

Other recommendations

-It appears that the Commonwealth represents the most promising forum for concerted action against the Nigerian regime. CMAG must meet as soon as possible on the question of Nigeria. Both formally and informally, Canada should lobby CMAG members for action.

-While the Commonwealth is a key forum, it is not certain that it will take firm action against Nigeria. Canada must therefore work to establish broader coalitions which include economic powers such as the U.S. and the U.K., and in persuading Nigeria's neighbours to acquiesce in (if not support) the imposition of sanctions.

-It is vitally important to determine what Nigeria's opposition wants and needs in terms of sanctions and other forms of support. It is also crucial that external actors and the internal opposition engage in a dialogue aimed at harmonizing their policy objectives and the instruments used in the pursuit of those objectives.

-Canada should push for the release of political prisoners, including President-elect Abiola, by the Nigerian regime. Other priorities include efforts to secure: unimpeded access for humanitarian organizations, permission for an international group to monitor Nigeria's upcoming elections, increased freedom of the press, and the safe return of exiles to Nigeria.

-Canada should initiate a study of the likely humanitarian impact of a possible oil export embargo or gasoline import embargo against Nigeria. Such a study would constitute an important part of the diplomatic process, given that it would be regarded by the Nigerian regime as an implicit threat.

-Canada should also study the structure of Nigerian debt: when is it due, how much, and to whom. This information would help to determine whether the debt could be used to pressure the regime, as was the case in South Africa. It would also be useful to explore the idea that debt relief could provide a positive incentive for change.

Things to watch / Questions for debate

-How likely is CMAG to take a strong stance against the Nigerian regime?

-How would other African states respond if Canada were to adopt a hard-line against Nigeria?

-How does the new regime react to dissent - is it trying to quash it brutally, or to quell it in order to make more incremental changes?

-How quickly would an oil embargo bring the regime to its knees (if at all)? If it would act quickly, then the question of civilian humanitarian impact might be less salient. More study is needed.

-What sort of "intergovernmental agreement" could serve as the legal basis for a Canadian ban on Nigerian oil imports?