

*PRESENTATION BY BARR MIKE EJIOFOR pnm, fsi, KSJI DURING THE 3RD SOUTH EAST NIGERIA ECONOMIC SUMMIT (SEES 3) 2018 HELD ON 11<sup>TH</sup>– 12<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 2018 AT BASE EVENT CENTRE, INDEPENDENCE LAYOUT, ENUGU.*

***THEME: SOUTH EAST NIGERIA, THE INVESTMENT DESTINATION***

*From what we know and see in the South East (SE) Nigeria which is predominantly inhabited by and is the homeland of the Igbos “Ndigbo, there is no gainsaying that the capacity to deliver on investment is not lacking in this region. What may perhaps mar this assertion is what we are here to discuss in this segment. Fantastic programmes or pursuits in life be it economical, political, religious, etc have been truncated and will continue to be truncated by insecurity which sometimes are as a result of negligence, bad planning, error of judgment, spontaneous behaviours or unforeseen developments. The planners of this event have done well by factoring security discourse into the programme from the beginning to enable all concerned to plan together. We will endeavour therefore to x-ray salient issues that if not dealt with tend to or may endanger the target of the South East Region Economic Development Company (SEREDEC) to make the SE an investment hub of the country and indeed the continent of Africa. I am sure that we all saw a reasonable robust security arrangement around the precinct of this venue where this event is being held. It is only a component of what we will look at in this segment. We will be examining more of an intangible larger security concept encompassing where we are, how we got here and the way forward.*

*2. Making an Investment hub out of a place/environment will be very incomplete and will end in multiple failures as well as losses if security is not factored into the planning process. This is because businesses can*

*only thrive in climes where security is relatively guaranteed. Security here might not necessarily mean the presence of fierce looking gun carrying operatives but a well thought out strategic security analysis and projections to guaranty the sustainability of the planned investments. This may include a holistic or partial review of the past and present developments/traits as well as an objective futuristic possible outcome based on the assessment. The “Dubai miracle” made a good mention in the table of activities for this programme. An on-line United Arab Emirates 2016 Crime Report states thus “The crime rate in Dubai is considerably lower than in most cities throughout the world of similar size ...” Another online crime report on Dubai stated that; “Dubai is one of the safest cities in the world...”. Security thus, is an essential ingredient that oils Investments.*

3. *This discussion will examine the following.*

- *What is Security*
- *Nature of Ndigbo within an outside the region,*
- *Potent security issues of the SE*
- *Present challenges*
- *Suggestions*
- *Conclusion*

## ***WHAT IS SECURITY***

4. *Cambridge English Dictionary defines security as “Protection of a person, building, organization or country against threats such as crime or attacks by foreign countries.”*

5. *Security is simply a state of being free from danger and threat. It is an inward feeling of safety; such as one is supposed to feel when he enters his house and locks the door. Domesticating it, security could be said to have been achieved when individuals can sleep well in their homes with their eyes closed, when they can go about their lawful activities anytime and anywhere without molestation or fear of not being safe, when properties, materials and information are protected from damage or theft and the sovereignty of the nation is not under any form of threat.*

#### **NATURE OF NDIGBO WITHIN AND OUTSIDE THE REGION:**

6. *There could not be any other auspicious timing for this event focusing on driving Investment in the South East, a region which by divine providence is truly the home of investment and technology in Nigeria. According to ISIDIENU in her work published in the Mgbakoigba, Journal of African Studies. Vol.6 No.1. July 2016, she noted in the abstract “... Their cultural heritage is one replete in peaceful coexistence and lawfulness and to a large extent industrious and honesty in their original way of life”. You may like or dislike the Igbo man, but you will certainly not refute the estimation that he is blessed with so much determination for growing businesses and excelling in whatever he does and wherever he finds himself irrespective of the non-conducive atmosphere in which he may be subjected. This background is central to the situation we are about to discuss in this segment. It will enable us to examine objectively the present situation and to perhaps see why the South East may not have been able to so easily take its rightful place over the years.*

7. *The Igbo man succeeds in his industry, international/petty businesses; buying and selling, import and export, fabrication of all*

kinds, even in the academia. A typical Igbo man never gives up and he is a success story where ever he settles, even better than the indigenes due to his studiousness. Instances abound across the globe and even within the country.

8. In the home front, most of the motor spare parts markets, pharmaceutical businesses, import and export of most goods and services are dominated by Ndigbo within and outside the SE region. This feat is only achievable by risk takers who are determined, focused, diligent and result oriented.

### ***POTENT SECURITY ISSUES THAT MAY UNDERCUT THE PROSPECTS OF THE SE***

9. Despite the above positive traits of the Ndigbo which separately or collectively are capable of delivering on any planned investment drive, there are some very potent issues that have not and cannot impact favourably towards the attainment of a reasonable security atmosphere in the SE to propel the desired investment. We will look at a few of them.

