INDIGENOUS RIGHTS, CULTURAL PRACTICES, INTERNATIONAL MIGRATIONS AND UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTION:

PRESENTATION BY JUSTICE PROFESSOR PETER UMEADI, WJА BOARD MEMBER 2017-2019, PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE IN NIGERIA 2023 (APGA) AT THE XXIX WORLD LAW CONGRESS AT SANTO DOMINGO, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC 4-6 MAY 2025 PROTOCOL There is a massive displacement of indigenous entities ongoing in Nigeria. The official description of these displaced persons is internally displaced persons, IDP. These internally displaced persons are herded into camps. The Nigerian Government are not able to grapple with the dynamics of providing for the camps and the international community have shown scant interest to these abandoned peoples. The displacement is finding occurrence across Nigeria. However, it is playing out with ferocity in the North, affecting original Hausa communities in Kaduna, Yobe and Gombe and now the scorched peoples of the Middle Belt in places like Benue, Plateau, Taraba, Adamawa for example. The origin of this irredentism date back to the 1900s of the Fulani Jihad wherein the autochthonous Hausa communities were subdued by a combination of warfare and guile and forcibly converted to Islam from their hitherto animist inclinations. The victor adopted Hausa language as lingua franca and imposed their political rulership over them. The same subjugation enveloped the Middle Belt which was part of Northern Nigeria and extended to the Western Region via Lokoja to Oyo. Only the Eastern Region was spared the spread of the Jihad at the time. The British conveniently superimposed their colonial administration on the gains of the Fulani Jihad in Nigeria. The dire situation got accentuated with the perception that despite the reality of the 1952-53 census the British manipulated the delineation of seats in the parliament which allotted a chunky half to the North, leaving the ostensibly more populated East and West to share the remider, at independence with executive power in their hands the irredentist inclinations of the North had ripened from the days of the Fulani Jihad. In the contentious presidential elections of 2015, it has been said that the Fulani, whose numbers are quite insignificant, in a bid to retain their hold on political power, designed and announced to the World that Nigeria is an inherited land of the Fulani and that Fulani wherever they may be should come and settle in Nigeria. The avalanche happened. Droves of Fulani from all over Africa made it to Nigeria's notorious porous borders, crossed and settled. They, not being indigenous to Nigeria, had no roots, no land, no home there. They came with their cattle in their nomadic life style. They first settled in the bushes. Next, they were attacking the indigenous communities in Hausa land and Middle Belt who were predominantly Christians, butchering men, women and children in their sleep, chasing them from their ancestral land and occupying same. The original owners of the land found themselves in the internally displaced persons, IDP camps. These camps now dot all over Northern Nigeria. The irony is that in many places the Fulani communities indigenous to Nigeria have become victims of their invited brethren. Also, prominent non-Fulani Nigerians who aided the Fulani rise and acquisition of power now watch as the land of their kith and kin are grabbed and many of their own massacred while the government they fostered look the other way. In the carnage that trigger the displacements, a worrisome pattern has emerged. Police and Army invariably arrive at the scene of crime long after the victims have been dispossessed of their ancestral homeland and have fled. The attackers remain on their newly conquered land in the full view of the powers that be. No one hear about whether the perpetrators are apprehended or brought to justice.

Talks in official quarters are on how to resettle the displaced persons on new land. There are no efforts to restore normalcy and return the indigenes to their ancestral homes from the squalid camps which they have been condemned to. Many evacuated places have been renamed by the Fulani newcomers. These conquered lands especially in the Middle Belt are ultra-fertile and represent the food basket of the whole country. The new landlords do not farm. It is inconceivable the wasted Page 2 of 3 opportunity which their land grab brought about. As a matter of fact the Fulani herdsmen have disrupted and devastated farming of crops for export and for subsistence nationwide. Their free ranging cattle destroy crops in farms of indigenous people starting fights and shoot-outs. It is alleged that the herdsmen rape women in their farms. They retaliate any harm done to their destructive cattle with force of undue proportion as it is said that they value the life of their cattle more than human life. They are said to engage in widespread kidnapping. All over Nigeria no region is spared at the moment. The Fulani incursions have been recorded in forests in all the geographical zones where they are called Fulani herdsmen. They kidnap, sometimes busloads of commuters, demand and receive ransom. The law enforcement agencies in Nigeria do not contain or trace how these ransoms funds move. Some funds are drawn from the banks. The Fulani attackers come with AK 47 rifles and other sophisticated guns fueling the suspicion that they are supplied by state actors. The herdsmen brandish AK 47 rifles and nobody ask questions despite the strict firearms laws. The indigenous peoples are prosecuted for owning mere hunting guns and dane guns. Recently the Nigeria Supreme Court sentenced a native farmer to death by hanging. See Suit No. SC.CR/1026/2022 Sunday Jackson V. The State. The farmer had engaged a herdsman whose cattle destroyed his labours on his farm. The herdsman brandished their ubiquitous dagger to stab the farmer and a mortal struggle ensued. The farmer disarmed the herdsman and used the dagger on the herdsman who died. The Supreme Court decided that at the point the farmer won the dagger he should have fled from his assailant and trespasser on his farm and should not have used the dagger to kill him. It is time for the international community to pay more attention to Nigeria especially on matters of IndigeIndigenous Rights, International Migrations and Universal Human Rights Protection.

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