**Call for inputs: *Internal displacement in the context of the slow-onset adverse effects of climate change***

**For the Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons**

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**SCOPE OF INPUT**

In this contribution we will examine how slow-onset effects of climate change are inter-related with conflict and can lead to internal displacement within the context of Herdsman-Farmers clashes in Nigeria, focusing on Question 10 in the call for inputs.

**QUESTION 10**

Information on how slow-onset effects of climate change are inter-related with conflict, i.e. how climate change and conflict combine to act as drivers and causes of internal displacement, and what specific combined effects they have on internally displaced persons.

1. **Introduction**

In Nigeria, there is evidence that slow-onset effects of climate change, such as desertification, drought, and water scarcity, are inter-related with conflict and can lead to internal displacement. In 2003, the European Security Strategy noted that climate change will aggravate competition for natural resources, and likely increase conflict and migratory movements in various regions (EU, 2003). That prediction has largely become reality for Nigeria. Climate change has intensified land-use conflicts and triggered forced migration by exacerbating existing environmental crises, such as desertification, drought, water scarcity and soil degradation. It is threatening to overwhelm local capacities to adapt to changing environmental conditions and reinforce the trend towards general instability that already exists in many societies and regions in Nigeria.

1. **The role of slow-onset effects of climate change**
2. **Desertification**

Climate change is a major cause of desertification. According to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), desertification is land degradation in arid, semi-arid and humid areas resulting from various factors, including climatic variations and human activities (UNCCD, 1997). Desertification can also be understood as a process by which land becomes increasingly dry until almost no vegetation grows on it, turning it into desert. When that happens, the land’s ability to absorb water becomes impaired, making it difficult for it to support crops.

Africa is likely to experience a continuing trend of land degradation. Already approximately 3,500 square kilometres of Nigerian land turns to desert each year, forcing both farmers and herdsmen to abandon their lands (Campbell et al., 2007).

Nigeria is faced with rapid desert encroachment affecting fifteen northernmost states from moderate to severe rate. Out of the 909,890 km2 of the country’s land area, about 580,841 km2 accounting for 63.83% of total land is impinged on by desertification (Olagunju, 2007).

1. **Drought and Water Scarcity**

At the same time, climate change is also contributing to the drying of lakes and rivers. A case in point is Lake Chad which used to support millions of livestock and crop farmers in four countries in Africa, including Nigeria. In the last 30 years, Lake Chad has shrunk from 25,000 square km to about 2,000 square km, a reduction of about 90%.

There is already existing water stress in Africa.Access to clean water is a major problem in many African countries. One-third of all people in Africa live in drought-prone regions. One-quarter (about 200 million people) currently experience significant water stress (IPCC, 2007). According to the United Nations Office for Risk Reduction, drought accounted for 31 per cent of all natural disasters in Africa between 1975 and 2002. Floods accounted for another 26 per cent (ISDR, 2004).

Climate change leads to weather variability, shifts in precipitation patterns, and a rise in temperature. Rising temperatures increase evaporation (from soil and rivers) and evapo-transpiration (from plants). Through these myriad impacts, climate change reduces the amount of available water in lakes and rivers (known as ‘blue’ water) and in the soil (‘green’ water).

There is widespread agreement that climate change and variability are likely to impose additional pressures on water availability and accessibility in Africa (IPCC, 2007). Using a range of scenarios the IPCC estimates that by 2020 an additional 75 to 250 million people in Africa are likely to be at risk of increased water stress. By 2050 this population is projected to be between 350 and 600 million (IPCC, 2007).

1. **Consequences of these slow-onset effects of climate change**
2. **Displacement and climate refugeeism**

The combination of desertification and drying lakes in Northern Nigeria has led todisplacement and climate refugeeism. Climate change is rendering displaced people jobless and homeless, thereby creating dependency and conflict in most cases.Over 30 million people have been displaced from the Lake Chad region, many of them farmers and fishermen.

1. **Forced migration of herdsmen and their livestock to Southern Nigeria**

Climate Change has led to widespread displacement of people north of Nigeria and in Northern Nigeria because of drought, desertification, crop failures, and famine. A lot of these people are livestock herders. When there is no grass or water for his animals, the herder must seek greener pasture and water elsewhere or risk the starvation of his flock.

The Nigerian experience is instructive. There has been a steady increase in Nigerian livestock population over time without a corresponding increase in resources to cater for them. According to ***Nigeria’s Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development***, Nigeria has an average annual increase in livestock population of 1.4%, translating to an additional 5 million cattle, 10 million sheep, and 15 million goats in the past 10 years (2007 – 2017).

As of 2018, Nigeria had an estimated livestock population of 19.5 million cattle, 72.5 million goats, 41.3 million sheep. See *Keynote Address Delivered by the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Chief Audu Ogbeh, Ofr, at the Retreat on Livestock and Dairy Development in Nigeria, held at Musa Yar’ Adua Centre, Abuja, on 7th to 8th June, 2016.*

Because of the slow-onset effects of climate change, there is no longer enough grass and water in the Northern States of Nigeria to cater for the current livestock population. Out of necessity and the primordial need for survival, herdsmen from Northern Nigeria are forced to migrate southwards in search of food and water for their livestock and for themselves. The impact of this climate change-induced migration is immense. It leads to further displacement of communities in the Southern part of Nigeria, communal clashes, and insecurity due to scarcity of arable land, grazing fields, and resources in the South.

