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Chapter Twelve

Hot Spot Nigeria: A Response¹

I. Introduction

The word violence by dictionary definition is the illegal, immoral and unethical exercise of physical force; an act of intimidation by the show or threat of force, whose import is of very dire consequences and inflicts pain or abuse to the rights and privileges of the victim. Violence thus has many faces: physical, psychological, subtle, overt, social, spiritual, economic, cultural, environmental, political, external, internal, silent and international. The unmitigating spate of violence we notice worldwide characterizes the inability of mankind to settle problems and misunderstandings maturely; thus, the use of violence as a tool for settlement.

Theologians would talk about the human predicament of sin, which is at the root cause of man's failure to live in peace with another. Seen in secular or theological or even in scientific lenses, violence is a reality among humans. The old Romans are even quoted to have said: "If you want peace, prepare for war". Today, this adage has no more place because with wisdom and added experience, behind every violence is the presence of injustice. Thus the Catholic adage attributed to Pope Paul VI at the Second Ecumenical Vatican Council: "*Si vis pacem cole iustitiam.*" "That is: *If you want Peace work for Justice*".

The dimensions of violence in today's Nigeria and the widening of frontiers of violence, leads us to the topic: **HOT SPOT NIGERIA** which is traceable to some extent as experts tell us, to the intrusion of the colonial spectre into traditional African societies. In ancient times, people respected and obeyed the guidelines led down by ancestral norms, cultural values, traditional norms and rules which guided the Nigerians in ancient culture. Society was smaller. People had order. Life was scared. Life had also a meaning. God and religion were central to society. Freedom meant responsibility. The family and society guided their excessive members who were prone to misbehaviour. Shame had place. Truth meant life. Wealth was seen only as a tool for service

¹ Ike, O. F.; Paper presented at the Joint Conference on Church and Development Workshop.

to the larger society. The elders were respected. Children, men, women, entire nature, the waters, trees, animals all these had a place in mythology, traditional religion and history that kept balance in the world, and therefore to the role and place of man in it.

Pre-colonial Nigeria was forcibly amalgamated by the colonial conquest of Nigeria and her many nationalities, numbering today over 374 tribes and languages. This colonial intrusion did not consider the facts on ground. Colonialism and its consequences, namely neo-colonialism, imperialism, militarism, materialism, communism and economic prebendalism changed all this and meted out on the various nationalities that inhabit Nigeria within 100 years, a new outlook with values, some of them western, alien and corresponding to the Machiavellian theory of *'Might is Right'*.

Since 1960 when Nigeria gained independence from Great Britain, the cracks at the foundation of the nation due to the errors of colonial structures and the aberration of the Nigerian experiment surfaced. Violence on a larger scale has come to stay with the natives, sometimes with even unquantifiable primitive and local logic, added to the methods so well learnt from the colonialists, namely the policy of *'Divide and Rule'*. Power has become the new game, in whatever shape. This struggle for power has meant that whether it is under the civilian regimes, or under the military, violence has grown to become a national issue of great concern. Yet, the Nigerian human being like all peoples the world over, are fundamentally peaceful. Violence is antithetical and does no one good. in fact, under violence, all are losers.

Surprisingly, the demise of military rule did not bring to an end the history of conflicts and violence in Nigeria. Daily we are confronted by the grim realities of a polity that is soaked in conflict, which often escalates to the point of violence. Today, violence is a grim reality in Nigeria. Whether in the social, cultural, economic, and more in the political scene, we witness abundant indices of conflict and violence. And their consequences stay for many years in the psyche of the victims, causing trauma and destruction at all levels, whichever way one would like to consider the phenomenon. In the military era, pockets of resistance and agitations leading to conflict and violence were usually met with strong opposition from military dictatorship. Conflicts and violence usually occurred to the disadvantage of the civilians who were more of punching bags of military brutality and mercilessness.

