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**Human Rights Committee****Concluding observations on Nigeria in the absence of its second periodic report\***

1. In the absence of the second periodic report by the State party, the Committee considered the situation of civil and political rights under the Covenant in Nigeria at its 3613rd and 3614th meetings (CCPR/C/SR.3613 and CCPR/C/SR.3614), held in public sessions on 3 and 4 July 2019. In accordance with rule 70, paragraph 1, of the Committee's rules of procedure, the failure of a State party to submit its report under article 40 of the Covenant may lead to an examination in a public session of the measures taken by the State party to give effect to the rights recognized in the Covenant and to adopt concluding observations.

2. At its 3636th meeting, held on 19 July 2019, the Committee adopted the following concluding observations.

**A. Introduction**

3. The Covenant came into force for Nigeria on 29 October 1993. The State party was under an obligation to submit its second periodic report by 28 October 1999. The Committee regrets that the State party had failed to honour its reporting obligations under article 40 of the Covenant and that, despite numerous reminders, the State party has not submitted its second periodic report.

4. The Committee nevertheless expresses appreciation for the opportunity to engage in a constructive dialogue with the State party's delegation on the implementation of the Covenant. The Committee is grateful to the State party for its written replies (CCPR/C/NGA/Q/2/Add.1) to the list of issues (CCPR/C/NGA/Q/2), which were supplemented by oral and written responses by the delegation.

5. In the light of the written replies to the Committee's list of issues and the constructive dialogue that the Committee had with the State party's delegation, the Committee considers the written replies as the second periodic report of the State party.

**B. Positive aspects**

6. The Committee generally welcomes the following legislative and institutional steps taken by the State party:

- (a) The HIV/AIDS Anti-Discrimination Act, in 2014;
- (b) The Violence against Persons (Prohibition) Act, in 2015;
- (c) The Anti-Torture Act, in 2017;

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\* Adopted by the Committee at its 126<sup>th</sup> session (1- 26 July 2019).

(d) The Prohibition of Discrimination against Person Living with Disabilities Act, in 2019.

7. The Committee welcomes the ratification of, or accession to, by the State party to the following treaties:

(a) The Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, on 28 June 2001;

(b) The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, on 28 June 2001;

(c) Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, on 28 June 2001;

(d) Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime on 27 September 2001;

(e) The Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, on 27 July 2009;

(f) The Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, on 27 July 2009;

(g) The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, on 27 July 2009;

(h) The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, on 25 September 2010 and 27 September 2012 respectively;

(i) The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, on 24 September 2010.

## C. Principal matters of concern and recommendations

### **Constitutional and legal framework within which the Covenant is implemented (art. 2)**

8. The Committee welcomes the information provided by the delegation that a National Working Group on Treaty Reporting has been convened as a permanent structure. It is however concerned about the capacity of the working group to address the considerable list of outstanding reporting obligations of the State party to human rights mechanisms and follow-up on their recommendations. The Committee also regrets lack of information on whether the State party considers acceding to the First Optional Protocol to the Covenant (art. 2).

9. **The State party should ensure that the Working Group is fully equipped to fulfil its functions as a standing government structure mandated to coordinate and prepare reports to and engage with international and regional human rights mechanisms, as well as to coordinate and track national follow-up to and implementation of the recommendations and decisions emanating from such mechanisms, and should provide the working group with adequate support, including dedicated staff, and the capacity to consult systematically with the national human rights institution and civil society. The State party should consider acceding to the First Optional Protocol to the Covenant in order to enhance the protection of human rights for all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction.**

### National human rights institution

10. The Committee welcomes the fact that the National Human Rights Commission has been reaccredited with “A” status by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions in 2016. The Committee is concerned about issues raised by the Subcommittee on Accreditation, including the selection and appointment process, security of tenure of members of the governing body and the lack of authority to table reports directly in the Parliament, as well as reported limited capacity and shortage of resources. (art. 2)

**11. The State party should address the concerns raised by the Subcommittee on Accreditation and provide the National Human Rights Commission with adequate human and financial resources, to ensure its effective functioning in conformity with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles).**

### The fight against corruption

12. While appreciating the information provided by the State party on its implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, as well as legislative, institutional and enforcement measures taken to prevent and combat corruption, including recent convictions of high-level officials for fraud and misappropriation of public funds, the Committee is concerned that corruption remains pervasive in the State party, including in the oil and security sectors. The Committee notes adoption of a whistle blower policy, but is concerned that the proposed law to protect whistle blowers has not yet been adopted. (arts. 1, 2 and 25)

