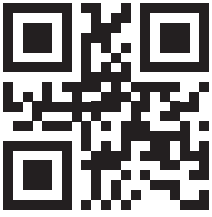




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31ST NGF COMMUNIQUE

ISSUED AT THE END OF THE 31ST TELECONFERENCE MEETING OF THE NIGERIA GOVERNORS' FORUM (8TH IN 2021) HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 16TH JUNE 2021

We, members of the Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF), at our meeting held on the 16th June 2021 deliberated on a number of issues of national importance particularly the signed Memorandum of Action (MOA) by major stakeholders and witnessed by the Hon. Minister of Labour & Employment as Chief Conciliator to address the ongoing Industrial Action by members of the Judiciary Staff Union of Nigeria (JUSUN) and the Parliamentary Staff Association of Nigeria (PASAN).

The NGF Chairman briefed members on several activities of the Forum including the meeting of the Nigeria Governors' Wives Forum (NGWF) which took place on June 10, 2021 to commemorate the first anniversary of the declaration of a state of emergency against Gender-Based Violence acknowledging the commendable role of the NGWF and alluding to some of the appreciable milestones over the period.

For instance, on June 2020 only fourteen (14) States had domesticated the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act, while as of June 2021, twenty-seven (27) States (including FCT) had passed the law with several others at advanced stages in the process of passing this law.

He urged his colleagues to support the efforts of the NGWF and continue to treat sexual and gender-based violence as a priority. The Forum received an update on the federal government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic from the Chairman of the Presidential Steering Committee (PSC) on COVID-19, Mr. Boss Mustapha, Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), in the company of other members of the PSC.

The SGF commended the State Governors for rising to the challenge of the time by providing exemplary leadership and resources to curb the impact of the pandemic in the country. He also called for continued action to maintain non-pharmaceutical interventions including the enforcement of COVID-19 guidelines in public places



and government institutions, heightened surveillance, risk communication, social mobilization, testing and reporting of data, vaccination, as well as sustained clinical care for patients.

To bolster the government's efforts, the SGF informed the Forum that Mr. President has approved the set-up of 38 oxygen plants in the country, with at least 1 plant in each State and two each in Lagos and Abuja. A supplementary budget has also been submitted by the federal government to enable the country access additional vaccines for its citizens.

The Programme Manager Federal Ministry of Finance Budget and National Planning (FMFBNP) SFTAS Programme Coordination Unit, Mrs. Oyindamola Adedokun, briefed the Forum on the efforts to ensure part-disbursement for the COVID-19 related Disbursement Linked Results (DLRs) of the SFTAS programme be made in 2021.

She highlighted to the Governors the progress of the States on the upcoming DLRs and 2021 Annual Performance Assessment (APA) Eligibility Criterion (2020 Audited Financial Statement), while informing them of the fast-approaching deadlines.

The DLRs included DLR 1.1 (FY21 Quarterly budget implementation report), DLR 8a (Published online an Arrears

Clearance Framework), DLR 10.3 (Passed and implemented audit laws granting operational and financial autonomy to the Offices of the State and Local Government Auditor Generals), DLR 11.2 (Prohibited the contracting-out of PIT assessment and collection to private consultants) and DLR 12.2 (Published online all COVID-19 related contracts executed between Q4 FY20 and Q1 FY21).

Understanding the importance of the fiscal reforms required by the DLRs, and the EC being an eligibility condition for the 2021 phase of the programme, the Governors committed to accelerating ongoing efforts to meet the deadlines.

Finally, Mr. Zakari Ahmed, Special Adviser to the President on Infrastructure (Secretary, Power Sector Reform Working Group), delivered an update on activities of key electricity sector reforms, including the transfer of DISCO equity to States, transition strategies for electricity subsidies, and the management of State and local government ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) outstanding electricity bills.

Following the presentation, the Forum resolved to review the proposals submitted by Mr. Zakari and communicate their position to the Power Sector Reform Working Group on a later date.



GBV: 13 states have domesticated VAPP Act – NGF

The Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) has said no fewer than 13 states have domesticated the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act between June 2020 and June 2021, as part of effort to curb Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

The forum disclosed this in a communiqué issued by its Chairman and Governor of Ekiti State, Dr Kayode Fayemi, after its 31st Teleconference.

It quoted Fayemi as disclosing this while briefing the governors on several activities of the Forum including the meeting of the Nigeria Governors' Wives Forum (NGWF) which took place on June 10.

The chairman said that the June 10 meeting commemorated the first anniversary of the declaration of a state of emergency against GBV.

He acknowledged the com-



Gov. Kayode Fayemi

mendable role of the NGWF and some of the appreciable milestones over the period.

He said that as of June 2020 only 14 states had domesticated the VAPP Act, while 27 states including FCT had passed the law with several others at advanced stages in the process of passing the law as of June.

He urged his colleagues

to support the efforts of the NGWF and continue to treat sexual and gender-based violence as a priority.

The communiqué noted that the governors received an update on the Federal Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic from the Chairman of the Presidential Steering Committee (PSC) on COVID-19, Mr Boss Mustapha.

It quoted Mustapha, who is also the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), as commending the governors for rising to the challenge of the time by providing exemplary leadership and resources to curb impact of the pandemic in the country.

Mustapha called for governors' continued action to maintain non-pharmaceutical interventions on COVID-19 as

well as sustained clinical care for patients.

The non-pharmaceutical interventions according to him include the enforcement of COVID-19 guidelines in public places and government institutions.

Others include heightened surveillance, risk communication, social mobilisation, testing and reporting of data and vaccination.

He noted that to bolster the government's efforts, President Muhammadu Buhari had approved the set-up of 38 oxygen plants in the country, with at least one plant in each State and two each in Lagos and Abuja.

He noted that a supplementary budget had also been submitted by the Federal Government to enable the country access additional vaccines for

its citizens.

The communiqué also stated that the governors also received a briefing from Mrs Oyindamola Adedokun, the Programme Manager Federal Ministry of Finance Budget and National Planning (FMF-BNP) SFTAS Programme Coordination Unit.

It noted that Adedokun briefed the governors on the efforts to ensure part-disbursement for the COVID-19 related Disbursement Linked Results (DLRs) of the SFTAS programme was made in 2021.

She highlighted to the governors the progress of the states on the upcoming DLRs and 2021 Annual Performance Assessment (APA) Eligibility Criterion (2020 Audited Financial Statement), while informing them of the fast-approaching deadlines.

El-Rufai's wife, Hadiza emerges chairperson, Northern Governors' Wives Forum

Wife of Kaduna State Governor, Nasir el-Rufai, Hadiza has been unanimously elected Chairperson, Northern Governors' Wives Forum for a two-year tenure.

This followed the election of new executive members into the forum recently in Abuja.

Mrs El-Rufai takes over from Dr Amina Bello, wife of Governor Abubakar Bello of Niger State.

Dr Olufolake Abdulrazaq (Kwara), was elected the Vice Chairperson, while Mrs Anna Ishaku (Taraba) was elected Secretary of the forum, and Hajjiya Mariya Tambuwal (Sokoto), Welfare Officer.

Others are Hajjiya Asma'u Yahaya (Gombe), Treasurer, and Mrs Regina Lalong (Plateau) Public Relations Officer.

While urging increased participation of women in politics, El-Rufai harped on the need for

women to be given adequate opportunities to contribute to nation building.

According to her, it is so sad that in Nigeria, women have poor record of participation in politics.

"Would you ever have thought that Nigeria would be like that with all the educated women?"

"We have the vocal women and you know all the women that have paved way before like Mrs Ransome Kuti and at this age we are still at this level.

"I think what we should do is to keep mounting pressure so that they would legislate for a certain percentage of seats to be reserved for women.

"This is because we cannot compete equally with the men and we all know this has a lot to do with financial strength and the women are not strong financially.



Mrs Hadiza El-Rufai

"It will be a great help if the legislators at the federal and state levels agree to reserve certain number of seats for women," El-Rufai said.

She commended the former chairperson and members of the forum for the peaceful conduct of the election and solicited the support of the media in promoting activities of the forum.

THE TEAM

Director-General

Asishana B **OKAURU**

Executive Director (Fin & Admin)

Abubakar **JIBIA**

Executive Director (Res & Str)

Abdullateef **SHITTU**

Head Media Public Affairs

Abdulrazaque **BELLO-BARKINDO**

Snr. Publications Officer

Halima S. **AHMED**

NGF Health Advisor

Dr. Ahmad **ABDULWAHAB**

Agric Economist

Bunmi **AKANBI**

Researchers

Abdulaziz **OLORUNISHOLA**

IT

Bassi **HEMAN**

Ubong **ESSIEN**

Senior Economist

David **NABENA**

Photography

Saeed **SANUSI**

Legal Advise: Chijioke **CHUKU**



Shuttle Diplomacy



The shuttle diplomacy embarked upon by the Chairman of the Nigeria Governors' Forum, NGF and Governor of Ekiti State, Dr John Kayode Fayemi, revealed a plethora of positive governance opportunities that state governments in Nigeria could explore for the betterment of governance in the country.

The shuttle is an off-shoot of the Forum, as part of its initiatives towards enhancing performance among governors. The conversations centre around the six core mandate areas of the Forum which include, but are not limited to, education, health, security, the economy, agriculture, and infrastructure development. As our readers are aware, it is no longer news that the NGF has been credited with the eradication of polio in the country and getting Nigeria off the global polio map in 2017.

There are many more remarkable achievements of the Forum that continue to remain under wraps because of their different stages of completion.

So, when the Ambassador of Canada to Nigeria, Mr Nicolas Simard asked the Chairman of the Nigeria Governors' Forum if the 2023 elections would ever hold, one would expect that the Ekiti State Governor would hold back and be a little bit circumspect in his response.

The Chairman of the Nigeria Governors' Forum, and Governor of Ekiti State, Dr John Kayode Fayemi, consummate academic,

military historian and political scientist to boot, responded as if he had expected the question ahead of time. He began his response by placing a caveat, albeit silently, on the issue that might have given the Ambassador, who had only spent six months in Nigeria, the impetus to ask the question.

"Let me begin by saying that security has already inserted itself on the agenda of the 2023 election", Dr John Kayode Fayemi began.

"We have more work to do to increase the level of social protection in our country if we are to continue as one and that we cannot be circumspect as a leadership, as a group or as individuals," he insisted, concluding that, "we need a country first before we contemplate anything like elections and we have the strength of character as a people to push our country to greatness."

The NGF Chairman then commenced on a historical tour of Nigeria sequence of electoral experiences and the various social circumstances that have either aided or negated our democratic voyeurism. He told the Canadian Ambassador that there are conflict merchants in Nigeria who take advantage of the weaknesses of, or absence of governance to perpetuate their trade but argued that Nigeria has the capacity to be tough on crime and those who commit them and therefore is without doubt marching steadily towards 2023 and the elections that are scheduled for that year.

Ambassador Simard suddenly sat up and braced himself for the



sequence of argument, some intellectual and other didactic that flew off the side of Dr Kayode Fayemi. He agreed with his host that there are, like in many countries of the world, declining levels of participation in elections but concludes that when the time comes, 2023 will obviously take care of itself in that regard.

The Chairman of the NGF was even more deliberate in his delivery, knowing that he was speaking at the residence of the Canadian Ambassador to Nigeria, as part of his scheduled shuttle diplomacy, an initiative of the NGF, as he allayed the fears that his host was entertaining because of the number of secessionists groups that have populated the political space in Nigeria when he rationalised that most of those groups were only hoping, through their agitations that government would meet them half way, by way of mitigating the grievances that had led to their strife, in the first place. "They are merely posturing for results," the Ekiti State Governor volunteered, confidentially.

On the part of government, and what its inner-circle resolutions were likely to be, the Governor declared that "we don't want to create the climate and conditions for unconstitutional resistance in the country," and so we would put all hands on deck to find solutions that threaten the corporate existence of our country, postulating that "Nigeria is currently a country with a government of unfinished greatness".

The engagement with the Canadian ambassador touched on several subjects that bind Nigeria and Canada. Ambassador Simard disclosed that in the 1970s Canada had also experienced the same kinds of secessionists agitations that Nigeria is currently experiencing and expressed relief that some even almost became violent but then goes further to offer to help Nigeria in finding solutions to their agitations.

Taxation

The conversation between the NGF Chairman and the Canadian ambassador touched on taxation in the country where the Canadian ambassador wondered why the average collection in Nigeria annually does not exceed 7% while the average tax intake on all nations on the continent as in other African countries ranges between 8% and 12%.

