

**LEAD DEBATE ON THE COMMUNITY DISPUTE RESOLUTION BILL, 2021
(SB. 848).**

Sponsor: Sen. Musa, Mohammed Sani (*Niger East*).

Mr. President, Distinguished Colleagues, permit me to lead the debate on the general principles of the Community Dispute Resolution Bill 2021. The Bill seeks to provide for the settlement of certain civil disputes by conciliation, mediation and traditional dispute resolution mechanism; to set out the guiding principles applicable in Nigeria.

The Bill was read for the first time in this Chamber on Tuesday, 7th December, 2021.

The principal object of the Bill is to put in place a legal framework for the settlement of certain civil disputes by conciliation, mediation and traditional dispute resolution. Resolution of disputes forms part and parcel of everyday life in any given society. Hence effective dispute resolution mechanisms in a country will guarantee peace, is an enabler of trade and investment, and contribute to economic, social and political development of the country.

The 1999 Constitution obligates the State to ensure access to justice, the ability of people to seek and obtain a remedy for grievances in line with human rights standards, for all persons. The Constitution under Chapter Seven provide for the Judiciary as one of the three arms of the Arms of government whose mandate is to protect and serve justice. In Nigeria, disputes are mainly resolved through the court process. This process is costly, takes longer for disputes to be resolved resulting in huge backlog in courts, parties are not in control of the outcome of a dispute and does not always result in reconciling the parties

Mr. President, my respected colleagues, numerous benefits will accrue if this Bill is passed into law due to the following reasons;

- (a) provide an effective mechanism for amicable dispute resolution;
- (b) promote a conciliatory approach to dispute resolution;
- (c) facilitate timely resolution of disputes at a relatively affordable cost;
- (d) facilitate access to justice;

- (e) enhance community and individual involvement in dispute resolution; and
- (f) foster peace and cohesion.

This Bill therefore seeks to implement the provisions of the Constitution with respect to enhancing access to justice and promoting the use of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms in resolving disputes.

This Bill when enacted will apply to certain civil disputes including disputes where the government is a party. However, the law will not apply to disputes concerning interpretation of the constitution, claims for violation, infringement or denial of a fundamental right, disputes governed by the Arbitration Act, election disputes, and disputes involving public interest.

Mr. President, my respected colleagues, I am convinced beyond all reasonable shadow of doubt that this Bill deserves the support of the entire senate.

Thank you.