

## **POOR FOREST MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA: THE NEED FOR AN IMMEDIATE INTERVENTION BY ATIBT AND OTHER RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES AND NGOS –**

*A paper Presented by Benjamin O Kalu at the ATIBT Dubai Forum on the 4-6<sup>th</sup> of March, 2017.*

### **GREETINGS:**

Thanks to **ATIBT** for providing this platform to advance the message of environmental protection in my country Nigeria.

My gratitude is equally extended to the **FSC** team who told us about ATIBT during their official sensitization tour to Nigeria. They motivated my attending this event, for the needed exposure and networking in the industry.

Ladies and Gentle men, thanks for permitting me to address you in English. It shows your organization is getting ready to embrace other stake holders from outside French speaking countries.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

All through my stay with you in this forum, I have observed one single line running through all the discussions and presentations; “the people, the people and the people”.

*The people’s responsible act,*

*The people’s benefit from such responsible act,*

*The consequences of environmental irresponsible act to the people.*

I commend your work in reaching out to the people of the African continent, supporting Africa to be more responsible. As impressive as this is, and if really it is about the people, it appears to me and other by standers that a large population of people in Africa has been left behind. It hurts so hard to see in all the presentations that the map of Africa was highlighted in every part but the space called Nigeria. Since your message is about the people, then 200 million people should not be left out of the the ATIBT effort to make the continent a better place, because these 200million people live in a

- land area of 92million hectares of land,
- 10-12% of which is a forest land ( Forest Cover)
- With 445 gazetted reserves across the 5 main ecological zones (mangrove, Rainforest, derived savannah and Sudan Savannah.
- 5% of this land is reserved for wild life conservation,
- Derives 2.5 % of their GDP from forest resources,
- Their forest provides a total of 2million employments,
- Majority of whom are in fuel wood and 80,000 are involved in wood logging processing in the South Zone.

- This people with the biggest market in Africa, also benefit from other Non wood products; bush meat, Medicine, water shed protection, stabilization of the hydro colonial regimes and carbon sequestration. This people are called Nigerians.

**MY QUESTION: SHOULD NIGERIA, A COUNTRY WITH SUCH PROFILE BE LEFT OUT FROM THE SYSTEMATIC EFFORT TO ENSURE GLOBAL RESPONSIBLE FOREST MANAGEMENT?**

I think the answer should be in the negative, especially considering the size of the market. Economically speaking, ATIBT stands to benefit a lot by helping Nigeria to get it right with tropical Forest Management.

**THE CHALLENGES:**

Nigeria was in 2005 declared as the country with the highest rate of deforestation by the UNFAO at an embarrassing 55.7% of the primary forest lost annually at the rate of 3.5%.

There has been a painful forest cover decline from the 17.2 million Hectares in 1990 to 13.2 million Hectares in 2000. It came down to 11 million hectares in 2005.

Unfortunately, statistics has it that between the years 1990 to 2005 we suffered a forest cover change rate at 31.15%.

The chief actor to the above has been DEFORESTATION.

**CAUSES –**

- BUSH BURNING – both accidental and intentional by hunters.
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- UNREGULATED LOGGING – according to WWF most logging today are done illegally.
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- RAPID URBANIZATION - Like in Lagos, Port harcourt , Abuja etc.
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- COOKING FUEL – Half of the trees illegally removed are used for cooking.
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- DROUGHT AND EROSION – Trees starved of rain water for a long period of time
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- AGRICULTURE – Farming activities for food production.
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- OIL SPILLAGES – The mangrove forest in the Niger Delta completely destroyed by oil spillage.

**CONSEQUENCES -**

- **Projected Loss of species and Bio diversity** as follows;
- 274 mammals,
- 899 special species of birds
- 154 reptiles
- 53 Amphibians and

- 4715 species of higher plants will be lost to deforestation.
- Erosion – Loss the trees and loose the soil.
- Conflict - Loss of lives between herdsmen and the farmers encroaching on each other for want of fertile land to feed their cattle
- Change in water cycle – a slight change affects the environment
- Release of Greenhouse gases – reduction of the trees that store CO2 which leads to global warming.

