**Report on the New York official public Launch of the Declaration Principles for Non-partisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organisation**

**Introduction**

The Launching of the Global principles at the United Nations between 3-5 of April 2012, represent a historical development in the life of election observers worldwide.

 The Declaration provides for how to ensure genuine democratic elections globally through independent, nonpartisan observation of the electoral processes and a code of conduct which spelt the behavioural pattern for all domestic observers globally.

**Conference Host/Sponsor:**

National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the United Nations Department For Electoral Assistance (UNEAD)

 **Participants:**

The Launch commenced on the 2nd of April with a Welcome Reception at the Galleries on lex, the Grand Hyatt New York Hotel, followed with a Dinner at the same venue.

The Inaugural Launch Ceremony kicked off from the 3rd of April with Distinguished world leaders who serve as the inaugural ceremony Panellists namely,

The UN Under Secretary- General for Political Affairs B. Lynn Pascoe

NDI Chairman, Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright

OAS Assistant Secretary General Albert R. Ramdin

OSCE/ Director Ambassador Janez Lenarcic

Carter Center Chairman, former US President Jimmy Carter spoke through pre- recorded Video to Participants.

Senior Associate and Director of Electoral Programs, NDI Patrick Merloe,

Deputy Director of the UN Electoral Assistance Division Ali Diabacte,

**They were supported by Citizen Election Monitoring Participants**

Abdelkhalig Shaib- Legal and political Advisor, suGDE (SUDAN)

Alejandra Barrios Cabrera- National Director, MOE and Secretary General, Acuerdo de Lima (Columbia)

Alexandra Postica-Human rights program Director, Promo-LEX Association (MOLDOVA)

Ali Mohammad Ali- Chairperson, suGDE (Sudan)

Amer Bani Amer- general Director, Al- Hayat Center (Jordan)

Franklin Oduro- Head of Research and Programs and Deputy Director , CDD Ghana,

Djeneba Diarra Kone - Executive secretary, APEM and Executive Board treasurer WAEON

Mashood Erubami- Chair Transition Monitoring Group TMG, and Chair WAEON

Other participants came from Zimbabwe, Macedonia, Peru, Lebanon, Argentina,, South Sudan, Georgia, Kenya, Slovakia, India, Thailand and Malawi.

The **Moderator** was Craig Jenness, Director UN Electoral Assistance Division.

The meeting provide a platform for discussing how the declaration will be led and owned by Non- partisan Election Observers and how its principles will be adapted into election observation practices.

Highlights of the Launch include the commemoration of the principles and the formation of citizen election monitoring panel to discuss Global Network of domestic election monitoring (GNDEM) from the perspectives of six regional blocks of the world.

 **Africa**, was represented by Mashood Erubami, Chair of WAEON, Peter Alingo and Rindai Chipfunde Vava from East Africa Network Initiative and SADC- Election Support Network respectively.

 **Other Discussants**  came from Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Middle East and North Africa. The panel was moderated by Patrick Merloe.

Other highlights include establishing a working session on “Developing consensus for Declaration Implementation” and Entrenching the Declaration into Non –Partisan Citizen Election Observation Practice, focussing on practical ways that the Declaration can be entrenched into non-partisan citizen observation practices through ,

. Using the declaration in training of observers;

. Requesting observers to sign the declarations code of conduct

. Promoting the declaration among other like-minded civil society organisations and encouraging adherence to the Declarations principles amongst signatories.

The meeting also discussed how to use the declaration with National Authorities and the International Community towards enhancing the legal framework for citizen election observation through engaging with Parliaments and others involved with legislation and public policy development,

. Engaging the electoral authorities, public security agencies and other relevant government bodies to ensure accreditation and legal recognition,

. Engaging with and educating the media about credible citizen election observation and the role of the declaration and

. Engaging with representatives of international community concerning credible citizen election observation and the role of the declaration.

At the end each region provided action plans for entrenching the declaration in the work of observers in their various regions.

The WAEON suggested actions PLAN is attached herewith as an Appendix.

