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## **Delivering United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria: Imperatives for Robust Foreign Policy Posturing**

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**Research Article**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Nigeria’s fragile social fabric resulting from a weak economy as well as her unstable domestic and international politics continues to accelerate the worsening global conditions. Thus, whether the concern is about poverty, inequality or even depleting energy and natural disasters, it is observed that the populations in developing nations have become most vulnerable as a result of low capital accumulation and rudimentary technological attainment. As a corollary, therefore, the United Nations in its wisdom articulated 17 critical global goals also referred to as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aimed at improving the general wellbeing of citizens of member states. While providing strategies for their attainment, the global body had charged member-states to take ownership and establish frameworks for delivering these goals. The outcome of this initiative for states, no doubt will be determined by how robust they are able to play at the international arena. This study examined how Nigerian foreign policy could be used as an instrument to actualize the Sustainable Development Goals for Nigerians. A qualitative research which derived its study data from secondary source, complex interdependence theory was adopted as the theoretical standpoint to argue that interdependence of states and international cooperation provides the surest plank to human security and national development. The study concludes that dynamic foreign policy posturing laced with capacity to project national strength globally will offer the most predictable route to Nigeria’s sustainable development aspiration. The study recommends among others that Nigeria unequivocally align with the liberal perspective on globalization while transparently engaging donor nations and other key agencies of global governance who have become major players of the SDGs initiative.

**Keywords:** Foreign policy, global goals, global governance, sustainable development, United Nations

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## INTRODUCTION

On a global scale, Nigeria wields enviable influence, basically derived from her huge hydrocarbons endowment. As the sixth largest Crude oil exporter and the ninth most endowed natural gas nation in the world, Nigeria has since the 1970s attracted rising global attention. In addition to these, Nigeria also harbours in large quantities a variety of critical metals and economic crops emerging among the World leading suppliers in most. Beside these, Nigeria's huge market, rich pool of human capital, stable environment and viable maritime sector have all combined to define her as the sub regional hegemony, a regional economic power and a strategic state in global economic rating.

With these verifiable economic strengths and potentials, probably much more than widely assumed, it was expected that Nigeria will not only project strength, stability and security globally, but is also able to contribute significantly to the much desired global development and its sustainability. Disappointingly, systemic challenges that manifest mostly through structural, institutional and normative complications have created conditions that obstruct both development and its sustainability in Nigeria.

Since economic and social policies are corruptly conceived and criminally implemented, large scale resource drains have left Nigerian governments at various levels financially broke. Thus, since independence in 1960, governments in Nigeria have struggled with the numerous development plan agendas which have neither lifted citizens out of poverty nor provoked any meaningful technological and industrial revolution. The consequences here is that as it stands today, Nigeria cannot on its own muster the capacity to confront most

of the 17 critical global goals as articulated by the United Nations.

On nations of the world, the United Nations has placed huge demands articulated under a broad headline as 17 SDGs. Legally enshrined in an official document, it is said that no nation has been able to meet all these targets and the larger goals for her citizens. Predicated on this understanding, many United Nations member states (especially the underdeveloped ones) have in efforts to meet some of these obligations to their peoples, resorted to economic and socio-cultural diplomacies in the multilateral and bilateral relationship they establish.

Of particular interest to these poor states is establishment of relationships with the wealthy nations, international governmental organizations and their agencies, nongovernmental organizations, trans-governmental coalitions, transnational communities of experts etc with a view to receiving assistance to actualizing the SDGs of the United Nations. It is known that such initiatives have worked well for some poor states that were able to deploy dynamic foreign policy to transform and improve the standard of living in their states.

In this article, therefore, we have derived our study objective by interrogating the following questions:

- i. What are the 17 Critical Global Goals of the United Nations that states seek to deliver to their citizens?
- ii. How has state and non-state actors' partnership with developing countries enhanced actualization of the UNSDGs?
- iii. How can robust foreign policy engagements with the state and non-state actors further Nigeria's attainment of the SDGs?

This paper therefore posits that dynamic foreign policy posturing, laced in the capacity to project national strength globally will offer the most predictable route to Nigeria's actualization of the SDGs aspiration while at the same time conferring on her, a deep sense of international accomplishment.

## CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

### Sustainable Development

The view that a clear understanding of the concept of development must precede any meaningful discourse on sustainable development enjoys wide consensus. According to Agbaenyi and Akunne (2015) even with variation in opinions about the constituents of development and yardsticks for its measurement, development is clearly defined by certain fundamentals aimed primarily at improving the standard of living of members of a society. The core argument here is that for anything to be called development, it must have a positive impact on the well-being of the people.

Thus, human index which translates to policies and programmes that offer concrete enhancement of the peoples' qualities and well being in various endeavours of their lives are referenced. Development will, therefore, mean enhancing access of individuals to such fundamentals as education, food, clothing, housing, finance, technological skills, communication, information, peace and safety among others. Put differently, development refers to the use of human and material resources available to a society to bring about policies and programmes capable of achieving better standard of living, personality development and fulfillment of the people.

