



# INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

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Interviewee: Kayode Idowu

Interviewer: Gabe Kuris

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KURIS: We are here with Mr. Kayode Idowu. It is October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2011. Can you tell us a little bit about your background and how you came to work here?

IDOWU: *Yes, my name is Kayode Idowu. I am the Chief Press Secretary to the Chairman of the commission, Professor Attahiru Jega. I came on board the INEC (Independent National Electoral Commission) after he took office. He invited me here. Before he did that I was in the print media industry. I was editor of The Saturday Punch. I was deputy editor of the Saturday This Day, and I was deputy editor of The Nation daily title. So I have been in the industry for quite a while. I was also the Chief Sub Editor of The Guardian newspaper. I had some real experience in terms of the business of that. He invited me to come on and work with him.*

KURIS: When did you come onboard, when did you start working here?

IDOWU: *That was in July 2010.*

KURIS: So very soon after Jega started himself.

IDOWU: *Very soon after he came on.*

KURIS: So you manage press relations for all of INEC or just for Jega?

IDOWU: *Yes, really there is no serious distinction between Professor Jega and INEC. I don't know if you observed in Nigeria a lot of things about INEC. It is tied to each person. A lot of activities are tied to each person, so there is no way if you speak for him, you don't speak for the Commission. Because by the understanding of the Nigerian public and the Nigerian media, Jega is INEC. So a lot of things that INEC does are referred to as him. But of course, it also falls in line with the fact that the buck stops at someone's table and it happens to be him. So even for a lot of things that the staff of INEC will do way in the field, whether in accordance with or in violation of the rules, he takes responsibility for such things. For that reason when you speak for him you speak for the commission.*

KURIS: So during the election when the foreign press wanted to talk to INEC or domestic press they would go to you?

IDOWU: *Exactly.*

KURIS: When you started here how did you find relations between the press and INEC? I guess you knew, you'd been editor here yourself.

IDOWU: *Yes.*

KURIS: So let me back up, when you were an editor of a newspaper, how did you find relations with INEC?

IDOWU: *The former commission, that was before Professor Jega came in, the former commission did not have too good a public image. For that reason it also did not have good media relations. I was in the industry then and I know, I was among the army of critics. For obvious reasons Nigerians believed that the commission did not do too well with conducting the elections, especially the 2007 elections. There was good basis for that as evident in the number of elections that were opened [Indecipherable 03:57] by the courts subsequently. So the relations then, with the old INEC, were a bit combative if I can use that word, but, like I said, as*

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*a practitioner. But that also helped what we have been doing here because Professor Jega as a person is known to have brought on board a huge capital of integrity and when he came on board and I joined him he made one thing clear, that we are not going to be on the defensive because that was one thing that the former commission was doing. It was on the defensive and being on the defensive, it was always in combat with the media because the media was always accusing, just like the professor [indecipherable 05:02] was accusing. It was defending itself against those accusations. It was always in combat with the media.*

*Professor Jega said we will not be on the defensive because we are going to do things openly and transparently. If we do it wrong we will be sincerely wrong and will not defend it. So we will be open to the media. We will lay our cards on the table and we will take their inquiries, their comments, as they are. That has been the strategy that we maintained. They seem to also have recommended the commission to the media and the public because again Nigerians have a way of seeing through. Yes, sometimes you get it wrong, sometimes you make mistakes but they know that those mistakes are sincere mistakes and they see it as such.*

KURIS: Are there any examples you can think of some of these kind of sincere mistakes?

IDOWU: *For instance when we postponed the April 2<sup>nd</sup> elections. That was a huge public relations problem because Nigerians were out there. Actually to compound it, on April 1<sup>st</sup> the chairman made a broadcast to the nation saying we are ready, saying we are on the verge of history only for him to come on April 2<sup>nd</sup> to say we are not ready. That was a huge media and public relations problem there. Of course the flak came fast and furious as you would expect. But again, he said something that day for as they say he took responsibility. Some put it pointedly to him that somebody within the system must have bungled. Somebody, as a matter of fact some suggested that there was [indecipherable 00:07:16] in the system. But he wouldn't put the line of passing the buck. He said he took responsibility.*

