



AFRICA BRIEFING

Nigeria's stability: the constitutional reform and beyond

Brussels, 11 June 2012 (09.30 - 13.00)

Venue
Club de la Fondation Universitaire
Rue d'Egmont 11
1000 Brussels

BACKGROUND

In recent months, Nigeria has faced a number of challenges to its stability. This briefing will analyse to what extent the already planned constitutional reform could bring substantial change to the country's political and socio-economic system.

In January 2012 Nigeria's government decided to remove the subsidy on fuel, a hugely unpopular economic reform that caused riots, protests and a nationwide strike called by labour unions. The social unrest and frustration created by reforms on fuel subsidies inflamed an already volatile situation in several regions of Nigeria and generated concern over increasing violence and instability.

Yet precisely because the new policy generated significant debate and opposition, it resulted in a renewed demand to end endemic corruption and the lack of transparency in government, promoting a certain shift in Nigeria's non-transparent power.

President Goodluck Jonathan has also faced growing criticism on the handling of the situation in the northern states where the Islamic group Boko Haram has emerged as a major security concern. Boko Haram has claimed various attacks and terrorist acts, also beyond its region of origin and has demanded the Islamisation of the northern states reflecting the country's religious divide and a form of rejection of Western values.

Although Islamic radicalisation and violence are behind the actions of some groups like Boko Haram, the underlying causes and challenges Nigeria faces are much more complex and mainly related to socio-economic marginalisation and political fragmentation. The Niger Delta militancy stemmed from the irresponsible exploitation of oil and the fact that oil producing communities were – and remain - underdeveloped. One of the core challenges is therefore the issue of poverty and uneven development around the country as well as to what extent states can manage or benefit from the resources found in its borders.

How is the Nigerian government going to react to the cycle of violence in the Niger Delta and the crisis of stability in Nigeria as a whole in a context of social unrest, unequal development, social injustice, corruption and government-centred economy? In this context it is important to note that almost a quarter of the 2012 budget is oriented towards security and the military.

In November 2011, President Goodluck Jonathan announced the inauguration of the 'Presidential Committee on the Review of Outstanding Constitutional Issues'. If the National Political Reform Conference of 2006 provided the basis for constitutional amendment, the President announced his willingness to further strengthen areas of national consensus and renew the 1999 Nigerian Constitution. The core issues at stake reportedly include: National Security, Human Rights and Social Security, People's Charter and Social Obligations, Environment and Natural Resources, Models and Structure of Government, Public Service, Power Sharing, Local Government Reforms and the Economy.

If centralised federalism is accepted by the different religious and ethnic groups, it should also prove to be an effective tool to set up accountable political structures, ensure economic development, and real political representation - an effective social

contract. One key question would be how to use the country's wealth to deal with the legitimate grievances in the north and the Niger Delta that have been identified as some of the causes that trigger political and criminal violence.

The post-presidential election violence in northern Nigeria and the escalation of Boko Haram's Islamic insurgency as well as their respective media coverage needs to be analysed cautiously and in detail before considering further engagement by external actors, including the EU.

PROCESS

By gathering key experts on Nigerian politics, this Africa Briefing will seek to identify the challenges of constitutional reform including the following issues:

- 1) The challenges for an effective constitutional reform agenda.*
- 2) The discussion on the root causes of human insecurity in Northern Nigeria and the challenges of state level security.*
- 3) The effective revenue sharing formula and the structure of fiscal federalism Nigeria should implement in order to ensure sustainable development.*
- 4) The implications and potential for engagement for external actors including the EU.*

PROGRAMME

Interventions are limited to 15 minutes. The seminar is held under the Chatham House rule

Chair: Damien Helly, Senior Research Fellow, EUISS, Paris

Panel:

Mr Kunle Amuwo, Senior Analyst, International Crisis Group, Dakar

Mr Udo Jude Ilo, Advocacy Officer, Open Society Institute West Africa, Abuja

Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, Researcher IRD, Paris

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

The event will take place in Brussels on 11th June from 09:30 to 13:00 (exact time tbc). Participation is on invitation basis. This Africa Briefing is organised by the **European Union Institute for Security Studies** in partnership with **Open Society Foundations** within the framework of the **Observatoire de l'Afrique**.

Date: 11 June 9h30 – 13h00
Venue: Club de la Fondation Universitaire
Rue d'Egmont 11; 1000 Brussels

For more information, please contact Any Freitas:

Any.Freitas@iss.europa.eu

The working language will be English. The briefing will be held under the Chatham House rule.