While investigating the reason for third World underdevelopment, Rodney (1972) identified the individual, the social

and the economic levels to development and argued that the third world development crisis was caused by the integration of her economy to the international capitalist system and their resultant exploitation. In addition, Hyden in his *No shortcut to progress* informs that Africa is backward because of the economy of affection and communal solidarity. He noted that in Africa, forces of demand and supply are not in force in the allocation of resources and that explains why Africa is backward (Egwu, 1998).

However, despite these and other suggestions to explain the apparent failure of development in Africa, Ake (2003) surprisingly contends that the crisis of development in Africa is not that development failed but that it was never on the agenda of states in the continent. According to him, hostile political conditions remain the greatest impediments to Africa's development. Whatever the argument, there is no gainsaying that development in the real sense of the word has failed in Africa. Given the numerous manifestations of this failure across the socioeconomic, political, cultural, technological and environmental space in Africa, what Africa and in particular Nigeria need today is development that is also sustainable.

It has been argued that the most rational perspective on sustainable development is to have it preceded by development. The logic here is that it is only a visible development and not a void that must be sustained. In other words, sustainable development does not act in a vacuum. It has also been argued that if development interventions are to have a lasting and sustainable impact on humanity, they must tackle inequalities and promote social justice. The understanding here is that interventions which directly or indirectly support existing forms of social and

economic injustice will be inherently unstable and cannot in the long run contribute to sustainable development (Biereenu-Nnabugwu, 2015).

The term Sustainable Development was popularized following the publication of the 1987 report of the World Commission on Environment and Development. Here, reference is made to a development process which uses the world resources in a way that is sustainable in the long run. (WCED Report 1987). Following from the wide range of its applicability, particularly to self support and to individual's livelihood, the term sustainable livelihood emerged as the choice concept of most donor agencies which adopted it as a template to inform the planning and evaluation of development interventions.

However, the most authoritative conception on sustainable development has also come from the World Commission on Environment and Development (Our Common Future) known as the 1987 Brundtland Report released by the UN. Here, sustainable development is defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to also meet their own needs (WCED, 1987). This conception has been strongly corroborated by the Johannesburg Declaration (2002). This definition contains two key concepts. First is the concept of needs, in particular the essential needs of the world's poor to which overriding priority should be given and second is the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs (Akwé, 2013). What this most widely accepted view on sustainable development represents is that humanity has the ability to make development sustainable by ensuring that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future

generations to also meet their own needs (Wahua & Ezeilo, 2021). Economic sustainability, therefore, implies improving the quality of human life while living within limits of the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems.

Beyond these conceptions, however, scholars like Ghosh (2006) and Meclaren (1996) have identified key interest of sustainability as the focus on a broad range of issues including the carrying capacity of ecosystems and natural resources. Also, in the list are emissions of greenhouse, energy use, compensatory afforestation against harvesting, issues of economic and social disparity among the top and bottom segment of the population among others. From a more critical analysis however, Oxfam (2005) has observed that the numerous assumptions about sustainable development and sustainable livelihood are grossly undermined by oppressive and unjust relationships and by wider economic and political processes which, when weighed on a global scale, are inequitable.

### **Foreign Policy**

On a daily basis, the media are filled with news about exchange of visits between one country and another, or signing of agreements between one country and another, or extension of economic support by one country to another or even from one international organization to one or numerous countries. Also, different forms of bilateral and multilateral agreements on trade, tourism, technology, climate security, education, etc aimed at fostering security and development, are signed between and among countries in the international system. The agreements and processes that drive these relationships for states are known as the states' foreign policy. But states also deploy foreign policies in their relationship with the numerous international



governmental as well as nongovernmental organizations, donor agencies as well as key institutions of global governance. For instance, international engagements that may not necessarily prioritize involvement of official bureaucracies are transacted by such bodies as nongovernmental organizations, trans-governmental coalitions, transnational communities of experts, international regimes, private foundations, etc.

Oftentimes, states need the active cooperation, support and even assistance of other states, organizations and agencies that operate in the international system to actualize their national objectives. As such, a state as a matter of necessity has to be in constant interaction with its external environment. It is the totality of this interaction that is commonly referred to as foreign policy. Against this background, Keith and Morrison (1977) conceive foreign policy as a set of explicit objectives with regard to the world beyond the borders of a given social unit and a set of strategies and tactics designed to achieve those objectives. It implies the perception of a need to influence the behaviour of other states, organizations and agencies that are playing a variety of diverse roles in the international system.

Interestingly, Akinboye (2013) conception of foreign policy as the instrumentality by which states influence or seek to influence the external world and to attain objectives that are in consonance with their perceived national interest has been adjudged one of the most beneficial in terms of concept clarity and real world application. Foreign policy therefore, is actions and inactions directed towards the external environment for the purpose of actualizing the set objectives of domestic development.

