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February 2016

A publication of the United Nations System in Nigeria



The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hon Geoffrey Onyeama (Right), on behalf of the Federal Government of Nigeria receives the Letter of Credence from the United Nations Resident Coordinator, Ms Fatma Samoura

FG reaffirms support to UN as new RC presents Letters of Credence

HIGHLIGHTS

- ⇒ **Female Genital Mutilation in Nigeria must end, says wife of President**
- ⇒ **UN opens condolence books in Abuja, Lagos to honour late Secretary-General Boutros Ghali**
- ⇒ **UNAIDS Executive Director hails Nigeria for halting the spread of HIV**
- ⇒ **UN Chief for refugees protection assures UNCT of more support**

The Federal Government of Nigeria has reaffirmed its support to the United Nations system in Nigeria and committed to resolving all operational issues facing the UN Agencies in the country.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hon. Geoffrey Onyeama, made this commitment when the new United Nations Resident Coordinator (RC) and Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme in Nigeria, Ms. Fatma Samoura, presented her Letters of Credence to the Federal Republic of Nigeria through the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Hon. Onyeama acknowledged the humanitarian and developmental assistance of the UN system to the country and therefore pledged to ease operational challenges of the UN Agencies.

By this diplomatic act, Ms. Samoura is officially and formally recognized as the UN Ambassador in Nigeria and has thus assumed duty as the United Nations Resident Coordinator and United Nations Development Programme Resident Representative in Nigeria.

In her remarks, the Resident Coordinator expressed her delight to be in Nigeria and promised the commitment of the over 19 UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes in Nigeria to work closely with government on her development and humanitarian agenda, especially on the situation in the North East Nigeria.

Ms. Fatma Samoura, a Senegalese national was, before her new appointment, the UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative for the Republic of Madagascar. She joined the UN system in 1995 and has held UN leadership positions including; Country Director and Representative, Guinea, (2009-2010); Representative and Country Director, Cameroon, (2005-2007); Representative and Country Director, Djibouti, (2000-2005) and Senior Logistics Officer, Italy (1995-2000). During her tenure with WFP Fatma was seconded to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Chad from 2007-2009. Before joining the UN, she worked in the private sector and has travelled extensively in Africa and beyond. She speaks English, French and Spanish.

Female Genital Mutilation in Nigeria must end, says wife of President



The wife of the Vice President, Mrs Dolapo Osinbajo (Right) presenting an award during the event.

The wife of the President, Her Excellency, Mrs. Aisha Buhari, launched a national response to eliminate the practice of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) in Nigeria within a generation. The launch which took place at the State House Abuja, was a collaboration between the Federal Government of Nigeria, State Governments and the Joint UNFPA/UNICEF Programme on FGM/C Abandonment.

Represented by Her Excellency, Mrs. Dolapo Osinbajo, the wife of the Vice President of the Republic of Nigeria, Mrs Buhari called on everyone to join the campaign to end FGM in Nigeria. She said “I urge the wives of Governors particularly those from states where this harmful practice is rampant to be the voice of the campaign to end FGM/C in their various States. We have the primary role to use our privileged positions to make lives better for Nigerians (especially women and

girls). I urge you to be vocal on the need for FGM/C to end in Nigeria (within this generation) and take action that will enable this to happen”.

FGM/C is an extremely harmful traditional practice, documented in 28 countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. It comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. It is widely practiced in Nigeria, where an estimated 19.9 million Nigerian women have undergone the procedure. According to the National Demographic Health Survey 2013, 25% of women in Nigeria have undergone FGM/C.

“It is a violation of women’s reproductive rights, one that destroys her bodily integrity, perpetuated and inflicted by other women” said Mrs. Toyin Saraki, the wife of the Senate President, “It is time for us women, to

think of how we can be better sisters, aunts, mothers or friends to others who are about to be victims”. “It is time to say enough is enough”, noted Ratidzai Ndhlovu, the UNFPA representative, “Our young girls have suffered enough from this barbaric act”. Although the practice is slowly declining, a few of the myths that perpetuate the practice are ideas that FGM/C prevents young women from becoming promiscuous or that it promotes the marriageability and fertility of the woman.

