AFRICA'S GREAT GREEN WALL AND THE CHALLENGES OF PEACEBUILDING IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The Africa's Great Green Wall (GGW) is an initiative of the African Union that aligns with other multilateral initiatives for the restoration of the green vegetation in the Sahel-Sahara region and the reduction of the impact of global warming that manifests in extreme poverty, food insecurity, forced human displacements, resource-based conflict and criminality. To be sure, the farmer-herder conflicts and other activities of terrorist organisations including the Boko Haram, Islamic State of the West African Province (ISWAP), Yan-Ta'adda, Yan-Bindiga occur as a result of people's vulnerabilities due to the environmental crisis in the region. At the core of peacebuilding discourse is the contradiction that arise from the security concern over ungoverned spaces, especially because non-state armed actors such as Boko Haram, Islamic State of the West African Province (ISWAP), Yan-Ta'adda, and Yan-Bindiga are using forests as safe havens for training, terror financing, arms trafficking, kidnapping, and so on. Conversely, the state of insecurity has heightened the decline in livelihood in a region that is already challenged by climatic and environmental issues, while insurgents, terrorists and bandits contrived strategies for controlling access to available vegetation, land, water, and other land resources. This paper looks at the Africa's Great Green Wall as a strategy for peacebuilding by restoring livelihood and combating terrorism. In deploying content analysis, the paper finds that while non-traditional security concerns were mainstreamed in the conception and implementation of the GGW, traditional security concerns were not adequately factored in at

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conception, which is evident in the implementation of the initiative. It therefore recommends that the GGW initiative is overdue for review at both national and continental levels in view of new and emerging peace and security threats associated with the region calling for the integration of not just freedom from want – security of the people, but also the freedom from fear – security of territories.

INTRODUCTION

The African Union (AU) adopted the Green Belt Initiative in 2007 to reverse the effect of desertification in Africa, which is in accordance with Declaration 137 (viii) of the Eighth Summit of the African Heads of States in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The initiative was set up to curb the detrimental effect of "social, economic, and environmental" effects of land degradation in the region (Pan African Green Wall 2018: 32), especially on human livelihood. Accordingly, the initiative aimed to grow 8,000km long/15km wide natural flora across the entire width of Africa, plant 4,350 trees mile long wall through dozens of countries from Djibouti in the East to Senegal in the West of Africa (Pan African Green Wall 2018). The wall is to be the umbrella project for other actions against desertification and as a panacea to many climate change threats such as drought, famine, violent conflict and forced migration, since the belt of trees will mitigate the encroachment of the desert that is eating away the Sahel-Sahara region, combat food insecurity as well as enrich the livelihoods of the inhabitants of the region (African Union, 2007).

As with several other regional and continental initiatives, member states are required to domesticate the initiative by contextualizing national implementation strategic actions to enabled horizontal and vertical sectoral engagements at governmental and nongovernmental continuum. For instance, Nigeria began the implementation of the initiative in 2012 with the enactment of an Act establishing the National Agency for the Great Green Wall (NAGGW) which saddles it with the responsibility of managing and reversing desert encroachment in Nigeria's frontline states, especially in North-East and North-West parts of the country through regional and international collaborations. To deepen its statutory functions, the

NAGGW coordinates programmes in frontline states and open up Local Government Councils' offices for the implementations of community-based activities, especially the planting of mosaic trees from Kebbi State at the northwestern border to its northeastern border in Borno State. The broader objective of this initiative by NAGGW is the restoration of land productivity, enhancement of food security, communities' adaptation to climate change, reduction in rural poverty, job creation as well as the prevention of social conflict (National Agency for Great Green Wall Establishment Act, 2015).

