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To Reduce Fiscal Stress Under Current Macroeconomic Challenges, Restructuring Option Be Considered – Mrs. Ahmed

● **Mrs. Zainab Ahmed**, Honourable Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning (L), with Nigerian Ambassador to US, **Her Excellency Dr. Uzoma Emenike,** during the Minister's visit to the Nigerian Embassy in Washington DC**.**

The Spring Meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Boards of Governors of the World Bank Group (WBG) usually bring together central bankers, ministers of finance and development, private sector executives, representatives from civil society organisations and academics to discuss issues of global concern, including the world economic outlook, poverty eradication, economic development, and aid effectiveness.

Also featured are seminars, regional briefings, press conferences, and many other events focused on the global economy, international development, and the world's financial system.

*The 2022 Spring Meetings events, which held on April 18-24, had the Honourable Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, **Mrs. Zainab Ahmed**, among others, discussed matters of interest on Nigeria particularly and African region in general, some of which **Enam Obiosio** reports.*

In order to reduce the fiscal stress under the current macroeconomic challenges, the option of restructuring should still be put on the table, according to Honourable Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, Mrs. Zainab Shamsuna Ahmed.

Speaking at the meeting with MIGA, a member of the World Bank Group (WBG) that promotes cross-border investment in developing countries by providing guarantees (political risk insurance and credit enhancement) to investors and lenders, she assured that necessary steps are being taken by the government of Nigeria to ensure timely payment of obligations for the transaction.

Mrs. Ahmed noted that the Nigeria energy sector is critical for sustainable development of the country and the government is committed to on-going reforms targeted at creating enabling environment for private sector investment to thrive.

"Some strategic interventions with regards to that include the unbundling of NNPC, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) forex policy to improve availability of foreign exchange for genuine business transactions, the setting up of the Presidential Task Force on Ease of Doing Business, and the upgrading of the gas master plan to accommodate Nigeria's commitment to the Paris Agreements," she stated.

At the 2022 Spring Meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the WBG, she used the opportunity to appreciate the efforts of MIGA in supporting Nigerian government to strengthen investor's confidence in the country's economy.

"We are also delighted to acknowledge the outbound portfolio as well and we should call on you to do more of such transactions to support the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) objectives and promote regional development," she stated.

According to her, Nigeria needs a sustainable energy mix to adequately address the national demand to effectively drive growth and we invite MIGA to look into investment in Nigeria's renewable energy and create opportunities for value chain development in the country. This, in addition, can help Nigeria to create jobs and target the problem of unemployment.

Mrs. Ahmed encouraged MIGA to do more and widen the scope of sector engagements in our country. "We look forward to seeing MIGA deploy more innovative instruments such as the

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To Reduce Fiscal Stress Under Current Macroeconomic Challenges, Restructuring Option Be Considered – Mrs. Ahmed

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International Development Association (IDA) Private Sector Window (PSW), and the IDA MIGA Guarantee Facility (MGF) to our economy," she also stated.

She recalled her meeting with MIGA at the 2021 Annual Meetings; there were discussions on the possibility of exploring the option of restructuring the Azura Project to review the terms in view of persistent challenge with foreign exchange and timely payments.

"The meeting also discussed the possibility of MIGA expanding its scope of operation in Nigeria, and explore investments in priority economic sectors to include digital infrastructure, agriculture and transportation. We would appreciate an update on this," she stated further.

MIGA protects investment against non-commercial risks and can help investors obtain access to funding sources with improved financial terms and conditions.

A key guarantee of the Agency in Nigeria is the Azura Edo IPP Power Plant to tune of US$492 million dollars. The Azura Edo Power Project consist of the construction, operation and maintenance of a 459 megawatts gas-fired, open cycle power plant in Edo State. It also includes the construction of 330 KV transmission line.

Mr Axel von Tronsenburg, Managing Director Operations of the World Bank Group**,** with **Mrs. Zainab Ahmed**, Honourable Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning

Strive For Delicate Balance In Safeguarding Recovery, Containing Inflation, Protecting Vulnerable, While Rebuilding Fiscal Buffers – Ahmed

On behalf of the African Group 11 (AFG1) Constituency at the 44th meeting of the International Monetary Fund Committee (IMFC), the Honourable Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, Mrs. Zainab Ahmed called on policymakers to strive for the delicate balance in safeguarding the recovery, containing inflation, and protecting the vulnerable, while rebuilding fiscal buffers.

She said this at the recent Spring Meetings in the United States in that global growth is expected to decelerate in 2022, owing to the adverse effects of the Russia-Ukraine war on economic activity, inflation, international trade, and market confidence.

According to her, the ripple effects of this geo-political shock threaten to erode incomes of vulnerable populations in low-and middle-income countries (LICs and MICs) and elevate food and energy insecurity.

"Our Constituency wish to reiterate the need for enhanced access to vaccines, tests, and treatments to help attain the global goal of 70 percent vaccine coverage by end-2022. We call on the Fund to advocate against trade restrictions on vaccines and food to help consolidate pandemic gains and avert starvation," Mrs. Ahmed said.

In her words: "The IMF and other international financial institutions should stand ready to provide affordable financing including in countries hosting refugees to address balance of payments (BoP) pressures created by negative terms of trade shocks.

"Growth in SSA remains constrained by the lingering pandemic, spillover effects from geo-political tensions, and high public debt. The war in Ukraine will further fuel the already high inflation in many countries, with the broad-based rise in the cost of living also compounded by recurrent climate shocks.

She stated: "The risk of social and political tensions, that materialised in some countries in our region, remains concerning. The rise in inflation and borrowing costs will also undermine fiscal sustainability and complicate already difficult debt dynamics.

"We welcome the increase in the Fund's structural budget, to help address these new imperatives. We underscore the need to leverage recently approved strategies on Climate and on Fragile and Conflict-affected States (FCS) and advance work in this direction. We look forward to timely operationalisation of the Resilience and Sustainability Trust (RST) and encourage its flexible use to support resilient growth.

"We urge the G20 to find a timely solution to the significant challenges encountered in the implementation of the CF for debt treatments. We support the emphasis placed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on the need to design credible medium term fiscal frameworks. We stress the need for continued engagement between the Fund and its members to address the longstanding challenges of illicit financial flows and a fair outcome for Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) on international corporate taxation reforms.

"The Fund's bilateral and multilateral surveillance efforts remain critical in providing timely and granular advice to help countries tackle complex challenges. We encourage continued efforts to revamp the IMF's multilateral Surveillance, with specific focus on global spillovers from the war. We look forward to policy guidance and technical support to help developing countries apply the updated IV and early lessons from the IPF.

The Africa Group 1 (AfG1) is one of the 24 Member Constituencies of the 184 Member countries of the IMF. Members of the AfG1 Constituency are are Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Republic of South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Dr. Taufila Nyamadzabo of Botswana is the current Executive Director for the Constituency.

Decline In Crude Oil Production By Nigeria, Libya Impacts OPEC Output In April - Survey

The increase in OPEC's oil output in April undershot the rise planned under a deal with allies, a Reuters survey found, as declines in Libya and Nigeria offset supply increases by Saudi Arabia and other top producers.

The Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) pumped 28.58 million barrels per day (bpd) in April, the survey found, up 40,000 bpd from the previous month and short of the 254,000 bpd increase called for under the supply deal.

OPEC and its allies, known as OPEC+, are slowly relaxing 2020 output cuts as demand recovers from the pandemic. OPEC+ meets on Thursday and is expected to confirm a previously agreed output hike despite the surge in oil prices after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"Probably the view is to maintain the plan," an OPEC delegate said of Thursday's meeting.

The deal called for a 400,000 bpd increase in April from all OPEC+ members, of which about 254,000 bpd is shared by the 10 OPEC producers the agreement covers.

Output undershot the pledged hikes from October to March, with the exception of February, according to Reuters surveys, as many producers lack the capacity to pump more crude following insufficient investment, a trend accelerated by the pandemic.

As a result, the 10 OPEC members are pumping far less than called for under the deal. OPEC compliance with pledged cuts was 164 percent, the survey found, versus 151 percent in March.

The biggest drop in output was in Libya, which at one point in April was losing more than 550,000 bpd from blockades on fields and terminals.

Libya is one of the OPEC members exempt from making output cuts.

Nigerian output posted a 40,000 bpd decline, the survey found, with lower exports than in March. Force majeure remains in place on the Bonny Light export stream.

These outages limited the increase in OPEC's output as top producers followed through on the pledged hike in supply. The biggest rise in April of 100,000 bpd came from Saudi Arabia, the survey found.

Iraq, which reported a month-on-month rise in exports, boosted output by 80,000 bpd.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) followed through on its higher quota and added 40,000 bpd, while Kuwait's output edged up by 10,000 bpd.

Iran, also exempt from making output cuts, has been shipping more to China in 2022 and production rose in April, the survey found, even as talks on reviving its 2015 nuclear deal with world powers have yet to reach a deal.

Production in Venezuela, another exempt producer, edged higher.

Production fell or did not increase in Angola, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon, the survey found, because of a lack of capacity to produce more.

The Reuters survey aims to track supply to the market. It is based on shipping data provided by external sources, Refinitiv Eikon flows data, information from tanker trackers such as Petro-Logistics, as well as information provided by sources at oil companies, OPEC and consultants.

FG Advocates Urgent Actions For Operationalisation Of G20 Common Framework

Apart from urging the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to flexibly apply its Lending into Arrears policy to help provide liquidity support to debt distressed members during crisis periods, federal government of Nigeria has reiterated its call for urgent actions to strengthen the operationalisation of the G20 Common Framework and a debt standstill for its debt relief applicants.

At the 2022 Spring Meetings of the IMF and the World Bank Group (WBG), Honourable Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, Mrs. Zainab Shamsuna Ahmed, made the call at the International Monetary and Financial Committee (IMFC) consisting of 24 members who are Central Bank Governors, Ministers, or others of comparable rank and who are usually drawn from the governors of the Fund's 189 member countries.

In this regard, she said: "We underline the necessity for orderly debt restructuring as debt dynamics have deteriorated."

"The global economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic shock was disrupted by the elevated geo-political tensions, which have lowered growth and setback recovery from the lingering pandemic.

"We are therefore concerned that the knock-on effects of strained global supply chains, fragmented cross border payment systems, and constrained smooth flow of trade associated with the escalating geo-political tension has further heightened uncertainty in our region by raising inflation, eroding incomes, and deepening poverty and inequality.

In this regard, the federal government has continued to call for a stronger response to fight pandemics, improve vaccine access, and strengthen the health systems, especially in our region, avert starvation and remove trade restrictions on food and fertilizers, alongside collaborative efforts to prevent economic and financial deglobalisation.

Considering the rising borrowing costs from the aggressive tightening of monetary policy by major central banks, slowing global economy, and existing vulnerabilities, we are concerned about the impending sovereign debt crisis.

Furthermore, the government has also called on the Fund to explore more active deployment of its precautionary instruments to help provide liquidity support to members and help insure against elevated external vulnerabilities.

This, according to her, should be complemented by other layers of the global financial safety net (GFSN) including regional financial arrangements.

The Committee advises and reports to the IMF Board of Governors on the supervision and management of the international monetary and financial system, including responses to unfolding events that may disrupt the system. Although the IMFC has no formal decision-making powers, in practice, it has become a key instrument for providing strategic direction to the work and policies of the Fund. A number of international institutions, including the World Bank, participate as observers in the IMFC's meetings.

FAAC: FG, States, LGs Receive N725.571 bn For March

The Federation Account Allocation Committee (FAAC) has injected a total sum of N725.571 billion revenue pooled in March 2022 into the economy, sharing it among the three tiers of government and other statutory transfers.

At its virtual meeting on Tuesday, FAAC stated that the N725.571 billion total injection comprised N521.17 billion distributable statutory revenue and N204.402 billion distributable Value Added Tax (VAT) while it also noted that in the month of March 2022, Petroleum Profit Tax (PPT), Oil and Gas Royalties, Import and Excise Duties, and Companies Income Tax (CIT) all recorded tremendous increases.

For the month also, the total deductions for the cost of the collection were N44.411 billion and the total deductions for statutory transfers, refunds and savings were N382.826 billion while the balance in the Excess Crude Account (ECA) was $35.372 million. Of the total N725.571billion, the federal government received N277.104 billion, the state governments received N227.201 billion and the local government councils received N167.910 billion. The littoral states also shared a total of N53.356 billion as 13 percent derivation revenue.

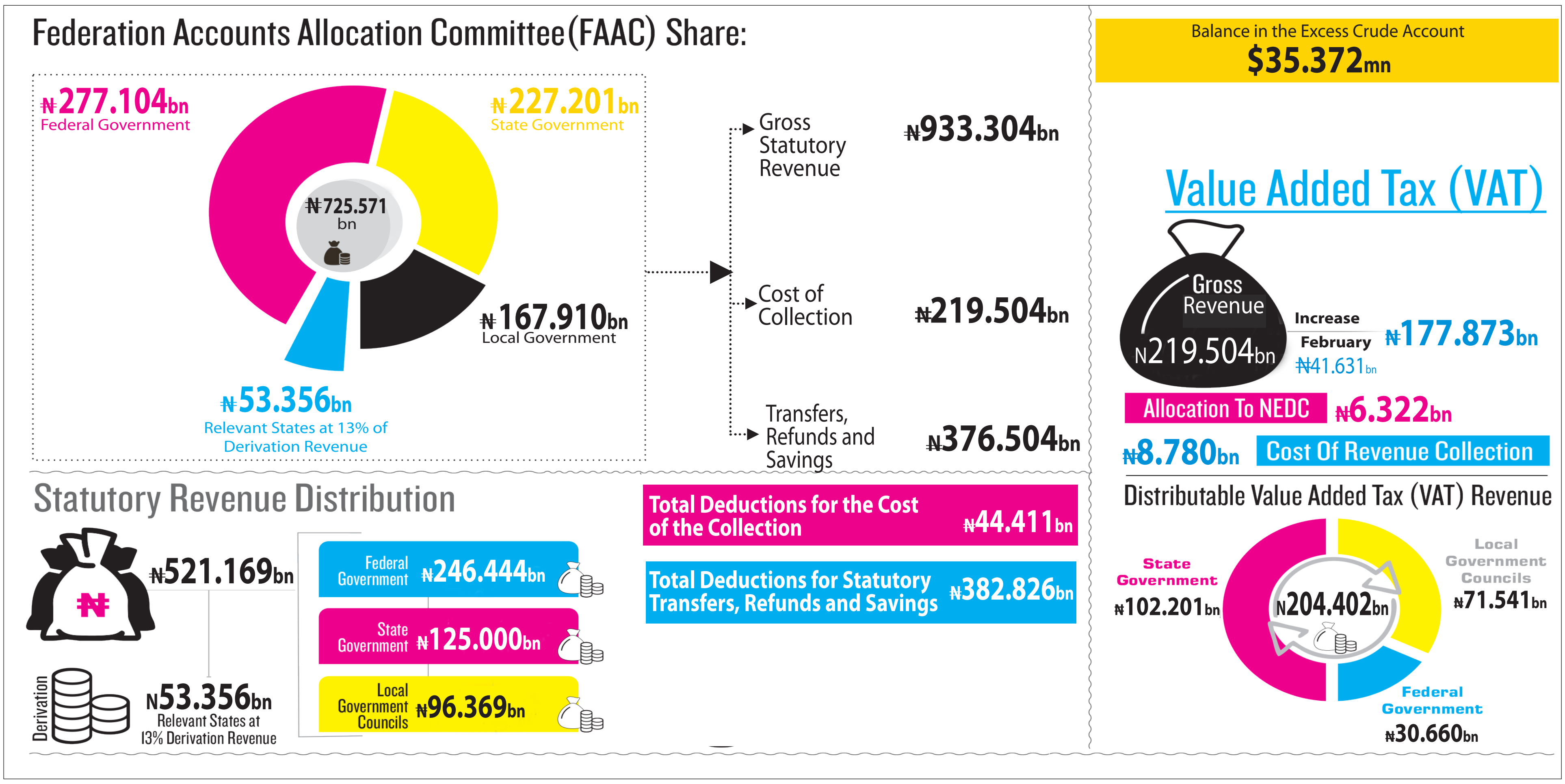
Gross statutory revenue of N933.304 billion was received for the month which was higher than the N429.681 billion received in the previous month by N503.623 billion. The sum of N35.631 billion cost of collection and N376.504 billion being amount for transfers, refunds and savings were deducted from the N933.304 billion gross statutory revenue, resulting in the distributable statutory revenue of N521.169 billion.

From the N521.169 billion distributable statutory revenue, the Federal Government received N246.444 billion, the State Governments received N125.000 billion and the Local Government Councils received N96.369 billion. The sum of N53.356 billion was shared with the relevant States as 13% derivation revenue.

In the month of March 2022, the gross revenue available from the Value Added Tax (VAT) was N219.504 billion. This was higher than the N177.873 billion available in the month of February 2022 by N41.631 billion.

The sum of N6.322 billion allocation to NEDC and N8.780 billion cost of the collection were deducted from the N219.504 billion gross Value Added Tax (VAT) revenue, resulting in the distributable Value Added Tax (VAT) revenue of N204.402 billion.

From the N204.402 billion distributable Value Added Tax (VAT) revenue, the Federal Government received N30.660 billion, the State Governments received N102.201 billion and the Local Government Councils received N71.541 billion.



Nigeria, UK Agree Partnership Should Help Encourage Economic Growth, Trade And Investment

L-R: **Mr. Ben Akabueze,** DG, Budget Office of the Federation, **Mr. Aliyu Ahmed,** Permanent Secretary Finance, Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning, **Mrs. Zainab Ahmed**, Honourable Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, **Mr. Ayo Salami**, Chief Economic Adviser to the President, **Ms Patience Oniha**, DG, Debt Management Office, and **Aisha Omar**, Director IER, Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning.

Both Nigeria and the United Kingdom (UK) have agreed that a partnership between their two countries should help encourage economic growth, job creation and greater two-way trade and investment, helping to support Nigerian and British businesses.

Both the UK and Nigeria have also agreed to set out priority sectors they would like the working group to consider and to give feedback at the 7th Ministerial meeting of the United Kingdom-Nigeria economic development forum.

Nigeria requested that the enhanced trade partnership working group should consider discussing mutual recognition agreements for standards and professional services.

UK representatives confirmed that the UK will set out details of its new trade preference scheme, the developing countries trading scheme (DCTS), later in 2022 and appreciated the Nigerian input into the UK's public consultation on the DCTS. Nigeria updated on the implementation of the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), and welcomed the assistance from the UK on Phase II negotiations training for Nigerian government officials and developing a monitoring, evaluation and learning tool for the National Action Committee to track AfCFTA implementation. The UK agreed to look for continued ways to work with Nigeria to effectively implement the AfCFTA.

