

REPORT BACK TO CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS BY CIVIL SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVE AT THE POLICE SERVICE COMMISSION

DATE: 12TH January 2021.

TIME: 10:30 AM.

PHYSICAL VENUE: Ibeto Hotel, Gudu District, Abuja, FCT

ONLINE VENUE: Zoom

FACILITATOR: Goziem Ellen Onugha, Legal Officer, Lawyers Alert.

The meeting commenced exactly at 10:30 with the introduction of participants and the National Anthem.

Welcome Address: Roseline Oghenebrume

Welcomes participants to the accountability forum meant for the Civil Society Representative at the Police Service Commission, Hon. Commissioner Rommy Mom Esq. to give an account of his stewardship to Civil Society groups.

The Police Service Commission, PSC is the statutory body created by Section 153 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) regulated by the PSC Act and is managed by members of the Commission nominated by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and confirmed by the National Assembly with a statutory tenure of five years.

Powers include to among other things: recruit and promote persons to Nigeria Police Force, Dismiss and exercise disciplinary control over persons in the Nigerian Police Force and formulate/ implement policies aimed at the efficiency of the Nigeria Police Force. In addition, the PSC is empowered to identify factors inhibiting or undermining discipline in the Nigeria Police Force. The PSC principally oversees the Nigeria Police Force.

Owing to this huge and critical task that the PSC delivers on, the law has ensured that the civil populace is well represented in the commission. To this end, the Commissioners within the commission are representatives of; Human Rights/NGOs, Women, Media, Organized private sector, Judiciary and the Police.

The intent of the law is that these representatives should be accountable to their sector and constantly take inputs from their sector towards effective police reforms and oversight.

It can be argued that the state of the Nigeria Police with regards to citizens' perceptions and how it discharges its functions has a direct linkage with how

well the PSC discharges its functions. A not so effective Police Force can be said to be a product of a not so effective PSC.

If the Nigerian people are to participate effectively in police reforms, and in ensuring good policing, it follows that their representatives at the PSC must constantly brief us on progress, challenges, and continuously take feedback from us for the Commission.

I will once more like to welcome you all and pray that for the next couple of hours we focus on reason we are here, listen to the CS representative of the PSC as he gives his overview, and provide concrete next steps for better policing in Nigeria.

Overview by Rommy Mom:

Happy to note the physical and virtual representation at the meeting.

Undoubtedly, there are challenges of security in Nigeria today. In the North East where even when soldiers liberate areas, they can't hold it down because we do not have police officers there to take charge. In the North West, banditry has made life a challenge and difficult have taken over. In the North Central, the Herders and Farmers crisis, we know about the kidnappings in other parts of Nigeria; it is a sea challenges for the police as it is in Nigeria today.

As Civil Society actors we need to look critically at how to engage government towards making these challenges less fundamental.

Issues

Personnel of the Police.

Nigeria as it is, has well under 310,000 police officers to a population of over 200,000 000 million, which falls far below the world's standard by over 80%. At the end of January and February, thousands of police officers would go on retirement, and by December this year, the numbers would deplete further.

There has been no recruitment for almost two years in Nigeria. Whether that is a problem of the tussle between the Police Service Commission and the police, over who recruits or issue of resources by the federal government doesn't really matter. What is important is that this is a point for us to have a conversation on. Why are we having much less police officers out there in Nigeria and yet not recruiting. Is there any relationship with the security challenges we are noting in Nigeria today and lack of recruitment? These are areas we need to critically examine and engage the government on.

END SARS taught us a big lesson in this country. The lesson being that empowering and equipping the Nigeria Police is a big issue. Is the Police Trust Fund giving us the kind of police in terms of equipment that we truly desire?

Issues of human rights training, salaries and well-being are critical areas we must engage, as it can be better. Under-staffed police, under-equipped police and under-paid police are issues the civil society must engage in.

That the Police Service Commission can do better is true. The Police Service Commission is effectively situated only in Abuja in the true sense when it should be all across the country, like for example the National Human Rights Commission. This is an issue for us to speak about, because if we are talking about a Police Service Commission that is supposed to instill the values of Human Rights and all others in the Nigeria Police, it presupposes that it is supposed to be everywhere and if it is not so, then it cannot deliver to Nigeria the kind of policing that it truly desires.

Amendment of the Police Service Commission Act.

There is a Bill at the National Assembly that has passed a second reading to amend the Police Service Commission Act. How are we as Civil Society groups looking into this proposed amendment? One of the cardinal things about this amendment is that it restructures the commissioners in the Police Service Commission. It has for example the Nigeria Bar Association, it has the ICPC on Board, it has the National Human Rights Commission on Board. So, the Police Service Commission is gradually moving to a point where it is going to be government organizations led and no longer civilian led in terms of the people. And you begin to wonder, how will that impact on issues like recruitment when they are there to represent their geopolitical zones to ensure equity and political representation in recruitment in Nigeria.

Friends in the Civil Society groups, the issue of representation at the Police Service Commission is key. If you think it is not key, recall what happened in the last recruitment, when other sections and geopolitical zones expressed strong reservations in the recruitment carried out by the NPF and not the PSC.

Community Policing.

Community Policing should start from bottom up. It should localize to every place so that Community Policing in Auchi does not necessarily be the same Community Policing in Zamfara, or in Lagos or in Bayelsa, and all of that.

We are a people that have our own local peculiarities. If Community Policing is from Abuja down to the states, then maybe there is a problem. These are issues for the Civil Society groups in Nigeria should begin to look at very closely.

Constitutional Amendment

There is a constitutional amendment before the National Assembly that has passed first and second reading at both the House of Representatives and in the Senate. It is now with the Committee on Constitutional Amendment. It gives the IG the powers to recruit and divests this from the Police Service Commission.

