

Nigeria: Too Rich for Dignity and the Law? Perspectives after the 2007 elections

**International Conference
Loccum, Germany, 15 - 17 June, 2007**

Communiqué

The conference, hosted by the Protestant Academy Loccum in Germany offered a rare platform for a considerable number of distinguished representatives from Nigeria, such as politicians, civil servants, scholars and members of various civil society organisations, as well as Nigerian Diaspora, to discuss their views and perspectives short after the highly contested local and federal elections in Nigeria in April 2007, from which Umaru Yar'Adua emerged as the new President. The conference also provided a first hand opportunity for the German side, represented by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), several church related services, political foundations, and members of the Federal Parliament, to involve in a dialogue and revisit their strategies vis-à-vis the most populous and oil-rich country in Africa, in the light of the challenges for international co-operation as envisaged in the aftermath of the G8 summit.

The conference centered on the following questions:

- How to empower the various segments of the Nigerian population, politically and economically, enhance good governance, fight rampant corruption and poverty, and conduct appropriate methods of conflict resolution, including corporate social responsibility?
- How will Nigeria facing increased pressure by the effects of globalization on the African continent, position itself, for instance, in the context of ECOWAS where Nigeria plays a leading political role?
- How much responsibility, in close cooperation with Nigerian players, for a policy focused on human security, peace and justice may be assumed by external governmental and non-governmental initiatives?

Results of the discussions in plenary as well as in workshop sessions can be summarized as follows:

Democracy, Participatory Governance, and Security

Course and results of the Nigerian elections have indicated an instant need for both constitutional and extra-constitutional reforms. In order to turn evolved frustration and apathy among the Nigerian people into positive energy and constructive political action several immediate and longterm initiatives have been discussed:

As a matter of fundamental significance, the conference participants regarded a *redefinition of responsibilities between federal and state level* necessary with the ultimate goal to allow more

political decision making to happen on state and community level both in terms of empowerment of the people and adequate resource allocation and management.

In particular, the conference emphasized the following issues, which may become subject to specific means of capacity building:

- Improve the voters rights in order to amend the choices, foster inclusiveness and elevate access to participation for the electorate (demand side of democracy);
- Improve the functioning mechanisms and performance of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), including voters education; elaborate on parliamentary rights and best practise (supply side of democracy);
- Strengthen the *independent role of the judiciary* in the context of the ongoing tribunals on the electoral results and beyond;
- Review *political leadership* performance and reassure that fighting corruption is carried out in a non-partisan manner, in order to improve legitimacy of the leading elites;
- Introduce *security sector reform* which leads to a new understanding of community based *policing* in order to tackle the socially motivated causes of tribal violence, separate the criminal aspects of violence, address impunity and re-establish a legitimate use of the state monopoly of power (“protect the people, not the state”).

Responsible Use of Resources

In many respects, the case of the *Niger Delta* is regarded a blueprint for both what went wrong and what should be done better with regard to resource use. Consequently, high expectations are directed to the *immediate start of implementation of the Master Plan for the Delta* as promised by the new President.

Lessons of the Delta should also be applied to other states/regions in Nigeria (Middle Belt) as well as to other oil-producing countries (by means such as multi stakeholder roundtables):

- Implement a *legal framework* (due process) for billing and re-distributing the oil revenues involving civil society in the areas of accountability and *transparency* (Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, EITI; Publish What You Pay); develop co-operational mechanisms between ECOWAS and the EU; do not overload demands for transparency with other issues of conflict management.
- Raise awareness on the *effects of climate change* and global warming in Africa, and in Nigeria in particular, and put problems of environmental damage in analytical perspective with issues of poverty, migration, etc.; fight uncontrolled logging, develop strategies to introduce *alternative resource use such a renewable energies* (solar energy et.al); link up with micro-economic initiatives and investment.

Matters and Means of Conflict Resolution

The ways conflict matters were discussed touched on a number of crosscutting issues and multiple causes for the use of violence, such as

- the ambiguous and at times escalating *role of religion*;
- the difficult relationship of *churches, religion and the state* (human rights violations, Sharia law implementation, etc.);
- the underdeveloped vision of citizenship and leadership on community level (also with regard to gender issues);

- the disfranchisement *of the youth* being specifically exposed to poverty and unemployment;
- the uncontrolled influx and vast availability of *small arms*.

With regard to strategies facilitating conflict resolution the conference discussions placed an emphasis on

- the development and exchange of best practice *concepts of dialogue*;
- the *requirements of the youth* for improved *public education*, in particular through programmes for vocational training, small scale business development etc.;
- campaigning for and implementing of small arms control mechanisms, as part of security sector reform; and support of the international community.

Follow up

The conference triggered a debate among the Nigerian speakers and participants seeking new forms of *networking* among themselves in order to follow up some of the major issues raised during the conference, and identify main areas that require a more coherent concept of *capacity building* domestically, and may also include outside assistance. The idea of a follow up conference in Nigeria was raised.

By creatively turning around the conference title, a Nigerian speaker suggested as a guiding principle for future co-operation with external governmental and non-governmental organisations: "Don't give us the fish every day, show us instead how to fish!"

German speakers indicated that beyond the continuation of existing co-operation and projects a new strategic and more comprehensive approach by the German Government may be adopted during the later year 2007 defining German interests in accordance with the partners within the EU, and acknowledging more closely Nigeria's role on the African continent, and within ECOWAS, in particular.

The participants altogether appreciated the true spirit of partnership and mutual respect provided and experienced during the conference in Loccum.

The Academy has promised to help as much as possible to foster further dialogue on the issues at stake. Conference proceedings with the papers presented in the conference will be published in the format of "Loccum Protocols" before the end of 2007.

For the time being the Academy's homepage www.loccum.de (<http://www.loccum.de/english/p0723e.html>) may serve as a point of reference (conference programme, speakers, sponsors, selected papers, pictures).

Contact:

Dr Corinna Hauswedell, Director of Studies for International Politics,
E-Mail: Corinna.Hauswedell@evlka.de