*He told the journalists that he would be sincere and honest with them when things—with all that he does, and this is one of such moments of sincerity. We couldn't go ahead with those elections. In the past the commission could have gone ahead with those elections. In the past, it happened in the past. Because what was largely missing for the April 2 elections were the result sheets. The official result sheets. The commission could have gone ahead. Actually there were suggestions to that effect. Look, it has been done before, it is not a big deal. You can just ignore the official result sheets and go ahead and use something else, some improvised sheets, the security of which could have been easily breached. So it would not have guaranteed the authenticity of the results.*

*The chairman said no. If we pledged that we would make this election credible, they would have to go the whole hog. So if we are in a situation where we use materials that we cannot guarantee that the results that would be written on them cannot be breached, then there is no point going ahead. So he came out and told the country that, look, we are sorry, we are calling off the elections and he did that.*

KURIS: So okay, can you tell us a bit about why the elections were delayed?

IDOWU: *Yes, the result sheets did not come. Again, that was part of why he had to take responsibility. Within the system we were expecting those result sheets to come in. There was the promise coming in every now and then that it will come in the*

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*next x number of hours. It was initially supposed to come 9 a.m. on Friday, at the last count. It ought to have come earlier on but then at the last count they said look, we will bring it at 9 a.m. on Friday which was fairly late but the idea was still that if it came in as of then, with the support that we had from the other arms of government like the air force which made many aircraft available for us to use to distribute those materials if they came in, we felt we could still swing it.*

*So the promise was okay, to come in at 9 a.m. on Friday. It didn't come. Later it was ok by 4 p.m. it would be in. It didn't come. Later it would be in by 8 p.m. It didn't come. As a matter of fact the promise kept coming up to 2 a.m. on Saturday that it would come in surely by 2 a.m. It didn't come.*

IDRISSA: Who was making the promises?

IDOWU: *The transporter.*

IDRISSA: The private contractor?

IDOWU: *Yes, the guy who was to bring it in with whom the commission had had a contract to ferry it in. One of the—he is not the only one. There are many of them who brought it. So it was one transporter that failed. Of course he was related with our own people who also believed him and were convincing the leadership to say look, we are sure this thing is on the way and it didn't come.*

KURIS: After things turned out, like later on were any kind of remedial actions taken to punish this contractor—?

IDOWU: *Oh yes, there were terms in the contract for that and those terms were invoked. But of course it was after the fact, after the fact that the materials didn't come.*

KURIS: So it was a fraction of the material, the others—.

IDOWU: *Yes, it was a fraction but it was very critical. For instance we had the ballot papers.*

KURIS: The result sheets, did you have a percentage of them?

IDOWU: *Yes, we had for a few states, but that was only what you could use for about three or four states. We had about 35 states which would be no good so we had to call it off.*

KURIS: Did that lead you guys to question the strategy of printing the materials abroad?

IDOWU: *Yes, printing abroad is also part of the things the commission had to do, one, in view of the time that we had, in view of the security requirement and in view of capacity. Now in the past the experience had been that if and when the contracts were awarded to local contractors, those contracts were sub-contracted. In the course of subcontracting there was no control, no quality control. There was also no control as to when those things were brought in how were they distributed. These were the things that made the system in the past very vulnerable to abuse. This time there were specific security features that were stipulated.*

*There were specific modalities for bringing those in and accounting for them because if you bring ballot papers in you have to be sure that the amount that you order was the amount that was printed, was the amount that was brought in and delivered and delivered to nobody else other than the person that ordered it.*

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*So those were considerations that informed the printing those things abroad. In any event, the contracts were openly bid for. So the best people got the contract, whether they were local or foreign. The best people with the best capacity to deliver got the contract and that was the bottom line.*

KURIS: Coming in as the new press person was it difficult at all to work with the INEC staff who had been here longer and who were maybe used to a different style of operations?

IDOWU: *Well, you know that the leadership in many cases also sets the pace for the followership. Now when the present leadership came in, it made clear what it would do and would not do. For instance, the chairman said repeatedly that he would not break the law, the national commissioners would not break the law. When he talked of the commission he talked of the chairman and the twelve national commissioners. Those are the people he referred to as the commission. That the commission would not break the law.*

*If the commission would not break the law then of course whoever does would be doing so at their own risk. They saw, everybody saw that the leadership meant what it said. So that, of course also inspired a change of chemistry in the followership. For instance, the chairman has repeatedly said this, "The commission used the same workforce that at least 80-90% or so of the same workforce that conducted the last election in the present election. Yet there was a difference as suggested by many, people locally and internationally. There was a big difference but yet largely the same workforce."*

*That was because the leadership character changed. So given that, those of us that came on board newly within also only keyed into that. Really the commission worked as one.*

KURIS: Were there any times when as press secretary you found that some of the staff were not acting as openly as you wanted and you had to kind of step in and correct that?