Governor Fayemi reasoned that it has to do with the Nigerian mindset which



implies that Nigeria is an oil producing country and therefore a rich one that does not require the collection of routine taxation. The NGF Chairman said that looking back at the pre-oil situation beginning from around 1963, there were revenues from produce and other cash crops but as soon as oil was discovered the people began to believe that there was no need to tax anyone and therefore began to resist complying with tax officials, saying "if rich, why bother?"

Governor Fayemi said that the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) in the 1980s caused an economic depression in the country. At the time, the capacity of government to cater for the Nigerian public diminished. Since then, successive governments had tried to reintroduce taxation but only succeeded in enforcing indirect taxation like the collection of VAT and the PAYE that civil servants could not evade, as they were collected at source. Other forms of direct taxation have been ve-

hemently resisted by the populace. To ameliorate the situation according to the NGF Chairman, Nigerians must arrive at a position where they agree that the money that would service their needs in the economy is, if we must face the truth, no longer there.

The conversation also touched a little on the pricing of petroleum products and the payment of subsidy. According to the NGF Chairman, the Governors are reluctant to assert themselves on the fuel subsidy issue just to be politically correct, which he described as unnecessary but "when we (Governors) sit down to do the numbers and share with the public, we are described as wicked."

Youth and Women Empowerment

When the conversation veered towards women and youth in Nigeria, the two dignitaries dwelt on the exchanges of talented youth between the two countries, now a thing of the past. On involvement with politics, the Ekiti State Governor advised women and youths of this country to take advantage of their numbers to get the votes out if they were to alter the current state of affairs in the country.

While answering questions regarding the participation of women in politics in the country, Governor Fayemi told the Canadian Ambassador that most people in Nigeria are adherents of the patriarchal system where men hold sway, adding that in these climes power is not given on a platter.

Power is not given a la carte in these parts of the world, and I suggest that if the youths of this country and women intend to grab power, they should take advantage of their numbers to change whatever they seem to



**NIGERIA IS
CURRENTLY A
COUNTRY WITH
A GOVERNMENT
OF UNFINISHED
GREATNESS**



disagree with instead of sitting down and expecting that it would be thrown at them by those who currently wield it.

Dr John Kayode Fayemi rationalised that in a situation where about 60 – 70 percent of the population are under 35 years of age and most of the population are females, it would only be fair if they stopped agonising and start organising to wrench power away from those who are in charge.

The only alternative, which is not likely, in favour of women is positive masculinity, which he described as a situation where the males who hold power in the country are broad-minded enough to consider ceding it to women voluntarily.

He concluded that the affirmative action type resolution that would usher more Nigerian women into politics in the country was neither currently in sight nor being contemplated in Nigeria because even the Bill that seeks to enhance women's chances in politics in the National Assembly has been languishing there for upward of three years.

On gender equality in the country the NGF Chairman disclosed that nearly all states of the federation including those that were hitherto

considered conservative have signed up to the Violence Against Persona Act, since the NGF declared a state of emergency on Gender Based Violence in the country.

He said that Governors had been cheer-leading in this respect as it is their wives that have been taking charge of the campaign.

On his part, the Canadian Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr Nicolas Simard, commended the efforts of the Nigerian political elite for providing the enabling environment for the governors' wives to lead the campaign against Gender-Based-Violence in the country and insisted however, that more needs to be done.

The Ambassador said that there are 12000 Nigerian students in Canada and preached for the economic inclusion of young people and women in the national super-structure that could make Nigeria a more viable democracy.

The Chairman of the Nigeria Governors' Forum, and Governor of Ekiti State, Dr John Kayode Fayemi, called on Nigerians to rise to the defence of democracy with a view to advancing the development of the country.

The Chairman's visits took him to the embassy of the People's Republic of China and the embassy of the Republic of South Africa.

At all the three meetings, Dr John Kayode Fayemi discussed issues of bilateral importance between the countries and their governments at the subnational level, including citizens engagements, economic progress of the federating states, youth mobilization and organisation, and women's empowerment.

Other issues that graced the conversation between the NGF Chairman and the three ambassadors include revenue generation, the economy, education, infrastructure development among others.

Both the NGF Chairman and the Canadian am-

bassador agreed that organisations like the NGF are the best platforms for healthy debates with the central governments on issues like restructuring, citizens engagement and internal and external security.

At the embassy of the People's Republic of China, where he spoke with the ambassador, Mr Cui Jian Chun, the NGF chairman negated the death-trap diplomacy that has been wrapped around the conversation in most African countries, when it comes to their relationship with China. Dr Fayemi assured Ambassador Cui Jian Chun of the full cooperation of the subnational governments.

Dr John Kayode Fayemi also praised the vaccine diplomacy of the Chinese while welcoming any support that will help Nigeria to develop its own vaccines to help raise the ratio of vaccinated people in the population for Nigeria to achieve herd immunity.

When he visited the South African embassy the next morning, the conversation revolved heavily around the ENDSARS movement and the help that the South African people can render Nigerian youths to be able to articulate their grievances in a non-violent manner.

Both leaders advised Nigerian youths to "organise and not agitate".

The ambassador of the Republic of South Africa to Nigeria, Thamsanqa Dennis Mseleku harped on three key issues: xenophobia, trade and youth dialogue.

Ambassador Dennis Mseleku argued that the NGF is strategic to such conversations especially as the two countries are working towards the establishment of Joint Ministerial Action Committees, which had started in earnest before the Covid 19 lockdowns interrupted.

All the three ambassadors that the NGF Chairman visited, pledged to link the NGF with their various subnational governments to encourage synergy between their governors, premiers, and Nigerian governors.



**WHEN WE
(GOVERNORS) SIT
DOWN TO DO THE
NUMBERS AND SHARE
WITH THE PUBLIC, WE
ARE DESCRIBED AS
WICKED**





Practice What You Preach:

NGF Staff Take Second Jab

Just like every other hesitation to new things, especially when it comes to people's health, COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy is a huge challenge in flattening the curve in the fight against the pandemic.

The people's hesitation to taking the jab will not only threaten the response to the pandemic, but prevent Nigeria from achieving strong immunity.

Outright refusal to vaccinate, delaying vaccines, have created uncertainties about their uses, hence, incomplete vaccine coverage has increased the risk of disease for the entire population, including those who have been vaccinated.

The common understanding and the major factors that birthed vaccine hesitancy are nonchalant attitude, distrust and vaccine apathy.

Leadership has been a major challenge and people tend not to trust the system in place despite the campaigns and enlightenment.

Against this backdrop, the Nigeria Governors' Forum Secretariat staff, just like Governors on the forum, recently put to practice what the government have been preaching, by receiving the second dose of their COVID-19 vaccines.



Director General Asishana Bayo Okauru



Mrs Ifueko O. Okauru



Abdulrazaque Bello-Barkindo (Head of Media and Publicity)



Alh. Mohammed A Jibia (EDF&A)



Ibrahim Jafar (Protol NGF)



Hauwa Halliru (Human Resources)



Olanrewaju Ojugbasile (Senior Program Manager)



Saheed Sanusi (Photo Editor)



NEWS FROM THE STATES

Banditry: Lalong hands over 50 patrol vehicles, motorcycles to IGP



Plateau state Governor, Simon Lalong (2nd left) with the IGP, Usman Alkali Baba during the unveiling of 50 patrol vehicles and motorcycles

The Inspector General of Police (IGP), Ibrahim Alkali Baba, and the Governor of Plateau State, Simon Lalong, yesterday, commissioned 50 new patrol vehicles and 200 security motorcycles purchased by the State government, to tackle issues of kidnapping, banditry and criminalities in the state.

The IGP, who was at the new Government House Rayfield, Jos, for the commissioning of the vehicles and motorcycles, applauded the effort of Plateau state governor towards addressing security challenges in the state.

He said Lalong's efforts at restoring peace and security in Plateau state, and consolidating it with the acquisition of vehicles and providing other logistics requirements for

the police and other security agencies, were commendable.

He assured that more police personnel will soon be recruited to boost the manpower of the force, while the training of the personnel was also being accorded serious attention.

Governor Lalong described the event as a momentous occasion that was aimed at boosting the capacity of security agencies in the State, towards tackling criminal activities and ressurging attacks on innocent citizens.

He said: "To a very large extent and without sounding immodest, we have made giant strides in restoring peace in Plateau by bringing down the level of insecurity and restoring confidence of the citizens, as well as attracting investors, visitors and tourists who continue to troop into the state in large numbers.

"We have also realised that while we consolidate on the peace, the crisis merchants are not sleeping as their source of business has been obstructed, due to the actions we have put in place to restore stability. Therefore, they are restless and trying various methods to breach the peace."

Lalong said the criminals have, in recent times, resorted to isolated attacks in various communities which are carried out in a hit-and-run fashion.

While commending the security agencies for doing their best to tackle such attacks and other criminal activities, he expressed deep concern over the inability to prevent isolated killings or arrest the perpetrators in some cases.

He told the police and other security agencies that he did not want to hear about unknown gunmen again in Plateau State.

Abia, FG parley on farm estate for 3,000 youths

Abia State Government and the Federal Government have signed a Memorandum of Understanding that would engage 3,000 youths for the revamp of the Ogwe Golden Chicken Farm Estate in the state.

The Executive Secretary/Chief Executive Officer, National Agricultural Land Development Authority, Paul Ikonne, said the ongoing projects by the Federal Government were based on the directives of the President, Major General Muhammadu Buhari (retd.).

Ikonne said in a statement issued by his agency in Abuja that Buhari directed NALDA to rehabilitate all farm estates across the country, adding that the Ogwe Golden Chicken in Ukwa East Local Gov-

ernment Area of Abia State was inclusive.

He told the Abia State Governor, Okezie Ikpeazu, that the NALDA team had to come to Abia to formalise the understanding on the rehabilitation of the poultry farm estate and reduce unemployment in the state.

He said the first phase of the farm estate project in the state would be inaugurated in December this year.

Ikonne said, "The MoU for Ogwe Golden Chicken Farm Estate is simple. The Abia State Government has made the land available for the facility. The President has mandated us to develop it in order to engage youths from that community.

"NALDA programmes

are community-based and this one is engaging 3,000 youths in the entire poultry value chain. What this means is that Abia will be known for egg production and finished chicken products in Nigeria.

"Ogwe Golden Chicken is going to have many facilities because the land is over 300 acres and with that size, we will have the processing and hatchery points, residential and production areas, in terms of producing feeds, as well as the packaging area."

Ikonne further noted that Abia was entitled to three integrated farm estates and urged the governor to donate land for the two other remaining farm estates.

On the fish ponds, he said the facilities were

ongoing under NALDA's Women in Fishery Programme, adding that 50 of the ponds were being constructed in Ikwuano Local Government Area of Abia State, while others were in Borno State.

Ikonne said the ponds in Borno were being constructed in 50 different locations, while about 50 ponds in 10 locations in Maiduguri, the Borno State capital, would be inaugurated in October this year.

On his part, the Abia governor pledged the state's support to the programmes of the Federal Government in Abia, stressing that his government would strive to ensure that the agreements in the MoU were implemented successfully.



NEWS FROM THE STATES

Governor Okezie Ikpeazu has said that the Igbos are committed to the unity of Nigeria, whilst calling on other ethnicities to foster a more united Nigeria.

The Governor stated this when he received in audience at the Government House Umuahia, the Governor of Kogi State, Alhaji Yahaya Bello, who paid him a courtesy visit.

He said the Igbo man lives and does business in every part of the country as well as contributes to the socio-economic development of his host community.

Governor Ikpeazu was of the view that despite all differences, with a little more patience and tolerance Nigeria will overcome her current challenges.

According to the Governor, if equal opportunities are given to Nigerian youths, they are capable of occupying strategic positions and leading the country aright and saluted Governor Bello's disposition to galvanize Nigerians.

He associated himself with a united and stronger Nigeria which is the goal of all and cautioned that while we all should condemn the criminal actions of some people, we must avoid the temptation of wholesale profiling of any ethnic group in Nigeria.

He appreciated Governor Bello for appointing youths in his cabinet including Igbo people and described him as his friend and strong pillar of support.

Governor Okezie Ikpeazu later presented his guest with Made in Aba products including Igbo traditional clothes.

Earlier, the Kogi State Governor, Alhaji Yahaya Bello said he was in the State to identify with Chief Ikechi

Kogi, Abia in a handshake across the Niger



Emenike who is burying his mother-in-law in Umuahia and in line with official protocol, he came to pay homage to the Governor.

He commended Governor Ikpeazu for the good relationship existing between them.

Governor Bello used the opportunity to commend the Igbo people living in Kogi

State for their peaceful and harmonious relationships in the State, adding that they have been contributing immensely to the economic development of Kogi State.

He said no criminal arrested in Kogi State that has been traced to be an Igbo man and emphasised that he believes in the united Nigeria where agitations should be settled

peacefully.

