



ADVOCACY CENTRE

Youths and Environmental Advocacy Centre (YEAC-NIGERIA)

CAC/IT/NO. 102679

COMMUNIQUÉ ISSUED AT THE END OF A ONE-DAY NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ORGANIZED CRIME IN NIGERIA AND THE GULF OF GUINEA (NACOCINAG) TOWARD STRENGTHENING COLLECTIVE EFFORT UNDER THE “NETWORK ON ORGANIZED CRIME IN NIGERIA AND THE GULF OF GUINEA (NOCINAG)” TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES OF DOMESTIC AND TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIMES IN THE REGION ORGANIZED BY YOUTHS AND ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY CENTRE (YEAC-NIGERIA) AND SPONSORED BY THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE AGAINST ORGANIZED CRIME/THE RESILIENCE FUND HELD ON FRIDAY, APRIL 28, 2023 IN PORT HARCOURT, RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

1. INTRODUCTION

Having considered Nigeria as one of the countries in the Gulf of Guinea faced with challenges associated with organized domestic and transnational crimes, the one-day national conference on organized crime in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea was held on Friday, April 28, 2023, to address related salient issues; the event took place on Friday, April 28, 2023 at Land Mark Hotel, Port Harcourt, Rivers State and was billed to be declared open by President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR but he was absent. However, Mr. President sent a message to the National Conference by 2:18PM on his verified Twitter handle @MBuhari in what seems to be his speech to the conference and said;

“I'm pleased with the successes being recorded in tackling piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. Nigeria remains committed to spearheading these efforts. Through the Deep Blue Project, launched in June 2021, @NigeriaGov invested \$195 million in security boats, vehicles and aircraft. In June 2019, I assented to the Suppression of Piracy & Other Maritime Offences Act, 2019 (SPOMO Act), passed by the National Assembly, and which aims to prevent and suppress Piracy, Armed Robbery and other unlawful acts against any ship lawfully operating in the Gulf of Guinea”

← Thread



Muhammadu Buhari 
@MBuhari

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2:18 pm · 28 Apr 23 · 13.3K Views

105 Retweets 5 Quotes 310 Likes



Muhammadu Buhari  @MBuhari · 38m

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5

19

55

4,220



DavidoBestie30BG @man_raizo · 53m
Replying to @MBuhari and @NigeriaGov

Participants examined crimes in the form of pipeline vandalism, crude oil theft, artisanal refining, illegal bunkering, kidnapping, banditry, insurgency, racketeering, cybercrimes, drugs/human trafficking, arms smuggling, sea pirates, Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUUF) in the Gulf of Guinea (along other fraudulent activities such as environmental crimes and illegal logging). Youths and Environmental Advocacy Centre (YEAC-Nigeria) facilitated the event sponsored by Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime and Resilience Fund.

The conference was designed to look into the character of mafia-like cartels comprising of criminal minded non-state actors that apparently established wide networks to operate illegal governance structures; such networks holding control across both governable and ungoverned spaces that transverse national borders to carry out transnational organized criminal activities; yet, violating human rights, and profiting illegally at great public expense, while damaging the national image of countries in the Gulf of Guinea –Republic of Angola, Republic of Cameroon, Republic of the Congo (Congo Brazzaville), The Democratic Republic of Congo (Congo Kinshasa), Republic of Equatorial Guinea, Republic of Gabon, Federal Republic of Nigeria, and the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe. The scope of the conference covers the following areas:

- Strengthening community-based advocacy in the Niger Delta through multi-stakeholder engagement to combat organized crime;
- Serving as a platform for intelligence gathering and information sharing with security formation to counter organized crime and violent extremism;
- Providing think-tank base for research and serving as a resource centre on organized crime, while constituting a mitigation mechanism for same;
- Building interventionist platform for civil society actors to expand participation through wide-based partnership linkages around the Gulf of Guinea Commission’s advocacy effort –for contributing needed input, and rallying support for combating transnational organized crime;
- Serving as a training hub to promote capacity development to build potentials at local, national and transnational level in strengthening effort against organized crime;
- Partnering and collaborating with other networks and formations (as state and no-state bodies) to mitigate organized crime, promote peace and security in Nigeria and the entire Gulf of Guinea;

By this wide-spectrum focus, the conference sought to sustain long-standing contributions for enhancing security efforts toward addressing organized crime challenges through the established “**Network on Organized Crime in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea (NOCINAG)**”. Under this focus, conference proceedings dwelt on strengthening existing organized crime mitigation mechanisms in partnership with Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GITOC) and sponsorship by the Resilience Fund, Austria.