To operate systematically towards actualizing its set objective(s), foreign policy must fulfil certain structural and

functional requisites. Thus, Adeniran (1983) outlined three basic structural components of foreign policy to include – the overall orientation and policy intentions of a particular country towards another, the objective that a country seeks to achieve in her relations with other countries and finally, the means of achieving that particular objective. In addition, since meaningful implementation is also as important as formulating a sound foreign policy, Akinboye and Ottoh (2006) inform that successful implementation rests on the skilful utilization of tactical or techniques. The major techniques listed include mostly diplomacy, but in addition, force, propaganda, and economic measures.

Foreign policy is pursued in the national interest, also, a critical concept of international relations. In his *Politics among Nations*, Morgenthau (1973) insists that no nation can have a true guide as to what it must do and what it needs to do in foreign policy without national interest as that guide. National interest is, therefore, used to explain what a nation is doing or about to do as foreign policy in her external relations (Adeniran, 1983). Thus, this shows the intricate relationship that exists between the constituents of national interest and what the foreign policy of a particular state is. Whatever the size, strength or wealth of a state, there are some core factors very relevant to its survival. All states for instance are interested in self preservation and this finds expression in national and human security as well as in system stability. Progress in these rubrics are indicated by reduced inflation, reduced poverty, reduced unemployment, improved healthcare delivery, improved education, improved social liberty, increased capacity against disasters, deepening democratic culture among numerous others. Interestingly, all these constitute the core

demand on states by the United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda.

Finally, if according to Akinboye and Ottoh (2006), foreign policy is the explicit objective which a state wants to pursue and achieve in her external relations, then, the broad content of the 17 Critical Global Goals of the UN, which largely constitutes Nigeria's national interest automatically adds and strongly counts among the foreign policy objectives of Nigeria. This article, therefore, investigates how Nigeria can leverage on robust and dynamic foreign policy that are in consonance with her national interest to effectively deliver the critical demands of the UN sustainable development goals.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Complex Interdependence Theory**

Among the numerous theories of international relations, the complex interdependence theory is deemed most appropriate to be applied to this study. This is because coming from the background of liberalism, the theory subscribes to the notion of rationality of state actors. It also accepts the idea of interdependence, cooperation, collaboration and coordination among states, organizations and agencies in the international system. Among the different strands of liberalism in international relations is the complex interdependence theory. The theory was embedded in liberalism, a school of thought which gained prominence in the eighteenth century, particularly after it inspired to success, the American Revolution. The central impact of this contribution was that liberalism became the building – block of the US constitution. Even though there exist minor variations in the level of analysis among the complex interdependence, the liberal institutionalism and the democratic peace variants (all are of the liberal school),

the key point is that they individually disagree more than they agree with realism.

Among the major proponents of complex interdependence theory are John Locke; Jean Jacques Rousseau; Adam Smith; Richard Ricardo; Vilfredo Pareto; Margeret Karns; David Mitrany; James Rosenau; Peter Haas; Raymond Hopkins; Stephen Krasner; Garrett Hardin; Karen Mingst; Robert Axelrod; Joseph Nye; Keohane Robert and Louis Richardson. The central philosophy of all strands of liberalism is that humans are rational being who understand their interests. In addition, liberals believe that the world is contingent and argue that though states compete for power, most goals of state require collaboration. Thus, liberalism rejects the notion of the state as a central actor and all states as unitary rational actors.

According to D'Anieri (2014), complex interdependence assumes that international politics encompasses a wide array of actors. This array includes states but also goes beyond them. These actors that comprise of important state and international groups operate both within and beyond the state system. This focus on multiple actors is sometimes referred to as pluralism. Also, complex interdependence assumes a wide variety of goals. The theory does not see security dominating all other goals. For instance, it is known today that the problems of energy, resources, environment, population, the use of space and the sea now rank with questions of military security, ideology and territorial rivalry which have traditionally made up the diplomatic agenda.

Added to the above two assumptions is that the theory views the world as interconnected by a thick web of many relationships among many actors. Of the wide range of goals being pursued by many actors in world politics, very few can be attained through exercise of military force. The rest such as poverty reduction, gender

equality, clean energy, environmental protection, prevention of rights abuse, climate change, refugee crisis, etc are pursued and attained through collaboration and cooperation within this thick web of many relationships among others. The United Nations SDGs is a set of critical goals (17 in number) that have been painstakingly articulated by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in the hope that through them, states will meet the numerous socioeconomic, political, technological, climatic, environmental and gender challenges that confront mankind. As a global project, the Sustainable Development Agenda (SDA) was designed with no particular group of nations, races or peoples in mind but for all members of human society.

The mandate was, however, that states should take ownership of the initiative and through legitimate processes, ensure their actualization. However, since inequality has stratified the world into the developed and the underdeveloped, global strategy for some form of coordinated support has also, naturally tilted in favour of the underdeveloped. Given the United Nations mandate to member states to take ownership of the initiative and ensure its actualization, states deployment of foreign policy becomes expedient, particularly since the SDGs initiative is a global agenda. Thus, in an interdependent global order where cooperation, coordination and collaboration among states is defined by the wide array of actors, the wide variety of goals and the thick web of many relationships among actors, the benefits of the SDGs will accrue more to states that can deploy dynamic foreign policy in international relations. The United Nations leads other international governmental organizations in this process. Then the international and domestic NGOs, the transnational advocacy networks (TANs), the global governance Institutions

(GGIs) the advocacy groups, the domestic and international foundations, the domestic bureaucracies, companies, interest groups, political parties and the voting population.

