

Participants to the roundtable felt significant measures should be implemented against Nigeria's non-compliance to Harare principles. In previous statements, Minister Axworthy signalled that Canada could be considered imposing sanctions on Nigeria. To do so, however, Canada would need further support from other members such as the United States and the Netherlands which so far have resisted the idea of imposing an embargo. Although human rights violations in Nigeria are flagrant, Canada will have to justify any sanctions on stronger arguments, as the human rights situation is also of concern in many other countries such as Cameroon and Kenya. It should be mentioned that in these two latter cases, a government was democratically elected. This only emphasizes the importance of the Nigerian presidential elections to come in August and the need for the process to be closely monitored.

4. Partnerships

When elaborating Canadian policy towards Nigeria, one has to conclude that so far much of the measures implemented by the International Community came short from their goal of inducing a change in Nigeria. Facing limited resources and presence on the field - our embassy was closed a year ago for security reasons - Canada has to investigate new approaches and create partnerships with other actors that are already present and active in Nigeria. Over the last five years, the our Government's policy has evolved, moving to a "first track" regulation process - such as the Harare Declaration - to a "second track" approach, using preventive or "quiet" diplomacy. Although Nigeria would be a perfect case for preventive diplomacy, it has not been possible to do so in the past for multiple reasons, such as the lack of effective opposition, the deep rooted and often hidden causes of the crisis, and the absence of coherent international policy towards Nigeria. A new approach that would concert actions could allow Canada's quiet diplomacy to bring concrete results.

4.1. NGOs

NGO participants raised that many ongoing projects would need further support, whether financial or technical, such as community services and visits to political prisoners. Limited resources are spent by Canada in Nigeria. It was felt that at this stage it was important for Canada to maintain a limited direct participation in order to avoid the Nigerian government refusing any deep-rooted community work interventions. Working with NGOs to implement or develop existing projects would be one way for Canada to make a useful contribution towards democracy in Nigeria. Canada's 2.2 millions Democratic Development Fund, which is probably the larger one in the area, could be used in that regard to support NGOs in their quest to strengthen Nigerian civil society. Kenya was raised as an example of successful grass-roots work done by local NGOs with overall government support. It was also raised by participants that Canada should commission a series of working groups addressing the situation in Nigeria. These working groups could be at different levels, diplomatic, NGOs and others and be