IDOWU: *Yes, it happened sometimes. Again that is part of the culture, an emerging culture and that is not particular to INEC really. Perhaps you know that the country just promulgated the Freedom of Information Act in April, no, sorry in May this year was when we just had our Freedom of Information Act. Prior to that generally, not only INEC like I said, there is a tendency to be cultic about things. But even before the Freedom of Information Act the leadership, the present leadership of the commission decided that things would be done openly.*

*For instance, after the bid, they did have some issues. The whole, all the papers pertaining to the tender, the bid and the award, the contract award, were posted on the website. That was new. It wasn't the kind of thing that was done before. So that people were at liberty to go and see which informed the choice of X or Y for this contract.*

*Again, this culture has to grow. So you will have in the system sometimes the tendency to say, "Let's keep this away." But for every such instance, immediately the attention of whoever is, above this [Indecipherable 18:12] to it, there is a requirement that things be opened up as necessary [Indecipherable 00:18:19].*

IDRISSA: Which media, your relations with the media were with Nigerian media, international media—

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- IDOWU: *Exactly.*
- IDRISSA: Radio, television and newspapers.
- IDOWU: Yes.
- IDRISSA: So where did you find the, at which level did you find the most difficulty in relating what INEC is doing? Is it international or national and if national, at which level? Written press or radio or television?
- IDOWU: *Generally the media, both national and international, were extremely supportive and cooperative of the electoral process. For whatever reason, perhaps for the fact that there was a huge consensus for getting things right this time around in the country. Perhaps because there was a perception that there was some sincerity in the leadership that you could stick some support on. But again, this election, of all the elections that have been conducted in Nigeria, this election had the greatest engagement with the social media and that had a way of also informing the conduct of the conventional media because things were more in the open. So if the conventional media would not do it, it would go out anyway because the social media was on to it. One thing with the social media is that it is like the baobab tree [Indecipherable 20:26]. That is our expression, I don't know if it is that elsewhere, but it is like the baobab tree [Indecipherable 20:31]. These are guys, very vibrant, committed, eager corps of youth who just want to get things out, they are interested in the system. Most of them are just keying in for the first time, it is a generational thing and they are just interested in knowing what is going on and informing others about it. They offer their platforms to do that and the media does something that puts it out there.*
- So because of that, really, even the commissioner could not do otherwise because if there is a conspiracy to do otherwise, it would be overwhelmed.*
- IDRISSA: My question had to do with the fact that the previous election in 2007 really had a very bad press.
- IDOWU: Yes.
- IDRISSA: So I guess they were extremely keen on looking at what is going on during these elections and maybe they would be on their guard and maybe very critical of each step of the process.
- IDOWU: *Yes they are.*
- IDRISSA: And you would have to manage that.
- IDOWU: *Yes, they were critical but being critical constructively was also helpful to the process. Like I said, when people also notice that you are sincere with what you are doing, there is an understanding that is brought to bear. Of course if you look at the media you find many instances of criticism, many instances of vile reporting, isolated instances of malicious reporting. But all that will not affect the overall perception because the bulk of the media, both the conventional and social media, would report the things that were going on. I will give you an instance.*

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*We had issues with some social platforms that had a perception so to speak of reporting negatively. Perhaps because of it, the problem of culture, I wouldn't want to name specific platforms now.*

KURIS: Yes.

IDOWU: *But there is a perception that the system is evil. So anything in the system really has to be seen coming from a negative perception. So even for those things that were sincere and were genuine, there were some things, and one of them was the issue of our tendered ballot papers for instance. There was a time when the commission ordered some printers in Abuja to print what we call tendered ballot papers. When they were going to deliver those things the police arrested them and said, "Oh we saw some people with ballot papers." They asked for the commission and the commission confirmed that yes, we asked some people to print what we called tendered ballot papers. They were not the original ballot papers, they were the tendered ballot papers. So these printers were commissioned.*