With a large crop farming and pastoral population, the communities across these two northern border regions are consistently affected by the scant and unreliable rainfall leading to desert encroachment, flood, drought and so on (Davis, 2022). Regrettably, these have adversely affected crop yield and husbandry as the unavailability of water has affected livelihood and increased people's vulnerabilities (Gadzama, 2017; Nagarajen et al, 2018; Okpara et al, 2015, Luiza, 2019; Goffner, Sinare and Gordon, 2019; Plante, Berger and Ba, 2020). Specifically, these climatic and environmental alterations have exacerbated the incidents of violent conflict, especially between crop farmers and pastoralists as well as exposed the people to social crimes, violent extremism and terrorism as evident with the Boko-Haram insurgency and armed banditry. Indeed, the peacebuilding challenges are intractable because communities in the Sahel-Sahara region are culturally linked to each other and vulnerabilities are always transnational in nature with food production and security issues traversing international borders. The 2010 devastating drought in the Republic of Niger that killed more than 4.8 million heads of cattle with an economic cost of more than $700 million did not only affected food production in Niger alone, but also Nigeria as well as other countries in the region (Cook, 1989). Although the desirability of the beef was debated in Cook (1989), Nigerians have since increased their consumption of beef with Benue State's annual consumption pegged at N2.1billion (Ejembi, 2019), despite the fact that the farmer-herder conflict has pitched the Fulani pastoralists against the majority farming Tiv and Idoma population of the state (NAN, 2021).

This study deploys content analysis to review relevant literature with the aim of examining the implications of the initiative on peacebuilding in three fundamental dimensions that are at the core of peacebuilding discourse. Firstly, the initiative is critical in restoring the green vegetation to the Sahel-Sahara region, reducing the impact of global warming on people, eradicating extreme poverty, increase food security, ending forced displacements, and addressing resource-based conflict and insecurity. Secondly, it relates to the contradiction concerning the ungoverned spaces that litter communities across Nigeria and their exploitation by non-state armed actors such as Boko Haram, Islamic State of the West African Province (ISWAP), Yan-Ta'adda, and Yan-Bindiga to serve as safe havens, training grounds, sources of terror financing, corridors for illicit trafficking, and nests for kidnapers and other criminals. Thirdly, even as insecurity heightens the decline in livelihood in a region that is already challenged by environmental vulnerabilities, insurgents, terrorists and bandits are contriving strategies and intensifying their control over access to available resources. In terms of response, the study notes that the initiative seems to be overwhelmed by the shift in security conception by placing emphasis on non-traditional concerns instead of balancing the protection of citizens as well as the state's territories. Thus, national, international and collaborative interventions are tailored to address these concerns while almost neglecting concerns about the protection of the state, state's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It concludes with recommendation for the review of the initiative to address new and emerging challenges of security, especially relating to the subversive activities of non-state armed actors along the spaces created by the initiative. Fundamentally, there is need to fuse and mainstream the traditional and non-traditional conceptions of security in the implementation of the initiative at national, international and other collaborative levels.

OVERVIEW OF THE AFRICA'S GREAT GREEN WALL INITIATIVE AS A PEACEBUILDING INTERVENTION

Considered as action to identify and support structures to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid relapse into conflict (Boutros-Ghali, 1992), peacebuilding has emerged as a concept that bridges security and development at the international and domestic levels. It is an integrated approach to addressing the threats to peace, security and development, which according to Adetula (2015) include the prevention and resolution of violent conflicts, consolidation of peace once violence has been reduced and post-conflict reconstruction with a view to avoiding relapse into violent conflict. While highlighting that peacebuilding is a new conception transcending the statist approach of the Cold War, Adetula (2015) observes that it includes efforts that are aimed at addressing "the proximate and root causes of contemporary conflicts including structural, political, socio-cultural, economic and environmental factors". While arguing that peace and development can no longer be treated as separate undertakings, Boutros Boutros-Ghali (1996: 52) observed and rightly so that, it "is a new approach which emphasizes that in order to achieve lasting peace, the effort to prevent, control and resolve conflicts must include action to address the underlying economic, social, cultural, humanitarian and political roots of conflict and to strengthen the foundations for development" (Boutros-Ghali, 1996: 19). It is instructive to note that the different approaches expressed on the conception of peacebuilding in *An Agenda for Peace* and *An Agenda for Democratisation* were partly informed by fact that the former was at the behest of UN Security Council, the latter was sequel to the request of the UN General Assembly. The implication is that the former speaks to interventions at strategic level of strengthening and solidifying structures, whereas the latter speaks to foundational issues of development at social, political, cultural, and economic dimensions.

The Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (2006) has argued that peacebuilding refers to strategies put in place to ensure peaceful relations and strengthen viable political, socio-economic and cultural institutions capable of mediating conflict, and strengthening other

mechanisms that would either create or support the necessary conditions for sustained peace. Indeed, as Barnett, Kim, O'Donnell and Sitea (2007: 38-41) noted, the concept of peacebuilding is largely informed by the mandate of specific proponents that ranges from post-conflict peacebuilding, conflict prevention, crisis management, reconstruction and rehabilitation, stabilization, post-conflict recovery and transition assistance, post-conflict reconstruction, conflict reduction, civilian crisis prevention, multidimensional peace mission, development, crisis management, peace consolidation, and reconstruction assistance. The aforementioned areas of focus of peacebuilding suggest that it concern itself with peace, security and development issues before, during and in post-conflict environment relating to social, cultural, political, economic and humanitarian problems that would cause or result in society's relapse into dysfunctional conflict state.

With the context of the foregoing therefore, the GGW Initiative was designed to support the efforts of local communities in the sustainable management and use of forests, rangelands, water resources and other natural resources in the region by contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation, improving food security and livelihood of the people in the region (Gadzama, 2017; Nagarajen et al, 2018; Okpara et al, 2015, Luiza, 2019; Goffner, Sinare and Gordon, 2019; Plante, Berger and Ba, 2020). These are critical peacebuilding issues and in order to appreciate the relationship with GGW, it is important to consider three fundamental dimensions that are at the core of peacebuilding discourse. They relate to the restoration of the sources of livelihood within the ecosystem, the evolving security threats associated with the restoration the depleting environment such as water resources, forest features, etc. and the competition over the control of the access to resources.

Restoration of Sources of Livelihood: The first fundamental dimension of the nexus between the GGWI and peacebuilding relates to the restoration of the green vegetation of the Sahel-Sahara region, reduction in the impact of global warming on people, eradication of extreme poverty, increasing food security, ending forced

displacements, addressing resource-based conflict and insecurity. Onuoha (2009) has noted that the Lake Chad is a major source of livelihood for communities in the Sahel-Sahara region, but the diminishing of the Lake is adversely affecting fishing, farming and pastoralism leading to "large scale intra-ethnic, intra-state and interstate conflicts, including the Boko Haram terrorism. Ehiane and Moyo (2021) have discussed the impact of climate change on livelihood, especially human development and the driving factors of violent conflicts in the Lake Chad region by reducing access to natural resources - fertile land, water and pasture. The reduction of access is undermining livelihoods of vulnerable people and communities leading to the recurrence of intractable violent conflicts. It has also triggered the southward human mobility, especially of pastoralists in search for pasture for their herds leading to incessant clashes with sedentary crop farmers. The Lake Chad has remained a major livelihood concern because it is a major source of water and resources to more than 20 million people in Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Nigeria and the Central African Republic (Onuoha, 2009). Recharging the Lake has been a long time ambition of not only Nigeria, but also the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the African Union as well as the international community to address climate change-induced vulnerabilities. This is because as noted by Onuoha (2009), the shrinking of the Lake Chad would impliedly exacerbate scarcity of water and other related resources that were hitherto derivable from it leading to intense competition and conflict over these resource. Manifestly, the northeast geopolitical zone has consistently returned high rate of poverty, illiteracy, under-employability, out of school children, mortality rate, and susceptibility to crimes and other social vices. Little wonder, violent extremism has persisted and occurring in the zone, including the Maitatsine uprising, Boko Haram insurgency and the Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP).

