

LEAD DEBATE ON A BILL FOR AN ACT TO MAKE SPECIAL PROVISIONS FOR SUPPRESSION OF SEA PIRACY AND TO PROVIDE FOR PUNISHMENT FOR THE OFFENCE OF SEA PIRACY AND FOR MATTERS CONNECTED THEREWITH.....

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Mr President, Distinguished Senators, thank you for the opportunity you have granted me to lead the debate on this very important bill for an act to make special provisions for suppression of sea piracy and to provide for punishment for the offence of sea piracy and for matters connected therewith. This bill had its first reading in this Hallowed Chamber on **20th April, 2016.**

Mr President, Distinguished Senators, sea pirates are distinct and sophisticated criminals who are fully armed and whose despicable activities are carried out on those who travel on sea routes.

Sea routes, as we all know, are popular and cheaper trade routes. Nigeria, being an import dependent economy must do more to guarantee the safe arrival of goods at her shores. It is therefore important and urgent that a law be put in place that will discourage, suppress sea piracy and punish those who engage in it.

Mr President, Distinguished Senators, at present the offence of sea piracy is treated in our criminal code Act.

The Act makes general provision on robbery without distinguishing the peculiarity of the place of occurrence. Robbery that is prosecuted at sea should be recognized and isolated from those that occur on land, as it is done in other countries of the world, because the victims of such robbery may be citizens of

other countries trading with Nigeria. Therefore, the terse provision in section 401 and 402 of the criminal code Act is insufficient thereby making this bill inevitable. It should be borne in our minds that sea piracy in this country has grown into a worrisome economic crime, hence the need to curtail its appeal by passing this bill. Moreover, this crime often times constitutes a violation of international law by forcefully taking ship away from the control of those who are legally entitled to operate the ship.

According to International Maritime Bureau (IMB), while the incidence of sea piracy is dropping in other territorial waters, it is increasing here in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea. The observation by IMB is a clarion call on this Distinguished Senate to make laws that will make potential pirates to weigh the enormity of the punishment that will be meted to them, if caught.

In this Bill Imprisonment for life is proposed and death penalty if the accused has caused death in committing the act of sea piracy.

Mr. President, Distinguished Colleagues, Mr. Mukundan, a Malaysian based IMB Director, observed that 30 deaths were recorded in sea pirate attacks around the world between January – June 2004. According to him, half of those deaths occurred in Nigerian Territorial waters. Mr. Mukundan went further to say, “Both the increased number of attacks in this area and the degree of violence being used is of grave concern and we will be putting pressure on Nigeria to step up anti-piracy measures.” We do not have to wait for IMB Director to prod us to do our job, it is incumbent on this senate to step up anti-sea piracy measures through proactive and robust legislation like we are about to do now.

At the United Nations Security Council open debate on peace and consolidation in West Africa with the theme ‘Piracy and Armed Robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea,’ Mr. Sison, United states Deputy Representative to United Nations,

stated how pirates forcefully abducted an Egyptian and Philippine officers from a cargo ship in April, 2016 on the territorial waters of Nigeria. Sadly, the two officers are still missing, "Earlier on April 11, the very same day, pirates had attacked a Turkish Cargo ship off the coast of Nigeria, kidnapping six members of the crew, including the vessel's Captain. Those men are also still missing." With over 32 attacks off the coast of Nigeria alone in 2016, it is urgent and important for this Senate to expedite action on this bill to check this worrisome trend.

The United Nations Security Council was informed by the US representatives that Nigeria was losing about \$ 1.5billion a month due to sea piracy, armed robberies at sea, smuggling, and fuel supply fraud as piracy and armed robberies in the Gulf of Guinea are on the rise. Sea piracy has led to the high cost of freight as ship owners and crew members often demand for high insurance premiums before embarking on any voyage to Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea. Apart from reducing the number of vessels calling at the Nation's seaports due to the fear of attacks, it has helped in no small measure to increase the cost of doing business as ship owners and consignors are compelled to charge higher than they do for other places.

Mr President, Distinguished Colleagues, hitherto our National laws have been treating sea piracy as just another crime. However, with the passage of this bill, our legal regime will be reinforced and our attitude towards maritime crime is going to change. Also the offshore perception of neglect or under policing of our maritime borders by successive government is equally going to change. In this Era of Change, our laws must change and be straightened to change our precarious legislative framework to a proactive framework.

Mr President, Distinguished colleagues I therefore move that this bill be read the second time and I urge my colleagues to please support it for passage into law as posterity will forever credit this 8th Senate for rescuing Nigeria from the abyss.

Thank you.