

VOTERS' REGISTRATION: UTOMI TASK ELECTORATES, INEC

The convener of the Restoration Group and Presidential Aspirant, Prof Pat Utomi has urged all Nigerian of voting age to come out en mass and participate in the forthcoming INEC voter's validation exercise billed to commence this weekend. Utomi stated this while addressing a large crowd of students from various institutions in Nigeria who paid him a solidarity visit. He said the voters card present another golden opportunity for Nigerians to reclaim their mandate from corrupt politicians and entrust that same mandate to highly credible Nigerians who can chart the positive future of this country.

He warned against the attitude of apathy and violence usually displayed by Nigerians during exercise of this nature only to cry wolf when elections have been won and lost. He reiterated his position that now, rather than the future belongs to the youths and therefore every opportunity provided for them to shape the future today such as the voters registration exercise should be fully utilized by them, Prof Utomi said no stone should be left unturned by the youths, the market women and indeed all professional groups in this country to ensure that Nigeria takes its rightful place in the comity of nations and that this can be done through the enthronement of corruption-free, transparently executed, all inclusive electoral process that will encourage economic freedom through a socially responsible democratic government.

Prof Utomi also used the opportunity to condemn the recent bounced 20 billion cheque issued to INEC by the Federal government which was widely reported by all national media as a sad development he said it is a bad omen and indeed a grand design to frustrate the operations of the commission, he urged the Central Bank of Nigeria to as a matter of urgency rectify whatever may have been the cause of the flop so that INEC can position itself for the task ahead as this is the only way to avoid inefficiencies and shoddy preparation against the 2007 elections.

On party platform, Prof Utomi allayed the fears of the students and announced that in the next few weeks, he will launch his presidential campaign on a platform that will have a national outlook in which all Nigerians will be proud to be associated and also vote into office. He said he had the platform of the African democratic Congress and a good working arrangement with the Labour Party, APGA, AD and the National Conscience Party and indeed others who will help broaden the base of the platform.

Meanwhile a leading nationwide youth group, the National Youth Democratic Association (**N.Y.D.A**) has said that it will mobilize young people to police the votes of the Nigerian people during the 2007 elections.

Speaking through its Coordinator, Prince Henry Ezike when a 15 person delegation of the Association called on Presidential Aspirant, Professor Pat Utomi in Abuja. The Association said its founding was inspired by a widespread abuse of the will of the people in the fraudulent vote-rigging during the 2003 elections.

In the address of the coordinator of NDYA during the visit, Prince Ezike said the group was resolved to searching for a credible candidate to support in 2007 so that the myriad of problems threatening the future of the youth would be overcome. He said that the criteria they evolved for evaluating Presidential Aspirants include "someone who can transform our economy through actions and not mere promises", selfless Nigerians who are willing to make personal sacrifices, someone who can run a government devoid of tribalism, religion and ethnicity and someone who plans to empower the youths. He added that the President they had in mind must also have the fear of God.

According to the NDYA this search led them to Prof. Pat Utomi who is an icon and had been role model for many years. He went further to say they were looking to identify similar persons who they would urge to contest gubernatorial elections at the state level.

In his response, Prof. Pat Utomi said he was pleasantly surprised by the address, noting that he did not know what to make of the request for a meeting. He said he assumed many of such groups were contrived. He promised the group that youth empowerment is a core part of his agenda. The Presidential Aspirant pointed out that his topmost priority was job creation which would necessarily benefit the youths as most young people were out of job or unable to find quality jobs. Other key issues on his top priority listing, Utomi continued, included security of life and property and food security through making agriculture profitable and attractive to young people. He further added that shaping the values of Nigeria through exemplary leadership was the driving element of his priorities and that such a re-orientation of values and an ethical revolution will make Nigerians more worthy of trust and spur investments, both local and foreign.

Prof. Utomi also called on Nigerians of older generation to stop referring to the youth as leaders of tomorrow because they are leaders of today. He

said the IT tycoons who turned the American economy around were in their twenties or thirties. He also pointed out that Nigerians were anxious for a leadership that is vigorous and visionary with the energy to implement a strategy that will take Nigeria out of poverty and the league in which it was recently classified by the World Bank. He cited a former Vice-Chancellor of a Nigerian University, now a Professor of Medicine in America who, during the Aspirant's recent Diaspora tour said that it will be uncharitable for Nigerians to have anybody over 55years old imposed on them as President. The distinguish scholar had wondered which big company will appoint someone over 55 as CEO.

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