

Kater AMAH – Minority Fellow OHCHR

ORAL STATEMENT FOR THE UN FORUM ON MINORITY ISSUES

Thank you Madam Chair

Ladies and Gentlemen, my name is Kater Amah. I am 2018 OHCHR Minorities Fellow; and I belong to the Tiv Minority in Taraba State, Nigeria, but I speak for all vulnerable people and communities in my region, especially the minorities.

I want to speak about Domestic Statelessness affecting minorities in my country Nigeria where people have the consciousness of being Nigerian Nationals but do not know where they belong because they are denied access to indigenship registration by local governments and states where they originally belong. This has been a trend that has been on for decades, and perhaps may be happening in other countries as well.

Because of land boundaries in the Federal system of Government of Nigeria, some people find themselves in states where they are minorities; and this is their situation Madam Chair! I have first-hand knowledge about Benue, Taraba, Nasarawa, Plateau, and Adamawa states. The minorities in description are frequently targeted for violent attacks.

As I speak here Madam Chair, over a 100,00 individuals including women and children are displaced from their homes in Taraba, Nasarawa, Benue and Plateau states as a result of the perennial conflict between herdsmen and farmers in some Northern states of Nigeria which led to the killing of thousands and destruction of their houses and means of livelihoods. Some have remained IDPs in different host communities across the states for over 5 years now without access to health; access to education for their children; and other basic rights. Even before displacement, the people and their communities have meager or no amenities at all!

Strangers have taken over their homes. There are no proactive efforts so far to ensure their return. Some of them are denied access to their homes by the majority groups. These are peasant farmers who earn their living strictly by farming.

I therefore recommend the following:

- ✓ The government of Nigeria should liaise with states and local governments to ensure the dignified return of the affected minorities; and rebuild their communities including the provision of basic amenities.
- ✓ The government of Nigeria should set up a Commission for Minority Affairs and make it accessible to all minorities for the promotion and protection of minority rights.
- ✓ The government of Nigeria should revisit the recommendations of Germany in the UPR to address the cultural, political and economic situation of ethnic minorities by taking steps to ensure adequate political participation of ethnic minority groups as well as measures to effectively prevent the loss of land, property and resources of ethnic minority groups through confiscation

- ✓ The UN Human Rights should create a Mechanism and Mandate to study and handle the issue of Domestic statelessness that is emerging.

Thank you.