

# Public Statement

Passed by International Secretariat

Secretariat Dec No. cclp/ 00010/2009-2010

Dated 17<sup>th</sup> Sep 2009

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## PUBLIC STATEMENT ON UNIVERSITY UNIONS INDUSTRIAL ACTION AFFECTING STUDENTS EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

The Global Civil Society CCLP Worldwide, the custodian of the EDUCATION CHARTER INTERNATIONAL, observes with great concern the industrial action launched in early July by the three registered trade unions in Nigerian universities, that has paralysed teaching, research and administration in federal and state universities in Nigeria.

The unions involved are the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Senior Staff Non-Academic Union (SSANU) and Non-Academic Staff Union of Universities (NASU). Private universities are not affected by the action because they do not allow unions to operate.

The current face-off between the government and ASUU especially has its origin in 2001 when the two parties failed to sign a negotiated memorandum of understanding articulating the need to improve working and living conditions in Nigerian universities.

Both parties agreed on four things: First, there was an urgent need to reduce the brain drain that is costing Nigerian universities their best academics. It was agreed that lecturer salaries should be increased by about 140% and the high price of crude oil and gas was sufficient to meet the cost.

Second, it was agreed the retirement age of professors should be raised from 65 to 70 years. Most brilliant young graduates today are not interested in pursuing postgraduate studies that would enable them to succeed ageing professors.



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They have different ambitions and career agendas, and prefer to dash out of university with a first degree and plunge into the labour market where they hope rapidly to become millionaires.

Third, the government agreed to substantially increase research funding in universities. It also pledged to put pressure on the private sector to earmark a percentage of profits for research.

Finally, the ASUU obtained a promise to enshrine the principle of university autonomy in the agreement.

One of the highlights of the memorandum was selection of vice-chancellors which has been highly politicised. To reduce government interference, it was agreed that university councils be mandated to select vice-chancellors.

Currently councils send three names of potential vice-chancellors to the University Visitor who may select one of them. This has led to unnecessary lobbying and unhealthy politicisation (University World News, African Edition).

THE ABOVE IS THE BACKGROUND TO THE CURRENT CRISIS AFFECTING UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA.

CCLP Worldwide conscious of the strategic role that education plays in national and manpower development and the negative effects of the university industrial action on the academic pursuit of Nigerian students make the following statement;

1. For ASUU, SSANU & NASU to immediately call off their three months old industrial action and resume negotiation with the federal government.

2. That ASUU, SSANU & NASU as presently composed, should establish a framework in their negotiation, to recognise the peculiar circumstances of the state chapters of their unions and



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recognise the inability of different state governments to match salary payments in federal universities.

3. That resolution of crisis is a give and take process and calls on the university unions to reciprocate the action of the Nigerian government in acceding to three of their four demands.

4. That university unions explore other creative ways of pressing home their grievances, that is potent and effective, other than the annual stike that has contributed in lowering the standards of university education in Nigeria.

5. CCLP Worldwide, recognises the concern and roles that the diferent unions has played in furthering the cause of university education in Nigeria, and identifies with them in all their legitimate struggles to move univeristy education forward, without its attendant negative consequences.

6. Calls on the Nigerian government negotiating party, to as a matter of urgency, return to the negotiating table with the ASUU.

7. For the Nigerian government to seize this opportunity to resolve all concerns of the three unions, and to not just focus on ASUU, but factor in the concerns of both SSANU & NASU, to prevent a situation where the other two unions would cry "blue murder", because their concerns where not factored in.

8. Calls on the Nigerian government to see governance as an on-going process, and CCLP Worldwide frowns at a process whereby agreement reached by past administration (s) would not be honoured by their successor (s).

9. Calls on the Nigerian Governors Forum to nominate a negotiating team to be part of the federal government and university unions negotiating teams, to accomodate the salary structure recommendation by state governments to state universities.

10. In recognition of the strategic role of the federal government in resolving this impasse, CCLP Worldwide calls on the federal government to seize the initiative and establish a confidence building measure to encourage the university unions to return to the negotiating table.



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11. CCLP Worldwide recognizes the strain and difficulties that university students are currently in, and praises the Nigerian Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) and indeed all university students for their steadfastness and abiding faith in upholding discipline in the midst of this trying times.

12. CCLP Worldwide strongly believes that both the government and the university unions should not be demonized, as both party feels justified in their positions and calls on all Nigerians, to use their individual and collective influence to see to the immediate resolution of this crisis.



S/D

Chairman- International Council- Sir Vikrant Singh  
Chairman- World Council- Dr. Elvis C Enyioko



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