

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
PRESS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

PRESS CLIPPINGS

Enclosed are clippings of the latest local and international press on the Special Court and related issues obtained by the Press and Public Affairs Office as of:

Friday, June 03, 2005

The press clips are produced Monday to Friday.
If you are aware of omissions or have any comments or suggestions please contact
Mariama S. Yilla
Ext 7217 / 7216
MOBILE: 232 76 767502

Independent Observer . Friday, 3rd June, 2005.

Charles Taylor hunkers down in Nigerian exile

Nigeria is coming under increasing pressure to expel ousted Liberian President Charles Taylor so that he can face trial in a U.N.-backed war crimes tribunal, a move now supported by the United States.

Taylor, a former warlord, has been accused of backing rebels notorious for hacking off hands and arms in the 1991-2002 Sierra Leone civil war, allegations that Taylor denies. The U.N.-backed tribunal wants him out of Nigeria, where he's in exile, to face charges.

A U.S. official on Tuesday said "the time has come for this to happen."

The U.N.-backed tribunal also accuses Taylor of violating his asylum agreement by meddling in the affairs of Liberia and its neighbors. Prosecutors accuse him of ties to al-Qaida. Washington helped arrange Taylor's flight to Nigeria as rebels besieged his capital, Monrovia, in August 2003. Then, the world applauded Nigeria for granting Taylor asylum, saying that was the only way to bring peace to Liberia. Now the United States favors Taylor's extradition.

"We believe that justice will not be complete until Charles Taylor appears before the court to answer the charges against him and believe the time has

come for this to happen," said Rudolph Stewart, a spokes-

man for the U.S. Embassy in Nigeria.

He said that President Olusegun Obasanjo had not
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Charles Taylor hunkers down in Nigerian exile

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done enough by offering to hand Taylor over to Liberia, rather than the court in Sierra Leone. Taylor has been accused of backing the rebels in Sierra Leone's civil war.

The anti-Taylor chorus has heightened its pitch in recent months as the U.N.-backed court, based in the Sierra Leone capital of Freetown, said it has new evidence showing Taylor was behind a January attempt to assassinate Guinea President Lansana Conte - himself accused of backing the rebels that fought against Taylor. After assassinating Conte, Taylor hoped to relocate to Guinea, where he is already forming a new rebel group, the court says.

Briefing to the Security Council by Justice Ayoola, President, the Special Court for Sierra Leone

From last edition

Outreach and public affairs

Mentioning the people of Sierra Leone leads me to the final part of my briefing, in which I would like to look at the hole that the Special Court is playing in contributing to the consolidation of peace in Sierra Leone, and to the development of the rule of law.

Since the very beginning of its operations, the Special Court has been aware of the need for a strong outreach programme in order to take full advantage of the unprecedented opportunity presented by its location in the country where the alleged crimes took place. The Outreach Section, which is entirely composed of Sierra Leonean staff, has undertaken a wide range of initiatives to create awareness and access to the Special Court, to provide forums for discussion about the meaning of the court's mandate, and to stimulate further activity for reform within Sierra Leone. In particular, it regularly organizes town hall meetings in all the 14 provinces of Sierra Leone. It conducts training sessions for members of the local justice system, the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces, and the Sierra Leone Police to inform them about ways in which the operations of the court could benefit the local administration of justice. The Section has also conducted an extensive program of activities with schools and colleges nationwide, and with a number of civil society groups and other audience, in particular victims of the conflict.

In a particularly innovative programme, the

Special Court Public Affairs Office has been producing video summaries of trial proceedings for the outreach efforts in the provinces, which are screened by the court's outreach program across Sierra Leone on mobile video units. The work of the Public Affairs with the local media, including radio campaigns, also serves to explain the

within the civil society community surrounding it.

Foremost, the Special Court will leave behind a sense of justice for crimes committed during the decade-long conflict in Sierra Leone, and engender public awareness that criminal accountability for such crimes is possible.