1. **Threat to food security**

Food security, as defined by **the United Nations Committee on World Food Security**, means that “all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their food preferences and dietary needs for an active and healthy life.”

Much of the food supply in Africa depends on climate and weather conditions. The indirect consequences of climate change include: an increase in hunger and water crises; increasing spread of pests and pathogens; and health risks through rising air temperatures and heatwaves, especially in developing countries. Changes like increased temperatures, water stress, diseases, and weather extremes create challenges for the farmers and fishermen who put food on our tables, thereby threatening food security.

Those who are displaced by climate change often become food insecure very quickly. The economic implications of dealing with secondary issues related to climate change affect displaced people disproportionately. For instance, the changes in climate variability have a direct implication on food-production system stability. Increased frequency and intensity of extreme events such as drought and flood threatens stability.

The complex interrelations between political conflicts and migration in a context of increased competition for limited resources, increases the frequency and magnitude of food emergencies. Climate change affects all four components of food security: food availability, food accessibility, food utilization and food systems stability. It can disrupt food availability, reduce access to food, and affect food quality. Its impact on food production, food distribution channels, and purchasing power can create insecurity and conflict.

1. **Conflicts and wars**

Climate change and desertification are significantly responsible for increased conflicts and wars across Africa and are implicated in herdsmen-farmers clashes in Nigeria. Access to water has been identified as a source of conflict at a community level—particularly in cases where no formal rules or agreements on the use of the water resources had been agreed (WBGU, 2007). An empirical link between reduced freshwater resources and an increased likelihood of community-level conflict was established by Raleigh and Urdal (2007). Nyong and Fiki (2005) argue that recurrent droughts interacting with other social and economic factors have resulted in conflicts among rural populations in the West African Sahel. These conflicts, they assert, have increased in their intensity, frequency, and the magnitude of destruction caused. Such impacts are not limited to Africa.

In 2007, for example, water scarcity, crop failures and livestock deaths stemming in part from climate-related drought drove an estimated 1.5 million people to the cities from rural areas in Syria, helping spark the horrifying civil war that displaced millions more. According to the ***Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre,*** "98% of all displacement in 2012 was related to climate- and weather-related events."

In Nigeria, the pressures exerted by climate change are taking a deadly toll. According to a Special Report on April 30, 2016 by Francis Igata of VANGUARD, a Nigerian Newspaper, the following clash happened on April 25, 2016:

“Hell was let loose last Monday in Ukpabi-Nimbo, in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area of Enugu State, when dare-devil herdsmen, numbering over 500, unleashed  terror on  hapless natives, killing 46 and burning the Christ Holy Catholic Church, Odozi-Obodo. 11 houses were razed while 14 victims are lying critically ill at Royal Cross Hospital,”Nsukka, Nsukka District General Hospital and Bishop Shanahan Hospital, Nsukka.

**APRIL 23: HOW IT STARTED**

The herdsmen were believed to have hatched the plot to attack Ukpabi-Nimbo, last weekend, and notified the natives. The development triggered tension in the community. The herdsmen, it was learnt, were bent on taking over portions of the vast fertile land in the community for cattle grazing, a stance the community opposed.”

There appears to be dramatic rise in the number, frequency and intensity of herder-farmer conflicts and attacks in recent years. The 2019 Global Terrorism Index reports that **“violence between Nigerian herders and farmers intensified in early 2018 with approximately 300,000 people fleeing their homes.”** The Index further reports that “in 2018, Fulani extremists were responsible for the majority of terror-related deaths in Nigeria at 1,158 fatalities. Terror-related deaths and incidents attributed to Fulani extremists increased by 261 and 308 percent respectively from the prior year.”

1. **Conclusion**

Slow-onset effects of climate change are inter-related with conflict and are directly harming people in Nigeria by:

1. Destroying the places they live;
2. Disrupting their means of livelihood;
3. Wreaking havoc on their farms and food supply chain;
4. Causing widespread displacement and climate refugeeism;
5. Forcing herdsmen to migrate with their livestock to seek better grazing grounds; and
6. Creating a tinder box that often erupts in clashes and conflicts.

Climate change is already prompting an increase in migration, with people being forced to leave their homes because of desertification, drought, flooding, and other climate-related disasters. Forced migration hinders development in at least four ways; by increasing pressure on urban infrastructure and services, by undermining economic growth, by increasing the risk of conflict; and by leading to worse health, educational and social indicators among migrants themselves.

There is a need to deploy a plethora of strategies to minimize the impact of the slow-onset effects of climate change on displaced persons, including: sensitization, integration of adaptation practices, development and implementation of Government policies, reforestation, water conservation, better water management, climate-smart agriculture, and greater protection of marginal lands.

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