Nigeria updated on the implementation of the Nigerian National Quality Policy, including the constitution of a twenty-member Quality Council and its Terms of Reference. Ministers discussed the need to robustly put this policy into effect so that Nigerian products met the required standards for export. Nigeria welcomed the support the UK has provided for exporters since EDF6. This included the UK-Nigeria Tech Hub's Trade Scaleup Bootcamp supporting Nigerian female entrepreneurs with export ready products or services, the virtual Exporters' Dialogue to explain the requirements of UK markets, both delivered in partnership with the Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC), and the support delivered by the now-completed Nigeria Improving Business Environment Programme, which included a demand assessment for quality services for four major value chains, and technical assistance to the Nigeria National Accreditation Service (NiNAS), a key provider of quality services, to gain international recognition as an accreditation body. The UK updated on support to Nigerian exporters of organic hibiscus, sesame and groundnuts through the LINKS ReGen farm initiative which will support 30,000 farmers over the next two years.

Ministers welcomed the case study from Social Lender, a Nigerian recipient of support from the UK Government's tech hub and global entrepreneur programmes that provide mentoring and business support to non-UK based founders to help them expand their business from a UK global headquarters; this showed the benefits of partnering to support Nigeria's dynamic fintech sector.

The UK looks forward to welcoming the signing of Nigeria's e-customs concession agreement by the 17th of October 2022 as well as the start of the implementation of this project before the next EDF. The UK also welcomed confirmation from Nigeria that Nigeria Customs Service will be the lead agency to ensure cross-agency cooperation at ports. Nigeria welcomed the support offered by the UK through the HMRC-WCO-UNCTAD Trade Facilitation programme and through a study tour to be hosted before EDF8.

Both sides welcomed the establishment and initial work of the Finance and Financial Services technical working group and the update from the co-chairs, Scott Devine and Ambassador Shuaibu Adamu Ahmed. The working group agreed to prioritise market access barriers in two areas by forming two sub-groups, one focused on foreign exchange and remittances, and one on mobile money and fintech. The terms of reference of the respective sub-groups include a review of existing regulations, licensing, practices and policy frameworks, and using these as the basis for recommendations towards resolution of identified market access barriers in both countries.

Nigeria welcomed the work of the UK's Financial Sector Deepening Africa (FSDA) programme, which has been supporting the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) of Nigeria, the National Pension Commission (PenCom) and the National Insurance Committee, has run a sustainable insurance challenge fund and is committed to supporting Nigeria's business associations in the fintech sector. Support through FSDA for social bonds and green bonds is being provided to Nigeria's Debt Management Office (DMO) and the Ministries of Finance, Budget and National Planning and Environment.

Both sides welcomed the update from the co-chairs of the legal services technical working group, Helen Grant MP and George Etomi, confirming that the group has discussed feedback on the respective legal services position papers as part of efforts to agree an MoU between the UK and Nigeria in this area. The group also held the first UK-Nigeria legal services capacity building session with the following themes: Building a Global Law Firm: Lessons from the UK - steered by the UK participants, and Understanding the Nigerian Legal Market - steered by the Nigerian participants. Looking forwards, Ministers welcomed that the working group will hold three meetings before EDF8 to discuss regulatory frameworks; recognition of qualifications and technical barriers.

Both the UK and Nigeria welcomed the continued efforts to encourage UK trade and investment into Nigeria. Ministers noted the UK Export Finance (UKEF) offer, as presented by the UKEF Lead for West Africa, who explained that the full range of UKEF facilities are available to support UK exports to Nigeria and that UKEF is able to provide guarantees for financing in Nigerian Naira on a case-by-case basis, meaning that Nigerian companies buying from the UK can access finance in their own currency. UKEF has £1.5billion capacity to support new export business in Nigeria.

Ministers also welcomed the work of the Manufacturing Africa programme, which has supported twelve firms in Nigeria to seek foreign investment. When these deals reach financial close they will generate over $300 million in FDI for Nigeria and create over 5000 direct jobs. Of the firms supported one is a UK firm and two are UK-linked firms. Nigeria also welcomed the support of the LINKS programme, which is supporting 26 companies to obtain investment and is facilitating finance for 341 SMEs, and has also supported the Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa investment promotion agencies with training sessions on due diligence, and with investment brochures and sector selection. Ministers also welcomed the work of British International Investment (formerly CDC) in Nigeria, including the provision of a $100million credit line for First Bank of Nigeria aimed at small and medium enterprises (SMEs), with 30 percent dedicated to women-related SMEs.

Ministers welcomed the 5th Business Dialogue held on 6th April 2022 and noted that the issues raised at the previous business dialogue have been collated and forwarded to relevant government agencies for consideration and action.

Ministers welcomed the removal of the Import Adjustment Taxation (IAT) as an issue raised and resolved through this dialogue. Ministers also discussed the frequent issues raised at multiple business dialogues – namely non-availability of forex for business operations, administration and application of custom duty charges for the importation of innovative pilot technologies to be used for R&D and testing (i.e., not for commercial purposes), and Bureau of Public Enterprise (BPE) consent required to progress a power sector deal.

Ministers discussed further cooperation on World Trade Organisation (WTO) issues to ensure the effective functioning of the global trading system, which relies on fair treatment of all nations and on fostering an environment of open and fair competition.

The UK and Nigeria welcomed the conclusion of the services domestic regulation negotiations, and reiterated their continued commitment to making meaningful progress towards services liberalisation through the WTO. Nigeria is open to learning more on the Trade and Health Initiative.

Nigeria provided an update on its implementation of the revised Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) and Climate Change Act. The UK looks forward to the inaugural meeting of the National Council of Climate Change.

Both sides recalled the commitment at EDF6 to establish a cross-agency technical working group to consider and implement the recommendations of the technical analysis presented by the UK, on how customs duties and VAT removal, on stand-alone solar systems could support job creation, increase government revenue and energy access in Nigeria, thereby contributing to wider economic and climate objectives; and both sides agreed to prioritise this commitment.

The UK minister confirmed continued support to Nigeria to deliver on its admirable and ambitious NDC commitments. The UK Aid funded Manufacturing Africa programme has completed its Green Manufacturing Nigeria report which has highlighted seven key sub-sectors which will play a critical role in the country's green transition and specific policy levers to enable the green sector's growth.

Nigeria welcomed the ongoing support from the UK through a range of climate related programmes, including UK PACT, UKNIAF, the Climate Finance Accelerator Programme, ACE-TAF and embedded climate finance advisors in the Federal Government.

To mobilise significant private sector investment to support the energy transition needed to ensure more on-grid renewable energy is

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PFAs Comply With N5bn Recapitalisation Requirement, Says Pencom

● As Commission, PenOp Mull Free Health Insurance For Contributors

Chiamaka G. Okpala

The National Pension Commission (PenCom) says 20 Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs) have complied with the commission's directive to raise the minimum regulatory capital requirement from N1 billion to N5 billion.

The commission had approved the recapitalisation exercise for the PFAs with a 12-month transition period from 27 April 2021 to 27 April 2022.

PenCom noted that majority of the PFAs met the requirement deadline, the recapitalisation process led to the reduction of the number of PFAs from 22 to 20 with some mergers and acquisitions within the period.

"It is worthwhile to state that 10 PFAs had met the new regulatory capital requirement of N5 billion as at 31 December 2021, while others intensified efforts to meet the deadline of 27 April 2022. This resulted in some mergers and acquisitions, which led to the reduction of the number of PFAs from 22 to 20," the statement reads.

"The exercise became expedient as the value of pension fund assets under management and custody had grown exponentially by 244 percent, from N3 trillion in 2012 (when the previous recapitalisation was done) to N12.29 trillion (as at December 31, 2020). The sustained growth in assets implies greater fiduciary responsibilities that require more operational capacity by the PFAs.

"The urgent need to ramp up PFAs capacity to manage the increasing number of registered contributors and value of pension fund assets under management led to the recapitalisation exercise.

● **Aisha Dahir-Umar**, PenCom DG

"The commission approved the acquisition of AIICO Pension Managers Limited by FCMB Pensions Limited; and the merger between Tangerine Pensions Limited and APT Pension Funds Managers Limited and the subsequent change of name of the merged entity to Tangerine APT Pensions Limited.

In addition, the commission also approved Norrenberger's acquisition of IEI-Anchor Pension Managers Limited, after its acquisition of the majority shareholder, IEI Plc."

With the conclusion of the recapitalisation exercise, PenCom said that stakeholders, particularly RSA holders, should expect increased effectiveness and efficiency as well as improved service delivery from PFAs.

Meanwhile, PenCom and the Pension Operators Association of Nigeria are planning to provide free health insurance for contributors of the micropension scheme. Both parties concluded on the plan after a meeting on ways to woo artisans into the contributory pension scheme (CPS).

Confirming this development, the Managing Director, Access Pension Fund Custodian Limited, Mrs Idu Okwuosa- Okeahialam, said the move was meant to drive inclusion in the scheme.

"The pension operators had a meeting and had resolved to enroll contributors of the micropension scheme with the health maintenance organisations," she said.

Only 73,600 informal sector workers have registered under the CPS as at the end of December 2021, according to figures obtained from PenCom.

The Pension Reform Act, which came into effect in 2004, provides a contributory arrangement in which both the employer and employee contribute into the workers' RSAs.

However, the CPS was only opened to the formal sector since inception, until the federal government officially extended it to the informal sector in March 2019.

As part of the financial inclusion objectives of the government, the PFAs were instructed to ensure the development of the micro pension plan to enable artisans and other self-employed workers to plan for their financial future.

According to the MMP, the informal sector contributors would be allowed to withdraw at least 40 percent of the contributions in their RSAs before retirement.

This is, however, different from what is obtainable with the formal sector in which contributors could only access 25 percent of their RSA balance after four months of being out of paid employment or at retirement.

However, to start withdrawing the 40 percent contribution, the artisan must have contributed to his RSA for a minimum of three months.

PenCom stated, "Every contribution shall be split into two, comprising 40 percent for contingent withdrawal and 60 percent for retirement benefits.

"The contributor may, based on his/her needs, periodically withdraw the total or part of the balance of the contingent portion of his/her RSA, including all accrued investment income thereto."

Nigeria, UK Agree Partnership Should Help Encourage Economic Growth, Trade And Investment

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available and to meet the significant need for access to energy throughout Nigeria, both sides agreed on the importance of continuing to work to resolve issues relating to all current on-grid solar energy deals.

Both sides agreed on the importance of boosting links between the UK and Nigeria's tech sectors. Both sides noted the benefits of the UK's deep capital markets for Nigerian tech companies seeking investment, as well as the advantages of establishing in the UK for tech start-ups looking to expand internationally.

Nigeria welcomed the UK's ongoing support for Nigeria's digital and tech sector, through the digital access programme and the UK-Nigeria tech hub, and welcomed the opportunity to explore these links in more depth at the subsequent tech match-making event to be held on 27th April 2022. This event aims to promote more business-to-business partnerships between UK and Nigerian tech companies.

Ministers agreed to meet again in October 2022 in Nigeria for the eighth UK-Nigeria economic development forum.

At the Seventh ministerial meeting of the United Kingdom - Nigeria Economic Development Forum (EDF)

It was recalled on 26 April 2022, that the Minister for Trade Policy of the UK, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment of Nigeria and the Minister of State Budget and National Planning of Nigeria, held in person the 7th Ministerial meeting of the UK-Nigeria Economic Development Forum (EDF). The meeting was joined by the Nigeria's Chief Trade Negotiator, a representative from the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), the UK's Trade Envoy to Nigeria and Her Majesty's Trade Commissioner for Africa. Ministers confirmed the strategic importance of the dialogue for bilateral economic relations and welcomed updates and progress.

Both sides restated the commitment to enhancing the relationship between Nigeria and the UK and understand that a deep trade policy relationship is in the interest of both countries; because of this, and ahead of the current EDF Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) coming to a close in 2023, ministers agreed to establish an official level working group to explore the benefits of a future UK-Nigeria enhanced trade partnership.

Nigeria, UK In £3bn Trade Pact To Support Small Businesses

Nigeria and United Kingdom sealed a deal in London to promote trade and boost a partnership worth over £3 billion at the Economic and Development Forum (EDF).

Funding and technical support are the recurring challenges faced by micro, small and medium scale enterprises in developing countries like Nigeria but is said that on completion of the deal which will greatly support small businesses in Nigeria, the pact would generate over $300 million in foreign direct investment (FDI) for Nigeria and directly create 5,000 jobs.

Already, both parties had agreed to start discussions on an enhanced trade partnership (ETP) to strengthen trade and high-value investment across both countries.

At the forum, both countries marked increased support for small and medium-sized enterprises in Nigeria, including the UK manufacturing Africa programme, which has helped 12 firms in Nigeria secure foreign investment.

UK Minister for Trade, Penny Mordaunt said that Nigeria is one of the country's long-standing and strategic partners in Africa, and the deal would deepen the investment relationship with Nigeria which is one of the most vibrant and innovative economies on the continent.

"Through the economic and development forum, we can demonstrate how trade is a force for good creating jobs and prosperity and reaffirm our commitment to boost economic ties, support businesses, and grow new markets."

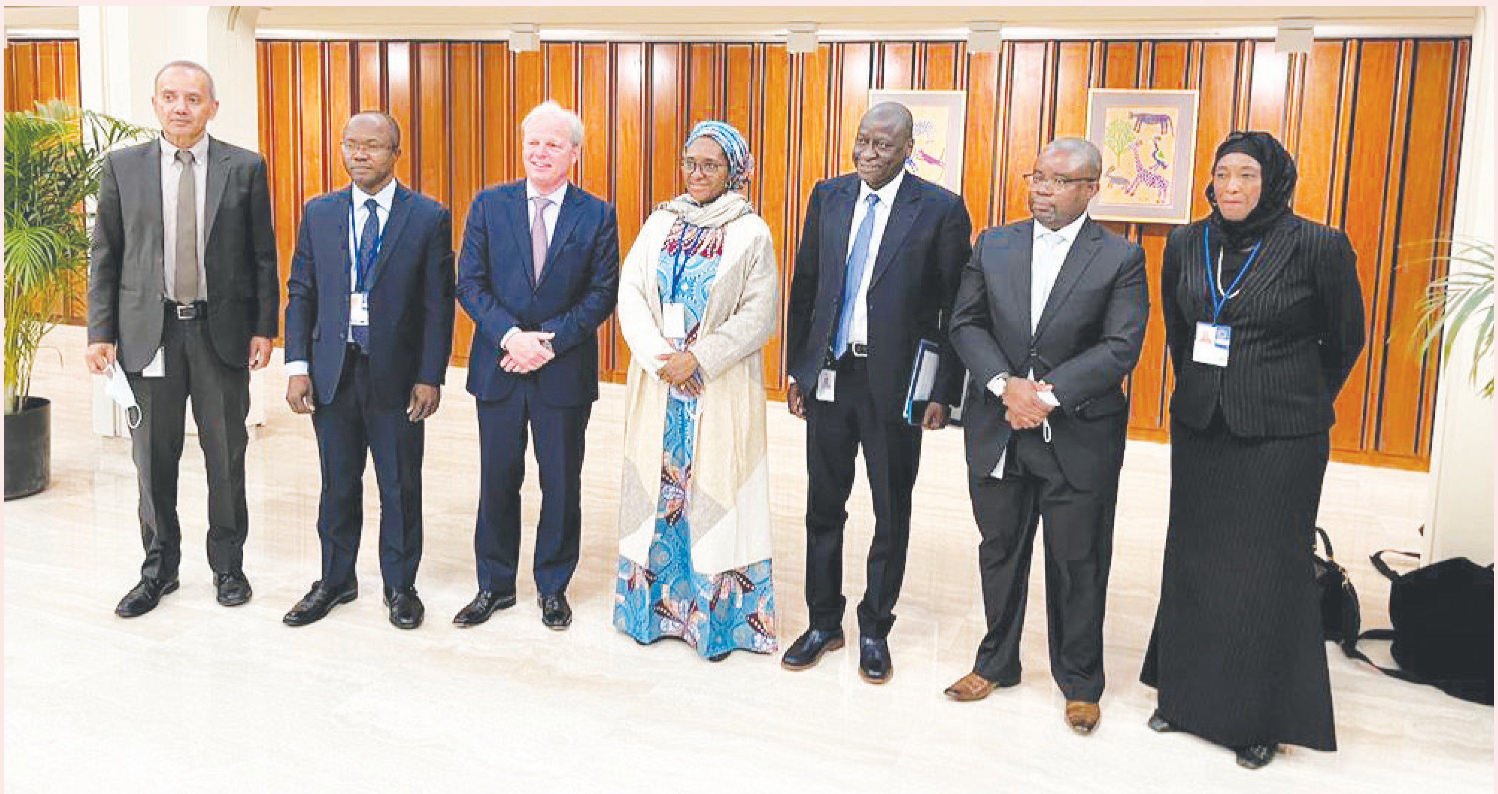
The forum had agreed it would include a tech matchmaking event for technology businesses from both nations hosted by venture capitalist firm LocalGlobe, in collaboration with TheCityUK, TechNation and Innovate UK.

The forum provided businesses with the opportunity to explore potential partnerships and share best practices on how to raise vital development capital and register a business in foreign markets.

Also, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Otunba Niyi Adebayo, assured of the Nigerian government's commitment to implementing reforms that can attract more FDIs into key industries, boost trade and development and create employment opportunities for Nigeria's youth by leveraging technology.

"We welcome the commitment to enhancing the relationship between our two countries today and underscore the significance of deepening our bilateral trade policy relationship in a mutually beneficial manner."

Nigeria Has Channelled Its Debt Financing Into Critical Infrastructure, Says Ahmed



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Nigeria has channelled its debt financing into critical infrastructure that will enhance growth while making tremendous effort in debt transparency and debt reporting, according to the Honourable Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, Mrs. Zainab Shamsuna Ahmed.

Speaking on 'Maximising Growth Amidst Debt Vulnerabilities In Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)' at the 2022 Spring Meetings organised by International Monetary Fund and World Bank Group, she also stated that the government at the same time ensures liquidity and solvency in debt service payments.

According to her, maximising growth amidst debt vulnerabilities requires avoiding unnecessary debt accumulation while channelling debt financing into critical infrastructure to catalyse growth.

"More so, future loan terms must embody greater concessional part and grant element. This will avoid debt balance sheet vulnerabilities due to mismatches – maturity mismatch, currency mismatch, and solvency problems. Nigeria has never had any problem with servicing her debt obligations," she stated.

Mrs. Ahmed said that creating fiscal space through reforming overburdened State-Owned Enterprises is essential – the government has raised electricity tariffs to more cost-effective level while reducing non-essential spending.

She also stated: "Building adequate buffers is very critical for growth and would enable sovereigns to be less exposed to the decline in maturity that happens during crises. The high commodity price due to the ongoing geopolitical tensions is expected to improve the external buffers of commodity exporters in our region and provide policy space."

"Strengthening governance reforms (fiscal rules, management, tax, and customs administration efficiency) would improve fiscal space for growth and eliminating solvency risk for the sovereign's debt payment at all future points, ensuring that current policies (growth, inflation, interest rate) are growth supportive while limiting debt vulnerability due to capital reversal," she said.

On COVID-19, growth-debt tradeoffs, and capacity constraints, the Honourable Minister said that growth remains constrained by the lingering pandemic while debt financing and eventually its accumulation is needed to navigate the pandemic.

She noted that the pandemic marked a build-up of high debt in the financial sector, household, non-financial enterprises, and government sector, creating weaknesses in their balance sheets. This hindered their ability to smoothen consumption and investment and to cushion adverse shocks.