*But a couple of social platforms picked on that and said that the commission was printing fake ballot papers. Now under the law tendered ballot papers are used in cases where someone cannot use the original ballot paper to vote for whatever reason. For instance, if a person comes in and checks his name in the voters' register and somebody else had voted on that name, you can't issue the person a ballot paper again. And yet the person wants to vote. Such a person would be given a tendered ballot.*

*At the end of the election you would now factor both the original ballot papers and the tendered ballot papers into account in determining the overall results of that election. That doesn't mean that the tendered ballot papers are fake. They are actually legal. The tendered ballot papers are actually legal. They are provided for in the law. But a couple of social platforms picked that up and ran with the story that the commission was printing fake ballot papers. Of course partisan parties seized on that as evidence that—.*

IDRISSA: How did you address this kind of problem?

IDOWU: *We came out and we explained to them—I wrote a couple of statements on that to say look, tendered ballot papers are legal instruments. There is no dishonest use to it because it is provided for by the law. It can be used. Those papers that were seen by those guys were actually accorded by the commission to have been ordered for. So there is nothing—.*

IDRISSA: In which venue did you make these clarifications?

IDOWU: *I posted it online. I actually made it as a direct rejoinder to the platform that ran with the paper.*

KURIS: You wrote comments on their website?

IDOWU: *Yes, and it was posted on our own website and I also sent it to the social media platform that ran with the negative story and of course I gave it to the conventional press.*

IDRISSA: So you have a system of monitoring those types of things that are happening in the media--?

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- IDOWU: *Oh yes, that's my job, yes.*
- IDRISSA: And then responding to them.
- IDOWU: *That's my job.*
- IDRISSA: How many people do you work with? Is it a big department?
- IDOWU: *Not really. I have two people, two senior people working with me. That's all.*
- IDRISSA: And you have assistants? Because the monitoring might be—you have to go through a lot of viewing and reading?
- IDOWU: *Yes, for instance, these are the papers I had to go through today.*
- KURIS: Every day.
- IDOWU: *Every day. And this is not all. So of course my assistants are also helping, watching out for stories that relate to the commission in the paper so that makes it easier for me, although I still have to go through all the papers basically—.*
- IDRISSA: And you are a media person so you know the tendency of the papers.
- IDOWU: *Yes, you already, you know where they're coming from. That's why, sometimes you see some story, you don't bother to respond because you know where they are coming from. Then of course the broadcast media, that is why you always find the television on. We monitor what they say, of course. Then the social media, you monitor that. That's largely what takes the whole day of this job.*
- IDRISSA: So Professor Jega knew your work before very well and you were acquainted with him? One of the innovations that we feel he made was in selecting people to work with. So I was wondering if—?
- IDOWU: *That is the beauty of his person. He never knew me from Adam.*
- KURIS: Really?
- IDRISSA: But he knew your work probably.
- IDOWU: *Yes, he read my column. But you see he is somebody who is very fair-minded, absolutely fair-minded. He is not interested in—Actually the more people tend to get nepotistic with him, the more they are likely to lose out because he insists on merit. So his selection was based absolutely—we never met before, he never knew me before. The only time he knew me was when he invited the short-listed names for interaction.*
- IDRISSA: So there was a process of application?
- IDOWU: *No, no. Some people assisted in shortlisting the names of those they'd known in the industry. Names in the industry that they think stand out. There was a progressive process of shortlisting. He called those on the shortlist for interaction and on the basis of interaction he made his choice.*
- IDRISSA: And you were interested? Because I mean you didn't apply to this job, you were contacted.

