

of radio air play, interviews with performers, introduction of new performers, concert promotions, and publicity that promotes the sale of music, concert tickets, ring tones, music videos, and associated merchandise;

Whereas committees in the Senate and the House of Representatives have previously reported that “the sale of many sound recordings and the careers of many performers have benefitted considerably from airplay and other promotional activities provided by both noncommercial and advertiser-supported, free over-the-air broadcasting”;

Whereas local radio broadcasters provide tens of thousands of hours of essential local news and weather information during times of national emergencies and natural disasters, such as on September 11, 2001, and during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, as well as public affairs programming, sports, and hundreds of millions of dollars worth of time for public service announcements and local fund raising efforts for worthy charitable causes, all of which are jeopardized if local radio stations are forced to divert revenues to pay for a new performance fee;

Whereas there are many thousands of local radio stations that will suffer severe economic hardship if any new performance fee is imposed, as will many other small businesses that play music including bars, restaurants, retail establishments, sports and other entertainment venues, shopping centers, and transportation facilities; and

Whereas the hardship that would result from a new performance fee would hurt businesses in the United States, and ultimately the consumers in the United States who rely on local radio for news, weather, and entertainment, and such a performance fee is not justified when the current system has produced the most prolific and innovative broadcasting, music, and sound recording industries in the world: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That Congress should not impose any new performance fee, tax, royalty, or other charge relating to the public performance of sound recordings on a local radio station for broadcasting sound recordings over the air, or on any business for such public performance of sound recordings.

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 5—SUPPORTING THE GOALS AND IDEALS OF THE INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT

Mr. CARDIN submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. CON. RES. 5

Whereas, in recognition of the African Diaspora, on December 23, 2013, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 68/237, designating the decade commencing on January 1, 2015, and ending on December 31, 2024, as the “International Decade for People of African Descent”, with the theme “People of African descent: recognition, justice and development”;

Whereas the African Diaspora is expansive, spanning across the globe from the Americas and the Caribbean to Asia and Europe, with persons of African descent having had a historical presence and currently residing on every continent;

Whereas the historical bonds and shared experiences that tie the African continent with the world must be recalled;

Whereas the global contributions of people of African descent must be recognized as a means of preserving that heritage;

Whereas the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, done at Helsinki August 1, 1975, states that “participating States will respect human rights and fundamental freedoms . . . for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion”;

Whereas the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Organization of American States, and other international organizations have undertaken efforts to address the human rights situation of people of African descent;

Whereas, on December 10, 2014, United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations Samantha Power stated, “The United States comes to the International Decade for People of African Descent with a full and robust commitment to ensuring the rights of persons of African descent, and to combating racism and discrimination against them.”; and

Whereas a central goal of the International Decade for People of African Descent is to strengthen national actions and regional and international cooperation for the benefit of people of African descent in relation to the full enjoyment of economic, cultural, social, civil, and political rights for people of African descent; the participation and integration of people of African descent in all political, economic, social, and cultural aspects of society; and the promotion of greater knowledge of, and respect for, the diverse heritage and culture of people of African descent; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That Congress—

(1) supports the goals and ideals of the “International Decade for People of African Descent”;

(2) encourages the recognition and celebration of the collective history and achievements made by people of African descent;

(3) reaffirms the importance of inclusion and the full and equal participation of people of African descent around the world in all aspects of political, economic, social, and cultural life;

(4) recognizes bilateral and multilateral efforts to promote democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, including those efforts that target the eradication of poverty, hunger, and inequality; and

(5) reaffirms the commitment of Congress to address racism, discrimination, and intolerance in the United States and around the globe.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 252. Mr. MCCONNELL (for Mr. MENENDEZ) proposed an amendment to the resolution S. Res. 65, supporting efforts to bring an end to violence perpetrated by Boko Haram, and urging the Government of Nigeria to conduct transparent, peaceful, and credible elections.

SA 253. Mr. MCCONNELL (for Mr. MENENDEZ) proposed an amendment to the resolution S. Res. 65, supra.