The Special Court will also leave a legacy for the

support in governmental institutions as well as NGOs who have collaborated with the Witnesses and Victims Support Section. In such ways, the Special Court will enable its Sierra Leonean personnel and counterparts to develop their professional expertise despite the Special Court's lack of an explicit capacity-building mandate.

model for ensuring accountability for violations of international humanitarian law in other post-conflict situations, in an expeditious and financially restrained fashion.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Security Council and in particular those member states who funded and supported the special court thus far. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Secretary General for his unwavering support, at a time when the United Nations has to face many varied challenges worldwide. The international community cannot afford to let the court fail as doing so would send a negative message to those struggling to combat the culture of impunity and would undermine respect for human rights and international law.

* Accordingly, and with those key issues that I have today in mind, I urge the Security Council to give its wholehearted support to the special court in any manner considered appropriate to pursue adequate funding, obtain the transfer of those indictees at large, and maintain the necessary security throughout its lifetime.

* As the outgoing President, I would like to also add a more personal note. I am honoured of being a part of the special court, and I would like to express my gratitude to other Special Court managers who are here today and to commend all the special court staff, who are working to bring justice for the victims of the Sierra Leonean conflict with an innovative vision and a true commitment.

Since the very beginning of its operations, the Special Court has been aware of the need for a strong outreach programme in order to take full advantage of the unprecedented opportunity presented by its location in the country where the alleged crimes took place. The Outreach Section, which is entirely composed of Sierra Leonean staff, has undertaken a wide range of initiatives to create awareness and access to the Special Court, to provide forums for discussion about the meaning of the court's mandate, and to stimulate further activity for reform within Sierra Leone. In particular, it regularly organizes town hall meetings in all the 14 provinces of Sierra Leone. It conducts training sessions for members of the local justice system, the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces, and the Sierra Leone Police to inform them about ways in which the operations of the court could benefit the local administration of justice

Special Court's activities and legal complexities to the general public.

I am proud to say that the outreach efforts of the Special Court has been regarded as a model by the Tribunals for Rwanda and Yugoslavia, and by the International Criminal Court.

Legacy

Finally, I would like to mention another aspect of the operations of the Special Court, that of Legacy. The location of the Special Court in Sierra Leone and its hybrid nature have given a prominent relevance to the concept of Legacy, and the notion of the Legacy of the Special Court is embedded within the court itself and

Sierra Leonean personnel, who represent approximately 60 percent of the 340 staff. In particular, the Sierra Leonean personnel of the Special Court will have a unique opportunity to develop their professional expertise. These include legal professionals (such as prosecutors, Defence counsel, court administrators and interns working in or before the Special Court) as well as administrative and support staff; correctional officers who have gained training and experience in the Detention Facility; law enforcement officials who have worked closely with Special Court security personnel; providers of psychosocial assistance and

* When the Special Court winds down, it will also leave behind material resources for the Sierra Leonean legal system. The courthouse, including furnishings and state-of-the-art equipment, will become part of the Sierra Leone justice system. The Detention Facility, in full compliance with international standards on prison accommodations, will also be handed over to the local authorities. In addition, the highly specialized collection of the special court library will also be donated for use by law students and legal professionals.

* Globally, it is hoped that the legacy of the special court will serve as a

Standard Times. Friday June 3, 2005.

Special Court gets new President

Justice Raja Fernando of Sri Lanka has been elected as the Presiding Judge of the Appeals Chamber, a position which makes him the

President of the Special Court for a period of one year.

Justice Fernando will succeed President Emmanuel

CONTINUED PAGE 7

Special Court gets new President

FROM PAGE 1

Ayoola of Nigeria, whose term as president ended on 26th May 2005.

Justice Fernando has been a Judge in Sri Lanka since 1992, and currently is a judge of the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka.

From 1995 to 1996 he served as director of public prosecutions in Belize.

Prior to 1992, he served as senior state counsel in the attorney general's department in Sri Lanka, and as judge Advocate of the Sri Lanka Navy at the rank of Commodore.

He was sworn in as a Justice of the Special Court on 10 March 2004.

Justice George Gelaga King of Sierra Leone has assumed office as the vice President of the Special Court for Sierra Leone.



