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President Tinubu Advocates For Investments In Nigeria's Power, Rail Sectors At G20 Compact With Africa

• Wale Edun Underscores Significance Of The Conference

*At the recently concluded two-day G20 Compact with Africa Conference in Berlin, Germany, dedicated to enhancing private investment in the rapidly advancing continent, **President Bola Tinubu** engaged in discussions with German Chancellor, **Mr. Olaf Scholz,** on the sidelines. The president underscored Nigeria's unwavering commitment to attracting German investment, emphasising a strategic focus on growth-inducing sectors such as energy, transportation, and electric power production, transmission, and distribution. **Enam Obiosio** provides insights into the deliberations.*

President Bola Tinubu, speaking at the G20 Compact with Africa Conference, expressed his commitment to the Siemens-supported Presidential Power Initiative (PPI) under his leadership, emphasising a more urgent and deliberate approach to project execution for sustained success.

He did this as he also noted the successful transformation of Egypt's electric power supply by Siemens AG.

The President underscored the importance of integrating Siemens technology into all aspects of the PPI,

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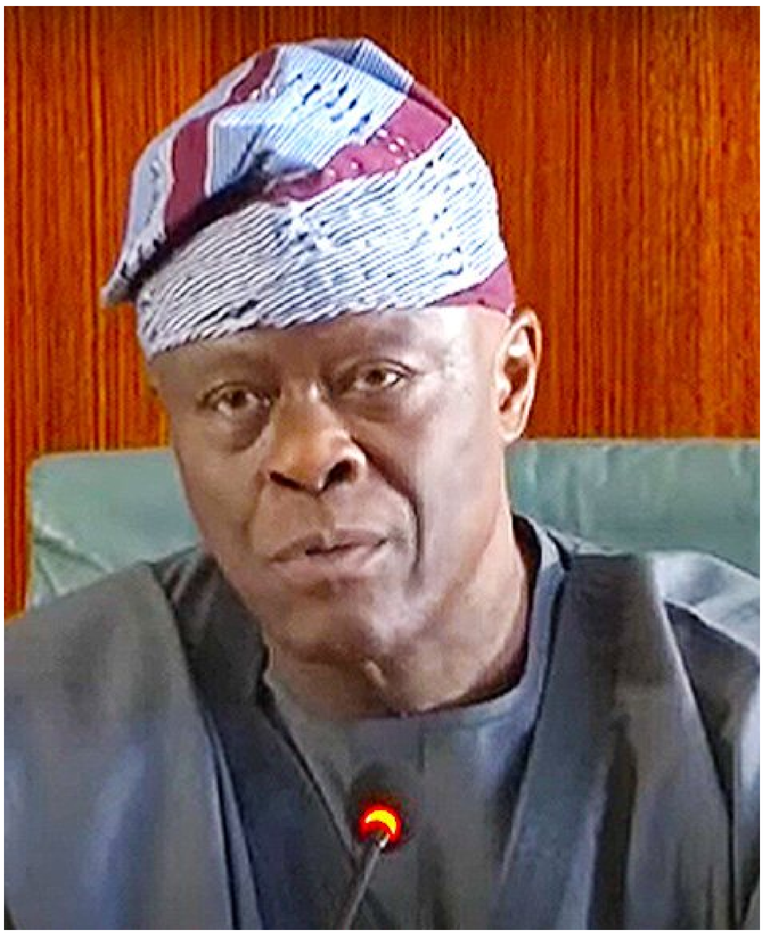
President Bola Ahmed Tinubu



Mr. Wale Edun, Minister of Finance And Coordinating Minister of The Economy

Empowering Nigeria's Future With $2bn US Energy Firm's Investment

EDITORIAL

In a landmark development for Nigeria's sustainable energy future, the federal government is set to receive a substantial boost with a $2.2 billion investment from a US-based energy firm, Sun Africa LLC, to provide vital power infrastructure for the country.

We understand from the Honourable Minister of Power, Mr. Adebayo Adelabu, that the commitment was formalised recently, after he met with representatives of Sun Africa led by Mr. Goran Rajsic, the firm's chairman.

It is noted that Nigeria faces significant demands for new power infrastructure to support economic needs and transition to a sustainable power mix, and that the initial phase of the project would focus on delivering 961 megawatts peak (MWp) of solar photovoltaics (PV) infrastructure and 455MWh of battery energy storage, valued at approximately $2.2 billion dollars.

"Sun Africa, with its partners, is set to implement this transformative project in the coming months," he said.

Mr. Rajsic has said that this is the cutting-edge project, featuring leading solar PV and

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CBN Looks To Have Banks Raise Capital Base For $1trn Economy

By Ahmed Ahmed

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) last week hinted that banks in the country would be asked to raise their capital base in order to be able to support the $1trillion economy of the country.

The governor of the apex bank, Mr. Yemi Cardoso, disclosed this in Lagos, precisely at the 58th Annual Bankers Dinner and Grand Finale of the 60th anniversary of the Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria (CIBN).

He said that Nigerian banks did not have sufficient capital, relative to the financial system's needs in servicing a $1.0trilion economy in the near future.

President Bola Tinubu recently hinted that Nigeria's economy could grow to $1trilion by 2026 and a $3trilion Nigerian economy in 10 years.

"It is not just about the stability of the financial system in the present moment as we have already established that the current assessment showed stability. However, we need to ask ourselves: Will Nigerian banks have sufficient capital, relative to the financial system's needs in servicing a $1.0 trillion economy in the near future? In my opinion, the answer is no, unless we take action. Therefore, we must make difficult decisions regarding capital adequacy. As a first step, we will be directing banks to increase their capital," Mr. Cardoso said.

He, who bemoaned the foreign exchange restrictions hitherto placed on the importation of 43 items by the previous government, said that the CBN under his watch would be repositioned as a catalyst for change and economic development.

While applauding the CIBN, the Honourable Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Mr. Wale Edun, said that the Bola Tinubu-led administration was committed to building a stable and resilient economy.

He said that the decisions taken by the government were difficult, but necessary in turning the country around, attracting investment, creating jobs and reducing poverty.

The chairman of the Body of Banks' Chief Executive Officers and managing director, Zenith Bank, Mr Ebenezer Onyeagwu, called for the support of the reforms introduced by the CBN.

He added that the apex bank was already addressing the issue of FX forward and it would soon be a thing of the past.

"Though some of the reforms are painful, we wholly support them because we need to endure the pain today for a brighter future," he said.

The president of the CIBN, Mr. Ken Opara, noted that within the short period in office, Mr. Cardoso had activated notable initiatives aimed at repositioning and stabilising the economy.

He mentioned the initiatives to include focusing on the core monetary policy mandate of price and exchange rate stability, unification of the exchange rate and initiating steps to boost liquidity in the foreign exchange market through commencement of settlement of mature forward obligations.

He said that others included market reflective rate for government treasury securities to ensure that investors get real positive yields on their investments, as well as joint issuance of advisory notice by the CBN in conjunction with the Financial Services Regulation Coordinating Committee (FSCRCC).

The Vice President, Mr. Kashim Shettima, and the Lagos State Governor, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu were represented by the Special Adviser to the President on National Economic Council (NEC) and Climate Change, Rukaiya El-Rufai, and the Lagos State Commissioner for Finance, Mr Abayomi Oluyomi, respectively.

Mr. Yemi Cardoso, CBN Governor

NCS Records N11bn Daily Revenue At Apapa Port As Ogun Customs Seizes N398m Contraband, Generates N30m

The Apapa Command of the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) recently reported a remarkable daily revenue collection of N11.3 billion, surpassing the previous daily record of N10 billion set on August 3, 2023.

Comptroller Babajide Jaiyeoba, the Customs Area Controller, attributed this achievement to teamwork, system audit, compliance, and a zero-compromise approach.

In a statement relayed by Public Relations Officer Mr. Abubakar Usman, Comptroller Jaiyeoba commended the dedication of the command's officers and emphasized the importance of sustaining the current level of hard work. He revealed that the command had focused on its mandate, resulting in a historic monthly collection of N135 billion for October.

Despite facing challenges earlier in the year, Comptroller Jaiyeoba expressed optimism about meeting the annual target based on the positive trend observed in the last two months.

