoral Act (as amended), the Nigerian Broadcasting Code (as revised) and the Nigeria Press Organisation Code of Ethics. It also requires giving opportunity to under- represented groups to express their views.



Accordingly:

1.1. Parties and Candidates

The Responsibilities of Media Organisations

- 1.1.1. A broadcast medium shall ensure equitable allocation of air time at specific but similar periods for all parties contesting elections to present their manifestoes;
- 1.1.2. A media organisation shall regularly apply the principle of equity in the coverage and reportage of campaigns and other activities of parties and candidates contesting elections and shall make public any procedure put in place to achieve this.
- 1.1.3. A media organisation shall at all times uphold the right of parties and candidates

to reply to allegations made against them;

- 1.1.4. A broadcast medium shall strive to ensure the participation of all parties and candidates contesting elections in political debates.

1.2. Under-represented groups

The Responsibilities of Media Organisations

- 1.2.1. A media organisation shall, as a matter of deliberate editorial policy, target under-represented groups, especially women, youths, persons with disabilities and rural dwellers in the coverage of electoral processes;
- 1.2.2. A media organisation shall consciously



Section 2

Professionalism & Social Responsibility

2.0. Professionalism & Social Responsibility

As the key purveyor of information on the electoral processes, the media shall at all times, embrace best professional practices by acting in accordance with the principles of social responsibility.



Professionalism & Social Responsibility

Accordingly:

2.1. Fairness, Accuracy and Balance

The responsibilities of journalists

- 2.1.1 A journalist shall report elections in a fair, accurate and balanced manner;
- 2.1.2 A journalist shall report only factual electoral information;
- 2.1.3 A journalist shall verify any allegation made against a party, candidate or any other interest before publishing while reflecting all sides in the story;
- 2.1.4 A journalist shall report the views of candidates and political parties directly and in their own words, while exercising necessary professional discretion, rather than as they are interpreted by others;

- 2.1.5 A journalist shall not declare a candidate as the winner of an election unless as announced by appropriate electoral authorities

The responsibilities of media organisations

- 2.1.6 A media organisation shall ensure accurate and impartial voter education about political parties and candidates, registration, verification, voting centres, voting procedures, complaint procedures, etc, as provided by relevant laws and agencies;
- 2.1.7 A media organisation shall strive to disseminate voter education in indigenous languages and/or through messages that target under-represented groups including women, youth and persons with disabilities;
- 2.1.8 A media organisation shall uphold the right of the people to free expression by providing opportunity for under-represented groups to express their views during electoral processes.



Section 3

Ethical Conduct

3.0. Ethical Conduct

Good journalism requires decent conduct that conforms to acceptable social norms, values and ethical codes; it also requires that journalists are well resourced and are able to act independently of the subjects of their reports.



thical Conduct

Accordingly:

3.1. Integrity

The responsibilities of journalists

- 3.1.1. A journalist shall NOT solicit or accept bribes or make other pecuniary demands from parties and candidates to publish or suppress reports;
- 3.1.2. A journalist shall NOT express personal opinion as facts in reports;
- 3.1.3. A journalist shall NOT use or display any insignia of candidates and parties in the course of professional duty;

The responsibilities of media organisations

- 3.1.4. A media organisation shall respect and abide by the confidentiality of sources;
- 3.1.5. A media organisation shall provide adequate resources for journalists to independently report activities of parties and candidates;

- 3.1.6. A media organisation shall strive not to publish or air news and analyses that are one-sided.

3.2. Credibility:

The responsibilities of journalists

- 3.2.1. A journalist shall use investigative methods and instruments to ensure factual and accurate reporting of electoral processes;
- 3.2.2. A journalist shall have the duty to verify the facts and information contained in press releases and media briefings;
- 3.2.3. A journalist shall not distort or deliberately misrepresent the facts of a political or electoral issue;
- 3.2.4. A journalist shall avoid the publication of fake news and refrain from disseminating or further disseminating misinformation or disinformation.

3.3. Opinion Polls:

The responsibilities of journalists

3.3.1. A journalist shall ensure due diligence and exercise restraint in reporting the findings of election opinion polls and take care to clearly state the context, particularly:

- Those who commissioned and conducted the poll;
 - The methodology used in conducting the poll
 - The specific questions that were asked;
 - The number and diversity of people interviewed;
- and
- The limitations and margin of error of the poll.

The responsibilities of media organisations

3.3.2. A media organisation shall make use of scientific methodologies in conducting election opinion polls. They should also clearly state the context, particularly:

- The specific questions that were asked;
- The number and diversity of people interviewed;
- The limitations and margin of error of the poll.

3.4. Endorsements: The responsibilities of media organisations

3.4.1. A government-owned media organisation shall not endorse political

parties or candidate(s) for particular office(s).

3.4.2. A private media organisation that endorses candidate(s) for particular office(s) shall ensure that the endorsement does not affect its commitment to the balanced coverage of parties and candidates contesting elections.