Deputy Governor Sir Ude Oko Chukwu, former Deputy Governor, Rt Hon Eric Acho Nwakanma, Secretary to Government, Barrister Chris Ezem, Honorable Commissioner for Information, Chief John Okiyi Kalu, Chief of Staff to the Governor, Professor ACB Agbazure were amongst other top officials

of the State Government who witnessed the occasion while the Kogi State Governor's entourage included some members of the State Executive Council, Members of the State House of Assembly, Chief of Staff to the Governor, the State Accountant General, State Auditor General and other key aides of the Governor.

Shoe production now at professional level in Abia, Says Ikpeazu

Governor Okezie Ikpeazu has expressed great joy and delight over the emergence of Aba based footwear academy with an award of excellence in leather works at the National MSME awards held in Abuja, noting that shoe making has gone beyond artisanal apprenticeship.

Governor Ikpeazu said the award was yet another validation of the efforts of his administration to provide support to willing and able entrepreneurs

to chart a course for themselves, and to make Abia a destination of choice for business breakthroughs.

The Governor notes that the fact that Abia State has consistently won this award which is organized by the office of the Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is an incontrovertible evidence that the deliberate efforts of his administration to incubate future business leaders is yielding

fruits.

Governor Ikpeazu stated that in Abia, the business and narrative of shoe production has been moved beyond the artisanal to the professional level with structured trainings, overseas capacity building and automation, noting with pride that the two ladies from Abia State who had won these awards previously, Onwuasoanya Norah and Prosper Nma Erem were part of the shoe-

makers sponsored to China for training in Automated Shoe Making by his administration. Today, the two ladies are doing great and breaking new grounds in their businesses.

Today, Abia State is the only state in the country that owns a functional automated shoe company that is professionally run and handles major shoe supply contracts to key agencies of the Federal Government.



NGF meets with Transportation Commissioners



A delegation of Transportation Commissioners in a group photograph with NGF chairman, DG and executive directors

The NGF went through quite an interesting journey as it was visited by the Nigeria Transportation Commissioners Forum on Thursday, June 30th.

The Nigeria Transportation Commissioners Forum is a platform that brings together all 36 Honourable Commissioners/ Special Advisers of Transport to enable collaborations, interactions, integration, and harmonization of policies in the sector, thus looking to improve transportation safety and creating enabling environment for businesses within the sector.

In the last three years, the transportation forum has made milestones in strategic partnership with Federal Ministry of Transportation, partnership with Federal Road Safety Corps and partnership with relevant federal agencies and national unions in the sector.

The Commissioners were led by Hon. Rahamatu Muhammed Yar'adua of Niger State.

They first expressed gratitude towards the opportunity to have a meet-

ing with the NGF.

Their reason for visiting the secretariat was to make a plea for changes in infrastructural, human capacity, legal framework, funding, and functional data base amongst others.

The goals of the transportation forum are hinged on safety, security, and revenue generation. They are seeking the support of the NGF Secretariat to achieve their long and short-term goals.

A challenge that is affecting the states in implementing transportation resolutions is due to a lack of collaboration when it comes to safety, security and revenue generation.

The forum would like to add value to the transportation ecosystem through "vehicular enumeration."

The Niger State Commissioner of Transport said that "data and statistics are ingredients for growth and development and to successfully implement the various resolutions for the retreat, they must go back to the basics and build solid foundation from which to leap to the next level."

Hon. Yar'adua said that most states cannot account for the number of vehicles in their domain which has to a large extent contributed to its own quota to ongoing se-

curity and banditry activities in the federation."

The forum would request collaboration with the secretariat as it relates to funds to implement projects for growth. The forum looks to engage an investor from the private sector to provide invaluable services across the nation at zero cost to states with significant boost of internally generated revenue.

They would hope that the NGF Secretariat would set up a committee to interphase with investors.

The forum would also like to be granted the privilege of participating in a Governors Forum event to make a presentation of their proposal.

The Chairman of the Nigeria Governors' Forum Secretariat, Dr. Kayode Fayemi said that the transportation services in our country leaves a lot to be desired. He believes that we can do better.

He believes that a lack of information is a contributing factor to crime and states tend to be weary of federal and road safety calls.

The Chairman said that the Governors would be interested in a database system. There should be a driver's licence that is recognizable in every state.

He concluded that secretariat could work towards arranging a meeting whereby the transportation committee can make a presentation.



In this edition of Governors' Connect with the Youth Population and Road to a Violence-Free Nigeria, we feature the Governor of Plateau State, His Excellency, Simon Lalong.

He talked about insecurity and other sundry issues. Excerpts:

Youth restiveness and protests has plagued the country in recent times. How was the ENDSARS protest in Plateau State?

Well, wasn't just in Plateau State but in the whole north. As chairman of the Northern Governor's Forum, I consider the impact generally and in the northern region and by implication, the whole nation. It however had a very terrible impact on us.

In Plateau State, we had gone far, very far in respect to even putting measures to address the engagement of youths and employment of youths and also empowerment of youth because we had a model we call three E's in 2015, (Empowerment, Employment, and Endorsement) and we have leverage on the three E's.

It will interest you to note that I was also a youth activist, I was National President of Youth Movement in my ethnic group, I was also a very key member of Plateau State Youth Council before I went to the House of Assembly.

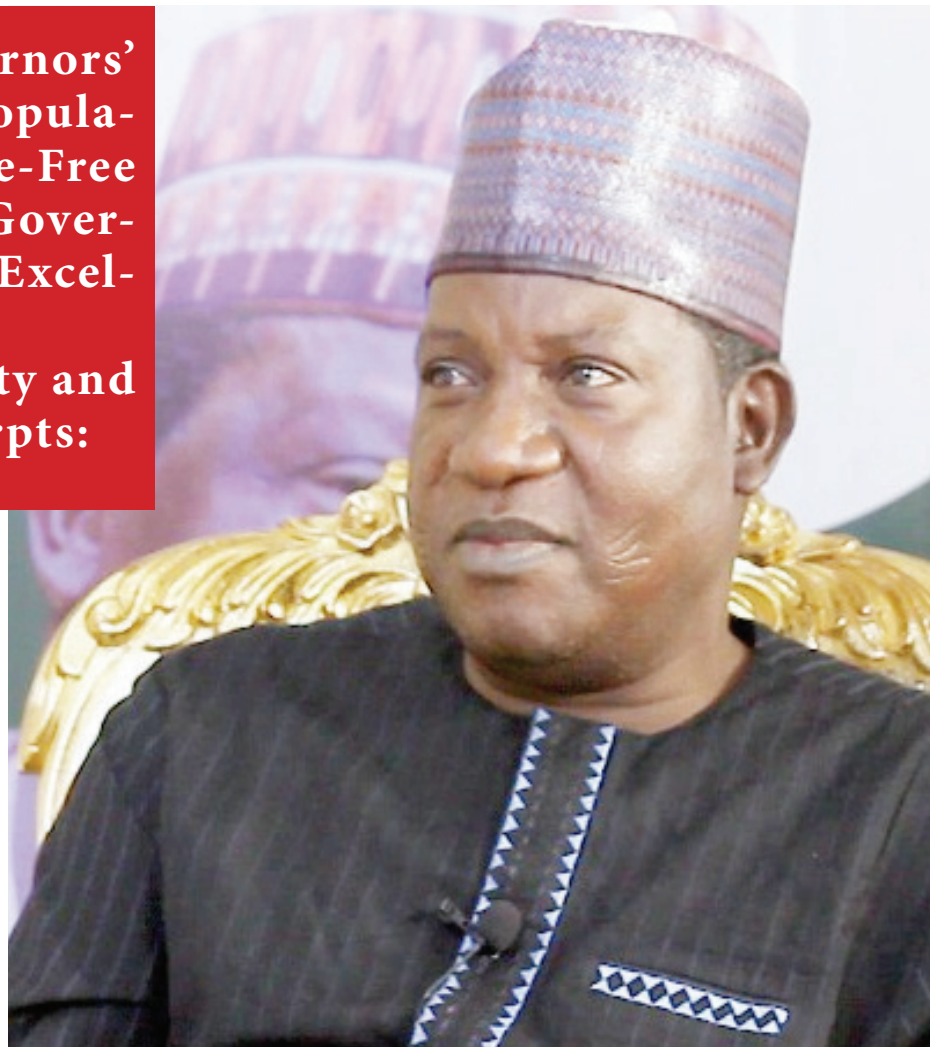
So, when I became governor the entire youth council had not been recognised in the state because my predecessor had a problem with them. He went on to abolish the youth council and proscribed them. On their part they were all involved in litigations. So, I paid the fees for the litigations, and also brought them back and they had an election and that was when we now again had a proper youth council which we are all.

It will interest you to know that we set up the model for youth engagement and employment, and our model is one of the best in the country. So, all hands were on deck before this ENDSARS thing came, and when it came my state was one of the states that had a very devastating effect of the protest because so many things were destroyed, and when we assessed the quantum of what was destroyed, it was almost beyond N72 billion worth of infrastructure.

In some cases, schools that were renovated and upgraded were destroyed, institutional facilities built partly for the engagement, empowerment of the youth and women were all destroyed.

How did you particularly respond to the mayhem?

As I said, I was not only handling the saga in Plateau State at that time, when it happened, because I was a principal



GOVERNMENT WILL ALWAYS SIDE WITH YOUTHS - LALONG

officer of the Governor's Forum; you will recall historically what happened during the 1918 Spanish flu.

So, we understand the effect of locking people indoors. When you lock people indoors expect a terrible reaction, as a lot of things went wrong, the economy was no

longer moving.

We were all preparing to address the ENDSARS as we thought the ENDSARS was mainly around the south, especially in Lagos. We were all trying to address the issue to avert the ENDSARS from moving to the North; I had calls from youths in the



North, because it was seemingly looking like a civil war, one of them was not talking about common grievances of the ENDSARS, they were concerned that they were killing northerners in the Southwest and the Southeast and so the youth were also becoming very restive and they were going to start killing southerners.

As the Chairman of the Northern Governor's Forum, I quickly called a meeting in Kaduna, first to address that issue and it was while I was in Kaduna trying to address the youth that the ENDSARS moved to my state.

By the time it moved to my state we had done security meetings and we were also trying to address it because we now invited the youths to come but they said no. Those who were involved in that ENDSARS, I won't say that it was really Plateau youths because we discovered that those involved were not from Plateau, they were brought people from different states but some were also from the Southeast.

Many of the people who participated in the ENDSARS were people from the Southeast and Southwest, so many of them moving with tinted cars everywhere within the state and the purpose was to ensure that they mobilized people for ENDSARS. At the time ENDSARS came to Plateau State, the following day it was not ENDSARS in Plateau because they came in the guise of ENDSARS but they started burning churches and mosques, so the protests were hijacked. I was very conversant with the demands and requests of the youth. I was in Kaduna when I had a meeting with the northern governor's and we all agreed when we first met and issued a communique and sent it to the President.

In Plateau when I saw that the first-day ENDSARS came into my state and it was all about burning of churches, mosques and then killing of people- about five people were killed. So, I declared a curfew that day to address the issue.

How was the issue of palliative looting like in your state?

Unfortunately, when hoarding of palliatives did not happen in Jos. The truth is the palliative looted in Jos was brought to Jos a week before it was looted. The first one that was brought to us about three months before by CACOVID was distributed even against the instructions of the CACOVID because the instruction then was that when you get them, you'll wait until they bring all before commencing

distribution but I told them I would not wait till they bring others. Plateau State distributed about 70 percent already.

Part of the annoyance was that when they got into the place they discovered that there were no palliatives to loot then they angrily burnt down the whole of Jos International Breweries where we kept them. In that annoyance, they moved to where we kept the ones for poor women that were flagged up by Ministry for Humanitarian Affairs and that one was barely a week it was flagged up in the whole nation and in Plateau. It was that week that we wanted to distribute when the ENDSARS started. So, when they came, we couldn't control them, they moved to that place, brought down the place and carted away everything in the storehouses.

People have been clamouring for restructuring of the country. Is this a viable solution, going forward?

I always say that there are advantages and disadvantages of ENDSARS protest. The disadvantages were part of the fact that hoodlums hijacked the process and used the avenue to perpetuate many criminal activities but the good aspect of it is that most of this agitation were genuine, they were things that everybody knew.