"In that regard, it led to limited capacity to mobilise domestic revenues or propel private investment as government could not increase taxes on already stressed economy and at the same lacked enough fiscal space for growth spending.

In view of the lessons from managing growth-debt; capacity gaps for greater digitalisation, Mrs. Ahmed said: "It is extremely important to channel the debt financing into critical infrastructure to catalyse growth while at the same time creating the fiscal space. Government is creating fiscal space through electricity tariff reform and expenditure rationalization initiatives. Additional, measures under the Strategic Revenue Growth Initiative (SRGI) will improve government revenue and entrench fiscal prudence.

To improve the business environment and mitigate the impact of deficient infrastructure on rising domestic price levels, the government, according to her, has prioritised investment in public utilities, particularly transportation networks, electricity supply, education, and health.

"The Tertiary Institutions' Entrepreneurship Scheme (TIES) is expected to further enhance employment by redirecting graduates towards entrepreneurship development. In addition, the authorities are committed to implement measures that would improve the foreign exchange-generating capacity of the economy," she further stated.

In that regard, the introduction of the 100 for 100 policy on production and productivity would, in her opinion, kick-start a sustainable economic growth trajectory, accelerate structural transformation, promote diversification, and improve productivity in the country.

She believes that Nigeria has the human capital capacity needed while the government is advancing efforts on technological infrastructure for greater digitalisation of government operations. "In this regard, the number of ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) captured on the integrated payroll and personnel information system has been increased to 711 to date, from 459 in 2017, with implications for personnel cost reduction.

"Government has automated most of its operations. Significant portion of the tax payment process has been digitalised and would further grow government revenue. Government for long has been operating the Treasury Single Account. The TSA elements and charges through its e-Collection and e-Payments have been robust," Mrs. Ahmed said.

In her swords: "The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) recently rolled out the Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC), the e-Naira, which is envisioned to enhance the Nigerian payment ecosystem, increase financial inclusion, revenue, and tax collection, aid targeted social interventions, improve remittance flows, and reduce informality, among others. We are optimistic that all this intervention will suffice as a platform for our envisaged growth post Covid-19 Pandemic."

Concerning key tradeoffs, "It is evident that growth in SSA countries remains constrained due to the lingering pandemic. A critical trade-off for us is between borrowing more and risking a debt crisis or choosing austerity and risking a growth/development crisis. Africa's risk of widespread development distress is daunting, and growing and if growth slows, creditworthiness will deteriorate, making debt distress even worse."

On the monetary side, "it is between raising the interest rate, which will contract system liquidity and thus reduce demand pressure in the foreign exchange market, tame inflationary pressure, and attract foreign portfolio investment (FPI), at the expense of raising the cost of credit and reducing the volume of credit to the private sector, and thus stifling domestic growth.

On balance, "the CBN can be adjudged to have remained dovish, leaving the monetary policy rate below the level of inflation to support growth, at the expense of attracting FPI which is considered highly volatile. This is due to the fear of capital flow reversal and associated exchange rate volatility, avoiding financial sector vulnerability.

"On the Fiscal side, in the absence of enough fiscal space, debt financing becomes a good vehicle for growth as accumulating debt can help smooth real activity. But in view of the rising debt vulnerabilities and risks in SSA, countries should ensure debt transparency, efficiency, and effective utilisation of resources in the context of credible growth policy to avoid high debt distress or debt crisis," she said.

Better data and openness will assist policymakers make better borrowing and investment choices, enabling investors and creditors to properly price sovereign risk, and enhance accountability mechanisms in government, boosting expenditure efficiency. "The reason our Constituency is calling for progress on debt agenda particularly, on G20 Common Framework (CF) is that it is vital for addressing elevated debt vulnerabilities.

The Policy Dialogue is organised by the Africa Group 1 Constituency in collaboration with the IMF Fiscal Affairs Department.

Impact Of COVID-19 Pandemic On Our Economy Deepened Pre-Existing Inequalities – Finance Minister

L-R: **Lucy Okpanachi**, Deputy Director, International Development Fund Division, Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning, **Ms Patience Oniha**, DG, Debt Management Office, **Mrs. Zainab Ahmed**, Honourable Minister Of Finance, Budget And National Planning, **Melinda Gates**, Co-chair, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, **Nabila Aguele**, SA, Performance Management and Development Cooperation, a participant, and **Mr. Fidel Odey**, SA, Multilateral, Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning.

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, the impact of the pandemic on our economy deepened pre-existing inequalities, exposing vulnerabilities in social and economic systems. Women and girls were disproportionately affected, thereby widening and worsening gender poverty gap, says the Honourable Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning.

Responding to questions recently while speaking on 'Ensuring an Inclusive COVID Recovery through Investments in 'Cash, Care, and Data', at an event organised by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Centre for Global Development on the sidelines of the Spring Meetings 2022, Mrs. Ahmed noted that before the pandemic, social inclusion was identified key to Nigeria government's effort at poverty reduction.

"This is why 'Investing in people' is a pillar of the federal government of Nigeria's Economic Recovery and Growth Plan. That is why government has made significant increases in capital allocations in human capital related sectors in the last three years despite fiscal constraints and low domestic revenues, to demonstrate its commitment to improving human capital development across the country," she sated.

While highlighting government's general COVID-19 response, Mrs. Ahmed stated: "Our response to the COVID-19 pandemic was primarily aimed at averting a drastic decline in the economy and protecting our most vulnerable – including women and children.

"We quickly mobilised and began implementing an economic sustainability plan and a fiscal stimulus package of N2.3 trillion (about $5.9 billion), prioritising targeted interventions at minimising economic contraction, preventing business collapse and protecting our most vulnerable communities, including women generally, and specifically women owned businesses.

"Through the annual Finance Acts, we have provided tax relief and other support to MSMEs, many of which are women-owned. We also created a special public works programme to employ 774,000 people (in all 774 local governments) and empowerment schemes designed to boost the capacity of women in artisanal employment and MSMEs.

"Through the Jobs for Youth Project we are supporting the creation of jobs, in part through digital training and the provision of start-up capital and entrepreneurship skills for young Nigerians and for women.

"Additionally, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has introduced the N50billion Household and SME COVID 19 Targeted Credit Facility of which N49 billion has been disbursed to small businesses and to over 80,000 households as of June 2020.

"We have also developed targeted recovery programmes (with a gender inclusion lens) such as the COVID-19 Action Recovery and Economic Stimulus also known (Nigeria Cares) and the COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Project (CoPREP).

On the national social safety net programmes, the Honourable Minister highlighted the facts: "Recognising the need to increase the reach and access to key social programmes, to dampen the effects of the adverse economic and health impacts of the pandemic particularly on low-income earners, the federal government committed to both horizontal and vertical expansion of social safety nets benefits by increasing the beneficiaries of the pre-existing household uplifting programme (HUP)- conditional cash transfer to cover mostly the rural poor and introducing the rapid response register (RRR) for COVID-19 cash transfer, which targets the urban poor.

"A deliberate design of these programmes is to target women as the core beneficiaries. The HUP currently has over 96 percent female beneficiaries who are caregivers of the households, while the RRR has over 170,000 women benefiting from the COVID-19 cash transfer. These programmes have a national coverage and the targeting process is ongoing and we anticipate having a larger coverage of women in the coming months," she stated.

In her words: "It is expected that this approach will have two direct effects for these women: (a) smoothen consumption and meet unexpected health care costs; and (b) support micro-enterprises to sustain their businesses to strengthen and build people's resilience.

"Nigeria for Women Project (with support from the World Bank): through this project we have been able to reach over 250,000 rural women with livelihood improvement packages such as livelihood grants, trainings, improved access to markets since 2020. On the point, permit me to acknowledge the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for their support to this and other projects in Nigeria.

On agriculture, she said: "We are addressing prevailing gender gaps in agriculture through targeted support to women farmers who express demand for improved seeds, especially for higher-value cereal crops to help them transition from planting low-value roots and tubers to small-scale irrigation tertiary canals, tube well, and boreholes which accounts for multiple uses of water by women to perform households' activities."

According to her, projects in the education sector, including the new Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment (AGILE), have been adapted to support distance learning and mitigate the risk of children, particularly girls, not returning to school. "Additionally, we are working with the support of the World Bank to re-enroll girls that had dropped out of school due to the pandemic and to keep them in school to complete their secondary education. While they are re-enrolled in school, working jointly with partner ministries such as women affairs, the government has introduced interventions such as life skills and livelihood skills to be able to empower them with the necessary skills they may need once they transit to adulthood.

"We at the Ministry of Finance Budget and Finance are focusing on comprehensive gender mainstreaming across fiscal policy and public financial management. This wholistic approach represents a critical paradigm shift towards systematic and scalable reforms, and leverages the coordination benefits of having the finance, budgeting and planning functionalities under the same federal ministry for the first time in Nigeria's history.

"The interventions being led by the Ministry of Finance, Budget, and National Planning include gender responsive budgeting, and assessments of the gender responsiveness of key fiscal interventions (including fiscal stimulus packages) with specific commitments aimed at improving the safety, livelihoods, and economic status of women and girls.

Mrs. Ahmed also stated: "We are currently developing with support from the United Nations and the European Union a gender responsive integrated financing framework for achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and our national development goals.

On challenges to implementing a 'cash, care, and data' framework for women's economic empowerment in Nigeria and the support is required domestically and internationally to prioritise an inclusive recovery, she stated that prioritising an inclusive recovery will mean prioritising the constraints that all women face in all sectors, whether they are entrepreneurs, farmers, wage workers or even in health and education sectors.

"Funding and gender sensitive fiscal policies are critical, as are credible disaggregate data and impact monitoring and evaluation. Recognising that we are contending with increasing fiscal and domestic revenue constraints, we are prioritising fiscal policies and reforms aimed at not only providing short- and medium-term relief but also at sustainability addressing the longstanding challenge of domestic revenue mobilisation, and work towards improving internally generated revenue, blocking tax leakages, creating new tax sources, and promoting effective tax collection.

According to Mrs. Ahmed, there is need for consolidated mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the benefits of COVID-19 mitigation and recovery measures on women and girls, as well as a need to strengthen broader data systems to ensure they reflect women's and girls' lived realities. This is particularly intensified by the federal nature of the country and the dispersion of programs at the federal, state, and local levels, without a centralised information system.

"Support is required to build a robust gender disaggregated data system to have evidence-based programs and policies in the country. Government and civil society organisations would need support to manage the development and implementation of several women economic empowerment programs, track and rate women's economic empowerment projects/policies/ interventions at the national and sub-national levels.

Addressing women's vulnerabilities in areas such as education and health is also critical, particularly for young girls to ensure they have the necessary education opportunities for their future economic growth. Expanding leadership opportunities for women- as women are often under-represented in public administrations, particularly in senior positions and accountability is another area that Nigeria will need global support.

"We face a challenge when it comes to coordination of programmes. We have quite a number of social programmes in the country focusing on women empowerment, however these are domiciled in different ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs), with and there is need to enhance coordination and structure for integration.

On how Nigeria could ensure that recovery efforts prioritise not only the needs of women, but also the perspectives of women and how the country could ensure progress in enabling more women – especially those who have been traditionally excluded from positions of influence – to access leadership positions and lead policy decision-making, Mrs. Ahmed said: "We need to focus more on not only the economic advancement for women but also increasing the elements of power and agency for our women, including access to social networks, legal empowerment and knowledge rights, as well as intrahousehold bargaining power and decision making.

"Much has been said about ensuring that more women have a seat and a voice at the table. It is now time to act on these good intentions. Ultimately, when you have women in strategic leadership positions both in government and the private sector, programmes and strategies more accurately reflect the perspectives and needs of women and girls, and are better overall.

"There is no doubt that social protection contributes to women's power and agency, particularly when the schemes ensure that women have control over the transfers made as well as control over the income generated by them. Taking these aspects into account and linking these programmes to other services, social protection schemes are probably some of the modalities with the highest immediate impacts on women's economic advancement and empowerment.

"We also need to create an enabling environment, which is important for ensuring the sustainability of development efforts towards women empowerment.

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EDITORIAL

Fragility, Spillovers From Policy Normalisation On The Front Burner

While speaking at the 107th meeting of ministers and governors of the G24 at the 2022 Spring Meetings, Honourable Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, Mrs. Zainab Ahmed, spoke particularly on two urgent issues on which the Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has been battling with for some time - fragility and spillovers from policy normalisation.

We note that the G-24 coordinates the position of developing countries on monetary and development issues in the deliberations and decisions of the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWI). In particular, the G-24 focuses on issues on the agendas of the International Monetary and Financial Committee (IMFC) and the Development Committee (DC) as well as in other relevant international fora.

On fragility which, according to her, has literally defied most of the local solutions, and has increasingly become a major impediment to development, many of our countries are faced with one form of fragility or another arising from both climate and non – climate conditions. The net effect is manifesting in food insecurity, supply chain disruptions and forced displacements, among others.

For instance, in SSA, we have seen the case of Sahel, Horn of Africa and Lake Chad. We believe that a key driver of fragility is the drying up of Lake Chad that had hitherto provided a source of livelihood to 40 million people in five countries. We, therefore, call on the World Bank Group (WBG) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to leverage its convening power to galvanise global support for a regional initiative to recharge the lake.

On policy normalisation, the twin effects of spillovers from tapering in developed countries and surging global inflation on top of the pandemic legacy leave our currencies and exchange rates vulnerable, resulting in upward pressure on foreign debt servicing obligations. Policy choices in dealing with this hydra headed challenges are limited. We, therefore, call on the IMF in particular to assist in expanding the menu of policy choices.

And on 'Deglobalisation And Sovereign Debt Crisis Early Warning Exercise (EWE)', we also note that the dual shocks from the COVID-19 pandemic and elevated geo-political tensions, have strained global supply chains, fragmented cross border payment systems, constrained smooth flow of trade, dampened the recovery momentum, and threaten to reverse gains made in global economic and financial integration.

We are, therefore, concerned that the associated global supply bottlenecks are further heightening uncertainty in our region by increasing food and energy prices, eroding incomes, which is deepening poverty and inequality. As such, the timely delivery of food and vaccines without trade restrictions, remains critical in efforts to bring the pandemic firmly under control, avert starvation, and preserve social cohesion.

Against this background, we call for global cooperation to prevent further economic deglobalisation and prevent a retreat from multilateralism which has conferred immense trade and growth benefits to advanced economies, as well as emerging market and developing economies (EMDEs).

The aggressive tightening of monetary policy by major central banks to contain inflation which intensified on the back of higher commodity prices, present risk of capital flow reversals in EMDEs. As such, we are concerned that the increased risk aversion that has manifested itself through the deglobalisation of financial flows and the flight to safety, will morph into the drying up of funding and liquidity markets, and the sudden stop of capital flows.

At the same time, exchange rate fluctuations will present external and financial stability risks in our region, further dampening growth prospects with adverse feedback loops on inflation. I

n this context, we view timely and tailored Fund policy guidance as critical to help countries calibrate their policy mix to balance the competing objectives of maintaining price, financial, and external stability. We also urge major central banks to clearly communicate their policy interventions to unintended spillovers to EMDEs including in SSA.

We, therefore, note with concern, the risk of a sovereign debt crisis compounded by rising borrowing costs, subdued global growth performance, and pre-existing vulnerabilities. Moreover, additional fiscal pressures from rising commodity prices and the effects of exchange rate depreciation on debt service costs makes the risk of a wave of defaults a concerning possibility.

At the same time, the increased sovereign-bank nexus and rising contingent liabilities that typify crisis periods, brings to the fore, the far-reaching effects of rising debt levels. Moreover, the realisation that higher growth and fiscal adjustments alone may not be adequate to improve debt outlook, is sobering. Against this background, we stress the need for orderly debt resolution considering that more countries are now at high risk or in debt distress.

We wish to reiterate our call for urgent actions to strengthen the operationalisation of the G20 Common Framework and a debt standstill for its debt relief applicants. Once the Common Framework is revamped to deliver on its promises, we see merit in extending its coverage to include vulnerable emerging markets and other low-income countries that are currently ineligible. We also call on the IMF to flexibly apply its Lending into Arrears policies to accommodate debt distressed members in crisis periods.

Regarding domestic debt, Fund technical support would be required to balance competing objectives of debt restructuring to ensure fiscal sustainability and preserve the viability of exposed financial and non-financial corporates. Furthermore, we underscore the need for the IMF to explore more active deployment of its precautionary instruments to help provide liquidity support to members and help insure against elevated external vulnerabilities.

Bank Directors, Staff Not Covered Under Deposit Insurance, Says NDIC

- To Develop Single Customer Platform For MFBs
- Develops SCV Platform To Eliminate Delays In Reimbursing Depositors By MFBs

Musa Ibrahim & Kingsley Benson

The Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation (NDIC) says its Deposit Insurance Scheme (DIS) does not cover insider deposits which are made up of deposits of banks' directors and staff.

According to NDIC, it is to create incentives for the affected group of people to manage their financial institutions in a safe and sound manner as well as ensure good corporate governance practices.

NDIC stated this in a series of tweet on its official Twitter account, where it noted that in the event of bank failure, insider deposits would only be paid after all insured deposits had been fully paid.

The corporation, however, noted that deposits of shareholders are covered since they are not involved in the day-to-day running of their institutions.

The NDIC said that entitlements of staff are settled along with creditors of the bank after all insured and uninsured deposits have been fully paid.

It stated: "The NDIC's DIS does not cover insider deposits which are made up of Banks' directors and staff deposits. Thus, in the event of bank failure, insider deposits are only paid after all insured deposits have been fully paid.

"On the other hand, knowing that their deposits are not protected reduces excessive risk-taking by them.

"Staff entitlements are settled along with creditors of the bank after all insured and uninsured deposits have been fully paid. Meanwhile, individual shareholder deposits in the bank are separate from their shareholdings.

"Thus, in the event of a bank failure, those individual deposits are paid as insured deposits while shareholdings are settled after all insured and uninsured deposits, creditors and staff entitlements have been paid in full."

Similarly, NDIC said that it is developing a single customer view platform to accelerate repayments to the depositors of collapsed microfinance banks.

In cases where the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) revokes the license of some microfinance banks, such bank's customers have issues retrieving their deposits.

The corporation said that its new platform which will address these issues would be deployed to all microfinance banks.

According to Managing Director/Chief Executive of the NDIC, Mr. Bello Hassan, the corporation introduced the single customer view platform in order to strengthen its processes.

He said that the platform would not only ensure rendition of quality, timely and complete data to NDIC by Microfinance Banks (MFBs), but also give complete position of depositors' data at any given time which would go a long way in enhancing prompt reimbursement in case of bank failure.

He, however, said that the corporation would expose the template for the platform to the association with a view to garnering additional inputs towards optimising the noble innovation.

He charged National Association of Microfinance Banks (NAMB), the apex body of all licensed microfinance banks in Nigeria, to promote adoption of sound risk management practices by its members, stressing that it is key to the maintenance of a safe and sound MFB sub-sector.

The president of NAMB, Yusuf Gyallesu, commended the corporation for its continued collaboration with the association and its members in strengthening microfinance bank operations in the country.