In a related development, the NCS, Ogun 1 Area Command, achieved significant success in October. Deputy Comptroller Amadu Shuaibu, the Acting Customs Area Controller, disclosed that the command seized 122 contraband goods valued at N398 million during the month.

This included 901 parcels of cannabis sativa, 500 pieces of foreign-used pneumatic tyres, 23 vehicles used for conveying prohibited goods, five foreign-used vehicles, and 4,684 bags of foreign parboiled rice.

Deputy Comptroller Shuaibu highlighted that the command generated N30 million in revenue through baggage assessment and auction sales of seized petroleum products. This marked a substantial increase of over 400 percent compared to the same period in the previous year, amounting to N24,921,200.00.

The Acting Customs Area Controller attributed this success to the command's commitment to trade facilitation, robust stakeholder engagement, and an unwavering stance against smuggling.

He acknowledged the support of the Comptroller-General of Customs, Mr. Adewale Adeniyi, and his management team, as well as the strategic deployment of officers, intelligence, and collaborative efforts with sister agencies.

Deputy Comptroller Shuaibu emphasized that the persistent seizure of prohibited items, including cannabis sativa and dangerous goods, reflects the command's dedication to preventing the youth from exposure to harmful substances.

He concluded by affirming the Nigeria Customs Service's commitment to contributing to the nation's economic development and national security.

Mr. Bashir Adewale Adeniyi, Comptroller-General, Nigeria Customs Service

President Tinubu Advocates For Investments In Nigeria's Power, Rail Sectors At G20 Compact With Africa

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President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (3rd from left) and other dignitaries at the at the G20 Compact with Africa Economic Conference

aiming to provide skill development opportunities for talented youths. He stated: "I am dedicated to pursuing the Siemens Power project and creating opportunities for our youth to contribute to sustaining the industry."

Acknowledging Siemens' construction of a 2,000km ultra-high-speed rail network in Egypt, President Tinubu expressed interest in Siemens' potential role in modernising and expanding Nigeria's rail network. He envisioned the provision of ultra-modern trains and railways that could significantly exceed the speed of Nigeria's current standard-gauge system.

President Tinubu urged the German business community to focus on value-additive processing in Nigerian sectors such as solid minerals, agriculture, and automobile production. He assured international investors that Nigeria was undergoing significant business environment reforms and emphasised his track record of successful transformations.

During a panel discussion in Berlin at the G20 Compact with Africa Economic Conference, the President highlighted Nigeria's highly educated, skilled, and industrious citizens as the country's primary asset. He emphasised the energetic youth population and well-educated populace as incentives for foreign investors, suggesting that Nigeria could replicate China's economic resurgence through fostering local value chains and investments.

President Tinubu also spoke about Nigeria's pursuit of natural gas development and hydrogen production, positioning the country as a leader in the energy sector on the global stage.

"Our abundant gas reserves and business-friendly environment position us as an appealing investment destination. Taking further strides, we are implementing fiscal responsibility and tax reforms while revamping our financial institutions to seamlessly accommodate foreign investments," stated President Tinubu.

Expressing eagerness to collaborate, he emphasised Nigeria's unique strengths, boasting the youngest, largest, and most vibrant youth population in Africa. The President highlighted the essential elements for a modern economy: a well-educated populace, a substantial market, and the political will under his leadership.

Dismissing outdated perceptions, the president asserted, "Africa has moved beyond false notions of business disincentives and poor adherence to the rule of law. We now recognise the connection between investor inflow and contract sanctity. Our partnership is based on who we are and what we do, dispelling long-held misconceptions."

Addressing the summit, President Tinubu outlined Nigeria's intentional focus on developing labour-intensive sectors for extensive job creation. He underscored the new emphasis on technological progress and burgeoning opportunities in the information and communications technology (ICT) sector.

Reassuring potential investors, the president stated that Nigeria had overcome restrictive policies, allowing capital to move freely in and out of the country, providing flexibility. Highlighting political stability, he said: "Your money is safe. Since assuming office in May 2023, we've removed obstacles hindering businesses, reforming the economy based on good governance principles."

While encouraging German automobile firms to establish manufacturing plants in Nigeria, President Tinubu invited German businesses to explore investment opportunities across various sectors, citing the successful visit of the German Chancellor to Nigeria in October.

President Tinubu engaged in discussions with the German Head of State and Federal President, Mr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, before attending the Compact with Africa Summit of heads of state and government. In response to Germany's readiness, Chancellor Olaf Scholz acknowledged administrative and financial hurdles stemming from governance problems in the sector. He expressed Siemens' preparedness to deepen implementation, especially in the power project, emphasising the need for the Nigerian government's follow-up action.

Mr. Scholz recognised Nigeria's potential for growth, drawing parallels with China's success, citing the possibility of leveraging overseas investment, abundant natural resources, and step-by-step achievable progress.

The leaders of Africa and Europe's largest economies have agreed to enhance cooperation in deploying advanced biometric systems and border control technology to address irregular migration. Both leaders also recognised that investments in labour-intensive industries could address the root causes of this issue.

Chancellor Scholz responded by announcing the German government's readiness to allocate €4 billion for consultations, investments, and private engagement until 2030. He clarified that this support was not conventional development aid but rather an investment that would be mutually beneficial. Chancellor Scholz emphasised Germany's need for green hydrogen, expressing confidence in expanding cooperation with African countries, which possess significant potential for renewable energy and competitive hydrogen production.

Highlighting the effectiveness of the Compact with Africa, Chancellor Scholz emphasised its role as the central G20 initiative to unleash Africa's potential for mutual benefit and to achieve global goals such as climate neutrality and economic sustainability. He noted the outperformance of Compact countries in economic growth compared to the rest of Africa, citing substantial increases in direct investments and export growth in these partner nations.

During the discussion, other participants included President Alassane Ouattara of Côte d'Ivoire, Prime Minister Aziz Akhannouch of Morocco, President Macky Sall of Senegal, Sabine Dall'Omo (Chairperson of Afrika-Verein, German-African Business Association), and the CEO of Sub-Saharan Africa, Siemens AG.

Chancellor Scholz, in his keynote address, underscored the evolving nature of economic relations between developed and developing nations. He positioned Germany as a partner in Nigeria's ambitious expansion of renewable energies, referencing the existing hydrogen office in Nigeria.

Subsequently, President Tinubu hosted prominent German business executives at a Nigeria-Germany Business Roundtable in Berlin, where he sought Siemens' investments in the Nigerian power and rail sectors.

Also addressing the gathering, Mr. Wale Edun, the Honourable Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, highlighted the significance of the Compact with Africa, led by German Chancellor Scholz. He stressed the crucial role of Nigeria in this compact, emphasising the country's large population and vast domestic market, which holds comparable importance to foreign markets.

Accompanying President Tinubu, whom he referred to as the Chief Marketing Officer of Nigeria, Mr. Edun expressed the collective goal of encouraging global investors, with a specific focus on attracting investment from Germany.

Mr. Edun elaborated on the macroeconomic reforms implemented to stabilise the economy, emphasising that the resulting benefits and dividends aimed to attract investment. He underscored the interconnectedness of domestic and foreign interests, stating that what is advantageous for foreign investors is equally beneficial for domestic investors. The primary target, he noted, is domestic investors, followed by foreign investors seeking to capitalise on the abundant opportunities emerging across various sectors of the Nigerian economy.

Africa has moved beyond false notions of business disincentives and poor adherence to the rule of law

EDITORIAL

Empowering Nigeria's Future With $2bn US Energy Firm's Investment

CONTINUES FROM COVER

battery storage technologies, financed with affordable, long-term debt under the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) guidelines.

Sun Africa's financing partners, ING Bank and Citi, had also emphasised their commitments up to US$10 billion in financing projects in the coming years. This support extends to both the initial phase and future developments, according to the US-based company.

Additionally, Sun Africa is collaborating with Sterling and Wilson Renewable Energy Limited, its Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) partner, by playing a pivotal role in providing services for the initial project phase.

This significant contribution aims to accelerate the nation's transition to clean and renewable energy sources, marking a crucial step towards a more sustainable and environmentally friendly future.

