

NERCT 2016 Recap

On October 6-7, the Modern Security Consulting Group MOSECON GmbH and its Nigerian partner Kingsyn Crystal Investments Ltd organised the third edition of the Nigeria Emergency Response and Counter-Terrorism Workshop (NERCT). Held in Abuja's Sheraton Hotel, the event brought together over 30 security practitioners and representatives to find solutions that can contribute to improving security in Nigeria.

Both days featured presentations on topics such as counter-terrorism, intelligence, youths in the Niger Delta, critical infrastructure security, or the use of dogs in the security sector. Speakers came from all regions of Nigeria and the world and featured Dr Emmanuel Odikaesieme of Selemma Industrial (Nigeria); Derek Yegambaram of Gelvenor Textiles (South Africa); Nik Wright of MOECON GmbH (UK); Uzoma I. Kingsley, CEO of Kingsyn Crystal Investments Ltd (Nigeria); Yan St-Pierre of MOSECON GmbH (Germany); Elder Dr Chukwunazom C. Obi of Trustlink, and our guest of honor, the NPF spokesperson DCP Don Awunah.

While all presentations generated great discussions, the highlights of NERCT 2016 were the panel discussion Growing Insurgencies in Nigeria: How can the Government restore Security? and the workshop on counter-terrorism. From the panel discussion, three main elements stood out: Empowerment, employment and education. Here, panelists and audience members argued the need for the government to support local initiatives by allowing them to grow and provide its leaders with the space to develop and properly implement these initiatives. Panelists also argued that employment is key to reducing the grievances of many of the militants at the core of the insurgencies. As it stands, joining a militia or taking part in criminal activities is a better way of obtaining revenue than finding a job. Finally, panelists re-affirmed that education is the key. If more people had access to

education, Nigerians would gain another perspective and a better understanding of the problems that plague their country. It would allow them to find solutions and work for better conditions.

The workshop on counter-terrorism focused on the conflict with Boko Haram and the militancy in the Niger Delta. In the Delta, negotiation is the solution according to participants, but more important is the need to identify the real stakeholders. Militant leaders do not represent the community and the government has no credibility, both of which are the biggest hurdles to fruitful and effective negotiations. The latter would be possible with credible representatives and could address the real problems, such as the decaying health of local populations and the environmental disasters destroying the region for the last 60 years. The negotiations must be about the real community grievances and not the money. Once again, the solution comes down to be empowerment.

On the issue of Boko Haram, participants were near unanimous: No negotiations. However, one participant who suggested negotiations did so based on strategic interest: Engaging Boko Haram in negotiations would allow the gathering of intelligence and to buy some time to improve the tactics and strategies of the army. Although the idea of negotiations was turned down, panelists specified that the army should not fight alone and that it needed to include all Nigerian security actors, in order to be more effective.

The underlining topic of the two days of NERCT 2016 was lack of trust. There is no trust in any decision maker, political or otherwise, and limited trust in outside actors, whether they be public or private. Restoring that trust begins with empowerment and education, but more importantly, it begins with Nigerians taking control of their own institutions and country.

NERCT 2016 fully exceeded the expectations of the organisers

and confirmed the growing importance and credibility of the event. The organisers would once again like to thank its sponsors and supporters for this event, especially Gelvenor Textiles, and the people that made NERCT happen: Uzoma Kingsley, Queen Ugonna Uzoma, Uwana Edet and Onyeka Odikaesieme. We thank you for all your efforts and hope you will join us again for NERCT 2017.

The timeline of NERCT 2016 is available on Twitter using the hashtag #NERCT16.