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FG Says ARMOR Programme Expected To Increase Non-oil Revenue By N3.8 trn Within 3 Years

The federal government of Nigeria has said that the new initiative to Accelerate Revenue Mobilisation Reforms (ARMOR) is expected to increase non-oil revenue by N3.8 trillion within three years based on the proposed reforms over 2022-2024.

This was stated by the Honourable Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, Mrs. Zainab Shamsuna Ahmed, while focusing on 'Africa's Post-Pandemic Economic Recovery: Insights from Ghana and Nigeria' Carnegie Africa Programme – ONE Campaign recently at the Spring Meetings in United States.

To sustain and upscale the achievements of the Strategic Revenue Growth Initiative (SRGI), it became imperative, according to her, to develop ARMOR meant to leverage the SRGI momentum to concretely address the perennial domestic revenue mobilisation challenges and draw selectively from measures planned under the initiative, with a focus on accelerating targeted revenue mobilisation strategies in the near term.

"Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) subsidies is not going to remain for too long. The Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) 2021 has eliminated subsidies and has set up the time frame for that. On the oil side, the reforms currently being proposed focus on strengthening the transparency of oil revenue flows and are expected to increase revenue flows from oil by about N160 billion annually. This is estimated to increase to about N3.5 trillion when PMS subsidy is phased out in 14 months. All these would be in addition to other revenue enhancing and leakage blocking initiatives being pursued by the government," she stated.

This response was following the question that concerted efforts to expand tax coverage and diversify public revenue are clearly beginning to pay off— in that in 2021 a record 80 percent of revenue to fund federal operations came from non-oil sectors. New legislation has also taken step to reduce inter-agency revenue leakages. Nevertheless, the decision to retain fuel subsidies remains contentious, and according to the new supplementary budget request from President Buhari to parliament is anticipated to cost up to N4 trillion due in part to rising oil prices.

Mrs. Ahmed's position has been that Nigeria's greatest fiscal challenge has been revenue more than debt. This is based on the fact that federal government's revenue to gross domestic product (GDP) is one of the lowest in the world, in fact it is the lowest of the 115 largest economies.

"The fiscal deficit of the federal government has been on the increase since 2015 precipitated first by the economic recession from the fall in global oil prices; followed later by the combined effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the resulting oil glut, and the large fiscal burden of the PMS subsidy.

"Despite the economic recovery and higher oil prices, Nigeria's fiscal deficit remains very high due largely to the surge in PMS subsidies and as a result, debt pressures continue to increase. While the debt to GDP ratio is still relatively low by international standards, the burden of debt servicing has risen rapidly from 68 percent of revenues in 2017 to 76 percent as of November 2021. It is the burden of this emerging fiscal pressures that gave us the added impetus to urgently accelerate domestic revenue mobilisation strategies over the next three years.

There was the question whether expansions in revenue generation will sufficiently offset the costs of continuing fuel subsidies enough to allow her to pursue her priorities for positioning the country to recover from COVID-19, and if tradeoffs will need to be made, which positions or policies, if any, she considers most crucial, to which she responded thus: "As you rightly observed, we have made significant progress following the launch of the SRGI. To sustain and upscale the achievements of the SRGI, it became imperative to develop this new initiative to accelerate revenue mobilisation reforms (ARMOR)."

According to Mrs. Ahmed, ARMOR will leverage the SRGI momentum to concretely address the perennial domestic revenue mobilisation challenges and draw selectively from measures planned under the initiative, with a focus on accelerating targeted revenue mobilisation strategies in the near term.

There was a question bothering on how the government aims to coordinate investments, especially from the private sector, for achieving the National Development Plan (2021 - 2025) which seeks to accelerate growth and foster sustainable development over the next four years, with a huge investment size of about $900billion (N348 trillion- private sector to account for (85.7 percent).

The Honourable Minister said: "Given the restrained fiscal space, and limited public sector financial resources, have develop an innovative financing strategy for the medium-term national development plan that leverages strong partnership between the public and private sectors, and is geared towards facilitating enhanced non-debt private capital investments in the country.

According to her, the key alternative funding initiatives identified include amplifying and unlocking the full potential of public-private partnerships (PPPs); enhancing the capacity of the private sector in all areas of the economy; and establishing a Nigeria Investment and Growth Fund (NIG-Fund) to invest in commercially viable projects in sectors that will promote growth; enhance local value-addition through backward, forward linkages; create employment opportunities; promote technological innovation and learning; and promote exports and exports diversification.

"Additionally, we have established Infrastructure Corporation of Nigeria (InfraCo) - a public-private partnership infrastructure finance entity wholly dedicated to critical infrastructure in Nigeria.

L-R: **Masood Ahmed,** President, Centre for Global Development (CGD)**, Melinda Gates,** Co-chair, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation**, Mrs. Zainab Ahmed**, Honourable Minister Of Finance, Budget And National Planning, during the presentation titled 'Ensuring an Inclusive COVID-19 recovery through Investments, in Cash, Care & Data' organised by the foundation in conjunction with CGD on the sideline of the annual meetings.

"Furthermore, the Road Infrastructure Development and Refurbishment Investment Tax Credit Scheme (RIDRITCS) utilises tax expenditures, refundable by way of tax credits, to finance the construction of critical road infrastructure through a Public Private Partnership mechanism. The scheme will encourage private sector investment in roads across key economic corridors and industrial clusters.

Other initiatives, according to her, include the institutionalisation of a contingent liability management framework; and the establishment of a National Credit Enhancement Framework (NCEF).

"Government will continue to work towards ensuring a regulatory environment and institutional arrangements that are investor friendly," she stated.

Mrs. Ahmed responded to a question on the topic of coordination between the existing operations and the new program in the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) recently unveiled RT200 FX program aimed at attracting US$200 billion in non-oil inflows over the next three to five years. Given that the Nigeria Export Import (NEXIM) Bank already oversees several similarly intended programs.

She said that there is significant cooperation and coordination between the Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning and the Central Bank in managing the economy. "For example, the Permanent Secretary of the ministry is a statutory member of both the Board and the Monetary Policy Committee of the CBN, thereby ensuring that fiscal views and analysis are embedded in the decisions of the bank. Furthermore, the CBN plays a significant role in the debt raising operations of the ministry, be they in local treasury bills or in Eurobonds. Indeed, you mentioned NEXIM Bank, and it may interest you to know that the NEXIM Bank itself is co-owned by both the ministry and the CBN, with the latter acting as Chair of the Board. So, there is coordination between both institutions."

"Having said that, I think it is important to clarify that the RT200 FX Programme is basically aimed at improving FX liquidity in the market through inflows from non-oil exports. You may have noticed that one of the five pillars of the programme is to disburse loans to companies that are into value-adding production for non-oil exports. Some of these loans will be channelled through NEXIM bank. In fact, quite a bit of the current balance sheet of NEXIM bank is attributable to loans made by CBN funds," she also said.

Despite this clear congruence of goals, "I might add that NEXIM's objectives are broader than FX liquidity in the system, and encompasses the engendering of total exports as a key component of GDP growth in Nigeria. At the moment though, I do not think the bank has any programme that is exactly like the RT200 FX Programme."

Concerning the key challenges facing Nigeria's current development priorities and how wealthier countries such as the G20 and MDBs could help overcome the challenges, the Honourable Minister noted that the key challenge facing the country's development priorities continues to be low domestic revenues, as it significantly undercuts our ability to fund our national budgets and make progress in critical sectors including infrastructure, agriculture, health and education.

The question is in view of the fact that there have been some global responses to the fiscal challenges imposed by Covid-19, such as the allocation of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) and Common Framework for debt treatment. On vaccines access, some wealthy countries have donated doses both bilaterally and through the United Nations (UN)-sponsored COVAX facility. Yet, these are inadequate, and more actions are necessary.

"Furthermore, we, as well as the broader Africa region, also face a healthcare manufacturing and vaccine access challenge. We, however, see this as an opportunity to scale up coordinated efforts towards developing and upscaling a thriving regional manufacturing industry. What we and other similarly situated economies need from the G20 and MDBs is continued support towards equitable debt management and a greater push for debt relief where appropriate; increased access to concessional resources; a critical review of the structures and practices of current global development organisations and IFIs with an eye towards

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NEWS IN PICTURE

L-R: Nabila Aguele, SA, Performance Management and Development Cooperation, **Mr. Ayo Salami**, Chief Economic Adviser to the President, **Mr. Aliyu Ahmed,** Permanent Secretary Finance, Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning**, Mrs. Zainab Ahmed**, Honourable Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, **Her Excellency Dr. Uzoma Emenike**, Nigerian Ambassador to US, **Amb. Mukhtar Bashir**, Deputy Chief of Mission Embassy of Nigeria Washington DC, **Aisha Omar**, Director IER, Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning, during the Minister's visit to the Nigerian Embassy in Washington DC.

NEWS IN PICTURE

L-R: **Masood Ahmed**, President, Centre for Global Development (CGD), **Melinda Gates**, Co-chair, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, **Mrs. Zainab Ahmed**, Honourable Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, and others during the presentation titled 'Ensuring an Inclusive COVID-19 recovery through Investments, in Cash, Care & Data' organised by the foundation in conjunction with CGD on the sideline of the annual meetings with others.

The Honourable Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, **Mrs. Zainab Ahmed (R)** with others at the Carnegie Africa program and the ONE Campaign.

The Honourable Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, **Mrs. Zainab Ahmed** (right) with her team in a bilateral meeting with the Egyptian Honourable Minister of International Affairs, **Dr. Rania Al-Mashat**.

Mr. Godwin Emefiele, CBN Governor, **Mrs. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala**, Director-General World Trade Organisation, and **Mrs. Zainab Ahmed**, Honourable Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning at the Spring Meetings.

No N4.9 trn Is Missing In Federation Account, Auditor-General Clarifies

Majeed Salaam

The Auditor-General for the Federation (AoGF), Chief Adolphus Aghughu, has said that its 2019 audited report did not suggest that money was missing in federation account.

According to him, queries raised in the Auditor-General's report on ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) does not mean the monies were missing.

He stated that audit reports were meant to correct discrepancies in the financials of the MDAs but not to say that money is missing.

Aghughu, who gave the clarification in a chat with newsmen in Lagos during the 46th induction ceremony of the Chartered Institute of Taxation of Nigeria (CITN), said that the concern of the Muhammadu Buhari-led government is to increase internally generated revenue (IGR) and ensure that such revenue was transparently accounted for by the collectors.

The AuGF, who delivered a keynote address at the ceremony where 372 tax professionals were inducted, however, tasked the tax collectors to up their game and generate more money for

Chief Adolphus Aghughu, The Auditor-General for the Federation (AoGF),

the government to deliver more projects to impact on the citizens.

Asked to comment on the 2019 Auditor-General report and the alleged discovery of unsubstantiated balances of N4.9trillion upon which the House of Representatives summoned some heads of ministries and agencies, he said: "I want to use this opportunity to disabuse your mind. When you have audit queries, audit queries in most cases do not translate to missing money in reference to the figures you are quoting.

"What we said was that you have some issues that you are not comfortable with. You will raise the issue with it, let the issue be clear. If, for instance, you have advances not retired, you just pick the figure and say fraud discovered. The reports are not like that.

"If you take the pains to read the report, you would discover that what you are reporting is quite different from what is in the report. I am not sure we reported that such money is missing. The papers may report that, but that is not what is in the report," he said.

Also speaking, the President of CITN, Adesina Adedayo, said that tax professionals were doing their best, but they could still do better to generate more money for the government.

Meanwhile, several notable Africans, including Nigeria's Auditor-General of the Federation, Mr. Aghughu, would be conferred with the prestigious Africa Public Sector Hall of Fame Award, at Africa Public Sector Conference and Awards (APSCA) that will hold this month in Ghana.

According to a statement to the news media by the organisers, the African Public Sector Award aims to honour leaders who have showcased excellence in policy innovation and exceptional leadership at various levels of governance.

The top award will be presented by the Vice President of Ghana, Mahamudu Bawumia, who is the chief host of APSCA 2022.

The statement stated that this year's APSCA theme is 'Repositioning Africa's Public Sector for Sustainable Development'.

Born in 1962, Adolphus, who is also the Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Board of External Auditors, graduated from the Bendel State University now Ambrose Ali University, Edo State Nigeria, in 1986 with 2nd Class Upper Division in Economics, joined the public service as a teacher with Bendel State Government (now Edo State Government) in 1980 before joining Edo State Government as an Accountant in 1988.

He became an Auditor in the Office of the Auditor-General after joining the Office in 1992 and was promoted to the rank of Director of Audit in January 2016.

Adolphus, a Fellow of the Association of National Accountants of Nigeria, a Member of the Nigerian Institute of Management and an Associate Member of the Chartered Institute of Taxation, was appointed by President Muhammadu Buhari as the Auditor-General for the Federation in 2021.

According to Akin Naphtal, GCEO of InstinctWave, organiser of the event, Aghughu has established himself as a major force in protecting the public interest and ensuring maximum compliance with internal control procedures and regulations in the public service.

More than 50 outstanding public sector leaders who have delivered extraordinary value, exceptional leadership, would be honoured at the award night.

IMF Projects $19bn Oil Import Bill, Trade Imbalances For Nigeria, Others

● Raises Hope, Projects Higher Economic Growth For Nigeria At 3.4%

Anita Dennis & Edmond Martins

International Monetary Fund (IMF) has said that higher oil prices will boost the import bill for Nigeria and other oil importers by about $19 billion, thereby worsening trade imbalances and raising transport and other consumer costs in sub-Saharan Africa.

It also urged oil exporters in the region to build buffers that could shield them from further economic shocks as inflation in the region is expected to remain elevated in 2022 and 2023 at 12.2 percent and 9.6 percent respectively—the first time since 2008 that regional average inflation will reach such high levels.

The fund noted that the effects of the Russia/Ukraine war would be deeply consequential, eroding standards of living and aggravating macroeconomic imbalances.

The fund further said that Sub-Saharan African countries would find themselves facing another severe and exogenous shock.

The IMF is particularly worried that the promising recovery in the region has been disrupted by the war in Ukraine which has exacerbated the already bad fiscal conditions created by the COVID-19 pandemic, leaving no room for manoeuvre.

To enhance resilience to future crises, the fund noted that it was important for these countries to develop effective social safety nets, adding that digital technology, such as mobile money or smart cards, could be used to better target social transfers, as Togo did during the pandemic.

According to IMF, commodity-importers, such as Benin, Ethiopia and Malawi, would need to find resources to protect the vulnerable by reprioritising spending.

It added: "Net exporters, like Nigeria, are likely to benefit from rising oil prices, but a fiscal gain is only possible if the fuel subsidies they provide are contained.

"It is important that windfalls are largely directed to strengthen policy buffers, supported by strong fiscal institutions."

Economic recovery in the region picked up in the third quarter of 2021 and held up despite the onset of a fourth COVID-19 wave at the end of the year.

It stressed that growth in 2021 had been revised upward from 3.7 to 4.5 percent.

But this progress has been offset by recent events, especially the Russian invasion of Ukraine which triggered a sharp rise in commodity prices—straining the fiscal and external balances of commodity-importing countries and increasing food-security concerns across the region.

As a result, economic activity is expected to slow to 3.8 percent this year and is subject to an extraordinary range of risks, the IMF said in the report.

The IMF's Director of African Department, Abebe Aemro Selassie explained during the press conference the main findings of the Fund's latest Regional Economic Outlook for Sub-Saharan Africa titled: "A New Shock and Little Room to Maneuver" that the war in Ukraine had already reshaped the near-term outlook for sub-Saharan Africa.

Selassie said: "Why we are very concerned relative to 2008/9 in Sub Saharan Africa is at least back in 2008/9 financial crisis, countries had some buffers some room for manoeuvre. Debt levels were very limited. So, countries were able to have a robust fiscal response to that crisis.

"This time, one reason why we're very worried is that room for manoeuvre has been exhausted even before the pandemic debt levels.

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FG Says ARMOR Programme Expected To Increase Non-oil Revenue By N3.8 trn Within 3 Years

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ensuring equity and inclusion – a true seat and voice at the table for developing economies; and in the area of health care manufacturing and vaccine access, a push for continued support in accessing the resources and funding needed to establish a regional health care manufacturing industry."

Whether she sees potential for widespread reform in the global financial system-including importantly for climate finance-as a result of the inertia from COVID-19 and now the war in Ukraine, Mrs. Ahmed would respond in affirmation; "yes, this is absolutely possible, but only if we work collectively and strategically."

"The COVID-19 pandemic (and our disjointed and pro-protectionist approach to addressing it) has been a sobering reminder that we are one world, and that a problem we do not address in one region will have a domino effect and potentially devastating impact for all. The same can be said of the war in Ukraine and other wars and armed conflicts around the world. The war in Ukraine underscores the need to accelerate the transition towards renewable energy sources, while also underscoring the importance of gas as a transition fuel, particularly for low emitting developing economies.

"Access to climate finance is critical to any energy transition, particularly the just and equitable transition we seek. It is crucial that developed countries honour the US$100 billion yearly pledge to assist developing countries. Furthermore, it is important that we continue to explore and implement innovative climate financing instruments (including green bonds and carbon markets). Again, the primary focus needs to be on ensuring an equitable, inclusive and just transition towards renewable energy.

"For the African region, there is a need for us to work strategically and to align on our common areas of interest, particularly as we prepare for COP 27. With a coordinated strategy, we can be better positioned to advocate for financing that will not further strain our fiscally constrained economies," she also said.

Mrs. Ahmed further noted that COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine are twin global challenges that have impacted countries differently. "The pandemic came on us like a tornado. In its wake, especially at its onset and peak, was the rapidly ravaging and widespread infection of the population. There was little knowledge of its dynamics; it took our health system by storm and tested our resilience and the quality of our preparedness for such a pandemic; it shut down our economy and severely disrupted supply chain. What is more is that it called our attention to urgent measures to safeguard our population.

"What this meant was that budget resources had to be diverted towards critical health expenditures to address the pandemic. And this had to do with our health infrastructures, treatment and management of patience, setting up of isolation centres, addressing emergency capacity gaps and strengthening the entire health system logistics for improved delivery of needed services.

"The war in Ukraine has not had as much a direct impact on us as our own internal challenges. The war has disrupted the supply of oil and gas globally and raised pump prices across the globe. For instance, in contrast to past periods of high oil prices, two factors are preventing Nigeria from fully benefitting from the current boom in international oil prices. First, oil production has fallen below Nigeria's estimated capacity and the OPEC quota because of security challenges in the Niger Delta. Second, the domestic price of PMS has remained fixed while global PMS prices have risen, increasing the cost of PMS subsidy.

"By maintaining an unsustainable price control of PMS, we as a country are forgoing investments in essential infrastructure, goods and services that could increase the overall productivity of the economy. We are, therefore, seeking to support all necessary reforms that would reduce the fiscal burden of energy subsidies; enhance internal control and promote greater efficiency in oil and gas operations; ensure an eventual elimination of PMS subsidies, and sustain market-based pricing of all petroleum products as stipulated in the Petroleum Industry Act. Furthermore, we are implementing measures to better monitor and improve the overall governance, operational efficiency and transparency of the entire oil and gas value chain.