My opinion as a person doesn't matter. What is important is what Nigerians think about this and how do we engage the process. Should the IG be saddled with the issue of recruitment in addition to operations. Or should civilians who are going to have these police officers' police their own society have a say in who gets recruited and how... what are our views as Civil Society groups?

Reactions from Overview

Okechukwu Nwanguma, RULAC –

Thanked the Hon Commissioner for the initiative of bringing CSOs together for a feedback to CSOs on the PSC. He started with the issue of recruitment, he outlined the unwillingness on the part of the government to comply with the law, as per the clear provisions of the law on recruitment of police officers. He used the issue of the appointment of the IG as case for illustration. He pointed out the inefficiency of the Police Council on the issue of disposing their functions rather than allow everything to the President who is a human being with his own interests to protect. He further emphasized on the need to always put aside personal sentiments and look forward to bringing onboard the right candidate.

Police Service Commission Act. He emphasized on the conflict between the PSC Act and the new Police Act in terms of the issue of recruitment of police officers. He also spoke on the pronouncement of the Court of Appeal on the issue of who has the mandate to recruit. Mr. Nwanguma further showed his position on the secrecy of the National Assembly with the passage of the PSC Bill. He urged the Civil Society to ensure that necessary changes are introduced to the Bill. He also touched on the issue of Chairmanship of the Police Service Commission. He made his position clear on the issue of continued advocacy and engagement of Civil Society groups with relevant bodies on ensuring that the best is got out of our laws on police and policing in Nigeria.

Dr. Otive Igbuzor, Chief of Staff to Deputy Senate President.

He first of all thanked Rommy Mom for reporting back to the Civil Society on what his journey so far in the Commission has been. He continued by saying that for activists who join any government agency, it is basically to pursue what they have advocated for over the years. It is not to go and defend what is indefensible. Unfortunately, that does not just change the government overnight. He appealed to everyone to cease lamentations at the meeting but rub minds on

what exactly that can be done with regard to the issues that Mr. Rommy Mom has raised which are the increasing issue of security, non-recruitment of police officers for two years, the amendment that has been proposed for the Police Service Commission Act and the amendment to change the representation and the challenge of Community Policing and constitutional amendment. He said for him, it is a wakeup call for the Civil Society, this was how CAMA was signed. He questioned how many people in the Civil Society who know that the amendment to the PSC Act would automatically change the representation to being a government institution. He further spoke on the attitude of work and activism of the Civil Society to pertinent issues as this. He also spoke on how the Civil Society can surmount these issues by coming together with members of the Civil Society who are or were working with law makers.

Edward Omega, Global International Crusade Network (GICN)

Emphasized Dr. Otive's view and urged Civil Society to work on synergizing amongst each other to surmount issues such as the amendment of the PSC act without full disclosure to neither the public nor the Civil Society. He also spoke on the issue of insecurity and the need to work around such issue by equipping the police, recruiting more police and setting up Community Policing in various communities of Nigeria.

Ahmed Amoto, Global International Crusade Network (GICN)

Global International Crusade Network (GICN) – He emphasized on the need to take seriously the issue of recruitment and equipment of the Nigeria Police Force as a means to surmounting the problem of insecurity in Nigeria.

Ms. Nkiru Uzodi, PLAC –

She spoke on the need for CSOs to be equipped with information. She also spoke on the need to have the PSC amendment Bill in circulation with the Civil Society for knowledge on how to surmount the issue before us. She used the Police Act and the issues PLAC encountered while working the Bill as a case to emphasize the need to have the Bill in circulation within the Civil Society. She also spoke on the need to do a breakdown of what the Bill entails and what it would amount to if passed and circulated to the Civil Society for good knowledge of what issues are before us

Mr. Maurice Archibong, Director, Human Resources, Police Service Commission

He acknowledged Mr. Rommy Mom's efforts at keeping the Civil Society abreast of what is happening at the Commission. He went further to pledge his loyalty to Nigeria through his work as a Director at the PSC. He also spoke on the need to reform the PSC Act for the better by retaining interest groups representatives as members of the Commission. He went on to highlight the dangers in transferring

recruitment mandate to the Nigeria Police by citing the outcome of the last police recruitment. He concluded by urging the Civil Society to take steps in preserving the nation through activism.

Next Steps by Dr. Otive Igbuzor:

He highlighted areas that needed to be carried along as next steps. These areas were:

1. Recruitment – Deepen advocacy for Recruitment and Community Poling. Produce a policy brief on how the FG should roll out Community Policing. Promote synergy between the Civil Society, Religious and Traditional Rulers and other stakeholders.
Honorable Commissioner, Civil Society, Police Service Commission, Mr. Rommy Mom leading a team to bring about reconciliation or MOU or agreement on what to do by the office of the IGP and the PSC pending the resolution of issues by the court.
2. Constitutional and Legal Reforms – Prepare a position paper on the position of the Civil Society on the proposed amendment of the PSC Act. Advocacy which should start with a liaison with Civil Society members at the National Assembly.

In other to achieve the above, he suggested a 5 organizations team led by Honorable Commissioner, Civil Society, Police Service Commission, Mr. Rommy Mom and Lawyers Alert. The 5 organizations team would do the following:

1. To prepare a position of the Civil Society on the constitutional and legal amendment of policing issues
2. To prepare advocacy brief on Recruitment and Community Policing
3. To lead the process of reconciliation and agreement on what to do

The 5 organizations agreed are: Lawyers Alert, Centre LSD, PLAC, RULAAC, NOPRIN

Closing Remark by Rommy Mom:

He thanked all participants and their level of commitment to ensuring the day's discussion came through. He acknowledged the pertinence of the issues raised and the need to act quickly on the way forward.