

**ADDRESS PRESENTED BY ANSLEM D. JOHN-MILLER BEFORE THE
HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, SUBCOMMITTEE ON
AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH, GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS ON JUNE 11, 2014.**

Mr. Chairman

Ranking Member Bass

All protocols Observed,

I thank you and members of your committee for giving me the opportunity to address you on current developments in Nigeria as it relates to the atrocities of the Boko Haram and how the United States and Nigeria could work together to put an end to the activities of this terrorist group.

First, I commend the government and people of the United States for condemning the kidnappings of the Chibok girls and the Obama Administration's efforts with the Nigerian Government to secure the release of these girls. I am positive that with such collaboration, the Chibok girls would ultimately be re-united with their families.

On the current efforts to rescue the abducted Chibok Girls, I must emphasize that the United States and other countries involved encourage the Nigerian Government to employ every means available at its disposal including diplomacy to secure their release. While I continue to maintain my position that no government should negotiate with any terrorist group, I am concerned that if the same principle is adopted in the case of the Chibok girls, their return may not be in the near future. Since the abducted girls are Christians, they risk being killed by the leader of Boko Haram because he knows that the girls remain Christians despite their so-called conversion. He may resort to killing the girls if force is employed in their rescue just to blackmail the governments of Nigeria, the United States and others. In this regard, I commend the efforts of Ex-President Olusegun Obasanjo who has initiated some moves to secure the release of the girls through dialogue and diplomacy. I implore this Committee to encourage the Nigerian Government to explore all means necessary in securing the release of the abducted Chibok girls.

While the United States and the International Community's attention is focused on how to secure the release of the abducted Chibok girls, it is important to note that the sophisticated and coordinated attacks that the Boko Haram has carried out after the abduction of the girls show that the organization remains strong, bold and determined to inflict unimaginable harm and destruction on Nigeria so that the Nigerian-state will plunge into total anarchy and chaos thereby making it ungovernable. As such, the ongoing war against Boko Haram in Nigeria should not be treated with levity or treated as a local Nigerian crisis but should be elevated to the status of the war against Al

Qaida. The United States Congress should therefore work closely with the Obama Administration to develop comprehensive counter-terrorism strategies that will help Nigeria to crush Boko Haram and put an end to the carnage and sufferings of the people of North-Eastern Nigeria and the neighboring countries of Cameroon, Chad and Niger-Republic.

Many terrorism experts and scholars have attributed poverty and under-development in North-East Nigeria as the cause of Boko-Haram and prescribed the provision of job opportunities and development of the region as the solution to the problem and I partly agree only in the context that poverty and idleness make youths of the area vulnerable and easy targets for recruitment as Boko Haram operatives. However, I strongly believe that if the youths recruited were not interested in terrorism, they would have resisted because poverty, under-development and idleness is not confined to only the North-East region but visible everywhere in the country, especially in Ogoni and the Niger-Delta region.

Solving the problem of Boko-Haram in Nigeria cannot be achieved without addressing the issue of corruption. While there has been much focus on corruption at the national level of governance in Nigeria and the military, very little attention has been paid to the level of corruption at the state and local government levels in the North-East and other parts of the country. Nigeria operates a Federal System of Government which shares power between the Federal, State and Local Governments. These states and local governments receive monthly allocations from the Federal Government and are expected to use the funds to provide amenities and develop their states and local governments. However, such funds end up in the private accounts of the state governors and the local government chairmen installed by the governors, resulting in paltry sums of money being spent on programs that have direct impact on the lives of the citizens of the states and local communities.

To address the problem of corruption in Nigeria, I propose that the United States partner with Nigeria to encourage transparency and accountability at all levels of governance. The United States should also through its Justice Department investigate and confiscate all funds stolen by those in power at all levels in Nigeria and saved in bank accounts in the United States, Dubai, London, etc. and prosecute the culprits. The benefits those corrupt politicians enjoy now such as sponsoring themselves and their families on limitless trips to the United States and other developed countries to spend holidays, buying expensive cars and luxury houses, educating their children in the best schools in foreign countries at the expense of the suffering masses should be stopped forthwith.

It is only such decisive steps that will send a clear message to the rulers of Nigeria that the United States is serious about tackling corruption in Nigeria. While a few people may argue that the United States confiscating and arresting corrupt Nigerian officials anywhere in the world may amount to interfering in the internal affairs of a sovereign country, I posit that such a step is reasonable and morally justified especially since

corruption breeds discontent and provides a platform for its victims to be easily recruited as agents of terror.