These arrays of domestic and international actors strive to accomplish a variety of goals including poverty reduction, hunger eradication, bridging illiteracy and ignorance gap, refugee crises, gender equity, healthcare delivery, human and people's right watch, environmental and climatic security among others. Since cooperation override conflict, in the thick web of many relationships among many actors, attainment of target goals are willingly backed by massive deployment of resources in the forms of funding, products, services, training, etc. The extent to which countries are able to deliver the UNSDGs to their citizens would largely depend on how broad in outreach and goal-oriented in design their foreign policies are.

## **DISCOURSE**

### **The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

The United Nations SDGs, formulated as part of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) post 2015 Development Agenda sought to create a future global development framework to succeed the Millennium Development Goals which ended that year (Biermann & Others, 2017). They were formally articulated and adopted in the UNGA resolution called the 2030 Agenda, known colloquially as Agenda 2030 (UN Resolution, 2030). On July 6, 2017, the SDGs were made more actionable by a UNGA resolution that identifies specific targets for each goal and provides indicators to measure progress. Accordingly, most targets are to be achieved by 2030; although some have no end dates (UNSD, 2020). The International Monetary

Fund (IMF) has taken initiative to achieve the SDGs by offering their support to developing countries. For example, the IMF works to reduce poverty in low income developing countries by offering financial support during COVID-19 pandemic and at numerous other times.

The seventeen interlinked objectives that constitute these global goals are designed to serve as a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future (UN Resolution 2017). As formulated by the UNGA, the SDGs include: no poverty, zero hunger; good health and well-being; quality education; gender equality; clean water and sanitation; affordable and clean energy; decent work and economic growth; industry, innovation and infrastructure; reduced inequalities; sustainable cities and communities; responsible consumption and production; climate action; life below water; life on land; peace, justice and strong institutions; and partnership for the goals. Thus, the SDGs emphasize interconnected environmental, social and economic aspects of sustainable development by putting sustainability at their center (Bali & Yang-Wallentin, 2020).

Critical observation reveals cross-cutting issues as well as synergies between the different goals. In addition, critics and observers have also identified trade-offs between some of the goals, for instance, between ending hunger and promoting environmental sustainability (Machingura, 2017). Other concerns include having too many goals that result in compounding trade-offs, a weak emphasis on environmental sustainability and difficulties tackling qualitative indicators.

The United Nations SDGs are monitored by the UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF); an annual forum held under the auspices of the United Nations Economic

and Social Council (ECOSOC). But the forum also faces the problems of political leadership and divergent national interests (Biermann & others, 2022). More revealing also is that the COVID-19 pandemic had serious negative impacts on all the 17 SDGs in 2020. Even though a scientific assessment of the political impacts of the SDGs found in 2022 that the SDGs have only had limited transformative political impact thus far, the same cannot hold for its socio-economic impact which has turned out to be more invigorating. In all, however, the entire politics surrounding the SDGs have at the very least affected the way actors understand and communicate about sustainable development.

### **Global Blocs and SDGs Partners**

Beyond the factor of geography, the division between the developed global North and the less developed global South is also punctuated by economic and political realities. Even though categories exist among the less developed states of the South, the socioeconomic circumstances they face knitted them by far closer than with the developed states of the North. To be more explicit, the UNDP Human Development Report (1995) designed content with categories of (world average); (developing, least developing and Sub-Saharan countries of the south) and (industrial countries of the North) for profiling quality of life in the regions of the world. Mingst (1999), for instance, informs that whereas the 22 most industrialized countries had gross national products (GNPs) per capita of \$22,410 in 1992, the average for the South was \$1,020. More revealing is that the North basking in relative wealth, consumptive habits, high level of education, health services and social welfare nets, squares with the South mired in relative poverty, struggling to meet basic



caloric needs, with poor educational and health services and no welfare nets to meet

the needs of the poorest of the poor (Chang, 2008).

**Table 1:**  
1992 quality-of-life indicators

	Life Expectancy at Birth (In Years)	Adult Literacy Rate (%)	Educational Enrollment of School Age Population %	Real GDP Per Capita PPP (USD)	Human Development Index (HDI)
All Developing Countries	61.5	68.3	54	2,591	0.570
Least Developing Countries	50.9	46.7	34	935	0.337
Sub-Sahara Africa	50.8	54.9	42	1,346	0.389
Industrial Countries	76.1	98.3	80	15,291	0.916
World/Global Average	62.8	76.0	58	5,410	0.759

**Source:** UNDP Human Development Report (1995)

Instructive as the above information is, they provide the impetus that spurred the Group of 77 developing countries to seek further changes in the international system. By the 1990s, most developing states had embraced economic liberalism - a strong forerunner of globalization, dropped their demands for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) and tampered their radical perspectives. The broad consensus that solidified almost globally on viability of market-oriented economic policies and political pluralism as the foundation for economic development witnessed most states of the South subscribe to the liberal ideology of the industrial states. These decisive positions of the states of the South were widely expected to attract global developmental attention to them. Thus, from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which only targets the developing countries to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which applies to all countries whether rich, middle or poor, the popular impression remains that the wealthy nations and their institutions are on a mission to rescue humanity from poverty and accompanying miseries.

