

STATEMENT

By

**Muhammad Babandede,
Comptroller General of Immigration of
the Federal Republic of Nigeria**

**during the
Interactive Multi-Stakeholder Round
Table 1:**

**Addressing the root causes of large
movement of refugees,
UNGA 71, 19th September, 2016.**

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MEMORANDUM

TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

FROM THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY

SUBJECT

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

DATE

RE: MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

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Mr. Chairman,

The Nigerian Delegation, headed by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Muhammadu Buhari, this morning during the Opening of the high level meeting, highlighted many issues relating to large number refugees and migrants which Nigeria together with the international community is ready to address. Nigerian experience and strategy in addressing the causes large movement of refugees is important to the overall strategy to be adopted in the millennium development initiative in 2018.

2. It is important to note that the activities of the terrorist group, Boko Haram sect, is the major cause of movement of large number of refugees in the North Eastern region of Nigeria. What is significant here is the fact that the large movement of these refugees caused by the activities of the so called terrorist group called Boko Haram remained in the Lake Chad area without crossing the sea to Europe. We are aware that criminal groups capitalised on the happening in the North East to move many economic migrants as refugees to Europe leading to many deaths in the dessert and the sea. According to FRONTEX, Nigeria topped the list of rescued person on the high sea with total of 12,477 irregular migrants who made their way to Europe from Africa in 2015 and early 2016. Data showed that 7,436 Nigerians made the dangerous crossing to Europe from the sea in 2015. The migrants were rescued through operations Triton and Mare Nostrum. Majority of these migrants are not refugees but migrants trafficked and smuggled by criminal network groups. With strict trafficking and smuggling of persons laws effectively in place, Nigeria seek support from transit and destination countries to prosecute these transnational criminal groups.

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3. At this juncture, it is important to commend our immediate neighbour for supporting the large movement of Nigerian refugees in their respective countries. Nigeria initiated a dialogue with countries in the Lake Chad area held in Abuja from 6th - 8th June, 2016 and the outcome of the Tripartite Meeting involving Nigeria, Cameroon and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) followed immediately on 9th June, 2016. The essence of the Dialogue is to identify and proffer lasting solutions to the protection risks in the Lake Chad Basin resulting from the conflict - induced crisis.

4. Mr. Chairman, as earlier stated that the root cause of the large movement of refugee in our country is the activities of the Boko Haram Terrorist Group (BHTG) in the North - East resulting in wanton destruction of lives and properties; the fleeing of a large population of traumatized people from the area to other parts of Nigeria and Cameroon; and the emergence of IDP and refugee camps in the process. This is a huge humanitarian issue that has generated about 2.2 million people forced out from their homes with about 555,000 Nigerian refugees scattered in Cameroon, Chad and Niger, mostly remaining within the Lake Chad areas. In view of the recent success recorded in the war against this terrorist group, a lot of the refugees and internally displaced persons have started returning home.

5. Nigeria's peaceful democratic transition from one civilian ruling party to an opposition party; and the ability of the Buhari administration to effectively manage victory avoided crises that might have led to large movement of refugees in the continent and the entire world in general. We strongly believe that the major cause of large movement of refugees in the world today is the

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inability of dictatorship to peacefully transit to real democracy by free and fair election.

Mr. Chairman,

6. It is time for the international community to wake up from its slumber and say no to violent change that produces nothing but large number of refugees on the move. We are glad as a country to overcome this so called 'change' with use of force and we call upon countries and leaders to give free and fair election a chance. The root cause of large movement of refugees in the world today is simply the so called investment in violent uprisings that failed to produce change but suffering of millions of refugees and loss of life and properties. Unless we address this particular root cause, large number of refugees will continue to move, causing huge humanitarian problem and changing the socio-economic and politically situation in the countries of destination. Our Millennium Development Goals will not be achieved under this condition.

7. In addressing the root cause of large number of refugees we must not neglect global warming. The lake Chad area is a typical example of how global warming can greatly affect mobility. There are many such example in the world where dwindling status of our natural resources and increase in population is gradually leading to crises resulting in large movement of refugees. We must continue to link Global Warming with human mobility.

8. Nigeria remains committed to its international and regional obligation to address the root causes of large movement of refugees. Boko Haram terrorist groups have been largely incapacitated and their defeat is around the corner. Our greatest effort is to win the peace after winning the war. Our community

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based de-radicalization effort, rehabilitation and reintegration efforts will go a long way to prevent future occurrence. We strongly solicit your continuous support in this area.

Mr. chairman,

9. In conclusion the major causes of large movement of refugees can be addressed by our resolve to fight terrorism, encourage democratic changes rather than violent changes and addressing environmental issues collectively, failure of which such large movement of refugees will inevitably affect the socio-economic as well as political situation of source, transit and destination countries of the refugees. It is important to note that large movement of refugees is everybody's problem but above all it is a huge humanitarian problem that we must address to have an assured future.

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