Asides the level of insecurity in the nation, everybody also knew the level of poverty, unemployment, so on and so forth, as elected leaders this were things that we were focused to address when ENDSARS came, but it further strengthened our ability to address this issues as quickly as possible, it was during the ENDSARS that there were agitations, some spoke about state police, some spoke about community police, some created outfit like Amotekun and others, but for those of us in the North we said no we will continue with community policing because we had to start from somewhere and I don't want to start condemning those who brought up other outfits because right now we are beginning to see complain coming here and there. I know that in our state we started like that but along the line, we said no let us first engage the people, let us first make the people understand what is security, you don't go and bring youth together then you'll start getting to the level of arming them and then they turn into an ethnic militia and then turn into something you cannot control. For now, we in the North prefer community police, we train them and they are right now working for us.



What are you doing differently for the youth in Plateau State and northern Nigeria?

I told you earlier about my background. I was a youth activist and I was the national president of my

ethnic association before I went to the House of Assembly and then became the Speaker for a long time before I became governor.

So, I know the problem of the youths and I understand the agitation of the youths. Now what we have in



plateau are segmentation, divisions along with ethnic and sometimes religious divisions. What we tried to do when we came into office is to do away with such things as we bring back the youth council so we develop the three E's and within the model, we are doing our best, in that case, the people are empowered, they coordinators have gone around they have engaged people, trained people within

the skill acquisition and that, so that way we engage a lot of them. Also, education was very important, we created avenues to ensure that those people that drop out from school return to school.

The cost of governance is high. There is this aspect of emoluments, bogus, pension packages for past governors and their deputies. Some of your colleagues have started taking steps to abolish it. Do you support it?

Pensions and bogus packages for governors and deputies among others started in 1999.

I think it was created by the Federal Revenue Mobilisation and there were reasons for that, and the first reason was to ensure that democracy was stable itself. You will recall that most of the time in history when we handed up to civilians, the military were always coming back then and these were some of the reasons they were bringing to come back and take over again and I know that I was a speaker and the idea now came that it should make those who are elected comfortably so that they don't steal money and it will also reduce corruption so if somebody like a governor is aware that when he leaves office and this is what you are going to get there will be no basis for you to steal money, but after serving, we saw a lot of governors' being prosecuted and jailed for corruption.

So, that means that that idea was no longer working so for me I think this idea of not paying I am also in agreement because it's not even an issue of people saying, there's a court judgement in respect to that, the reasons that brought it there has been abused so for me I'll also agree with it that there's no need for anybody to be paid money after leaving office.

Is there a connection between poverty, ethnicity, and youth restiveness?

There's always a connection because part of the problem that we have in Nigeria today is ethnicity, divisions in religion. After all, anytime people are doing things kudos to our leaders especially those leaders who came in the first republic, even they were doing it wasn't taking to the high point that we see today, but we've gotten to a stage where everything you do now, at the federal they talk about ethnicity even if we move to the local government they will talk about clan so this division is also affecting us, as for me we

must find a way of discouraging it because by the time the culture and the way it's moving into our youth if it gets so high it will be very difficult to say we are talking about one Nigeria.

What is your advice to the young people who are beginning to think that kidnapping and banditry are lucrative and those who believe that COVID-19 does not exist?

I was a victim in December and spent my Christmas in isolation because I was infected with COVID-19 and if somebody is trying to say there is no COVID-19, no problem for him, let him also go through what I went through. I thank God that within those ten days I saw something, I saw a lot of things, so I can't come and tell people because as a governor I'll always tell you it exists. It has killed a lot of people, right now as I am talking seven persons are down in my state and VIPs have died of COVID.

As leaders we should not endanger others, even if we don't believe in it. It's not to go to preach because we are endangering those who are in need of our attention to protect them. Then we will say it doesn't exist because we feel that we already have immunity against it but our duty is to protect people in every state.

I don't think that no state will tell you that there is no COVID, some of them who say they don't have, I said allow me to send my team to go and start testing then they will say no they don't want. We must be very careful to observe, respect the protocol, and then also take the vaccine.

Concerning insecurity, I think that are lots of programmes now setup by the state and also by the Federal Government. We discussed them and money is already channeled to Central Bank for the empowerment of youths, so there is no reason for somebody to say no because I don't have something doing I will go back to banditry or engage in kidnapping.

In my state, I signed a law this December that the penalty for kidnapping is death because there will be no basis for you to go and start kidnapping people and if you have genuine grievances, we are always set to address it. So, let us use the opportunity that is provided by the federal government, let us use the opportunity provided by governors and find ways of engaging the youths rather than going back to ENDSARS.



NEWS FROM THE STATES

Students' Kidnap: NGF shows solidarity; visits Bagudu in Kebbi

Governor of Ekiti State and Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) Chairman, Dr. Kayode Fayemi, led the NGF delegation on a solidarity visit to the Governor of Kebbi State, H.E Atiku Bagudu, over the kidnapping at the Federal Government College, Yauri, Kebbi State.

While commending the efforts of the security operatives in rescuing some of the abducted students

and teachers, Governor Fayemi urged the public to remain calm as the joint task force intensifies efforts to rescue the remaining abductees still in captivity.

Governor Fayemi also reaffirmed the commitment of the Forum to engage critical stakeholders at all levels to find a lasting solution to the security challenges confronting the country.



Governor Kayode Fayemi gives words of encouragement during the NGF delegates visit to Kebbi State

Uzodinma declares last Saturday in June as Imo Youth Day

Imo State Governor, Hope Uzodinma has declared the last Saturday in June as Imo Youth Day to celebrate the teeming youth population in the state.

This is just as the Imo State Government under the Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Skills Acquisition, had trained 15,000 young Imolites under various skills, and promised to empower them with start-up capital.

The promise was fulfilled recently, when the Governor Hope Uzodinma flagged off the payment of start-up grants to the



Gov Uzodinma

15,000 youths to the tune of N250,000 per beneficiary under the Imo State Youth Employment program.

According to the

Governor, the empowerment program is part of a holistic agenda to empower Imo Youths in line with the State's shared prosperi-

ty agenda and the Imo State Government's commitment towards economic stability.

Meanwhile, the grant is expected to serve as

start-up capital for the beneficiaries as they begin to apply the acquired skills and knowledge in their various choice of ventures.

Uzodinma also encouraged the beneficiaries to be committed and productive in their various ventures, whilst charging them to remain ambassadors of peace and future leaders of the state.

Declaring that the last Saturday of every June will be Imo Youth Day, the governor added that it will always be celebrated with various events marking it.



NGWF, entertainment industry unite against GBV, drug abuse

The Nigerian Governors Wives Forum (NGWF), in partnership with Ford Foundation and Lufodo Productions Limited recently hosted a webinar on the role of the entertainment industry in addressing drug abuse and gender-based violence.

The webinar was hosted via zoom on Tuesday the 29th, June 2021.

The discussion, which was moderated by veteran actress, Joke Silva, had speakers like Kate Henshaw, Ali Nuhu, Toyin Abraham, Ifeoma Fafunwa, Timi Dakolo and Dija.

Some of the governors' wives present included the Chairperson of the Nigerian Governors Wives Forum and Wife of Ekiti State, Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi, Her Excellency, Dr. Zainab Shinkafi-Bagudu of Kebbi State and Dr. Olufolake Abdulrazaq of Kwara State.

The discussion was around how the entertainment industry could do its part to spreading a message of the dangers of drug abuse and eradicating gender-based violence in society.

Ali Nuhu, a Nigerian Actor and Director, said that most homes in Northern Nigeria are run by the men and the women often do not work. He lamented that the men often try to instil fear in the women.

Nuhu made emphasis on how there is need to be more research work to get the factors responsible for gender-based violence.

He said that "it is important to know the factors that lead to gender-based violence and what medium to approach it."

Nuhu added that when it comes to drug abuse, parents need to be more proactive in their children's lives. He said that parents need to be friends with their children and respect their opinion.

As parent's befriend their children, they would be more aware of what is going on in their chil-



Mrs Bisi Fayemi



Dr. Zainab Shinkafi-Bagudu

dren's lives.

Singer and songwriter, Timi Dakolo also said that each person has a role to play in stopping gender-based violence.

He mentioned the use of social media in

putting out messages that are against men abusing their wives. He said for example, someone could share that "so you've beaten her finish, you don get more power?"

Dakolo also referred to a quote that says if everyone keeps their front yard clean, then the neighbourhood would be clean.

It was his way of reminding Nigerians to know that it is our responsibility to take charge in making sure that we are living in a safe society that is free from gender-based violence.

Her Excellency, Dr. Zainab Shinkafi-Bagudu of Kebbi State said that gender-based violence must be tackled from all aspects.

She stated that only 20% of Nigerians are on social media. It is therefore essential that when advocacy is being done, we be willing to take it to the grassroots. The grassroots are the villages and communities where they did need the education and the awareness the most.

The Chairperson of the Nigerian Governors Wives Forum, Mrs. Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi said that as Governor's wives, we would like to believe that we are advocates, influencers, and mobilizers.

"Since our first year of starting, we have been focused on advocating for laws and policies to protect women and girls in society. We provide treatment and care for the survivors of gender-based violence."

She added that they work on this in their respective states. She reiterated the message that the Governors wives are willing to work with the entertainment industry collectively and individually.

Dr. Olufolake Abdulrazaq of Kwara State agreed that the presence of celebrities when enhancing messages of gender-based violence is important because it's likely to garner more attention.

She thanked the Nigeria Governors' Forum for their partnership and for their declaration of a state of emergency on gender-based violence in the nation.

NIGERIAN GOVERNORS' WIVES FORUM

FORD FOUNDATION

LUFODO PRODUCTIONS LIMITED

KATE HENSHAW | ALI NUHU | TOYIN ABRAHAM

IFEOMA FAFUNWA | TIMI DAKOLO | DIJA

MODERATOR JOKE SILVA

THE ROLE OF THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY IN ADDRESSING DRUG ABUSE AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

TUES. 29TH JUNE 2021 11:00 AM

LIVE WEBINAR REGISTER HERE: <http://bit.ly/NGW-webinar>



The NGF Chairman J. K. Fayemi stressing a point to Ambassador Dennis Mseleku of South Africa



NGF DG assists NGF Chairman with gifts for the Chinese Ambassador to Nigeria Cui Chun



Ambassador Simard getting a collection of magazines form the NGF Chairman



South African Ambassador to Nigeria, Dennis Mseleku receives a collection of NGF magazines from NGF Chairman, John Kayode Fayemi



NGF Chairman, Kayode Fayemi with the Chinese Ambassador, Cui Jiangchun



NGF delegation with the Chinese envoy



DG NGF, A. B. Okauru, NGF chairmam, John Kayode Fayemi with the South African envoy



Canadian Ambassador, Nicolas Simard with NGF Chairman, John Kayode Fayemi



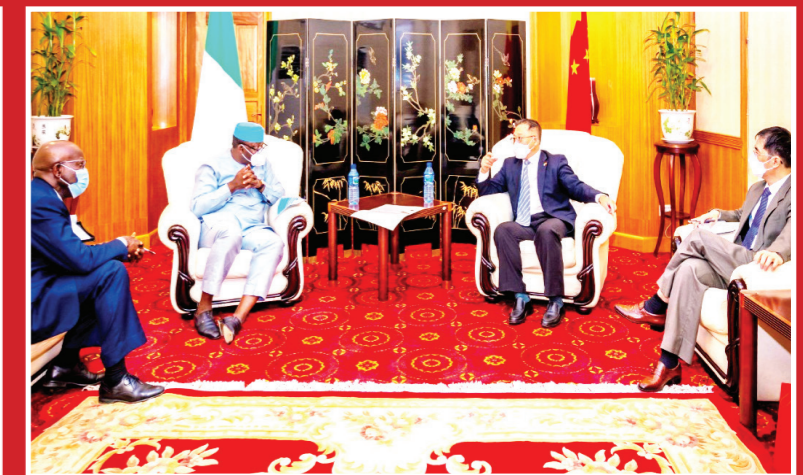
Panoramic view of the meeting at the residence of the Canadian Ambassador to Nigeria



Ambassador Nicolas Simard of Canada and NGF Chairman John Kayode Fayemi



NGF Chairman and Ekiti Gov, Dr. John Kayode Fayemi chopping knuckle



Cross-section of guests at the meeting



Protect Igbos!

South East Leaders Beg Other Nigerians



Leaders of the South East geo-political zone comprising the governors of the five states, members of the National Assembly, Ministers, Speakers of the State Houses of Assembly, the Clergy and Traditional Rulers, on Saturday, rose from a closed-door meeting at the Government House, Enugu, urging leaders of other geo-political zones in the country to protect Igbos living in their regions.

The South East leaders who made the request in view of what they described as “threats by some groups against our people”, promised to protect everyone, including Igbos and people from other regions, residing in the zone.

In a communiqué read by the Governor of Ebonyi State and Chairman of South East Governors’ Forum, Engr. David Umahi, the leaders of the zone reiterated their “commitment to one united Nigeria under a platform of justice, equality of rights, fairness, love and respect for one another”.