2. The advent of democracy:

The return of democracy on May 29th 1999 tried to alter the situation slightly but not entirely. The people's understanding of democracy, a government of the people for the people and by the people, encouraged them to be outspoken and to exercise their freedom of expression. This freedom came with a renewed agitation for a reclaim of rights and privileges forfeited to military's highhandedness. And beyond this, there are also other areas of subjugation, incarceration, intimidation and abuse. Democracy has come with its own logic of violence, yet, with the rule of law, this can be tamed. Until then however, the problem of conflict and violence is real, continuous, persistent and pervasive in Nigeria. We are witnessing a transition to democracy. This is why every support must be given to Nigeria to sustain the trend. The opposite would be rather imagined than real. If others made it to freedom and democracy, why not Nigeria?

3. Gratitude

It is a gratifying note that conflict management and violence prevention have become generally accepted principles in the European practice of law, particularly in German political fields of foreign affairs and development co-operation. In particular, we are grateful to the Joint Conference Church and Development (GKKE), to Misereor, the Justice and Peace Organs, the Political, Economic and Social Actors and other person of good will for deciding to set up a political dialogue programme in order to discuss the prerequisites, opportunities and limits of conflict management and violence prevention focusing on Nigeria. This is the real time for such a venture. We assume that this is done, no doubt, to avoid disastrous experiences such as those of Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia, etc.

Instead, there is emerging with your assistance, a new way of thinking to promote adequate and speedy management of conflict and crises prevention. In short your organization "intends to promote the peace skills of foreign and development policies" (Hot Spot Nigeria, P.1). Catholic Institute for Development Justice and Peace (CIDJAP) Enugu shares this vision and desires to collaborate fully with you in this enterprise. Our wealth of experience in conflict prevention, detection, monitoring, management, resolution and reconciliation speaks for itself in the local milieu.

4. The Challenge

There can be no meaningful development if the threats posed by conflict and violence are neglected. In fact, *"the seriousness of violence-prone situations often go unnoticed until it is too late to make timely political efforts towards peaceful*

conflict management” (invitation Letter, by GKKE to participate in this discussion P.I). As a result of the disastrous conflicts and wars, which have been on the world stage in Europe, Africa and other parts of the world, conflict and related issues are now given increased attention. As a matter of fact, the stated objective, which is the major challenge now is *"to make the German Government aware of issues related to the effective promotion of development, justice and peace at a worldwide scale"*.

5. Nigeria

It is providential that your organization has decided to focus its attention on Nigeria. This is most timely when one realizes that all the indicators confirm a potentially explosive situation. Nigeria is really the next hotspot of conflict and violence, literally sitting on a keg of gunpowder ready to explode at the slightest provocation. The ongoing Urhobo/Ijaw/Itshekiri crisis at the Warri oil rich regions of Nigeria and what is scorching some parts of the Delta State as well as the restive situation in the other parts of the Nigeria, North, West, East and South are all pointers to this.

This concern becomes more meaningful against the backdrop of the fact that developments in Nigeria hold great significance for Africa and the world at large. Nigeria is the most populous black nation in the world with a teeming population of nearly one hundred and thirty million people. The land is one of the largest in Africa, about 923,768 square kilometres. it is said that one of every five Africans is a Nigerian. As the 6th world largest exporter of crude oil and many other rich mineral deposits, its strategic importance cannot be overemphasized. Furthermore, the fallouts of a colonial amalgamation, which lumped over 374 ethnic nationalities into one federation, many of which are miles apart in culture, language and religion provided a fertile ground for the emergence of mutual suspicion, which has been a great catalyst to conflict and violence.

Religion in this situation is most at time employed in the service of conflict involving Christians and Muslims. As the biggest Christian—Muslim country in the world, with equal representations of both religions, almost on a 50—50 basis, and each numbering over 50 million people, Nigeria has an immense symbolic function for the relationship between other Christians and Muslim beyond Nigeria. There is a permanent climate of tension hanging around with a potent threat to the survival of the people and the nation, waiting each time to burst into violence. Indeed, Nigeria's status regarding the safety of Africa and the world cannot be over-emphasized. in the words of Karl Maier *"Nigeria's influence extends well beyond Africa...If Nigeria remains trapped in the*

quicksand of political malaise, economic decline and ethnic rivalry the world will be worse off for it” (Karl Maier, This House has Fallen, P. xxxi).