Mingst (1999) captures the totality of the discourse on SDGs when he maintains that the concept recognizes that the South cannot develop in the same way that the industrialized nations did because humanity cannot survive another diminution of scarce global resources. D'Anieri (2014) corroborated the above when he insists that justice is a key component of sustainability. Developing countries are socio-economically weak, politically unstable, and technologically rudimentary and still have a majority of their people fall below average in most of the quality-of-life indicators. However, majority of the industrialized countries and their Multinational Corporations (MNCs); the key International Governmental Organizations (IGOs) and their agencies; the Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs); the Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs), the Trans-governmental Coalitions (TCs), the Transnational Communities of Experts (TCEs); the International Regimes (IRs) and the development partners, donor agencies, private foundations, etc have continued to mobilize support for the poor countries,

particularly, across 17 broad Global Goals of the United Nations.

### **Key Institutions in Sustainable Development Partnerships**

#### *i. Global Powers and Sustainable Development Goals*

The input of G-7 and G-8 nations in providing support for the SDGs project remains unprecedented. For Larionova and Kirton (2018), the G-7, the G-8, and the G-28 states are the most industrialized, having accumulated most of the global capital, and have by far, funded the SDGs Programme more than other states of the world. The G-7 and G-8 nations are the forerunners of global capitalism. They fought great wars in the twentieth century to defend liberalism. Their initial attempt at a global body to prevent world wars and defend liberal democracy failed. In 1945, they successfully led other states of the world to establish the United Nations, mandating it to ensure that global peace, security and development are not comprised by any means. Their overwhelming influences on the activities of international governmental organizations and agencies through which most SDGs decisions are implemented stand them out as the most powerful bloc in the international system.

#### *ii. International Governmental Organizations and Sustainable Development Goals*

Karns and Mingst (1990) have identified key International Governmental Organizations (IGOs) such as the United Nations, the World Bank, the World Health Organization among others and the critical roles they play in the international system. For instance, they inform that IGOs contribute to habits of cooperation and as

well, play key roles in international bargaining, serving as arenas for negotiating and developing coalitions. As rightly observed by Mingst (1999), characters of IGOs incorporate norms, rules and decision-making processes of regimes. Thus, while IGOs such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) develop procedures to make rules and settle disputes, others like the World Health Organization (WHO) conduct operational activities that help to resolve major international problems such as the transmission of communicable diseases. The United Nations through its High Commission for Human Rights, the European Union and Nongovernmental Organizations like Amnesty International have institutionalized principles and established processes through which State's human rights behaviour and compliance are monitored (Mingst, 1999).

Under the United Nations system for instance, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is clearly designated for developmental purposes in member states. ECOSOC is composed of Specialized Agencies; World Bank Group, Functional Commissions and Regional Commissions. In its role as the UN organ that coordinates and sustains development in member states, it is worthy to note the interface, for instance, among the International Monetary Fund under the World Bank Group, Sustainable Development under the Functional Commissions and Africa under the Regional Commissions. Such developmental provisions also exist and are coordinated within other organs of the UN, particularly the General Assembly. The UNGA, for instance, coordinates and supports such programmes as international trade, drug control, environmental challenges, women status, children welfare and refugee crises in member states by making funds available not only for development but for their sustainability as

well. The United Nations, therefore, shoulders exceptional responsibility on the demands of sustainable development, particularly being its own initiative.

In addition to the UN, hundreds of other less prominent IGOs exist, each playing critical roles in providing development and supporting their sustainability (Larionova & Kirton, 2018). The European Union (EU), the Association of SouthEast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) among others have shown active support for sustainable development in poor countries of Sub-Saharan Africa in particular. Their engagements with these poor countries are basically tailored towards actualizing the global goals.

### *iii. Transnational Actors and Sustainable Development Goals*

Transnational Actors (TAs) have grown in significance as major contributors to sustainable development. Made up of the Transnational Corporations (TNCs) and the International Nongovernmental Organizations (INGOs), activities of Transnational Actors (TAs) cut across state boundaries. Willets (2001) gave a deeper insight on TAs when he informs that whereas there are roughly 200 states in the world and about 250 IGOs, there are roughly 60,000 transnational organizations and nearly 16,000 international nongovernmental organizations. While some TAs play key roles in international politics, others drive the global economy. They are yet, those that strive to shape international norms, monitor governments or provide humanitarian services. Notwithstanding some reservations about their activities in underdeveloped countries, their high capital investment portfolio and manpower development profiles as well as their

capacity to expand the tax base in host communities stands them out as key collaborators in the SDGs partnership. Thus, even with their seemingly use of governments as salespeople (Lipton & Clark 2011), a dynamic effectively eroding state sovereignty (Vernon, 1971), the impression of states remains largely favourable for TNCs. This explains why today, more countries welcome the arrival of TNCs for economic benefits they bring to the extent that governments sometimes compete intensively, granting significant waivers and other benefits to lure global firms.

