

US embassy's description of Nigeria

On its website, the US Embassy, in a piece of information meant for Americans intending to visit Nigeria, describes the country in very unflattering terms. It harps on two major albatrosses, namely crude infrastructure and poor security. Anyone familiar with the Nigerian terrain knows full well that its performance in these two areas is horrendously low. Thankfully, the embassy says so quite unapologetically. For instance, on health, the embassy confirms that Nigeria has well-trained health professionals but lacks good health facilities. It particularly notes that many medicines are unavailable, including medications for diabetes and hypertension. It says that medicine should be purchased with utmost caution because counterfeit pharmaceuticals are a common problem and distinguishing them from genuine medications may prove difficult.

The expose' also says that Nigerian hospitals often expect immediate cash payments for the health services rendered. It thumbs down the emergency health services in the country, saying that they are practically non-existent, and circumscribed by unreliable and unsafe blood supply for transfusion. It then counsels intending visitors to Nigeria to consider Europe, South Africa or the United States itself for treatments that require such services. It notes, quite sadly, that "ambulance services are not present throughout the country or are unreliable in most areas."

The embassy's observations and comments on water supply in Nigeria are instructive. As it notes, "no areas (in Nigeria) have safe tap water." This is specifically unnerving since pipes, most of them rusted, typically bear water for public consumption from moribund reservoirs throughout the country. By the World Health Organization (WHO) standards, the approved lifespan of water pipes is five years. Sadly, these pipes have hardly ever been replaced since they were laid decades ago, so it is proper to consider pipe-borne water wherever it

exists in the country as unsafe. It is clear that even ice blocks brewed from such unsafe sources are not to be trusted for human consumption. In the areas of roads and safe traffic, the embassy is right on the money in its submission that "roads are generally in poor condition, causing damage to vehicles and contributing to hazardous traffic conditions."

It also berates the public transport system, describing it as unsafe throughout the country. According to it, "public transportation vehicles such as buses and motorbikes are unsafe due to poor maintenance, high speed and overcrowding." Sadly, it is not certain that governments across the country have ever considered the import of this damning description on the US website, otherwise they would have taken concrete steps to make the country a truly modern society. The import of the description is that governance in the country has been held in abeyance over the years. As a matter of fact, this expose throws cold water on the expectations of tourists and other potential investors in the country. It is simply delusional for the government to claim to be in search of foreign direct investment from anywhere in the face of primitive infrastructure, particularly when there is no sign that efforts to change this narrative are in place.

Obviously, the US embassy's description of Nigeria should be seen as a call to action by the country's leadership. They should pull out of the morass of self-delusion: things are not working in the country. On their part, Nigerians must take the task of removing the country's depraved and utterly corrupt politicians from office through the ballot box much more seriously. No truly serious country can be described in the manner that the US embassy has done with Nigeria...

Culled from EDITORIAL, Nigeria Tribune