

LEAD DEBATE ON THE EMPLOYEE'S COMPENSATION ACT 2010 (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2016.

Sponsored by Senator Clifford Ordia (*Edo Central*)

Mr. President, Distinguished Colleagues, permit me to lead the debate on this very important Bill. The Bill was read for the first time in this hallowed Chamber on Wednesday, 09th December, 2015.

The Bill when passed into law seeks to amend the Employee's Compensation Act 2010 to incorporate the payment of compensation to Sportsmen and women who sustain injuries while on national assignment.

Mr. President, Distinguished Colleagues, the popularity of different sporting activities has increased over the last decades, a development that has been generally considered beneficial in many aspects for the society as well as individuals involved. The benefit of sports to humanity and indeed the world cannot be overemphasized. It serves as a major avenue for global peace and unity, employment generation, a medium of cultural exchange among nations, tourism and means of discouraging juvenile delinquency and crime. Infact, Nigeria is universally acclaimed as a sporting nation.

However, one of the hazards of sports is the possibility of sustaining injuries ranging from sprain, strain, contusion, abrasion, dislocation, laceration, back pain, fracture, etc. and when any of these happen, there is no legal framework or provision which enables these sportsmen and women in national sport events to access compensation.

Mr. President, Distinguished Colleagues, there is no doubt that this is one major reason responsible for lack of enthusiasm and zeal

when elite sportsmen and women are invited for national assignments. What is more, as a result of this lacuna in the law, many of our sportsmen and women in the past were abandoned after sustaining serious injuries in the course of national assignment. Example includes Victor Igbinoba, a member of the 1985 gold winning Under 17 National Team, Dosu Joseph, 1996 Olympic Dream Team Goal Keeper, etc. This sad development is not because of the unwillingness on the part of the government but the absence of enabling law that will empower government agency to do the needful as required in a decent society like ours.

Mr. President, Distinguished colleagues, sports men and women are putting their bodies at the risk of catastrophic injury every day they engage in competition un-behalf of the nation and because of the pressure to honour national assignment, those in the sports field often ignore pain without getting adequate treatment. This makes them prone to the development of serious cumulative/respective injuries. Many times these injuries result in the sport person developing a chronic pain syndrome which eventually leads to premature retirement from the sports.

Mr. President, Distinguished colleagues, this Bill has no direct consequential financial implication on government, as the National Sports Commission shall make a minimum annual contribution of 5percent of the total gate taking of every sporting event in Nigeria.

I therefore call on you my respected colleagues to give this Bill the support it deserves to give hope to our injured sportsmen and also to encourage the active sportsmen who for fear of injury always reject honouring national assignment.

Thank you.