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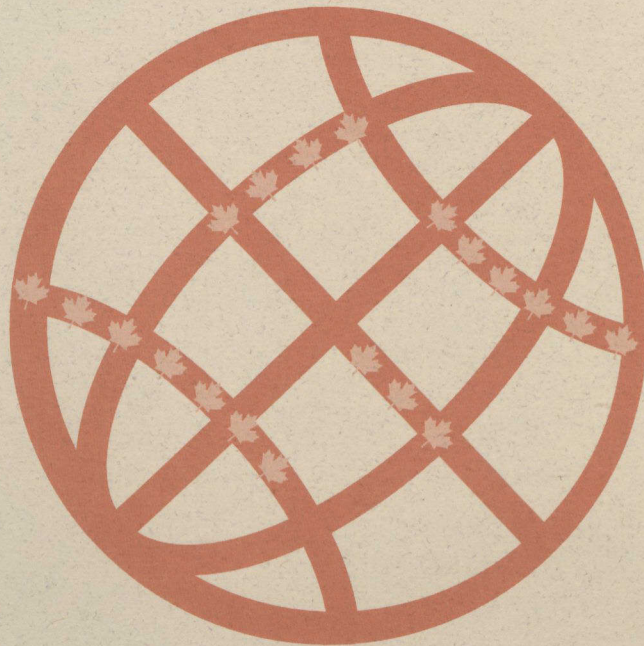
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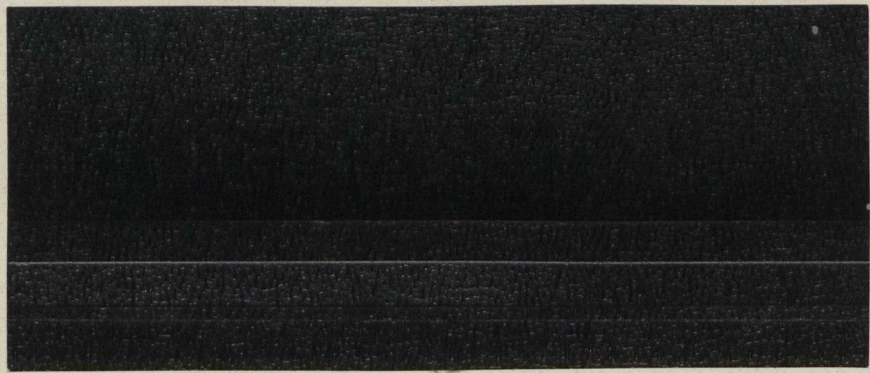


Centre canadien
pour le développement
de la politique étrangère

**REPORT FROM
THE ROUNDTABLE ON NIGERIA**

**March 20, 2000
Ottawa**





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Canadian Centre
for Foreign Policy
Development



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REPORT FROM THE ROUNDTABLE ON NIGERIA

March 20, 2000
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The Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development organized a roundtable on Nigeria on March 20, 2000, in Ottawa. The roundtable brought together experts and academics from Nigeria and Canada to discuss the current situation in Nigeria and to explore possible policy options for Canada. The roundtable examined the current situation in Nigeria, the role of civil society in Nigeria, and explored possible policy options for Canada.

I. Nigeria Today: Obstacles to Democracy, the Rule of Law, and Economic Development

Steve Lee, opened the discussion by welcoming all to the roundtable. In particular, he thanked the Nigerian participants for making the great effort to come to Ottawa. The goal of the roundtable was to share information, to identify points of Nigerian history and to think together about possible Canadian approaches to the continuing political and economic transformation.

Following Steve Lee's remarks, the President of the High Commission to the world, chiefly published by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, and the President of the Nigerian Chamber of Commerce, Lagos, Nigeria, introduced the roundtable. In the case of the High Commission, the President of the Nigerian Chamber of Commerce, Lagos, Nigeria, introduced the roundtable. Following the introduction, the President of the Nigerian Chamber of Commerce, Lagos, Nigeria, introduced the roundtable. Following the introduction, the President of the Nigerian Chamber of Commerce, Lagos, Nigeria, introduced the roundtable.