Evolving threats associated with Ungoverned Spaces: The second dimension of the nexus is the compelling reality relating to ungoverned spaces littering Nigeria, which are exploited by criminal groups such as Boko Haram, Islamic State of the West African Province (ISWAP), Yan-

Ta'adda, and Yan-Bindiga for subversive purposes including serving as safe havens, training grounds, sources of terror financing, corridors for illicit trafficking, and nests for kidnapers and other criminals. Raleigh and Dowd (2013; Igboin, 2021) provide an alternative context on the notion of ungoverned spaces by challenging the understanding that it signifies lack of governance. Arguing that the Sahel region is an example of the wrong perception of lack of governance because there exists some level of governance that provide a system of order by traditional authority, communal organisations, rebel, etc. (Raleigh and Dowd, 2013; Igboin, 2021). The argument is founded on the fact that these alternative governance structures often operate within local context and in response to issues of mismanagement, political exclusion, corruption, and marginalization (Raleigh and Dowd, 2013: 13). In fact, these spaces occur as a result of state's absence, poor border management, inadequate social amenities, decaying public infrastructures and human rights violations (Ojo, 2020). For instance, there exist about 1,894 illegal entry points into Nigeria out of 1,978 identified entry points, which means that only 84 border posts are approved and officially manned. Thus, the illegal entry points have remained anonymous to the state and constitute avenues for smuggling, trafficking in human, arms, drugs and other illicit pharmaceuticals, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, free movement of jihadist, terrorists, and criminals, and state subversion. Also of particular concern is the absence of adequate state presence which enabled the ungoverned spaces to serve as safe havens, training grounds, sources of terror financing, corridors for illicit trafficking, and nests for kidnapers and other criminals. Clearly, Boko Haram and other jihadist groups have used these spaces to sustain their subversive operations (Albert, 2017). Ojo (2020: 11) observed that,

> …Boko Haram abducted the Chibok Schoolgirls, who were later taken to the forest. Sambisa Forest provides a safe haven for the Boko Haram for their operational, logistical, technical and organisation base and destination for the insurgents' prisoners of war. It is also considered as a training ground for recruitment

> of new members, radicalization, executions, a detention place for the abductees, it has bomb-making factories, illegal mining, arms trafficking, as well as prayer-ground for the terrorists. It has been a battleground for counterinsurgency between the Boko Haram and the Nigerian military. Despite the self-acclaimed success by the federal government that the forest has been reclaimed from the Boko Haram, a larger part of the forest is still under the territorial command of the insurgents. The space has remained quite inaccessible to the Nigerian security operatives whose reluctance to storm the space has been identified as a product of their inefficiency, sub-standard weaponry and conspiracy.

The foregoing recounts in bold relief the maximization of ungoverned spaces by criminal organisations, which Professor Umara Zulum of Borno State and Malam Nasiru El-Rufai of Kaduna State have separately argued are being controlled by terrorists. The Federal Government and the Military have refuted the allegation and insisted that all Nigeria's territory is being occurred and control by recognized state authority. While these back and forth persist, terrorists have continued to levied taxes on farmers and pastoralists across communities, especially in Kaduna, Borno, Katsina, Zamfara, Niger, Sokoto and Kebbi States (Adeyemi, 2022). In addition to levying community taxes, the terrorists have ventured into kidnapping for ransom as well as keeping their captives away from state's eyes for months and years. In Zamfara State, Adeyemi (2022) reported that armed bandits swindled communities in the state to the tone of N538Million on levies for access to farmlands covering N20Million in Bungudu, N64Million in Maradun, N5Milliin inKaura, N5Million in Birnin-Magaji, N46Million in Zurmi, N17Million in Dada, N20Million in Gummi, N32.7 in Bakura, N39.6Million in Maru, N19 Million in Anka, N122.5 Million in Marafa, and N146.8 Million in Bukkuyom. Similarly, the kidnapped victims of the Abuja-Kaduna train attack were kept for months as negotiation facilitated by Malam Tukur Mamu continued before he was eventually arrested by the Department of State

Services (DSS). Indeed, the Chibok schoolgirls, Leah Shuaidu, student of Government Girls College, Birnin Kebbi, and others are kept within Nigeria's territory. Onuoha and Akogwu (2022) observed that between 2011 and 2020, Nigerians paid at least US$18.34 million (₦7 billion) in ransoms to kidnappers as 2,371 people were kidnapped in the first half of 2021 and paid the sum of about US$23.84 million out of the ₦10 billion demanded by their captors.