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- IDOWU: Yes.
- IDRISSA: You could have said “No, I am not interested.” But you were still interested?
- IDOWU: *Again, it is a long story. Yes I could have said that of course. Of course I had initial issues. But the fact, the encouraging thing was one, when I learned of the shortlisting process I saw how objective it was. Number two, I know that he, in person, has a huge capital of integrity, that it is worth staking a career on. You know in the media we are all critics. We write columns, we criticize people and all that. So it takes somebody who you think all those things. You have been known to be a critic, now you are coming into the show. You want to see that the person you will stake your career on has the personality for it. I saw clearly that he had that. Honestly I have no regrets, absolutely none, because he is absolutely steadfast on integrity.*
- Part of that is also the reason why here we don't give the media money. This was one of the few places that we don't monetize the system. The argument of our boss is, even when you don't have something to hide, why do you keep occluding with money. They think you have something to hide. So let them see what I am and let them see who I am for what it is and report as such.*
- Of course we make public relations gestures after the fact when the need arises. But the culture of throwing money at the media to buy media and all that, we don't do that because integrity counts.*
- KURIS: Is that a change for INEC?
- IDOWU: *It is a change, absolutely. It is a change.*
- KURIS: How did your press background help you in this job; how did it affect your work?
- IDOWU: *Well, because I came from the industry, I'm familiar with the industry. I know people in the industry. I also know the limits because a lot of the things you see in the media are informed also by proprietorial limits. So for instance, I just said you know where the media is coming from when you read the story. You know where the media is coming from so you can interpret it in that light. Sometimes it is coming that well, it may not be absolutely true. But given where it is coming from it is understandable. So that also helps you to situate those reports in proper context whereas if you don't do that you may be in the position or you may find yourself fighting needless battles because every report, if you are not able to look at it in the context where the report has been made, you may think that there is more to it than you have seen. But given my experience in the industry I could interpret a lot of that. You know where this report is coming from, why the report is this way and you can relate to it on that basis.*
- IDRISSA: Can I ask you coming from this job, the person who was there before, was he also a media person?
- KURIS: Is that a common background for this—?
- IDOWU: *Yes, I think he was a media person.*
- KURIS: Did it make the press people trust you more? Because they knew you from your work?
- IDOWU: *I think so yes.*

KURIS: So one big thing I wanted to talk about, probably the biggest challenge related to the election—most of the election actually went surprisingly smoothly I think but then after the presidential vote of course there was an outbreak of very serious violence.

IDOWU: Yes.

KURIS: So I wanted to know what was that like for you? How did INEC—how did you respond to the violence?

IDRISSA: And to how it was reported on.

IDOWU: *Yes, the violence likely was a security issue, not an electoral issue, although it was associated with the elections. So the reportage of it was more a matter of security. One thing INEC did was to make our records open. For instance I recall that during the announcement of the election results, just about the time the violence broke out, a particular Party was asking that we stop announcing the results and let's make our case to you instead. The chairman said no. In the glare of the media, because there was a live coverage, in the glare of the media make your case there and let it be known so that the world can see what case you have. Otherwise there would be no private audience for things. The process will go on.*

*The results had to be announced because Nigeria had an experience of aborted announcement of results in June 12, 1993 and we knew we had left the country. The country could not afford a reenactment of that. So the process had to go through. Whoever had issues with it, with the results, had an opportunity to deal with those issues in the public glare. For as many as wanted to make use of that they did, but those who did not, did not. Like I said the violence was more of a security issue than an electoral issue.*

KURIS: In general what kinds of things did you do to speak to the press? Did you hold press conferences?

IDOWU: *We do press conferences, we issue press statements. We also have a media center at the commission, which the media always covered—throughout the elections they were there. Actually those whose beat is INEC report at the media center every day. Our doors are open. They are always coming to make inquiries. Like I said, because our doors are open, because they had free access, there was good information flow which was also reflected in how they reported the elections.*

KURIS: Was the media center a new innovation or did INEC always have one?

IDOWU: *No INEC always had one. All we did was to upgrade it.*

KURIS: How did you upgrade it?

IDOWU: *We equipped it more, we made it more conducive so that people can sit there and send their stories to their media houses. Some spend the whole day there so we made it conducive for them to do that, stuff like that.*

KURIS: Was the media allowed access to the election situation room? I know INEC had a situation room.