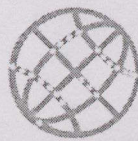
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President Obasanjo continues to merit support as he approaches his first anniversary in office. However, reforms, especially economic reforms, are slower than initially anticipated. This



REPORT FROM THE ROUNDTABLE ON NIGERIA

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The Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development organised a Roundtable on Nigeria on March 20, 2000, in Ottawa. The roundtable brought together experts, academics, NGOs, Nigerians actively involved in the transformation process, as well as government officials, including the Director General of the Africa Bureau, Sandelle Scrimshaw. Ian Ferguson, the Canadian High Commissioner to Nigeria was able to join the roundtable by phone. Canada's former External Affairs Minister, the Hon. Flora MacDonald, also participated. The roundtable examined the current situation in Nigeria, assessed the progress of democratic reforms, examined the role of civil society in the transformation process and explored possible policy options for Canada.

1. Nigeria Today: Obstacles to Democratic Development

Steve Lee, opened the discussion by welcoming all to the roundtable. In particular, he thanked the Nigerian guests for making the great effort to come to Ottawa. The goal of the roundtable was to share information at a critical point of Nigeria's history and to think together about possible Canadian contributions to the continuing democratic transformation.

Following Steve Lee's remarks, Ian Ferguson, Canadian High Commissioner to Nigeria, briefly outlined the contemporary situation. He said that tensions remain high following the unrest in Kaduna and other parts of the country and the freeze on the further introduction of Sharia. In the case of the Odi community last December, the army was sent in to "resolve" a kidnaping and killing of police officers in the Odi community. The operation resulted in widespread destruction of property and hardship for the community. The President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo has apologized for the military action. Political and religious leaders are now reaching out to other groups. Incidents like this one are not new to Nigeria and the country is not disintegrating. Some NGOs are doing excellent work in conflict prevention and management. Nigeria's diversity, competition over scarce resources and poor governance are the major factors contributing to such outbreaks of violence. In a recent meeting with a Nigeria-Canada Business Group, the President was undaunted by the unrest and appeared confident. In another recent significant development, the President has taken over NEPA (Nigerian Electric Power Authority) to address acute power shortages.

President Obasanjo continues to merit support as he approaches his first anniversary in office. However, reforms, especially economic reforms, are slower than initially anticipated. This

year's budget has not been passed yet, and the state is running on emergency finances. There have been launched some investigations of past abuses, some order restored to Cabinet meetings, and some advancement in international affairs apparent from Nigeria's efforts to positively influence African peace and development. However, putting public finances back to order and debt relief are key to future reforms. The currently high oil price offers an opportunity.

Canada is viewed favourably in Nigeria. The Prime Minister's and other Ministerial visits have contributed in part to this view. Current efforts include the upcoming Conference on War-affected Children in Ghana as well as activities to Roll Back Malaria Summit in Abuja where it is planned that the Minister of International Cooperation would represent Canada. Canadian NGOs are also coming back to Nigeria with their own programmes. He looked forward to the report of the group's discussion and wished it every success.

Collins Babalola, Common Cause, raised caution that the progress in democracy in Nigeria has not been especially apparent. Others argued that free elections, the introduction of pluralism into Nigeria's political life, and privatisation do not necessarily presuppose democratic development. While structural problems remain (i.e., imbalanced representation in the National Assembly of various groups and corruption as a survival technique), cosmetic changes often lead to circulation of elites and reproduce patterns of bad governance. The government record of human rights abuses has improved, however, violence remains the main instrument for some problem solving.

Several participants, including Chief Adetola Adeniyi from the Canada-Nigeria Business Group, pointed out that Nigeria has yet to be constituted as a political nation. Legitimacy is necessary for peoples of different ethnic and political backgrounds to re-focus their loyalty and patriotism toward the Nigerian state rather than their own particular communities. Democracy, including the concepts of responsibility and accountability, is not alien to Nigerians. These concepts are being practised in communities regarded as legitimate by their members. Unrest and ethnic clashes are not caused by primordial hatreds. Instead, they are a reaction to the long-standing imbalances in resource allocation and political representation. Similarly, corruption and theft are not characteristics inherent to the Nigerian peoples. Often they are systemic survival tactics in the context of an authoritarian/illegitimate system.

Some participants agreed that at the root of the malaise in Nigeria is a flawed Constitution. The present Constitution has been drafted by the military regime and was imposed on people from the top-down. *Some believe it is imperative that the Constitution be changed to adequately reflect, in particular, the relationship between exploitation and re-distribution of resources/oil and the link between the diverse Nigerian populations and political representation (in the National Assembly and elsewhere).* It is also imperative to build constitutional consensus from the grass-roots level. All peoples should be included in the Constitution building process and their interests and concerns considered. *Without a grass-roots endorsed Constitution, the state of Nigeria will remain a phantom, said Dimeari von Kemedi from the Ijaw Youth Council.*

Pat Williams, Working Group on Nigeria, raised the point that for most Nigerians, preoccupations with day-to-day survival often prevent them from addressing larger questions necessary for informed and active grass-roots involvement in state-building, including the contents of the Constitution. People simply do not have the time and capacity to ponder the nature of an ascending political system or the meaning of a democratic culture. Key issues for many Nigerians are: jobs, health and basic subsistence. If the Nigerian state is to be lent legitimacy through grass-roots endorsement, work has to be done to educate and engage people on the community level. Annie Brisibe, Niger Delta Women for Justice, pointed out that today people on the ground are mostly cut out of the constitutional debates and used for political purposes. The ascending democracy in Nigeria is not participatory since no efforts have been made to involve women and youth.

Alison van Rooy, North South Institute, identified other factors that need to be addressed for democracy to flourish in Nigeria. She outlined the results of a three weeks project undertaken by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (Stockholm), assessing the progress of democracy in several developing countries, including Nigeria.¹ The democratic assessment of Nigeria identified five main constraints to reconciliation:

1. *Missing democratic dividend*: it is difficult for Nigerians to rally for democracy indefinitely if few see real positive change such as more jobs or improvement of the standard of living, including better health and educational systems.
2. *Wide-spread corruption and inefficiency*: the entrenched bureaucracy is susceptible to bribes, many see the public service as an avenue for personal gain. This situation leads to a lack of faith in elected officials, who are unable (or unwilling) to tackle the issue. Furthermore, it poses challenges for international donors (it is estimated that around 130 international loan agreements have been "misplaced"). Nigeria's debt arrears are more a question of fiscal ineffectiveness (and embezzlement of funds) rather than incapacity to repay, since oil revenues should be more than sufficient to cover interest and debt payments.
3. *Constitutional Reform*: as stated before, it is necessary that the new Constitution is based on consensus and that constitutional preparations include extensive, inclusive discussion of core issues, including the division of power and resource allocation.
4. *Military Reform*: the military should be professionalised and sent back to the barracks. Efforts should be made to demilitarise the national culture. Attempts should be made to replace the culture of violence (i.e., aggressiveness, vengeance, personal "rule of law," authoritarian tendencies) with a democratic culture (i.e., pluralism, tolerance, civilian

¹A study will be published by the end of June.

control of the military).

5. *Institution Building to strengthen democratic culture*: institutions that support the development of a democracy should be set up and strengthened. It is especially important to think about formal federal structures/institutions.

Evaluating sector-specific reforms, Douglas Anglin, Canadian Council for International Peace and Security, said that considerable progress has been already made in transferring the military under civilian control. However, the Parliament is not working very smoothly and the passage of Bills takes excessive amount of time (for instance, the anti-corruption bill dragged on for 8 months in the Senate). There are some worrying signs in constitutional reforms with proposals calling for a Constitution based on ethnicity and/or affiliation to a political party. Neither of which are seen as helpful to national reconciliation.

Paul Puritt from the Canadian Labour Congress said that despite all the obstacles for democracy to take root at the federal/national level and through Track I activities, there are some optimistic signs at the grass-roots level. The trade union structure in Nigeria, for example, exists and pressured successfully for a minimum wage increase. Kenna Owoh, Interchurch Action, also emphasised the importance of local and municipal forces in democratisation. There have been efforts to encourage citizens at the community level to read local budgets and provide input in South-West Nigeria, for instance. These small local sites of democratic practices serve as a countervailing movement to the anti-democratic forces. The role of Churches and Mosques was also raised. Religious institutions have enormous mobilising power and often serve as public sites during government failure to provide services like healthcare or education. Dimieari Von Kemedi said that things are happening even in one of the most desperate areas of Nigeria – the Niger Delta, where unrest goes hand in hand with state-sanctioned violence. Young people are recognising the problems. Efforts are being made to address conflict before it flares up.

Taba Cooney, Informetrica, turned attention to economic reforms and the need for privatisation. She pointed out that President Obasanjo is not inclined to take hard economic decisions and remains statist. Privatisation, along with other reforms, has been postponed while public infrastructure decays. Some currency reforms have been initiated to primarily attract foreign investment. The issues of the debt and the inability to pass the 1999 budget have to be addressed. A regulatory framework should be established to facilitate foreign investment.

Others, including Terisa Turner, warned against large scale transfers of public/common property to private corporations. Democracy does not necessarily mean private property ownership and certainly not corporate ownership. Instead, it may involve common property sharing more amendable to respect for human rights and environmental protection (than corporate ownership). Similarly, Kenna Owoh, said that private sector interests must be laid bare, especially when commercialising such vital community resources as water. Dimeari von Kemedi reinforced the message by stating that investment must always come before profits. Companies must respect human rights and acquire a "social licence" from communities within which they

locate their business. As states often do not require such a commitment, other mechanisms must be found to make companies adhere to codes of conduct.

2. Needs

Several key needs have been identified by the participants to further the democratic development of Nigeria:

- *The need for an inclusive National Conference aimed at redefining the building blocks of the Nigerian state.* In preparation for the Conference, nation-wide fora for discussion should be established where core constitutional and other issues could be addressed. The Conference should be representative of all the Nigerian nationalities and other stakeholders and define the parameters of a "truly" new Nigerian federation.
- *The need to pressure the Nigerian government to comply with human rights and humanitarian laws.*
- *The need to address the crumbling health and education systems.* There is an acute need for computers and other technology to improve the quality of education. The health system is in a critical state where hospitals serve more as mortuaries than health-improvement centres.
- *The need to address electric power failure.* Perhaps alternative ways to power generation should be sought, including solar energy.
- *The need to assist with institution building, democratic processes and the improvement of administration.* Election monitoring and pre-election assistance as well as legal training would especially be of value.
- *The need to reinvigorate Nigeria's trade with the rest of the world and to attract socially responsible foreign investment.* Possible tools could include the establishment of foreign trade missions in Nigerian and the signing of an Investment Promotion Agreements.
- *The continuing need for humanitarian aid.*

Drawing on the study of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, Alison van Rooy, offered a list of recommendations/activities that the international community could undertake to address Nigeria's "democratic deficit." She also raised caution about activities that could harm the democratisation process:

1. *The international community should consider small and cautious programmes rather than mega-projects.*

2. *Emphasis should be put on moral versus monetary support.* For instance, outside political statements could lead to buttressing the democratisation process. There should be international discussion of current human rights abuses and money (mis)allocation. Open support for democratic activists should be displayed.
3. *The international community could help the new Nigerian government repatriate money from European bank accounts established by former corrupt leaders.* The Nigerian public should be aware that the international community cares about these mismanaged monies.
4. *The Nigerian debt could be rescheduled to help put finances in order.*
5. Heed should be paid to cultural sensitivities addressing issues such as demilitarisation of the society. Moreover, too much attention is being paid to parliamentary work without understanding the extend of corruption in the National Assembly. The international institutions should be involve in trying to foster democratic culture in Nigeria (i.e., the Ford Foundation's civic awareness programme). However, the NGOs and others should tread carefully.
6. Approximately five bodies are trying to coordinate aid and other programmes to Nigeria. Canada should stay away from trying to function as yet another coordinator of bodies/organisations that do not particularly like to be coordinated.
7. *The international community has to pay careful attention to regional balance in aid programmes.* Information about implementation/delivery of aid and other programmes should be readily available. The international NGO community should be accountable for their actions in Nigeria and elsewhere.

3. Canadian Initiatives

Sandelle Scrimshaw, Director General, Africa Bureau, DFAIT, said that her team is preparing a strategic plan of action to which all stakeholders could contribute. She reiterated the importance of Nigeria for Canadian foreign policy and for African peace and development. The Prime Minister's visit last November symbolised the importance of Nigeria to Canada. The political relationship between the two countries creates an enabling framework for other relationships to develop (Track II). She expressed her hope that President Obasanjo will reciprocate the PM's visit by coming to Canada this year.

Sandelle Scrimshaw said that Canada is working to support democratic development in Nigeria. Some of the areas in which Canada has been active include:

- evolving trade and economic relationships,

- encouraging Nigeria's place at the Forum of Federations,
- supporting Nigeria's regional role (i.e., active Nigerian participation at the Ghana Conference on War-Affected Children),
- facilitating parliamentary exchanges,
- reviewing defence cooperation (i.e., trying to instill a democratic culture within the Nigerian military and a respect for human rights),
- supporting/encouraging regional economic regimes (trade and investment).

She reminded participants that Canadian engagement has only intensified recently. Offices had to be opened, staff found, and additional resources acquired. A proposal for the creation of a trade commissioner position is under consideration and efforts are underway to restore a visa processing office.

Louis Guay, Deputy Director, West and Central Africa Division, DFAIT, welcomed the CCFPD's efforts to bring outside ideas to foreign policy development. He reiterated Sandelle Scrimshaw's remarks that the evolving Nigeria action plan is aimed at implementing ideas and projects that would give Nigeria the role it merits in the region and the development it deserves. The task is daunting, institutions in Nigeria are weak and crumbling, there is wide-spread corruption, the society is divided and human rights abuses continue. Nevertheless, overall "there is more hope than worry," he concluded.

Robert Foote, Canadian International Development Agency, outlined the engagement of CIDA in Nigeria. Presently, there is one Senior Development Officer working full time on the Nigeria file together with the Regional Director for the Gulf of Guinea Division. This summer, a senior planning officer will be posted to Nigeria and plans are underway for the establishment of a Program Support Unit for Nigeria as well. At the time of CIDA's July 1999 planning mission, the new administration had not had sufficient time to formulate sector policies and priorities, identify areas where donor assistance may be required or be able to engage in substantive bilateral consultations. CIDA's objectives were therefore to initiate discussions with selected government departments and to re-establish relationships with civil society groups and representatives of donor agencies based in Nigeria. Short and medium term strategies have been developed by the Desk but have not received formal approval within CIDA.

While it would be beneficial to have a long-term development strategy, the "in-transition" nature of the Nigerian government and the lack of resources allow for shorter-term pro-active projects with quick impact. (Among the recent CIDA activities were funding of a local civil society group for a constitutional rights project and a law students internship project, parliamentary seminars, a polio eradication project and others). When thinking about CIDA's activities in general, it is beneficial to keep in mind the framework within which decisions about funding and projects are taken. It includes the following considerations:

1. larger foreign policy objectives,
2. Canadian expertise and resources (i.e., capacity to help),

3. priorities of stake-holders (i.e., priorities of Nigerian partners have to be identified before funding/projects are approved to avoid donor-led investment. The aim is usually to create an enabling environment rather than directly/unilaterally intervene in development.),
4. chances of success,
5. building on the Canadian reputation abroad.

6. Policy Options for Canada and Sites of Intervention

During the roundtable there were several recommendations for Canadian action in Nigeria:

