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International relations and diplomacy

SMS

CHAPTER 8

CITIZENS ROLES IN A DEMOCRACY

Sovereignty resides in and flows from the people in a democracy. They have the power to elect or choose their governmental or political leader and system. The people have the right to take part in their government, including through genuine elections to determine who will legitimately occupy governmental offices.

There is no democracy without the engagement of citizens.

Engagement is thus both a right and a responsibility of citizen in establishing democracy. For democracy to deliver, citizens must become informed about issues that can improve their lives. They must be free to express their selves and their preferences and work to see that government responds to citizens view, thus holding the government accountable. Citizens need timely and accurate information, especially government-held information. Access to information is essential to an informed citizenry. That is why transparency is a necessity for democracy.

CITIZEN/CITIZESHIP

The term citizen has an inherently political meaning that implies a certain type of relationship between the people and government.

Citizens have a set of rights and responsibilities, including the right to participate in decisions that affect public welfare.

Citizenship of a state may be required either by birth or by naturalisation. A person becomes a citizen of a state if his parents are citizens of that state or if he is born within the territory of that state.

IN THE NIGERIAN CONSTITUTION, CITIZENSHIP IS DEFINED AS;

1. Every person born in Nigeria before the date of independence.
2. Every person born in Nigeria after the date of independence either of whose parents or any of whose grandparents is a citizen of Nigeria.
3. Every person born outside Nigeria either of whose parents is a citizen of Nigeria.

Citizenship can be divided or shared into civil citizenship, political citizenship and social citizenship.

DEMOCRACY

Democracy could be seen as the government of the people, for the people and by the people.

In the words of Maxey, the states and countries where the arrangements, constitutions and practices and the workings of the government are such that the individuals and his rights, freedoms and worth are ensured and guaranteed are usually referred to as democracies.

FEATURES OF DEMOCRACY

1. The fundamental rights of citizens is guaranteed
2. Independent and impartial judiciary
3. Existence of rule of law
4. Freedom of press
5. Periodic election that is free and fair

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CITIZENS IN A DEMOCRACY

1. A citizen in a democracy should have the duty to vote.
2. A citizen should be willing to pay taxes.
3. A good citizen must have a duty to obey laws.
4. A good citizen must refrain from uttering destructive criticisms but be prepared to offer constructive alternatives to government policies.
5. A good citizen must refrain from interference with the rights of other members of the community.

