

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

during the session of the Senate on February 24, 2015, at 10 a.m., in room SD-430 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled "Recalibrating Regulation of Colleges and Universities: A Report from the Task Force on Government Regulation of Higher Education."

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

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on February 24, 2015, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing entitled "Improving the Efficiency, Effectiveness, and Independence of Inspectors General."

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

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on February 24, 2015, at 10 a.m., in room SD-226 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled "Human Trafficking in the United States: Protecting the Victim."

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

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Veterans' Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on February 24, 2015, at 2 p.m., in room SD-G50 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct a joint hearing with the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

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

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Intelligence be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on February 24, 2015, at 2:30 p.m.

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

**SUPPORTING EFFORTS TO BRING
AN END TO VIOLENCE PER-
PETRATED BY BOKO HARAM,
AND URGING THE GOVERNMENT
OF NIGERIA TO CONDUCT
TRANSPARENT, PEACEFUL, AND
CREDIBLE ELECTIONS**

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Foreign Relations Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. Res. 65 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A 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.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I further ask unanimous consent that the Menendez amendment to the resolution be agreed to.

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

The amendment (No. 252) in the nature of a substitute was agreed to, as follows:

(Purpose: To provide a complete substitute)

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.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I know of no further debate on this measure.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there any further debate?

Hearing none, the question is on agreeing to the resolution.

The resolution (S. Res. 65), as amended, was agreed to.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I further ask unanimous consent that the Menendez substitute amendment to the preamble be considered; that the Rubio amendment to the Menendez amendment to the preamble be considered and agreed to; that the Menendez substitute, as amended, be agreed to; that the preamble, as amended, be agreed to; and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The amendment (No. 253) is as follows:

(Purpose: To amend the preamble)

Amend the preamble to read 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 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;