7TH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
SECOND SESSION
NO. 83

SENATE OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS

Thursday, 16th May, 2013

1. The Senate met at 11:02 a.m. The Senate President read prayers.

2. **Votes and Proceedings:**
The Senate examined the Votes and Proceedings of Wednesday, 15th May, 2013.

Question was put and the Votes and Proceedings were approved by unanimous consent.

3. **Announcement:**
Acknowledgment:
The Senate President acknowledged the presence of the following who were in the gallery to observe Senate Proceedings:
(*i*) Staff and Students of Glory International School, Karu Site, Abuja; and

(*ii*) Students of the Department of Public Administration and Local Government, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State.

4. **Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development:**
Report on the Animal Health and Husbandry Technologists (Registration, etc) Bill 2013 (SB.161):
Motion made: That the Senate do receive the Report of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, on the Animal Health and Husbandry Technologists (Registration, etc) Bill 2013 (*Senator Emmanuel Bwacha — Taraba South*).

Question put and agreed to.

Report Laid.

5. **Motion:**
Emergency Preparedness for 2013 Flood and Rainfall Prediction:
Urgent Need for Dredging and Desilting of the River Niger, the Cross River, River Benue and Other Inland Waterways in Nigeria:
Motion made: That the Senate notes that in year 2013, there was an excessive rainfall in Nigeria coupled with the release of water from the Lagdo dam in Cameroun which led to devastating flooding in most parts of Nigeria;

whereas the released water caused several people in Kano, Adamawa, Benue, Taraba and other States in the North-East part of the country;

whereas the water released from the said dam flowed through the River Benue and merged at the Confluence of River Benue and Niger at Lokoja leading to massive flooding, deaths, submerging of houses and farmlands at Lokoja, Kogi State;

whereas the excess rainfall for the said year caused independently, the overflow of the banks of the River Niger from Sokoto, Kaduna, Niger, Kogi and at Kogi Confluence, the large volume of water, the merging rivers Benue and Niger now flows along only the River Niger channel to Onitsha/Asaba in Anambra/Delta States down to the Atlantic ocean;

further notes that at the Delta State/Bayelsa States Estuary, where there are many tributaries, most of these tributaries are silted and filled with sand such that the large volume of water from the Rivers Benue and Niger find not sufficient depth of channel on which to channel the volume of water through to the Atlantic ocean;

whereupon the water will then overflow its banks flowing on built up areas and flooding lands causing damages;

further notes that on the North-East, North Central and South-East of Nigeria lies the Cross River flowing from the Cameroun down through Ikom - Obubra - Ugep through Ebonyi/Cross River - Cross River/Abia State and Cross River/Akwa Ibom States emptying into the Atlantic ocean at the estuaries through the various tributaries.

conscious that along the channel of the said Cross River there has been severe siltation and blockage of many of the tributaries such that shrubs and sometimes trees grow on the erstwhile channels through which water hitherto flowed with attendant consequence of water overflowing its banks when there is heavy rainfall as now expected in 2013;

further aware that the body of water in many areas within Nigerian territory have been known to recede in the past few years resulting in development of buildings and other infrastructure on potential flood plains with the result that when the forecasted heavy downpour occurs in 2013, there will be little or no room for water to flow due to the fact that natural channels of water flow have been taken up by these developments;

observes that the massive economic and infrastructural destructions occasioned by heavy rainfall in the past two years in Nigeria is attributable to amongst other things failure to address certain inadequacies including the blockage of water channels which would have led excess rain water from the tributaries of River Niger, River Benue and other inland water bodies out to the ocean. The failure to unblock these channels has affected several rivers in the north such as the Rima River, Jama'are, Katsina-Ala, Hadejia, Sokoto and Komadugu Rivers;

further observes that unless concerted effort is made by the Federal and State Governments and relevant Ministries, Departments and Agencies statutorily charged with the responsibility of planning for and mitigating the effect of natural disasters such as the clearing of obstruction along water routes such as bridges, the channels through which excess water can flow through the Benue and Niger river to the confluence in Lokoja for subsequent emptying to the ocean will continue to be obstructed;