Closely related to corruption is the human rights abuses committed by Nigerian soldiers. It is no secret that Nigerian soldiers torture and commit terrible human rights abuses when deployed to various communities and such acts discourage the local population from cooperating with them and providing intelligence that would have helped in accomplishing their missions. A clear example is the activities of Major Paul Okuntimo, then Chairman of the disbanded Rivers State Internal Security Taskforce who committed all sorts of atrocities in Ogoniland during the height of the Ogoni struggle in the 1990s. Despite the extra-judicial killings and crimes against humanity Major Paul Okuntimo and his men committed in Ogoni, he remains a free man walking on the streets in Nigeria instead of being locked behind bars. In recent times, several allegations of human rights abuses has been leveled against the soldiers deployed to the North-East to fight the Boko Haram insurgency and to date, no investigations has been carried out to unveil the truth or otherwise of the allegations.

With such negative perception about the soldiers, the citizens find it very difficult to collaborate with them and without the involvement of the locals who know the Boko Haram operatives, it will be very difficult to defeat the terrorist group. To address this issue, the United States Government should prevail on Nigeria to set up an independent judicial panel or empower the National Human Rights Commission to investigate such allegations and any soldiers incriminated be prosecuted so as to serve as a deterrent to others. A starting point is to influence the Nigerian National Assembly to immediately pass the "Enforcement and Punishment of Crimes Against Humanity, War Crimes, Genocide and Related Offences --- Bill of 2012 - (A copy of the Delta Force Documentary on the atrocities committed by the defunct Rivers State Internal Security Task Force in Ogoni is tendered for the records. Also enclosed is the Punch publication of September 2, 2012 titled "JTF soldiers to face trial for rape, murder, torture")

The declaration of Boko Haram as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) by the United States Government after the initial reluctance is a welcome development because it paves way for the United States Government to take various steps including freezing of bank accounts, deployment of drones and others assets to fight the terrorists. However, one major step that should be taken will make the current way against Boko Haram successful is to work with the Nigerian Government to identify the sponsors of Boko Haram and bring them to justice. On occasions, notable commanders of the Bokjo Haram have been apprehended while hiding in the houses of influential politicians without the host politicians being questioned and investigated over their ties with the terrorists arrested. With such developments, civilians who would have provided credible and actionable intelligence are afraid that doing so would put them at risk and in as much as this ugly trend continues, the Boko Haram insurgency will continue – (see attached Daily Post Publication of January 15, 2012 titled "Unbelievable: Christmas Day

Bomber Nabbed in Governor's Lodge and This Day Publication of 21 October 2012 titled "JTF: Boko Haram Member Arrested at Senator's Home").

To address this challenge, I urge the Congress to mandate the Justice Department to immediately initiate steps to collaborate with the Nigerian security and intelligence services to investigate, arrest and prosecute all alleged sponsors of Boko Haram in the United States. Alternatively, the United States should work with other permanent members of the United Nations Security Council to set up a Special Terrorism Court to try all those arrested for involvement in the activities of the Boko Haram in Nigeria. Prosecuting the sponsors and operators of Boko Haram in an international court will send a clear message to members and potential members of Boko Haram that the International Community is serious about bringing them to justice.

It is imperative to note that the Boko Haram insurgency has both religious and political undertones. The inflammatory and incisive statements made by some Islamic clerics and politicians, especially from the Northern part of Nigeria prior to and after the election of President Goodluck Jonathan in 2011 has also served as an incentive to the insurgents. Shortly after the 2011 Presidential election, some notable politicians from the North called on the masses in Northern Nigeria to revolt against the newly elected President Jonathan. With such statements coming from such influential leaders, their supporters subsequently rioted and attacked innocent graduates who were employed by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to help conduct the elections. To date, no single individual involved in instigating those unwarranted attacks on innocent graduates who devoted their time and efforts for services to their country had been brought to justice. It is also crucial to note that the intensification of the attacks by Boko Haram is linked to the forthcoming 2015 General Elections and as such, the United States Government and the International Community must ensure that all necessary steps are taken to ensure free and fair elections. Working closely with the Nigerian Government to ensure that the outcome of the 2015 general elections are devoid of all forms of electoral malpractice will help in maintaining stability in the country. A major step in this direction is to mobilize international observers to ensure that all votes are counted immediately the polls end at all polling stations in the forthcoming 2015 national elections in Nigeria.