Justice Raja Fernando

United Nations



Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 01 June 2005

[The media summaries and press clips do not necessarily represent the views of UNMIL.]

06/01/2005 12:54:38

Liberia's October Polls: Monitor Taylor Closely, Say UN, Ecowas

By Vincent Egunyanga

Abuja, May 30, 2005 (Daily Champion/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) --FOR the October, general elections in Liberia to be free and fair, that country's former President Charles Taylor, who is currently on exile in Nigeria must steer clear of the exercise.

Fear paralyses Ivorian cocoa town after killings

By Loucoumane Coulibaly

ABIDJAN, June 1 (Reuters) - Cocoa trade in Ivory Coast's western town of Duekoue ground to a halt on Wednesday after at least 41 people were killed overnight in the latest bout of ethnic bloodletting in the region.

Rights Group Wants Default Judgment for Taylor

(The Analyst)

- A local group, Human Rights Watch, Women and Children has called on the Special Court for Sierra Leone to render judgment by default against former President Charles Taylor for war crimes and crimes against humanity and sentence him to life imprisonment with hard labor.

ECOWAS Opposes Trial of Taylor Now

- The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Special Representative Ansumana Ceesay told journalists in Monrovia yesterday that ECOWAS was not giving consideration to requests for the surrender of former President Charles Taylor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

(Also Reported on ELBS Radio)



Trouble: Peace in Liberia, Impunity in S/Leone

The Analyst (Monrovia)

NEWS

June 2, 2005

Posted to the web June 2, 2005

- *Says Network of S/L Rights Advocates*

- *But UN-ECOWAS-NTGL Coordination Mechanism on Liberia Remains Ambiguous*

The knotty issue of extraditing former president, Charles Ghankay Taylor, to Sierra Leone to face his supposed nemesis is slowly hurling West Africa's most populous nation and ace peace-broker, Nigeria, to the hyenas in Washington, the UN Security Council, and the European Union countries. President Obasanjo has interestingly been daring but irresolute about what to do with Taylor in the wake of mounting international pressure and possible sanction to turn Taylor over.

His colleagues in ECOWAS and AU have been uninspiring about where they stand on the issue even though they will not let the new international order inspired by NEPAD to stand in the way of the now hackneyed concept of African solidarity and peer support. There is uncertainty and utter confusion and many believe this typical case of international law versus national honor can only end with joint efforts that draw from the commitment of multilateral committees on the Liberian peace process such as the NTGL-UN-ECOWAS Coordination Mechanism on Liberia. Unfortunately that group ended its second meeting on Liberia, ambiguous about everything except its impression about UNMIL, NEC, and election timetable. But as The Analyst's Staff Writer reports, the Network of Sierra Leonean human and civil rights organizations is raising the bars for justice in Sierra Leone and calling for immediate UN action.

The Sierra Leonean 7-organization pressure group calling itself "Campaign Group for the Extradition of Charles Taylor to Special Court for Sierra Leone" has called on the UN Security Council to pass a unanimous resolution immediately compelling Nigeria to release Taylor to the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone Taylor.

In a petition to the UN Security Council recently, perhaps the first of a series of planned actions by the group, it said, "Finally, we re-echo our fears to President Obasanjo that peace in Liberia without justice in Sierra Leone is not a durable peace in the Mano River Basin and in the subregion." The group's petition came in the wake of what it called past unsuccessful attempts to draw the attention of the international community to the "cries of fellow Sierra Leoneans at home and abroad." It listed the United Nations Security Council, European Union, the United Kingdom, Commonwealth, the United States of America, Africa Union, and ECOWAS as international organizations and governments it pleaded with in the past to urge the Nigerian government to hand Taylor over for trial in Sierra Leone.

The group said while it acknowledges with fond memories Nigeria's sacrificial role in ECOMOG that halted the spate of death and destruction in the Mano River Union Basin, and guardedly agrees that Taylor's asylum is part

of the peace process, it is worried about its present role in the Charles Taylor debacle.

It expressed dismay over reports it said it has gathered from credible institutions in the ECOWAS subregion that alleged that Mr. Taylor is persistently breaching the terms of his asylum in Calaba, Nigeria.