They explained that the meeting was held “for articulation of our positions and further meet with the Presidential team”, sequel to the earlier meeting with the Presidential delegation, led by the Minister of Defence, Retired Maj. Gen. Bashir Magashi, on June 11, 2021.

The communiqué disclosed that the meeting consequently “set up committees under Ohaneze Ndigbo to articulate and address our positions on all burning issues to further meet among ourselves and thereafter meet with the Presidential team”.

It added that South East leaders condemned the killing of security agents, burning of strategic infrastructure and killing of civilians in South East and in other regions, and requested the security agencies to discharge their duties within the rules of engagement and the law.

The South East leaders also condemned in totality, the activities of violent secessionist groups in the zone and elsewhere, proclaiming firmly that “we do not support them, they do not speak for

South East”.

On the impression that South East leaders are silent over agitations for secession by some youths of the region, they stated that “is not correct”, stressing that “South East Governors, Ohaneze President, National Assembly members, notable leader had come out publicly many times in the past to speak against such agitations”.

The communiqué revealed that South East leaders, in order not to mismanage the unfortunate situation, “have set up a committee to engage such youths to stop and allow elders speak to address such fears”.

On the safety of the Igbo indigenes in other parts of the country and the newly established regional security outfit, etc, the communiqué added that the “meeting directed our Governors and Ohaneze Ndigbo to liaise with indigenes from the northern part of Nigeria and indigenes of other regions to assure that the nation, Nigeria, and their people of their safety in South East.

“The meeting endorsed our South East joint security outfit - Ebubeagu and asked them to work with security agencies and to respect the rights and privileges of all those living in the South East and our visitors.

“We request our National Assembly from the South East to support State Police creation in the on-going constitutional amendment.”

The Committees set up, according to the communiqué, are “Agitation; engagement with other regions; those of our people in the North, South East, South-South and South West; IPOB, MASSOB, Youths and Market people, Okada and Keke; Diaspora; Advocacy; and Diplomatic engagement with Foreign

Missions”.

Those present at the meeting include the host #Governor of Enugu State, Rt. Hon. Ifeanyi #Ugwuanyi, Abia State Governor, Dr. Okezie Ikpeazu, Deputy Governors of Anambra and Imo states, Dr. Nkem Okeke and Prof. Placid Njoku respectively, the Senate Minority Leader, Senator Enyinnaya Abaribe, Minister of Labour and Employment, Senator Dr. Chris Ngige, the Minister of State for Mines and Steel Development, Hon. Uchechukwu Ogah, President General of Ohaneze Ndigbo, Amb. George Obiozor, former President of the Senate, Senator Anyim Pius Anyim, former Governor of old Enugu State, Dr. Okwesilieze Nwodo, former Governor of Ebonyi State, Senator Sam Egwu, former Governor of Imo State, Chief Ikedi Ohakim and former Military Administrator of old Anambra State, Rear Admiral Allison Madueke.

Also in attendance were the Speaker of Enugu State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Edward Ubosi; his Ebonyi State counterpart, Rt. Hon. Francis Nwifuru, Senator Ike Ekweremadu, the Deputy Minority Leader, House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Toby Okechukwu; Chief Emmanuel Iwuanyawu; Archbishop of the Catholic Archdiocese of Onitsha and Metropolitan of Onitsha Ecclesiastical Province, Most Rev. Valerian Maduka Okeke, Archbishop of Enugu Ecclesiastical Province, Most. Rev. Dr. Emmanuel O. Chukwuma, Catholic Bishop of Enugu Diocese, Most Rev. Callistus Onaga, Chairman, Enugu State Traditional Rulers’ Council, HRH Igwe Amb. Lawrence Agubuzu, immediate past President General of Ohaneze Ndigbo, Chief Nnia Nwodo, Prof. Chinedu Nebo, among others.



AMINA J MOHD

An NGF Ally Clocks 60

It was a delightful evening when Governor Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya of Gombe State, joined other prominent Nigerians at the Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Centre in Abuja, gave the opening remarks that flagged-off series of activities lined up for the celebration of the 60th birthday of an illustrious daughter of Gombe, Hajiya Amina J. Muhammed, the Deputy Director-General of the United Nations.

While giving the opening remarks at the occasion, Governor Inuwa Yahaya described the Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations as an epitome of international diplomacy who defied social and cultural barriers to rise to the peak of her carrier as an excellent administrator in global affairs.

At the Birthday Anniversary Symposium with the theme "Overcoming the Challenges of Africa's Transformation", Governor Inuwa Yahaya explained that considering the humble background Amina Mohammed came from, he has no choice than to admit that the international diplomat is an extraordinary personality who always strives to make the most of any assignment given to her.

To this end, the Governor said that her 60th birthday is not only worth celebrating but an avenue to showcase her determination, dedication, commitment and the undying spirit of pan Africanism.

Regaling in Amina Muhammed's background, Inuwa Yahaya said "Going by her background, ordinarily in pre-independence Nigeria, no one would not have expected that a typical Fulani man that came out from the North East where unfolding events shows vulnerability and lack of development could have at that time travelled to study at the

United Kingdom and not only so, to look at the nature of his people and decide to take a way that could advance their course.

A typical Fulani man that went to study veterinary medicine and not only that but going higher to consummate an arrangement and married a Scottish woman".

This consummation of nuptial relationship, Governor Inuwa Yahaya observed, eventually gave birth to Amina Mohammed who is being celebrated as an international figure and an icon of diplomacy today, adding that since her days with Norman and Doban, the diplomat has been of immense help to the then Bauchi State and the present Gombe State particularly in the areas of health, education and subsequently in environmental protection when she held sway as the Minister of Environment for Federal Republic of Nigeria.

He said her doggedness to turn around the fortunes of her home State, Gombe led to the establishment of the Federal Teaching Hospital in the State which has a mega health sanctuary where many are today seeking medical attention across the Northeast Nigeria.

Governor Yahaya further described Amina Mohammed's contribution to humanity from her days in MDGs and SDGs to Nigeria's Minister of Environment and her current position as the United Nations Deputy Secretary General as incredible and a tonic for global peace and cooperation, describing her re-appointment as the UN Deputy Chief as most deserving.

"We are very proud of her performance before now and going forward into the future, I see Amina as a special gift, a golden gift not only to the people of Gombe State



and Nigeria but infact to the whole world, seeing the role and the job she is doing now of trying to transform the world and make it a better place for all of us to be proud of".

Governor Inuwa Yahaya said Amina's experience remains a thing of pride to the people of Gombe State owing to her superlative performance and contributions to humanity, assuring the diplomat of the support of the Government and people of the State.

The Governor challenged the high and mighty in the society to return to their people and bring the change they so desire to see as



L-R: Emir of Nasarawa, HRH Ibrahim Usman Jibril; Gombe State Governor, Inuwa Yahaya and Hajiya Amina J. Muhammed



L-R: Hajiya Amina J. Muhammed and Mrs Ellen Johnson Sirleaf



L-R: Governor, Inuwa Yahaya and COS, Ibrahim Gambari

exemplified by Amina Mohammed both in her thoughts and deeds.

He said his administration is poised to continue to encourage more women to attain their full potentials, saying "Gombe under my watch has deemed it necessary to appoint two women to head the civil and teachers service commissions which are areas of human resource management and public administration.

Governor Yahaya said further that he appointed three women into key ministries to boost efficiency in governance, participate in decision making and to move the State forward, challenging other states across the country to borrow a leaf from Gombe State. He noted that if women are given the opportunity, the level of retrogression the country has experienced could have been avoided.

Commenting on the topic of the symposium,

WE ARE VERY PROUD OF HER PERFORMANCE BEFORE NOW AND GOING FORWARD INTO THE FUTURE

Governor Yahaya described the theme as very apt and an opportunity for policy makers to think and learn deep so that Nigeria and the rest of Africa can be transformed in line with present day realities.

"Africa is a continent at odds with itself. It is therefore heart-warming today's lecture is to be delivered by another icon and Africa's gift to the world – Ellen Sirleaf Johnson. This towering leader broke the glass ceiling by being the first female President in Africa".

The 60th birthday lecture was a parade of VIPs with notable national and international personalities in attendance.

President Muhammadu Buhari was represented by his Chief of Staff, Amb. Ibrahim Gambari and Former President of Liberia, H.E Mrs

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf delivered the keynote address while Governors Nasir El-Rufai and Kayode Fayemi of Kaduna and Ekiti states respectively presented goodwill messages.

Emir of Gombe, Alhaji Abubakar Shehu Abubakar III served as royal father of the day and was represented at the occasion by former Minister of FCT, Dr. Aliyu Modibbo Umar, who paid glowing tribute to the celebrant, describing her as a patriot who has continued with the legacy of serving people throughout her career as bequeathed by her late father.

The event was also attended by business mogul Aliko Dangote, Envoys, Ministers of Works, Babatunde Fashola; Communications and Digital Economy, Dr. Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami; Women Affairs, Dame Pauline Tallen; Industry; Otunba Adebayo and Transportation, Rotimi Amaechi.



NUTRITION SCORECARD

NGF TAKES STOCK, PLANS NEXT ROUND OF DATA COLLECTION

The Nigeria Governors' Forum Secretariat recently held a meeting with the Chairpersons of State Committees of Food and Nutrition (Permanent Secretaries of Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning) to review the Nutrition Scorecard and plan for the next round of data collection for the scorecard.

The nutrition scorecard is a recently developed data visualization tool (DVT) that will hold the state Governors accountable to key nutrition commitments and motivate them to act and the NGF had designed and implemented several state-level scorecards to engage Governors around key policy issues, including polio eradication, state-supported health insurance schemes, and release of basic health care provision funds.

The objective of the meeting was to review the lessons from the first phase of the scorecard, to review data collection tools for the second phase and to discuss rescue tracking framework and prioritization of multi-sectoral nutrition plans.

The scorecard was developed by NGF and the design team of (DataDENT.)

DataDent is Data for Decisions to Expand Nutrition Transformation. It is a five-year initiative (2017-2022) that aims to transform the availability and use of nutrition data

by addressing gaps in nutrition measurement and advocating for stronger nutrition data systems.

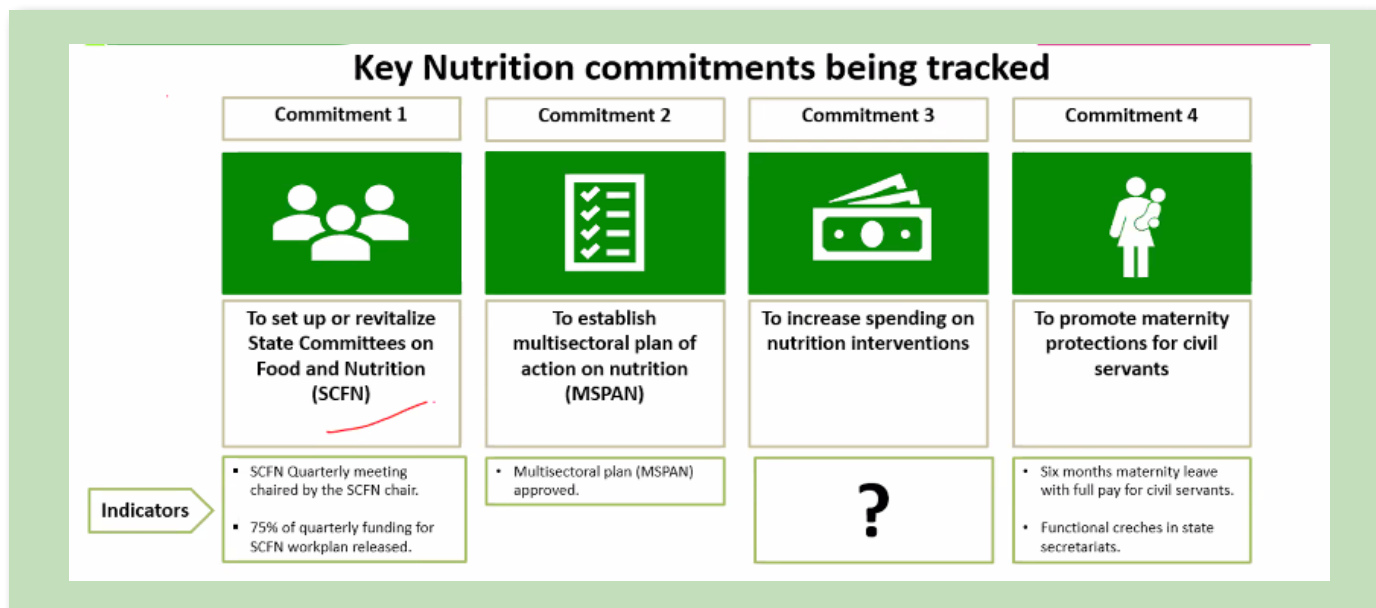
At the meeting, the NGF team placed emphasis on how the scorecard has been received by the Governors. The feedback from the governors was mostly positive. State governors committed to following up with commissioners to ensure state nutrition is improved.