As the United States Government seek ways to assist Nigeria in addressing some of her challenges, it is also instructive that both countries identify flashpoints where future crises might erupt and take proactive steps to address them. A clear example of such flashpoints is the case of Ogoni. The Ogoni people since the 1990s had made presentations to the Nigerian Government, Shell and the International Community to address the environmental challenges caused by reckless oil operation in Ogoni since 1958 when oil was drilled in commercial quantities in the area. The environmental, social, and political demands of the people contained in the Ogoni Bills of Rights (OBR) which was submitted to the Nigerian Government since 1990 and the International Community has not been resolved to this date – (see the Ogoni Bill of Rights and

National Network Vol. 11 NO. 21, 2014 June 4-10, 2014 titled “Outburst Of Another Round Of Militancy Imminent In N/D – Mitee” for the records).

In August 2011, the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) released the report of its findings in Ogoniland and submitted the report to President Goodluck Jonathan who promised to promptly implement the report. In anticipation of a massive protest by the Ogoni people for failure of the government to implement the report after one year, the government in 2012 established the Hydro-Carbon Pollution Control and Restoration Agency (HYPREP). Despite their reservations, the Ogoni people assured the government that the Ogonis will collaborate with the agency in implementing the UNEP Report. However, it is sad to note that to this day, very little has been done by the HYPREP to implement the UNEP Report despite the fact that the report observes that Ogonis are dying in their numbers on a daily basis as a result of the consumption of benzene contaminated water – (see copy of the 2011 UNEP Report for the records). Shell has publicly indicated its willingness to work with the government and the Ogoni people in implementing the UNEP Report. Just last week, the President/CEO of Royal Dutch Shell Company, Mr. Ben Van Beurden stated that the funds for the implementation of the UNEP Report has been set-aside in a special and verifiable account and that he was embarking on a trip to Nigeria to seeks ways of working with the government to implement the report. While we welcome the move by the President and CEO of Shell, I am concerned that unless all parties are onboard, especially the Nigerian Government, such efforts would amount to nothing – (see National Network Vol. 11 NO. 21, June 4-10, 2014 titled “Ogonis Charge FG, Shell On UNEP Report” for the records).

While the UNEP Report remains unresolved, hundreds of Ogoni refugees and political asylum-seekers remain stranded in the Federal Republic of Benin, living under dehumanizing conditions such as no access to food, medication, education, etc.

One of the cardinal solutions that the Ogoni people has advanced to resolve the ongoing impasse with Shell and the Nigerian Government is the creation of Bori State. The proposed Bori State as acknowledged by the Nigerian National Assembly is one that would be economically viable due to abundant human and natural resources endowed in Ogoni and the neighboring communities of Andoni, Opobo, Nkoro, Oyigbo that make up the proposed state. However, given high level of politics based on the dominance of majority vs minority at the ongoing National Conference in Abuja, Nigeria, we are not hopeful that Bori State would be among the states recommended to be created at the end of the conference.

As a matter of fact, the United States remains a strategic partner of Nigeria that we all count on to help Nigeria in navigating through her rough waters. The formation of the US/Nigeria Binational Commission is a bold step in the right direction. However, since deliberations and activities of the Commission remain at the inter-governmental level, it

is very difficult for concerned individuals and civil society organizations that would have contributed toward the success of the commission to participate. To address the concerns of the Ogoni and other peoples of the Niger-Delta, I strongly appeal to this committee to work with the Obama Administration to appoint a Special Envoy saddled with the responsibility of working with the Commission and the Nigerian Government to address the legitimate and genuine concerns of the Ogoni people and others. The Ministry of Niger-Delta Affairs, the Niger-Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and the Niger-Delta Amnesty Program can best be described as bureaucracies in Nigeria. If these establishments were effective, the over two-decades Ogoni conflict with Shell and the Nigerian Government would have been a thing of the past but that is not the case.

Once again, thank you for your interest in the stability of Nigeria and for giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts on recent developments in Nigeria. I look forward to working closely with this committee to seek durable solutions to the crises in Nigeria.

Anslem DornuBari John-Miller

(For and On-Behalf of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP))