

RESPONSE BY THE EMBASSY OF NIGERIA TO THE PUBLIC REACTIONS TO THE CURRENT SECURITY CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA AND REMOVAL OF OIL SUBSIDY BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF NIGERIA

The Embassy of Nigeria has noted with keen interest various and divergent reactions by individuals, human rights activists/organizations and the general public to the current security challenges in Nigeria, as well as the removal of fuel subsidy by the Federal Government of Nigeria. The Embassy wishes to appreciate the interest shown by the Nigerian citizens resident in Germany and friends of Nigeria, which is an indication of love for the corporate existence of Nigeria as a united and indivisible entity.

Security Challenges

2. The Embassy wishes to disabuse the minds of the general public of the notion that the security challenges facing Nigeria, particularly the scourge of terrorist attacks by the notorious Boko Haram are directed by one ethnic or religious group against another. It should be noted that terrorism and terrorist act, which until 2009 was alien to Nigeria, is a global phenomenon and has posed grave threat to world's peace and security. Governments all over the world are collaborating with one another with a view to combating the scourge. It is pertinent to indicate that terrorist acts know no religious and ethnic delineation; they affect Christians, Muslims and even Atheists. In the case of Nigeria, terrorist acts by Boko Haram have affected both the Christians and Muslims alike and have not only been roundly condemned but also denounced by the adherents of both religions. The perpetrators are mindless and criminal individuals who hide under the cover of religion.

3. The Federal Government of Nigeria, just like any other government in the world, knows that its primary duty is to guarantee security of lives and property of all the people living in the country. Consequently, it has taken several measures to combat the incidents of terrorism and other sectarian attacks in the country. These measures include, but not limited to, enthronement of good governance, eradication of poverty, provision of job opportunities, fight against corruption, strengthening and equipping of all security agencies, as well as collaboration and liaison with other friendly countries, such as the Federal Republic of Germany. It would be recalled that Defence and Security took the lion share of the 2012 Federal Budget,

which shows the high priority the Government attaches to the maintenance of law and order in the country.

4. It needs to be reiterated that the Nigerian Government is poised to create conducive environment for everybody to live and conduct his or her businesses without let or hindrance. It is also committed to creating an atmosphere where foreign direct investment would thrive.

Removal of Fuel Subsidy

5. With regard to fuel subsidy removal, the Federal and State governments, in consultations with the legislature, organized labour and other stake-holders agreed that in order to enthrone transparency, accountability, as well as afford the government to make the oil sector attractive to foreign investors and also garner sufficient funds to provide infrastructural facilities, the fuel subsidy must be removed. There was no doubt that all the stake-holders agreed to the removal of the fuel subsidy as a stage in the oil sector reforms and deregulation of the downstream sector of the oil industry. However, the aspect the organized labour and some sections of the civil society disagreed with was the so-called “hasty” implementation of the policy. Everybody has come to the realization that there were rots in the oil sector and this was further compounded by the fuel subsidy, which had become an avenue for a few people to corruptly enrich themselves at the expense of the populace. It was therefore the strong desire of the government to block all the leakages and ensure that funds accruing from the removal of subsidy are channeled towards provision of much needed infrastructure, employment and alleviation of poverty that propelled it to quickly implement the policy, on 1st January, 2012.

6. The action of the government was understandable when viewed from the statistics released by the Federal Government which indicated that a sum of N3.7 trillion was used to fund fuel subsidy between 2006 and 2011, and N1.35 trillion between January and October, 2011, which amounted to 30 percent of total budget, 118 percent of capital project and 4.18 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The data further indicated that should the subsidy removal be implemented, it would bring about a significant reduction in government borrowing and save the country N1.12 trillion in 2012. Based on the above statistics and the strong desire to actualize its dreams for the country, government became motivated to quickly implement the policy, believing that it had carried everybody along.

7. However, following the mass protests and demonstrations by the organized labour and other members of the society, as well as wide consultations with all stake-holders, the listening government of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, conceded and reduced the pump price to N97 per litre. The decision of the government has therefore, restored peace and stability to the country and work has fully resumed.

8. The Embassy wishes to assure all and sundry that the Federal government under President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan means well for the country and is desirous to make a difference. In order to combat the endemic corruption, it has ordered the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), a government establishment charged with the responsibility of combating corruption in the country, to investigate all allegations of fraudulent disbursement of petroleum subsidy since its inception. This is in addition to various investigation panels that have been set up both by the Executive and Legislative arms of the government with a view to unearthing all fraudulent practices in the oil sector and recommend appropriate measures/sanctions.

9. In view of the above, the Embassy wishes to appeal to the general public, including the Nigerian citizens and friends of Nigeria in Germany to kindly show understanding and support the current government's efforts to deliver on its promises as contained in the transformation agenda. The Embassy also assures that the government is determined, sincere and will not disappoint.

10. Meanwhile, the Embassy wishes to add that Nigeria will come out of all these myriads of challenges stronger and more united and will continue to count on the support and cooperation of the international community.

**Embassy of Nigeria,
Berlin, Germany.
19th January, 2012.**