notes that there is an urgent need to dredge the coastlines of major rivers and oceans within the country's inland territories where sand has accumulated in order to further reduce the impact of the restriction of water channels on seasonal flooding. Such sand can also be directed to other uses, ensuring that no resource is lost ultimately;

whereas the rainfall and flood prediction says that there will be excess rain this year in Cross River, Akwa Ibom, Abia, and Ebonyi States with attendant effect, that the resultant water will not have enough channel to flow through to the Atlantic ocean which will then result in flooding of farmlands, residential houses, drainage to infrastructure and danger to human and marine life;

aware that the Nigeria Metrological Agency did present the 2013 SEASONAL RAINFALL PREDICTION (NIMET - SRP) 2013 in April 2013 wherein an almost 100% increase in rain volume was predicted for 2013 as against that of 2012;

whereas President Goodluck Jonathan GCFR at the presentation observed thus "It is a known fact that, all over the world, the frequency and intensity of extreme weather; and the associated negative impacts on lives and property, are increasing. Our country Nigeria is not immune to these phenomena. In 2012 we experienced one of the most devastating floods in the history of this country. It affected about twenty-seven states of the Federation, resulting in loss of hundreds of lives, displacement of millions of people from their homes and extensive damage to infrastructure. Government responded to the emergency situation with several palliative measures that reduced the impacts of the flooding of the affected communities. I also directed NIMET to ensure the timely preparation and release of the Rainfall Prediction for 2013" ;

whereas the Hydrological Service, Ministries of Water Resources, Aviation, Environment, Nigeria Inland Waterways Authority, National Emergency Management Agency, Office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation are aware of this warning and alert but does not appear to be prepared either severally or coordinated to tackle the impending challenge;

whereas the Senate in the year 2012 did receive and passed motions on the disasters caused by flooding and blockage of the North - South Highway at Lokoja, Kogi State and other flood disasters leading to loss of lives from other parts of the country for the same year;

whereas it is necessary for the Senate, the National Assembly and the Government at the Federal and State levels to pre-emptorily assess and preview the preparedness of the different tiers (Federal and States) as well as inter-agency preparedness and evacuation steps prior to the advent of severe flooding;

whereas an aerial survey across the channels of River Benue, Niger, Cross River, River Kaduna, Imo River, Anambra, Gongola, and in particular the East-West Atlantic Coastlines from Calabar - Eket - Port-Harcourt - Bayelsa - Delta - Onitsha - Benin - Ondo - Lagos - Badagry, etc. will show the level of siltation, where sand has taken over river channels, and further reveal the flooding resulting from the blockade of these water channels in all these, among other places;

whereas the Nigeria Inland Waterways Authority appears overwhelmed by the level of expected rains and ill-preparedness of her institution for want of capacity; and

whereas it may be necessary to undertake emergency dredging and opening up of waterways from the Lagos - Delta - Onitsha - Bayelsa - Itu - Calabar estuaries to the Atlantic ocean to allow flow channels for the expected volume of water to avert fatalities.

Accordingly resolves:

(i) that the Senate do mandate the Committees on Water Resources, Environment, Marine Transport and Special Duties to as a matter of urgency conduct a Public hearing on the State of Preparedness of the Federal and State Government, their Ministries of Water Resources, Environment and Health, National Inland Waterways Authority and the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) to contain the predicted flooding and excess rainfall and report on a continuing basis to the Senate;

(*ii*) mandate the said Senate Committees to examine the level of siltation and blockade of these rivers and recommend possible phased out emergency desiltation and clearing of the channels to take large volumes of water;

(*iii*) mandate the said Committees to interact with State Governments of the potentially susceptible States to examine their level of preparedness, co-ordination and liaise with relevant Federal Authorities in event of emergency;

(*iv*) conduct a Public Hearing on the history, funding, challenges and prospect of the dredging of the River Niger, so far and what is needed to complete the dredging to the Atlantic ocean including the tributaries; and

