



REPORT ON THE VIF-NIIA WEBINAR UNDER “CONNECT AFRICA” PROGRAM HELD ON OCTOBER 27, 2022

1.0 Background

The Nigerian Institute of International Affairs in collaboration with the Vivekananda International Foundation, (VIF) India organized a Webinar on *Nigeria- India Relations* under the “Connect Africa” program on Thursday, October 27, 2022. Papers were presented on **Global and Regional Security Environment, and Prospects of India-Nigeria Cooperation.** Paper presenters at the webinar include Dr. Ruchita Beri, Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses, India; Prof Femi Otubanjo, Nigerian Institute of International Affairs; Amb. Anil Trigunayat, (VIF), and Prof. Eghosa Osaghae NIIA. In attendance were scholars from the VIF and the NIIA including Drs Joshua Bolarinwa, Chinasa Ugwuanyi, Godwin Ichimi, Mr Kelechi Nwogu, Omotola Ilesanmi and Rita Agu. The Director General of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Professor Eghosa Osaghae welcomed members of the Indian Commission for Cultural Relations under the Connect Africa Initiative stating that the meeting provides ‘an opportunity to open discussion along the trajectory of diplomatic channel’. Stating the need for greater collaboration between the two institutions, he stated that such meetings would push the frontiers of understanding between India and Nigeria to improve their existing ties as well as engender capacity building for greater interventions in world affairs. The Nigeria Institute of International Affairs and Vivekananda International Foundation webinar under the ‘Connect Africa’ Initiative was on Nigeria-India Relations was organized to identify areas where both countries need collaboration in maximizing the opportunities offered by the changing dynamics in the world.

2.0 Nigeria – India Bilateral Relations

Nigeria – India relations dates back two years before Nigeria’s independence and became firmly established in 1960 when India opened its diplomatic mission in Lagos, Nigeria. Both countries share commonalities in many fronts. One of which is their colonial experience. Nigeria and India were former colonies of the British Empire. India was ruled by the British Raj until it became independent in 1947. Nigeria had the same fate till 1960. Both have long been members of the Commonwealth of Nations afterwards till present. The two countries are the largest democracies in their continents – India in Asia and Nigeria in Africa. Their populations are also of much significance with India being the second in the world and Nigeria first in Africa. Nigeria and India have collaborated on several fronts with mutual benefits to both countries. India has been one of Nigerian’s closest allies in the field of international relations having been part of educational development in Nigeria for a long time. India has consistently maintained a strong lead in Nigeria’s pharmaceutical industry, and partnered in the area of health and medical tourism. In addition Nigeria is the largest trading partner of India in Africa and has the highest concentration of Indian manufacturing industries. India is said to be the highest number of employer of labour after the Federal Government. On the other hand, India displaced the United States of America to become the largest importer of Nigeria’s crude oil sale. Both countries have also had cultural relations that have fostered their relationship especially in the movie industry. Bollywood and Nollywood respectively are about the best rated in the world after Hollywood with Indian movies watched in many TV screens across Nigeria. Equally, there is a growing number of Indian population in Nigeria particularly in Abuja, Lagos and Ogun State.

3.0 Nigeria-India Cooperation within the Global and Regional Security Environment

The current regional and global security environment in which both Nigeria and India exist has become largely rudderless and complex, with widespread conflict and insecurity capable of destabilizing the world. The world today is confronted with a plethora of dynamics and challenges that threaten its very existence. These ranges from the escalation of warfare between Ukraine and Russia, the likelihood of a nuclear war, the end of unipolarity and the institutionalization of a polycentric multipolar world with attendant anarchic nature, formation of new power blocs, annexation of sovereign states by more powerful countries, economic power play – sanctions, blockades, embargoes that lead to inflation, economic downturn, depression

and more. The alignment and realignment strategies undertaken by various power blocs in the wake of the Russian – Ukraine war confirms the contradictions of either displacing the present unipolar world or maintaining the old order instituted in 1945 to the exclusive benefit of specific few. At the vanguard of change of the present system are Russia, China, Saudi Arabia, and their allies while the United States and European countries are favorably disposed to maintaining the present arrangement. In Africa, West Africa (especially in the Sahel region) has become the epicentre of the tragic reinvigoration of terror groups and their extremist ideologies. Democracy in Burkina Faso, Mali and Guinea has succumbed to coup plotters. The rest of Africa is also not free from the irritations of jihadist, separatist and ethnic violence. Ethiopia, Libya, South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Northern Mozambique and Cameroons (North West and South West) continue to experience pockets of violent conflicts while the rise of alternative power blocs threatens to create an unpredictable and volatile polycentric world.