"[the] Most recent is from [the] Coalition for International Justice which provides evidence that Taylor's financial network continues to operate despite his exile in Calaba, Nigeria," the group said.

Repeating recent allegations that Taylor was not adhering to the terms of his asylum agreement, the group noted, "Taylor is operating without oversight in Nigeria where he is still in contact with his associates to support dissident groups in West Africa." It named neither the dissident group, nor say where they are based in West Africa.

The group notwithstanding recalled that the Obasanjo administration was rather evasive when it was sued in the Federal Court of Nigeria for the breach of refugee convention by denying Taylor's role in the Sierra Leonean civil war.

It quoted a Nigeria government statement at the time as saying that Taylor played no role in the Sierra Leonean war but was rather busy containing the insurgents in Liberia while coping with the influx of Sierra Leonean refugees into Liberia.

"Closely examining the entire government's reply leaves no doubt that the Nigerian government has failed to address the plights of all victims of the conflict in Sierra Leone in her bid to protect Charles Taylor," the group noted.

The petition was signed by seven civil and human rights organizations including the Coalition for Justice and Accountability (COJA), the National Forum for Human Rights, Civil Society Movement of Sierra Leone, Amnesty International-Sierra Leone, Coalition for Civil Society and Human Rights, National Commission for Democracy, and the Post Conflict Reintegration Initiatives for Development and Empowerment (PRIDE).

Meanwhile, the NTGL-UN-ECOWAS Coordination Mechanism on Liberia, ending its second meeting in Abuja last week, has been ambiguous about what to do with Taylor.

In a carefully worded remark about Taylor and his Nigeria asylum, the Mechanism did not say whether or not the question of impunity is crucial to the successful conclusion of the Liberian conflict and the security of the Mano River Basin.

Having hailed the departure of Taylor from Liberia to Nigeria as a crucial step in bringing about the current peace in Liberia, the Mechanism proceeded to say that it is also a crucial step in the efforts to tackle the culture of impunity within the region.

"Toward this end," the Mechanism says, "the meeting expressed gratitude to Nigeria for its role in the departure of Charles Taylor. It warned that Taylor's return under any guise would threaten Liberia's stability." It is not clear whether or not by this statement the Mechanism is rejecting Obasanjo's insistence that he will only turn Taylor over to an elected Liberia government against arguments that such government would lack the power to handle the issue of Taylor's indictment in Sierra Leone.

"We disagree that Mr. Taylor should be surrendered to an incoming Liberian government for crimes allegedly committed in Sierra Leone," said former state minister for economic affairs in the Taylor administration, Sam Jackson at a recent press conference.

The Mechanism however hailed NTGL, ECOWAS, and UNMIL for the level of success achieved in Liberia since the group's first meeting in New York in September 2004.

In related developments, the Mechanism which reviewed the implementation of the CPA, the DDRR programme, core issues of security sector reform, and the electoral process with satisfaction says it is focusing on challenges needed to consolidate peace and stability in Liberia.

Amongst the challenges it says the program is faced with in restoring institutions, constitutionality, the rule of law and peace and stability are the provision of logistical and financial support to the National Elections Commission, the need to prevent the possible disruption of the electoral process, the conclusion of baseline studies by NTGL and UNMIL for the restructuring of the AFL, and the incorporation into the security sector reform exercise of the rehabilitation of the judicial, penal, and immigration systems to administer justice.

Meanwhile the Mechanism says it is considering mobilizing resources including additional financial injections, the provision of transportation, election experts, and monitors to complement the efforts of NEC.

It did not say when that will be done, but described the October elections as "a critical milestone in the transition process" the derailing of which would "deal a mortal blow" to efforts to end the Liberian conflict.

The Mechanism then proceeded to repeat international concerns about corruption within the NTGL, to insist that such corruption was deliberate, and to hail the recent deployment of ECOWAS expert investigators on economic crimes.