Control over Access to Resources by Non-State Armed Actors: The third dimension is that insurgents, terrorists, bandits and other non-state armed actors are contriving strategies and intensifying control over access to available resources, especially natural resources at the detriment of the national economy. Indeed, as insecurity heightens with the decline in livelihood and in the face of existing challenges as occasioned by environmental and climatic variations, the competition over access to natural resources, especially solid minerals and petroleum, is increasingly tilted in favour of criminals and criminal groups. For instance, the bandits in northwest geopolitical zone have greater control and access over mineral resources, especially the gold mine fields because the weak state regulation and the cash-based nature of transactions in gold mining sector has attracted armed bandits who killed several artisan miners in the course of raiding mining sites and robbed them of gold and cash (International Crisis Group, 2020). Several factors have contributed in granting them edge over other actors including their familiarity with the terrain, the continuous state weaknesses as occasioned by continuous deflecting public revenue and adherence to Bretton Wood institutions conditionality on downsizing of workforce leading to scabbing of critical public agencies such as the Forest Guards, Extension Workers, etc. Albert (2017: 8) highlights four core nexus between the forests and peacebuilding, to include: that the depletion of forest resources could cause violent conflict which would threaten people's livelihood pattern; that illegal exploitation of forest resources by criminal groups would finance the sustenance of motivation for insecurity and criminality; that forests features such as caves, mountains, creeks and jungles provides safe haven; and that intense insurgency and counterinsurgency damage the environment

because of the movements of displaced persons and bombardments. Indeed, the Governor of Kaduna State, Malam Nasiru El-Rufai had advocated for the bombardment of the forests in northwest in continuation of counterinsurgency because according to him,

> We have been pressing for the past two years for the military from the air and the ground to bomb these forests while soldiers on the ground kill all those that escape the bomb. I do not believe that there is any innocent person in the forest. It is my intention to see Mr President to reiterate this and to also ask that a military theatre command headquarters be established for the Northwest geo-political zone (NAN, 2022).

This suggestion is obviously not environmentally friend for a region that faces livelihood challenges that relate to environment including rainfall variation leading to food insecurity, and so on. Although, the Federal Government of Nigeria (Ochogwu, 2022) argued against the bombardment because it would endanger the lives of innocent citizens, there are essential environmental considerations especially destruction of biodiversity that would help in adaptation and prevention of climate change (David, 2022). Alternative suggestions on tackling banditry include the engagement and deployment of foreign private military contractors as well as the strengthening and arming of the Department of Forest Guards to secure the forests (David, 2022).

THE CHALLENGES OF PEACEBUILDING ASSOCIATED WITH THE GREAT GREEN WALL IN NIGERIA

The argument espoused in understanding the underlying issues foregrounding the challenges of peacebuilding associated with the GGW in Nigeria is determining whether in the original conception security was prioritized and mainstreamed. Secondly, it is to determine whether it was the traditional, non-traditional or the combination of both? Thirdly, it is to determine whether in the implementation of the initiative security was understood within the traditional or non-traditional conception? Again, these thoughts are informed by the fact that the region is evidently facing threats that are both within the

traditional and non-traditional conception of security. Indeed, criminal groups are taking advantage of the existing socioeconomic deficits across communities to recruit, radicalize, mobilize and carry out violent attacks against citizens and state's interests and this is a serious threat to the socioeconomic wellbeing of the people.

