

My statement for the sixth intersessional meeting of the sixty-second session of the CND, 17 October 2019 in Vienna, Austria.

Topic : The rate of drug abuse, illicit cultivation, production, trafficking and the use of precursor chemicals in Nigeria.

Introduction

Drug abuse, illicit cultivation, production of narcotic, psychotropic substances including trafficking of those illicit drugs has assumed a frightening dimension and poses a serious threat to human and national security. The problem of illicit drug cultivation, trafficking and consumption is one of the major challenges facing Nigeria as a country. Hard drugs such as cannabis, cocaine, heroin and psychotropic substances are on high demand and abused by Nigerian and mostly youths.

Thus, Nigeria provides the **transit routes** between producing countries of these drugs and the consuming nations of the world. Furthermore, the increase in the cultivation of cannabis across Nigeria has increased the country's drug problem. The illicit market for meth has taken a new turn in Nigeria the growth has also been fuelled by the accessibility of precursor chemicals such ephedrine which is meant to be a controlled substance but is widely available in Nigeria.

Overview of Drug and Crime Activities in Nigeria

Nigeria is a country blessed with **ove 180 million people**, making it the most Populous Nation 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.

The origin of Nigeria's drugs trafficking problem can be traced to the period just after the Second World War. Nigerian soldiers who had served in Burma, India, came back with seeds of the cannabis sativa plant. They went ahead to experiment with its cultivation and discovered that the plant does very well in some parts of Nigeria, and this led to a rise in the cultivation of the plant. The most widely abused and locally trafficked illicit drug in Nigeria and indeed West Africa is cannabis, in its herbal form because it is quite affordable and readily available due to the fact that it is cultivated and produced locally.

Currently Nigeria society is in a serious dilemma and in a pathetic situation, this is because narcotic drugs such as cocaine, crack, heroin, morphine, and other related illicit drugs that used to be traded in secret places are now readily available and can easily be bought on the streets of Nigeria. This development is disturbing and has been described as a dangerous trend in the illicit drug trade in Nigeria. Also the increase in the cultivation of cannabis across Nigeria has compounded the country's drug problem. The trend in local supplies of cannabis from the traditional high-risk areas of Ondo, Edo, Osun, Oyo, Delta, and Ogun states have now changed to supplies from various parts of the country thereby increasing consumption and export rates.

Available records of recent arrest by the Nigeria Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) indicate that there has been an exponential and steady increase in the number of persons arrested for drug trafficking-related offences. From four hundred and sixty-four (464) drug traffickers arrest in 1990 to eight thousand, eight hundred and twenty-six (8,826) arrest in 2014. The statistics further revealed that between 2000 and 2014, a total number of eighty-six thousand, three hundred and fourteen (86,314) persons were arrested for drug trafficking-related offences.

A report of the first ever survey on drug use in Nigeria facilitated by the UNODC in collaboration with relevant Nigerian authorities (2019) indicates that about 14.3 million Nigerians, representing about 14.4 per cent of the country's population between the ages of 15 and 64, were said to have abused drugs in 2017. This is very worrisome because of the deleterious effects of drug or substance abuse on both the abuser and the society.

Most disturbing about the Nigerian report is that, at 14.4 per cent, the prevalence of drug abuse in the country is more than double the 2016 global average of 5.6 per cent. Yet, given the rate at which the habit is spreading, it is expected that the rate will further increase and might become an epidemic in Nigeria because of insufficient capacity to handle it.

The fallout effect of drug trafficking which is the availability of psychoactive substances has also invariably led to drug abuse and other associated crimes such as armed robbery, burglary, arson, assassination, kidnapping, militancy, terrorism, insurgency, and political thuggery.

Conclusion

Nigerian's drug cultivation, production, consumption and trafficking have reached an emergency level. Given the deep-rooted nature of the drug problem, it is a situation that will remain so for a long time, unless drastic measures are taken to restore the country's drug problem situation.

This is a problem that demands the collaboration of all segments of the society, especially the family, where parents and guardians should pay more attention to what their children and wards are doing. Religious groups also have a big role to play in keeping the youth away from drugs, especially through enlightenment.

Parent-Child Intervention Centre (PCIC) is one of the NGOs in Nigeria at the forefront of drug abuse prevention. For the past five years, we have been working in partnership with schools, religious organizations, communities, families NDLEA Enugu and other relevant stakeholders.

With the strategy of our **Parents for Parents Movement**, (Training of Trainers of volunteered parents for drug prevention) we have been able to reach out to more persons in communities with our drug awareness programs.

Recommendation

As an organization with a mandate to reduce drug and substance abuse, we recommend for;

1. The involvement of parents in the guidance of their children and strengthening of the marriage institutions for effective upbringing of children.

2. Greater involvement of educational institutions through emphasis in the curriculum about dangers of drug abuse, and of religious institutions in laying more emphasis on the protection of the body from substances that can damage and destroy it.
3. Attitudinal change among Nigerians should be encouraged.. There should be a shift in focus, to moral rebirth, ethics, and social re-orientation.
4. The government should provide cannabis farmers with high yielding seedlings for food and cash crops such as maize, yam, cassava, plantain cocoa, groundnut, cotton and so on in order to discourage illegal cannabis cultivation and boost food supply and food security thereby promoting alternative development.
5. Constant and aggressive enlightenment programmes on the ills of drug trafficking should be encouraged and the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) should be strengthened through sufficient funding.

Thank you.

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