“Not one of the myths surrounding this practice has any basis in truth,” said Jean Gough, the UNICEF Representative, “the only truth is that on every level this is a harmful and brutal practice that has a detrimental impact on the health of women and girls.”

Cecelia a 20 year old survivor almost bled to death when her clitoris was cut at the age of 18. Recounting her story at the launch of the national response, she narrated how she was tricked by her mother to visit the village. Upon her arrival, she was taken away by two strange women. On dirt floor, her legs were spread apart and tied to a tree, while a heavy woman sat on her chest. She was restrained but she struggled notwithstanding till she was cut. “The cut was too deep”, Cecelia recounted with a shaking voice. With sobbing eyes she looked at her mother and the only response she got was “you are now a woman”.

“I hear the cry of a little girl, she cries from the pain afflicted on her, she cried yesterday, cries today and may cry tomorrow, will you help me stop the pain?” Cecelia asked.

Diana Kendi Makale, a journalist from Kenya, was honored during the launch, as the first Efua Dorkenoo Pan African Award winner for her Reportage on Female Genital Mutilation. The award was created by *The Guardian* UK and UNFPA, to increase awareness and engagement on FGM within African media outlets at the community, national and regional levels.

UNCG organises social media training for members

To strengthen the communication component of its intervention in Nigeria and underscore the emerging influence of the social media on public information, the United Nations Communication Group (UNCG), with approval of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), has organized a one-day training on social media optimization for its members.

The training, held at Abuja on 29 February 2016, was attended by Communication specialists and focal persons from nine of the UN Agencies in Nigeria as well as the Coordination Specialist in the Resident Coordinator’s office. Agencies represented included UNDP, UNWomen, IOM, UNIC, ILO, UNESCO, WHO, UNHCR, and UNODC.

Facilitating the training, the UNDP Communication Specialist, Mr Lucky Musonda, observed that the social media had come to

stay as veritable tools of communication. Therefore, he continued, members of the UNCG should optimize the use of the relevant social media platforms. Following his presentation on ‘Using Twitter’, participants had hands-on exercises on tweet composition for wider reach.

In her presentation, Ms Nneka Egbuna, a Programme Associate at UN Women, highlighted the ‘dos’ and ‘don’ts’ of the social media as well as the use of twitter handles and hashtags.

As regards Tweets Monitoring and Management, Mr Musonda hinged his presentation on Tweetdeck and Twitter Analytics. The need for greater collaboration for social media contents sharing amongst UNCG members for greater traffic was stressed. The training was



succeeded by a brief UNCG meeting during which the UNDAF Review meeting and thematic exhibitions were discussed.

UN takes global goals to NGOs, presents SDGs Year Planner

In its quest to widely disseminate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and its targets in Nigeria, the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) Lagos, has hosted an NGO-Partners' meeting to introduce the 17 SDGs and its associated 169 targets with a view to enhancing Partners' understanding of the SDGs framework and its place in programming.

The meeting which was attended by 95 representatives of 75 Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), focused on UNIC Lagos priorities for 2016, SDGs Overview; mapping of NGOs based on their mandates and according to the SDGs as well as aligning Partners' core areas of activities with UN Observances in the year.

Addressing the participants, the Director of UNIC Lagos, Mr Ronald Kayanja, highlighted SDGs, Climate Change and Counter-terrorism as part of the 2016 priorities of UNIC Lagos.

He urged the partners to be strategic in programming this year by aligning their activities with the SDGs. The global goals, he noted, must be localized through the collaborative efforts of UNIC Lagos and its NGO-partners.

The mapping of the NGOs, he explained, was aimed at aligning the focus of 'our NGO partners with the goals and targets of the SDGs. To facilitate deliberation at the meeting, every participant was given a copy of UNIC Lagos SDGs Year Planner which con-



Participants at the meeting work with the SDGs Year Planner.

tains all the 17 goals and the 169 targets. Besides, it also features all the International Days.