The multi-billion-dollar investment comes at a crucial moment when the world is increasingly recognising the importance of renewable energy in mitigating climate change and fostering economic growth. Nigeria, with its abundant sunlight and vast energy needs, stands to benefit immensely from this collaboration.

One of the primary advantages of this solar project is its potential to revolutionise the energy landscape in Nigeria. By harnessing the power of the sun, the project aims to significantly increase the country's energy capacity, providing a reliable and sustainable source of electricity to millions of households and businesses. This move aligns perfectly with the government's commitment to addressing the energy deficit and improving access to electricity for all citizens.

Furthermore, the infusion of $2.2 billion into Nigeria's economy is expected to have far-reaching positive effects. The investment will not only stimulate economic growth but also create numerous job opportunities across various sectors. As the solar project progresses, there will be a surge in demand for skilled and unskilled labour, promoting employment and contributing to poverty alleviation.

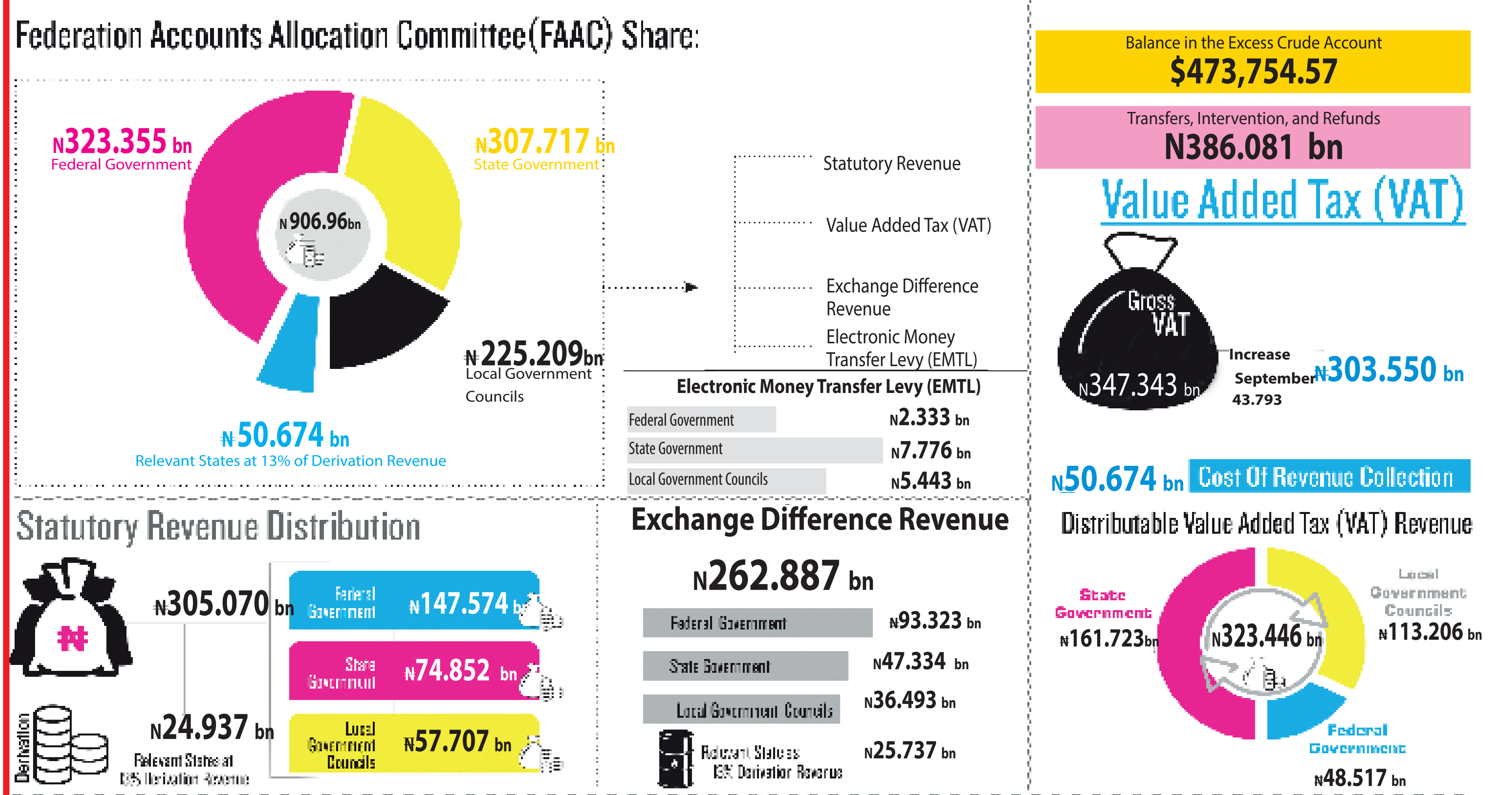
In addition to the economic benefits, the solar project underscores the commitment of both the Nigerian government and the US energy firm to combat climate change. By shifting towards clean energy, the nation reduces its reliance on fossil fuels, lowering carbon emissions and mitigating the adverse effects of climate change. This aligns with global efforts to transition towards a greener and more sustainable future.

Moreover, the partnership between the federal government and the US energy firm exemplifies the positive outcomes that can result from international collaboration. The exchange of expertise, technology, and resources fosters innovation and accelerates progress towards common goals. This collaboration serves as a testament to the potential of diplomatic and economic partnerships to drive positive change on a global scale.

As Nigeria positions itself as a key player in the renewable energy sector, the $2.2 billion investment from the US energy firm is a beacon of hope for the nation's energy aspirations. The solar project not only addresses immediate energy needs but also sets the stage for long-term sustainability and resilience in the face of a rapidly evolving global energy landscape.

In conclusion, the federal government's collaboration with the US energy firm marks a significant milestone in Nigeria's journey towards a cleaner, more sustainable energy future. It is our firm belief that this transformative project has the potential to uplift communities, stimulate economic growth, and contribute to global efforts in combating climate change. As Nigeria embraces the benefits of renewable energy, it paves the way for a brighter and more sustainable tomorrow.s

FAAC Shares N906.96 billion October 2023 Revenue To FG, States And LGCs



In the month of October 2023, Petroleum Profit Tax (PPT) and Oil and Gas Royalties increased considerably while Value Added Tax (VAT), Import and Excise Duties, Electronic Money Transfer Levy (EMTL), Companies Income Tax (CIT) and CET Levies recorded significant decreases.

FG Starts A Nationwide Recruitment Exercise For 3MTT Community Managers

• In Talks With Starlink To Create Jobs

By Edmond Martins

The federal government has initiated a recruitment drive for community managers as part of its ongoing 3 million technical talent (3MTT) program.

According to a recent statement by Honourable Minister of the Ministry of Communications, Innovation, and Digital Economy, Dr. Bosun Tijani.

The nationwide recruitment effort aims to select 37 learning community managers across Nigeria to oversee and coordinate the activities of community members.

"As we commence the #3MTT program, we are hiring 37 learning community managers across Nigeria to coordinate the activities of community members. #3MTT learning community is a cluster of learners with full access to structured content and a network of learners to support them," stated the Minister.

Dr. Tijani emphasised that the 3MTT program is a crucial component of President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope agenda. Its primary objective is to build Nigeria's technical talent pool to drive the digital economy and position the country as a net talent exporter.

The recruitment page outlines the job specifications and requirements for eligible candidates, with the application process opened on Monday, November 20, 2023. However, the Ministry did not specify the application deadline.

The program's first phase, conducted in collaboration with the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), involves various stakeholders, including fellows, training providers, partners, and placement organisations.

In a related development, the federal government engaged in discussions with Mr. Elon Musk's internet company, Starlink, exploring the potential for setting up programs that would generate jobs in Nigeria through local maintenance and production of hardware.

Dr. Tijani shared this information on his official communication handle, noting that the discussions occurred on the sidelines of the ongoing International Telecommunication Union-World Radio Communication (ITU-WRC) Conference in Dubai.

Our intention is to encourage every tech company to invest and deepen our tech ecosystem

During the event, Dr. Tijani met with Mr. Ryan Goodnight, the Senior Director of Global Licensing and Activation at SpaceX, Starlink's parent company.

He mentioned that the conversation focused on the possibility of Starlink implementing a program to certify local installers and maintenance personnel in Nigeria.

Additionally, there were discussions about potential contracts for hardware startups in the country to manufacture Starlink's repeater boxes locally. The Minister highlighted Nigeria as Starlink's largest market based on statements from the Starlink official.

"Our intention is to encourage every tech company to invest and deepen our tech ecosystem," stated the Minister.

Despite Starlink officially announcing its presence in Nigeria in January of this year, Nigerians have been pre-ordering its hardware since the previous year. Despite being relatively more expensive than local internet service providers (ISPs), Starlink has generated significant interest among Nigerians seeking to switch service providers.

The widespread coverage of its satellite service also appeals to individuals in areas with inadequate internet networks.

According to data from the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), Starlink has become one of the leading ISPs in Nigeria, boasting a customer base of 6,756 as of the end of June. This figure surpasses the customer numbers of many local ISPs that have been operational in Nigeria for several years.

In a bid to expand its market share in the Nigerian ISP market, Starlink reduced its hardware costs by 21 percent last month. The price cut brought Starlink's hardware cost down to N299,500 from the previous N378,000, while the monthly subscription fee of N38,000 remained unchanged.

FG Takes Decisive Action: **Revokes 1,633 Mining Licences**

By Chiamaka G. Okpala

The federal government through the Ministry of Solid Minerals Development, has taken a significant step by revoking 1,633 mineral titles previously granted to mining companies that were non-compliant with regulations.

The announcement was made by the Honourable Minister of Solid Minerals Development, Mr. Dele Alake, during a recent press briefing in Abuja.

Mr. Alake not only conveyed the revocation of these mineral titles but also underscored the government's commitment to revitalising the solid minerals sector to enhance its international competitiveness. He called on all stakeholders who may have engaged in improper practices within the sector to rectify their behaviour.

The reason behind the revocation was the failure of the holders of these mineral titles to pay the mandatory annual service fees, set at N1,500 per cadastral unit.

Mr. Alake stressed that this action, following earlier warnings to 2,213 mining companies, aligns with the stipulations in Sections 10, 11, and 12 of the Mining Act. Moreover, it opens up opportunities for potential investors interested in contributing to the sector's growth.

Expressing disappointment, Mr. Alake highlighted the prolonged failure of mining firms to make the necessary payments to the government, despite years of holding lucrative licenses and reaping substantial profits from mining activities.

He characterised the refusal to pay the annual service fee as "unconscionable" and suggested that companies benefiting from mining profits should fulfill their financial obligations, including royalties and taxes.

In compliance with the law, the Mining Cadastral Office initiated the revocation process on October 4, 2023, targeting a total of 2,213 titles. These encompassed 795 Exploration titles, 956 Small Scale Mining Licences, 364 Quarry licenses, and 98 Mining Leases.

The details of this revocation process were officially published in the federal government gazette number 178, Volume 110, dated October 10, 2023, citing the default in the payment of the Annual Service Fee as the reason for revocation.

The Mining Cadastre Office recommended the revocation of 1,633 mineral titles, categorised as Exploration Licences (536), Quarry Licences (279), Small Scale Mining Licences (787), and Mining Leases (31). Acting within the authority conferred by the NMMA 2007, Section 5 (a), Mr. Alake approved the revocation of these titles.

Mr. Dele Alake, Honourable Minister of Solid Minerals Development

The minister cautioned those affected by the revocation to vacate mining sites promptly to avoid potential legal consequences. The comprehensive revocation process, aligned with legal provisions, underscores the government's commitment to fostering a responsible and transparent mining environment.

Mr. Alake provided insight into the revocation process, revealing that the ministry had issued a thirty-day written default notice to parties in violation, urging them to settle their outstanding fees. However, only 580 titleholders responded to the notice and successfully paid their annual fees.

> The comprehensive revocation process, aligned with legal provisions, underscores the government's commitment to fostering a responsible and transparent mining environment

Mr. Alake emphasised the prescribed methods for sending notices, stating that any communication from the Mining Cadastre Office to an applicant or holder of a mineral title must be conveyed through courier service, registered mail to the last known address in Nigeria, or given in person to an authorized representative in Nigeria.

In instances of default in payment of the annual service fee to the Mining Cadastre Office, the standard procedure involves issuing a thirty-day written default notice to the defaulting party. If payment is not received during that period, the Mining Cadastre Office records the default and proceeds to revoke the mineral title. This approach aligns with the established regulations to ensure compliance with the payment obligations associated with holding a mineral title.

Musawa Unveils Ambitious Plan To Propel Nigeria's Creative Sector to $100bn GDP By 2030

By Majeed Salaam

The Honourable Minister of Arts, Culture, and Creative Economy, Mrs. Hannatu Musawa, recently outlined the federal government's ambitious goal of contributing 10 percent to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by expanding the creative sector's GDP to $100 billion by 2030.

Speaking during the Arts, Culture, and Creative Economy roundtable at the State House in Abuja, Mrs. Musawa expressed the government's commitment to fostering an environment conducive to growth and investment. She shared the government's vision, built upon five key pillars, emphasising the need for a conducive environment that supports fair participation and encourages growth and investment.

Mrs. Musawa highlighted the importance of protecting creative rights, intellectual property, and economic rights to signal to talents, investors, and the global community that Nigeria is open for business.

She underscored the commitment to exploring every creative sub-sector, from excellence in various forms to the realms of music and gaming.

Recognising the unifying and inspiring power of culture, she disclosed a robust economic plan aimed at creating millions of jobs through comprehensive skills training programs. The ultimate objective is to contribute 10 percent to the nation's GDP, expanding the sector's GDP to an impressive $100 billion by 2030.

Mrs. Musawa also acknowledged the significance of the private sector, emphasising a shift from merely focusing on financing to providing comprehensive ecosystem support.

The goal is to nurture and amplify creative endeavours and businesses through greater participation and collaboration.

She unveiled 'Destination 2030, Nigeria Everywhere' as a brand to unite various initiatives, serving as both the overall strategic direction and a soft power initiative. This initiative aims to promote Nigeria's culture and showcase its creators globally, positioning the country as the leading global hub for arts, culture, and creativity.

Mrs. Musawa urged collective efforts, stating that each creative individual plays an indispensable role in this transformative journey. The objective is not only to make Nigeria the world's creative capital, but also to enrich the lives of its people and inspire future generations.

FIRS Chairman Urges Shipping Companies To Adhere To Tax Laws

By Kingsley Benson

Mr. Zacch Adedeji, Acting Executive Chairman, Federal Inland Revenue Service

The Chairman of the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), Mr. Zacch Adedeji, has emphasised the need for non-domestic companies involved in the shipment of crude oil from Nigeria to adhere strictly to the country's tax regulations.

This directive was issued during a recent workshop on the taxation of non-resident shipping companies held in Lagos, organised by FIRS in collaboration with the oil producers trade section.

Addressing the participants, Mr. Adedeji highlighted that FIRS initiated a tax compliance initiative focusing on the activities of foreign shipping companies engaged in lifting hydrocarbons from Nigeria. The objective is to enhance revenue generation for the government by expanding the tax base.

In a statement conveyed by his Special Adviser on Media, Mr. Dare Adekanmbi, Mr. Adedeji assured international companies that the agency's intention is solely to enforce compliance with existing tax laws without causing disruptions to their operations.

He emphasised the obligation imposed by Section 14 of the Companies Income Tax Act (CITA) 2004 (as amended), which mandates foreign companies involved in shipping and air transport operations in Nigeria to file tax returns to continue conducting business within the country.

Mr. Adedeji clarified that the workshop was convened to address challenges related to tax compliance by foreign companies and find sustainable solutions. He explained that the federal government has set a target to increase Nigeria's tax-to- gross domestic product (GDP) ratio to 18 percent within the next three years without imposing additional taxes, focusing instead on broadening the tax net.

The ongoing compliance exercise on international shipping companies involved in lifting crude oil from Nigeria aligns with this strategy of expanding the tax base. Mr. Adedeji expressed confidence that the contacted international shipping companies are aware of the significance of complying with tax laws in the various jurisdictions where they operate.