There was also positive feedback from the Office of the Vice President, Federal Ministry of Health, and the nutrition partners.

Though the feedback was positive, there were a few challenges in gathering data for scorecard collection. Some of the challenges were that the data collection was stalled due to delayed response from some states. There was an absence of indicator for budget/resource tracking. There was also inadequate vetting from the SCFN chairperson.

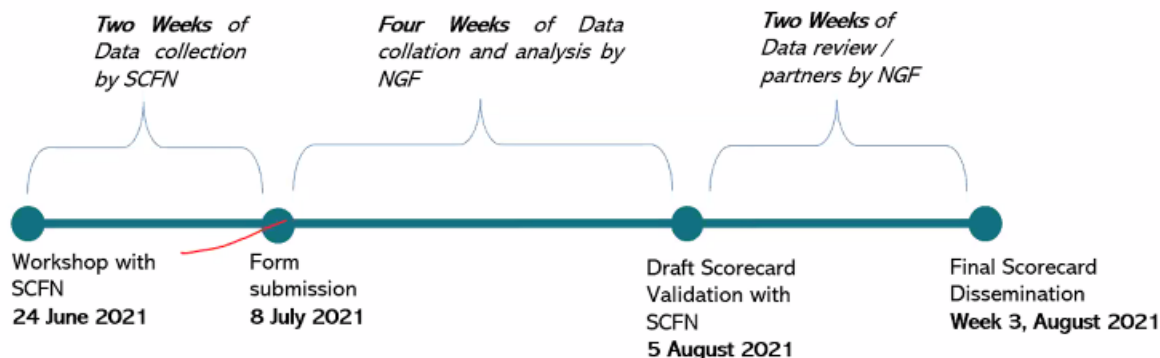
The lessons that were derived was that there would be a signed endorsement from the PS Budget and Economic Planning/ Chairperson from the SCFN. A new framework is being developed and an online data form will be used for data collection to make it easier to fill and collate.

Moving forward, the next round of data collection for nutrition would include state list of prioritized nutrition programs for resource tracking either from the MPSAN or approved by the SCFN.





The timeline for the next round of the Scorecard is as follows:



The indicators would also show whether the state has a system to routinely track allocations, releases, and expenditures to nutrition.

The next steps for the scorecard would also include quarterly scorecards to be reported, starting from the 2nd quarter of 2021.

There would be a development of a proxy indicator for resource tracking. The data collection and collation would be for the 2nd quarter of 2021. In addition, there would be a review of the scorecard every quarter. Plus, a scorecard presentation made to the State Governors. This would be done every six months, starting from October 2021.

For the second round of data collection for the scorecard, there would be slight adjustments made.

Some of this include:

A new set of questions would be introduced to the budget / resource tracking such as Ex: Does your state have a prioritized list of nutrition programs (either from MSPANN or agreed-upon by the SCFN).

Another question would be: Does your state currently track allocations, releases, and/or expenditures to nutrition activities?

In conclusion, the state representatives made a plea that they the NGF should provide more funds allocated for food and budgeting.

The Senior Health Adviser, Dr Ahmad Abdulwahab said that a challenge in allocation for funds is addressing what has been budgeted for

nutrition. He emphasized that is why tracking matters.

The tracking will help states to understand how the monies allocated and appropriately spent can support nutrition programs. This will inevitably lead to achieve the targets set out in the National Policy on Food and Nutrition.

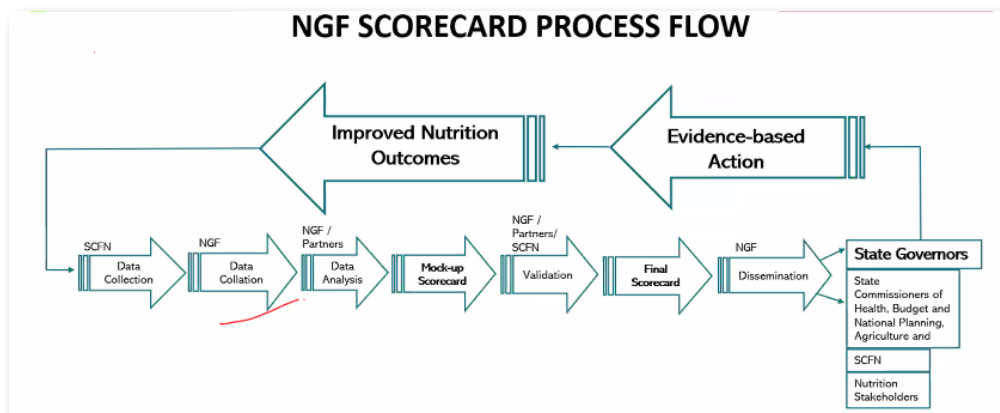
The presentation was led by NGF Senior Health Adviser, Dr Ahmad Abdulwahab and the Nutrition Policy Analyst, Oluwagbenga Sadik.

In attendance also was the Health Specialist, Dr. Chinekwa Oreh and the Head of Media and Communications, Mr Abdulrazaque Bello Barkindo.

Also, present at the meeting were the Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Budget and Planning, Mr Dada Olufunmilayo, Mr Usman A. Bodinga, and Mofoluke Adebisi.

The meeting was held in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Budget and National Planning. They were represented by Mrs Nelson Chito, the Head of Nutrition, Division for the Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget, and National Planning.

There were 19 states present in the meeting from Delta, Oyo, Sokoto, Ogun. Gombe, Ondo, Ebonyi, Abuja, Abia, Kebbi, Osun, Rivers, Yobe, Edo, Lagos, Jigawa, Bauchi and Cross River.





AA Sule: Encapsulating strides of a futuristic governor

By Yakubu Lamai

Albert Einstein, known to be one of the greatest physicist of all time, had said; “imagination is more important than knowledge” because while knowledge can help you identify things and also make you understand things; it is imagination that will make you “see the world and show you how you can change the world.”

Engineer Abdullahi A. Sule, the Governor of Nasarawa State is a man who is uniquely blessed with both knowledge and imagination.

According to Professor Koyinsola Ajayi SAN, chairman of the Nasarawa State Investment and Economic Advisory Council; “this is a man whose sincerity of purpose and fidelity to the national cause is without blemish!”

This is a governor who has risen in just two years, over and above the banality of politics and he remains poised to disrupt the status quo in a way that is not merely incremental, but transformative for the greater good of Nasarawa state and the entire country. That is why the new Governor of Nasarawa state as proclaimed by his state mantra continues to “exceed all expectations!”

“Chronicles of Abdullahi A. Sule” is a short film series produced for online dissemination, by the Directorate of Strategic Communication in the office of Governor Abdullahi A. Sule of Nasarawa State.

The function of the office of

Strategic Communication is to handle “THE BIG-PICTURE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY” around Governor Sule and to make sure that his administration's message is delivered with clarity to the people, such that the voice of Governor Sule is heard “LOUD AND CLEAR” and his vision is “UNDERSTOOD” without ambiguity.

It is in this regard that the short online film series entitled: ‘CHRONICLES OF



ABDULLAHI A. SULE’ explains in resonant cinema “WHO is Engineer Abdullahi A. Sule”, “WHY is he in politics?” and “WHAT is he doing in Nasarawa State?” And also “HOW does he hope to achieve

ABDULLAHI A. SULE

Engineer Abdullahi Sule is the Executive Governor of Nasarawa State. He has over 35 years’ proven experience in the Oil & Gas, Steel Production, and Sugar Industries in the United States of America and Nigeria. Sule worked in various conglomerates which include: Lancer Corporation – San Antonio, OEM component Houston, Morgan Performance, Houston, Drill-Quip Incorporation, Huston and Osyka Corporation, Houston, among others.

Abdullahi Sule returned to Nigeria in year 2000, and joined in setting up an indigenous oil and gas company called Sadiq Petroleum Nigeria Limited; where he served as the pioneer Managing Director from February to November, 2000, as ‘Cinderella stories go’, Sadiq Petroleum acquired majority shareholding in one of Nigeria’s

major petroleum products marketing companies, AP: African Petroleum Plc. (now Forte Oil), where Sule was seconded as the Executive Director, Operations in November, 2000 and thereafter promoted to the position of Managing Director of AP: African Petroleum Plc., in 2001, a position he held till July 2006, when he resigned from the Company.

As with most ‘tales of the extraordinary’, it is Engineer Abdullahi A. Sule, who ‘with sheer grit, business savvy and determination’ turned around the ailing fortunes of AP Plc. from a shared capital eroded with negative balance sheet of over N22 Billion to surplus share capital of over N5 billion in July 2006.

Engr. Sule was appointed the Managing Director/CEO of Dangote Sugar Refinery Plc. in November 2007, and later the Country Director of Fairport Process Equipment UK in 2009. He rejoined Dangote Sugar Refinery Plc. as the MD/CEO in December 2011, a position he held until he was promoted to the position of Deputy Group Managing Director in November 2013.

He was appointed the Ag. Group Managing Director in 2015, and confirmed the Group Managing Director in June 2018. Exactly one year later, Engineer. A. A. Sule became Governor of Nasarawa State on May 29th 2019.

his economic vision of making Nasarawa State one among the top five most competitive states in Nigeria by the year 2023?”

His Excellency, Engineer Abdullahi A. Sule as a person is “an apostle of open government” and one who believes that citizens have the right to access



the documents, processes and proceedings of government, so as to allow for greater transparency, accountability and effective public oversight.

This value set of Engineer Abdullahi Sule to be transparent and God-fearing has ensured that CHRONICLES OF ABDULLAHI A. SULE is not unduly sensational nor does it merely reflect inherent bias, fickle propaganda or praise singing on behalf of government, but the tone and tenor of CHRONICLES is intellectual, reflective, objective, democratic and constructive.

The thematic purpose of CHRONICLES OF ABDULLAHI A. SULE has for two years remained to raise visibility on critical issues, incite public debate, expose evidence, direct focus and set an active social agenda for the growth of Nasarawa State; while at the same time rekindling ethos of love for country and responsive citizenry.

HOW ABDULLAHI A. SULE IS 'MOVING NASARAWA STATE FROM AN AGRARIAN ENCLAVE TO AN INVESTORS' HAVEN'

Engineer Abdullahi A. Sule has that distinct scent of leadership. In just two years, he has elevated governance in Nasarawa State to become more people-centered, futuristic and economically driven on the basis of global best practices and the building of institutions. This is in line with the vision of the World Health Organization which defines a healthy society in 1986 during the Ottawa conference, as: "one which possesses the nine key elements of "peace, shelter, education,



food, income, sustainable resources, social justice, equity and a stable ecosystem!"

Engineer Abdullahi A. Sule came into office as Governor with an economic blueprint which he called NEDS: Nasarawa Economic Development Strategy- the very first of its kind in the 25-year-old history of Nasarawa State. NEDS articulates with clarity, the vision of Abdullahi Sule to galvanize and sustain accelerated growth of the Nasarawa economy and translate this to clear improvement in the lives of the citizens, and the achievement of other key development outcomes.

Engineer Abdullahi A. Sule came into office as Governor of Nasarawa State on May 29th 2019 with a keen

awareness that all over the world, the private sector is the institution that is at the forefront of leading economic transformation, job creation and poverty reduction.

Therefore, in order to fully harness the economic potential of Nasarawa State, Engineer Sule felt the focal attention of his administration will be to integrate the agrarian economy of Nasarawa State with national and global markets by

enhancing the competitiveness of Nasarawa State, so as to ginger economic growth, generate employment and create wealth.

This goal to take Nasarawa State from the backyard or 'backwater' of Nigeria's economy to be among the top five most competitive states in Nigeria, became the mission statement of the A.A. Sule administration from May 29th 2019. And for two years, Engineer Abdullahi Sule has never wavered, halted nor turned away from this mission, purpose and goal of his administration.

- Lamai currently serves as Director General: Strategic Communication & Events Management to Governor Abdullahi Sule of Nasarawa State.



HOW DR AMINA ABUBAKAR BELLO IS

Scaling up Antenatal Clinic Attendance In Rural Niger

The well-being of mothers and children form the core of a strong and healthy society. Studies have shown that women in rural areas adopt traditional and cultural practices in pregnancy as against the modern medical maternal health care which is the antenatal care.

Reasons have been attributed to the difficult terrenes in rural areas hindering women from attending antenatal clinics and also delivering at health facilities.