**13. The State party should continue its efforts, including through international cooperation and effective implementation of legislation and preventive measures, to combat corruption and promote good governance, transparency and accountability, including in the management of natural resources. The State party should adopt legislation protecting whistle blowers.**

### Counter-terrorism measures and states of emergency

14. While acknowledging serious challenges posed by terrorist activities to the State party, the Committee is concerned about some provisions of the Terrorism (Prevention) Act of 2011, such as the broad definition of “terrorism” and “terrorist activities”, the disproportionate sanctions attached to non-violent acts and omissions which fall under the scope of the Act, the extensive powers of the State authorities and the lack of judicial supervision over the exercise of certain powers. The Committee is concerned about a lack of clarity concerning the legal framework governing states of emergency, its conformity with article 4 of the Covenant, and the range of permissible derogations from the Covenant rights during states of emergency. The Committee is concerned about allegations of serious human rights violations committed by the security forces during the state of emergency, declared in May 2013 in the northeast of the country (states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe), in the context of counter-terrorism measures against Boko Haram. (arts. 4, 6, 7 and 9)

**15. The State party should take the necessary steps to review the provisions of the Terrorism (Prevention) Act of 2011 and bring them into line with the Covenant and other relevant international standards. The State party should ensure that the legal framework governing states of emergency is clear and compliant with all provisions of article 4 of the Covenant. It should ensure that measures derogating from the provisions of the Covenant are limited to the extent strictly required by the exigencies of the situation and meet the requirements of the principle of proportionality. The State party should ensure that all allegations of human rights violations committed during the states of emergency are promptly and effectively investigated, and that those responsible are brought to justice, and victims are provided with full reparations. The State party should also continue its efforts, including through training and monitoring, to prevent human rights violations in military and law enforcement operations.**

### Non-discrimination and gender equality

16. The Committee is concerned about a lack of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation and the absence of a definition of discrimination in the State party’s legislation.

The Committee notes with concern that the Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill has not yet been adopted and that discrimination against women in access to justice, education and employment, and enjoyment of land and property rights, persists both in law and practice. The Committee is particularly concerned about discriminatory legal provisions and practices against women, including with regard to the transmission of nationality; and polygamy, repudiation, adultery and inheritance rights in the states that apply sharia law, and discriminatory traditional practices. The Committee regrets that women remain under-represented in the public and private sectors, particularly in decision-making positions. (arts. 2, 3, 14, 25 and 26)

**17. The State party should adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation that (a) includes a comprehensive list of prohibited grounds of discrimination, including race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, sexual orientation, gender identity and other status; (b) covers direct, indirect and intersecting forms of discrimination; and (c) provides for effective remedies, including judicial. The State party should take steps, including comprehensive review of legislation, to ensure that women are not subjected to any form of discrimination, in law and in practice, *inter alia* in matters of access to justice, education, employment, land and property rights, marriage, and transmittal of nationality. It should (a) harmonize its national laws with the provisions of the Covenant, including by repealing discriminatory provisions relating, *inter alia*, to marriage, polygamy, repudiation, divorce, succession and landownership; (b) conduct public awareness campaigns aimed at eliminating gender biases and stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of men and women in the family and society and promote gender equality and non-discrimination; and (c) take efforts to increase the participation of women in the political and public domains, particularly in decision-making positions, if necessary, through temporary special measures.**

#### **Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity**

18. The Committee is concerned that the Criminal Code criminalizes consensual same-sex sexual activity and that the Same-Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act provides for 14 years imprisonment for a person who enters into a same sex union and ten years imprisonment for anyone who supports, meet with, or forms a group advocating for the human rights of lesbian, gays, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons. The Committee is further concerned about reports that, since the adoption of the Act, harassment and violence against LGBT persons has increased as well as the number of arrests and detention of young people based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity. (arts. 2, 6, 7 and 26)

**19. The State party should de-criminalize consensual same-sex relationships between consenting adults and ensure that arrest, prosecution and punishment based on actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity or advocacy of rights for LGBT persons are prohibited and should consider repealing the Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act, and reviewing all other relevant legislation. Pending such revisions, these measures should not be used. The State party should provide effective protection to LGBT persons and ensure the investigation, prosecution and punishment of any act of violence motivated by the victim's sexual orientation or gender identity. The State party should take efforts to combat stereotypes and prejudice against LGBT persons, including by launching a sensitization campaign aimed at the general public and providing appropriate training to public officials so as to put an end to the social stigmatization of LGBT persons.**