"Therefore, I strongly urge international shipping companies currently not adhering to Nigerian tax laws to promptly initiate compliance. The service acknowledges the concerns expressed by stakeholders in the oil and gas industry and the maritime sector regarding the ongoing tax compliance initiative targeting foreign shipping companies engaged in lifting crude oil from Nigeria.

"I want to clarify that the service recognises the economic significance of this sector and has no intention of causing disruptions. Instead, our objective is to foster compliance with Nigerian tax laws. As a point of reference, in my capacity as Special Adviser on Revenue, I facilitated an intervention in June this year, resulting in a six-month grace period granted to non-resident shipping companies for the regularization of their tax affairs, ensuring their equitable contribution to the country's revenue. This grace period concludes at the end of this year."

"Upon assuming the role of Executive Chairman of FIRS, I emphasised the importance of collaborative efforts with stakeholders to address challenges related to tax compliance. In line with this, the workshop has been organised, bringing together various stakeholders from the oil and gas industry and the maritime sector. I assure all participants that FIRS is committed to a transparent and fair resolution of assessment notices served on any taxpayer. Nevertheless, if necessary, the service is prepared to enforce Nigerian tax laws, ensuring compliance without infringing upon the rights of any taxpayer," Mr. Adedeji stated.

The workshop saw the participation of key industry players, including members of the International Association of Independent Tanker Owners, the International Chamber of Shipping, the Independent Petroleum Producers Group, government agencies, and tax advisers, among others.

Meanwhile, the House of Representatives summoned the FIRS to appear before the Public Accounts Committee. The summons is in response to queries raised by the Auditor General for the Federation.

During committee's hearing, members expressed dissatisfaction with the agencies' failure to respond to previous invitations and address the serious allegations outlined in the 2019 Auditor General's Report.

Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, Rep. Bamidele Salam, reiterated the committee's dedication to a thorough and unbiased investigation into various reported financial regulation violations by the MDAs in fulfilling their mandates.

Services Sector, Oil Production Push Nigeria's GDP To 2.54% in Q3 2023

By Anita Dennis

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), has reported that in the third quarter of 2023 (Q3,2023), the country has witnessed a growth of 2.54 percent in its Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

The growth surpasses the 2.25 percent recorded in the same quarter of the previous year and also outperforms the 2.51 percent growth observed in the second quarter of 2023.

The Services sector played a pivotal role in driving the overall GDP performance, achieving a growth rate of 3.99 percent and contributing 52.70 percent to the aggregate GDP, according to the NBS.

The agriculture sector exhibited a growth of 1.30 percent, slightly lower than the 1.34 percent recorded in the third quarter of 2022.

The industry sector experienced notable improvement, registering a growth of 0.46 percent, a positive shift from the -8.00 percent recorded in the same quarter of the preceding year.

In terms of GDP contribution, both the agriculture and industry sectors contributed less to the aggregate GDP in the Q3,2023 compared to the corresponding period in 2022.

The NBS provided figures for the nominal GDP, which stood at N60.66 trillion in Q3 2023, with a real GDP of N19.44 trillion. Nominal GDP represents the total value of goods produced without adjusting for inflation, while real GDP is adjusted for inflation. The performance indicated a year-on-year nominal growth of 16.08 percent compared to the third quarter of 2022.

'Nigeria's Oil Production Rises In Q3 2023

The report also highlighted positive trends in Nigeria's oil sector. The country recorded an average daily oil production of 1.45 million barrels per day in Q3 2023, surpassing the production figures from the same quarter in 2022 and the second quarter of 2023.

The oil sector exhibited a real growth rate of -0.85 percent year-on-year in Q3 2023, signifying a considerable improvement from the corresponding quarter in 2022 (-22.67 percent) and the second quarter of 2023 (-13.43 percent).

'Non-oil Sector Accounts For Nearly 95% Of Nigeria's GDP In Q3 2023'

Furthermore, the non-oil sector demonstrated a real growth rate of 2.75 percent in Q3 2023. This growth was slightly lower compared to the same quarter in 2022 and the preceding quarter in 2023. Key drivers of the non-oil sector included information and communication (telecommunication), financial and insurance (financial institutions), agriculture (crop production), trade, construction, and real estate.

The non-oil sector contributed 94.52 percent to the nation's GDP in the third quarter of 2023, reflecting a slight variation from the figures recorded in the corresponding period of 2022 and the second quarter of 2023.

SEC Optimistic Of Achieving $1Trn Economy Target Through Capital Market Innovations

• Unveils e-dividend Portal To Tackle Unclaimed Dividends

By Jennete Ugo Anya

Mr. Lamido Yuguda, Director-General (DG) of Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC)

The Director-General (DG) of Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Mr. Lamido Yuguda, has expressed confidence in the feasibility of the $1 trillion economy target set by the President Bola Tinubu-led federal government.

Speaking at a briefing after the third meeting of the Capital Market Committee (CMC) in 2023 in Lagos, he outlined the SEC's strategic focus on leveraging the capital market to achieve this ambitious economic goal by 2026.

President Tinubu had previously shared the vision of growing Nigeria's economy to $1 trillion by 2026, with an even more ambitious target of a $3 trillion economy within the next decade. Mr. Yuguda emphasised the commission's commitment to channelling capital market funds into infrastructure projects to address the country's infrastructural deficit.

This approach aims not only to create a conducive business environment but also to boost the production capacity of Nigerians, fostering economic growth and development.

The DG highlighted the importance of market and investor literacy, along with public awareness, in mobilising companies and investors to capitalise on opportunities within the capital market. Optimistic about resolving the foreign exchange crisis limiting foreign investors' influence, he expressed confidence in the government's efforts to address this issue.

In response to concerns arising from the recent reclassifications of Nigerian securities indices by FTSE-Russell and MSCI, the SEC boss attributed these challenges to current foreign exchange liquidity issues affecting investor confidence.

The CMC meeting mandated the commission to enhance public awareness of the capital market's benefits, with Mr. Yuguda stressing the need for strategic measures to attract more investments and address challenges posed by high-interest rates on government treasury securities. Overall, he believes that collaborative efforts and proactive actions in the capital market can contribute to the realisation of the envisioned one trillion-dollar economy.

Expressing confidence in unlocking the capital market's full potential and aligning it with President Tinubu's 'Renewed Hope Agenda', it was revealed that the Chairperson of the Technical Committee on the Commodities Trading Ecosystem, Ms. Daisey Ekineh, updated the CMC on ongoing engagements with the Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON). These efforts aim to secure approval for specific standards and the adoption of additional commodity standards sanctioned by the African Organisation for Standardisation (ARSO).

...efforts to enhance trust in the Collective Investment Scheme (CIS) have contributed to an increase in funds under management from N1 trillion in 2020 to N2 trillion in 2023

Ms. Ekineh emphasised the technical committee's initiatives, particularly focusing on the introduction of commodity derivatives. She also highlighted ongoing collaborations, including efforts with the National Insurance Commission (NAICOM) to introduce insurance products tailored to the needs of commodities producers and traders.

The meeting underscored the CMC's commitment to drive Nigeria's economic growth, promote collaboration, and embrace innovation to shape a brighter future for the nation. The gathering provided the capital market community with an opportunity to recommit to further deepening the market as a valuable tool for infrastructure financing in the country.

Key economic indicators, such as Nigeria's headline inflation rate, GDP growth rate, and market performance, were highlighted during the session.

In another development, the commission stated that it is finalising arrangements to launch an e-dividend portal aimed at streamlining the account-mandating process in the capital market.

The SEC disclosed that efforts to enhance trust in the Collective Investment Scheme (CIS) have contributed to an increase in funds under management from N1 trillion in 2020 to N2 trillion in 2023.

The figure for funds under management rose from N170 billion in 2020 to N180 billion in December 2021 and further increased to N190 billion in August 2023. To address challenges faced by investors in claiming dividends through savings accounts, the SEC has implemented various measures, including the introduction of the e-dividend management mandate system, launched in 2015. This electronic dividend payment platform facilitates the crediting of investors' accounts after dividend payments.

Recently, SEC inaugurated e-dividend champions for banks and registrars at its Lagos Zonal office. These champions are tasked with forwarding all shareholders' complaints on registration to the Nigerian Interbank Settlement System (NIBBS) to address challenges within three days.

Experts have linked the rise in unclaimed dividends to factors such as lack of awareness, forgotten investments, multiple subscriptions, and inaccurate identity management.

Mr. Yuguda recently announced that the e-dividend portal would be operational this November, aiming to enhance efficiency and significantly reduce unclaimed dividends.

Finance Minister Outlines Strategies To Attain Revenue Objectives

By Jennete Ugo Anya

Mr. Wale Edun, Minister of Finance And Coordinating Minister of The Economy

The effective enhancement and broadening of the tax base are crucial for attaining the government's fiscal objectives, as emphasised by the Honourable Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of Economy, Mr. Wale Edun.

This revelation was made during the commencement of a four-day retreat for members of the Federation Account Allocation Committee (FAAC) in Asaba, the capital of Delta State.

Represented by Mr. Okokon Udo, Permanent Secretary, Finance, Special Duties, Mr. Edun outlined the administration's key goals, including reaching a tax revenue to gross domestic product (GDP) target of 22 percent and a tax to GDP ratio of 18 percent by 2026.

He stressed the importance of avoiding overburdening taxpayers with excessive new taxes, advocating instead for an expansion of the tax base and the simplification of tax administration to facilitate collection.

Addressing the removal of the petrol subsidy, Mr. Edun acknowledged the government's recognition of its long-term unsustainability. Since the subsidy removal, there has been a notable increase in revenue inflow to the federation account, rising from an average of N650 million to N1 trillion in the past four months.

The minister emphasised that the subsidy regime had previously depleted funds that could have been allocated to crucial public expenditures.

Despite acknowledging the challenges faced by Nigerians due to the removal of the fuel subsidy and the harmonisation of exchange rates, Mr. Edun reassured the public that the government remains committed to implementing policies focused on the well-being of the populace.

He highlighted the administration's efforts to introduce well-structured palliative measures to mitigate the economic consequences of ongoing reforms.

In a separate discussion on funding the 2024 budget, Mr. Edun emphasised that the nation cannot solely rely on borrowing. He urged the need for necessary sacrifices to generate sufficient revenues and reduce the current high deficit financing.

Speaking before the joint Senate Committee scrutinising the 2024-2026 Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) and Fiscal Strategy Paper (FSP), he emphasised the importance of directing funds towards revenue-generating infrastructure, drawing parallels with advanced economies that increase interest rates to stabilise their economies and combat inflation.

The minister also expressed concerns about the high cost associated with accessing foreign loans for a developing country. He emphasised the impracticality of relying on borrowing in the current international and national economic climate. Addressing the existing borrowing profile, he outlined the government's strategy in the 2024 budget to reduce borrowing and intercept deficit financing.

Internationally, he highlighted the emphasis among rich countries on lowering inflation rates to stabilise economies and foster investment growth. The minister acknowledged the sacrifice of immediate economic goals by contracting money supplies and raising interest rates, noting the inherent contradiction between high-interest rates and investments.

Highlighting the challenges, Mr. Edun explained that accessing funds through borrowing was expensive due to existing debt servicing, which already consumed 98 percent of government revenue. He stressed the need for the government to spend more, citing the low percentage of government spending as a proportion of GDP compared to other countries. Even Ghana, he noted, had a higher percentage, and wealthy nations allocated up to 50 percent of GDP to government spending.

Speaking at the Chartered Institute of Directors (CIoD) conference in Abuja, Mr. Edun addressed the scarcity of funding internationally and the lack of interest in providing development financing due to inflation concerns in the Western world.

He emphasised the importance of attracting investment to increase productivity, grow the economy, create jobs, and reduce poverty, aligning with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's economic policies.

The minister stressed the significance of strong corporate governance in the country, asserting that it boosts investor confidence, facilitates access to capital, promotes risk management, and drives innovation and efficiency.

He commended the CIoD for its role in enhancing world leadership and organization quality while providing independent directors across Nigerian boards.

However, Senator Sani Musa, Chairman of the joint panel scrutinising the MTEF-FSP) expressed concerns about revenue projections from federal government ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs).

He suggested external interventions as an option, despite the potential for increased deficit financing. Sen. Musa also highlighted the issue of leakages in government resource utilisation, with some MDAs failing to remit funds promptly, contributing to financial challenges.

The call for attention is directed towards the Office of the Accountant-General of the Federation (OAGF), urging a thorough investigation into current practices. The delay in revenue remittances by MDAs has raised concerns about potential misappropriation of funds.

Following discussions with officials from the Nigerian Customs Service (NCS), it was revealed that significant shortfalls were occurring due to incidents of waivers.

Highlighting the need for transparency, the speaker questioned the entities responsible for issuing these waivers—whether it is the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) or the Ministry of Finance. Additionally, there is a keen interest in understanding the specifics of the Customs modernisation project, referred to as e-customs.

The Senate Committee on Finance seeks clarity on the agreements signed on behalf of the federal government, the monetary value of the e-customs agreement, and Nigeria's anticipated benefits from it.

Senator Musa emphasised a collective weariness of widespread judgment debts and emphasised the importance of comprehensive plans to collect excise duties and other tariffs. The objective is to prevent the recurrence of a deficit budget in the coming year, underscoring the urgency of addressing these issues and ensuring financial accountability.

Since the subsidy removal, there has been a notable increase in revenue inflow to the federation account, rising from an average of N650 million to N1 trillion in the past four months

NDIC
Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation
Protecting your bank deposits

NOTICE TO STAKEHOLDERS OF BANKS (IN-LIQUIDATION)

The Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation (NDIC), the Official Liquidator of deposit-taking banks licensed by the Central Bank of Nigeria is in the process of verifying and paying liquidation dividends to the specified stakeholders of the following defunct banks.

S/N	BANK	STAKEHOLDERS	DECLARATION STATUS
1	Liberty Bank	Depositor	1st Liquidation Dividend
2	Amicable Bank	Depositors	Final call for depositors.
3	City Express Bank	Depositors	3rd Liquidation Dividend
4	Assurance Bank	Depositors	2nd Liquidation Dividend
5	Century Bank	Depositors	2nd Liquidation Dividend
6	Fortune Bank	Depositors and Ex-Staff	2nd Liquidation Dividend
7	Allstates Trust Bank	Depositors and Ex-Staff	5th Liquidation Dividend
8	Prime Merchant Bank	Depositors and Ex-Staff	2nd Liquidation Dividend for depositors.
9	Allied Bank	Depositors/ MDAs	6th Liquidation Dividend
10	North South Bank	Depositors/ MDAs	Final Call for Depositors
11	Financial Merchant Bank	Creditors	1st Liquidation Dividend for Creditors
12	Icon Merchant Bank	Creditors	1st Liquidation Dividend for Creditors
13	Progress Bank Creditors	1st Liquidation	Dividend for Creditors
14	Commercial Trust Bank	Depositors	Final Call for Depositors
15	Merchant Bank of Africa (MBA)	Creditors	Final Call/Final Liquidation Dividends for Creditors
16	Premier Commercial Bank	Creditors & Shareholders	Final Call/Final Liquidation Dividends for Creditors
17	Co-Operative & Commerce Bank	Shareholders	2nd Liquidation Dividend for shareholders
18	Rims Merchant Bank	Shareholders 2nd Liquidation	Dividend for shareholders.
19	Nigeria Merchant Bank	Shareholders	2nd Liquidation Dividend for shareholders
20	Pan African Bank	Shareholders	Dividend for Shareholders.

Eligible stakeholders are, by this notice, advised to either contact NDIC officials in any of the underlisted NDIC Offices or visit NDIC website on www.ndic.gov.ng to download the verification forms that apply to each category of claimants.
Kindly note that duly completed verification forms may be returned to any of the underlisted offices or via our email address: claimscomplaints@ndic.gov.ng.