It said of the observations of the meeting, "Whilst it attributed the widespread corruption and lack of accountability to the desire by unscrupulous individuals to exploit systemic weaknesses brought about by war and collapsed institutions, it also pointed out that culpable behavior and a lack of political will in the high echelons of power have exacerbated the problem of graft." On UN Security Council Targeted Sanctions regimes including the travel ban and financial freeze imposed on some members of Taylor's defunct NPP government, the Mechanism called for the adoption of "clear, well-defined and transparent criteria to guide the inclusion or exclusion of individuals within the regime." The Abuja meeting was attended by high-level delegates representing ECOWAS, UN, UNMIL, NTGL, NEC, the governments of Ghana and Nigeria, and the World Bank.

The Mechanism's next meeting is in September 2005 in New York.

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Taylor Must Be Judged By Default

The Analyst (Monrovia)

NEWS

June 1, 2005

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- *Local Watchdog Suggests*

A local human rights watchdog for women and children has called on the United Nations-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone to render judgment by default against exiled former Liberian president Charles Taylor and sentence him to life imprisonment with hard labor for defying the world crime court.

The Human Rights Watch Women and Children also called on the United States to arrest Taylor and pleaded for continuous pressure on Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo and his government to turn him over for prosecution on war crime charges.

"President Obasanjo is risking the lives of the Liberian people by harboring a universal criminal under the cover of special arrangement, which he vowed not to deceive. The presence of Charles Taylor in Nigeria continues to pose serious security threats to the people of Liberia, the Mano River Union basin and of course West Africa in general," said Alfred E. Fallah, Executive Director of the watchdog.

He said the failure of Nigerian President Obasanjo to turn over Taylor to Sierra Leone's special court to answer charges against him "for crimes against humanity is a gross violation of international humanitarian law and also a defiance of the United Nations backed special court for Sierra Leone set up to bring to justice all those who bear the greatest responsibilities during the war in Sierra Leone and Liberia." The Human Rights Watch Women and Children Director says it "still doubts as to whether the United Nations and the Administration of President George Bush are out for transparent justice in the global village." Justice, he pointed out, "continues to be delayed and this has the propensity to deny the same justice." "The slow pace method applied by the United Nations and USA to take Charles Taylor to Court continues to create psychological trauma in those who suffered at the hands of this wicked man. Liberians have begun losing confidence in the US and the United Nations for aiding and abetting culture of impunity in Liberia and the Mano River basin," In his views, "This has the propensity to encourage more hardened criminals like former President Charles Taylor to rise up against their own people for their selfish aim." Fallah said Taylor "was created not to build but to permanently destroy what the Almighty God has created." He said Taylor manifested this to Liberian people when they forgave him and unanimously voted him into the highest Office of the land during the 1997 presidential elections.

"Liberians were then compensated by Charles Taylor through torture, disappearances, rape, murder, insults, intimidation, harassment, embezzlement of the Liberian people's resources, recruitment of children as soldiers, dividing families, fuelling ethnic and tribal differences and worst of all insulting the church," Fallah stated in a statement released yesterday.

He said President Obasanjo should "take keen note that during the mad days of Charles Taylor in Liberia, he was able to brainwash 75% of the Liberian youths, majority of whom are illiterate, made them idle, criminals and also was able to extend his wicked hands and ideology in other countries in Africa, especially the sub-region. These brain washed youths and their masters in and outside Liberia are very desperate under the cover of darkness to make sure that Liberia enjoys no peace and stability as long as their godfather Charles Taylor is not in Liberia or a free man." The Human Rights Watch Women and Children says it will blame President Olusegun Obasanjo should any other trouble occur in Liberia and the Mano River basin. "This is because," he said, Obasanjo "is harboring a universal criminal who is equipped enough even from his hideout in Nigeria to cause trouble in any part of Africa.