Another subset of transnational actors, the International Nongovernmental Organisations INGOs, includes a wide range of nongovernmental and non-business organizations that operate across states and boundaries. Among the many different INGOs, transnational advocacy networks TANs organize across national boundaries to pursue some political, social or cultural goals (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). Despite the complexities that exist in TANs - Government relationship which at times appears adversarial, D'Anieri (2014) has observed relationships that are cordial enough to enable attainment of common goals which ordinarily, governments could not have been able to achieve by themselves.

In critical items of the global goal agenda such as healthcare, democratization, environment and poverty reduction, TANs have made great strides, particularly in poor nations. According to Odinkalu (2021), it is known that the watchdog role of some of these advocacy networks including the Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International has always put many governments on their toes. Similarly, TANs drives the process of setting international agendas by defining key goals, promoting norms and setting standards. Oftentimes, IGOs and states key into derived standard and subscribe to emergent expectations.

Transnational Advocacy Networks do not merely advocate but also act as much as they mobilize the mass public. Whereas the Green Peace had to mobilize to save the Whales through international law limiting Whaling, transnational advocacy networks like Medecins Sans Frontieres, World Catholic Relief and Oxfam have distributed critical assistance to refugees in Somalia, Rwanda, Nigeria, Yugoslavia and other poor states. TANs such as the Human Rights Watch monitor human rights norms and environmental regulations and provide warnings of violations as they have done in China, Latin America and most of Sub-Saharan Africa.

The numerous International Nongovernmental Organizations and Transnational Advocacy Networks exist for diverse development needs, particularly in the third world countries (Odinkalu, 2022). While the list of interest areas is long and comprehensive with some having interest in multiple interdisciplinary projects, others are concerned with community economic advancement, yet, there are those concerned with health issues. Some of these networks have interest in children and youth while many are interested in education and human rights. In delivering these needs around the world, it is known that transnational aid organizations can often accomplish tasks that even the most powerful governments cannot and this results from the fact that they can often establish relationships and go to places where official government representatives cannot. For instance, whereas governments of most leading economies cannot establish official presence in Sudan, Somalia, Zaire or Nigeria villages, Amnesty International, the ICRC and Medecins Sans Frontieres (Doctors without Borders) among numerous other advocacy networks can. In addition, the US and Sudanese governments, for example, may be unwilling to collaborate with each other as a

result of poor diplomatic relationship, but INGOs and TANs with US background may have no problem collaborating with the Sudanese government.

While it is governments in most cases that own the funds which INGOs and TANs often dispense, it is also fair to know that in times of urgency and national emergencies, governments rely on these transnational aid organizations to deliver aid. This is because most aid organizations maintain local knowledge and logistic networks that governments can neither easily, nor quickly establish for timely responses. Similarly, in conflict prone communities like the Nigeria's Niger Delta, the Cassamas district in Senegal and the Mano River Basin communities stretching across Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia where the presence of foreign government officials often perceived as bias might provoke fresh conflicts or intensify existing ones, governments most times, rely on transnational aid organizations to deliver all sorts of aid.

#### *iv. Nigeria's Engagement with Global Industrial Powers and SDGs Partners*

Nigeria is a prominent state in the Sub-Saharan Africa, a geopolitical bloc that even though hosts highly valued natural endowments, yet, accommodates the largest number of global least developed states. Within the global community are also a couple of wealthy, highly industrialized and very powerful states. Under the United Nations guiding principles, all member states are sovereign and all sovereign states are equal within the general assembly. In reality however, it is known that endowment and capacities of states varies and it is these variations that determines the measure of influences that states wield in the International development project. While the



industrialized nations, particularly the G-7 and G-8 continue to give visible and impactful support to the numerous SDGs outlets, for further processing and allocation of resources, training and technical support, the poor nations, mostly located in Africa, Southeast Asia and the Latin America have continued to remain the target of sustainable development support.

As human population exponentially multiplies, the quantum of human needs desirous of satisfaction also grows in similar proportion and global resources can barely provide a solution for the mounting needs of poor states. It becomes inevitable that poor states will compete with one another for resource and technical support of the wealthy states that established and continued to significantly fund the IGOs; NGOs; MNOs; TANS; TCs; donor agencies; private foundations; and the numerous development partners. In competing to attract global resources and technical support and also to further the developmental needs of their people, states have increasingly relied on the dynamic forces of foreign policies. Even before the formulation of the UNSDGs in 2015, Nigeria had realized the critical role of foreign policy in actualizing human development contents for her people. It had, to that extent, always articulated and implemented foreign policies that are deliberately designed at delivering those goals. To get these goals effectively delivered requires that Nigeria remains constantly on top of her engagements with the global industrial powers as well as the numerous international institutions.