*i. Infrastructural Status of SE:* While it is true that the entire country is bereft of functional and adequate infrastructure, the case of the SE is indescribable. Various persons in recent times have shouted to high heavens regarding the infrastructural deficit in the SE. In the Daily Post Online, August 2017, the Governor of Rivers state lamented the poor infrastructural state of the South East and the South South. Excerpt from the publication states thus, “...Wike also lamented that neither are the two regions linked by any rail services. He said as neighbours, the two regions must strive to overcome the challenges through regional efforts by sharing resources...”

*Another online commentator, “Emmanuel Onwubiko, Head, HUMAN Rights Writers’ Association of Nigeria blogs (HURIWA) Huriwa.blogspot.com/2012 has this to say “But one thing the South East geopolitical area lacks is the needed and necessary federal presence and the strategic infrastructure that would enable the people to harness their natural and human resources to achieve collective economic growth and advancement of the area. This accounts for the presence of a lot of youths that are jobless and therefore restive. Even Aba that used to be the industrial hub of Southern Nigeria is in a total sorry state due largely to the criminal neglect of the basic social infrastructure...” In what seems like credence to this, in November, 2017, in Abakaliki, Ebonyi state, during a reception held in his honour by the State government at the Government House, President Muhammadu Buhari pledged his determination to urgently address the infrastructure deficit and related challenges confronting the South-East. (Vanguard online, November 14, 2017)*

*I do not know of any statistics on which this conclusions are based but from what we see on ground and read in the news, the region has suffered a legendary neglect from various governments at all levels. Substantive investments cannot be domiciled in an environment where existing infrastructure is decaying while relevant ones are inexistent or not sufficient to accommodate the expected inflowing investments.*

**ii. Perceived marginalization by the Federal Government:** *Again, the SE is perceived as a region struggling on its own to survive having been marginalized or denied its rightful place at the Federal level. Deliberately or otherwise, there appears to be an unequal distribution of key federal government establishments with only few situated in the SE by successive governments. Similarly, the appointments by the Federal*

*Government appear to have marginalized the region. This implies that the SE may have no voice when matters affecting it are being discussed.*

*The Governor of Rivers state, Nyesom Wike, while delivering his welcome address during a meeting of the eleven governors from the two regions in Port-Harcourt, the Rivers State capital in 2017 said that the South-South and South East geo-political zones are the most politically and economically marginalized within the nation, (Daily post online, August, 2017).*

**iii. Effects of the Activities of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB):** *Several schools of thought and individuals have described the IPOB movement differently. While some view the group as fighting a legitimate cause, others regard them as misguided elements, propelled by joblessness and criminal intent. Meanwhile the Federal Government described the group as a terrorist group and had it proscribed. Irrespective of the divergent and convergent versions of thought and classification, the fact is that the group remains a relevant factor that cannot be swept under the carpet by any reasonable thinker in any security matter affecting the region and the nation at large. A solution not necessarily the use of force should therefore be advanced to permanently resolve this impasse. Dialogue and inclusiveness of the major actors of IPOB could reveal if they are serving the interest of Ndigbo or not and afterwards chart a course for resolving the crisis in the overall good of the region.*

**iv. Effects of the Civil War: 1967-1970:** *This could be summed up in the words of Virtual Kollage, Feb 24, 2017 in the work titled “the Negative Consequences of the Nigeria Civil War”– “One of the negative consequences of the 1967 to 1970 Civil War in Nigeria was the drain it had on human, material and financial resources ...” The SE till*

*date is still suffering these consequences in the form of depletion of human, material and financial resources of the entire nation especially the SE, collapsed educational system, disruption of economic activities, reduction of the population of the entire country, increased criminal activities as is usual in war zones, violation of the rights of citizens and the bad international image question.*

*v. **Lack of Political Unity:** True or false, it is often said and believed in some quarters that the Igbos are not politically united. In other words, the political bigwigs do not easily put aside personal political interests for common interest of the SE.*

*10. The above x-rayed situations portend grave, real or potential security threat to the actualization of SEES's vision in the SE. This is because it has the capacity to and has actually provoked spoken and unspoken feelings and agitations at all levels and across all classes of persons. These destroy the self esteem of the people, give them a feeling of not being in the main stream, create a feeling of "they don't like us", or "we are not one of them". All of these culminate in hostilities, venting of anger by the youths in the form of assorted criminal acts in pursuit of survival or vendetta. Nigeria is and remains one indivisible entity and must be seen as such by all as well as by the actions of all.*