SA 254. Mr. MCCONNELL (for Mr. RUBIO) proposed an amendment to amendment SA 253 proposed by Mr. MCCONNELL (for Mr. MENENDEZ) to the resolution S. Res. 65, supra.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 252. Mr. MCCONNELL (for Mr. MENENDEZ) proposed an amendment to the resolution S. Res. 65, supporting efforts to bring an end to violence perpetrated by Boko Haram, and urging the Government of Nigeria to conduct

transparent, peaceful, and credible elections; as follows:

Strike all after the resolving clause and insert the following: “That the Senate—

(1) condemns Boko Haram for its violent attacks, particularly the indiscriminate targeting of civilians, especially women and girls, and the use of children as fighters and suicide bombers;

(2) stands with—

(A) the people of Nigeria in their right to live free from fear or intimidation by state or nonstate actors, regardless of their ethnic, religious, or regional affiliation;

(B) the people of Cameroon, Chad, and Niger who are increasingly at risk of becoming victims of Boko Haram’s violence; and

(C) the international community in its efforts to defeat Boko Haram;

(3) supports the Abuja Accord, and calls on candidates, party officials, and adherents of all political movements to comply with the code of conduct spelled out therein, by refraining from any rhetoric or action that seeks to demonize or delegitimize opponents, sow division among Nigerians, or otherwise inflame tensions;

(4) condemns any and all abuses of civilians by security forces of the Government of Nigeria;

(5) urges the Government of Nigeria to—

(A) adhere to the new timeline for elections announced by INEC on February 7, 2015;

(B) refrain from using security concerns as a pretext for impeding the democratic process and using the security apparatus for political purposes in connection with the elections;

(C) ensure elections are credible, transparent, and peaceful;

(D) prioritize the safety and security of Nigerians vulnerable to Boko Haram attacks;

(E) implement a comprehensive, civilian security-focused response to defeat Boko Haram that addresses political and economic grievances of citizens in the north;

(F) improve the capacity and conduct of Nigeria’s security forces, including respect for human rights, and take steps to hold accountable through a transparent process those members of the security forces responsible for abuses;

(G) recognize that security forces are intended to protect the safety and security of all citizens equally; and

(H) cooperate with regional and international partners to defeat Boko Haram;

(6) urges all Nigerians to engage in the electoral process, to insist on full enfranchisement, and to reject inflammatory or divisive rhetoric or actions; and

(7) reaffirms that the people of the United States will continue to stand with the people of Nigeria in support of peace and democracy.

SA 253. Mr. MCCONNELL (for Mr. MENENDEZ) proposed an amendment to the resolution S. Res. 65, supporting efforts to bring an end to violence perpetrated by Boko Haram, and urging the Government of Nigeria to conduct transparent, peaceful, and credible elections; as follows:

Whereas Nigeria is the most populous nation in Africa, with the largest economy;

Whereas the Governments of the United States and Nigeria have had a strong bilateral relationship, and Nigeria has been a valued partner of the United States since its transition to civilian rule;

Whereas the Government of Nigeria is currently confronted with threats to internal security by terrorists, insurgents, and communal violence that have caused considerable population displacement, and at the

same time must administer transparent and peaceful elections with a credible outcome;

Whereas the government and those who aspire to hold office in Nigeria must demonstrate the political will to address both of these challenges in a responsible way, including by ensuring full enfranchisement, with particular emphasis on developing a means for enfranchisement for the hundreds of thousands displaced by violence;

Whereas the members of Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad, commonly known as Boko Haram, have terrorized the people of Nigeria with increasing violence since 2009, targeting military, government, and civilian sites in Nigeria, including schools, mosques, churches, markets, villages, and agricultural centers, and killing thousands and abducting hundreds of civilians in Nigeria and the surrounding countries;

Whereas the Department of State named several individuals linked to Boko Haram, including its leader, Abubakar Shekau, as Specially Designated Global Terrorists in 2012, and designated Boko Haram as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) in November 2013;

Whereas, in May 2014, the United Nations Security Council added Boko Haram to its al Qaeda sanctions list, and on January 19, 2015, the United Nations Security Council issued a presidential statement condemning the recent escalation of attacks in northeastern Nigeria and surrounding countries and expressing concern that the situation was undermining peace and security in West and Central Africa;

Whereas Boko Haram calls for the universal implementation of what it considers "pure" Shari'ah law, has called on all Christians to leave northern Nigeria, and perpetrates targeted violent attacks against Christians, churches, schools, mosques, and Muslim critics;