"Good leaders are those who listen to their people and respect eminent people in their countries but this man, Charles Taylor during his mad days as President, never gave a single respect to the Liberian people as a good leader but chose to either insult, intimidate, kill or chase them out of Liberia into displaced or refugee camps. Can such a man be in Calabar State enjoying Presidential immunities while hundreds of thousands of his victims continue to die daily due to frustration? This is no justice to the Liberian people." He also said for transparent justice to prevail in Liberia and the sub-region, America and United Nations "must set a very good precedence, which our past and present leaders have failed to do, and this is done by abolishing the culture of impunity and holding firmly those responsible for committing crimes against humanity." "We observe with dismay that world leaders we expect to protect and promote international humanitarian laws have begun risking the lives of the masses on the continent by not adhering to the purposes of these laws because they continue to delay in taking world criminals to court.

"We wonder what former President Charles Taylor is afraid of, transparent justice or jungle justice.

A man who has been the head of jungle justice administration for 14 years shall never be free or confident in himself to face transparent justice because he is always running from his own shadow but come what may, Charles Taylor must go to court and prove to the whole world that he was a good leader in Liberia and the Mano river basin." He told President Obasanjo that "keeping a man who made his country to loose half a million people through various forms of human rights violations and abuses majority of whom were women and children is a sign that you are part and parcel of the deal in Africa to promote and protect culture of impunity against the governed." Fallah reminded Obasanjo that "harboring Charles Taylor in your country may sound good to you but don't forget, this is the same man that was assisted by the Ivory Coast in the 1990s to fight against the government of the late President Samuel Kayon Doe, and you know what compensation Charles Taylor had to offer to the people of Ivory Coast which they are enjoying now." "We believe that the survival of Liberia and the maintenance of peace and stability in the Man river basin and the sub-region depend largely on where former President Charles Taylor would be in the next 5 years. If he will be a free man, then we should not expect peace and stability but in prison for live with hard labor, yes there will be relative peace; democracy and respect for human rights would be the order of the day in Liberia," Fallah concluded his statement.

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'No Longer a Way of Life'

Nigeria's president discusses his anti-corruption drive, strife in Darfur and former Liberian strongman Charles Taylor.

WEB EXCLUSIVE

By Eve Conant

Newsweek

Updated: 2:02 p.m. ET June 2, 2005

June 2 - Nigeria has the dubious honor of being one of the most corrupt countries on earth. From petty bureaucrats to top-level officials, graft has always been rampant in the largest nation in Africa with its 137 million people. But Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo is aiming to change all that. The 68-year-old has started an anti-corruption drive that has shocked officials in his oil-rich country. His initiative has forced the nation's education minister, housing minister, top police official and the Senate president to leave their jobs and, in several cases, to face criminal charges.

In addition to fighting corruption, Obasanjo—as chairman of the African Union—is working to stabilize Sudan's troubled Darfur region. He's also trying to convince the international community to forgive his country's \$35 billion in debt, answer criticism that he should turn over Liberian strongman Charles Taylor, who has been indicted by a U.N.-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone for war crimes, and lobby for Nigeria to get a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council. Obasanjo spoke to NEWSWEEK's Eve Conant about developments in the region.

NEWSWEEK: Is the African Union overstretched in Darfur? Do you need U.N. or NATO forces to step in and help out or can you handle it alone?

Olusegun Obasanjo: This is very much something that the AU can handle alone. The problem of Darfur for us is not a problem of availability of troops. It is a problem of logistics. If you are going to put troops into the field you have to properly kit them. They have to be properly equipped and clothed. Some of the countries that would be ready to contribute troops need that type of logistical backing. The international community understands this. The U.S. and NATO and European Union have assured us that logistical requirements will be provided for us to be able to put additional troops in Darfur. Now we are assured they'll provide everything from the helmets to the boots.

So you feel the U.S. and world community is doing enough?

That's right.

You're leading an anti-corruption drive in your country, but Nigeria is still ranked third in corruption by Transparency International. Are you succeeding?

It's ranked No. 3 only by perception.

Still, why is it so difficult to tackle this problem in Nigeria? You've been in power for many years and this campaign is only now gaining strength. Is this happening a little bit late?

No, I don't agree. I feel we have to take it into perspective. The first bill that was sent to the National Assembly was the bill now called the Anti-Corruption Bill. I sent it within the first 10 days of my taking over. That bill was not passed into law until well over a year [later]. When that bill was passed into law some people even challenged it in the courts as unconstitutional. With that bill in place now we're working towards something ... I'll say the required preparation was made and therefore the ground was prepared. The foundation was laid. And that is why able to move forward now. Still, corruption is very hard to prove.