**Appendix 1**

**ENTRENCHING THE PRINCIPLES IN THE WORK S OF ELECTION OBSERVERS.**

The launching of the principles is one step from development of the ideas behind the principles. As the launching is being concluded in New York, WAEON hereby offer the following strategic ideas for action as the next step towards promoting implementationand global recognitionfor the principles**.**

 **Strategy 1**

**Establishment of a Co-ordinating structure at global, regional and country levels**

1. To reinforce regional charters and international instruments
2. To serve as the institutional clearing house for information gathering and knowledge sharing.

**Strategy 2**

**MEDIA STRATEGY**

**Advocacy visit to the media to sensitize it to the content**, relevance and need for the media to redirect the attention of stakeholders to support the principles and put pressure to bear on legislature particularly to create the legal framework for the implementation of the principles either in the electoral Act or the Constitution.

1. Organising strategic media briefings and conferences to highlight the state of the principles and giving regular updates.
2. Organising media Launch/Forum for journalist for better understanding of the intent of the principles and the code of conduct for Non- Partisan Election Observers, so as to guide and enrich their strategies for dissemination of information relating to the declaration.
3. Organising regular strategic meetings to brief the Press on the status of the declaration.
4. Organising Radio Magazine programs to reach out to the mass of the Nigerian People who will be beneficiaries of credible election and who form the mass base for recruiting the grass root Observers.
5. Using the outlet of new social and traditional media to reach out to subscribers within their jurisdiction.
6. Conduct media training and awareness rising for journalists on the principles.

**Strategy 3**

 **Legislative Advocacy**

Organising regular advocacy visits to the Legislature especially relevant committees on Electoral and constitutional reforms to advert their attention to the existence of the principles and what can be jointly done with the Civil Society to create legal framework for enablement of the implementation of the principles to recognize the rights of the citizens Observers.

**Strategy 4**

**Community Organizing**

1. **Reflecting the contents of the declarations in the Training manual for observers and making the observers to sign on to the code of conduct and pledge attached to the principles.**

**b. Bringing the community of Observers and stakeholders in the electoral process together through organising public hearing /Town Hall Meeting** to sensitize them to the significance of these principles and the need to join hands together to influence the government to endorse the principles as a direct tool that can guarantee credible and legitimate elections.

**c. Advocacy or Courtesy visit to the security Agencies, political parties, CSOs** or bringing the stakeholders together using such space to bring the content of the global principles into their common understanding

**STRATEGY 5.**

 **Engagement of the election management bodies** as partners to influence the inclusion of the principles in the electoral reform initiatives of the body to affect the policy of the body.

**STRATEGY 6**

**Lobbying of Regional Organisations** like the ECOWAS and the AU AND SADC in Africa to support and secure endorsement for the Global Principles.

**STRATEGY 7**

**Strengthening the CSOs community** as the necessary driving force to advance the principles in their communities using Regional Civil Society Networks to ensure that their member in counties are supportive of the principles and adhere to the code of conduct in all their monitoring efforts.

**STRATEGY 8**

**Engagement of Regional and International Development Institutions**

1. For support and commitment on the Principles
2. Integrate declaration into existing expert Networks and training programs such as ACE knowledge project.
3. Pressuring international development Agencies to make endorsement and implementation of declaration a condition for aid.

**STRATEGY 9**

**Building a mass movement of Validators such as media Executives Opinion Columnists, Church and Islamic Scholars who support elections with integrity to speak about the principles publicly to ensure wider support base by political Authorities on the** implementation of the principles.

**STRATEGY 10**

**Set out a commemorative Day every year** to be organized simultaneously in GNDEM member countries to supports the declarations with a symbolic statement and using the context to review the status of the Declaration, highlight challenges, opportunities since its commemoration on the 3rd of April 2012 at the UN and designing possible ways out.

 Such occasion should also be used to visit stakeholder institutions in the countries, Regions and critical friends across the globe.

Mashood Erubami

**Chair**

**WEST AFRICAN ELECTION OBSERVERS NETWORK (WAEON)**