Whereas the over 200 school girls abducted by Boko Haram on April 14, 2014, from the Government Girls Secondary School in the northeastern state of Borno, whose kidnapping sparked domestic and international outrage spawning the Twitter campaign #BringBackOurGirls, are still missing;

Whereas the militant group is an increasing menace to the countries along Nigeria's northeastern border, prompting the African Union, the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the European Union, and the United Nations Security Council to recognize that there must be a regional response;

Whereas the United States Government has stepped forward to offer assistance through intelligence sharing, bilateral and international sanctioning of Boko Haram leaders, counterterrorism assistance through the Global Security Contingency Fund program for countries in the region to counter the militant group, and humanitarian services to populations affected by and vulnerable to Boko Haram violence;

Whereas Boko Haram emerged partially as a response to underdevelopment in northeastern Nigeria, and inequality, elite impunity, and alleged human rights abuses by security forces may be fueling anti-government sentiment;

Whereas it is clear that a military approach alone will not eliminate the threat of Boko Haram, and gross human rights abuses and atrocities by security forces causes insecurity and mistrust among the civilian population;

Whereas it is imperative that the Government of Nigeria implement a comprehensive, civilian security focused plan that prioritizes protecting civilians and also addresses legitimate political and economic grievances of citizens in northern Nigeria;

Whereas Nigeria is scheduled to hold national elections in the coming weeks, and the elections appear to be the most closely contested in Nigeria since the return to civilian rule;

Whereas election-related violence has occurred in Nigeria in successive elections, including in 2011, when nearly 800 people died in clashes following the presidential election;

Whereas President Goodluck Ebele Azikiwe Jonathan, General Muhammadu Buhari, and other presidential candidates pledged to reverse this trend by signing the "Abuja Accord" on January 14, 2015, in which they committed themselves and their campaigns to refraining from public statements that incite violence, to running issue-based campaigns that do not seek to divide citizens along religious or ethnic lines, and to supporting the impartial conduct of the electoral commission and the security services;

Whereas Secretary of State John Kerry visited Nigeria on January 25, 2015, to emphasize the importance of ensuring the upcoming elections are peaceful, nonviolent, and credible;

Whereas, despite the Nigerian Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) views that preparations were "sufficient to conduct free, fair and credible elections as scheduled," at the repeated urging of security officials, INEC announced on February 7, 2015, the postponement of the elections by six weeks, and elections will now take place on March 28 and April 11, 2015;

Whereas tensions in the country remain high, and either electoral fraud or violence could undermine the credibility of the upcoming election;

Whereas the people of Nigeria aspire for a fair, competently executed, and secure electoral process, as well as an outcome that can be accepted peacefully by all citizens; and

Whereas it is in the best interest of the United States to maintain close ties with a politically stable, democratic and economically sound Nigeria: Now, therefore, be it

SA 254. Mr. McCONNELL (for Mr. RUBIO) proposed an amendment to amendment SA 253 proposed by Mr. McCONNELL (for Mr. MENENDEZ) to the resolution S. Res. 65, supporting efforts to bring an end to violence perpetrated by Boko Haram, and urging the Government of Nigeria to conduct transparent, peaceful, and credible elections; as follows:

Insert after the seventh whereas clause of the preamble the following:

Whereas Boko Haram calls for the universal implementation of what it considers "pure" Shari'ah law, has called on all Christians to leave northern Nigeria, and perpetrates targeted violent attacks against Christians, churches, schools, mosques, and Muslim critics;

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on February 24, 2015, at 9:30 a.m., in room SR-328A of the Russell Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled "The Agricultural Act of 2014 implementation after one year and Farm Credit Administration pending nominations."

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Armed Services be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on February 24, 2015, at 9:30 a.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on February 24, 2015, at 10 a.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on February 24, 2015, at 2 p.m., in room SR-253 of the Russell Senate Office Building to conduct a subcommittee hearing entitled "U.S. Human Exploration Goals and Commercial Space Competitiveness."

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on February 24, 2015, at 10 a.m., in room SD-366 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on February 24, 2015, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a hearing entitled "Review of Resources, Priorities and Programs in the FY 2016 State Department Budget Request."

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Finance be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on February 24, 2015, at 10 a.m., in room SD-215 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled "Tax Reform, Growth and Efficiency."

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions be authorized to meet