



THE SENATE

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY COMPLEX

THREE-ARMS ZONE

ABUJA

SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

REPORT OF THE INVESTIGATIVE HEARING ON
THE ALLEGED IRREGULARITIES AND LOP-
SIDEDNESS OF THE LIST OF 47 CAREER
AMBASSADORIAL NOMINEES

TUESDAY, 19TH JULY, 2016

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1.0 MEMBERSHIP

Sen. Monsurat Sunmonu	-	Chairman
Sen. Shehu Sani	-	Vice Chairman
Sen. Mohammed Ali Ndume	-	Member
Sen. BalaIbn Na'Allah	-	Member
Sen. James Manager	-	Member
Sen. Mohammed Shaaba Lafiagi	-	Member
Sen. Olugbenga Bareehu Ashafa	-	Member
Sen. Enyinnaya H. Abaribe	-	Member
Sen. Sunny O. Ogbuoji	-	Member
Sen. Tijjani Yahaya Kaura	-	Member
Sen. Clifford Ordia	-	Member
S.D. Umar	-	Clerk to the Committee

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The release of the long awaited list of Ambassadorial nominees (Career) provoked concerns from some individuals and their representatives, for perceived marginalization in the exercise. The list was presented to the Senate on Wednesday, 8th June, 2016, one (1) year into the life of administration.

Consequently, the Senate, Federal Republic of Nigeria, at its sitting on Wednesday, 22nd June, 2016, debated on a motion on the Matter of Urgent Public Importance: *the Irregularities and Lop-sidedness of the list of Career Ambassadorial Nominees forwarded to the Senate by Mr. President, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federation* and resolved; *"that the Senate do invite the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Secretary to the Government of the Federation to appear before the Committee on Foreign Affairs to explain the irregularities and lop-sidedness in the nomination of Career Ambassadors before the commencement of the screening exercise and report back within one week".*

The Senate, being sensitive to the concerns expressed from different quotas and the desire to ensure equal representation in the distribution of Ambassadorial positions, referred the matter to this Committee. The Committee was then mandated to investigate the entire process of selection vide a letter No. NASS/8S/R/03/VOL.1/246, dated 23rd June, 2016.

The Senate is requested to note that Nigeria in its quest for a robust foreign policy established and currently operates about 116 Missions across the globe. These Missions are to be headed by Ambassadors duly screened and confirmed by the Senate. Currently, there are no Ambassadors serving in any of the Missions.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The Committee sent letters to the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Secretary to the Government of the Federation on Thursday, 23rd June, 2016 to appear before it with detailed explanations of the process and criteria for the nominations. They were equally requested to submit ahead of the meeting, the following:

- a. A comprehensive brief stating the process and criteria for the selection of the forty-seven (47) Career Ambassadorial Nominees for confirmation.
- b. Nominal Roll of the Foreign Service Officers currently in service, on grade level 15-17, in this format:

S/N	Name	Date of Birth	Gender	State of Origin	Date of First Appointment	Date of Present Appointment	Current Grade Level	Date of Retirement	Remaining Years in Service
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4.0 SUBMISSIONS

4.1 Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF)

According to the submissions received on 24th June, 2016, the SGF noted that the nominees were carefully selected on the basis of; _____

- a. Federal Character
- b. Seniority
- c. Gender consideration
- d. Specialist Relevance
- e. A Minimum of 30 Months period of Service before Retirement
- f. Competence

The submission also explained that, officers from Bayelsa, Ebonyi, Ondo and Plateau States were not featured in the list because officers from these States did not meet the criteria for appointment.

Presentation by the SGF

While briefing the Committee, the SGF explained that there was a selection Committee assigned to handle the assignment based on laid down criteria. These criteria were fully articulated and approved by the President, after which the Ministry was directed to draw a list, based on the identified criteria, which gave rise to the 47 Ambassadorial nominees.

In drawing up the list, the Ministry also conducted an in-house due diligence on the conduct, character and ability of all eligible officers for selection, based on available records. The list was subsequently forwarded to the President who equally vetted all the nominees, to ensure that all those listed were compatible with the change agenda of the government.

The purpose of conducting due diligence is to ensure that all those selected are of sound mind and track records, without any fault whatsoever, to avoid any international embarrassment.