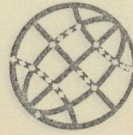
1. Canada could help Nigerian with *constitutional issues*, however, not necessarily through Track I initiatives. Instead, the value added of sharing/imparting the challenges Canadians have been facing with their own coexistence could be valuable. Caution was raised against formal assistance/advice on constitutional issues. Canada could also act as a neutral broker in creating a safe forum for the constitutional debate to take place, indirectly and directly encouraging the North (in particular) to make Nigeria a true federation built on solid constitutional foundations. At the international level, including the UN, Canada could also pressure for a National Conference
2. Canada could strengthen *human rights* by voicing concerns and alerting the international community of human rights abuses. It could also provide funds to organisations/NGOs aimed at promoting human rights in Nigeria (including investigation of human rights abuses). There has been a general concern expressed that Canada and others have significantly scaled back their human rights activities in Nigeria since the transition began.
3. Canada could contribute to lasting *stability and peace in Nigeria* by encouraging the government to address core issues, including the Constitution. Canada could make the case publicly that national reconciliation is unlikely without tackling these issues and engaging civil society in the process.
4. The Canadian government could quickly re-established a *visa processing office* for Nigerians. Some participants pointed out that the issue falls under the jurisdiction of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration and there is not much the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade can do.
5. Canada could assist with *judicial and legal reforms*. Given the fact that the courts often can not pay clerks and sometimes even do not have any paper, setting up an alternative dispute-resolutions system in designated areas could be useful.
6. Canada could assist with the *reform of the military*. Caution was raised that defence

training activities sometimes serve the military as a preparation exercise for a take-over/coup.

7. Canada should focus on *supporting grass-roots initiatives and on-the-ground NGOs*. It should take advantage of the good record Canadian NGOs have in Nigeria and continue endorsing Track II interventions. (Areas of interventions could include: electoral reform, human rights, transparency, education as well as indigenous NGO personnel development). Concern was raised that those Nigerian NGOs, which did dangerous work before the transition, are now being forced out of business by the influx of new Northern NGOs. This trend should be considered when funding decisions are made. Some argued that the current practice of administering funding in Nigeria through the High Commission, rather than Canadian NGOs, is problematic. A specific recommendation to extend funding to the Community Development Programme was made. Funding could be also extended to the Transition Monitoring Group and the Justice Development and Peace Commission of Ijebu-Ode.
8. Canada could help with *power generation* problems faced by Nigerians.
9. The Canadian *private sector* could play a role in Nigeria's economic transformation. Socially responsible investment and increased trade links could be particularly beneficial. Canada could broker a forum to address investment in Nigeria involving the Canadian and Nigerian business communities and citizens concerned about the impact of foreign investment on their well being (i.e., environment, human rights, sustainability).

Calls were made to focus activities toward youth and women. Some argued that Canadian engagement should be concentrated in the Niger Delta, which could act as a testing ground for further projects. Others objected to streamlining aid into one geographical area. There is a need for better inter-departmental collaboration (CIDA, DFAIT, Immigration, DND) and better information sharing mechanisms. A long-term vision for Nigeria is necessary and given limited resources Canada should better utilise its existing expertise and personnel (i.e., it was not seen as useful having personnel completely new to Nigeria's realities sent on a CIDA mission to the region).

Steve Lee, Chair, closed the discussion by thanking all for their participation in the Nigeria learning circle. He expressed the hope that upon leaving the roundtable, participants were encouraged to better share information and create new links and networks.



March 6, 2000

Dear Friends,

In partnership with the Africa Branch of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development is pleased to invite you to a roundtable on Nigeria to be held **March 20, 2000, in Ottawa, from 9:30am to 4:30pm, at the Lord Elgin Hotel, 100 Elgin Street, Lady Elgin Room**. Space is limited, participants will be limited to only those who confirm their attendance (before March 16).

As an important player in Africa, Nigeria is a major influence in regional issues. Four themes will be addressed in the discussion:

- 1- The progress of democracy in Nigeria (remaining threats, legislative programme and legislative accomplishments, main challenges)
- 2- The progress of various reforms (constitution, institutions, economy, state security sector)
- 3- The role of Civil Society in democratic development (how civil society - Canadian and Nigerian- can contribute more efficiently to the democratic development of Nigeria, what can be done to reinforce civil society in Nigeria ?)
- 4- The role of Canada (What Canada can/should do at a bilateral level, multilateral level and in relations with civil society ?)

We hope to assemble experts from a number of sectors including: universities, business, NGO's, labour, government and youth. Attached you will find the agenda, the list of invitees, as well as information regarding your travel and reimbursement. Background papers will be available at the roundtable.

