

Illicit financial flow through drug trafficking-impact on development and security: A statement of Barrister Ahmad Musa Umar at the 2021 INCB civil society hearing taking place on 19th May 2021, from 12.30 to 14.30 Central European

Good day to everyone!

First of all, on behalf of Society for Drug Abuse Enlightenment & Control (SODAEC) I wish to express our gratitude to the members of VNGOC board for finding me worthy to give a talk on the topic for this year's INCB civil society hearing.

Secondly, to justify the topic and make a strong case in proving how illicit financial flow impacts on development and security, I choose to rely on factual information citing my country, Nigeria(the 3rd in rank on Global Terrorism Index, 2020) as the best example.

Introduction

One of the actual threats to the nation's and human security is the alarming rate of illicit drug trafficking (IDT). The menace of illicit drug trafficking poses heinous threats to human lives, national development and security. Most of the Nigerian borders are porous, therefore, giving room for easy influx, movement and exit of drugs. However, the failing economy, insecurity, high rate of graduate unemployment, poverty, failure of government to provide basic necessities of life, high level of corruption and get-rich-quickly syndrome among the youths in Nigeria, constitute the various banes behind the practice of illicit drug trafficking in the state. This statement exposes the obstacles and threats posed by drug trafficking to human lives, state's development and national security. However, lack of adequate intelligence gathering, insecurity, bribery and corruption, poverty, civilization and porous borders stand as a cog in the wheel to appreciable efforts at arresting the menace in the country. It our humble submission that there is need for sound orientation/education, strong law and good governance, adequate intelligence gathering to solve the problem in addition to the imperative role of law enforcement agencies for sustenance of a drug-free society and state.

Nigeria:

Nigeria is a state that gained independence in 1960 and .a federation of 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), located in West Africa and shares borders with Republic of Benin in the west, Chad and Cameroon in the east and Niger Republic in the north. Its coast in the south lies on the Gulf of Guinea in the Atlantic Ocean. Nigeria is divided into six geo-political zones: North-East, North-Central, North- West, South-East, South-South and South-West. Nigeria is blessed with population of more than 200 million citizens/inhabitants, making it the most populous country in Africa and the seventh in the world. The country is inhabited by over 250 ethnic groups, of which the three largest are the Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba.

Drug trafficking: The current situation in Nigeria

Drug trafficking is a global phenomenon. A 2012 report by the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), submits that Nigeria tops the list with the highest trafficking and drug use in West Africa. The report further indicates that in the last 15 years, West Africa became the new transit hub for cocaine comparing from Latin America destined for Europe with Nigeria's commercial capital Lagos, emerging as the most active centre for air trafficking of cocaine. The report indicates that close to 50% of Africa's drug couriers arrested in Europe in 2011 were citizens of Nigeria. Nigeria however, topped the list of major transit routes of heroin destined for Europe. Nigeria is reported to have featured prominently among West African states that produce and export cannabis to countries in Europe.

According to the UNODC Threat Assessment of Transnational Organized Crime in West Africa Report in 2013, Nigerian trafficking syndicates based in Brazil and other places in South America remain quite active in cocaine trafficking, with these groups importing cocaine through containerized consignments and maritime shipping, air couriering and postal shipments. It is of note that methamphetamine production in West Africa is a growing concern. The main market for West African produced methamphetamine is East Asia, and to a lesser extent, South Africa. Nigerians have been over-represented in the number of West Africans arrested both in Africa and Europe for heroin smuggling.

NDLEA Report identifies that drug trafficking remains a thriving business and a serious issue in Nigeria and strong concerted efforts are needed to be taken for the control. The report shows that NDLEA in 2014 arrested 8, 843 suspected drug offenders. The total quantity of drugs seized stood at 339, 968 kilograms. As appeared in the previous years, cannabis topped the list of drugs seized with a total of 205, 373 kilograms. Psychotropic drugs followed at 133,920 kilograms, then methamphetamine (340.8kg), cocaine (290.2kg), heroin (24.53kg), amphetamine (19.297kg.) and ephedrine (0.28kg). The cultivation of cannabis is also well situated in some parts of Nigeria [13]. For instance, in 2013, about 847.46 hectares of cannabis plantations nationwide were discovered and destroyed.