Nigeria Earns Over $195bn Exporting Crude Oil

Majeed Salaam

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) has reported that Nigeria in 2021 made over N14.4 trillion selling crude to different countries around the world.

NBS disclosed this in its latest Foreign trade statistics report.

According to the report, crude oil sales accounted for 76.22 of the total exports made during the year under review

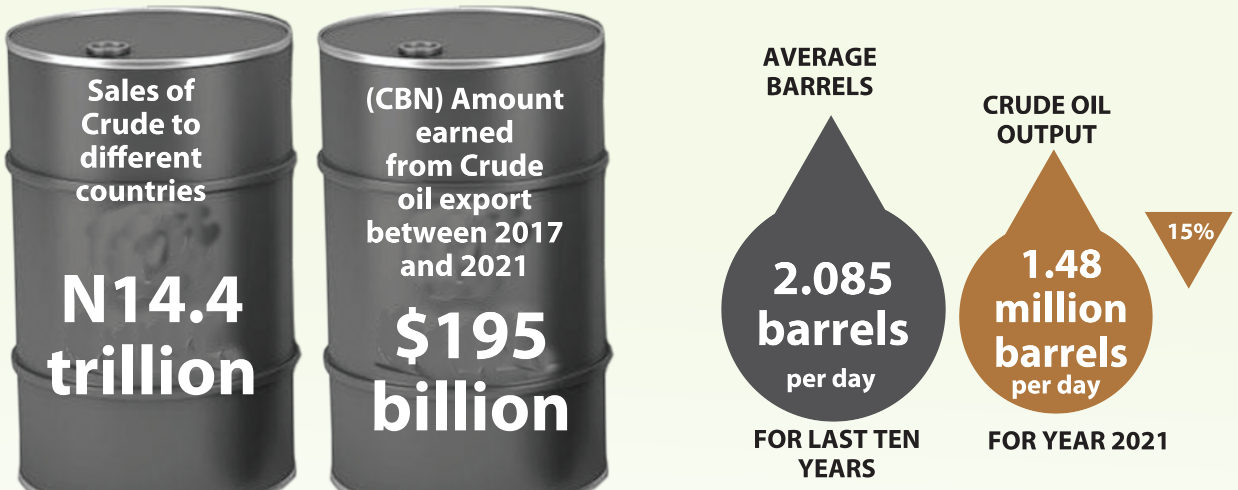
Additionally, statistics from the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) also revealed that Nigeria earned about $195 billion exporting crude oil between 2017 and 2021.

The country produces more than one million barrels of crude oil a day, which is a far cry from previous production. Experts blame oil thefts and pipeline vandalism for the country's waning oil export fortunes. Your support counts.

Nigeria has produced an average of 2.085 barrels of crude oil per day during the last ten years. In 2021, the country's daily crude oil output was 1.48 million barrels per day, a 15% decrease from the year before.

In the five years that followed, average daily volumes of 1.7 million barrels per day of crude oil were exported which is 20 percent lower than the 2.085 million barrels per day in 10 years.

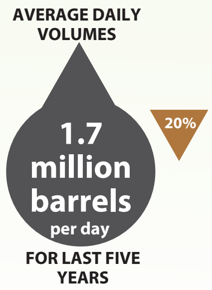
Energy experts have blamed the decline on divestments from major oil-producing companies and massive capital expenditures which have stalled the recovery of the oil sector.



Reasons for production decline Others have also blamed the decline in oil production and oil thefts, the proliferation of illegal oil bunkering and pipeline vandalism.

In a recent tweet, Tony Elumelu, Chairman of UBA, stated that Nigeria has lost over 96 percent of its oil to theft. He cited that Bonny Terminal, with 200,000 barrels per day capacity, receives a miserly 3,00 capacity which made oil giant, Shell divest its operations from Nigeria.

Former Seplat MD Austin Avuru says Nigeria's oil production is in a crisis, stating that theft prevents production wells from receiving 80 percent of their production.



Use Of Cheque Drops, Hits Six-year Low As POS Gains Acceptance

By Albert Egbede

Reports have indicated that Point of Sale (POS) has become more popular as any other means of cash transactions in the country.

Findings revealed that over 3.03 million daily times, Nigerians process payments through POS in the first two months of 2022.

The findings also showed that the use of cheques dropped to a six-year low, according to data obtained from the Nigeria Inter-Bank Settlement System (NIBSS) Plc portal.

The data showed that Nigerians used POS services 178.99 million times in the first two months of 2022, a 25.59 percent increase from the 142.51 million times it was used in the corresponding period of 2021.

The total value of these transactions was N1.15trillion, a 19.76 percent increase from the N958.14billion worth of transactions that were processed in the corresponding period of 2021.

According to the NIBSS, there are 986,252 registered POS units in the nation. It added that 955,234 units were deployed and in use.

While the adoption of POS as a payment gateway increased, the acceptance of cheques has reduced to a six-year low, according to data from the NIBSS portal.

Within the first two months of 2022, cheques were used as payment gateways 669,218 times, a 15.39 percent decrease from the 772,249 times they were used within the corresponding period in 2021.

In the corresponding period of 2017, cheques were used 1,721,295 times; in the corresponding period of 2018, they were used 1,669,825 times; they were used 1,352,688 times in the corresponding period of 2019; and 1,222,721 times in the corresponding period of 2020.

According to the data, as the volume of usage dropped, the value also did. In 2017, N967.89billion worth of cheque was processed in the first two months of the year, this figure dropped to 876.16billion within the first two months of 2018.

In 2019, N775.58billion worth of cheque was processed in the first two months of the year. It fell to N726.25billion in 2020. In 2021, N525.65billion cheque was processed in the first two months of the year and dropped further to N497.09billion within the first two months of 2022.

Recently, the Group Managing Director, Zenith Bank Plc, Mr Ebenezer Onyeagwu, disclosed that banks had been witnessing an uptake in electronic banking by customers since the onset of the COVID pandemic.

In its 'Instant Payments – 2020 Annual Statistics', the NIBSS revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic changed the e-payments landscape and accelerated the adoption of instant payments as more people transitioned to electronic channels for funds exchange in the wake of government.

Reports in March this year had it that mobile transactions in Nigeria have jumped by 4,009.58 percent to hit N8.07trillion within a five-year period as the number of telecommunication subscribers rises by 34.91 per cent to 195,128,265.

This is according to data from the Nigeria Interbank Settlement System and Nigerian Communications Commission.

According to mobile inter-scheme transaction data tracked on the NIBBS portal, mobile transactions increased from N196.29billion in 2017 to N8.07trillion by the end of 2021.

This increase in value was a 5,445.07 percent hike in mobile channel uptake within the time under review as mobile transaction volume increased from 5,130,716 in 2017 to 284,501,722 in 2021.

In 2017, 5,130,716 mobile transactions were worth N196.29bn; 7,229,878 transactions were worth N292.02bn in 2018; 41,212,074 transactions were worth N828.10bn in 2019; and 132,978,782 transactions were worth N3.05trillion in 2020.

In 2021, the volume of mobile transactions surged to 284,501,722 as the value hit N8.07trillion. The NIBBS had attributed this increase in mobile channel uptake to changing behaviour of bank customers as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a report titled 'Instant Payments – 2020 Annual Statistics', it said the COVID-19 pandemic changed the e-payments landscape, and accelerated the adoption of instant payments as more people switched to electronic channels for funds exchange.

It added that mobile devices drove electronic payment in 2020, as it accounted for 43 per cent of total transactions in 2020, while 35 percent of the transactions were with USSD, indicating that 78 percent of the total transfer transactions were carried out using mobile devices.

Within the period under review, the number of telecom subscribers increased by 34.91 percent from 144,631,678 in 2017 to 195,463,898 in 2021, according to data from the NCC.

The Executive Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of NCC, Prof. Umar Danbatta, had recently said one visible area of beneficial financial service riding on telecom infrastructure was the provision of Unstructured Supplementary Service Data for financial transactions across various financial institutions' platforms.

According to him, this has brought ease to financial transactions. In 2020, mobile money transactions rose to $490billion in Nigeria and other sub-Saharan Africa, according to Visa.

FG Issues Two-Month Deadline To Terminal Operators On Practitioners' Fee Payment

Fatimah Bintu Yussuf

The Federal Government has issued a two-month deadline for terminal operators at the nation's seaports to integrate the collection of the Practitioners Operating Fee (POF) into their platforms to avoid sanctions.

The government had earlier sought the cooperation of terminal operators for the implementation of the POF in the various terminals, noted that two months was generous enough having had "a gentleman agreement" to that effect.

The Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Transportation, Magdalene Ajani spoke shortly after a strategic ministerial meeting with stakeholders on the enforcement of POF in Lagos, stating that the payment is precedent to the exit of containers from the ports.

At the meeting, some operators outrightly claimed that they didn't know, while some admitted that they know and trying to perfect the process having integrated the fee into their system.

The operators with the government, according to Ajani, now have a gentleman agreement to go back and collect the POF, within the next two months, make payment to the banks, and then, continue on a regular basis.

"Just to say that it is not the terminal operators that collect the money, it is the freight forwarders that have to pay and there is a platform which the Council for the Regulation of Freight Forwarding in Nigeria (CRFFN) has developed which doesn't take more than two minutes online to make that payment and all the terminal operators will see the receipt of the payment.

Magdalene Ajani, Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Transportation

"So, this conversation is to say, please, help us to enforce this because Nigeria is losing revenue by the non-collection of POF and we need to ensure that this is done and after two months if it is not complied with, we will now begin to look at the sanctions. Fortunately, an arm of EFCC was here and they have said, this is a prelude even for them to get their SCUML Certificate.

So, if this is not done, they can't even open an account because they have to see from the CRFFN end that the freight forwarders are compliant with this directive". "I have told them in clear terms, that you can't come to a country and choose the processes of engagement. You have rules in every country on how all businesses should run and they have to comply with that. We don't have any exemption for anybody, businesses have to be run based on the rules in Nigeria and that was clearly spelt out for them and I believe that going forward, the language and the message is very clear and we will come back".

"As I said to them, our agreement is at the beginning of the third month, I would be asking for the compliance rate at least from CRFFN and I also clearly stated that if we find anybody not complying, then the sanctions will have to kick in. I think two months is generous enough for people to do what they need to do and I believe that they will do exactly what we have agreed to do so that we don't have to go to the other side of it and that is the sanctions because sanctions can be applied.

"CRFFN is saddled with the responsibility of developing a comprehensive freight forwarding policy and promoting freight forwarding as a career as well as providing an enabling environment for freight forwarding business with a view to creating job opportunities for Nigerians.

POF is designed to ensure sustainable funding of the freight forwarding venture in the country and its integration will promote the global competitiveness and also build capacity for effective participation in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AFCFTA).

To actualise the goals and objectives of POF, are certain conditions by CRFFN including a robust electronic payment system to generate invoices for import and export, make payment for generated invoices and view a comprehensive report of transactions on the Council portal.

She noted: "So, this will make it very transparent for everybody who has to pay this. The application also serves as a database for determining the number of cargoes coming in and out of the port and it is also designed in such a way that invoices can be generated through self-services."

CRFFN had a Memorandum of Understanding with relevant stakeholders like the Seaports Terminal Operators Association of Nigeria (STOAN) on POF, and this, according to Ajani, enabled the government to know that from the inception of the programme on 24th of February, 2021, some terminal operators have failed to comply with this MoU, leading to revenue loss for Nigeria.

"So, to address this issue, that is why we are here to listen to you to know why you have decided not to comply or partially complied so that we know what the challenges are. But it is pertinent for us to note that the job of the ministry is to ensure that government policies are adhered to and where there is a failure of adherence, you leave us with no choice but to look at the sanctions that could follow such disobedience to the policy implementation.

"It is important for us to know that the POF is a win-win for both the government and the practitioners with the promise of organised collective action against the numerous threats including intrusion and dominance of the space by people who shouldn't be there, near absence of local content participation in the oil and gas services and need to build capacity for effective participation in the AfCFTA regime."

"I want to plead with all of us, the stakeholders in particular and the leadership of the freight forwarding associations to sensitise your members with a view to ensuring full compliance with the POF regime and to also assure you that the Federal Ministry of Transportation will put in place sufficient guidelines to ensure that funds realised from the POF are devoted to professionalisation and capacity building of the practitioners."

FG Concerned That Associated Global Supply Bottlenecks Further Heightening Uncertainty

Kirk Obed

The federal government of Nigeria has expressed concerned that the associated global supply bottlenecks are further heightening uncertainty by increasing food and energy prices, eroding incomes, which is deepening poverty and inequality.

Mrs. Zainab Shamsuna Ahmed, Honourable Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, said this while speaking on Deglobalisation And Sovereign Debt Crisis - Early Warning Exercise (EWE), at the Spring Meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank Group (WBG).

Speaking further, she said: "As such, the timely delivery of food and vaccines without trade restrictions, remains critical in efforts to bring the pandemic firmly under control, avert starvation, and preserve social cohesion.

Mrs. Ahmed noted that the dual shocks from the COVID-19 pandemic and elevated geo-political tensions, have strained global supply chains, fragmented cross border payment systems, constrained smooth flow of trade, dampened the recovery momentum, and threaten to reverse gains made in global economic and financial integration.

"Against this background, we call for global cooperation to prevent further economic deglobalisation and prevent a retreat from multilateralism which has conferred immense trade and growth benefits to advanced economies, as well as emerging market and developing economies (EMDEs)," she stated.

Mrs. Ahmed also stated: "The aggressive tightening of monetary policy by major central banks to contain inflation which intensified on the back of higher commodity prices, present risk of capital flow reversals in EMDEs.

"As such, we are concerned that the increased risk aversion that has manifested itself through the deglobalisation of financial flows and the flight to safety, will morph into the drying up of funding and liquidity markets, and the sudden stop of capital flows", she further stated.

At the same time, exchange rate fluctuations, according to her, would present external and financial stability risks in our region, further dampening growth prospects with adverse feedback loops on inflation. "In this context, we view timely and tailored fund policy guidance as critical to help countries calibrate their policy mix to balance the competing objectives of maintaining price, financial, and external stability. We also urge major central banks to clearly communicate their policy interventions to unintended spillovers to EMDEs including in SSA.

Also stating, she said: "We note with concern, the risk of a sovereign debt crisis compounded by rising borrowing costs, subdued global growth performance, and pre-existing vulnerabilities. Moreover, additional fiscal pressures from rising commodity prices and the effects of exchange rate depreciation on debt service costs makes the risk of a wave of defaults a concerning possibility. speak

At the same time, the increased sovereign-bank nexus and rising contingent liabilities that typify crisis periods, according to her, brings to the fore, the far-reaching effects of rising debt levels. "Moreover, the realisation that higher growth and fiscal adjustments alone may not be adequate to improve debt outlook, is sobering. Against this background, we stress the need for orderly debt resolution considering that more countries are now at high risk or in debt distress.

"We wish to reiterate our call for urgent actions to strengthen the operationalisation of the G20 Common Framework and a debt standstill for its debt relief applicants. Once the Common Framework is revamped to deliver on its promises, we see merit in extending its coverage to include vulnerable emerging markets and other low-income countries that are currently ineligible.

"We also call on the IMF to flexibly apply its Lending into Arrears policies to accommodate debt distressed members in crisis periods.

Regarding domestic debt, Mrs. Ahmed also stated: "Fund technical support would be required to balance competing objectives of debt restructuring to ensure fiscal sustainability and preserve the viability of exposed financial and non-financial corporates. Furthermore, we underscore the need for the IMF to explore more active deployment of its precautionary instruments to help provide liquidity support to members and help insure against elevated external vulnerabilities. The Honourable Minister concluded by stating that "all these should be complemented by other layers of the global financial safety net (GFSN) including regional financial arrangements.

The EWE is part of the IMF's efforts to strengthen surveillance, especially the analysis of economic, financial, fiscal, and external risks as well as cross-sectoral and cross-border spillovers.

The exercise examines unlikely but plausible risks that would necessitate policy recommendations that could differ from those related to baseline projections presented in the World Economic Outlook, Global Financial Stability Report, and the Fiscal Monitor. The EWE does not attempt to predict crises. Rather, it seeks to identify the vulnerabilities and triggers that could precipitate systemic crises, and identifies risk-mitigating policies, including those that would require international cooperation.

NDIC

Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation

Protecting your bank deposits

The Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation (NDIC) is an agency of government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It was established in 1988 and is responsible for administering deposit insurance in the country. It protects depositors and guarantees payment of insured funds in the event of failure of an insured licenced deposit-taking financial institution, thereby helping to maintain stability in the financial system.

The NDIC's Public Policy Objectives (PPOs) are: To Protect depositors by providing an orderly means of compensation in the event of failure of an insured financial institution; Enhance public confidence by providing a framework for the resolution and orderly exit of failing and failed financial institutions; and Contribute to financial system stability by making incidence of bank runs less likely. The NDIC had achieved these PPOs through the implementation of its following Mandates:

DEPOSIT GUARANTEE

Insurance of deposit liabilities of licensed deposit-taking financial institutions (banks) and guaranteeing payment to a maximum amount as stipulated in the NDIC Act, in the event of failure of a licensed financial institution. Thus, the sum of N500,000.00 or US$1,613 is paid to each depositor of Deposit Money Bank, Primary Mortgage Bank and Non-Interest Bank while the sum of N200,000.00 or US$645 is paid to each depositor of a Micro-Finance Bank;

BANK SUPERVISION

Supervision of banks to reduce the potential risk of failure, ensure effective payment system and healthy competition in the banking system; hence contributing to financial system stability;

DISTRESS RESOLUTION

Provision of financial and technical assistance to failing or distressed eligible insured institutions, in the interest of depositors; and

BANK LIQUIDATION

Orderly and efficient closure of failed institutions with minimal disruption to the banking and payment system.

NDIC's activities over the years had contributed to the development of the Nigerian economy through the promotion of soundness and safety of the banking system thereby enhancing confidence in the country's financial system.

More adult Nigerians now have access to formal financial services and are deriving numerous benefits through access to savings, credits, insurance and pension. NDIC, in collaboration with other Safety-net Players such as the Central Bank of Nigiera (CBN), has contributed to reducing the percentage of adult Nigerians that do not have acess to financial services from 46.30% in 2010 to 39.50% in 2014 (EFInA Financial Inclusion Study, 2014) in line with the Financial Inclusion policy of the Federal Government.

NDIC is also involved in social and developmental endeavours. Over the years, it has supported many community-based projects. Most of the projects were in the areas of Education and Human Capital Development.

> "ENGENDERING CONFIDENCE IN THE BANKING SYSTEM, PROMOTING FINANCIAL INCLUSION AND EXCELLENT IN CORPORATE SOCIAL RESONSIBILITY ACTIVITIES TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA"

OUR CORE MANDATES

- → Deposit Guarantee
- → Bank Supervision
- → Distress Resolution
- → Bank Liquidation

Customs Commences Trade Facilitation At Reopened Kamba Border

Kirk Obed

Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) has commenced business activities at the Kamba Border in Kebbi state which was re-opened over the weekend.

