

**INTERVENTION PAPER FOR THE 145TH
INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION (IPU) ASSEMBLY**

ON

**GENDER EQUALITY AND GENDER-SENSITIVE
PARLIAMENTS AS DRIVERS OF CHANGE FOR A
MORE RESILIENT AND PEACEFUL WORLD**

HOLDING AT KIGALI-RWANDA

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INTERVENTION PAPER FOR 145th ASSEMBLY OF THE INTER PARLIAMENTARY UNION (IPU) AND RELATED MEETINGS

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The quest for equal ease of access to resources and opportunities, economic participation, decision making as well as key leadership positions regardless of gender will continue to dominate public debate among policymakers globally. According to UNICEF, to achieve gender equality, women and men, girls and boys should enjoy the same rights and opportunities.

However, the topic, gender equality has received an unprecedented push in recent times though with its attendant challenges. These challenges are clogging the wheel to achieving desired results. They include sex trafficking, organ harvesting, sexual violence, others are rape, child labour, forced prostitution, societal discrimination. Some of the greater issues are the religious and ethnic practices that are inimical to the well-being of the woman or girl child in some places. These factors are some of the negative vices orchestrated against women that hinder their growth and overall safety. Some of these inhuman treatments have existed over a long period of time.

Understandably, some of the issues of gender equality historically propagated based on the ideology of one size fits all approach, does not take into account the peculiarities that existed among different religious and ethnic practices which may work in one culture but not in another.

Gender-Sensitive Parliament is another avenue where issues affecting or concerning women are critically looked into and addressed by the parliaments. Parliament is the true representation of the people in a democratic government. I, therefore, call on members' of the parliaments to ensure their parliaments comply with "gender-sensitive parliament" in composition and in operations. Therefore parliament should ensure that the committee that

oversees gender issues is adequately empowered to carry out its legislative duties (i.e. Legislation, oversight functions on the executive) to ensure issues related to gender are handled with utmost diligence.

The Nigerian Parliament and indeed the Federal Government are conscious of the important roles played by women in any sane society, therefore, different measures were adopted to ensure women occupy their positions in society. Some of these measures designed to ensure adequate representation of women in governance as well as protection of their civil rights and privileges are highlighted below:

- a. In the legal framework for the prosecution of offenders, the government has drafted the Child Right Law, the Criminal Code, Panel Code, all these are done to provide enabling laws for prompt dispensation of justice.
- b. In the health sector, the Government has provided Primary Health Care Centers across the country. They provide health services to pregnant women and children. About 33,000 Healthcare centers were established, and in 2017, about 10,000 of these centers were revitalized especially in the rural areas.
- c. In the democratic process, the FG has appointed women in various Key positions in Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies, as well as the passage of the Not Too Young to Run Bill to provide a framework for youths (both men and women) to actively participate in politics and take up elective positions.
- d. In terms of education, the establishment of Federal Government Girls' Colleges across the nation has offered near-free education for the girl child from Primary to Secondary levels and State Governments had borrowed the initiative with some effective up to the University.

Sustained advocacy by the FGN utilizing available channels via print and electronic media, traditional and religious leaders as well as various women groups on the need to allow women to benefit and actively participate in politics and governance. The Parliament on its part has continued to enact laws and make policies that enhance the overall well-being of women and the girl child.

Universally, high numbers of women and girls inadvertently fall victims of human trafficking; either for domestic work, sexual exploration, forced labour, or organ harvesting. These inhuman treatment has compelling and deleterious effects on the victims with far-reaching outcomes on humanity and society. These abuses include physical and psychological torture which have negative effects that hinders the positive development of women and girls. It is based on these may reasons that the Federal Government of Nigeria took the following steps;

- a. Created the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons with the mandate to arrest and prosecute offenders of human rights abuses as it concerns human trafficking.
- b. Created the Ministry of Humanitarian and Women Affairs to train, empower, enlighten as well as prosecute violators of women's rights in collaboration with other security agencies.
- c. Massive enlightenment campaign on the dangers of human trafficking by the Ministry of Information, as well as the National Orientation Agency.