Acknowledging the technical support of UNIC Lagos, the Executive Director of Women in politics and Governance (WIPOGOV), Barrister Obiageli Obi, not-

ed that the meeting was rich in contents and much focused. Speaking in the same vein, the Executive Director of Strategy For Mentoring Initiative and Leadership Empowerment (S.M.I.L.E), Mrs Bimpe Bamgbose-Martins, called for more of such quality engagements.

UN opens condolence books in Abuja, Lagos to honour late Secretary-General Boutros



Late Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali

The United Nations system in Nigeria has opened two books of condolence in Abuja and Lagos in honour of the deceased former United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. The condolence books were placed at the Anambra House office of the UN in Nigeria and the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) Lagos.

The former Secretary General died on the 16th of February 2016 at the age of 93. He was the sixth Secretary-General and the first African

Secretary General of the United Nations. He served a five-year term from 1992 to 1996.

The Veteran Diplomat was praised by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for guiding the Organization through the tumultuous early 1990's and for helping shape the UN's response to post-Cold War realities, drafting a seminal report on preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping. In her condolence message, the Resident Coordinator of the UN system in Nigeria, Ms

Fatma Samoura, acknowledged the tremendous contributions of late Boutros-Ghali to global peace and development.

Members of the public have been pouring in to sign the condolence books at the two centres. The exercise ends on Friday, 04 March 2016.



Mr Fyneray Mbaka of MTN signing condolence register in honour of late UNSG Boutros-Ghali

UNAIDS Executive Director hails Nigeria for halting the spread of HIV

The UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé has hailed Nigeria for having halted the spread and reversed the trend of its AIDS epidemic. Mr Sidibé made the remarks during a visit to the country from 7 to 10 February. He also urged the political leadership to increase domestic funding for the response from 22% in 2012 to 45% by 2020.

“Putting our people on treatment is important to the realisation of zero new infections. If we are going to sustain treatment, we will need to have a plan for the transition from externally funded treatment to treatment offered with domestic funds. Nigeria has the means to make this happen,” said Mr Sidibé during his meeting in Abuja with the Vice President of Nigeria, Prof Yemi Osinbajo.

Mr Sidibé urged the government to increase its support for the Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health Week, with the aim that all pregnant women are tested for HIV by the end of 2016 and all women who test HIV-positive have immediate access to antiretroviral therapy. The health week has proven to be an excellent opportunity for pregnant women to know their HIV status. During the health week in 2015, for example, Kaduna State reported testing 84,000 pregnant women for HIV in a first round and an additional 126,000 in a second round.

Mr Osinbajo told Mr Sidibé during the meeting that Nigeria was making huge budget allocations for social investment programmes, in part to increase access to health care and help

end the AIDS epidemic. “The government is determined to make sure that everyone has access to universal health care in Nigeria. We are also very determined to work towards ending new HIV infections,” Prof. Osinbajo said.

New HIV infections dropped from 310,000 in 2004 to 230,000 in 2014, and coverage of antiretroviral therapy increased from 13% in 2011 to 22% in 2014, providing more than 747,000 people living with HIV with access to life-saving medicine.

During his visit, Mr Sidibé also met with the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), the Secretary to the Government of the Federa-



UNAIDS Executive Director, Mr Michel Sidibe exchanges pleasantries with Nigeria's Vice President, Prof Yemi Osinbajo

tion, the Minister of Budget and National Planning, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Environment, development partners, the President of the Dangote Group, Aliko Dangote; pharmaceutical companies and civil society; as well as the UNAIDS Champion and former President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo.

UN marks World Radio Day at Abuja and Lagos



Journalists interviewing an IDP with a 7-day old baby delivered at the camp without antenatal care and immunization

(IDPS) located at Kuchingoro, Durumi, Abuja, Nigeria.

The Lagos observance, organized by UNIC and Association of Voice-Over Artists (AVOA) Nigeria, featured a press conference, a students' excursion to UNIC office and Inspiration 92.3 FM Lagos as well as a seminar.