2. SPECIAL FOCUS

The event specially highlighted other critical contributions of YEAC in Nigeria, including advocacy efforts and propositions as already captured in a report, titled: “**The Doctrine Of PACORDI and Other Oil Theft Mitigation Mechanisms for Nigeria**”; this focus was aimed at countering organized crime acts of oil theft, artisanal refining, illegal bunkering and associated environmental pollution (including, but not limited to, the “black soot” hazard).

3. FORUM PARTICIPATION

The conference witnessed a very resourceful participation that drew inspiration from background effort to unravel the critical challenge that organized crime posed to the Gulf of Guinea sub-region. Thus, the critical national multi-stakeholder engagement was felt satisfactory to participants; it brought together participants from the security circle, government agencies, oil companies, policymakers, academic institutions, members of diplomatic community, organized private sector, media practitioner, religious bodies, ethnic nationalities, civil society and host communities of extractive/non-extractive industries, among others; all joined to discuss and brainstorm on strategic ways of collaborating, supporting and working with governments and security formations in their efforts to tackling organized crime in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea for safer societies.

4. THE FORUM’S ENGAGEMENT PROCEEDINGS

The event was planned and designed to generate needed information to shed light on an issue of major concern in the socio-political and ethno-cultural experiences of our communities, State, Niger Delta, dear country of Nigeria and the entire Gulf of Guinea region. Delivered speeches, goodwill messages and other spicy communication and presentation forms were largely supported by a keynote lecture-type address (bearing a tint of research insight) to focus deliberations of the conference. Discussions, question/answers, comments, suggestions/observations also form part of contributions to generate robust outcome from the conference. A special part of the conference was the formal launch of the “**Network on Organized Crime in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea (NOCINAG)**” – by way of pushing for building strong collaboration among non-state actors and synergize with governmental organizations in the member countries of the Gulf of Guinea sub-region; NOCINAG was conceived to also draw significant participation of local populations into sub-regional wide effort to combat organized crime in the Gulf of Guinea.

5. CONCERNS RAISED AT THE FORUM

The forum addressed the following concerns over seven core objectives and other related the concerns, as follow:

- Low development of effective, non-violent ways of raising the profile of community priorities to adopt constructive and sustainable approaches in handling issues of social destabilization;
- Virtual absence of generally approved/adopted campaign strategies against organized crime manifesting as oil theft, artisanal refining, human trafficking and environment/social pollution in Nigeria (and other countries);

- Low concern around promoting sustainable/gainful enterprising for youths toward combating rising wave of organized crime in Nigeria and the entire Gulf of Guinea;
- Need to promote the formulation of services that would be strongly benefiting from critical intellectual input/related resource sources;
- Need to leverage on existing local and international partnerships, contacts and networks –toward finding practical solutions to problems related to organized crime;
- Need to improve support services to complement state and non-state efforts in combating organized crime and,
- Need to focus more on alternative livelihood promotion, especially in the fields of green energy generation to empower youths as a way of creation orientation away from criminality.

6. OBSERVATIONS MADE AT THE FORUM

Some challenges related to combating organized crime in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea were covered during the conference proceedings, and observations made in the course of discussion's time. They include:

- The invisibility of modern day crime (and of criminals) has made traditional methods of crime mitigation (becoming more and more) unreliable;
- New technologies (such as satellite surveillance mechanisms) are yet to develop and improve the effort of crime investigation to deal with present criminal challenges in Nigeria;
- Regional collaborations are yet to crystalize into helpful ways of supporting crime mitigation across borders;
- Organized crime is complex, and can be carried out by distant operators that may also be literally invisible;
- Exploitation of economic benefits has continued to serve colonial/post-colonial interests, which defy crime prevention values that (and are rather promoting crime perpetration);
- There is a relational and linkage between the natural resource endowment of the Gulf of Guinea and the scramble for profiteering that can include deviation to transnational organized crime;
- Conference identified risks and impacts of organized crime on women to include sex slaves, rape, ritual killings for money-making, vulnerability and easy targets for harm, susceptible to economic hardship during cult-related clashes, victims of conflict/kidnap situations among others.
- Transnational organized crime is a problem that affects all of us among the populations in the (Gulf) region;
- There is a co-relationship between created conflicts in conflict-afflicted areas and the formations/sustenance of organized crime in the (Gulf);
- There is usually a collaboration between international crime syndicates and Nigerian state/corporate officials who wield high-level influence in the industries related to the problem of organized crime;
- State effort in setting up mere task force outfits cannot automatically translate into desirable result, but may even help benefit the few corrupt/thieving members of society;