How big of a role does corruption play in Nigerian politics and society?

I would say up until now it's been very pervasive. I won't say that we've eliminated corruption, but I will

say that it's no longer a way of life. We still have a long way to go. What is important is that what we're doing now should be sustained.

Some critics have said that this anti-corruption campaign has targeted some of your political opponents.

Is my inspector-general of police my political opponent? Is the president of the Senate, who I worked very hard to put into position and who belongs to my party a political opponent? Is my minister of education my political opponent? Those who are saying that are talking rubbish. And I wonder why you have to ask that question. Our anti-corruption campaign is blind. It will hit anybody, friend or foe. It's like justice.

Does that make you unpopular among certain layers of government to be pushing this? How difficult is this for you politically?

I made it clear that things would not be business as usual. Some people didn't take me seriously [at first], but I think now they're taking me seriously. It will not be business as usual. And I didn't go into government for a popularity contest. I went into government to do a job as I believe it should be done.

What about Nigeria's \$35 billion debt? Would debt relief help your country?

I believe the international community, particularly the major creditors, are conscious of the need to grant us relief. The relief issue, as far as debt is concerned for Nigeria, is no longer an issue. It is how, when, and how much. It is very important.

What will happen to your country if you don't get debt relief?

Nigeria will continue to exist, but we won't be able to do some of the things that we will want to do in the area of development. I have no doubt we'll be given debt relief.

Do you honestly think you can recoup the huge sums of money that have been lost to corruption in recent years?

We have been recouping. If you look at property we've regained, and cash we've already regained internally, it will not be less than \$2.5 billion already.

[Former Liberian leader] Charles Taylor has been given asylum in your country. But the U.N.-backed court for Sierra Leone is charging him with several counts of human-rights abuses and officials say that he still meddling in politics while in exile—that he's tried to stage a coup in Guinea as well as stay involved in politics in his own country. Is it time for him to be handed over?

First of all I do not know how many charges he has been indicted for. Second, if you allege that he's been involved in anything you have to show it, you have to prove it. Anybody can allege anything. And thirdly, there were certain circumstances and certain conditions, certain undertakings, if you'd like, before Charles Taylor was taken to Nigeria. It was not a Nigerian affair. It was a West African, African Union and European Union affair. This was an African and international community issue and we consulted the United States, who granted us a green light [to offer asylum] without conditions. The British also—without conditions. The U.N.—without conditions. Memories may be short. But if we had not taken Charles Taylor out there would be a bloodbath in Liberia now. It's not just Liberia alone—it's Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire [Ivory Coast] and Guinea—because they are all interconnected.

Do you deal with him often?

He might have come to see me a couple of times.

What is your relationship like?

If he has anything to talk about he comes to tell me. And if there is anything I can do to help him, I do. [Pause.] He's my guest.

Can you tell me a bit about the role of women in your anti-corruption drive?

We brought women into an area where we've never had women before—not particularly in anti-corruption

per se. Dora Akunyili [head of the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC)] works in what is like your Food and Drug Administration and they are fighting against fake drugs and unhygienic or contaminated food—which is a sort of corruption. They handle that wonderfully well. Just recently, we just appointed a woman to the Supreme Court for the first time. Our minister of finance and junior minister of finance are women.

What is the most important psychological aspect of this anti-corruption drive?

What is important is that Nigerians must know that if you do [accept bribes] and you are caught, you are in for a high jump. What is bad, if you are fighting a crime, is if the criminal believes he can get away with it. That if he's caught he believes he can plead his way out of it. Once everybody knows that it doesn't matter who you are or where you are—if you are caught you are in for a high jump. There is no getting off.

Should Nigeria get a permanent seat in the Security Council if U.N. reform makes new seats available?

Yes. Nigeria, by virtue of its composition, reforms and diversity is poised to take its rightful place in Africa and among the nations of the world.

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