6. Road to Violence — Colonial Past

It has been said many times over, but this truth needs another re-echo here that Nigeria, as a nation was founded on a shaky past. The boarder lines were not drawn around previously existing relationship between people with cultural affinity but in faraway Berlin in 1885 to suit the interest of Europeans without any regard to the future of the nation. Today, several previously warring and incompatible ethnic groups have been clamped together into this nation. There is a gradual but continuous erosion of cultural values, which is the most sustainable in people’s lives. The colonialists reduced traditional institutions to the barest minimum and definitely killed them. Local chiefs, age—grades, town councils, women and youth groups have been played down and supplanted, leaving behind a cultural vacuum without a credible alternative.

There is need in every institution of a clear leader. Can the blind lead the blind? Daily these numerous cultural nationalities struggle for domination and control of the vast economic resource in the country. This breeds friction, crisis and violence. Fear of further social and political domination increase the general feeling of social unrest and tension awaiting explosion in the form of conflict and violence. And the *national cake*, baked long ago, is getting smaller and smaller. Each group wants its chunk of the cake.

7. Modernization, Immigration, Unemployment and Alienation

With colonization came modernization and the emergence of the dichotomy between Urban and rural areas. This in turn brought about the culture of immigration of youth to the urban areas in competition for the scarce resources of the country. Nationally the new interaction brings in a spirit of suspicion and envy, which boils over into violence at the slightest provocation. At stake is the principle of survival of the fittest- a sort of rat race if one ever gets to drive through the streets of Lagos. The mad rush for township life is accompanied by alienation, despondency, desperation and general feeling of insecurity for the citizens in search of economic wellbeing, discovering only poverty and frustration in return.

So many are lacking in requisite qualification to compete favourably in a technological and sophisticated society such as this. Even for the qualified, there is not much jobs available, as government has failed to live up to the challenge of job creation and wealth generation. There is therefore the

abundance of unemployed youth roaming the street daily. These become convertible materials and willing tinder for the fire of conflict and violence. The cities are grown to the brim with so many of the youth unemployed, and managing to eke out existence with much pain and difficulty.

What begins as a personal conflict escalates into a national calamity when these youth clashes on cultural, ethnic, economic, political and/ or religious grounds. In any case, a *hungry man is an angry man*, so says the main-road proverb, and there is always something to clash about. The growing spate of armed robbery; the commonality of arson and violent demonstration are all testimonies of a polity overheated by conflict and violence especially with the youth at the centre.

8. Military Coups, Wars, Murder and a rising Culture of Violence

In 43 years of independence history, Nigeria has witnessed more than 10 *coups d'état* during which governments were ousted and overthrown by military dictatorship with enormous bloodshed, desecration of life and heavy loss in economic resources. For 30 years, out of the 43 years of independence, the military have ruled this country spreading terror, death and the culture of violence everywhere. The struggle for power among the military plunged the nation into a bloody civil war in which about 1 million Nigerians perished from 1967 — 1970. People still live in traumatized conditions because of the effect of the war including those who were plunged into poverty and hopelessness because they've lost their dear ones and breadwinners.

Till date Nigerians are held hostage by the military that have spread their odious influence on all the facets of the society, always with an assurance of conflict and violence. Politicians have exacerbated the situation by employing terrible measures in order to win some advantages over others. Some of them employ the services of thugs to whom are distributed arms for the protection of the politicians and intimidation, even sometimes assassination of opponents.

The just concluded April and May 2003 elections have proved that violence is not far, in fact it is not a monopoly of the military. It has become a basic characteristic of Nigerian partisan politics, as attested to by reports from monitors and observers, some of whom were from the European Union. Not less than 100 persons lost their lives in inter-party struggles during the recent elections in April 2003. Many were wounded, while useful properties such as houses, cars and farmlands were set ablaze.