About 10 radio stations which included Capital FM, Ray Power, Aso FM, Love FM, Hot 98.3, Rhythm 96.3, Cool FM, Wazobia FM, FRCN visited the IDPs and recorded testimonies about the Boko Haram situation in the communities of Bama, Damboa, Gwosa, Dokwa, Gamboru, Gala, and Konduga and the onward fleeing of the affected victims to safe havens as Abuja, neighboring communities, and Cameroon.

In his message, the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called on everyone to resolve to use radio for human progress especially at this time the global attention is on implementing the Sustainable Development

Goals. ‘For people in shattered societies, or caught in catastrophe, or desperately seeking news,’ he continued, ‘radio brings lifesaving information.’

Representing the Secretary General at the 2016 World Radio Day observance in Lagos, the Director of United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) Lagos, Mr Ronald Kayanja, noted that radio could help in emergency response operations just as it could assist with rebuilding. Speaking, the President of AVOA, Mr Ehi Omokhuale, observed that the radio was a companion for both the rich and the poor and a credible source of life-saving information.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Abuja and the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) Lagos, have observed the 2016 World Radio Day in grand style.

Anchoring the Abuja end, and in line with this year's theme: Impact of Radio in times of emergency and disaster, UNESCO Abuja; the National Commission for UNESCO and the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) through selected radio stations, commemorated the day with a visit to the Internally Displaced Camps



UNIC Lagos, Ronald Kayanja addresses the audience while AVOA President, Mr Ehi Omokhuale looks on

UN Chief for refugees protection assures UNCT of more support

The Assistant High Commissioner for Protection (UNHCR), Volker Türk, has reaffirmed UNHCR's continued commitment in assisting the internally displaced persons in Nigeria. Mr. Türk was speaking after a meeting with the UNCT on 19 February 2016. Welcoming him, the United Nations Resident Coordinator, Ms. Fatma Samoura, explained the challenges faced by the humanitarian community as a result of funding shortfalls.

"We all need to listen to the IDPs, their aspirations and sense of dignity and safety," Mr. Türk stressed during a visit at the weekend to Maiduguri, capital of Borno state, referring to organized returns to areas back under government control but still considered risky. Mr. Türk reviewed the refugee agency's emergency operations in the north-east, where UNHCR helps tens of thousands of IDPs located in camps. He has also met Nigeria's Vice President Yemi Osinbajo in Abuja and government partners to discuss the challenges and areas of cooperation.

During these meetings, he appealed to the government to take advantage of UNHCR's experience in voluntary repatriation and to work closely to ensure the welfare of people of concern. The insurgency has affected about 5 million people, including more than 2.2 million Nigerians who are internally displaced and almost 180,000 who have fled to neighbouring countries. Türk offered to help neighbouring countries organize voluntary repatriation

where and when the conditions were right.

While encouraging government institutions and civil society organizations to lead the response to forced displacement, he said: "UNHCR, as part of the international community, will continue to support local initiatives."

The Assistant High Commissioner also met IDPs in Borno and Yola states, listening to harrowing tales of violence and destruction and the continuing suffering and challenges facing people unable to return home. He was deeply moved by their courage and resilience.

At Malkohi, on the outskirts of Yola, capital of Adamawa state, he talked to some of the internally displaced about their concerns and situation. "We want to



Mr. Volker Türk, interacts with IDPs in Malkohi camp

listen to the people in order to better assist them," Türk said. Hapsatu Amadu, a 47-year-old community leader, told him they needed clothing, food and shelter. "We are exposed to the vagaries of the weather in these grass thatched huts," she explained.

UNHCR and its partners have been providing protection, shelter, camp management training and assistance to about 10 per cent of the IDPs in north-east Nigeria, where most of the displaced live with host families.

Polio Eradication Expert Review Committee warns of a hard road to the finish line



Dr Salla Mbaye, of the WHO Regional Office for Africa presenting the recommendations of the 31st ERC

The 31st session of the Expert Review Committee (ERC) on Polio Eradication and Routine immunization (ERC), warns that the perception of a "Job done" coupled with risks of waning political commitment and accountability at each level, funding gaps and delays, access to children in North-East and pockets of low population immunity, could be bottlenecks to achieving certification in 2017.