3.5. Political advertisement:

The responsibilities of media organisations

3.5.1. A media organisation shall clearly identify political adverts and advertorials. They should refrain from presenting them as independent news or opinion of the organisation;

3.5.2. A media organisation shall not publish or air political adverts, advertorials and sponsored political news capable of inciting hatred or violence.

3.5.3. A media organisation, particularly a government-owned or controlled medium, shall not reject advertisements or advertorials by any political party and candidate in elections or otherwise deny any political party or candidate the opportunity to place paid advertisements.



Section 4

Hate Speech and Incitement

4.0. Hate Speech and Incitement

Hate speech and other forms of incitement could lead to violence and threaten the democratic fabric of a society. The social obligations of the media during elections therefore include the prevention of hate speech.

The African Commission on Human and People's Rights defines hate speech as any form of speech which degrades others, promotes hatred and encourages violence against a group on the basis of the following criteria: race, colour, religion, national origin, gender, disability or a number of other traits.



Hate Speech and Incitement

Accordingly:

The responsibilities of journalists

- 4.1. A journalist or other media professional shall use temperate language and avoid stereotypes or expressions that dehumanise aspirants or candidates or other groups on the basis of race, colour, religion, nationality, gender or disability.
- 4.2. A presenter of a programme in any broadcast medium shall refrain from pejorative comments;
- 4.3. A journalist or other media professional shall prior to a programme brief interviewees or guests on the need to avoid hateful comments;
- 4.4. A journalist or other media professional shall immediately reject and

refute hateful comments from guests/speakers in a live or recorded programme, press conference, political gathering, etc;

- 4.5. A journalist or other media professional shall immediately request his or her interviewees/guests to withdraw any hateful comments;
- 4.6. A journalist or other media professional shall not use images or pictures that contain elements of hateful representations of parties, aspirants, candidates or other groups;

The responsibilities of media organisations

- 4.7. A media organisation shall have an anti-hate speech reporting policy that clearly states, among others, that hate speech or inciting messages are not permitted on its social media platforms;

- 4.8. A media organisation shall reject any material intended for publication or airing by parties, aspirants, candidates and other interests that contains hateful or inciting words or messages;
- 4.9. A media organisation shall refrain from publishing or airing abusive editorial comments or opinions that denigrate individuals or groups on account of disability, race, ethnicity, tribe, gender, belief or other traits;
- 4.10. A media organisation shall meticulously monitor the content of its social media platforms to stop the spread of hate speech or other inciting messages;
- 4.11. A media organisation shall take advantage of fact-checking tools to avoid publishing or broadcasting unverified materials from social media platforms;
- 4.12. A broadcast medium shall, prior to a recorded or a live political debate, request participants to endorse a NO-HATE-SPEECH MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING committing them NOT to use words or expressions that disparage others on account of disability, race, ethnicity, tribe, gender, belief or other traits;
- 4.13. Media organisations shall build the capacity of journalists and other media professionals in their employment to understand hate speech and its implications.

Hate Speech
and Incitement



Section 5

Conflict Sensitivity

5.0. Conflict Sensitivity

Violent conflicts are obstacles to the conduct of free, fair and peaceful elections as they could lead to voter apathy and hinder the free performance of media roles and responsibilities during electoral processes.



Conflict

Accordingly:

The responsibilities of journalists

- 5.1. A journalist shall be conflict-sensitive and alert to early warning signals of possible outbreak of violent conflict during elections, which should be duly reported;
- 5.2. A journalist shall work for the de-escalation of violent conflicts, should they occur during elections;
- 5.3. A journalist shall give equitable opportunity to diverse sides of a political or electoral conflict to state their case;
- 5.4. A journalist shall use temperate language and non-offensive images in reporting political/electoral tensions and conflicts;

5.5. A journalist shall keep to the facts of a political/electoral conflict;

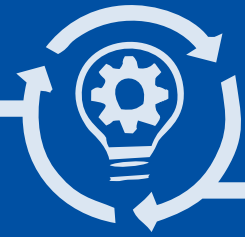
5.6. A journalist shall be cautious in reporting figures and identities of casualties of violent conflicts to avoid inflaming passions;

The responsibilities of media organisations

5.7. A media organisation shall work for the reduction of conflict and promote the common values of peace without compromising the duty to inform

;

5.8. A media organisation shall exercise professional discretion in news reporting and casting of headlines to avoid publishing or broadcasting information that may lead to or escalate violent conflict.