- Environmental pollution taking place around the Gulf of Guinea is contributing to minimize ecological (or natural resources) services that traditionally benefit the people of the region;
- International interests approximating to superpower struggle form part of insecurity difficulties and related challenges across Africa’s coastal regions (including Gulf of Guinea);
- National security strategy efforts are weak generally—as perpetrators of transnational crimes are usually part of the formulation of strategic mechanisms; and,
- Low capacity of political leadership (particularly, of elected leaders) naturally give rise to weak state effort to provide effective governance around organized crime management.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations, after conference rigorous deliberations, were considered:

- a. Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) should fast track effort in setting up effective task force against organized crime to be known as “Taskforce Against Organized Crime in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea (TAOCINAG)”;
- b. FGN should no longer delay to establish the modular refineries promised across the Niger Delta states to support sustainable youth empowerment priorities;
- c. FGN should immediately establish the Presidential Artisanal Crude Oil Refining Development Initiative (PACORDI) proposed by YEAC-Nigeria as a corresponding organized crime mitigation mechanism for artisanal crude oil refiners in the Niger Delta like illegal gold miners in parts of the North and Western Nigeria that the Presidential Artisanal Gold Mining Development Initiative (PAGMI) is established for them to mitigate organized crime in gold mining;
- d. We should adopt new innovative ways of combating crime to be able to address the problem of organized crime and perpetrators of such crimes now carried out in sophisticated ways;
- e. Cultural orientation must be revisited to recapture value dimension to prevent increasing penchant for crime;
- f. Tactful mitigation of organized crime must go beyond mere declaration (statements), and must involve seriously committed mindset and political will;
- g. Discussions must be sustained and expanded in an effort to seek solution against transnational organized crime;
- h. The state (government) must target to make genuine effort to provide services that address the needs of the grassroots population –to make the masses happy and disabuse their minds from organized crime;
- i. The Gulf of Guinea membership is still expanding to include more countries, and the current efforts to secure the region (and combat crime) must be responsive to related emerging trends;
- j. Concerted effort should be made to continue this engagement to ensure that strong persuasion messages can emerge to help improve crime mitigation contributions;
- k. A coast-guard mechanism should be established to support the effort of maritime security enforcement to ensure related benefits are maximized;
- l. Existing state agencies should be properly funded to ensure that they have capability to carry out legitimate duties of providing security and combating organized crime;

- m. Government’s role in combating organized crime is prime, and must be put to play if our effort to mitigate the menace posed by organized crime will succeed;
- n. There should be coastal community development areas agencies to cater to the special security and development needs of the people living there –toward strengthening community resilience and partnership advantages from even their disadvantaged conditions;
- o. Legal reform-based advocacy and governance oversight role must also be intensified on this same organized crime menace.
- p. Steps should be taken to build the capacity of women, community leaders and resilience on organized crime mitigation
- q. Conference recommends that YEAC-Nigeria and its partners synergize and form the Network on Organized Crime in other Gulf of Guinea Countries that are members of the Gulf of Guinea Commission such as Republic of Angola, Republic of Cameroon, Republic of the Congo (Congo Brazzaville), The Democratic Republic of Congo (Congo Kinshasa), Republic of Equatorial Guinea, Republic of Gabon, Federal Republic of Nigeria, and the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe
- r. Conference calls on GITOC and the Resilience Fund to continue sponsoring “National Conference on Organized Crime in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea” to make it an annual event to sustain the discussion and achievements of proffering solutions to organized crimes in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea.
- s. Conference call on the Gulf of Guinea Commission to partner with the “Network on Organized Crime in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea (NOCINAG)” to generate data and information from community stakeholders to support its objectives and contribute to mitigate organized crime in the Gulf of Guinea.

8. CONCLUSION

There is general consensus that the effort of mitigating organized crime should be sustained with continuous engagement that would expand to involve more effort from wide spectrum of actors across urban and non-urban settings—and across state/non-state bodies. However, more demand from individual citizens and groups for governance good practices must be sustainably carried out toward assuring beneficial results.