9. Foreign influences

The shaky foundation upon which the colonial masters founded Nigeria has been having a negative effect on its stability, development and growth. And till now, that influence has not abated. True, the colonial powers have handed over power to indigenous Nigerians; but the fact is that their influence is still spread all over the place. The basis of their interest has shifted from land and territorial acquisitions to natural resources of the erstwhile colonial lords with which they fuel their industries and economies back home in their countries. For instance, the United States, which is the major trading partner with Nigeria, plans to increase its oil import from 9 to 15 in a few years' time. Not bad. But the income does not trickle down. Not America's fault; yet, the big business is now involved in the violence factors in Nigeria.

Therefore, their interest does not lie primarily, although it could be contingent, in securing human rights or to maintain stability, rule of law and to stimulate growth, but in strategic economic advantage. The story is the same with European Union, especially with Great Britain, whose official continued interference has continued to be an embarrassment to Nigeria's existence as an independent nation.

Nigeria has been stunted in growth by the repeated installation of stooges in political offices to dance to the whims and caprices of their foreign masters. This of course ensures that certain persons cannot occupy strategic political positions in order to come to the emancipation which Nigeria so much needs. Guerrilla war fares are sponsored by foreigners, same in Nigeria. Detractors are paid.

In the economy, the story is worse. By a series of depraved policies, foreign institutions such as the IMF (International Monetary Fund), the World Bank, the Club of Paris have supported only those policies that will devalue the Naira for whatever economic reasons there may be, but the people lose, are permanently indebted to the Bretton Woods Institutions and creditor nations and the debts continue to rise. Lack of Corporate Social Responsibility, Corporate Culture and Governance, Environmental Impact Assessment; Ethical Business is random in Nigeria. The effect of globalization, multinational and transnational misbehaviour is common. Is profit the only reason for engagement in the economy? And why must transnational corporations practice and abate corruption in Nigeria which they dare not practice in their own countries?

The result of all these is prostrate economy. The effects are poverty, high—cost of living, lack of basic amenities, underdevelopment, unemployment, stagnation, and frustration. These transform into anger, conflict and violence. In poverty therefore, conflict, crises and violence thrive in unimaginable proportions.

10. Poverty and Insecurity

The direct effect of the harsh economic policies in the country is spiral poverty noticeable in the lives of Nigerians. Many lack purchasing power incapable of providing for their daily needs. United Nations Human Development Index has consistently classified Nigeria among the poorest in the world due to the miserly low standard of living of her peoples. The GPA has continually declined with a per capital income of less than USD2 for the average Nigerian. Under such disgruntled conditions, the poor latch on any opportunity to foment trouble and therefore yield to temptations of violence. In *"the challenges of Ethnicity and conflict in Africa the need for a new paradigm"*, Sam Amoo projects that lack of food, shelter, identity, security, recognition, participation and autonomy are fuel to wooding conflict.

11. Ethnicity

There is beauty in diversity and Nigeria's multi ethnic base is a potential strength. Unfortunately, however, there is an intense struggle for space within the Nigerian nation among the numerous ethnic groups in the country. Nigeria is home to more than 370 ethnic groups and nationalities with often —extreme differences. The struggle for domination among these group have so much heated up the system, such that occasionally it boils over in conflicts and violence. All the stories of violence in Nigeria have been overtly or covertly linked to ethnic basis. This is because, though ethnical difference as such would not be sufficient base for initiating conflict, it has often been exploited by political elites who have often whipped up ethnic sentiments to maximize political advantage. The most famous cliché in Nigeria today is the theme of Marginalization. The diminishing fortunes of the various ethnic groups lead each to shout marginalization more than the others, whether it be the north especially Hausa—Fulani or the Igbo people, or even the Yoruba. This syndrome in Nigerian politics, has so much heated up the system with an increase in the general feelings of social threat.

