

MegaCity

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Scholars from Nigeria and South Africa have urged African leaders to produce sufficient food and stop over dependence on the West for such.

The scholars made the disclosure recently at a conference tagged: 'Russia-Ukraine Crisis and Its Impact on Africa', which was held at the Department of African Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Lagos.

Professor Aaron Tshidzumba, Deputy Dean, Faculty of Humanities, North West University, South Africa, admonished African countries to stop attributing the war between Ukraine and Russia to the cause of food scarcity on the continent but rather they should machinery in motion to produce sufficient food for their people.

Professor Tshidzumba said the conference was organised by one of them, Professor Victor Ojokorotu, who is a lecturer at the University in South Africa but a Nigerian.

Ukraine-Russia war

"We came together to discuss the crisis between Ukraine and Russia and how the war has affected food protection in Africa.

"We are six professors who came with him to present our academic papers that can assist research and determine whether African countries are involved in the crisis between the two countries, as for me, we are not involved."

Professor Tshidzumba wondered why African countries are being mentioned in the war taking place thousands of kilometres away.

"I don't see why we should attribute the war to the lack of not having enough food in Africa. The papers we are going to present tried to solve this.

"We brought the Consulate General of South Africa to foster unity between University of Lagos, Nigeria and South Africa and to also have exchange of students in the area of scholarships, visa and cultural exchange between the two countries.

"In South Africa we don't see the reason why Ukraine and Russia should be using our names in their war, that they are bringing food to Africa.

Grains to Russia

"In South Africa we are shipping grains to Russia and to the Middle East. We have food in Africa. We Africans suffered a lot during colonisation; there is also food in Nigeria. Why are they using our names in the war? On our continent we have a lot of seedlings that we are using for agriculture. They can buy grains from us rather than using our continent as an example of the effects of the conflict.

"In Africa; the two countries are very important. Nigeria has the largest economy and South Africa is second. If the two countries complement each other we can change Africa, rather than competing, we don't need to compete, South Africa is into tin and Nigeria is blessed with oil, both countries can be a blessing to smaller countries in Africa and not depend on the west.

Nigerian, S'African Scholars To African Leaders: You can't blame Russia-Ukraine war for food scarcity

●Discourage over-dependence on West



Some of the participants at the events

"I want more of this collaboration, we want to bring students from South Africa to Nigeria, we only bring students from Nigeria to South Africa to have experience of Nigeria to supplement each other not oppress each other that's why we are in Nigeria. Through exchange of programmes we can end xenophobic attacks; each country is to expose our youths to our culture. Presently we don't understand culture and Nigerians don't understand South African culture as well."

Exchange programmes

He added: "They who are the senior citizens are exchanging programmes between themselves, they should be exchange programmes from primary schools to high school, celebrating events together the issues of xenophobic wouldn't be there after 10 years.

"Unfortunately, the people of my generation didn't create such avenues for exchange of programmes between our countries. During apartheid we were not allowed to cross borders, when you come to my country you will copy something, if I come to yours I will also copy something good.

"In South Africa we don't have xenophobia in our language, it's the West who formed it and brought it to us. Even in our native language we don't have the word xenophobia. Nigeria supported us and other African countries, but it was the West that came to separate us and that's the problem we are facing. We the academicians can design programmes for the young ones of both countries and Africa will become the best continent for the West to emulate."

Xenophobic attacks

The South African Consul General, Doctor Bobby Moroe on his part said the exchange of academic programmes, ideas and cultures between Nigeria and South Africa will put an end to xenophobic attacks.

He said it will no longer be difficult for Nigerians to secure students' visas and promised to make it easier because by doing that, both countries will benefit from each other's academic ideas and impact it to the new generations.

"We are going to organise a food competition about who cooks the best jollof rice," he added.

According to Professor Muyiwa Falaiye, Director of the Institute of African and Diaspora Studies, University of Lagos: "Ordinarily, we would have thought we have no business with the Ukraine and Russia war

"Unfortunately, every little problem in Africa is now blamed on the Ukraine and Russia war rightly or wrongly. The high inflation, unemployment and all sorts of things people now attributed to the war between the European nations."

He said: "The continent of Africa is as important and as endowed as it is. We are depending on Russia and Ukraine to provide basic food for its citizenry. Grain shortage is the order of the day and is now being blamed on the Ukraine and Russia war. Before the war Ukraine was the major supplier of wheat to Africa and that supply has now been blocked. The conference has afforded us the opportunity to think on social security, food security and environmental security since the Russia-Ukraine war started, it may be convenient to blame the war, but these are the problems Africa has had to grapple with previously. It only became more prominent since Russia invaded Ukraine last February because of poor planning of our leaders generally.

"Unfortunately, this will stay with us for a long time, because we don't know when the war will end. The conference I thought would give us fresh ideas on how we can eat with each other in Africa and South South Cooperation and develop our agriculture to be self-reliant and

self-sufficient. The conference is very important.

Internal crisis

"The internal crisis in Nigeria has nothing to do with the Russia-Ukraine war; we have the Boko Haram conflict, the climate change problem, and banditry that's made it impossible for farmers to go to farms. I wonder why we didn't approach all these at the beginning? Now they have made it impossible for people to have access to their lands. These are what scholars; academics assist government by providing insight through research no society develops without the contribution of its academia's. This is important for us as an institute that can assist the government and society at large.

"Countries bordering the Sahel should collaborate with others to prevent the inclusion of the terrorists, over the last few months you will notice that the jihadist had been pushing upwards Togo and the coast of West Africa, they should all come together to fight the insurgents, because one country cannot fight them alone. Because of the porous borders Jihadists are able to move freely from one country to another. It is important that African countries collaborate and corroborate to be able to fight the war posed by Islamic State Jihadists and other terrorists running riot across the continent."

Convener

Earlier, the convener of the conference, Professor Victor Ojokorotu, who is the Deputy Director School of Government Studies, North West University, South Africa, said he decided to bring the conference to Nigeria because of the love he has for his country.

"The conference is another opportunity to cement the relationship between Nigeria and South Africa, aside from that there is an arrangement between Glotan Research Services and the University of Lagos, we felt we needed to bring it here so that scholars from both countries can learn from each other and brainstorm.

"The Russia-Ukraine war should be Africa's independence, because Africa is self-sufficient the impact would not have been as severe compared to what we are experiencing today. It is because Africa is over dependence, especially on the developed world, because a majority of the countries on the continent depend on Russia and Ukraine for food security.

"The questions is can Africa be self-sufficient in terms of food security? Which is one of the reasons for this conference and the impact wish I which Africa can produce wheat that would be self-sufficient that would increase in trade relations with the west like that of Russia and Ukraine."