**NOTE 8: THE CONGRESS OF VIENNA AND THE CHANGING NATURE OF DIPLOMACY**

**8.0. THE CONGRESS OF VIENNA (1814-1815)**

The congress of Vienna (1814-1815) is of most significant historical importance mainly to the development of the modern international system and diplomatic practices. For three reasons

1. The congress established a framework for curtailing anarchy and disorder in the international system up until 1914 scholars of English school often argue that a society of state existed in Europe in the 19th century. International conferences (Concert of Europe) to make necessary adjustments to the European order to the balance of interests and power also took place during this period. Small wars occurred but was contained and posed no global threat.
2. It wasn’t until congress of Vienna that a truly organised system of diplomatic practices and norm emerged. The congress of Aix-la-Chapelle which followed the congress of Vienna agreed on a hierarchy of diplomatic representation. Diplomatic procedures were not a function of who represented the most powerful country but rather who had held the diplomatic post the longest. By 1815 diplomatic services came to be viewed as a distinct branch of each government. Diplomacy was increasingly professionalised with common rule, norms and expectations.
3. It also signified the first successful multilateral Diplomacy- a number of countries communicating and negotiating often over the most contentious issues.

**8.1. CHANGING NATURE OF DIPLOMACY**

Diplomacy from pre-Westphalia shares some characteristics with contemporary Diplomacy, particularly in its purpose. Traditional Diplomacy espoused Diplomacy as found in ancient civilisations of Greece, Italy, Africa, India, etc. During this period Diplomacy operated only among few political units; the king/emperor was a central figure in Diplomacy, there was the absence of permanent diplomatic missions or embassies. Contemporary Diplomacy, however, features an institutionalised system of Diplomatic practices and formalised rules of conducts. It transcends the openness of the conduct of traditional Diplomacy to a more overt conduct of Diplomacy. The pattern of Diplomacy is equally changing from the bilateral under traditional Diplomacy to a Multilateral Diplomacy involving more than two states coming together to discuss contentious issues. There are more multilateral conferences nowadays than before under the auspices of the United Nations. These multilateral conferences are now more featured and discussed than bilateral ones. People around the world are more informed about when the African Union will meet, the United Nations’ General Assembly.

The significant change is, however, seen since the end of the 19th century in the conduct, machinery, style and form of Diplomacy. The emergence of non-state actors like individuals, multilateral institutions, terrorist/insurgents groups; coupled with challenges of the new age ranging from climate change, global warming, natural disasters, pollution, etc. Practitioners of contemporary Diplomacy are seasoned diplomats who choose to be diplomats on their own and versed in the knowledge of modern politics. The functions of these diplomats have also expanded from merely the application of intelligence to the conduct of official relations between government to initiating and advising certain policies that are likely to help their countries. They can engage in actual bargaining and negotiations on issues that could resort to peace or war or negatively impact economic progress. Contemporary Diplomats enjoy extensive Diplomatic immunities and privileges different from the traditional Diplomat. They often reflect the cultural values, ideological orientations and portray the posture of their governments

These diplomats are no longer the trained theologians, moralists, philosophers, scholars or orators of the past and they are no longer required to even be eloquent in Latin. They do not have to be handsome and elegant to behold as in the past. They, however, are required to possess similar qualities of good temper, political wit, loyalty and commitment to the assignment for which they were sent. They should be able to execute instructions faithfully, respond adequately to the sentiments of others, be able to recognise their host’s interests and desires and respect the customs and traditions of the host country. The Diplomat must most importantly understand his country’s capabilities and limitation, especially in relations to others.