#### **Violence against women and harmful practices**

20. While generally welcoming the adoption of the Violence against Persons (Prohibition) Act of 2015, dealing among other things with gender-based violence, the Committee is concerned that the act applies only in the Federal Capital Territory and in those few states that have adopted the law, and that several states do not have specific laws prohibiting sexual and gender-based violence. The Committee is concerned about reports of widespread gender-based violence, including rape, and prevalence of harmful traditional practices against girls and women, including female genital mutilation, especially its medicalization. It is further

concerned by the low level of reporting of gender-based violence, including due to a culture of silence perpetuated by persistent societal stereotypes; the lack of prompt and effective investigations of such cases; the low level of prosecution and conviction of perpetrators; and the insufficient level of assistance for victims. (arts. 2, 3, 7 and 26)

**21. The State party should strengthen its efforts to curb gender-based violence, in particular by (a) ensuring the Violence against Persons (Prohibition) Act applies in all federal states; (b) taking measures to ensure that cases of violence against women are reported and thoroughly investigated; perpetrators are prosecuted, and if convicted, sentenced with appropriate penalties; and victims provided with full reparation, and granted adequate assistance, including shelters; (c) raising awareness among religious and traditional leaders, police, medical staff and legal professionals, and society at large, about the negative effects of violence against women and harmful traditional practices.**

#### **Maternal mortality, reproductive rights and termination of pregnancy**

22. The Committee is concerned that the maternal mortality rates in Nigeria are among the highest in the world, particularly in the northeast of the country, among women who are poor, living in rural areas and affected by conflict, due to their limited access to reproductive health care. The Committee notes with concern the highly restrictive laws permitting abortion only in order to save a pregnant woman's life, and criminalizing it in all other circumstances, leading to a high incidence of unsafe abortions in the State party. The Committee is concerned about allegations of detention of women post-delivery due to their inability to pay medical bills. The Committee is concerned about the high rate of teenage pregnancy, high HIV rates, especially among young girls and women, and the lack of effective access to contraceptive methods for women and girls. (arts. 2, 3, 6 and 7)

**23. The State party should (a) strengthen its efforts to ensure unimpeded access to sexual and reproductive health services, including effective access to quality prenatal and post-abortion health care for women and girls, in all circumstances, and on a confidential basis; (b) review its legislation to ensure safe, legal and effective access to abortion where the life and health of the pregnant woman or girl is at risk and where carrying a pregnancy to term would cause the pregnant woman or girl substantial pain or suffering, most notably where the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest or where the pregnancy is not viable; (c) ensure that women and girls who have abortions, as well as the health-care practitioners assisting them, are not subject to criminal sanctions; (d) ensure access to quality and evidence-based information and education about sexual and reproductive health and appropriate and affordable contraceptive methods for women, men and adolescents nationwide.**

#### **Death penalty**

24. The Committee welcomes the fact that the State party has not carried out any executions since 2016 and has established a de facto moratorium on executions. However, the Committee is concerned about information that some states consider re-instating executions. The Committee remains concerned that, despite its previous recommendations (CCPR/C/79/Add.65, para. 39), the death penalty is still imposed by courts, including for crimes other than the most serious crimes within the meaning of article 6 (2) of the Covenant, and in some federal states it is still available for offences committed by minors. The Committee is further concerned that the death penalty is mandatory for some offences. The Committee is also concerned about the high number of individuals remaining on death row in the State party and the slow pace in affording commutation of sentences. (arts. 6 and 7)

**25. In accordance with its general comment No. 36 (2018) on the right to life, in which the Committee reaffirms that States parties that are not yet totally abolitionist should be on an irrevocable path towards complete eradication of the death penalty, de facto and de jure, in the foreseeable future, the State party should consider: (a) establishing a de jure moratorium on the death penalty with a view to abolishing it; and (b) acceding to the Second Optional Protocol to the Covenant, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty. In the meantime, the State party should revise the Criminal Code so as to make it strictly compliant with article 6 (2) of the Covenant, and restrict the**

**crimes for which the death penalty may be imposed on perpetrators to the most serious crimes, understood to be crimes involving intentional killing. The State party should increase efforts to take steps towards commuting the death penalty imposed on persons on death row to life imprisonment.**

#### **Excessive use of force by law enforcement agents**

26. The Committee is concerned that the Constitution allows for a broad use of lethal force, including for the defence of property and that the provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the Administration of Justice Act, and the Police Order 237 authorize the use of force without adequately restricting the nature of the force and setting out the principles of necessity or proportionality. The Committee is further concerned about allegations of excessive use of force against demonstrators, including the alleged killing of more than 150 members and supporters of the Indigenous People of Biafra, during Operation Python Dance, on the occasion of non-violent gatherings between August 2015 and November 2016; and the alleged killing of 350 supporters of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria in response to their barricading of roads blocking the passage of a military convoy in December 2015. While noting that some investigations have been initiated, the Committee regrets lack of information about the outcome of these investigations, and recommendations, including punishment of perpetrators and reparations granted to victims. (arts. 6, 7, 9 and 14)

**27. The State party should take measures to effectively prevent and eliminate all forms of excessive use of force by law enforcement agents, including by: (a) revising legislation and policies controlling the use of force by law enforcement officials, taking due account of the Committee's general comment No. 36 on the right to life and the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials; (b) introducing procedures designed to ensure that law enforcement actions are adequately planned in a manner consistent with the need to minimize the risk they pose to human life, mandatory reporting on the use of force, and review and investigation of such incidents; (c) providing law enforcement personnel with training on the use of force in line with the international standards; (d) ensuring that all instances of excessive use of force are investigated promptly, impartially and effectively and that those responsible are brought to justice, and victims provided with full reparations.**

#### **Intercommunal and inter-ethnic violence**

28. The Committee is concerned about the long-standing conflict between nomadic cattle herders, in particular the Fulani herders and associated militia, and farmers, notably in the middle belt region, which has led to thousands of deaths and displaced persons. The Committee is also concerned about allegations of excessive use of force by the Nigerian air force, including firing rockets at villages in order to counter spiralling communal violence. The Committee regrets lack of information about specific measures taken by the State party to ensure safety and security in the region; about outcomes of investigations and the provision of victims with the infrastructure for safe shelters. (arts. 6, 7, 9 and 14)

**29. The State party should strengthen its efforts to (a) ensure safety and security in the region, including through providing safe shelters, especially for women and children; and (b) ensure that all attacks and acts of inter-ethnic violence as well as allegations of excessive use of force by the Governmental actors are investigated, those responsible are brought to justice and victims provided with full reparations.**

#### **Conflict with Boko Haram and civilian protection**

30. The Committee is concerned about violence and widespread human rights abuses committed by Boko Haram since 2009 in large parts of the northeast of the State party against civilian population, including executions, abductions, torture, rape and the use of children in hostilities and for commission of atrocities. The Committee is also concerned about allegations of serious human rights violations by the Nigerian security forces and the Civilian Joint Task Force, in the course of security operations against Boko Haram. It is also concerned about the bombing of a camp of internally displaced persons by the Nigerian air

force in January 2017, killing at least 167 individuals, and the lack of information about the outcomes of the investigation of this incident. (arts. 2, 3, 6, 9 and 24)

**31. The State party should conduct prompt, impartial and effective investigations of allegations of human rights abuses committed in the context of the conflict with Boko Haram, both by non-state and state actors, in order to identify, prosecute and punish those responsible, and ensure that victims have access to effective remedies and full reparation. It should take steps to increase the transparency of the investigations, including publishing their findings. The State party should take measures to ensure the safety and security of the population affected by the conflict and to prevent violations of their human rights by any party of the conflict.**

#### **Prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and treatment of persons deprived of their liberty**

32. While welcoming adoption of the Anti-Torture Act of 2017, the Committee is concerned about the allegations that use of torture, including for obtaining confessions, remains frequent among law enforcement agents in military and police custody, in particular among the Special Anti-Robbery Squad agents. The Committee is also concerned about lack of provisions for the rehabilitation of victims of torture. While noting the establishment of the Complaint Response Unit in 2015, the Committee regrets lack of information about cases of torture and ill-treatment during the reporting period. (art. 7)

**33. The State party should (a) ensure prompt, thorough and effective investigation of all allegations of torture and ill-treatment, prosecute, punish the perpetrators, if convicted, with penalties commensurate with the gravity of the offence and provide effective remedies for the victims, including rehabilitation; (b) ensure that confessions obtained by coercion are never admissible in legal proceedings; and (c) take all measures necessary to prevent torture, including by strengthening education and training of judges, prosecutors, the police and military and security forces. Specific efforts should be made to ensure that the Special Anti-Robbery Squad operate within the applicable international standards.**