Section 6

Awareness, Monitoring, Implementation and Enforcement

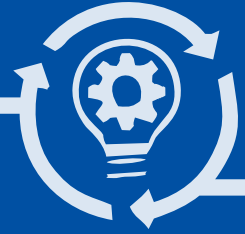
6.0. Awareness, Monitoring, Implementation and Enforcement

Internal Mechanisms



- 6.1. Media Organisations shall sensitise their editorial staff on the code to raise awareness about it and shall require them to apply the provisions of the Code in their work and reporting.
- 6.2. A media organisation shall regularly monitor its election reports to ensure compliance with the standards set out in this Code.
- 6.3. The professional organisations endorsing this Code agree to use existing internal mechanisms, including the office of the Ombudsman, Ethics Committee, Disciplinary Committee or some other such arrangement to ensure its implementation and compliance.
- 6.4. Each media organisation shall ensure that the mechanism has the requisite instruments, resources and authority to play the role effectively of ensuring compliance with the Code by both individual journalists as well as the media organisation and media umbrella professional organisations.
- 6.5. Each media organisation shall ensure that those on election coverage duty as well as other assignments are properly trained and adhere strictly to the provisions of this Code to protect the institution's credibility.

Awareness, Monitoring Implementation and Enforcement



Section 7

Endorsement

7.0. Binding provisions/effective date of operation:

Internal Mechanisms



71. The regulations in this revised code were adopted on this 14th day of October, 2022.

This code is endorsed by the following:

Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ)	N.U.J. National Secretariat, Plot 131, Cadastral Zone, Sector Center A, Jahi District, Off Mabushi Ultra Modern Market, By Father's Church, Abuja, FCT, Abuja. Email: nujnatsec@gmail.com Tel: 08034004239
Nigeria Guild of Editors (NGE)	Editors' House, 24 Mojidi Street, Off Toyin Street, Ikeja, Lagos. Email: nigerianeditors@gmail.com Tel: 08033018430
Newspapers Publishers Association of Nigeria (NPAN)	8, Maryland Crescent, Maryland Estate, Maryland, Lagos, Lagos. Email: feyismith@yahoo.co.uk npan_nigeria@yahoo.com Tel:08023046738, 08077049999
Broadcasting Organizations of Nigeria (BON)	House 3, block 6, Kano Street, Area 1, Abuja. 08033315256 .
Radio, Television, Theatre and Arts Workers Union (RATTAWU)	Sir Kesington Adebute House, Plot M408 Ext. III Kubwa Army Scheme Post Service Road, Kubwa, Abuja. Contact: President -08036317144 General Secretary -08084777235 Email:rattawu@yahoo.com

Broadcast, Print and Online Media

- Channels TV
- Voice of Nigeria (VON)
- Africa Independent Television (AIT)
- Television Continental (TVC)
- Arise TV
- Max FM
- Raypower FM
- The Punch Newspapers
- News Agency of Nigeria (NAN)
- Vanguard Newspapers
- The Sun Newspapers
- Leadership Newspaper
- This Day Newspapers
- The Guardian Newspaper
- Daily Trust Newspapers
- The Nation Newspapers
- The Triumph Newspaper
- Business Eye Magazine
- The News
- Tell
- Broad Street Journal
- Premium Times
- The Cable Newspaper
- The Next Edition
- Nigerian Tribune
- The Eagle Online
- News Express
- Newsdiaryonline
- Prompt News
- Blueprint Newspaper
- The Citizen
- Metro Watch
- The Rainbow
- World Stage
- New Mail
- Nigeria Politics Online
- Real News
- Daily Post
- Daily Review
- Quick News
- Greenbarga
- You News
- African Examiner
- Watchdog Reporters
- News Rangers
- Frontiers News
- Biztellers
- The Whistler
- Freedom Online
- New Sentinel
- IT Realms
- Global Village Extra
- EnviroNews
- Nigeria Sundiata Post
- Global Patriot
- African News Circle
- Nigeria Communications
- National Accord
- Express News
- Upshot Reports
- Qed.ng
- Daylightng
- Newsreel
- Supreme Magazine online
- Bende Analyst
- Oriental News
- The Advocate
- First African News
- The Luxury Reporter
- Citybusiness News Online
- Whirlwind News
- News Arena
- Scroll Online
- Political Economist
- News Break
- Business World
- Newsroom
- Orderpaper Nigeria
- Sahel Standard

Media Support/ Development Groups

- Nigeria Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ)
- International Press Centre (IPC)
- Media Rights Agenda (MRA)
- Institute for Media and Society (IMS)
- Premium Times Centre for Investigative Journalism (PTCIJ)
- Wole Soyinka Centre for Investigative Journalism (WSCIJ)
- Centre for Information Technology and Development (CITAD)
- International Press Institute (IPI), Nigeria.
- Association of Communication Scholars & Professionals of Nigeria (ACSPN)
- Journalists for Democratic Rights (JODER)
- Network for Media Excellence
- Media Career Development Centre (MCDC)
- Diamond Media Awards for Excellence (DAME)
- Media Law Centre
- The Journalism Clinic
- International Centre for Investigative Reporting (ICIR)
- Order paper Advocacy Initiative
- African Centre for Media & Information Literacy

Journalism Training Institutions

- Nigerian Institute of Journalism (NIJ)
- International Institute of Journalism (IIJ)

About the EU-SDGN Programme

The European Union Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria (EU-SDGN) is the EU's flagship democracy support programme in Nigeria. The programme is designed to complement the efforts of the Nigerian government to improve and strengthen democracy.