## **PRESENT CHALLENGES**

*11. Taking cognizance of the fact that we are talking about a people who have the determination to excel in every endeavour, the aforementioned potent security issues have over the years in one way or the other culminated in the following contemporary challenges which if not addressed, have the capability to endanger the investment vision of the SE and render our collective efforts futile. Again, according to Wike, "...the two regions must strive to overcome challenges through regional*

*efforts by sharing resources, intelligence and denying sanctuaries to criminal elements in the areas...”Once more,a credence that criminal activities is high in this region.*

**a. *Rising Crime Rate:*** *Youths of our time across the country including those from the SE have been and lately improved on the spate and intensity of criminality. These include armed robbery, ritual killings, Kidnapping for ransom, advance free fraud (419), internet crimes, rape, political thuggery, terrorism, fake drugs sales and distribution, land/Chieftaincy related killings etc. Some recent celebrated criminal activities like Evans, the Nnewi born, supposedly successful business man and billionaire kidnapper, the Ozubulu Catholic church shooting, the Okija shrine case etc are still memorable. Advance free fraud (419) which involves obtaining payments from unsuspecting victims through deceits or fraudulent means has today been christened “yahoo yahoo or yahoo plus”. The lists are endless and are consequences of failing family upbringing, collapsed value system, failed governments, etc. The fact remains that the cankerworm of criminality has eaten deep into the fabrics of our youths and even adults across the country which the SE is a major play ground.*

**b. *Crave for Quick Money:*** *This scourge whereby youths indulge in all kinds of illegal acts in the name of “I want to make it” has become prevalent in the country especially in the SE. The situation exposes the young folks and makes them very vulnerable to manipulations for political thuggery, ritual killings, kidnap for ransom, yahoo yahoo, prostitution, etc. These constitute serious security threats as well as run contrary to positive hard work required in the making of investment destination.*

## **SUGGESTIONS**



12. *One of the things that make us superior animals is the ability to solve problems. Making the SE an investment destination in Nigeria in the midst of the above-mentioned security land mines will amount to an effort in futility. The leaders of this region must as a matter of **urgency contain insecurity to the barest minimum and create a peaceful and secured ambiance where businesses can thrive, where investors can willingly invest their money without any fear of losing it to criminal elements, ethnic or communal clashes or fraudsters or failed banks, or being themselves kidnapped.** The following suggestions are thus proffered for follow-up by the programme organizers with a view to achieving its objectives.*

- **Good leadership:** *Leadership is given for direction. Direction is all encompassing therefore failure of followership indicates failure of leadership. Governance in Nigeria must be devoid of self aggrandizement or vendetta rather it should be target driven. The SE needs an all inclusive administration that should be able to remove or reduce areas of contention amongst the citizenry, solve problems, create employment, provide relevant infrastructure, enhance educational pursuits, restore reasonable value system, introduce programmes to meaningfully engage the youths etc.*
- **Political oneness:** *Elites and opinion leaders from the SE must be united and be ready to place interests common to the region over and above their personal interests.*
- **Move away from blame game:** *Most people have continued to blame the past; colonial masters, 1914 amalgamation of Nigeria, failures of past leaders, fallen standards, perceived antipathy against Ndigbo, even their parents, etc for the situation they find themselves or the place of Ndigbo in the scheme of things in*

*Nigeria. The SE, from the leaders to the led must leave the past behind and chart its destiny in the future by getting it right today.*

- ***Security Consciousness/Vigilance:*** *No matter how safe a place could be, there will usually be traces of criminality. And since security agents cannot be deployed everywhere round the clock, it is expected that citizens should report security incidences or suspicious developments to relevant agencies. Though some persons may feel immune to insecurity due to the “concrete walls” around them and their homes but have forgotten that they are still part and parcel of the community, therefore they are not immune at all. It is only a feeling in self-deceit.*
- ***Ensure Justice for all:*** *Equality before the law and balance of justice is essential without which insecurity and impunity will remain pervasive. This apparently will discourage local and foreign investments as well as deny the region of any sustainable infrastructure since destroying them will be the hobby for criminal elements.*

## **CONCLUSION**

*13. Without security no business can thrive. Security here must be holistic and beyond acquisition of armament. It should rather encompass a tactful reduction or removal of some silent but potent causes of insecurity like poverty, unemployment, injustice, celebration of criminals or corrupt people, lack of basic human needs, lack of needed infrastructure etc. This will reduce contentious areas and ultimately enhance security.*

*14. The South Eastern Governors and leaders must as a matter of urgency come together and realistically articulate short-term, mid-term and long-term security strategies as well as other areas to arrive at this*

*desired investment destination. Some of the strategies; can be harnessed from this segment as well as from other composite segments discussed in the course of this programme. Finally, it is important that some of, or the entire above are vigorously pursued, without which achieving an investment destination in the SE may never progress beyond programmes like this.*

*God bless Ndigbo, God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.*

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