While it is easier to get the service records of the Career civil servants and make recommendations, it is extremely difficult to do same for the non-Career nominees. This therefore explains the submissions in batches, first

with the Career nominees before that of the non-Career. The outstanding list will soon be presented to the Senate, by the President.

Therefore, if for any reason of the criteria for selection, a state is not able to find itself on the list of the 47 nominees, the shortfall will be made up from the yet to be presented non-Career list and eventually, all states will be represented. So far, out of the 36 States and FCT, 32 States are represented. This satisfactorily complied with the spirit of the Constitution.

4.2 Minister of Foreign Affairs

The Ministry complied with the request of the Committee on the submissions which reflected the same criteria for the selection process of the nominees as presented by the SGF. In addition, the Ministry forwarded a detailed nominal roll of Foreign Service Officers from grade level 15-17, as requested by the Committee.

Presentation by Minister

The Minister concurred with all the explanations presented by the SGF. The Minister emphasised further, that the criteria used for the selection of the nominees were very rigorous in application. This is aimed at rewarding the exemplary performance of the best and most experienced officers, who possess the ability to do the job, in line with the set out agenda of the government.

In the selection process, the government has no agenda to discriminate against any state whatsoever. The Minister also, confirmed that the awaited list of non-career nominees, when presented to the Senate, will address the perceived imbalance.

However, those senior and deserving officers that may not have the opportunity to be nominated as Ambassadors and deployed to serve at post will be conferred with the title of Ambassador in-situ, by the President. This

will go a long way in compensating the officers, as a result of the loss of Ambassadorial appointment, and they will also, retire with their full benefits and privileges.

5.0 SPECIFIC CONCERNS ON THE NOMINATION

The Committee received specific complaints on the nomination affecting the following States:

- a. **Bayelsa** – from the presentations, the candidate from Bayelsa did not meet with all the laid down criteria for selection.
- b. **Benue** – the complainant from Benue, a male Foreign Service Officer, with two years two months (26 months) remaining period of service was dropped on gender consideration for the next most senior officer, a female, who has two years five months (29 months) remaining period of service.
- c. **Kogi** – from the records, one of the two senior officers with the same service records, except for the slight difference in the remaining period of service, on the part of the one not selected (who is leaving 15 days earlier) before retirement, was dropped in favour of the one selected for nomination.
- d. **Ondo** – none of the three senior officers from the state satisfy all the criteria for selection.
- e. **Osun** – the officer nominated complied with the set down criteria for selection, while the most senior officer with only 12 months remaining period of service before retirement, was dropped for lack of adequate period of service.
- f. **Plateau** – none of the officers satisfy all the criteria for selection.
- g. **Taraba** – the Officer selected for nomination has satisfied the set down criteria for nomination and she is the most senior Officer from the State.

6.0 FINDINGS

1. That the forty-seven (47) Career Ambassadorial nominees were carefully selected on the basis of Federal Character, Seniority, Gender

consideration, Specialist Relevance, a Minimum of 30 Months period of Service before Retirement and compétence, except for a few that have between 18 to 29 months remaining period of service.

2. Officers from Bayelsa, Ebonyi, Ondo, Plateau and other States not featured on the list, did not meet the criteria approved for selection.
3. That the Executive is working on the list of non-Career Ambassadorial nominees, which will make up for the states that were not represented in the current list. The list will accordingly balance the perceived lop-sidedness. The Minister and SGF expressed strong will that Mr. President will ensure that each state of the Federation is represented in line with the principles of federal character.
4. That the complexities in the selection of the non-Career Ambassadors whose records are not readily available for scrutiny contributed to the submission of only the list of Career Ambassadorial nominees to the Senate, instead of a combined list.
5. Similarly, the late submission of the list of the Career nominees was attributed to the delay in the appointment of the principal officers of the President and the Cabinet Ministers, most of which came late into the year, 2015.
6. The list contains 12 women which represent ²⁵40% of the 47 nominees, in line with the affirmative action on gender.
7. From August, 2015 and January, 2016, respectively, the non-Career and Career Ambassadors at post were recalled by the present government. Nigerian Missions across the globe have been operating without Ambassadors, which makes it difficult for Nigeria to actualize its full potentials in global politics.
8. The presentation could not divulge certain information contained in the confidential files of some of the Foreign Service Officers that were not considered for nomination. This was to respect the sanctity of confidentiality in line with the contract between the employer and employee.