#### **Conditions of detention**

34. The Committee remains concerned about the poor condition of detention in police cells, military detention facilities and other places of detention, in particular regarding overcrowding, sanitary conditions, and access to medical care, food and water. (arts. 7 and 10)

**35. The State party should take steps, in accordance with the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), to (a) improve the living conditions and treatment of prisoners, including by ensuring their access to proper medical care; (b) eliminate prison overcrowding, including by implementing a policy on the use of non-custodial sentences; (c) renovate existing detention centres and build new ones; and (d) carry out training activities for justice officials and prison staff throughout the country.**

#### **Liberty and security of person**

36. The Committee is concerned about allegations of arbitrary arrests by law enforcement agents, including the Civilian Joint Task Force members; the arrest of a large number of women without charge, for alleged links with Boko Haram, by the military; lengthy pre-trial detention and incommunicado detention; especially in cases involving suspected Boko Haram fighters; frequent denial of basic legal safeguards, such as the right to be informed of charges, and the right to communicate with a lawyer or to notify family members; and a discretionary granting of bail. (arts. 2, 9 and 14)

**37. The State party should take steps to ensure that: (a) no one is arbitrarily arrested or detained and that detained persons enjoy all legal safeguards, in accordance with articles 9 and 14 of the Covenant; (b) all cases of arbitrary arrest are investigated and**

**those responsible are subjected to disciplinary action or judicial proceedings and, where appropriate, full reparation is provided; and (c) pre-trial detention is used only as an exceptional measure and is not be excessive in length.**

#### **Administration of justice, independence of the judiciary and right to a fair trial**

38. The Committee is concerned about reports of political influence and corruption in the judiciary, the limited role of the National Judicial Council in appointments of judges, and delays in the administration of justice linked inter alia to the lack of resources and staff. The Committee is concerned about the reported absence of legal representation in some criminal cases, general nature of some charges and mass trials of terrorist suspects. (arts. 7, 9 and 14)

**39. The State party should take measures to strengthen the independence of the judiciary. It should also ensure fair trial safeguards, including by providing legal aid in criminal cases, and reduce delays in the administration of justice, inter alia by providing adequate resources and staff.**

#### **Surveillance and the right to privacy**

40. While noting the steps taken towards passage of the Digital Rights and Freedom Bill, the Committee is concerned about reports of website shutdowns and an increased monitoring of online activities by Government, particularly on social media. The Committee is also concerned that the Terrorism (Prevention) Act and the Cybercrimes Act of 2015 provide for broad authority with respect to surveillance measures. (art. 17)

**41. The State party should speed up the process to pass the Digital Rights and Freedom Bill and take all necessary measures to ensure that all surveillance activities are in keeping with its obligations under article 17 of the Covenant and that any interference with the right to privacy is governed by law and conducted in accordance with the principles of necessity and proportionality and subject to effective safeguards.**

#### **Family life**

42. The Committee is concerned about reports of large-scale evictions and demolition of homes, in particular in Lagos State, and in the Ilubirin and Otodo-Gbame communities, since 2013, particularly in 2016 and 2017, involving the excessive use of force by law enforcement agents and unidentified armed men assisting demolition teams, leading to deaths and destruction through fires during these events. (arts. 6, 7, 17 and 24)

**43. The State party should take measures to (a) investigate these allegations and grant victims full reparation and where necessary take disciplinary measures against those responsible; (b) ensure adequate safeguards and effective participations in decisions by the community concerned to avoid forced evictions; and (c) ensure the provision of alternative accommodations.**

#### **Freedom of religion**

44. The Committee is concerned about allegations of discrimination against religious minorities, including discrimination against Christians in the northern states in access to education, employment and land permits to build churches. It is concerned about reports of hate speech, and incitement to religious hatred and violence, particularly in the northern states against religious minorities. The Committee is concerned about the pending bill in Kaduna State that would require all preachers to obtain licences to preach or risk fines or imprisonment, and reports of its restrictive effect on churches' activities. (arts. 2, 6, 12, 18, 20, 21, and 26)

**45. The State party should guarantee the effective exercise of freedom of religion and belief in practice, and refrain from any action that may restrict it beyond the narrowly construed restrictions permitted under article 18 of the Covenant. It should take measures against discrimination and hate speech, incitement to hatred and violence aimed against any religious community.**