Nigeria's foreign policy towards the industrial powers, particularly the G-7 and G-8 nations has remained fairly strong since her early years of statehood in the 1960s. Historical antecedents, mostly colonial, which bonded the Nigerian state together with Great Britain also, tied her strongly to other liberal and capitalist states of the

world. For instance, Adebajo (2018) pointed out that Nigeria's initial reluctance to establish diplomatic relations with communist bloc states was influenced by its desire to maintain close ties with the Western countries, particularly the United States and Britain. He argues that Nigerian leaders were wary of being perceived as sympathetic to communism due to their desire to receive aid and investment from the West. Additionally, he emphasized that Nigeria's commitment to non-alignment was often interpreted as leaning towards the West rather than the communist bloc.

Also, during her formative years, Nigeria refused to establish embassies for Russia, China and other communist bloc states in Nigeria (Falola, 2019). Udo-Jacob (2018) for instance, attributes this action to Nigeria's alignment with the Western powers and its desire to maintain close ties with the United States and the United Kingdom in particular. Thus, for many years, Nigeria operated within the circle of the Western powers and was adequately incorporated into the global liberal and capitalist systems. The need for stronger economic cooperation, trade relations and technological partnerships were fundamental to Nigeria. She also seeks to attract foreign investment particularly from the Western economic giants to develop her infrastructure, industries and human capital. Thus, even before the UNSDGs were articulated in 2015, development and its sustainability was already a priority agenda of the emergent Nigerian state.

However, globalization and the massive economic and social transformation that are turning out knowledge and prosperity of significant scope in China, India, Russia and other non-capitalist states have precipitated in Nigeria the desire to assert her sovereign status and promote her interests on a global scale. The realization that these non-western nations have also

garnered strong economic capabilities and like their Western counterparts, can support the SDGs aspirations of poor states has made Nigeria's foreign policy formulators to increasingly gravitate towards the East. Today, different forms of bilateral co-operations and multilateral engagements exist between Nigeria/Africa and countries of the Western bloc on the one hand as well as those of the communist bloc on the other hand. For instance, socio-economic and technical platforms like the Nigeria-India Economic Forum; the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation; the Russia-Africa Consortium, etc today exist side-by-side with other economic entities that are pro-West in state composition. These formations like their Western counterparts are drivers of SDGs and in a globalizing world order where state sovereignty has become an imperative for attracting wide range developmental support, Nigeria foreign policy has shown some resilience.

Beyond the role of states (particularly the global industrial giants) in facilitating SDGs support for underdeveloped states like Nigeria and the Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) states, International Governmental Organizations (IGOs), the Transnational Actors made up of Transnational Corporations and International Nongovernmental Organizations, the Transnational Advocacy Networks and International Regimes organized around specific subjects have all become strategic partners in the SDGs project. Most of these institutions, organizations and advocacy networks were established and principally funded by the wealthy industrial nations who also use them to dispense developmental support even if disproportionately in favour of ideologically and diplomatically friendly states. A UNDP (2014) report which was also corroborated by Sachs (2015) has informed that even if international organizations in principle aim

to distribute aid based on need and effectiveness regardless of political affiliation, in reality, political affiliations constitute tendencies to favour states that are ideologically and diplomatically aligned with Western countries of the world. Thus, by remaining within the orbit of Western political liberalism and economic capitalism, Nigeria has managed to sustain the cordiality between her and major Western powers. In addition, by unequivocally flaunting her sovereign status on a global scale and freely engaging with prominent communist states of Russia and China among others, Nigeria has further diversified her human development support base.

Through the instrument of foreign policy, therefore, Nigeria has committed numerous international organizations such as the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Civil Aviation Organization to take up visible stakes in her SDGs master plan. Karns and Mingst (1990), for instance, observed some of the critical roles of Intergovernmental Organizations in contributing to habits of cooperation. IGOs such as the International Atomic Energy, the World Trade Organization, the World Health Organization, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees or even the African Union among others contribute to enlarge the possibilities and add to the constraints under which states operate and implement foreign policy. Thus, Nigeria has leveraged on her membership of numerous international organizations to attract support for the most pressing areas of need on her development goals. Similarly, thousands of Transnational Actors made up of Transnational Corporations, International Nongovernmental Organizations as well as the numerous Advocacy Networks are today freely operating in Nigeria. Conducive domestic environment laced with liberal practices, onslaught against terrorism,

deliberate state efforts to alleviate poverty, deliver a clean environment and stamp out corrupt practices among others have attracted the interest of these international bodies to Nigeria's development efforts.

