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NIGERIA: PROTECT AND DIALOGUE WITH PEACEFUL PROTESTERS

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The African Diaspora Congress (ADC), a coalition of the various groups and concerned citizens from Africa and African Diaspora, is deeply troubled by the ominous situation in Nigeria, Africa's most populous country. Various sources have confirmed that on October 20, 2020, armed men alleged to be soldiers opened fire on peaceful youth protesters in Nigeria's largest city, Lagos, killing and wounding several protesters. The ADC condemns in the strongest terms these killings and violent engagement with peaceful protesters.

Spontaneous nationwide protests over the impunity and brutality of a notorious police unit known as the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) had erupted on October 08, triggered by the police killing of a young man. Protesters called on the Nigerian Government to disband SARS, using the social media hashtag #EndSARS to rally people. Although the government announced the disbanding of SARS and future police reforms on October 8, the youths were dissatisfied with the promises since this was about the fourth time such announcement was made in the past without any action. Insisting that the announcement did not go far enough, the youths requested government consideration of other related issues including justice for the families of victims of police brutality, retraining of SARS officers before re-absorption into other police formations, and setting up of an independent body to investigate cases of police brutality. Furthermore, the youths expressed their frustration over years of corruption and bad governance in the country.

The African Diaspora Congress (ADC) urges the Nigerian government to act with restraint to ensure that the lives of unarmed protesting youths are always protected. The government should reassure its citizens by bringing to justice all those involved in the killing of peaceful protesters. Besides, we urge the government to conduct good faith negotiations with the protesters as soon as possible to restore order. The right to peaceful protest is a benchmark of democratic governance and Nigerian youths reserve that right under international law. The ADC upholds that government is instituted to cater for the welfare of the people, and no one deserves to die for demanding reforms from government. The rule of international law and decency applies to all African leaders and governments without exception. Dialogue now!

Sincerely,

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