7.0 RECOMMENDATION

1. It is recommended that the Senate should proceed with the screening and confirmation hearing of the 47 Ambassadorial nominees with dispatch, ahead of the submission of the second list of non-Career Ambassadorial nominees. The detailed screening will further address any concern that may arise.
2. The President should be advised to expedite action on the submission of the list of the non-Career nominees, which is expected to balance the perceived lop-sidedness in the nomination of the Ambassadors. More so, in future nominations, the Executive Arm should be guided to see the logic of sustaining the previous practice of presenting to the Senate, a combined list of both Career and non-Career nominees for confirmation.
3. The Executive Arm should be equally advised to promptly commence the process of the selection of all nominees and other Principal Officers of Government for appointments, ahead of confirmation by the Senate, to avoid delays in governmental operations.
4. The Government is advised to sustain the commendable compliance to gender representation and balance in the remaining nomination and any other one in the future, with a view to giving to the female gender the desired sense of belonging.
5. The Senate and the Executive Arms of government should as a matter of urgency, respectively, facilitate the screening and confirmation hearings of all the Career and non-Career Ambassadorial nominees, as well as, the process of posting, to quickly fill the vacuum in all Nigerian Missions abroad.
6. Unless extremely necessary, the Senate should distance itself from doing anything that is capable of revealing some of the details contained in the confidential files of some of the eligible Officers that were not considered for nomination, to guard against litigation, et al.

8.0 CONCLUSION

The Committee, having considered all the petitions and concerns on the 47 Ambassadorial nominees, under consideration by the Senate, concludes that, the nominees were meticulously selected in line with due diligence. They should therefore be considered for screening and confirmation by the Senate.

The Committee expresses its gratitude to the Senate for finding it worthy of handling this all-important assignment, which was conducted with all sense of responsibility and service to the Nation. It is to be noted that, members and staff of the Secretariat worked tirelessly to ensure that the Committee arrived at this report to assuage any agitation by Nigerians, as well as, to promote justice and equity for the benefit of all.

The Committee so submits:

Sen. Monsurat Sunmonu

Sen. Shehu Sani

Sen. Mohammed Ali Ndume

Sen. BalaIbn Na'Allah

Sen. James Manager

Sen. Mohammed Shaaba Lafiagi

Sen. Olugbenga Bareehu Ashafa

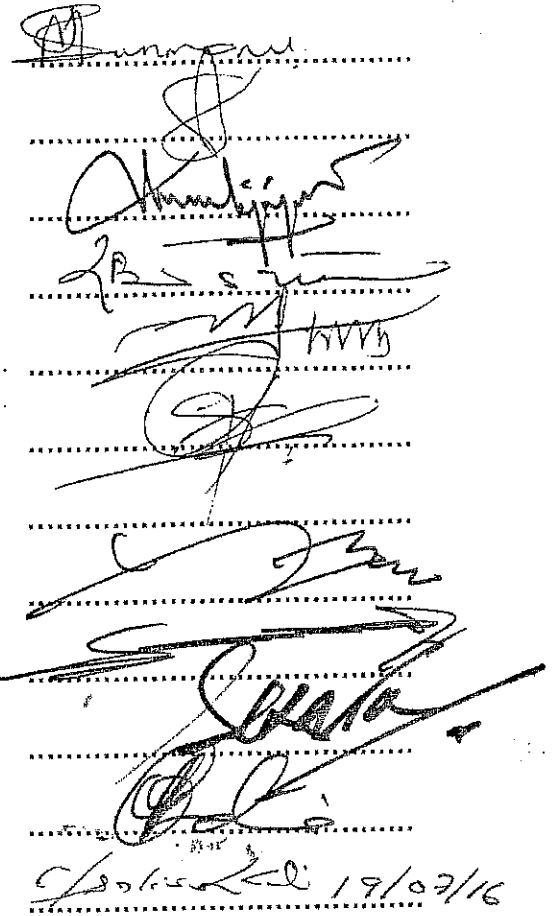
Sen. Enyinnaya H. Abaribe

Sen. Sunny O. Ogbuaji

Sen. Tijjani Yahaya Kaura

Sen. Clifford Ordia

S.D. Umar, *Hon. Kentucky Cal.* (Clerk to the Committee)


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