The government had through a circular last week ordered the reopening of four borders including Kamba in Kebbi state, Idiroko in Ogun state, Jibiya in Katsina and Ikom in Cross Rivers state., Jibiya and Ikom. The borders which were reopened at the weekend by the Federal Government were closed for business by the government in August 2019.

The Customs Area Controller, Comptroller Joseph Attah told the stakeholders and indigenes of Kamba that the reopening of the border presents an opportunity for legitimate business activities across the border, urging them to shun illegitimate business.

He stressed that they are not permitted to import every manner of goods, especially those that could compromise national security but trade that could improve the economy and impact positively on people.

The comptroller noted that his officers and men were ready to facilitate legitimate trade within the ambit of the law to make trade across Kamba Border seamless as long as stakeholders import what was allowed by the law.

"Make a proper declaration and pay appropriate duties to the federal government coffers', stated Attah who took time to explain the import and clearance procedure to the audience, emphasizing the need for strict compliance.

Also, the Kebbi State Government commended the federal government on the reopening of the border at the sensitisation exercise put together by the Customs Area Controller, Kebbi Area Command to signal the reopening of the Kamba Border on Monday 25th April 2022.

Represented by the State Commissioner for Commerce and industry, Garba Ibrahim Geza, the governor expressed optimism that the reopening of the border would impact positively on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and youths in the State who stand to benefit most from the border reopening.

Earlier, the District Head of Kamba, Mahmuda Fana, who could not hide his joy, commended the Federal Government for the development noting that the reopening would boost the economic activities of the border town and the nation at large. The sensitisation programme had in attendance the representatives of all relevant units at the border as well as representatives from the Niger Republic.

20 PFAs Meet N5bn PenCom Recapitalisation Deadline

- FCMB Pensions acquires ALLCO Pensions
- Tangerine Pensions, APT Pension Fuse Into Tangerine APT Pensions

Fatimah Bintu Yussuf

The National Pension Commission, PenCom, has announced that 20 Pension Fund Administrators, PFAs, have met its N5 billion minimum recapitalisation deadline from N1billion.

The Commission has also announced the approval of the acquisition of AIICO Pension Managers Limited by FCMB Pensions Limited.

It equally approved the merger between Tangerine Pensions Limited and APT Pension Funds Managers Limited and subsequent change of name of the merged entity to Tangerine APT Pensions Limited.

Similarly, PenCom also approved Norrenberger's acquisition of IEI-Anchor Pension Managers Limited, after its acquisition of the majority shareholder, IEI Plc.

The Commission in a statement titled: PFAs Comply with N5 billion Minimum Regulatory Capital Requirement," said: "The National Pension Commission, PenCom is pleased to inform all stakeholders and the general public that as at 27 April 2022, all Pension Fund Administrators, PFAs have complied with the Commission's directive for the increase of the Minimum Regulatory Capital, Shareholders' Fund from N1 billion to N5 billion.

"Recall that the Commission had approved the recapitalisation exercise for the PFAs with a 12-month transition period from 27 April 2021 to 27 April 2022.

"The exercise became expedient as the value of pension fund assets under management and custody had grown exponentially by 244 percent, from N3 trillion in 2012 (when the previous recapitalisation was done) to N12.29 trillion (as at December 31, 2020).

"The sustained growth in assets implies greater fiduciary responsibilities that require more operational capacity by the PFAs.

"The urgent need to ramp up PFAs capacity to manage the increasing number of registered contributors and value of pension fund assets under management led to the recapitalisation exercise.

"It is worthwhile to state that 10 PFAs had met the new regulatory capital requirement of N5 billion as at 31 December 2021, while the others intensified efforts to meet the deadline of 27 April 2022. This resulted in some mergers and acquisitions, which led to the reduction of the number of PFAs from 22 to 20.

"The Commission approved the acquisition of AIICO Pension Managers Limited by FCMB Pensions Limited; and the merger between Tangerine Pensions Limited and APT Pension Funds Managers Limited and subsequent change of name of the merged entity to Tangerine APT Pensions Limited. In addition, the Commission also approved Norrenberger's acquisition of IEI-Anchor Pension Managers Limited, after its acquisition of the majority shareholder, IEI Plc.

"With the conclusion of the recapitalisation exercise, stakeholders, particularly RSA holders, should expect increased effectiveness and efficiency as well as improved service delivery from PFAs.

Current International Debt Architecture Fails To Address Needs Of Many African Countries – Mrs. Ahmed

Kingsley Benson

The current international debt architecture fails to address the needs of many countries in the region, making it difficult to access resources to finance development needs, according to Mrs. Zainab Ahmed, Honourable Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning.

Speaking on the platform of the African Consultative Group meeting at the International Monetary Fund/World Bank Group's Spring Meetings in the United States recently on the need to streamline the international debt architecture, she stated that given the large infrastructure needs facing many countries in Africa, significant financing on concessional terms would be required to manage debt sustainability risks while ensuring that countries advance on their development agenda.

Her intervention then focused on challenges with the international debt architecture, and the difficulties to access international markets while exploring possible Fund initiatives to help member countries tackle the rising debt vulnerabilities.

While acknowledging the strong leadership Madame Kristalina, ... in bolstering the fight against COVID-19 pandemic through emergency financial support and debt relief under the CCRT, which helped African countries manage associated socio-economic repercussions, Mrs. Ahmed stated: "Notwithstanding the help, the pandemic has led to elevated debt levels and increased debt burdens for our countries."

According to her, the rising interest rates in the wake of monetary policy normalisation could further amplify these vulnerabilities, at a time when several countries on the continent are either in debt distress or at high risk of debt distress.

"Leveraging its expertise, the Fund should explore ways to identify drivers of debt and help member countries to proactively address them, while noting lack of developed domestic markets as a key constraint. This attendant gap in financing sources, presents an important factor that underly the increased reliance on international markets," she stated.

However, the current debt architecture, which is less responsive to countries needs and insufficient, continues to exacerbate the debt dynamics in the region, according to her.

On revamped capacity development (CD), Mrs. Ahmed said that given rising debt vulnerabilities, it remains imperative that Fund technical assistance within the Multi-Pronged Approach (MPA), continues to be prioritised for the region to address the remaining capacity requirements.

She also said that strengthening the MPA's four pillars around debt transparency, capacity building, building analytical tools and enhancing debt policies would, therefore, be key. "Furthermore, the policy advice on prudent borrowing and analysis can assist countries strike the right balance between boosting development spending and containing debt vulnerabilities.

The implication of policy normalisation in advanced economies on the back of rising inflation is most certainly going to give rise to tightening of global financial conditions, along with high financing costs that is bound to compound debt service burdens in EMDEs

"Finally, tightening global financial conditions will exacerbate debt vulnerabilities for many of our countries. More specifically, we are concerned with the high risk of capital flow reversals should market sentiments weaken.

"The effect of policy normalisation is concerning for the economy of Nigeria. Once policy normalisation takes place, depreciation will set in and raise debt service burdens because of the highly concentrated dollar obligations. This will generate additional fiscal pressures, thereby, creating feedback loops on the debt burden.

In this context, in her words: "the IMF's policy advice on the appropriate implementation of the updated Institutional View (IV) will be important to help our countries manage prospective capital flow volatility in the forthcoming periods. We also view the continued refinement and operationalisation of the Integrated Policy Framework (IPF) as essential in helping country authorities design an appropriate mix of policy actions that would help manage risks from volatile capital flows."

The African Consultative Group comprises the Fund Governors of a subset of 12 African countries belonging to the African Caucus (African Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors) and Fund management. It was formed in 2007 to enhance the IMF's policy dialogue with the African Caucus.

The main theme for discussion during the 2022 Spring Meetings is "Unlocking Financing for the Recovery and Mitigating Debt and Climate Vulnerabilities."

The context to the meeting was the new external shock amid a fragile, insufficient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The surge in commodity prices triggered by the war in Ukraine has destabilised global commodity markets, particularly for food and energy.

Currently, global food prices are at their highest in over three decades. Given that food comprises on average about 40 percent of African nations' CPI consumption baskets, the shock is hitting households that were already grappling with higher inflation, adding to food insecurity and risking social/political tensions.

fmfinsights

Economy & Investment

ADVERT RATE

COLOUR

PRODUCT

Size	Rate	Vat (7.5%)
F/P	557,916.68	41,843.76
H/P	316,462.50	23,734.68
Q/P	152,770.00	11,457.76
14.5x5	452,218.76	33,916.40
14.5x3	271,293.26	20,347.00
10x6	374,250.00	28,068.76
10x5	311,875.00	23,390.62
10x4	249,500.00	18,712.50
9x6	336,825.00	25,261.88
9x5	280,687.50	21,051.56
9x4	224,550.00	16,841.26
9x3	168,412.50	12,630.94
8x6	299,400.00	22,455.00
8x5	249,500.00	18,712.50
8x4	199,600.00	14,970.00
7x6	251,975.00	18,898.12
7x5	218,312.50	16,373.44
7x4	174,650.00	13,098.76
7x2	172,150.00	6,549.38
6x4	149,700.00	11,227.50
6x3	112,275.00	8,420.62
6x2	74,850.00	5,613.75
5x6	187,125.00	14,034.38
5x5	155,937.50	11,695.32
5x4	124,750.00	9,356.26
5x3	93,562.50	7,017.18
5x2	62,375.00	4,678.12
4x4	99,800.00	7,485.00
4x3	74,850.00	5,613.76
4x2	49,900.00	3,742.50
3x2	37,425.00	2,806.88
2x2	24,950.00	1,871.26
2x1	12,475.00	935.62
1x1	6,237.50	467.82

PUBLIC NOTICE POLITICAL

Size	Rate	Vat (7.5%)
F/P	578,838.55	43,412.90
H/P	328,329.84	24,624.74
Q/P	158,498.88	11,887.42
14.5x5	234,558.65	35,183.80
14.5x3	284,858.44	21,364.38
10x6	388,303.80	29,122.78
10x5	323,586.50	24,268.98
10x4	258,869.20	19,415.20
9x6	349,473.42	26,210.50
9x5	291,227.85	21,842.08
9x4	232,982.28	17,473.68
9x3	174,736.70	13,105.26
8x6	310,643.04	23,298.22
8x5	258,869.20	19,415.20
8x4	207,095.36	15,532.16
7x6	271,812.66	20,385.94
7x5	226,510.55	16,988.30
7x4	181,208.44	13,590.64
7x2	90,604.22	6,795.32
6x4	155,321.52	11,649.12
6x3	116,491.14	8,736.84
6x2	77,660.76	5,824.56
5x6	194,151.90	14,561.40
5x5	161,793.24	12,134.50
5x4	129,434.60	9,707.60
5x3	97,075.95	7,280.70
5x2	64,717.30	4,853.80
4x4	103,547.66	7,766.08
4x3	77,660.74	5,824.56
4x2	51,773.84	3,883.04
3x2	38,830.38	2,912.28
2x2	25,886.92	1,941.52
2x1	12,943.46	970.76
1x1	6,471.72	485.38

BLACK AND WHITE

PRODUCT

Size	Rate	Vat (7.5%)
F/P	366,792.56	27,509.44
H/P	198,423.18	14,881.74
Q/P	95,782.00	7,183.66
14.5x5	283,950.60	21,296.30
14.5x3	190,000.00	14,250.00
9x6	234,993.60	17,624.52
9x5	176,245.20	13,218.4
9x4	140,996.16	10,574.72
9x3	105,747.12	7,931.04
8x6	187,994.88	14,099.62
8x5	156,662.40	11,749.68
8x4	126,329.92	9,474.74
7x6	164,495.52	12,337.16
7x5	137,079.60	10,280.98
7x4	109,663.68	8,224.78
7x2	54,831.84	4,112.38
6x4	93,997.44	7,049.80
6x3	70,498.08	5,287.36
6x2	70,498.08	5,287.36
5x6	117,496.80	8,812.26
5x5	97,914.00	7,343.56
5x4	78,331.20	5,874.84
5x3	58,748.40	4,406.14
5x2	39,165.60	2,937.42
4x4	62,664.96	4,699.88
4x3	46,998.72	3,524.90
4x2	31,322.48	2,349.18
3x2	23,499.38	1,762.46
2x2	15,666.24	1,174.96
2x1	7,833.12	587.48
1x1	3,916.56	293.74

PUBLIC NOTICE POLITICAL

Size	Rate	Vat (7.5%)
F/P	435,178.08	32,638.36
H/P	254,538.96	19,090.42
Q/P	131,226.90	9,842.02
14.5x5	38,040.56	2,853.04
14.5x3	232,825.87	17,461.94
10x6	319,512.00	23,963.40
10x5	266,260.00	19,969.50
10x4	213,006.00	15,975.46
9x6	287,560.80	21,567.06
9x5	239,634.00	17,972.56
9x4	191,707.20	14,378.04
9x3	143,780.40	10,783.54
8x6	255,609.60	19,170.72
8x5	213,008.00	15,975.60
8x4	170,406.40	12,780.48
7x6	223,658.00	16,774.36
7x5	186,382.00	13,978.66
7x4	149,105.60	11,182.92
7x2	74,552.80	5,591.46
6x4	127,804.80	9,585.36
6x3	95,853.60	7,189.02
6x2	63,902.40	4,792.68
5x6	159,756.00	11,981.70
5x5	133,130.00	9,984.76
5x4	106,504.00	7,987.80
5x3	79,878.00	5,990.86
5x2	53,252.00	3,993.90
4x4	85,203.20	6,390.24
4x3	83,902.40	6,292.68
4x2	42,601.60	3,195.12
3x2	31,951.20	2,396.34
2x2	21,300.80	1,597.56
2x1	10,650.40	798.78
1x1	5,325.20	399.40

SPECIAL POSITION	Rate	Vat (7.5%)
FPS 6x2	1,291,193.44	96,839.50
BPS 6x2	923,375.00	69,253.12
STRIP (FRONT) 2X6	1,322,912.50	99,218.44
STRIP (BACK) 2X6	1,037,500.00	77,812.50
STRIP (INSIDE) 2X6	218,460.38	16,384.52
EARPIECE (FRONT) 2X2	517,094.30	38,782.08
EARPIECE (BACK) 2X2	405,145.10	30,385.88
EARPIECE (INSIDE) 2X2	240,000.00	18,000.00
CENTERSPREAD (FULL)	3,320,000.00	249,000.00
CENTERSPREAD (HALF)	1,992,000.00	149,400.00
CENTERSPREAD (STRIP)	594,300.00	44,572.50
DOUBLESPREAD	2,982,952.00	223,721.40

WRAP	Rate	Vat (7.5%)
FULL WRAP	41,500,000.00	3,112,500.00
10 X 6	28,620,690.00	2,146,551.76
HALF PAGE (FRONT)	20,800,000.00	1,560,000.00
5X6 (FRONT)	14,312,344.00	1,073,425.80
4X6 (FRONT)	11,448,274.00	858,620.56
2X6 (UNDER MASTHEAD	7,262,500.00	544,687.50
2X6 (FRONT POLITICAL)	1,560,000.00	117,000.00

LOOSE INSERT	
RATE PER 1,000 SHEETS	60,000.00
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Food Security: **Buhari Lauds AfDB For Being Proactive, Invested $45bn Across 40 Countries In 50 Years**

By Felix Omoh-Asun

President Muhammadu Buhari has given plaudits to the Africa Development Bank (AfDB) for planning ahead of whatever negative consequences may come from the Russia-Ukraine war in terms of food security.

According to his Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Femi Adesina, the President spoke at State House, Abuja, during an audience with the AfDB President, Dr Akinwumi Adesina, who briefed him on steps being taken by the bank to avert food crisis in Africa, in the foreseeable future.

"Thank you for knowing our weaknesses and our strengths, and for planning and working ahead," President Buhari said. "We are very much aware of the need for food security, and to encourage our local farmers, that was why we closed our borders for about two years to curb smuggling. We made some progress."

Dr Adesina said the Russia-Ukraine war would create global problems, and particularly for Africa, which imports a huge percentage of its food from the two countries.

"Already, the price of wheat has gone up about 60%. Maize and other grains will also be affected. There may be fertilizer crisis, as there would be about 2 million metric tons deficit. And that will affect food production by about 20%. Africa will lose $11 billion worth of food, and coming shortly after COVID-19, that would be rather serious," the AfDB President disclosed.

To prepare against the evil day, Dr Adesina said the AfDB has developed a $1.5 billion Africa Emergency Food Plan, which is now before the bank's Board for approval.

He added: "We were not ready for COVID-19, but we are now planning to avert food crisis on the continent. There is plan to help farmers cultivate wheat, maize, rice, sorghum, and soybeans. It will mitigate the impact of the Russia-Ukraine war."

President Muhammadu Buhari

Talking specifically of Nigeria, the Nigerian-born Adesina, and a former Minister of Agriculture, said in the wet season of 2022, at least 5 million smallholder farmers would be helped to cultivate 1 million hectares of maize, 1 million hectares of rice, and 250,000 hectares of sorghum and soybeans, respectively.

"In total, our support will help Nigeria to produce 9.5 million metric tons of food."

States that will benefit from the assistance include Kano, Ogun, Oyo, Kaduna, Imo, Cross River, and the Federal Capital Territory.

Dr Adesina submitted: "Mr President, you have a passion for agriculture. We are behind you strongly, and we want to ensure Nigeria won't feel the impact of the food crisis."

Meanwhile, AfDB said it had invested $45bn across 40 countries as the bank marks 50 years of existence.

The AfDB through the African Development Fund (ADF) has invested $45 billion in 2,750 operations across 40 African countries.

The Bank in a brochure titled "50 Voices, 50 Stories: Celebrating the impact of the African Development Fund over five decades," said this on its website.

AfDB said that since the creation of the fund in 1972, it had been an important source of concessionary resources and technical support to low-income African countries.

The bank said the fund had in the past five years, helped to connect 15.5 million people to electricity, supported 74 million Africans with improved agriculture and food security.

AfDB said the fund had also built or rehabilitated 8,700 kilometres of roads, enabled 50 million people to gain access to transport and 42 million people to access better water and sanitation.

"Fifty years ago, the ADF was founded on one fundamental principle. It is to promote economic and social development in the lives of people in low-income and fragile African countries.

"Today, the fund remains a staunch partner of these countries, touching the lives of millions of people across the continent. A people-first approach remains at the core of the fund's priorities.

"As it celebrates its 50th anniversary this year, the AfDB Group is launching 50 Voices, 50 Stories: a series which highlights the fund's life-changing impact in 37 beneficiary countries," the Bank said.

AfDB said that the fund supported its benefitting countries through the 2008 and 2009 global financial crisis and the 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa.

It said the fund's support came to the countries during frequent and intense droughts, floods and other natural disasters.

It noted that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the fund demonstrated its ability to respond rapidly, reprioritising its operations and targeted programmes to mitigate impacts of the pandemic through the COVID-19 Response Facility.

The bank said the fund was investing in building up a deep understanding of the drivers of conflict and fragility across Africa to address the root causes of poverty and conflicts.

AfDB in the brochure assured benefitting countries that the fund would continue to play a fundamental role in their lives.

"As the beneficiary countries continue to bear the brunt of the most devastating impacts of COVID-19, rising debt, climate change, and more recently the prospect of a food crisis triggered by the conflict in Ukraine, the fund will continue to play a fundamental role in the lives of people in these countries," it said.

