

**CHALLENGES
OF THE
UNITED
NATIONS
REFORM**

PROCEEDINGS OF A COLLOQUIUM



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United Nations Reforms - Should Nigeria not have A Permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council?

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Introduction

The United Nations emerged, from the ashes of the League of Nations. The failure of the League of Nations to avert World War II did not destroy the conviction, shared by many, that only by some form of supra-national organisation could a system of collective security be achieved which would protect the international community from the scourge of war. The allies were even in 1941 calling themselves "The United Nations" and by 1943, the Moscow declaration had recognized "the necessity of establishing at the earliest practicable date a general international organization, based upon the principle of sovereign equality of all peace-loving states, large and small, for the maintenance of international peace and security², The United Nation Charter is a multilateral treaty establishing or restating of the rights and duties of signatory states and it is also the basic constitutional document of the organisation and as such, has an inherent dynamic character which can be seen in its various constitutional development since 1945.³

The United Nations has six principal organs, namely: the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice and Secretariat. Of the above-mentioned principal organs of the United Nations, the Security Council stands out as the only organ that can bite when the chips are down.

Many countries especially the developing nations have been itching for a permanent seat before the Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan, declared that the United Nations itself is on the

part of reforms that will open more doors to countries that want seat on the UN SC.⁴

The focus of this paper therefore is to highlight on Nigeria's quest for a seat on the United Nations Security Council and proffer reasons why it is expedient that Nigeria should get a seat on the United Nations Security Council.

The United Nations Security Council (SC)

The primary responsibility of the Security Council is the maintenance of international peace and security. It is so organized to be able to function continuously, and a representative of each of its members must be present at all times at United Nations headquarters.

- When a complaint concerning a threat to peace is brought before the Council for action, it usually recommends peaceful resolution of disputes.
- When a dispute leads to fighting, the Council's first concern is to nip it in the bud as soon as possible.
- A member state against which preventive or enforcement action has been taken by the Security Council, may be suspended from the exercise of the right and privileges of membership.
- A state member of United Nations but not of the Security Council may participate without vote.

Structure of the United Nations Security Council

The Council consists of 15 members of which five have permanent seat and 10 members are elected on a two-year term renewable.

The Security Council has two standing Committees:

- (i) Committee of Experts on rules of procedure (studies and advises on rules of procedure and other technical matters.
- (ii) Committee on Admission of New members. The Security Council has standing committees which are established as the need arises.

Functions And Powers

Each Council member has one vote. Decisions on procedural matters are made by an affirmative vote of at least nine of the 15 members. Decision on substantive matters require nine votes, including the concurring votes of all the five permanent members. This is the rule of "great power unanimity", often referred to as the "veto" power. Under the Charter all members agree to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council. While other organs of the United Nation make the United Nation make recommendations to Governments, the Security Council alone has the power to take decisions which member states are obliged under the Charter to carry out.⁵

Nigeria's Chances Of Securing A Permanent Seat

Nigeria is Africa's most populous country, with an estimated population of about 120 million and more than 300 ethnic nationalities. Nigeria is more than the size of Britain and France put together. Nigeria lies on the Gulf of Guinea and has borders with Republic of Benin (West), Niger Republic (North) Chad (North East across the Lake Chad), Cameroon (East) and the Atlantic Ocean (South). Nigeria is Africa's largest producer of crude oil and the world's seventh largest oil producer.

The thrust of the Secretary General's report on the proposal for the Reform of the UN especially the Security Council is based on the proposed increase of the membership of this organ from 15 to 24. In this proposal, there are two options.

Option A will create six new permanent members without veto and two of the seats will go to Africa. Option B will also create additional of five permanent seats where some will be elected for four years and others will be, elected for two years.

The first option seem to be clearer and this is what Nigeria should opt for as it will be clear that two permanent seats are reserved for Africa. The battle is thus restricted to the members of the African Union to pick and elect those two states from amongst its members.

- The credentials of Nigeria in the creation of the OAU and the present Africa Union cannot be wished away.

- _ The contribution of Nigeria to all the UN Peace Keeping Operations in Africa and around the world cannot be dispended with.
- The liberation efforts of Nigeria as a 'Frontline State' in Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibia and its efforts in dismantling the cruel apartheid regime in South Africa will remain a big credit to the Nigerian State.
- Recently the efforts of Nigeria in restoring peace and democratic regimes to Sierra Leone, Liberia and Sao Tome and Principe are debts to Nigeria that cannot be repaid except Nigeria forgive the debtors i.e. Africa and the International community.
- The peaceful means by which Nigeria has dealt with and dealing with its neighbour cannot be wished away.

Conclusion

Nigeria has contributed immensely to the peace and security initiatives and efforts both in Africa and the world over. Nigerian rightly deserves a seat.