Illicit Drug Trafficking as Obstacle to National Development and Security

Since 2009, Nigeria has been hit hard by different forms of insecurities. Boko Haram insurgents have ravaged states in the North-Eastern part of the country; Borno State, Yobe and Adamawa state. This form of insurgency is estimated to have claimed the lives of more than 36,000 while 2.4million persons have been displaced internally and to the neighbouring countries.

The former Chairman of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Col. Muhammad Abdullahi (Rtd) lamented that drug "fuels insurgency in the north-east, because theatre commandants have testified to me that every Boko Haram camp(s) they have overrun, they found paraphernalia of drug abuse, particularly tramadol." According to him, "The whole average of drug abuse in nations is 5%. In Nigeria, it is getting to 15%. That is not a data or a statistic we should be happy with."

Other major security challenges facing the country which are connected to illicit financial flow through drug trafficking include armed banditry, kidnappings and farmers-herders conflict.

The security meeting summoned by President Muhammadu Buhari with the former security chiefs on Tuesday August 4, 2020 identified the high menace of drug abuse as responsible for the increased insecurity in the country, including armed banditry, kidnappings and rapes, according to the National Security Adviser, Babagana Monguno.

The National Security Adviser to President Muhammadu Buhari, Maj-Gen Babagana Monguno (rtd) has attributed the rise in insecurity in the North to sale and consumption of hard drugs. Maj-Gen Monguno (rtd) admitted that the use of hard drugs has assumed a dangerous and worrisome dimension.

The National Security Adviser, NSA, disclosed this while briefing State House correspondents after the National Security Council meeting on August 4, 2020 chaired by President Buhari.

In Nigeria today, kidnapping is a reoccurring decimal. In recent times, the country has been witnessing kidnapping incidents among travellers from one state to another and most recently kidnapping of school students. Some of these kidnappers seek supply of hard drugs as ransoms for the release of their victims during negotiations.

Illicit financial flows through drug trafficking are increasingly understood as a threat to sustainable development and one of the greatest contemporary challenges to global development. They undercut economic growth and legitimate trade, depriving governments of the financial resources they might otherwise invest in public goods, such as health, education and infrastructure.

Successive Nigerian governments have been budgeting billions of dollars to purchase arms and ammunitions to fight the different aspects of insecurity threatening the peace and existence of the country.

Channels of Drug Trafficking in Nigeria

Drugs are illegally trafficked through the following channels:

1. Smuggling through the porous borders
2. Internet
3. Air route

Factors that Encourage Illicit Drug Trafficking in Nigeria

1. Financial burdens
2. Youth unemployment

3. Get-rich-quickly syndrome
4. Peer pressure
5. Addiction
6. Sexual involvement
7. Break-up relationship

Efforts to convert the menace

With the effort of the current leadership of National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), under Gen. Muhammad Buba Marwa (Rtd), the country has been witnessing unprecedented successes in the fight against illicit financial flow through drug trafficking which lead to several arrests of high profile individuals and drugs worth billions of naira.

What we do

The followings are some of the steps our organisation is taking to help the government in the fight against illicit financial flow through drug trafficking.

1. The organisation has developed the 1st technological tool which tracks routes through which illicit drugs are trafficked and transacted.
2. The organisation is engaging the two committees of the National Assembly; both the Upper and lower chambers on drugs and narcotics for the purpose of amending the laws on drugs with the view to tackling the menace of illicit financial flow through drug trafficking.
3. The organisation is working with the NDLEA and acting as a whistleblower to track routes of illicit drugs and their transactions.
4. The trustees of the organisation have instituted a legal action against some pharmaceutical industries who were exposed in a BBC Africa Eye documentary selling some harmful substances into the black markets and unlicensed individuals.

Recommended Strategies of Preventing Illicit Drug Trafficking in Nigeria

1. Reduction of target market
2. Adequate funding and training of security operatives

3. Orientation and education of the youth
4. Use of full-body scanning machines
5. Strong law and good governance
6. Constant monitoring with technology in blogs/websites
7. Adequate intelligence gathering on drug trafficking
8. Need for effective air monitoring

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