S/N	OFFICE	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE NO.
1	Lagos Office	23 A, MARINA, LAGOS. P.M.B. 12881, LAGOS	07080517483, 09063903615 08038112996, 08067298386
2	Enugu	No. 10, Our Lord's Street, Independence Layout, Enugu	08065996819
3	Benin	28A/28B, Benoni Hospital Road, Off Airport Road, GRA, Benin City, Edo State	08023124220
4	Kano	Plot 458, Muhammad Muhammad Avenue, Off Maiduguri Road, Hotoro, GRA, Kano	08133151192
5	Ilorin	No. 23B, Ahmadu Bello Way, GRA, Ilorin.	08023073975
6	Bauchi	Plot No. 3, Bank Road, P.M.B. 0207, Bauchi	09127343434
7	Sokoto	No. 2, Gusau Road, Opp. NNPC Mega Station, Sokoto.	08033142546. 09077367736 08033468446
8	Yola	No. 6, Numan Road, P.M.B. 2227, Jimeta, Yola, Adamawa State.	08067910599 08067923383, 09-4601515, 09-4601516
9	Port Harcourt	No. 104, Woji Road, Off Olu Obasanjo Road, GRA, Port Harcourt, Rivers State.	08054663230
10	Head Office Abuja	Head, Bank Examination Unit (BEU), NDIC, Abuja, Plot 447/448, Constitution Avenue, Central Business District, Garki, Abuja	09-4601260, 09-4601261
11	Owerri	No. 56, Area A, World bank Area, New Owerri Landmark, Behind Immaculate Hotel, opp. Fidelity Bank. Owerri, Imo State.	09135137677
12	Abeokuta	No. 1, Oshele Road, Ibara GRA, Abeokuta, Ogun State.	08033137255

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NSIA Unveils $500m Renewables Investment Platform, Establishes Partnership With IFC

By Jennete Ugo Anya

Mr. Umar-Sadiq, NSIA Boss

The Nigerian Sovereign Investment Authority (NSIA) has introduced the Renewables Investment Platform for Limitless Energy (RIPLE), a groundbreaking $500 million initiative aimed at advancing Nigeria's renewable energy objectives and expanding electricity accessibility.

Simultaneously, the NSIA has inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the International Finance Corporation (IFC), marking the IFC as a strategic partner for pilot investments and more, focusing on key areas within the RIPLE.

Structured around three fundamental pillars—diesel displacement, franchising, and backward integration toward Photovoltaic system (PV) manufacturing—NSIA's RIPLE is a transformative venture dedicated to developing, investing in, and operating renewable energy projects across the entire value chain in Nigeria.

The pilot project, situated within the Tokarawa Industrial Hub in Kano State, focuses on establishing a generation and distribution system capable of meeting 70 megawatts of unmet energy demands in an area encompassing approximately 9,000 connections, spanning industrial activities, commercial enterprises, and residential customers.

Speaking at the launch in Abuja, Mr. Aminu Umar-Sadiq, Managing Director of NSIA, referred to this as a pivotal moment for NSIA in the renewable energy arena, expressing high expectations for RIPLE to make a substantial impact on renewable energy investing and contribute to expanding energy access, enhancing efficiency, and ensuring energy security.

Mr. Umar-Sadiq highlighted RIPLE as another milestone initiative in the NSIA's climate sustainability asset class, following previous ventures such as Carbon Vista with Vitol and the construction finance warehouse facility.

This initiative represents the NSIA's ongoing commitment to addressing value dislocations in Nigeria's infrastructure space, complementing previous efforts like Infracredit, the Nigeria Mortgage Refinancing Company (NMRC), and the Family Homes Fund (FHF).

He stated that NSIA has committed an initial $25 million in funding and aims to attract additional investments to meet the $500 million required for implementing the platform's mandate.

"The ambition of NSIA and the IFC regarding this fund is to scale up and expand significantly. We are optimistic that, over time, we will witness the positive impact of the projects we are collaboratively developing and executing for the benefit of Nigeria and its people," he stated.

Over the past year, NSIA, the manager of Nigeria's Sovereign Wealth Fund (SWF), has strategically emphasised sustainability and climate as an asset class, leveraging its impactful capacity and the nature of funds under its management. The Managing Director highlighted that the investment approach in the climate space focuses on institutional readiness, demonstration projects, and building strategic partnerships.

...Authority's investments in climate and sustainability reach $100mn

On the sidelines of the event, he informed the media that NSIA has invested approximately $100 million in projects dedicated to climate and sustainability. "Our investments span clean cooking, biodiversity, and various climate and sustainability initiatives. When aggregating all these projects, the committed capital is nearly $100 million. As one of the largest investors, we focus on conceptualising and developing projects, leveraging our modest capital to attract strategic partners that complement our funding," he explained.

In his comments, Mr. Dan Croft, Regional Manager Africa at IFC, stated that the corporation's objective is to enhance energy access, efficiency, and security in a climate-friendly manner, collaborating with committed partners with a long-term vision for project development.

He emphasised the significance of reliable electricity for improving quality of life, productivity, and economic growth in Nigeria, expressing IFC's pleasure in collaborating with NSIA to develop and implement the initial phase of this innovative energy solution, which aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reliance on fossil fuels while delivering dependable power for commercial, residential, and industrial use.

Discussing the IFC's commitment, Mr. Croft mentioned, "We do not have a set limit for our financing in this sector. Our challenge is finding suitable opportunities, which is why we are thrilled about this collaboration. While we have invested in various renewable energy projects like solar, wind, hydro, and transmission and distribution, entering the Nigerian market in this manner is a first for us, and we hope to identify more partners like this."

Mr. Yusuf Umar, NSIA's program manager for RIPLE, also shared insights during the event. He highlighted that RIPLE draws inspiration from the successful implementation of a previous 10-megawatt solar project, incorporating lessons learned, relationships built, and achievements accomplished.

The primary objective of the platform is to tackle challenges in Nigeria's energy sector by accelerating the development of renewable energy projects across the nation.

Mr. Umar outlined the three core pillars of NSIA's energy strategy: expanding access, enhancing efficiency, and ensuring energy security. Reflecting on their experience with procurement disruptions during the construction of the current solar project, he emphasised the need to localise and strengthen supply chains.

A significant aspect of RIPLE is the emphasis on local upstream technology manufacturing. The platform's focus extends beyond solar PV technology to encompass green hydrogen, waste to energy, mini hydro, and wind, with promising prospects for wind projects in Nigeria.

This initiative represents the NSIA's ongoing commitment to addressing value dislocations in Nigeria's infrastructure space, complementing previous efforts like Infracredit...

NNPCL Reveals Ambitious Plan For Advancing Energy Sector At 41st NAPE Conference

• As NCDMB Announces N-STEP Initiative Aimed At Addressing Oil And Gas Challenges

By Jennete Ugo Anya

At the 41st Nigerian Association of Petroleum Explorationists (NAPE) conference, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation Limited's (NNPCL) Chief Upstream Investment Officer at NNPC Upstream Investment Management Services (NUIMS), Mr. Bala Wunti, unveiled a strategic plan designed to reshape Nigeria's energy sector.

Delivered in Lagos during the management session, Mr. Wunti, represented by NNPCL Upstream Investment Management Services (NUIMS) staff, Mr. Frank Mmamelu, presented the comprehensive roadmap under the theme 'Challenging Opportunities and Enablers that will Allow Strategies for Reserves and Potential Growth.'

The focal point of the strategic plan is a bold target to increase gas regionalisation by 20 percent within the next six months. This initiative involves the deregulation of midstream gas pricing, positioning Nigeria for greater dynamism and competitiveness in the energy market.

The plan also underscores NNPCL commitment to supporting local refineries and boosting Indigenous operators' share of imported crude oil by one million barrels, aiming to enhance domestic economic growth and elevate Nigeria's global energy standing.

Aligned with NNPCL's mandate for profitability and energy security, the strategic plan aims to establish the company as a global player in the energy sector. It envisions an energy business prioritising profitability, resilience, and sustainability amid the ongoing energy transition.

Addressing industry challenges, Mr. Mmamelu candidly acknowledged issues like funding constraints and declining investor interest, advocating for collaborative efforts among NNPCL, regulators, host communities, service providers, and agencies.