(*v*) urge the Federal Government to initiate urgent action to dredge the coastal waterways of Nigeria to wit; the Lower Cross River at the Akwa Ibom/Cross River estuaries flowing into the Atlantic ocean and the Lower River Niger and its tributaries at Delta State, Anambra State, Bayelsa State and Ondo State as well as open the channels leading water at Lagos and Badagry emptying into the Atlantic ocean at the Western Coastlines of the Atlantic ocean (*Senator Ita S. J. Enang — Akwa Ibom North-East).*

Debate:

Proposed Resolution (i):
Question: That the Senate do mandate the Committees on Water Resources, Environment, Marine Transport and Special Duties to as a matter of urgency conduct a Public Hearing on the State of Preparedness of the Federal and State Government, their Ministries of Water Resources, Environment and Health, National Inland Waterways Authority and the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) to contain the predicted flooding and excess rainfall and report on a continuing basis to the Senate.

Proposed Resolution (ii):
Question: That the Senate do mandate the said Senate Committees to examine the level of siltation and blockade of these rivers and recommend possible phased out emergency desiltation and clearing of the channels to take large volumes of water.

Proposed Resolution (iii):
Question: That the Senate do mandate the said Committees to interact with State Governments of the potentially susceptible States to examine their level of preparedness, co-ordination and liaise with relevant Federal Authorities in event of emergency.

Proposed Resolution (iv):
Question: That the Senate do conduct a Public Hearing on the history, funding, challenges and prospect of the dredging of the River Niger so far and what is needed to complete the dredging to the Atlantic ocean including the tributaries.

Proposed Resolution (v):
Question: That the Senate do urge the Federal Government to initiate urgent action to dredge the coastal waterways of Nigeria to wit; the Lower Cross River at the Akwa Ibom/Cross River estuaries flowing into the Atlantic ocean and the Lower River Niger and its tributaries at Delta State, Anambra State, Bayelsa State and Ondo State as well as open the channels leading water at Lagos and Badagry emptying into the Atlantic ocean at the Western Coastlines of the Atlantic ocean.

Amendment Proposed:
Leave out Proposed Resolutions (i),(ii),(iii),(iv) and (v) and *insert* the following instead thereof:
"That the Senate do mandate the relevant Committees to establish the level of preparedness of Government and its Agencies to contain the predicted flood in 2013 and to report within two (2) weeks (*Senator Victor Ndoma-Egba — Cross River Central).*

Question that the amendment be made, put and agreed to.

Resolved:
That the Senate do mandate the relevant Committees to establish the level of preparedness of Government and its Agencies to contain the predicted flood in 2013 and to report within two (2) weeks ***(S/Res/044/02/13)***.

6. **Committee on Environment and Ecology:**
Report on the National Oil Spill Detection Agency (NOSDRA) Act 2006 (Amendment) Bill 2013 (SB. 155):
Motion made: That the Senate do consider the Report of the Committee on Environment and Ecology, on the National Oil Spill Detection Agency (NOSDRA) Act 2006 (Amendment) Bill 2013 (*Senator Abubakar O. Saraki — Kwara Central*).

Question put and agreed to.

Report presented.

Motion made: That the Senate do resolve into the Committee of the Whole to consider the Report *(Senate Leader).*

Question put and agreed to.

(SENATE IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE)

CONSIDERATION OF A BILL FOR AN ACT TO AMEND THE NATIONAL OIL SPILL DETECTION AND RESPONSE AGENCY AND OTHER RELATED MATTERS 2006 AND FOR OTHER RELATED MATTERS CONNECTED THEREWITH 2013.

Consideration of Report deferred to another Legislative Day

Chairman to report progress.

(SENATE IN PLENARY)

The Senate President reported that the Senate in the Committee of the Whole considered the Report of the Committee on Environment and Ecology, on the National Oil Spill Detection Agency (NOSDRA) Act 2006 (Amendment) Bill 2013 and deferred consideration to another Legislative Day.

Question: That the Senate do approve the Report of the Committee of the Whole — *Resolved in the Affirmative.*

7. **Adjournment:**
Motion made: That the Senate do now adjourn till Tuesday, 21st May, 2013 at 10.00 a.m. (*Senate Leader*).

Adjourned accordingly at 1:04 *p.m.*

Dr. David A. B. Mark, GCON, fnim
President,
Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.