These traditional practices put mother and child at high risk of mortality and morbidity which Raise foundation seeks to address through the distribution of delivery kits containing all items a woman needs to deliver at a health facility and also providing the Health Centre with tricycle ambulances to convey pregnant women from their homes within the community to the PHC.

The foundation also has community based volunteers in villages who sensitize and mobilize pregnant women to the PHC for antenatal care and delivery.

This MNCH intervention in 15 PHC's in Niger State has resulted in relative increase in both antenatal clinic attendance and deliveries at the health facility.

Presently in our areas of intervention, over 2000 women now attend antenatal clinics as against less than 50 in time past and over 386 deliveries monthly at PHC level.

There has also been a significant increase in the level of awareness on safe delivery practices, reduced maternal mortality and resolved emergency delivery cases.



Dr Amina Abubakar Bello
Wife of the Executive Governor of Niger State



Dr Amina Abubakar Bello is a consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist with a Masters degree in public health and an advocate for the reproductive health rights of women.

She is the founder of RAiSE Foundation, a non-governmental organization whose vision is of a Nigerian where no woman dies from pregnancy related causes. Her work at the foundation has led her to become intimately involved with the plight of women with varying reproductive health issues especially women with obstetric fistula, Breast and cervical cancer.

Her Foundation unveiled a cancer screening centre the first of its kind in Niger state dedicated to early detection and preventive therapy of breast and cervical cancer. She has conducted free breast cancer screenings for over 5, 229 women and 4, 076 women for cervical cancer. Her foundation has helped with treatment of those who require further diagnosis and treatment.

She is also involved in cancer awareness programs with series of events that include public lectures on cancer and awareness treks to raise funds for the treatment of cancer patients. Her foundation is set to create mini screening centres across the three senatorial zones of Niger State.

Her Foundation has conducted free Medical outreaches across Niger State where over 16, 212 people were treated of different ailments while those who required surgeries or further medical attention were referred and their bills paid by the Foundation.

She has done several research works on several aspects of maternal mortality and reproductive health. She has also done some works on unsafe abortion, family planning and primary health care centres. She further strengthens her knowledge by undertaking courses and attending seminars around the globe.

She has organised several Obstetric Fistula camps where over 300 patients in Niger state have had free repairs and have been reintegrated into the society. The flagship intervention for the foundation however is ensuring women deliver safely in the hospital. She does this by advocacy, sensitisation, intervention, training of skilled birth attendants and providing safe delivery kits for pregnant women.

She holds membership of Nigerian Medical Association (NMA), Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria (MDCN), Medical Women Association of Nigeria (MWAN) and Society of Gynaecologists and Obstetricians of Nigeria (SOGON), she is also a Member West African College of Surgeons and a member of African Institute of Public Health Professionals (AIPHP).

She serves on the World Health Organization's Technical Advisory Group for the cervical cancer elimination initiative.

Also, in her quest to address the challenges of women suffering from Obstetric Fistula in Niger State she has established a Women's Health Centre in Kontagora.

She has established RAiSE Foundation skill acquisition centre where women and youths are being trained in tailoring, embellishments, bead work and leather work.



Loud Whispers

IN CONVERSATION

Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi

On June 27th, I took part in the Toyin Falola Live Interview Series. Professor Toyin Falola, Professor of African Studies at University of Texas at Austin is one of my revered lecturers when I was a History student at the Obafemi Awolowo University. I was interviewed by Professor Peyi Soyinka-Airewele (Professor of International and African Politics, Ithaca College, New York) Mr Segun Adeniyi (Chairman, ThisDay Editorial Board) Mrs Bamidele Ademola-Olateju (Columnist) and Ms Idaniloju Sotunsa (JSS2 Student).

Erelu, you boldly use the language “feminism” at a time when many African women in leadership hesitate to do so or reject it altogether because of its often-controversial meanings and debates. In your work, you constantly reference the feminist movement, feminist theory and activism, and the struggle against patriarchal oppression, domination, and gender-based violence. I feel you are too radical for the conservatives and too conservative for the radicals. Do you find yourself at odds with various sectors of the women’s movement?

I learnt early on, the importance of naming in feminist politics. I grew up with the different debates around feminist naming, and the so-called baggage it comes



with. To me, Feminism is a global struggle against all forms of patriarchal oppression. I believe that by naming myself a Feminist I am taking a clear position on my understanding of Patriarchy and how this affects women’s lives throughout their life cycle and focus on the tasks every feminist has a) To understand what Patriarchy means b) Question, reform or transform Patriarchal structures to unleash the personhood of women c) Demand for a world in which women will matter in every sense of the word.

My current work on Gender Based Violence is an example of challenging years of oppression and impunity and what that entails. That might come across as too radical in some places.

I have however learnt that this is not work that can be done in isolation of those who control the levers of power at political or community level. I have had to learn

how to speak that language in order to get my message across. This then comes across as being ‘Too conservative for the radicals.’ There was a debate once on one of our feminist platforms about kneeling down for male political leaders, and I made the point that I have done so many times to secure political support. However, I too by virtue of my political and social status have experienced men old enough to be my father prostrating for me. Gendered power relations in many African communities are complex and nuanced and we need to have an understanding of that. Context and how they aid or restrict platforms has been something I have always had to consider over the years.

You are one of the few women leaders who genuinely deal with intersectionality in engaging women’s struggles. There is the rarefied air of women elites, the cloister of academic feminists and the clan of impatient and irate activists. How have you done it?

Perhaps because I know what it is like to traverse those identities. I am a Feminist who is Middle-aged, Black, African, Nigerian, Yoruba, Wife, Mother, High Chief, Political Spouse, Politician, etc. Intersectionality is the understanding of how our overlapping identities shape the way we experience oppression and discrimination. Every step of the way I have tried to figure out which of my identities grants me access and which ones inhibit my agency. I do not apologise for my privilege as a so-called elite woman, but I am aware that it comes with a responsibility to respond to what life is like for the vast majority of women. As a political mobiliser, I also know that the priorities of women in our communities are shaped around their immediate, practical needs such as peace, shelter, food, healthcare, education for their children and livelihoods. This means I have to find ways of translating resistance to patriarchy into something that is relevant to the lives of women in our communities.

What is the value framework that informs how you work across the many lines that divide women’s lives and experiences, including our ethnic, generational, religious, class divides?

Two concepts have always been important to me, Voice and Space. As feminists we use our voices to raise issue of concern, make ourselves visible, refuse to be silenced and tell our own stories. The spaces we have created either in the academia, community or online are used for learning, solidarity, mobilisation and common ac-



tion. In this context, as far as I am concerned, every woman is entitled to a voice and space across all the lines that usually divide us.

Secondly, a feminist agenda has to envisage workable solutions, at least as far as African Feminists are concerned. We have done a great job of developing a body of thought and knowledge and how we experience multiple layers of oppression as African feminists. This knowledge we have built though will not serve its purpose if it is not applied to workable solutions that will lift the burden off the backs of the vast majority of women, for example through addressing the need for peace and security, feminization of poverty, lack of access to decision-making, freedom from violence and abuse and so on. This is why I am so invested in Policy Advocacy. I can also be impatient and irate, as a matter of fact I believe my age and years of work give me permission to do so. I also know that social change is painfully slow, and we have to leverage on the agency of everyone, sometimes whether we agree with them or not.

Third, context matters but I believe that women's rights are inalienable and universal. Culture, tradition or religion cannot be used as an excuse to perpetuate discrimination against women.

Anger is a legitimate response to the oppression women have been subjected to for millennia. These days, the angry feminist isn't just a trope, in Nigeria many young feminists are very angry. What do you think is the basis for this anger?

Feminists old and young are very angry these days. Older feminists

are angry with institutional systems of oppression which remain impervious to change, or which consistently readapt once feminist gains have been made. Younger feminists are angry because of the expectation that they too should conform with the systems of oppression their mothers and grandmothers had to endure. If our societies are seeking development and progress, it is unbelievable that people will expect power relations to remain the same. I think the Anger is a good thing. It propels action and change. Negative anger of course brings disastrous results so I am not advocating for that, but I am certainly a fan of having a fire in my belly about injustice that wakes me up in the morning and keeps me going till I have accomplished something.



WE NEED TO HAVE A STRONGER VOICE IN THE KEY POLITICAL PARTIES, WE NEED STRONG WOMEN'S WINGS AND WE NEED A CRITICAL MASS OF WOMEN VOTERS WHO CAN ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS AND MAKE THOSE THE BASIS OF THEIR DEMANDS

Young feminists in Nigeria appear to hate anything and everything about men. Is feminism linked with misandry?

Feminism is not the same as misandry, they should not be conflated. A Misandrist is not necessarily a Feminist and a Feminist is not a Misandrist. Feminism to me is a struggle against all forms of patriarchal oppression. Misandry is a dislike of or contempt for men. It serves a purpose for those who consider individual men to be the cause of patriarchal oppression. Individual men exercise dominance and control through their affin-

ity with these institutions and structures I have mentioned, and for this control to be successful, they also coopt women and at the same time silence men who do not agree with them. Feminism as a movement is more interested in challenging the powers and privileges that accrue to men through their control of these structures as opposed to wars with men as individuals. Feminism serves a purpose – to contest patriarchy. Misandry does not serve a purpose because hating individual men does not solve any problems.

In your experience, do you think women do politics differently?

Yes and no. As leaders, women bring skills to the table that are usually undervalued as 'soft skills', such as listening, consensus building, mediation and a desire for inclusion. These are attributes we are socialized into having as mothers, wives and in-laws, and they become useful to us when we are in leadership positions. We are however socialized into these skills; we are not born with them. We do not come into the world with spoons in our hands to cook or brooms in our hands to sweep. Men too do not come into the world with guns in their hands or pens to write laws and public policy. We all learn how to use these things and to appropriate the power or powerlessness that comes with them. When women find themselves in situations where their experiences or voices will not make a difference, if they fear they will not be taken seriously, or in order to fight back against exclusion, they are quite capable of pushing back.

Following your lifelong career and what you have done in Ekiti, do you think equality of opportunity can be achieved without the support of men?

No, it can't.

From Amina Mohammed to Chimamanda Adichie to Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Nigerian women are recognized for their talent globally but not at home. What is responsible and how can we change this narrative?

Even though we have a number of women in political and public life in Nigeria, their numbers are still quite negligible compared to that of men, and their achievements tend to be under-rated. Male leadership is considered to be the norm, the leadership of women is gradually becoming more acceptable than in the past, but there is still a lot of suspicion around women in certain roles. They get asked questions men do not – how did she get there, who



Education Authorities Need

- A zero-tolerance culture for sexual harassment and violence
- Mandatory Anti-Sexual Harassment/SGBV Policies
- A transparent grievance procedure that does not victimise victims
- Appropriate accommodation for students as well as security
- Anti-GBV clubs in every tertiary institution
- School-related GBV directives for primary and secondary schools
- Safe spaces for support and counselling
- Sanctions for schools that engage in conspiracy to cover up sexual assaults
- Scapegoats

How can our society change cultures that not only reinforce patriarchy but criminalise victims?

The narrative can be changed through:

- New ways of socializing girls and boys
- Legal and Policy Frameworks
- Strong networks mobilizing for change
- Knowledge building and learning
- Inter-generational engagements
- Change champions in communities
- Political Will

Among some of the girls of my generation we find out there is a lot of dependency and unnecessary obsession with boys, as a well-known feminist activist, ma what do you have to say about this trend and how young girls can develop better self-esteem and self-confidence?

It is not unusual for girls to have crushes on boys at your age and vice versa. It is absolutely normal. However, a crush does not have to become an obsession with dependency issues, that is dangerous and a serious distraction. Young girls need self-esteem. You need to know you are beautiful, inside and out and no one should tell you otherwise. You don't need to grovel at the feet of any boys or when you grow up, at the feet of any man. Stand in front of the mirror every morning or night and tell yourself: I am worthy. I am valuable. I will be great.

is she sleeping with, can she keep a family, etc. Education, training and promotion opportunities are harder for women in this society than for men, so women have to work twice as hard to prove themselves. Many promising women have their dreams cut short by teachers who undermine their aspirations, parents, boyfriends and husbands. We need to develop a mindset that says no society can progress if they continue to under-utilise critical assets, be they women or young people. When marginalised people find themselves in societies where institutional and cultural barriers are removed, they thrive.



Why do you think political arrangements are skewed against women when majority of those who vote are women?

Right now, we are playing the political game as if we are all peers with men, starting a race from the same point on the field. That is an illusion. The men are always mid-field by the time a political race starts. We need to have a stronger voice in the key political parties, we need strong women's wings and we need a critical mass of women voters who can ask the right questions and make those the basis of their demands. We also need



THEORETICALLY WOMEN SHOULD HAVE AN UPPER HAND IN ELECTORAL POLITICS BECAUSE OF THEIR NUMBERS, BUT THE REALITY IS NOT THE CASE

the backing of laws and policies because we cannot continue to rely on the goodwill and discretion of our political leaders.