12. Ignorance and poor education

In Nigeria literacy level is still below 50%. This has implications on the response of the public to national issues and the ability of citizens to weigh policies and form independent opinion. The epileptic nature of the

educational system undermines every effort to liberate people from the bondage of ignorance. Strike actions, whether of students or teachers are common places with the ultimate consequence that Nigeria's education system is said by pessimists to be comatose. There is therefore lack of adequate man-power knowledgeable enough to drive the engine of the economy. With a motley of uncertainties turning out half-baked products, for a people with the brightest brains comparable to anywhere in the world, who daily bloat the labour market, compounding the already endemic problem of unemployment, the social milieu is over-heated to the point of explosion, an opportunity that is usually abused by the disgruntle unemployed youth.

Ignorance of alternative means of settling disputes, or of the priceless value of peace or the eternal wisdom of dialogue and non—violence has been the bane of modern Nigerians. Religious fundamentalism, bigotry and intolerance are all indices of ignorance. Disagreements at both personal, ethnic, political and religious level can be minimized and overcome by education. This can help the local cultures to solve whatever problems existed in the past. The theme of palaver is therefore still very relevant.

13. Corruption and Poor Leadership

Corruption creates more poverty. Corruption and purposeless leadership are at the root of Nigeria's failures as an independent nation. With the vast economic resources in the oil and energy sector, and a cream of enlightened citizens, Nigeria was predicted at independence to be one of the leading nations of the world. Years have proved that the prediction was naive and unrealistic.

Nigeria has managed to produce about \$3006 from oil resources and a lot more from agriculture and allied services, enough to transform her into an industrialized nation and potent world power. All these have been wasted on corruption and brigandry by a cream of greedy politicians and their local and foreign accomplices. Aimless policies and white-elephant projects are initiated without any positive impact on the economy; instead they constitute a devastating drain on the resources of the country. Corruption has led to a mindless pilling away of our resources. Few have enriched themselves beyond imagination with bloated bank accounts in and outside the country, for themselves and their generations yet unborn.

Many others lack the basic necessities of life. Lack of drinkable water, regular supply of electricity, good road and other amenities define the life of the

ordinary man. Disaffection and anger have reached a saturation point heating and boiling over in conflicts and violence. The youth, who are affected most by the development, by the threat of a meaningless future are eager and willing to resort to insolence to see matters addressed. Experts have argued that *"without some fulfilment of needs of groups with respect of security, participation in government and forth, the quality of governance, institutions and policies would be low hence crises and conflict."*

14. Religious Difference

Nigeria is the biggest Christian-Muslim country in the world, which in itself is a blessing but makes it a fertile ground for hostilities, which over-boil into different proportions of conflict and violent clashes. By their nature and motion, religious clashes/conflict are the severest and costliest. Though the constitution is clear on freedom of religion, the religious habits of some are in constant violation of those provisions. The recent adoption of Sharia legal system by some Northern States provoke another bloody uprising because it was seen by Christians as a step toward Islamization of the country.

It has been known in political history of Nigeria, that religious fundamentalism has been exploited as a political weapon by the northern elites to destabilize the country to their own advantage. indeed, the Sharia campaign is gimmick by the northern Hausa—Fulani of oligarchy to counteract their fading political influence and their diminishing access to the nation's economic resources. In Nigeria, religious crises have been the most frequent in occurrence and the severest in execution. In all cases, the Christians and Southerners have been targets. Though Christians and traditional religionist have lived together in a state of uneasy calm, infrequent outrages have occurred causing damages to lives and property. And as things are now, nothing shows the situation is improving.

15. Socio-Political and Cultural Factors

Other social, political and cultural practices enhance the atmosphere of conflict and promote violence. Ostensibly, to counter pose the exclusive control of police powers by the federal government under Nigeria's 1999 constitution, state governments have constituted and continued to fund, various vigilante machineries under state laws. In the Western Nigeria, there is the Oodua People's Congress (OPC), in the East there is the Bakassi Boys and Movement for the Actualization of the sovereign state of Biafra (MSSOB), in the North there is The Arewa Caucus and the ever willing youth who are ready to answer any call based on religious bigotry.

The South—South has the Egbesu Boys, while the oligarchy in the north exploits the state machinery of government to legitimize their operations. Communities and towns form their own vigilante groups and arm them with automatic rifles for varying intensions. Daily therefore, the record of brutalization, extra—judicial executions and armed hostilities keep on increasing. These developments have been on the increase since the 90's to supply for police incompetence, though with dire consequences.