The ADF is the concessional window of the AfDB Group, established in 1972 but became operational in 1974.

Contributory Pension Scheme Rises In Volume

Chiamaka G. Okpala

There is rise in the total assets under the Contributory Pension Scheme.

Data indicated that the contributory scheme rose by N460billion in three months to N13.88trillion in March, 2022, according to figures from the National Pension Commission released last week.

In the National Pension Commission's latest report which was titled, "Unaudited report on pension funds industry portfolio for the period ended 31 March 2022; Approved Existing Schemes, Closed Pension Fund Administrators and RSA funds (Including unremitted contributions @CBN & legacy funds)," said the funds, which ended December 31, 2021, at N13.42trillion, rose to N13.61trillion and N13.76trillion as of the end of January and February 2022 respectively.

The data showed that N8.5trillion of the total funds was invested in Federal Government securities, comprising bonds and treasury bills in March.

The amount represented 61.24 percent of the total assets under the Contributory Pension Scheme.

Other investment portfolios where the funds were invested included: domestic and foreign ordinary shares; corporate debt securities comprising corporate bonds, corporate infrastructure bonds, corporate green bonds, and supranational bonds.

PenCom also disclosed that the total number of workers with Retirement Savings Accounts rose slightly to 9.589 million as of end of February, from 9.529 million as of end of December 2021.

It stated that 131,376 workers who retired from active service could not be placed on monthly pensions as of the end of 2021.

Figures obtained from PenCom showed that the affected workers had received all the contributions in their Retirement Savings Accounts totalling N32.58billion, having quit the Contributory Pension Scheme.

According to PenCom, the affected retirees had below N550,000 as the balance in their RSAs which did not qualify them to be enrolled under the two retirement options of annuity and programmed withdrawal

The pension regulator also said some foreign nationals returning to their countries withdrew their savings before leaving.

According to the Pension Reform Act 2014, any worker with less than N550, 000 would be given the total balance in their RSA by the PFA and allowed to leave the pension scheme.

It could recall that recently, the National Pension Commission (PenCom) announced that 20 Pension Fund Administrators, PFAs, have met their N5 billion minimum recapitalisation deadline from N1billion.

The Commission also announced the approval of the acquisition of AIICO Pension Managers Limited by FCMB Pensions Limited.

It equally approved the merger between Tangerine Pensions Limited and APT Pension Funds Managers Limited and subsequent change of name of the merged entity to Tangerine APT Pensions Limited.

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"Recall that the Commission had approved the recapitalisation exercise for the PFAs with a 12-month transition period from 27 April 2021 to 27 April 2022.

"The exercise became expedient as the value of pension fund assets under management and custody had grown exponentially by 244 percent, from N3 trillion in 2012 (when the previous recapitalisation was done) to N12.29 trillion (as at December 31, 2020).

"The sustained growth in assets implies greater fiduciary responsibilities that require more operational capacity by the PFAs.

"The urgent need to ramp up PFAs capacity to manage the increasing number of registered contributors and value of pension fund assets under management led to the recapitalisation exercise.

"It is worthwhile to state that 10 PFAs had met the new regulatory capital requirement of N5 billion as at 31 December 2021, while the others intensified efforts to meet the deadline of 27 April 2022. This resulted in some mergers and acquisitions, which led to the reduction of the number of PFAs from 22 to 20.

"The Commission approved the acquisition of AIICO Pension Managers Limited by FCMB Pensions Limited; and the merger between Tangerine Pensions Limited and APT Pension Funds Managers Limited and subsequent change of name of the merged entity to Tangerine APT Pensions Limited. In addition, the Commission also approved Norrenberger's acquisition of IEI-Anchor Pension Managers Limited, after its acquisition of the majority shareholder, IEI Plc.

"With the conclusion of the recapitalisation exercise, stakeholders, particularly RSA holders, should expect increased effectiveness and efficiency as well as improved service delivery from PFAs."

Bank Directors, Staff Not Covered Under Deposit Insurance, Says NDIC

● **Mr. Bello Hassan,** Managing Director/Chief Executive, Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation (NDIC)

CONTINUES FROM PAGE 8

Meanwhile, the NDIC said it has developed a Single Customer View (SCV) platform to be deployed to microfinance banks (MFBs) to eliminate delays often experienced in reimbursing depositors following revocation of failed MFBs licences by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN).

Managing Director/Chief Executive of the Corporation, Mr. Bello Hassan disclosed this while receiving executive members of the National Association of Microfinance Banks (NAMB) on a courtesy visit to the NDIC Management in Abuja.

According to the NDIC Boss, the Corporation introduced the Single Customer View platform in order to strengthen its processes. He said the platform would not only ensure rendition of quality, timely and complete data to NDIC by MFBs but also give complete position of depositors' data at any given time which would go a long way in enhancing prompt reimbursement in case of bank failure. The MD however said the Corporation would expose the template for the platform to the association with a view to garnering additional inputs towards optimising the noble innovation.

He charged the association to promote adoption of sound risk management practices by its members, stressing that it is key to the maintenance of safe and sound MFB sub-sector.

The President of NAMB, Mr. Yusuf Gyallesu lauded the Corporation for its continued collaboration with the Association and its members in strengthening microfinance bank operations in the country. He recalled NDIC's contribution towards the acquisition of the National Association of Microfinance Banks Unified Information Technology (NAMBUIT) and continuous capacity building for operators amongst other support which the Corporation had given to the association.

The President disclosed the establishment of a Monitoring and Evaluation Department by the Association aimed at promoting sound practices through self-regulation among MFB operators and called on the Corporation to assist in strengthening the operations of the new department.

IMF Projects $19bn Oil Import Bill, Trade Imbalances For Nigeria, Others

CONTINUES FROM PAGE 12

Meanwhile, the IMF has projected the Nigeria's economy to grow by 3.4 percent in 2022, up from 2.7 percent earlier projected.

This was disclosed by the IMF in its April World Economic Outlook (WEO) report released as part of activities at the ongoing IMF/World Bank spring meetings.

The report however, reduced the global growth projection to 3.6 percent in both 2022 and 2023, citing the impact of the costly humanitarian crisis economic damage from the Russian war on Ukraine.

IMF also projected that Russia's economy would shrink by 8.5 percent this year while Ukraine's economy would also decline by 35 percent.

The report equally said: "The war in Ukraine has triggered a costly humanitarian crisis that demands a peaceful resolution.

"At the same time, economic damage from the conflict will contribute to a significant slowdown in global growth in 2022 and add to inflation.

"Fuel and food prices have increased rapidly, hitting vulnerable populations in low-income countries hardest."

Going by the report, global growth will slow from an estimated 6.1 percent in 2021 to 3.6 percent in 2022 and 2023. This is 0.8 and 0.2 percentage points lower for 2022 and 2023 than projected in January.

It posited that: "Beyond 2023, global growth is forecast to decline to about 3.3 percent over the medium term."

IMF is of the view that: "War-induced commodity price increases and broadening price pressures have led to 2022 inflation projections of 5.7 percent in advanced economies and 8.7 percent in emerging market and developing economies — 1.8 and 2.8 percentage points higher than projected last January.

Recall in January this year, the IMF projected the country's economy to grow by 3.1 percent by 2023 from the 2.7 percent it earlier projected.

The body revised upward its growth forecast for the Nigerian economy in 2022 to 3.4 percent from its earlier projection of 2.7 percent announced in January.

In its World Economic Outlook update release in January, It also projected the country's economy to grow by 3.1 percent by 2023 from the 2.7 percent it earlier projected.

It, however, reduced the global growth projection to 3.6 percent for 2022 and 2023, given the Russia/Ukraine War.

"Global economic prospects have worsened significantly since our last World Economic Outlook forecast in January. At the time, we had projected the global recovery to strengthen from the second quarter of this year after a short-lived impact of the Omicron variant. Since then, the outlook has deteriorated, largely because of Russia's invasion of Ukraine—causing a tragic.

The lender projected Russia's economy to shrink by 8.5 percent in 2022 while Ukraine's economy is projected to decline by 35 percent.

The Fund has raised concerns about how the pandemic might have caused the interdependence between banks and governments which can eventually lead to a "doom loop" for emerging economies.

A doom loop is a phenomenon by which weak banks can destabilise governments that support them and over-indebted governments can push banks that hold their bonds over the edge.

"Governments around the world have spent aggressively to help households and employers weather the economic impact of the pandemic. Public debt has mounted as governments have issued bonds to cover their budget deficits. The average ratio of public debt to the gross domestic product—a key measure of a country's fiscal health—rose to a record 67 percent last year in emerging market countries, according to Chapter 2 of the IMF's April 2022 Global Financial Stability Report," the report said.

"Emerging-market banks have provided most of that credit, driving holdings of government debt as a percentage of their assets to a record 17 percent in 2021. In some economies, government debt amounts to a quarter of bank assets. The result: emerging-market governments rely heavily on their banks for credit, and these banks rely heavily on government bonds as an investment that they can use as collateral for securing funding from the central bank."

It said emerging-market economies are now at greater risk than advanced economies for two reasons.

"For one, their growth prospects are weaker relative to the pre-pandemic trend compared with advanced economies, and governments have less fiscal firepower to support the economy.

"For another, external financing costs have generally risen, so governments will have to pay more to borrow," the fund said.

It advised that policymakers should develop resolution frameworks for sovereign domestic debt to facilitate orderly deleveraging and restructuring in case they are needed.

Abuse Naira Notes Go To Jail, CBN Warns Nigerians

Felix Omoh-Asun

Over the years, spraying the naira in public functions has been on the ban list. But the law has never been implemented.

Of course, it is almost impossible not to see people slapping celebrants with naira notes during celebrations.

This attitude has become a common place that any function without rain of naira notes or dollar, as the case may be, is not considered a successful one.

It is on this note that the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) had again reminded Nigerians that six months imprisonment await those caught with spraying naira notes at parties.

The apex bank declared that henceforth, anybody caught abusing the country's currency would be made to face the law by serving six months imprisonment with a fine of N50,000.

Mrs. Uchenna Onyene in the Currency Operations Department of CBN, said this at the two-day CBN FAIR organised in Owerri for bank users and customers.

The CBN official stated that there is need for users of Nigerian currency to change their attitude to the handling of currency.

According to her, Nigerian currency remains the pride of the nation adding that it must be kept clean all the time.

She said: "CBN issued out currency clean and it must be returned clean."

She condemned the attitude of spraying money in public, observed with dismayed that Igbos have been most guilty of this act.

While advising people to desist from such action adding such an attitude destroys the country's currency.

Speaking earlier, the Director of Corporate Communication CBN, Mr. Osita Nwanisiobi said that the essence of CBN FAIR is to sensitize bank customers and stakeholders and acquaint them with necessary information about their monetary policies and activities.

Nwanisiobi represented by the Deputy Director Corporate Communication Department CBN, he identified some of the policies to include 'how to handle Naira, various payment platforms, consumer protection initiatives and development international initiatives among others.

He said that since 2016, Nigeria, as a country has gone into recession twice, regretted that any country that has such an ugly experience cannot stand economically.

Mr. Osita condemned what he described as an army of unemployed youths seen in the streets of Nigeria, adding that such situations project the nation as a poor country.

He appealed to Nigerians to stop complaining about exchange rate, adding that it is only those countries that export their products that would have value in Naira and boast in exchange rate.

He said: "If Nigerian exports more, the currency of the country will certainly rise."

Describing the CBN programs and interventionist program as livewire, the CBN Director Corporate Communication said that since 70s, Nigerian have restricted herself to producing one product which is crude oil.

He expressed dismayed that even when we do that, the country does not have control of fixing the prize.

SEC Says Capital Market Imperative In Nation's Development As Consumer Sector Displaces Financial Industry

• Contributes 76.3% To Equity Turnover

● **Mr Lamido Yuguda,** Director-General of SEC

Ahmed Ahmed

The role of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), cannot be overlooked in capital market and in the development of any country through the provision of long-term funds for infrastructure development, among others.

This is as consumer sector has displaced financial industry and contributed 76.3 percent to equity turnover last week.

Director General of the SEC Mr Lamido Yuguda stated that capital market is imperative in the development of any country.

Yuguda stated this when a team from the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG) visited the Commission in Abuja, to collaborate with the SEC towards the development of the economy.

The SEC DG said that the capital market could actually do more in the areas of provision of necessary infrastructure for the country in a bid to support the government in its development efforts.

He said: "Our collective economic power is bigger than the government and in many countries you find out that the capital market is actually funding the government. When you save, the finance is used to create economic value that actually enhances your standard of living and this is a win-win. You get financial returns and also get utility from the investments and this is actually achievable."

Yuguda said: "On the capital market, it is a welcome development that we are talking with the NESG for there is something that really needs to happen in this country.

"When you look at our policy environment, in many areas it is not conducive for the return of capital to investors and we are working hard to tackle this."

The SEC DG noted that the telecommunications companies were successful because no one was getting the services for free as everyone paid.

"We all pay for the services no one is getting the services for free, but when we move on our roads, we say no we do not want to pay for it. In other countries people pay for their roads and they are happy doing that, because the roads are good.

"We need to have a collaboration with a group like NESG. Once we are able to put things right, investors will be willing to put in money and there will be returns," he said.

In his remarks, Chief Executive Officer of NESG, Mr Laoye Jaiyeola, expressed worry that the banking sector was being over stressed, urging governments and corporate organisations to look towards the capital market for their funding needs.

Jaiyeola stated that transactions could be restructured to raise bonds, bills and all of those things that would fund whatever it waa that needed to be funded without going through banks.

He said: "The securities market needs to take the bull by the horns otherwise we are going to be in perpetual debt as a Nation and that will not help us.

"That is one of the reasons we say let's re-engage, how can we get an Investments and Securities Act that will ensure that the needed funding for development in Nigeria is given priority and then we can fund Nigeria for a longer term.

"The short term funding cannot help us; we need to begin to move to long-term. We are passionate about it and we need to raise these funds for the needed development funding for Nigeria."

Also speaking, Executive Commissioner Legal and Enforcement SEC, Mr Reginald Karawusa stated that the current ISA was signed into Law by then President Musa YarÁdua in 2007, which made it 15 years old now.

Karawusa said the SEC set up an industry-wide Committee to rework the law, adding that several market experts were involved in redrafting the law as well as inputs from stakeholders.

According to him, "a draft was tabled to the 8th assembly, unfortunately the assembly left before passing the Bill. Getting the bill passed will be a major thing for the capital market. There are new provisions that will strengthen the SEC to effectively regulate to make us a top notch regulator to increase the number of products. There is also a provision that will enable us play with National Savings Scheme, which is another major gate changer if the Bill becomes passed. Therefore, any support we can get from the NESG will be appreciated."

Meanwhile, for the first time in four months, the consumer goods industry outperformed the financial sector, dominating in volume terms at the end of last week's transactions on the equities sector of the Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX).

It led the activity chart with 6.259 billion shares valued at N29.309 billion traded in 5,225 deals; thus contributing 76.3 per cent to the total equity turnover.

Following the consumer sector, last week, was the financial services industry with 1.3 billion shares worth N9.1 billion in 11,551 deals.

The conglomerates industry ranked third with a turnover of 247.477 million shares worth N334.894 million in 1,348 deals.

Trading in the top three equities namely Honeywell Flour Mills Plc, FCMB Group Plc and Transnational Corporation of Nigeria Plc (measured by volume) accounted for 6.924 billion shares worth N27.951 billion in 2,237 deals, contributing 84.39 per cent to the total equity turnover volume.

Further breakdown of last week's trading showed that a turnover of 8.2 billion shares worth N49.1 billion was recorded in 28,622 deals by investors on the floor of the exchange last week.

This volume of shares traded was, however, higher than 1.3 billion units valued at N17.8 billion that changed hands in 20,212 deals.

Reacting to market performance, the Chief Research Officer of Investment Consulting Limited, Ambrose Omordion said there was mixed sentiment and selling interests at the midweek's session, as traders cash out their profits in banking, insurance and petroleum marketing stocks.

He pointed out that the continued mixed direction of fixed income market yields and rates of treasury bills may trigger a flow of funds in or out of the equities space, despite the prevailing mixed sentiment in the stock market amidst the ongoing war in Ukraine.

"We expect improved sentiments on an influx of impressive Q1 corporate earnings, as market players take advantage of these numbers to position as investors digest the Q1 numbers and 2021 full-year earnings reports, ahead of March year-end 2022 audited financials with dividend announcements to support uptrend in the new month." Omordion said.

Analysts at Codros Capital said: "In the week ahead, we expect investors to continue to rotate their portfolios towards cyclical stocks that delivered decent earnings this week."

"Thus, we see scope for the bulls to maintain dominance, albeit the magnitude of the gains will be substantially lower, as profit takers are likely to cash out on the gains across bellwether stocks.

"Notwithstanding, we reiterate the need for positioning in only fundamentally sound stocks as the weak macro environment remains a significant headwind for corporate earnings."

The All-Share Index (ASI) and market capitalisation appreciated by 2.4 per cent to close the week at 49,638.94 and N26.761 trillion respectively.

A total of 5,202 units of Exchange Traded Products (ETPs) valued at N320,564.37 were recorded in 13 deals compared with a total of 20,137 units valued at N365,231.58 transacted in 10 deals during the preceding week.

Also, 45,531units of bonds valued at N48.070 million were exchanged in 19 deals compared with a total of 62,425 units worth N66.802 million that was achieved in 14 deals.

On the price movement chart, 56 equities appreciated during the week, higher than 50 equities while 26 equities depreciated, lower than 29 equities in the previous week.

PwC Master Plan Review'll Contribute To Nation's Economy Growth - SEC DG

• Equity Market Defies Easter Lull

By Albert Egbede

As security exchange market continues its contributions to the realisation of stable and improved economy, innovations in the sector have given rise to economy growth.

The Director General of Security and Exchange Commission (SEC), Lamido Yuguda lend credence to this innovational improvement when has said within the week that the implementation of the master plan review concluded by PwC would deepen the market and improve its contribution to the nation's economic growth.

This is even as the equity market defied the Easter lull to sustain gains for the four trading sessions as the all-share index (ASI) and market capitalisation appreciated by two per cent to close the week at 47,558.45 and N25.64 trillion respectively.

SEC DG restated the commission's commitment to ensuring that the nation's capital market attains its full potential through advanced technology.

Yuguda stated this during a meeting with the management team of Financial Sector Deepening (FSD) Africa.

FSD Africa is support centres on the development of capital markets master plans, conducting institutional capacity assessments, and creating capacity for sustainable finance such as green bonds, helping markets to adapt to their operating goals.

Yuguda expressed the commission's delight with the support from FSD Africa in the areas of human resource transformation, information technology strategy as well as capital market master plan review.

"I cannot but express my support to FSD Africa for the various support they have given to the commission in various areas.

"We are very excited about the Human Resource Transformation exercise as the report will assist the Commission in profound ways that will lead to optimal productivity of staff.

"What you are doing is commendable, you are looking at African financial markets and trying to assist to ensure that productivity and development are enhanced. We, therefore, assure you that these investments are well placed and we will continue to work to ensure the confidence that you have in us," he said.

