

WEEK 4

MEANING OF ELECTORAL COMMISSION

An electoral commission is defined as a body responsible for organizing and conduction of elections in a political system. It is an independent and impartial body charged with the responsibility of conducting and organizing elections in a country.

In Nigeria, an electoral commission is appointed to organize and conduct all elections in the country. For example, the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) conducted the 1979-83 second Republic election. National Electoral Commission (NEC) conducted the 1993 aborted third Republic Elections, and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) conductor the 1999 four Republic Elections.

The commission usually has a head that is referred to as the Chairman of the Commission. There are other members of the commission that help in the smooth running of the affairs of the body.

FEATURES OF ELECTORAL COMMISSION

1. **Organizing and Conducting Elections:** The Electoral Commission has the sole responsibility of organizing and conducting all elections in a political system.
2. **Ensuring free and fair elections:** It is also the specific duty of the commission to conduct Free and Fair Elections in a country.
3. **Announcement of Election Results:** The body only, is permitted by law to announce election results.
4. **Independent Body:** The commission is an independent and impartial electoral body.
5. **Headed by a Chairman:** The commission is controlled by the chairman, while other members are appointed.
6. **Fixed Tenure of Office:** The composition of the electoral commission has a stipulated tenure of office.
7. **Resident Commissioner:** Each state of the federation has a resident commissioner who works for the body in the state.
8. **Constitutionally Guided:** In all its actions, the commission is strongly backed by law in all its dealings.
9. **Honesty and Fair Play:** An electoral commission is expected to be honest and just in decision making especially with the conduct of the elections.
10. **A Neutral Body:** The commission should be neutral and should not be partisan in out-look.

FUNCTIONS OF ELECTORAL COMMISSION

1. **Registration of Political Parties:** The commission registers political parties according to the stipulated rules and regulations. Parties that meet the requirements are duly registered.
2. **Registration of Voters:** Eligible voters in a country are registered by the commission.
3. **Provision of Electoral Materials:** During an election, it is the duty of the commission to provide electoral materials like ballot votes, pooling booth etc.
4. **Free and Fair Elections:** The major function of an electoral commission is to organize and conduct credible free and fair elections in a country.
5. **Delimitation (division) of the Country:** The commission divides the country into constituencies or electoral districts for easy conduct of elections.
6. **Appointment and Training:** It appoints electoral officers and organizes training for Adhoc staff, presiding officers, clerks, pooling orderlies etc.

7. **Counting of Votes:** The commission is responsible for the counting of votes and the release of the results of elections conducted.
8. **Financial Grants to Parties:** Part of the functions of the commission is to give financial grants to political parties to aid their campaigns and election actions.
9. **Enlightenment:** The electorate is properly educated by the commission about the necessary issues in the elections.
10. **Types of Voting:** It is also the function of the electoral commission to inform the electorates about the types of the voting system to be adopted in an election, whether secret or open (public) vote system etc.
11. **Screening of Candidates:** Candidates for election are properly screened and their eligibility is confirmed before elections are held.
12. **Security at the Pooling Stations:** Since elections sometimes may prove to be rowdy, the commission provides adequate security at the polling stations so that the lives and properties of the commission's staff and that of the voters are safeguarded to prevent unwarranted attacks.

GENERAL EVALUATION

1. What is an electoral commission?
2. Discuss the features of the electoral commission.