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- IDOWU:* Yes, they had access to it. We did not bar them from it.
- KURIS:* Looking back are there any things that you wish you had done differently? Any lessons you've learned?
- IDOWU:* Yes, the issue of—the chairman has also said this a couple of times, the issue of voter education, which also involves the media, it has to do with the public. The issue of voter education could have been done a lot better. Going forward we hope to do a better job of that. I actually believe that the post-election violence could also partly have been accounted for by poor voter education. Because people need to know that when two to three people go to an election only one person can win—the three cannot win. So there has to be a winner and there have to be losers. Then people need to also know that even if you have issues with the electoral processes there are ways of addressing those issues. That certainly needs to be done a lot better.
- We are also consolidating on our use of the social media platform. Like I said the social media was very useful in the last elections. The use then, in the last election, was more experimental because it was not there before, we were just engaging the social media. So we intend to consolidate on that.*
- Of course also build on our relationship with the conventional media. Yes, the relationship is good, but it can be bettered. So we are hoping that we get to understand each other more and more so that we can all do our jobs better and more effectively. So we are doing that.*
- KURIS:* I know right now INEC is really trying to push for more electoral reforms in the country. So how are you engaging with the media to push that forward?
- IDOWU:* Right now the legal issues that will be proposed for reform are being worked upon. The issue of electoral reforms actually lies with the National Assembly and the commission will have to engage with the National Assembly at some point. We have not even gotten there. So when the time comes for that of course the media will be a part of the consensus-building process. Not only for electoral reforms, even for the constituency delineation, the delineation that will be done before 2015. There will be constituency delineation. There will be a lot of consensus building to precede that, which the media will play a huge role in.
- So we are going towards that. But the level that we are at now as we speak is getting the persons as a committee, as a legal committee, that is working on a position paper of what legal reforms INEC desires which will subsequently be sent to the National Assembly.*
- KURIS:* One more thing about INEC I wanted to ask about was one of the great innovations was the use of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) as electoral staff. A lot of people we talked to are really appreciative of this. But then of course challengers were opposed when some of the Youth Corps were unfortunately killed. What was that like for you? I'm sure the media then had a lot of questions.
- IDOWU:* Oh yes, it was a very sad experience. Sad in the sense that they were in service of Fatherland. They were engaged by INEC. So in a way INEC had a responsibility. It was a very sad experience for the commission. As a matter of fact before the post-election violence there were some instances of violence. For instance there was this bomb blast in Suleja where some people were killed,

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*many of them those who had graduated but also [Indecipherable 44:23], they were the adult corps of staff.*

*I recall that night that the chairman accompanied by some of us had to leave for Suleja at 11 pm to go and see what happened in the night. He had to address a press conference that night and immediately after addressing the press conference he had to leave for Suleja. Again, that is at one level.*

*At another level the commission had to engage the National Youth Service Corps. There is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with NYSC. When things go wrong like that you have to be seen to be a responsible partner in that MOU. The commissioner had a body show itself as a responsible partner in that MOU. That also had to be dealt with by the leadership. It was a very sad experience.*

KURIS: How is the commission now working with some of the investigative panels? There are certain panels both at the state level and the federal level trying to figure out what happened during the violence. How is the commission working with them?

IDOWU: *There is a panel headed by Sheikh (Ahmed) Lemu. The chairman has already made a presentation to the panel, appeared before that panel. That is the major panel that the commission constituted. But of course the commission also has a very good working relationship with Security Justice because actually there is a platform that the commission facilitated which is called the Inter-agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) and that committee brings together all the security agencies in the country. The commission has a working relationship with that, with those agencies. So whenever the need arises it makes available whatever information is needed, whatever is required, as long as it is [possible] on the part of the commission to make that available. So that much has been done.*

KURIS: Is this committee new? This Inter-agency Consultative Committee?

IDOWU: *Yes it is new; it was facilitated by the present commission just in January this year.*

KURIS: January this year?

IDOWU: *It came to be in January of this year.*

KURIS: Were the security agencies receptive to the idea of creating this committee?

IDOWU: *Yes, because—they also saw that it worked. You know in the past the experience was that the Security Justices worked sometimes at cross purposes or at the least there was some rivalry between them because there were no defined rules. So their functions tended to overlap in the past. But on the platform of ICCES, INEC was able to stipulate specific rules for the different agencies in a way that leaves no room for rivalry. The agencies themselves came to see that it was better, that it made them more effective in discharging the rules as far as the election was concerned. So they warmed up to it.*

*The committee still exists even beyond the elections. It is still a subsistent organization so to speak.*

KURIS: Are there similar committees that the commission has created? What about with parties? Is there a committee for relations with the parties?

IDOWU: *Yes, there is IPAC, (Inter-Party Advisory Council) but that had existed, it has been in existence for a long [time] but it was only reconstituted. Well reconstituted because their own rules provided for the leadership to be changed at specific periods. Then you can only be a member of IPAC if you exist as a political party. So some parties who are newly registered needed to be admitted into IPAC. So to that extent there was some reconstitution of the body, but it always existed.*

KURIS: Was there another committee for dealing with civil society or was that more kind of ad hoc?