Clashes of tribal motivations and other kinds have been irregular. Ife—Modakeke clash, the Jukun—Tiv uprising, the Umuleri-Agulleri bloody conflict are a few of the numerous inter-tribal clashes sustained and exacerbated by these vigilante group. In Onitsha and Aba, the Bakassi boys led bloody siege on the cities and indulged in wanton killing of people. Corpses littered the streets. In the West, at the slightest provocation, the Area boys and the OPC literary overtook the city of Lagos, paralyzed economic activities and held the state hostage, leaving mayhem and bloodbath in their wake.

Other cultural practices too have worsened the security situation in the country. In the Eastern part of Nigeria, certain individuals designated Osu or Ohu are social outcasts not ripe for free communal interaction. They are ostracized and regularly sacrifices to idols the myth goes in ancient times. These myths still persist to this day and people act on them. Similar situations are obtainable in many other parts of Nigeria.

Cult activities among students in higher institutions of learning in Nigeria have added another dimension to the record of conflicts and violent clashes in Nigeria. Cult activities are sponsored in the campuses by influential members of the larger society, using the members to attack their political and business opponents. Several unrest and highest sense of insecurity haunt the students in the higher institutions of learning. Daily Government respond to clashes between these groups by closing down schools. Forcing them to go home however does not lighten the security situation in the society.

16. Some Proposals on the Way Out

Civic Education

In order to avert the potent threat posed by the abundance of violent conflict in Nigeria, there must be a conscious campaign on Civic Education. This is one of the major strengths of CIDJAP in Nigeria. Through the means of mass media and communication, government can help this process more. But government needs assistance through the NGOs and international

Agencies. Here the government must show good will and champion the cause by a continuous campaign against violence and by addressing several issues of injustice and deprivation, which lie at the heart of most conflicts. Unfortunately, the government is part of the problem of violence in Nigeria. Therefore, Civic Education must become the course of the civil society championed by the Church and other like-minded organizations.

Several workshops could be designed to address this matter, added to other educational and radical measures. The people must be made to know their rights within the limits of constitutional provisions. People should be educated on the implication of the Rule of Law. They should learn rational ways of resisting an unjust and oppressive government through civil disobedience, organized protests and non—violent resistance. All incidents of human right abuses must be exposed, fought and stopped.

Naturally the press is to lead in this era by highlighting grey area of importance. Non—governmental organization, Civil Society Organization (CSOs) and Community based Organizations (CBOs) are important to champion this programme of Civic Education and empowerment. No one is left out. CIDJAP has designed a programme of education in schools.

17. Mass Mobilization

There is no alternative mass mobilization of the people. Much of the difficulty experienced daily in Nigeria arise due to political failure. As Plato said: *the punishment of Wise men who refuse to participate in government is to live under the government of the unwise*. The people must be made to live up to their responsibilities. issues of public concern should be shared and constitutional responsibility used to vote against corrupt politicians and supporting responsible government. They need to be encourage to shun violence in their daily lives and adopt an attitude of non-violence as their personal philosophy. Political and economic sabotage and conspiracy with international bodies are to be eschewed while exhorting the spirit of patriotism and good citizenship. in this way, responsible living is encouraged while undue conflict and violence are avoided.

18. Addressing Structures of Injustice

Every attempt to win the war against conflict and violence would be a lip-service if nothing is done to address the high level of injustices in the society. A popular aphorism has it: if you want peace, work for justice. In his 2000 Jubilee message, Pope John Paul II urged the world to cross the Rubicon of injustice and realize the civilization of love, by a conscious and dedicated

attempt towards the evolution of a universal brotherhood, beyond the entanglements of race, colour, tongue and creed. In Nigeria, economic imbalance and marginalization, the location of government projects and appointments of key posts, are at the root of the disaffection/dissatisfaction that blows into bloody violence.