Doubtlessly, the GGW is a critical response to desert encroachment, land unproductivity, food insecurity, climate change, and rural poverty, (National Agency for Great Green Wall Establishment Act, 2015:78). Thus, the initiative is viewed as critical respond to non-traditional security as opposed to traditional security, which deals with the security and the protection of the interests of the state, governing classes and their propertied allies. Traditional security alienates most citizens from the security process that turns on them from time to time (Olukoshi, 1992). In addressing issues of tree planting, land unproductivity, food insecurity, climate change, and rural poverty, the GGW was conceived. Incidentally, the conception of GGW coincided with the global paradigm shift in security conception from the traditional to the non-traditional security as well as the fact that Africa was coming out of a protracted era of dictatorship.

A global beaconing in the non-traditional conception was the 1994 UNDP Human Development Report, which by the way corresponded with the publication of an article by Homer-Dixon (1994) on the impact of environmental scarcities on violent conflict. Homer-Dixon (1994) has argued that the ever-increasing global population portent an increase in the scarcities of renewable resources, widespread depletion of rivers, drop of the quality of agricultural land and depletion of land resources, degradation of water resources, decline of fisheries and other aquatic resource, and significant climate change. As a result of these depletions, declines, and degradations, there would be upsurge in environmental-induced violence as aggravated by the scarcity with poor communities mostly affected because of the absence of socioeconomic safe nets (Homer-Dixon, 1994). The 1994 UNDP Report was cognizant of the decline in the global military spending which is an indication of the emergence of international community that is not threatened by nuclear war resulting from inter-state wars. Thus,

an existential common threat to all human family relates to hunger, disease, crime, repression, drug abuse, "sudden and hurtful disruptions in the pattern of our daily lives – whether in our homes, in our jobs, in our communities or in our environment" (UNDP, 1994: 15). It is therefore argued that human security is people-centred. It is concerned with how people live and breathe in a society, how freely they exercise their many choices, how much access they have to market and social opportunities – and whether they live in conflict or in peace (UNDP, 1994: 35).

For a study of this nature, it is important to highlight that the UNDP Report (1994; 36) notes that since the formation of the UN, security was conceived as freedom from fear and freedom from want, which is giving equal weight to security of territories as well as the security of the people. This trend changed over time as the conception of security tilted in favour of freedom from fear – security of territories from external threats to freedom from want – security of the people from poverty, diseases, natural disasters, terrorism, etc. The Report calls for shift from exclusive stress on territorial security to a much greater stress on people's security; and from security through armaments to sustainable development, which it listed to include the threats associated with economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security (UNDP, 1994: 36-37).

In spite of the foregoing, there is hardly a compact initiative that integrates both the security of territories and people. For instance, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) comprises of seventeen goals covering, eliminating poverty, erasing hunger, establishing good health and well-being, provision of quality education, enforcing gender equality, improving clean water and sanitation, growing affordable and clean energy, creating decent work and economic growth, increasing industry, innovation and infrastructure, reducing inequality, mobilizing sustainable cities and communities, influencing responsible consumption and production, organizing climate action, developing life below water, advancing life on land, guaranteeing peace, justice, and strong institutions, and building partnerships for the Goals (United

Nations, 2015). It did not explicitly address issues of the security of territories in terms of guaranteeing the freedom from fear of physical threat from armed groups or hostile states. Similarly, the African Union Commission's Agenda 2063 on the Africa We Want (African Union Commission, 2015) is a shared strategic framework for inclusive growth and sustainable development around seven aspirations that tilt in favour of freedom from want while relegating freedom from fear. The Agenda 2063 respond to: a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development; an integrated continent politically united and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa's renaissance, an Africa of good governance, democracy and respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law; a peaceful and secure Africa; an Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics; an Africa whose development is people-driven relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children; and Africa as a strong, united, resilient and influential global player and partner.