However, the ongoing war in Ukraine which is altering geo-political economic balance across the world offers the global south, especially the G-77 and the medium powers new opportunities and roles that require the strengthening of ties at regional levels for greater interventions in the global community. Nigeria and India have a long history of defence and military cooperation and partnership since Nigeria's independence in 1960. It is noteworthy that the Nigerian Defence Academy Kaduna was established with the technical cooperation of the Indian government. In addition, several senior military officers in Nigerian armed forces have benefited from courses and training programmes in Indian military training institutions. Also, India partners with Nigeria in the ongoing counterterrorism effort of the Nigerian government through defence training, capacity building for its military officers and in intelligence gathering to mention a few.

4.0 Nigeria-India Relations: Enhancing Greater Cooperation for Maximizing Opportunities

Given the well over six decades of mutual cooperation with attendant benefits to both states, it goes to say that Nigeria and India share common destinies. There still are critical areas where the symbiotic relationship between both countries present great opportunities and with enormous potentials. These areas span health and technology, food security, increased trade relations, educational and cultural exchanges, greater economic opportunities, and lots more. Nigerian

youths have embraced Indian technology and this portends a greater collaboration in the Information Communication Technology sector that can lead to the full enactment of the Bangalore experience (Indian Silicon Valley) in places like Lagos with thriving electronic market hub. A technological institute patterned after Bangalore established in Nigeria can turn the fortune of young minds who utilize their tech skills for unwholesome and uncharitable practices. This therefore can be an avenue of reducing criminality, providing job opportunities, curtailing cyber fraud and laundering the image of Nigeria among others. India has equally enjoyed Nigeria's patronage in the area of health and medical tourism by Nigerians and the investment opportunities Nigeria has provided for Indian companies. However, with the passage of the *Ease of Doing Business Act*, alongside *the Start-up Act* both aimed at foreign investment attraction and the encouragement of business startups to complement the medium and small scale enterprise there exist better frameworks for investors in the country. All of these suggest more opportunities for Indian investment in Nigeria. It is believed that strengthened collaboration between Nigeria and India will lead to the provision of leadership in galvanizing the global south in taking a stand to advance their national interests in the face of the present realities of a dynamic and changing world with its many challenges and opportunities. This is in addition to the opportunities in oil and gas sector and the telecommunication sector where India has heavy participation. Nigeria's current juncture is very critical to the future of the country as Nigeria prepares for election in 2023 and Nigeria needs good support from India particularly as India marks 75 years of Independence as the largest democracy in the world.

5.0 Recommendations

- i). Nigeria and India as medium powers should strengthen their relations to provide leadership for the global south. Strengthened ties between Nigeria and India can be a lee way for the coordination of the remaining members of the G-77 who have common interest in the reform of the United Nations agencies. It is therefore imperative that Nigeria and India while maintaining a conservative stand of the present realities begin to advance and articulate actions towards favourable terms for the global south in the unfolding new world order.
- ii). Nigeria and India should deepen their trade relations in oil and gas and advance their collaboration to areas of agricultural products. Though Nigeria and India have robust trade relations, more still needs be explored as Nigeria's present trajectory of diversification is moving

beyond oil to leather and other agricultural products. Nigeria on the other hand can utilize technology for agricultural production like India to address food insecurity which has been a big issue in Nigeria and Africa.

iii). India and Nigeria should partner in building an Institute patterned after the Indian Silicon Valley in Nigeria to address the negative use of technological skill of the Nigerian youths and also provide better job opportunities.

iv). Nigeria and India should explore cooperation at agency and sub-national levels to further deepen their cooperation and shared experiences especially as the 2023 election approaches.

v). Both countries should synergize efforts and work together towards the attaining their goal of permanent representation in the United Nations Security Council.

vi). Educational exchanges should be further enhanced particularly in the study of Medicine, Technology and Engineering.

vii). Ultra-modern hospitals equipped with state of the art facilities in the treatment of cancer and other diseases should be built and staffed by Indian health experts and Indian trained Nigerians to reduce the incidence of medical tourism.

viii) Nigeria and India should deepen their cultural relations especially in the film industry as Bollywood and Nollywood have lots of unexplored potentials. Their frontiers of cultural exchanges can be expanded as Nigeria has a large followership of Bollywood and Nollywood is brought to India in a stronger way.

PHOTO GALLERY