IDOWU: *There was no specific committee in INEC working with civil society but the civil society has an organized platform on the basis of which they deal with the commission. That is all the more effective because Professor Jega has a civil society background. So he is one of them. They rose up to that challenge and even as we speak they see him as one of their own and so they engage the commission very, very actively.*

IDRISSA: Isn't there a department for civil society and gender?

IDOWU: *There is a department, yes, a department of the commission, civil society—but it is not a committee, it is a department. A civil society and gender desk.*

KURIS: Are there any other of these committees like the Party committee and the security committee? Are there any other committees we're missing?

IDOWU: *Yes, there is a committee for instance that brings the State Electoral Commissions and the Independent National Electoral Commission together. The State Electoral Commissions are autonomous organizations constituted by the states for local elections. So they are really not an organization of the Independent National Electoral Commission but because credibility of elections and credibility of leadership also goes out to look at elections, the commission has constituted a committee on which it can relate with the State Electoral Commissions in order to make sure that best practices are adopted, global best practices are adopted in all the elections including local elections.*

KURIS: Were there any problems during the election with the state level election commissions? Were there any problems getting them to follow these best practices?

IDOWU: *I don't understand.*

KURIS: Did you have any issues during the election in dealing with the state level commissions? Were all of them cooperative with this new approach?

IDOWU: *The states' independent electoral commissions do not participate in the conduct of elections that INEC handles. The states' independent electoral commissions are responsible for the local elections, which INEC does not handle. You understand what I'm saying?*

KURIS: So like the third election, the one on April 27<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>, that was an INEC election?

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IDOWU: *That was an INEC election. For instance, if you have been observing in the media some states are getting set for local elections. That is not an INEC issue.*

KURIS: So governor elections are INEC.

IDOWU: *Yes, the governor elections are INEC. Now but what INEC did is even if you do the best you can in getting credible elections at the state governorship level, state assembly level, at the national level, but you have crooked elections at the local level, leadership will still be a hobbled affair in the country. So all the commission has done is just to create a platform where there can be sharing of ideas, there can be engagement, mutual engagement with the state electoral election management bodies. It was assuring that global best practices are adopted all the way down to local elections, even though the local elections are not the responsibility of INEC. They're not.*

KURIS: Great. Do you have any questions?

IDRISSA: No.

KURIS: I think we've used up a lot of your time, thank you so much for being so generous. Did you have any questions for us or anything else that you wanted to mention that we didn't bring up?

IDOWU: *Perhaps the key thing is that the present leadership is also committed to improve on the level that was attained in the past elections. The chairman and the leadership and various [indecipherable 00:54:43] the last elections were not perfect. They were just seen as a springboard to improve. The country hits the nadir in 2007, so you have to get up from that point. Having gotten up from that point you need to progress. All the efforts of the commission now are oriented at consolidating the modest gains in the April elections and making sure that the subsequent elections are way better than they were in the past.*

*Towards that end it is also trying to institutionalize the operations of INEC. In other words, in such a way that if you take away the personality, conducting credible elections would be the norm in the commission. Because a lot of people have made issues about the fact that okay, the leadership this time is credible and so because the leadership is credible and has integrity, maybe that is why the elections were way better than in the past. But the issue for the leadership now is to say well, what good will it be if we leave here and the culture goes back to where it is.*

*So there is an effort to institutionalize best practices of the commission such that it will not be linked to individuals. It will be a norm. It will be something that the commission will do as a matter of course whoever is in position there. So that is part of the vision of the commission right now, the leadership, to do [that]. Efforts are directed towards that. So we are really going forward. We are going forward from where we were in April. April is not the benchmark, it is not the standard, it is just the starting point.*

IDRISSA: That's a good point.

KURIS: Yes, definitely. In going forward are you looking to examples of other countries?

IDOWU: *Oh, certainly. Certainly. As we speak, a team from this country is in South Korea. They left yesterday. A team came back from India last week. The chairman himself as I was on his delegation had been in Germany on invitation, to study*

*the system. He has been in the US. There is also a networking ongoing interaction with other EMBs (Election Management Boards). There was a Commonwealth conference of EMBs in July, in Cambridge in which we participated.*

*At INEC, as we speak, now we are organizing an African, all African EMB conference, hopefully by next month, by mid-November, in order to share experiences, share ideas on best practices. All in order to build upon what we have done and see that we improve.*

KURIS: Great, that sounds great. Excellent, thank you so much.