## **SOLUTIONS:**

- **LANDSCAPE RESTORATION – REFORESTATION** – Driven through PPP not just the Government. The Government only replanted 1million Hectares through the National Environment Standard and Regulatory Agency (NESREA), statutorily assigned to do so. This is 12 years after and there has not been a major activity in this area. This is where we need the Stake holders like you to come on board to assist us. We intend to take over most of the forest currently managed by the Government on a concession to enable us commence aggressive replantation program with the support of international agencies.
- **PROTECTION OF THE EXISTING FOREST** – Nigeria has wonderful near perfect forest policies and laws but our problem lies with the implementation. The enforcement of logging regulations is weak. We need help in implementing the compulsory plant a tree program when you cut one. **THE FOREST GUARDS NEED TO BE BETTER EQUIPPED.** Introduction of the recent well developed methodologies of managing a forest should be passed to them via periodic training by nominated consultants and experts in the industry.
- **ALTERNATIVE SOURCE OF COOKING FUEL** – In 2014, the Government came up with the initiative to provide 20 million clean cooking stoves for the rural women. This needs the private sector, NGO support to make the needed impact. Any effort to reduce the total dependence on wood for cooking fuel will help the survival of the forest in Nigeria. Imagine almost Two Hundred million people, with larger number located in the rural areas with closer proximity to these forests looking for how best to cook their meal. They need alternative to wood as cooking fuel. These alternatives exist, but need support to be sustainable. We need partnerships and support to make this happen.
- **STRONG ADVOCACY GROUP** – To handle public enlightenment and reorientation. Ignorance is a great disease which will keep eating off our forest unless, a major call is raised by an advocacy group to sensitize the people on the need to be responsible towards the forest. Many NGOs are ready to run with the **RESPONSIBLE FOREST MANAGEMENT ADVOCACY** to change the orientation of both the Public and the

Private sector about our forest, but this needs your support and that of other agencies.

#### **GOING FORWARD:**

- **ATIBT MEMBERSHIP** - The organization should show interest in having members in Nigeria, who will periodically participate in a forum of this nature as we continue in the conversation of fixing the needed standard in the Industry. This is important, as it would provide a good platform to take the discussion forward by affording the organization a participatory observation status and making the organization accessible to the industry in Nigeria.
- **CAPACITY BUILDING AND CERTIFICATION** – There is the need for the certification agencies like FSC and PEFC to show more interest in Nigeria. We need to have a clear access to the road map towards achieving certification in no distant time. This is would faster once these organizations decide to locate their offices in Nigeria; a resource center for both Government and Private companies in need of direct information on how best to meet the international standards. A situation where a country with Two hundred million people and a stronger market will be traveling to smaller neighboring countries to access relevant certifying information is frowned at, because it would slow the pace of motivation and interest in working towards achieving the certifying goals.
- **PARTNERSHIPS** – members of ATIBT who are already certified are encouraged to partner with Nigerian companies to increase their base in Africa as this will discourage a lot of timber trade currently going out of the country through the unapproved routes. We invite you to come to Nigeria as we promise to represent you well as well as provide you with the needed platform to meet the objectives of ATIBT.

#### **CLOSING REMARK:**

Nigeria should not be left behind as we strive to make the global environment a healthier one. We may be starting late, but it is better than not starting at all. Starting is not usually the problem, but staying on course till we win. This we cannot do without your expertise, experience, rich contact base and resources, and therefore, we call on you to help us make our environment better as we promise it would be a profit for all at the end. Remember, that a bad environment in Nigeria or any other part of the world is by implication a sick global environment that needs our help. Let us help as much as we can.

This is my message and thanks for listening.

**Benjamin O. Kalu**