The strategic plan delineates a roadmap for short-term gains, emphasising improvements in cash flows, team building, and stakeholder engagement. These initiatives are geared towards enhancing NNPCL's agility and readiness to seize emerging opportunities.

As Nigeria enters a post-2020 era, NNPCL emerges as a transformed organisation, ready to navigate the evolving energy landscape.

The keynote address at the 41st NAPE edition served as a catalyst for industry-wide alignment, signaling a shared purpose that will drive Nigeria towards a prosperous and sustainable energy future.

Mr. Mele Kyari, MD NNPC

The event at Eko Hotel and Suites, Lagos, provided a platform for NNPCL to showcase visionary leadership and a commitment to steering Nigeria's energy sector towards prosperity, bringing together industry experts and stakeholders for collaborative efforts shaping the future of the nation's oil and gas industry.

> The plan also underscores NNPCL commitment to supporting local refineries and boosting Indigenous operators' share of imported crude oil by one million barrels...

NCDMB Announces N-STEP Initiative Aimed at Addressing Oil & Gas Challenges

The Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) and SLB jointly introduced the inaugural cohort of their collaborative initiative, the NCDMB-SLB Technology Enhancement Programme (N-STEP), during the 2023 Nigerian Association of Petroleum Geologists (NAPE) in Lagos.

According to the partners, the N-STEP program establishes a comprehensive framework for the rapid development and deployment of software solutions addressing challenges in the oil and gas sector.

Executed through a phased and multidimensional approach, the program primarily focuses on students creating software plugins for various applications in the oil field.

As part of the 2023 cohort, nine students from three distinguished Nigerian universities—University of Lagos, Federal University of Petroleum Resources Effurun, and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Bauchi—presented their innovative projects during the unveiling.

These projects showcased advancements in machine learning, artificial intelligence, and innovative solutions with the potential to unlock opportunities within the Nigerian oil and gas industry.

During the unveiling ceremony, Engr. Simbi Wabote, the Executive Secretary of NCDMB, stated, "The N-STEP program is an industry-education partnership within NCDMB's Adopt a Faculty Initiative for STEM courses. It is designed to foster collaboration between industry, universities, and the government, focusing on research, innovation, curriculum enhancement, infrastructure and equipment provision, as well as learning and knowledge exchange in Nigeria."

"Nigeria allocates an estimated $400 million annually towards foreign software, imposing a significant strain on our foreign exchange reserves. Our endorsement of the N-STEP reflects our determination to reverse this pattern. The program is strategically directed at undergraduates, as we firmly believe in the innovation capabilities of Nigerian youth, positioning them as solution providers rather than job seekers.

Discussing the impact of the N-STEP initiative, Mr. Sops Ideriah, Group Managing Director, West Africa at SLB, expressed the objective of empowering software developers to create and implement plug-ins that enhance the functionality of Exploration and Production (E&P) software platforms.

The collaboration with the public sector and academia aims to deliver a structured training program, enabling selected students to acquire the knowledge and skills essential for developing innovative software solutions tailored to specific challenges in the E&P industry.

The N-STEP initiative offers mentorship, internship opportunities, and specialised training aligned with industry requirements, empowering upcoming generations of innovators and leaders in the energy sector. The collaborative aspiration is to expand the programme's reach to encompass at least one university in each key region of Nigeria.

For SLB, the N-STEP programme not only serves as a means to promote education but also as a platform to identify and tap into local talent.

Mr. Ideriah emphasised SLB's commitment to staying at the forefront of global technology and actively seeking exceptional individuals who have the potential to revolutionise the energy landscape. The program, therefore, provides a strategic avenue to identify and nurture future leaders within the organisation.

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The Need For FG To Reclaim Nigeria's Wealth By Eliminating Gas Flaring

POLICY BRIEF *with* ENAM **OBIOSIO**

In the past decade, Nigeria has faced an immense challenge that has not only impacted its economy but has also hindered progress and development. The alarming loss of $16 trillion due to gas flaring demands urgent attention and strategic intervention from the federal government. As the custodian of the nation's resources, it is time for the government to embark on a comprehensive plan to reverse this economic haemorrhage and pave the way for a sustainable and prosperous future.

In view of the magnitude of the crisis, the $16 trillion lost to gas flaring over the past 10 years is a staggering figure that requires a thorough examination. Gas flaring not only contributes to environmental degradation but also represents a significant economic drain. As we imagine the root causes, it becomes evident that a multi-faceted approach is needed to address this complex issue.

The cornerstone of any successful intervention is robust policy reform. The federal government must enact and enforce stringent policies aimed at discouraging gas flaring while incentivising the adoption of environmentally friendly alternatives. This includes penalties for non-compliance and rewards for companies investing in technologies that capture and utilise flared gas.

Furthermore, the government should engage in international collaborations to access expertise and funding for implementing advanced technologies. Learning from global best practices can propel Nigeria towards sustainable development in the energy sector.

To effectively combat gas flaring, Nigeria needs to invest heavily in infrastructure and technology. Developing gas processing facilities, expanding pipelines, and upgrading power generation infrastructure are imperative steps. By creating an enabling environment for private sector participation through public-private partnerships (PPPs), the government can accelerate the development of these critical components.

Additionally, prioritising research and development in collaboration with local and international experts is vital. Innovation is key to finding efficient and cost-effective solutions that will not only reduce environmental impact but also contribute to revenue generation.

Legislation plays a crucial role in shaping behaviour. The government should revisit and strengthen existing laws related to gas flaring, ensuring that they align with contemporary environmental standards. Rigorous enforcement mechanisms, coupled with transparency and accountability measures, will deter companies from engaging in environmentally harmful practices.

There is the need to further deepen the federal government's economic diversification for long-term stability. Reducing dependency on oil and gas revenue is crucial for Nigeria's economic resilience. The government must strategically diversify the economy, investing in sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and technology. This diversification will not only mitigate the impact of future economic shocks but also provide alternative revenue streams.

Of course, the success of any initiative depends on the support of the public. The government should engage in extensive awareness campaigns, highlighting the environmental and economic consequences of gas flaring. By fostering a sense of responsibility and unity, the public can become advocates for change and put pressure on companies to adopt sustainable practices.

Looking at the economic impact, $16 trillion is an enormous amount of money, and for Nigeria to lose such a significant sum due to gas flaring, spells severe impact on the country's economy. This loss could have financed critical infrastructure projects, education, healthcare, and poverty alleviation programs.

> To effectively combat gas flaring, Nigeria needs to invest heavily in infrastructure and technology

Foreign direct investors may be deterred by the economic instability caused by such a massive loss. The country could continue to experience a decline in foreign direct investment, which is crucial for economic growth and development.

Of course, losing such a substantial amount could impede the development of gas infrastructure. The funds could have been used to invest in technologies and facilities to harness and utilise gas more efficiently, contributing to the country's energy security and sustainability.

Globally, it is considered that gas flaring is not only an economic issue but also an environmental one. The release of greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide and methane, contributes to climate change and poses health risks to nearby communities. The environmental impact could be exacerbated if investments to reduce or eliminate gas flaring are not made.

We cannot over emphasise the fact that local communities near gas flare sites often suffer health issues due to air pollution and environmental degradation. Consequently, with a loss of $16 trillion, there might be insufficient funds available for social programs and healthcare facilities to address the needs of affected communities.

In the country where we yearly battle with budget deficit, such a significant loss could lead to budgetary constraints, affecting the government's ability to provide essential services. This could result in austerity measures, affecting public sector salaries, infrastructure development, and social welfare programs.

On the global stage, Nigeria's international image might be negatively affected. A failure to effectively manage and monetise our natural resources could lead to a loss of credibility on the global stage. Therefore, we call for transparency in the management of our natural resources and reform re-evaluation of existing regulations and the implementation of measures to prevent such losses in the future.

Our position is because the $16 trillion lost to gas flaring represents a critical juncture in Nigeria's economic trajectory. The federal government must rise to the occasion, to implement a comprehensive and integrated strategy that addresses the root causes of this issue. Through collaboration, innovation, and decisive action, Nigeria can reclaim its wealth, protect its environment, and pave the way for a sustainable and prosperous future. The time for change is now.

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