The Niger Delta is also of a sour testimony of government insensitivity to the plight of the people from whose soil and waters is mined Oil and Mineral Resources with which the other parts of the country are developed. They have suffered untold hardship from the oil companies whose oil exploration have led to environmental pollution and complete ecological degradation. These multinational companies should embrace a spirit of corporate social responsibility and undertake to place a developmental role in the communities where they work. The Niger Delta Development Corporation, established by the Federal Government to cater for the well-being of the people of Niger Delta, and other welfare packages through which basic infrastructures are grounded, are steps in the right direction. When the irate youths of these areas are in schools and others gainfully employed, the attraction to conflict will be reduced peace and harmony are restored.

The early formation of children with a culture of peace is important in any country. Nigerians need help to overcome the rising modern culture of violence now prevalent everywhere and spread through TV, Films, and war theatres acted and sold to children as entertainment on the international arena. Also the ease with which arms are manufactured and circulated for profit raises much concern. In schools, especially the primary and secondary level, peace education, should be introduced into the curriculum of schools. Tolerance, forgiveness and accommodation are virtues that should be imbibed. This will obviously counteract undermining factors of fundamentalism and fanaticism.

19. Alternative Dispute Resolution

As Africans, Nigerians must accept a new readiness to adopt the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) method of settling misunderstandings and difficulties, one of which are informal but are exaggerated to a dangerous part. This method implies a range of procedures that serve as alternatives to litigation through the court for the resolution of disputes which generally involves the intercession and assistance of a neutral and impartial third party. ADR describe methods of procedures used to resolve disputes either as alternatives to courts or in some cases supplementary to the court provisions. It involves a lot of healthy stages like: arbitration, conciliation,

mediation, negotiation and sometimes restoration, with the obvious advantages of informality, confidentiality and absence of antagonism. The obvious advantage is that it could leave the parties in question with the opportunity to resume normal relationship without any disruption or ill — feelings after an award / verdict has been rendered. Tension and hostility are reduced and often eliminated.

20. Economic and Political Reforms

The path to genuine and lasting peace lies in political and economic reforms. Political reforms should aim to integrate the whole peoples of Nigeria in governance. This is called participation. This means that power should spread beyond the three major ethnic group to the minor ones who too are legitimate members of this nation. Opportunities and responsibilities should be shared out, without fear or favour.

One may consider the social market economy for a country as Nigeria. The promotion of research is important and experts should be encouraged to undergo research projects. Opportunities to share the experiences of Europe and America and other members on the south axis should be explored. Training of future elite and leaders must be a matter of priority. Here the role of the preacher, the pastor and the religious leaders should be brought to bear. Economic reforms should ensure that infrastructures and amenities are equitably distributed taking cognizance of need and use.

Economic prosperity should not be a reserve of a few opportunists that exploit their positions to the disadvantages of fellow citizens. Opportunities should be increased, to eliminate idle hands, which we know is the devil workshop. When this is done a new spirit of patriotism will dawn on Nigerians and everybody will be devoted to the evolution of a peaceful society where rights of persons are not abused, but respected.

21. The Church as an Agent of Reconciliation alongside other Agencies

Nigerians love religion and they believe in their religious leaders. The Church in Nigeria enjoys high profile respect from believers and non-believers alike. The Church is the last hope of the common man in Nigeria according to Pope John XXIII, *"though the Church's first care must be for souls, how she sanctifies them and make them holy, she also concerns herself with man's daily problems and life, man's needs and aspirations, their daily problem and hopes"* (Mater et Magistra, No. 220).

The Church is the longest living and surviving institution which has experience in the art of conflict resolution and crisis intervention. This role corresponds to the mandate of Mission: *Go into the whole world, proclaim the Good News of salvation*. The Church therefore has a big role to play in the transformation of Nigerian society with regard to conflict management and prevention. Of immediate concern are those conflicts that have religious provenance. The Church should maintain a continuous campaign on forgiveness and tolerance while condemning all forms of violent conflicts. In this way the tendency to resort to violence will be reduced. Her attention empowerment of civil society towards the ideals of peace.