### **Freedom of expression, assembly and association and human rights defenders**

46. The Committee is concerned that sections 52 and 60 (chap. 7) of the Criminal Code provides that slander, libel and defamation are criminal offences punishable by imprisonment. It is also concerned about reports that accusations of libel are used by State authorities against journalists in retaliation for negative reporting and that bloggers criticizing the Government allegedly have been detained or arrested for such activities, and that hate speech legislation is over broadly applied. The Committee is also concerned that the Trade Unions Act of 1973 unduly restricts the establishment and activities of trade unions, in particular, section 3 (1) and (2). The Committee is concerned about allegations of threats against and harassment, arbitrary arrest and killings of trade union activists. (arts. 6, 7, 19, and 21)

**47. The State party should decriminalize slander, libel and defamation, and ensure that imprisonment is never a punishment for these acts and that criminal laws, including hate speech provisions, are not improperly used against journalists, members of the political opposition and others criticizing the Government voices. It should promptly and thoroughly investigate all reported cases of harassment, arbitrary arrest and detention of bloggers, journalists and human rights defenders, bring the perpetrators to justice and provide victims with full reparations and take specific measures to protect journalists and human rights defenders. The State party should review the Trade Union Act to ensure its compliance with the Covenant and investigate all allegations of threats against, harassment, arbitrary arrest and killings of trade union activists, prosecute perpetrators and provide victims with full reparation.**

### **Participation in public affairs**

48. While noting the State party's stated commitment to democratic elections, and that election monitors did not dispute the results of the 2019 elections, the Committee is concerned about reports of violence, including killing, institutional shortcomings identified by international observers, the low turn-out of voters and insufficient representation of women among candidates during the last presidential and legislative elections . (arts. 3, 25 and 27)

**49. The State party should adopt the necessary measures to (a) remedy institutional shortcomings to guarantee free and fair elections, including providing the Independent National Electoral Commission with adequate resources; (b) ensure that the effective exercise of voting rights is guaranteed to all and that persons with the right to vote, as well as activists and candidates, are protected from violence and threats; and (c) effectively promote participation of female candidates in elections.**

### **Rights of minorities**

50. The Committee notes with regret the lack of a comprehensive policy to protect the rights of ethnic minorities, including linguistic rights of ethnic groups with lesser-used languages. The Committee is concerned about reports of discrimination of certain ethnic minorities in various aspects of their lives, including access to education and employment due to the differential access of indigene and settlers, segregation from society of some groups such as the Osu, and mistreatment and acts of violence, including incitement to racial hatred against the Igbos. The Committee regrets that ethnic minorities are not adequately represented at governmental levels or are excluded from decision-making on issues of particular concern to them, as is the case for example in respect of the Ogoni and Ikwerre regarding natural resources. (arts. 2, 25, 26 and 27)

**51. The State party should consider adoption of a comprehensive policy and strategy to protect the rights of ethnic minorities. It should take measures to address discrimination of ethnic minorities, their segregation and mistreatment, and investigate all acts of violence and incitement to hatred against members of ethnic minorities, bring the perpetrators to justice and provide reparations to victims. The State party should ensure adequate representation of ethnic minorities at governmental level and effective participation in decisions-makings, especially on issues of particular concern to them.**

#### **D. Dissemination and follow-up**

52. The State party should widely disseminate the Covenant, the written replies to the Committee's list of issues, and the present concluding observations, with a view to raising awareness of the rights enshrined in the Covenant among the judicial, legislative and administrative authorities, civil society and non-governmental organizations operating in the country and the general public.

53. In accordance with rule 71, paragraph 5, of the Committee's rules of procedure, the State party is requested to provide, by 26 July 2021, information on the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee in paragraphs 23 (maternal mortality, reproductive health and termination of pregnancy), 29 (intercommunal and inter-ethnic violence), and 31 (conflict with Boko Haram and civilian protection) above.

54. The Committee requests the State party to submit its next periodic report by 26 July 2025 and to include in that report specific up-to-date information on the implementation of the recommendations made in the present concluding observations and of the Covenant as a whole. The Committee also requests the State party, in preparing the report, to broadly consult civil society and non-governmental organizations operating in the country. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 68/268, the word limit for the report is 21,200 words. The Committee encourages all States to follow the simplified procedure when submitting their reports. Should the State party wish to follow the simplified reporting procedure for its next report, it is requested to inform the Committee accordingly, within one year of receipt of these concluding observations. The State party's replies to the list of issues prepared by the Committee under the simplified reporting procedure will constitute the next periodic report to be submitted under article 40 of the Covenant.

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