Theoretically women should have an upper hand in electoral politics because of their numbers, but the reality is not the case. We have tried for years to take the conventional approach of demanding for inclusion of women in party politics or in appointive positions. We are still less than 5% in the NASS. Our fortunes keep declining with each

electoral cycle as political stakes get higher. I think it is time for us to consider special measures which will increase the number of women such as Affirmative Action, Quotas and creation of special seats for women, youth and those living with disabilities as they have in countries like South Africa, Uganda, Namibia and Kenya. It is through these special measures that we can redress age-old barriers and institutional obstacles.

How can we tackle the raging rape pandemic in Nigeria?

Sexual and Gender Based Violence continues because of a sense of entitlement to the bodies of women and girls. The culture of silence and stigma re-enforces impunity which creates a vicious cycle – rape-shame-silence-rape again-shame again, and so on. We will continue to see increased levels of SGBV if we do not have the laws, political will and institutions to tackle impunity.

Whenever we look around, in most places we find ourselves in, we find out most youths spend their time on social media which takes up their time and can end up affecting their future what advice can you give to such youths?

Social media is great, with all the opportunities it brings for connecting with people and sharing ideas, information and knowledge. It can also be a cesspit. People of all ages, but particularly young people, need to be very careful and use social media wisely. You do not have to live your lives for public consumption. The whole world does not need to know when you wake up, brush your teeth, eat breakfast, and go to the bathroom.

People will follow you and give you the likes you crave, but they do not care about you.



Ease of Doing Business

HOW YAHAYA IS BLAZING THE GOVERNANCE TRAIL

By Ismaila Uba Misilli

After two years in the saddle, Governor Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya has recorded many firsts in governance and has bagged many awards, including Man of the Year from four different newspapers in different sectors.

Under his watch, Gombe State however added yet another first recently when it was adjudged the best in Ease of Doing Business by the Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council (PEBEC).

The Council, headed by the Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Prof Yemi Osinbajo, is a status report podium on the current attractiveness of states' business climates for small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs).

This subnational survey methodology framework was developed by the PEBEC-NEC Technical Working Group comprising representation from six states embodying the six geopolitical zones, the NEC (National Economic Council) Secretariat, Nigerian Governors Forum, the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics, the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission, the Nigerian Export Promotion Council, the Nigerian Summit Group and other private sector representatives.

Since his assumption of office at a time the economy of the state, and indeed that of the country in general, was in the doldrums, Governor Yahaya's exceptional business acumen which accounted for his phenomenal success in his private businesses has been brought to bear in the governance of Gombe.

Although he inherited a humongous debt profile, Inuwa Yahaya was undaunted having overturned several challenging situations like that in the past and always making huge successes out of all.

It was definitely a dire situation for Gombe State, considering its low-standing Internally Generated Revenue IGR status and its unfavourable position as second to the last State on the nation's statutory allocation log.

But no sooner had Governor Yahaya settled down to tackle these problems head on than the novel Coronavirus Pandemic set in, destroying literally global economies, particularly Nigeria's ailing economy to which Gombe State is an integral part. As it were, this pandemic brought to a complete halt the attention of the Gombe State govern-



ment on other sectors of the economy in order to channel all energy and resources towards containing the virus.

Today, the story is different Governor Inuwa Yahaya has triggered a robust 10-year Development Plan otherwise known as Development Agenda for Gombe – DEVAGOM.

This plan is basically aimed at positioning the State as a beacon for socio-economic infrastructural and cultural development, while making Gombe State a destination haven

for investors.

To achieve these lofty initiatives contained in the plan, the administration came up with an ambitious project known as the "Network 11-100" which targets the construction of at least one hundred kilometres of road in each of the eleven Local Government Areas of State because it is the conviction of the Governor that road network plays a pivotal role in opening up a society for economic growth and development.

Also, in its firm belief that health is wealth and a healthy nation is a wealthy nation, the Gombe State government wasted no time in embarking on the construction and revitalization of Primary Health Care Centres, PHCs across the 114 wards of the State. This is in addition to the complete overhaul and upgrade of the State Specialist hospital Gombe.

Today every ward in the State can boast of a functional PHC operating 24 hours with the compliment of solar system to generate energy at the facility and boreholes to supply water.

On the transport sector, the administration of Governor Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya on coming into office approved the procurement of 50 Toyota Hummer buses to be used by the Gombe state transport service, known as Gombe Line. The immediate approval for the procurement of the buses came at the heat of public outcry on condition of the Gombe line buses.

However, the State-owned Transport Company is currently doing credibly well, providing services to commuters travelling to different parts of the country.



In the same vein, the Gombe State government, under the leadership of Governor Inuwa Yahaya, embarked on a sweeping and wide-ranging reform to block financial leakages, ensure prudence in Government spending as well as breaking all forms of administrative bottlenecks in the system.

From the establishment of the Gombe Geographic Information Systems (GO-GIS) in an effort to digitize, manage land matters effectively to the new tax regime in the state.

Perhaps, the above measures and other world class business models introduced by the ebullient and effervescent Governor Inuwa Yahaya made Gombe to outclass other states on the Ease of Doing Business medal table.

It is not surprising at all to see Inuwa Yahaya giving tacit encouragement and support to small and medium scale industries. The Gombe State Government has reorganised the Gombe industrial cluster in BCGA by providing them access to financial services and building infrastructure such as road networks to ease the movement of goods and services in the area.

The political sagacity cum economic dexterity of Governor Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya can be better appreciated in his conceptualisation of the Gombe Industrial Park in Dadin-kowa Yalmatu Deba Local Government Area of the State.

The Industrial Park is standing on a 1000 hectares of land with the compliment of 40-megawatt hydroelectricity in Dadin-kowa Dam.

The industrial Park is expected to revolutionise the agricultural sector which is the main occupation of the State.

Furthermore, Inuwa Yahaya has been able to sustain a relative peace and tranquility uncommon in the North East of Nigeria. This relative peace is perhaps the most fundamental factor that placed the State at a vantage position to be ranked first in the country with the favourable conditions for doing business.

All these efforts by the APC led Government in Gombe State aptly captured the parameters used by the Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council (PEBEC) and won the committee's heart.

This subnational survey methodology framework was developed by the PEBEC-NEC Technical Working Group comprising representation from six states embodying the six geopolitical zones, the NEC (National Economic Council) Secretariat, Nigerian Governors Forum, the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics, the Nigerian In-



vestment Promotion Commission, the Nigerian Export Promotion Council, the Nigerian Summit Group and other private sector representatives.

PEBEC has developed a home-grown indicators used in the survey which are; infrastructure and security, transparency and access to information, regulatory environment and skills and workforce readiness.

Each state was rated on a ten-point scale across the indicators, which provided the basis for calculating the overall performance of the state.

The field survey was conducted by KPMG Professional Services between November 2020 and January, 2021.

The survey captured the reforms baseline enabling each state's Ease of Doing Business Council to craft their own reform agenda and implementation roadmap based on empirical data and feedback from a cross section of 998 SMEs across the 36 states and the FCT.

A breakdown of the result showed that on security, Gombe scored 5.86 in Electricity, 5.86 in Transportation, Primary Healthcare 7.50 and Security, 7.99, with an average score of 6.80.

In Transparency and Access to Information, the state scored 9.35 in Investment

Promotion and 8.69 in State Information Structures, with an average score of 9.02.

In regulatory environment, it scored 5.75 in paying taxes, 8.21 in Starting a Business, 6.44 in Enforcing Contracts and 7.64 in Land, Property Acquisition and Development. Its average was 7.01.

In Skill and Labour, Gombe scored 7.94 in Technical and Professional Skills. The cumulative average of the state was 7.69, shooting it to the top of the list of states with the best enabling environment for doing business in the country.

Like Dr. Ibrahim Hameed noted in a recent article, that the ease of doing business survey was an indication of the suitability and attractiveness of a state to both local and international investors, implying that the more the state improves its business regulatory environment the more it attracts investment and achieve sustainable growth, creates jobs and reduces poverty which results in the rise in standard of living of the state populous which is a key in delivering the dividend of democ-

ocracy and good governance.

Governor Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya had while reacting to the development, attributed the attainment of the feat to a clear demonstration of his administration's commitment to good governance which has culminated in comprehensive reforms in land administration, financial management, revenue administration and the massive infrastructural development that are critical to doing business.

"Noteworthy is the drastic reduction in transaction time for processing land title and ease of payment of taxes as captured in the harmonised Gombe State revenue law. In addition, the clear and purposeful drive in vocational and technical education, as well as support to SMEs, have ensured the upgrading of the skills of the youthful population of Gombe State", he said.

The Governor assured citizens of Gombe of his determination to sustain the tempo, while acknowledging the hard work by the public service in making these achievements happen. He expressed belief that the successes recorded so far are also part of the dividend of his administration's comprehensive reforms in the civil service.

With the tempo of hard work and massive support enjoyed presently by the Inuwa Yahaya administration it is quite clear that sooner than later, more national and International recognitions are on the way of the Governor and the Jewel in the Savannah.

*Misilli is the Director-General, Press Affairs, Government House, Gombe



NGF, JTB reiterate partnership on Stamp Duty implementation

In a bid to consolidate on the gains of financial and administrative autonomy in 21 states of the federation, the Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) has reiterated its partnership with the Joint Tax Board in the capturing and implementation of stamp duty.

Speaking during a meeting at the NGF Secretariat in Abuja, the new JTB Executive Secretary, Obomeghie Nana-Aisha, said she was grateful and excited about the progress made by the NGF in tax administration in the country, but that more collaboration needs to be done between the two agencies, especially in the area of funding for research carried out by the JTB.

"I'm so excited about the collaboration between the Joint Tax Board and the Nigeria Governors' Forum, especially in the progress of having 21 states receive financial and administrative autonomy.

"There is also the need for the Joint Tax Board to consolidate on the collaboration with the Nigeria Governors Forum in pushing for more implementation of the stamp duty as captured by law, as well as support to undertake more research," Nana-Aisha said.

In his response, the Director General of the NGF, Asishana Bayo Okauru, said the issues discussed were germane and that very governor needs to pay more attention to revenue generation. He emphasized on the need to get specific about the issues of tax administration in the country, especially as it concerns the law backing it

The DG said: "Every governor has to pay attention to revenue generation. We need to get specific about the issues."

He further stated that there should be a proper review to learn from the states what is working what is not.

Moving forward, NGF Senior Economist, David Nabena said the areas that the Forum needs to focus on tax team atomisation and data sharing across states and that the NGF aims to collaborate more with the Ministry of Finance, Budgeting and Planning along with the Joint Tax Board.



Dr. Kayode Fayemi, chairman NGF (middle) and Mr. Asishana Okauru, DG, NGF (right) discussing a point of interest with the leader of the Nigerian Security Printing and Minting delegation to the NGF

NGF parleys Nigerian Security Printing and Minting

The Nigeria Governors' Forum recently had a parley with the Nigerian Security Printing and Minting, the agency responsible for issuing currency notes. They are a company with a long history and a proven track record of business success. They have developed a strong vision that acts as a compass.

The meeting was held to discuss possible areas of collaboration on Thursday, June 30th.

The NSPM prides itself as a technology leader, trusted partner, and preferred provider of products, services, and solutions in all markets.

They pride themselves on intercultural excellence and entrepreneurial drive.

Since the beginning of the Buhari Administration, they have imported over 100 worth of Nigerian currency.

Before the end of the year, they aim to be able to print in both their Lagos and Abuja office.

Their visit to the NGF Secretariat is to enable the Governors and all Nigerian citizens to understand the potential of Nigeria's own printing and minting industry.

The Managing Director and Chief Executive, Mr Alhaji Masanawa said that

"we do not need to be outside Nigeria to print currency."

He added that we can print for every state and federal government.

The Managing Director and Chief Executive says that through the printing and minting industry, they would be able to contribute to helping the economy.

One of their goals is to be able to employ more individuals, thereby reducing the high rate of unemployment.

They would also create more transparency and accountability through the way business is done by maximizing revenue, eliminating leakages and tracking.

The Chairman of the Nigeria Governors' Forum Secretariat said that there are so many myths around printing.

He said it is necessary that Nigerians know that we can have things done locally.

The Chairman, Dr John Kayode Fayemi added that this information is what his colleagues would like to know more about.

He intends to put this as an agenda for subsequent NGF Meetings. He implores the representatives of Printing and Minting to come back to the secretariat and make a presentation to the Governors.



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