This misbalancing of traditional and nontraditional security has impeded the potentials of the national, international and collaborative interventions under the GGW to yield the desired results in guaranteeing both freedom from fear and freedom from want. For instance, within the specific context of budgetary allocation in Nigerian security sector, the armed forces' budget has been heavier than those of the Nigeria Police Force and other paramilitary agencies. Additionally, the military has continued to enjoy increased collaborative assistance at multilateral and bilateral levels for capacity enhancement, equipment, etc., more than the other security agencies even as these agencies are currently inundated and overwhelmed by the rising internal security challenges.

The Nigeria's National Security Strategy (2019) is an innovative framework whose implementation seemed to be motivated by elite mentality of rent seeking which manifested in the corrupt utilization of intervention funds. For instance, Lawal Babachir's conflict of interest in the award of contract to his company thereby benefitting from his office as the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (OSGF) through

the Presidential Initiative for North East (PINE) was a violation of relevant provisions of the Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Act, 2000 (Adebayo, 2020). The former Governor of Plateau State, Chief Joshua Dariya's syphoned the Ecological Fund for his state and distributed it for electioneering campaign (Daniel, 2016). Colonel Dasuki's misappropriated funds for arms procurement and shared it to his political cronies (Mohammed, 2017; Page, 2018). In fact, one of the critical reform of the country's Infrastructure for Peace has been the formation of the Ministry for Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development, which is vested with broad mandate of humanitarian policies, effective coordination of national and international humanitarian interventions, disaster mitigation, preparedness and response, and the management, formulation and implementation of fair and focused social inclusion and protection programmes in Nigeria (https://www.fmhds.gov.ng/). Despite that over 133 million Nigerians are languishing in poverty and exposed to violent extremism, terrorism, insecurity and criminality (Khaliq, Idowu, and Bello, 2020). Recently, the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Offences Commission (ICPC) arrested, investigated and later released the Musician, Oladapo Oyebanjo alias D-Banj, over alleged diversion of monies for the N-Power, but he has denied involvement (Tariemi, 2022). There are reports pointing to sleazing fraud in the implementation of the social investment programme, especially the N-Power, school feeding programme, etc., where institutions are conniving with beneficiaries to defraud the state (Adedigba, 2020; Adetulu, 2019). The ICPC has discovered the payment of N2.67 billion during COVID 19 lockdown when children were not in school indicating that some of the monies have ended up in personal accounts.

Responses to the Challenges of Peacebuilding associated with the Great Green Wall in Nigeria

As the Sahel-Sahara region continued to present traditional and non-traditional security challenges not only to Nigeria, but also to the countries in the region and the international community, several initiatives have been conceived and implemented.

At the multilateral level, it was earlier noted that the Great Green Wall Initiative (GGWI), the AU Agenda 2063 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal are some of the critical initiatives for addressing the security challenges in the Sahel-Sahara region. However, it was observed that these initiatives were not broad enough in addressing the two major concerns of security – guaranteeing freedom from want as well as freedom from fear. In addition to these three mechanisms, there are other frameworks that have sustainable and ad-hoc peacebuilding components, including the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Multinational Joint Task Force initiative; Paris Peace Forum, United Nations Security Council, United Nations General Assembly, the African Union and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

The Lake Chad Basin Commission was established as to manage the Lake's shared water resources among member states – Chad, Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria, Libya, and the Central Africa Republic, preserve the ecosystem, and promote regional integration, peace, security and development of the basin. The emergence of the Boko Haram terrorists saw the Commission performing actual peacebuilding roles even as the Multinational Joint Task Force initiative was implemented under the Commission's platform. Indeed, several collaborative engagements are taking place under the umbrella of the Commission to address peacebuilding issues along the Lake Chad Basin.