Thus, numerous and influential transnational political, human and animal right groups which include but not limited to the Amnesty International and the Greenpeace; the disaster-relief and refugees advocacy groups such as the Medecins Sans Frontieres, the World Catholic Relief and the Oxfam; the monitors of human rights norms and environmental regulations such as the Human Rights Watch; the Action Aid International that focuses on poverty eradication, social justice and human rights; the Africare that strives to provide health, food security and water resources development; the Amnesty International that advocates for human rights and justice; the UNICEF which promotes Children's rights and welfare, providing services in education, health and sanitation; Transparency International Nigeria that works on combating corruption and promoting transparency; and the Heinrich Boll Foundation which promotes democracy, human rights and environmental justice; the Family Health International, the Ford Foundation, the International Committee on the Red Cross (ICRC), Solidarites International and the Mercy Corps, have through the instrumentality of purposive and actionable Nigerian foreign policy become key stakeholders in Nigeria's SDGs efforts.

Looking holistically therefore, Nigeria's robust foreign policy has played a significant role in attracting sustainable development for her citizens. Some of these are witnessed in economic partnerships and trade agreements with other countries. For instance, by engaging in regional and international trade blocs such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), Nigeria has expanded her market access,

promoted export diversification and economic growth. Also, through diplomatic efforts and investment promotion strategies, Nigeria has attracted significant foreign direct investment. In addition, Nigerian foreign policy has successfully leveraged development aid and technical assistance from international organizations and partner countries. Programmes funded by the World Bank, the IMF, the UN and bilateral aid agencies have supported projects in health, education, infrastructure and governance, contributing to sustainable development.

Also, Nigeria's involvement in peace and security initiatives, including her active participation in global bilateral and multilateral politics has shown to be SDGs friendly. For instance, Nigeria's active participation in international organizations and forums such as the AU, the UN and the Commonwealth has facilitated access to international support and collaboration on SDGs. Such partnerships have enabled Nigeria to benefit from global best practices, technical expertise and financial resources. Nigeria foreign policy efforts have also promoted educational and cultural exchanges which enhance human capital development. Scholarships, exchange programmes and international collaborations with research institutions have improved the all round quality of lives of Nigerians. Apart from aiding and sustaining a high-valued diaspora population that has through its remittances, significantly supported development back home. Nigeria has also promoted its tourism potentials through diplomatic channels. Tourism in Nigeria has shown tremendous capacity for job creation and economic growth. Through robust deployment of various aspects of foreign policy, Nigeria has been able to attract resources, investments, expertise and partnerships that support sustainable development, thereby ultimately improving the quality of life of her citizens.

## CONCLUSION

Accomplishing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals is the aspiration of every state, particularly, the poor ones that are predominant in Africa, Southeast Asia and Latin America. Nigeria, a typical third world state in need of external support for her development has found a window of opportunity in dynamic conduct of her foreign policy. In a globalizing world order where alliance politics has become less beneficial in attracting development than the globe-wide interdependence politics, Nigeria's option for robust globe-wide foreign policy laced with capacity to project diplomatic strength is providing the needed development roadmap. The multiplicity of sustainable development assistance that Nigeria continues to receive from the Russo-China communist bloc and the US-EU liberal capitalist bloc testifies to her robust and purposive non-aligned foreign policy posturing. This should be improved upon and sustained for more sustainable development goals.

## Recommendations

In an era of sweeping globalization, Nigeria can use her foreign policy to continue to advance the gains of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the following key strategies:

- i. Strengthening multilateral engagements through continual relevance in international organizations particularly the United Nations, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States. By playing an active role in such organizations, Nigeria can advocate for policies and initiatives that align with the SDGs, thus ensuring that her

development priorities are reflected in global agendas.

- ii. By promoting regional integration, Nigeria can enhance her leadership in such critical initiatives as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). This given, a more prosperous and stable region which supports the realization of the various SDGs, particularly those related to economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure will result through established trade and economic cooperation within Africa.
- iii. Additionally, through diplomatic efforts and favourable policies, Nigeria can attract foreign direct investment (FDI) that aligns with sustainable development. By focusing on sectors such as renewable energy, sustainable agriculture and infrastructure development, Nigeria can leverage FDI to create jobs, improve living standards and advance environmental sustainability.
- iv. Nigeria should also continue to foster strong partnerships with international development agencies, donor countries and global financial institutions. By collaborating on projects and initiatives that target SDGs, Nigeria can leverage financial and technical assistance to accelerate progress in areas such as health, education, and poverty reduction.
- v. Since a stable and secure environment is expedient for sustainable development, Nigeria's foreign policy should prioritize peace building and



- conflict resolution both within its borders and in the wider region. By doing so, Nigeria can help create the conditions necessary for sustainable development.
- vi. Essentially, Nigeria's foreign policy should emphasize the promotion of human rights, equity, democracy and good governance. By setting a positive example and advocating for these liberal values internationally, Nigeria can contribute to creating an environment where sustainable development can thrive.
- vii. Leveraging the Diaspora engagement is also another area that Nigerian foreign policy can explore to strengthen Nigeria's sustainable development goals aspirations. The Nigerian Diaspora is a valuable asset that can contribute to the country's development. Nigeria's foreign policy can focus on engaging the Diaspora community to support SDG-related projects through remittances, investments and knowledge transfer.
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