The summary of the experts' feedback was contained in a presentation by Dr Salla Mbaye, of the WHO Regional Office for Africa, after meeting with government officials,

partners and other stakeholders in Abuja from 9-10 February, 2016 to review progress in polio eradication in Nigeria. The ERC appreciated the unprecedented achievement which led to the removal of Nigeria from the list of polio endemic countries and attributed the success so far to high political commitment, impactful innovations and the indispensable effort of frontline

workers performance under some instances of very challenging conditions, particularly in North-East and North-West of the country.

The ERC further acknowledged the continued improvement in AFP surveillance sensitivity. Notwithstanding the progress made, the experts cautioned that "Nigeria must sustain the gains, maintain momentum, and be prepared to mitigate the programme risks to avoid resurgence of polio in the country".

To achieve results, the ERC made crucial

recommendations around major thematic areas. On sustaining political and traditional leaders' commitment, the ERC recommended that the "Presidential Task Force be convened immediately with established dates for the remainder of the year". The ERC also noted the importance of timely availability of financing by the Federal Government of Nigeria, including counterpart funding at LGA level, as well as pledged funding from donors.

In order to reach chronically missed children, the experts recommended the continued close analysis of reasons for missed children and under-performance focusing on the 11 high risk states, with a view to addressing operational gaps and reaching more children in inaccessible areas of Borno and Yobe. Close monitoring of population movements due to displacement following conflicts and droughts, was additionally recommended.

Dr Rui Gama Vaz, the WHO Country Representative in Nigeria, appreciated the guidance of the ERC and noted the need to consider prioritization of key areas to focus on for attaining certification to be highlighted in the final report of the Committee.

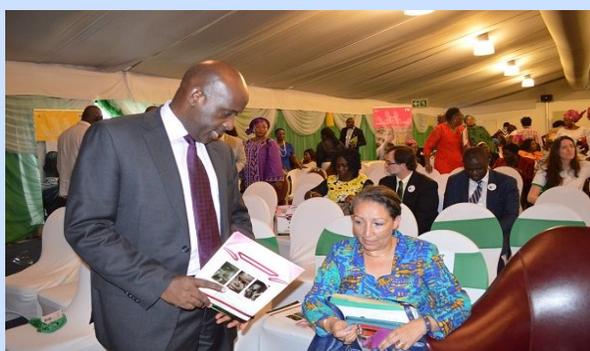
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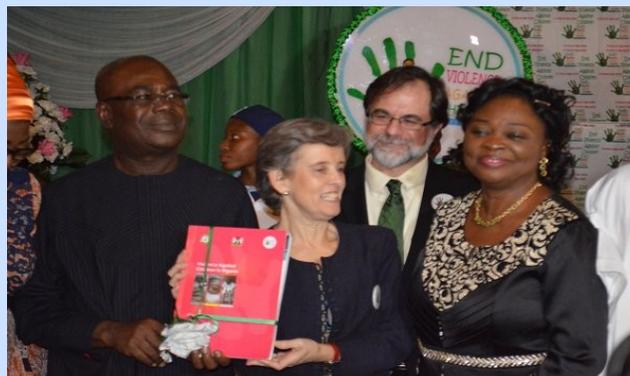
UNAIDS Executive Director, Mr Michel Sidibe and UNCT members



UN Resident Coordinator, Ms Fatma Samoura (Left) and Minister of Environment, Ms Amina Muhammed at #Habitat3 Regional Meeting in Abuja



Director, UNIC Lagos, Mr Ronald Kayanja (Left) and Country Representative, UNICEF, Ms Jean Gough at the launching the survey report on 'End Violence Against Children' in Lagos



SRSR Marta Santos Pais launching the survey report on 'End Violence Against Children' in Lagos



UN Resident Coordinator, Ms Fatma Samoura (Middle) and staff of UNIDO Abuja



New UN Resident Coordinator, Ms Fatma Samoura (center) with Dr Rui Vaz (2nd left) after her meeting with WHO Country Office staff in Abuja on 08 February, 2016

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