The United Nations Security Council have passed several resolutions towards tackling climate change-induced insecurity, criminality and violence in the Sahel-Sahara region including UNS/RES/2531 of 29 June 2020; UNS/RES/2480 of 28 June 2019 on terrorism in Mali and the Sahel region; UNS/RES/2391 of 8 December 2017 on Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, and UNS/RES/2359 of 21 June 2017 on the need to address the terrorist threat in the Sahel region, as well as the serious challenges posed by transnational organized crime, including arms and drug trafficking, the

smuggling of migrants, trafficking in persons, and its increasing links, in some cases, with terrorism, and underscoring the responsibility of the countries in the region in addressing these threats and challenges. Indeed, every meeting of the United Nations General Assembly avails countries in the Sahel-Sahara region to table their challenges to the international community as demonstrated in the 77th UNGA where the World Bank, AU, ECOWAS, as well as other bilateral platforms were committed to the challenges of peacebuilding in the region.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has several initiatives towards addressing the peacebuilding related problems in the Sahel-Sahara region. For instance, the ECOWAS Regional Climate Strategy and Action Plan is to support Member States to tackle the challenge of the fight against climate change, in particular for the achievement of their commitments under the Paris Agreement. Also very important are ECOWAS Action Plan on Terrorism, ECOWAS Plan of Action against Drug Trafficking, and several conventions and protocols.

At the bilateral level, there are engagements to address peace, security and development challenges in the region including Nigeria-Niger Joint Commission, Paris Peace Forum, US-Africa Summit, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC).

At the national level, the paper has highlighted the role of the National Agency for the Great Green Wall (NAGGW), but suffice it to also note other national response mechanisms the creation of the North-East Development Commission (NEDC), National Security Strategy 2019, the Ecological Fund, NAGGW, Joint Task Force. In other countries of the Sahel-Saharan region, there are outbreaks of military coups and countercoups, breaking of diplomatic relations with former colonial masters, deployment of the private security companies, especially the Russian Wagner to address the threat of terrorism. In the FOCAC Meeting in Dakar in 2021, China and Africa expressed commitment to the development of Great Green Wall, China-Africa Green Envoys Programme, the China-Africa Green Innovation Programme and so on with Beijing pledging 40 Billion US Dollar (Chinese Embassy in Nigeria, 2021). In the much recent US-Africa Summit, the United States pledged

to commit $55 billion to the African continent over the next three years, especially to support the AU's Agenda 2063 relating to investment in human capital, infrastructure, agriculture, health systems, and security towards advancing shared U.S. and African priorities (Usman, Ovadia and Abayo, 2022).

CONCLUSION: MAKING THE GREAT GREEN WALL INITIATIVE WORK FOR PEACEBUILDING IN NIGERIA

This four parts paper have analyzed the Great Green Wall Initiative of the African Union Commission for the Sahel-Sahara region by examining whether peacebuilding was mainstreamed into it at inception or not. It proceeded to review its potentials as a peacebuilding mechanism considering the fact that it was conceived to address existing threats to freedom from want resulting from climate change. It argued despite the conception, the region still faces challenges of extreme poverty, food insecurity, forced human displacements, resource-based conflict and criminality which are caused by and the effects of the farmer-herder conflicts and other activities of terrorist organisations including the Boko Haram, Islamic State of the West African Province (ISWAP), Yan-Ta'adda, and Yan-Bindiga. As the implementation of GGWI continuous, forests are emerging and exacerbating the existing threats emanating from ungoverned spaces in the region which have been used as safe havens for training, terror financing, arms trafficking, kidnapping, and so on. More disturbing to this paper is that the implementation of the GGWI should integrate both the traditional as well as the non-traditional security concerns which was demonstrated not to be so including by international initiatives such as the SDGs and the AU Agenda 2063. Though the National Security Strategy has recognized the importance of balancing security of territories and the people, but it has been clogged by the rent-seeking mentality of the ruling elites. It is however recommended that there is need for the periodic national and continental review of the Great Green Wall Initiative in line with original conception for peacebuilding and also strategise on identifying and determining gains and challenges. This has become critical in view of the fact that the initiative is

increasing attracting global attention and support as exemplified with its specific mention during the 2021 FOCAC Meeting in Dakar, Senegal. Secondly, there is need to harmonise and fuse the implementation of traditional and non-traditional security in the GGWI as highlighted in Nigeria's National Security Strategy (2019) – kinetic and non-kinetic approaches.

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