

ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIANS ABROAD [ANA]
11568 Webster Road
Strongsville, OH 44136 USA
Email: ANA-Headquarters@anenet.org

March 29, 2006

Press Release

The Association of Nigerians Abroad is concerned that Nigerian President's Third Term push will destabilize Nigeria

The Association of Nigerians Abroad (ANA) (www.anenet.org), cognizant of its principled commitment to promote and nurture democratic principles and practices in Nigeria, do hereby declare that it categorically rejects the current convulsive push to amend the Nigerian constitution to allow for three-term presidency. While ANA is in principle not opposed to the amendment of the constitution, it believes that such amendment must be done after exhaustive debate among the civic societies and with serious consideration of how such amendment promotes unity and progress. It should also be conducted in an atmosphere that is free of state sponsored intimidation and threats against opposing views. ANA hereby declares unequivocally that the current process to amend the constitution is fundamentally flawed for the following reasons:

- In a democracy, the constitution is the heartbeat of the nation and its amendment must reflect the desire of the majority and must be exhaustively debated. This critical process has been ignored in current push toward amendment. The claim that the Mantu-led constitutional review committee received overwhelming support for a three-term presidency is false since no credible attempt was made to measure the national pulse on the issue. What the world witnessed was hastily organized choreography of supporters appearing before the committee.
- Proponents of the constitutional amendment have dangerously and recklessly ignored the fact that Nigeria's democracy is in its nascent stage and that the nation's democratic institutions are still nursing the wounds inflicted by previous dictatorships.
- The amendment process has been conducted under an atmosphere of extreme intimidation of political and civic leaders that oppose the amendment. The security services have been used to promote a climate of fear, thereby suppressing opposing views.
- ANA believes that political, national and economic stability are mutually exclusive. The current process to amend the constitution at this present time has the potential to create more instability that can be avoided.
- ANA believes that the proponents of the amendment have not provided any compelling national motivation for such amendment. The proponents have not provided any compelling logical argument to indicate how such amendment will advance peace, social progress, and the economic well being of the generality of Nigerians. ANA believes that this ill-timed effort to amend the constitution is very destabilizing and lacks progressive merit. ANA believes that there are more pressing problems confronting Nigeria today and

the amendment for three-term presidency is not one of them. This is an artificial problem that can be avoided.

- ANA believes that the convulsive push toward third term presidency leaves the entire exercise open to suspicion. Extending elected offices without exhaustive debate in an ethnically diverse country like Nigeria further feeds into the pervasive ethnic suspicion that exists among Nigerians-which ANA seeks to discourage.
- Does the argument for the third term as a reward for performance, as have been argued, also imply that the constitution should always be amended on the basis of a president's performance or lack there of? The suggestion that no one else can govern Nigeria is an insult to Nigerians and lacks merit. The assumption that only one person has the capability of leading Nigeria is to impose a dictatorship that effectively robs Nigeria the opportunity of new leaders.
- Given Nigeria's position in African geo-politics, the political leaders ought to lead the effort toward discouraging the common practice of African leaders to perpetuate their hold on power.
- On the basis of the above reasons, ANA urges the Nigerian political leadership to suspend its ill-conceived rush to amend the constitution for a three-time presidency.

The Association of Nigerians Abroad (www.ananet.org) is non-profit, non-ethnic, non-religious, and non-partisan in all its dealings with the people and government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The Association shall, as and when necessary, advocate for democratic ideals, human rights, the rule of law, fairness, justice, and equity in Nigeria and for all Nigerians. The composition of ANA reflects the rich ethnic and cultural diversity of Nigeria.

Robert S. Okojie, PhD.

President, Association of Nigerians Abroad (www.ananet.org)

Email: president@ananet.org