He also stated that the review of the capital market master plans better positions the SEC to deliver on its regulatory objectives in the challenging times.

He said: "The FSD Africa and SEC Nigeria's laudable partnership underscores our mutual goals to build financial markets that are robust, efficient and above all-inclusive."

The SEC boss disclosed that the current management is also looking at other sources to promote market efficiency and ensure that the aim of this support is not defeated. He said the commission has prioritised the issue of human resource management to infuse a culture of excellence in the market.

"Thank you for the considerable assistance on IT. What we have done too is to explore domestic sources of funding for our IT infrastructure and thankfully, we are making tremendous progress in that regard," he added.

Chief Executive Office FDS Africa, Mike Napier, expressed excitement on various initiatives embarked upon by the SEC to ensure a more vibrant and better capital market regulation.

Napier said well-functioning capital markets can play a vital role in support of inclusive economic growth by channeling long-term finance into infrastructure and other large-scale projects that create jobs and improve access to the market.

He added that strengthening regulatory capacity in capital markets is an essential pre-condition for building investor confidence.

He said: "We are very happy that you have taken these challenges to embark on these various initiatives to ensure that your processes are better which will ultimately lead to a better regulator for the capital market.

"In FSD Africa we are embracing innovation and that is why we are providing support for these various projects, it is a long journey but we know we will get there at the end of it all," he stated.

Napier also expressed satisfaction with the level of innovations in the market, stating that across Africa there are not many organisations that can do this especially given the issues of the paucity of funds.

N60bn Needed Annually To Meet Domestic Consumption Of Palm Oil - CBN

Edmond Martins

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has recently disclosed that Nigeria requires about N60 billion annually for the importation of palm oil to meet local demand and consumption.

According to the CBN, to narrow the gap, it has disbursed a total of over N45.03 billion to stakeholders in the oil palm industry under the Anchor Borrowers Programme (ABP) to fast track the cultivation of about 31, 442 hectares to further grow the commodity.

According the apex bank, its intervention is capable of growing the oil palm value chain in line with the diversification efforts of the federal government.

The importation demand was expected to cover both the technical palm oil (TPO) used in industry and special palm oil (SPO) used by households.

According to the apex bank, the country's palm oil production per annum is currently estimated at 1,250,000 million metric tons (MT) with demand valued at 2,500,00 MT per annum.

It added that for Nigeria to achieve 50 percent import substitution through production upgrade within the next 10 years, there was need to bridge demand deficits for domestic production of fresh fruit bunches from 8.5 million MT in 2010 to about 10 million MT.

According to the fourth quarter 2021 trade statistics by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), crude palm oil imports from China totaled N20.28 billion and N16.49 billion from Malaysia as well as palm oil worth N31.43 billion imported from Malaysia.

The ABP was launched in 2015 to curtail excessive imports particularly palm oil and other food products that could be competitively grown in the country.

Mr. Godwin Emefiele, Governor of CBN, said recently that the achievements so far recorded in the implementation of the ABP had started to record giant strides in the production of maize and cassava and expressed optimism that in the next 12 months, palm produce harvests would have commenced in the country.

The CBN governor, who stressed that agriculture remained a strong pillar for Nigerian economy, had expressed satisfaction over the level of interest shown in agriculture and the tremendous impacts that the sector had recorded in the last six years.

Emefiele, like several other Nigerians, had particularly wondered how the country would have coped with the rising prices of food and commodity items across the world – without the foresight to revamp agriculture.

The apex bank boss further disclosed that the ultimate objective of the CBN intervention in the oil palm sector was to overtake Thailand and Colombia to become the third-largest producer over the next few years through increased oil palm production by 2028.

He said: "Core objectives of the intervention are to meet local demand for palm oil and improve local processing quality and standards; conserve foreign exchange; create jobs and enhance the skills of Nigerian people along the oil palm value chain."

Other objectives of the funding support to the sector are to facilitate easier access to funding for oil majors, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and smallholder farmers as well as improve and grow the economy.

In another development, the CBN recently granted final approval for Airtel subsidiary, SMARTCASH Payment Service Bank limited ('Smartcash') to operate a Payment Service Bank ('PSB') in Nigeria.

The disclosure was made by Airtel on the website of the Nigerian Exchange Group today titled, "Nigeria PSB Full Licence Approval", signed by Simon O'Hara, Group Company Secretary.

The CBN had earlier granted Airtel's subsidiary Airtel Mobile Commerce Nigeria Ltd a full 'super agent' license, allowing it to serve customers of Nigerian banks, payment service banks, and licensed mobile money carriers.

Airtel stated: "The Airtel Africa, a leading provider of telecommunications and mobile money services, with presence in 14 countries across Africa, today announces that the CBN has confirmed that its subsidiary, SMARTCASH Payment Service Bank limited ('Smartcash'), has now received final approval from the CBN for a full Payment Service Bank (PSB) licence, affording the group the opportunity to deliver a full suite of mobile money services into Nigeria."

Segun Ogunsanya, CEO, Airtel Africa, said: "I am very pleased that Smartcash has been granted approval for a full PSB licence to operate a service bank business in Nigeria and we are now working towards the commencement of business."

He stated that the license would enable Airtel to reach the unbanked and promote the apex bank's agenda of financial inclusion.

He also said: "This licence enables us to expand our digital financial products and reach the millions of Nigerians that do not currently have access to traditional financial services. We are delighted to be able to pursue our shared agenda with the Nigerian government, the CBN and traditional financial institutions to further deepen financial inclusion in the country for the benefit of all citizens and the Nigerian economy."

Airtel's complete PSB license would allow it to operate financial services in Nigeria, including receiving cash deposits, processing payments and remittances, issuing debit and prepaid cards, operating electronic wallets, and other services.

Airtel is intended to operate in rural areas and in areas where Nigerians do not have access to banking services. In rural areas, they are also mandated to provide at least 50 percent physical access points (sometimes known as kiosks).

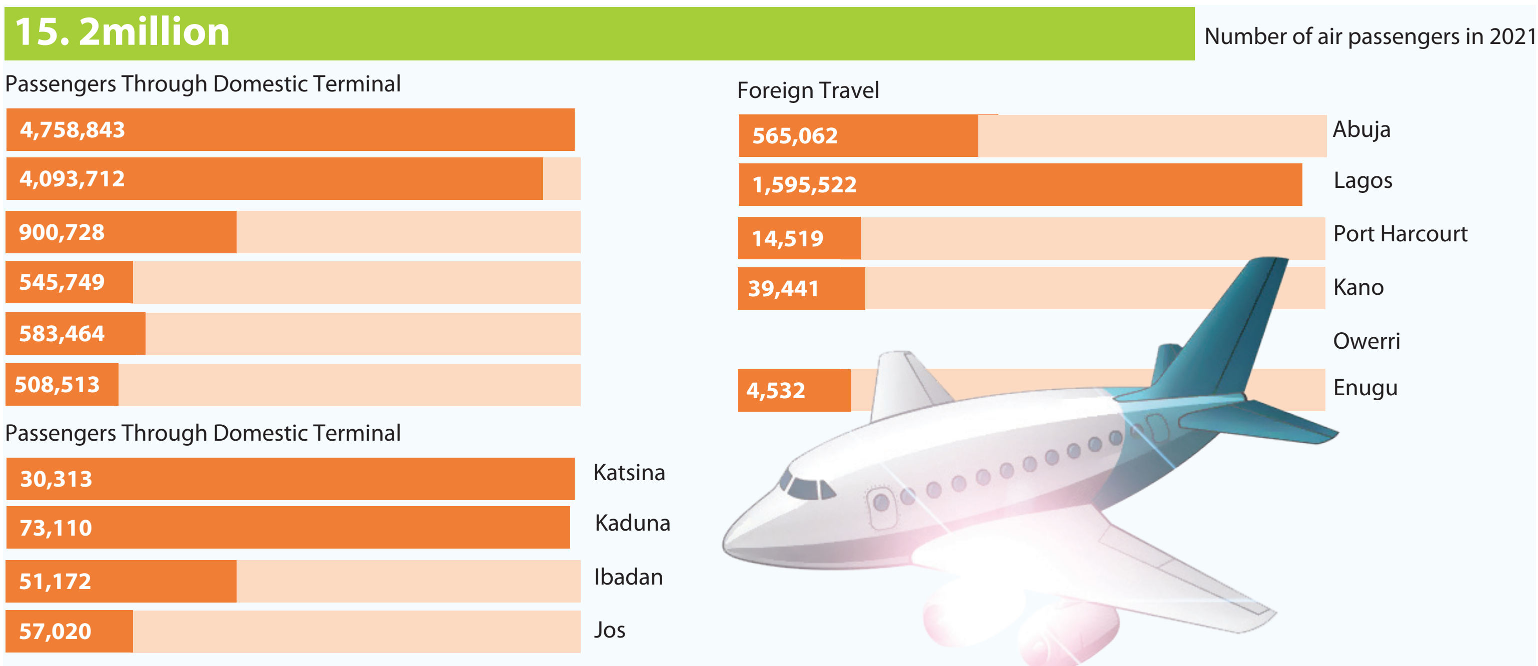
In some of its locations, Airtel may also have ATMs. Customers can withdraw cash as a result of this.

A PSB and a traditional commercial bank share the ability to take customer deposits and invest a portion of those deposits in short-term CBN or federal government's products.

More information about the start of operations will be released with Airtel's full-year results announcement this month, according to the company.

15m Passengers Travelled By Air In 2021 - NBS

Kingsley Benson



The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) has revealed recently that a total of 15.2 million travelers went through Nigeria's airports in 2021.

The figure represents an increase of 101.02 per cent in domestic and international travel when compared to 2020.

The details show that the total number of international passengers who passed through Nigerian airports was 2,219,146, as against 1,408,026 passengers in 2020.

This represented 57.61 per cent growth rate, while in 2021, the total number of domestic passengers who passed through Nigerian airports was 13,006,481 as against 9,069,295 in 2020, which also represented a 43.41 per cent growth rate.

Furthermore, the data showed that the number of arrivals in 2021 stood at 6,533,740, which was higher compared to 4,870,072 in 2020.

On the other hand, departure stood at 6,472,741 in 2021 compared to 4,199,223 in 2020. Similarly, the total number of international passengers who passed through Nigerian airports were 2,219,146 in 2021 as against 1,408,026 passengers in 2020.

This represented 57.61 per cent growth rate. Similarly, the number of arrivals in 2021 stood at 1,109,621, which was higher compared to 690,765 in 2020. Also, departure stood at 1,109,525 in 2021 compared to 717,261 in 2020.

The data showed that Abuja, Lagos, Kano, Port Harcourt, Enugu and Owerri recorded the highest rate of traffic, while Katsina, Kaduna, Ibadan and Jos recorded the lowest traffic.

A total of 4,758,843 passengers passed through the domestic terminal of the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja, while 4,093,712 passengers passed through the domestic terminals of the Murtala Muhammed Airport, Lagos. The domestic terminals of Port Harcourt International Airport had 900,728 passengers, Mallam Aminu Kano International Airport (545,749) and Akanu Ibiam International Airport (508,513).

Others were Owerri (583,464) Benin Airport (433,017) Margaret Ekpo Airport (197,998) Yola (175,699) Maiduguri (197,898), Ilorin (148,109) Akure (113,625), Sokoto (137,511) Kaduna (73,110), Jos (57,020), Ibadan (51,172) and Katsina (30,313).

For foreign travel, Lagos recorded the highest traffic, with 1,595,522 passengers, while Abuja came second with 565,062 passengers. Port Harcourt had 14,519 passengers, while Kano had 39,441, Enugu had 4,532 and Maiduguri had 68.

Meanwhile, the (NBS) has said that the average fare paid by air passengers for specified routes single journeys, increased by 4.43 per cent month-on-month from N44,825.04 in February 2022 to N46,810.62 in March 2022.

On a year-on-year, the fare rose by 28.26 per cent (N36,495.41) in March 2021.

The NBS website further explained that the average fare paid by commuters for bus journey intercity per drop rose to N3,270.94 in March 2022 indicating an increase of 5.29 per cent on a month-on-month compared to the value of N3,106.72 in February 2022.

The fare, however, rose by 35.65 per cent (N2,411.29) on a year-on-year, in March 2021. Similarly, the average fare paid by commuters for bus journeys within the city per drop, increased by 4.41 per cent on a month-on-month from N513.72 in February 2022 to N536.35 in March 2022.

In terms of year-on-year, however, the average fare paid by commuters for bus journeys within the city per drop rose by 42.17 per cent from N 377.27 in March 2021 to N536.35 in March 2022.

In another category, the average fare paid by commuters for journey by motorcycle per drop increased by 4.22 per cent on month-on-month from N379.12 in February 2022 to N395.12 in March 2022.

Also, in terms of year-on-year, the fare rose by 45.57 per cent from N271.44 in March 2021 to N395.12 in March 2022. The average fare paid for water transport (waterway passenger transportation) in March 2022 dropped to N890.03 showing a decrease of 2.53 per cent on month-on-month from N913.13 in February 2022. On year-on-year, the fare rose by 10.10 per cent from N 808.38 in March 2021 to N890.03 in March 2022," NBS said.

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CBN releases payments entitlements directly into pensioner's account

E-mail: **info@ptad.gov.ng, complaints@ptad.gov.ng**
Website: **www.ptad.gov.ng**

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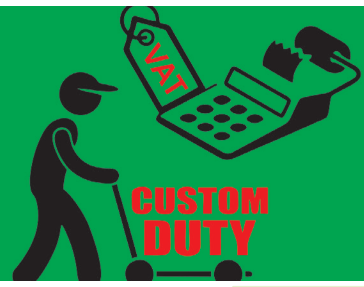

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Monday 9th - Sunday 22nd May, 2022

Caregiving Return on Investment: Nigeria Summary

POLICY BRIEF *with* ENAM **OBIOSIO**

The cross-country caregiving return on investment (ROI) study by Fraym, a venture-backed startup built to revolutionise data-driven decision making in Africa, featured at the 2022 Spring Meetings, examines whether existing primary caregivers would plan to enter or re-enter the labour force, along with information about the type of expected economic activity, if safe and quality childcare services were available.

Through Fraym's nationally representative survey of 4,922 Nigerian adults conducted between 31 January 2022 and 9 February 2022, it analyses existing household approaches to child caregiving, satisfaction with existing early childhood services, obstacles to accessing care services, and preferences for alternative care arrangements.

The report provides the summary findings from Nigeria.

Apart from in India, Indonesia, Kenya, and South Africa, in Nigeria, Fraym surveyed 4,922 respondents aged 18 or older. Fielding occurred between 31 January 2022 and 9 February 2022.

Fraym focused specifically on households with children under the age of compulsory education.

It also focused on two specific and distinct subpopulation groups such as primary caregivers who had children under the age of compulsory education living in the household, and non-primary caregivers who had under the age of compulsory education but used other forms of childcare arrangements for further analysis.

Though its interest is that caregiving services should be provided to needy families, Fraym also considered focus population sub-groups such as primary caregiver and non- primary caregiver.

The range covered adults who report themselves or their spouse or partner as the primary childcare provider, adults who report using some other type of childcare arrangements rather than parents, including facilities, hired caregivers, relatives, neighbours, or friends, and adults who do not have young children living in the household, which were asked about the state of child caregiving in the country and a range of other related topics.

Nigeria:
Return on Investment Summary[1]

Return On Investment	Average ROI per Respondent
Benefits from Employment	$1,700
Costs of Childcare[2]	$550
ROI Expected from Childcare Policy (Benefit – Cost)	$1,150
Margin (Expected ROI / Benefit)	68%
ROI Impact Per $1 Invested	$3

Note 1: Under more conservative assumptions which discount the Benefits from Employment using the latest national unemployment rate (Q4' 2020), the lower bound of the ROI Impact per $1 Invested is $2.

Note 2: The costs of childcare figure in the model is derived from the average annual reported childcare costs among parents with young children who are non-primary caregivers and pay for child caregiving services in cash.

Source: Fraym • Mapping Humanity 11

It also considered adults who report using some other type of childcare arrangements rather than parents, including facilities, hired caregivers, relatives, neighbours, or friends; this included adults who do not have young children living in the household, which were asked about the state of child caregiving in the country and a range of other related topics.

Looking at labour force participation impact, Fraym also investigated the potential impact of child caregiving policies and programs on labour force participation rates for primary caregiver households.

The Report highlights the percentage of all households whereby at least one of the spouses/ partners who are primary caregivers would join or re-join the workforce, if affordable childcare services were available (based upon Fraym survey data results); convert this into an absolute number of entrants or re-entrant into the labour force by multiplying this percentage figure by the total number of households in the country (based upon national statistics office data).

The Report also highlights the most recent labour force participation rate available (based upon official labour force survey data).

Fraym calculated the potential labour force participation rate change by comparing the projected impact to the most recently available participation rate data (based upon official labour force survey data).

In view of return on investment (ROI) model assumptions in this study, Fraym specifically investigated the potential impact of child caregiving policies and programs on potential household earnings if existing primary caregivers were able to access affordable caregiving services.

After conducting the surveys, Fraym analysed the economic benefits and costs in a scenario where caregiving is made available for primary caregivers who were age 18 or older with at least one young child under the age at which compulsory education begins in the country; who were unemployed at the time of the survey; and who would plan to look for income generating work, if safe and affordable childcare was available and accessible.

Fraym then estimated how much economic benefit these key caregivers could reasonably expect to earn through entering or re-entering the labour force.

For key assumptions for ROI calculation for income estimates, Fraym applied the average reported earnings by occupation type that the primary caregiver or their spouse/ partner reportedly would pursue, while for childcare cost estimates, it also applied the average reported current childcare costs by occupation type.

"We also consider a more conservative scenario that incorporates a discount for the national unemployment rate into the ROI assumptions. This more conservative scenario is reported in a footnote on the respective country slides as a lower bound estimate," Fraym stated.

Specifically in Nigeria, addressing primary caregivers' childcare needs could, according to Fraym, lead to eight percentage point increase in the labour force participation rate, or roughly 9 million people.

The Report shows that for every $1 invested in childcare programming in Nigeria, primary caregivers could generate up to $3 in benefits through entering the labour force. The cost is by far the most cited barrier to changing childcare arrangements, but a subsidy could alter parents' calculus.

There is overwhelming public support for subsidised child caregiving for needy families across Nigeria – 95 percent nationally.

Primary caregivers in Nigeria expect to earn $1,700 annually, on average, if they were to return to the labour force. Primary caregivers and their partners spend on average $550 each year on childcare.

In respect of public support for early child caregiving, Nigerians overwhelmingly support providing subsidised care for those families in need.

Overall, 95 percent of Nigerians believe that the government should support access to childcare services for children under six either for free or at a discounted and affordable price for those families in need. This level of super majority support holds true across every demographic group in the country spanning gender, age brackets, geographic area, and socioeconomic status.

Support for government subsidised childcare is extremely high across Nigeria. Even in LGAs with the lowest support, nearly three-quarters or more of adults are in favour of government subsidised childcare.

The majority of Nigerians, 85 percent of Nigerians, believe that the government should prioritise improving access to safe and affordable childcare services more than primary schooling.

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