The Church must champion the use of peace by empowering her priests who are well trained to be messengers of peace and preachers of the gospel message without fanaticism or antagonism. The Church must export the image of all people as Children of God and the truth that all the tribes are united in one family of God. Of course, this understanding will improve interpersonal and inter religious dialogue and relationship, among the entire people of Nigeria. By nurturing trust and confidence on each other, which are necessary ingredients towards the evolution of conflict — free environment, the Church would put her services fully to the maximum advantage of organizations which are spread out to the grass roots.

The Church in Nigeria can be an agent of reconciliation as she has always done and open up avenues on ecumenical and even interreligious levels for maximum results. There is no going back on the issues of ecumenism and interreligious dialogue as the surest way to peace and non-violence in Nigeria. To complement the works of the Churches are the Civil Society Organizations (CSO) and other Community Based Organizations (CBO). Through massive education and enlightenment campaigns the war against violence and crisis of the nature lurking Nigeria as a nation at this time in her history must be won.

22. CIDJAP

The Catholic institute for Development Justice and Peace is a known nationally and beyond as a social organ of the Catholic Church devoted to the empowerment of people, promotion of integral human development, challenging structures of injustices, creating hope and working for peace. CIDJAP has played a leading role in various fields of human development like researching on new models and methods of involvement in the Social Question. CIDJAP plays roles in conflict and crisis intervention and does the training of future agents of conflict resolution. This entails training,

transformation and orientation of people and structures towards a positive and active involvement in issues concerning, justice, peace, human rights, prisoners and victim's welfare, women and youth programmes, democratization processes, among others.

CIDJAP runs a regular course on conflicts and crisis intervention and prevention in Nigeria, CIDJAP is currently a research centre, appointed by the United States Agency for international Development (USAID) as a cluster office for crisis Intervention and prevention in the South eastern zone of Nigeria.

CIDJAP has played outstanding roles towards civic education, mass mobilization, media presence, research titles, and training of trainers, rural development, and economic empowerment of disadvantaged groups, youth education and the organization of groups for social and political revival. CIDJAP believes in the maintenance of peace and order in the society by a consistent gospel of love and tolerance and by training of people to appreciate peace and work for it. Several conflicts between persons, group and communities have been settled through our alternative dispute resolution and otherwise interventions. Besides the USAID has designated CIDJAP as a centre for conflict management and resolution for Eastern Nigeria, in recognition of her outstanding contributions in the area of peace. Other agencies, including government institutions and other NGOs see in CIDJAP a revolving centre for the theological and social leadership needs at this time.

23. Other Activities

The pursuit of a peaceful Nigeria through effective conflict prevention and Management will involve multiple actors and activities.

Baseline Study: There shall be baseline research on the causes, patterns, players and effects of conflicts and violence in Nigeria with the aim of highlighting gray areas for serious focus attention The study will identify the critical areas of intervention through training, civic education and other forms of peace advocacy, This research will not only inform the content and structure of the training programmes of this project, but will also be ready resource materials for future intervention and information on this area of conflict. The outcome of the research may be made public if need be. Ignorance is one of the biggest roots of conflicts.

Training of Trainers (TOT) workshop. This shall apply to stakeholders on peace and conflict in Nigeria at the national, regional, zonal, state and LGA. This will stretch from the three arms of government: Executive, Legislature and Judiciary. It will also involve representatives from the private sectors and public sectors, banking, energy, communications etc. Religious leaders and social agency workers are also to be trained. Others includes: teachers, students, youth and women leaders. Indeed, the training will cut across people from all walks of life to achieve a thorough awakening and concern from all sections of the country.

Step Down Training and Workshop at the Grassroots: Those who have been trained will therefore be empowered to train others at their respective states, constituencies, sectors, fields etc. In this way, a thorough and permanent culture of peace world be built together with a conflict prevention and management ability. In this, both governmental and non-governmental agencies are to be involved for an all—round success.

Publicity: The media will be extensively involved to ensure a wide publicity for resolution and activities. Education and conscientization of the public will be achieved through adequate publicity and this should receive commensurate attention.