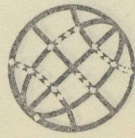
Please confirm your attendance with Yannick Lamonde by responding to this email or by phone at (613) 944-0391.

I look forward to seeing you on the 20th of March.

Sincerely,

Steven Lee
Executive Director

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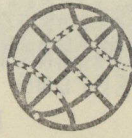


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AGENDA
NIGERIA ROUNDTABLE
March 20, 2000
Ottawa

9:30am to 4:30pm
Lord Elgin Hotel, 100 Elgin Street
Lady Elgin Room

- 9:30 - 9:45 Coffee and Donuts
- 9:45 - 10:00 Welcome, Roundtable Introductions (Steve Lee, Chair)
- 10:00 - 10:15 **Setting the Scene : Nigeria Today**
- Sandelle Scrimshaw
Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade
- Ian Ferguson (by phone)
Canadian High Commissioner to Nigeria
- 10:15 - 12:00 **Part 1: Progress of Democracy**
Opening comment (tbc)
- 12:00 - 12:30 Lunch
- 12:30 - 14:00 **Part 2: Progress of Reforms**
Opening Comment by John Van Mossel
- 14:00 - 14:15 Break
- 14:15 - 15:45 **Part 3: The Role of Civil Society in Democratic Development**
Opening Comment (tbc)
- 15:45 - 16:30 **Policy Options for Canada / Conclusion**



125 promenade Sussex Drive Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0G2

List of Participants

NIGERIA ROUNDTABLE

March 20, 2000

Ottawa

9:30am to 4:30pm

Lord Elgin Hotel, 100 Elgin Street

Lady Elgin Room

Hon. Flora MacDonald
Former Minister of External Affairs

Rick Fee
Presbyterian World Service and Development
Toronto, Ontario

Gary Kenny
Inter-Church Coalition for Africa
Toronto, Ontario

Paul Puritt
Canadian Labour Congress
Ottawa, Ontario

Susan Learoyd
CUSO
Ottawa, Ontario

Collins Babalola
Common Cause
Ottawa, Ontario

Ted Dreger
Parliamentary Centre
Ottawa, Ontario

Walter McLean
Presbyterian Church
Toronto, Ontario

Warren Allmand
International Centre for Human Rights and
Democratic Development
Montreal, Quebec

Akouete Akakpo-Vidah
International Centre for Human Rights and
Democratic Development
Montreal, Quebec

Pat Williams
Working Group on Nigeria
Ottawa, Ontario

Douglas A Fraser
Canadian Council for International Peace and
Security
Ottawa, Ontario

Douglas Anglin
Canadian Council for International Peace and
Security
Ottawa, Ontario

Adetola Adeniyi
Chief
Canada-Nigeria Business Group

Terisa Turner
University of Guelph
Guelph, Ontario

John Van Mossel
Ottawa, Ontario

Ola Smith
IDRC
Ottawa, Ontario

Kenna Owoh
Interchurch Action
Toronto, Ontario

Alison van Rooy
North South Institute
Ottawa, Ontario

Owens Wiwa
MOSOP
Toronto, Ontario

Taba Cookey
Informetrica
Ottawa, Ontario

Sandelle Scrimshaw
Director General
Africa Bureau - DFAIT

Ian Ferguson (by phone)
Canadian High Commissioner to Nigeria

Louis Guay
Deputy Director
West and Central Africa Division - DFAIT

Robert Foote
Canadian International Development Agency
Hull, Quebec

Steve Lee
Executive Director
Canadian Centre For Foreign Policy Development
Ottawa, Ontario

Marketa Geisler
Rapporteur/Writer
Canadian Centre For Foreign Policy Development
Ottawa, Ontario

Yannick Lamonde

Executive Assistant to the Director
Canadian Centre For Foreign Policy Development
Ottawa, Ontario

Guests from Nigeria

Patrick Naagbantou
South-South Zone Civil Liberties Organization

Adeoye Adewale
Punch Newspapers

Annie Brisibe
Niger Delta Women for Justice

Dimeari Von Kemedi
Ijaw Youth Council

Tokunbo Adelanwa
Penal Reform & Welfare Project

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