

PROGRESS REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL, NGF

Introduction

I wish to welcome Your Excellencies to this landmark meeting in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, convened primarily to solidarity to the people of the Niger Delta. May I once again congratulate Mr. President and the Governors of the Niger Delta for the Amnesty Initiative which has served as a major recipe for peace in the region.

I wish to use this opportunity to brief Your Excellencies on the activities of the Secretariat since my briefing.

1. Visit of the Secretariat to States/Development of a framework for peer review mechanism.

Your Excellencies may recall that in the past five (5) months, I have led a team made up of some Secretariat staff, policy analysts and professional journalists to visit States as part of a programme designed at one level to acquaint the Secretariat with the States and at another level to evolve a framework for developing a peer review mechanism.

The Secretariat has so far visited seventeen (17) States: Edo, Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Anambra, Imo, Enugu, Ebonyi, Abia, Benue, Plateau, Niger, Kwara, Nasarawa, and Kogi.

Our initial findings from the States visited is that a number of States are doing a number of things well and several States do have excellent unique practices that could be benchmarked across the country. In major areas like education, healthcare, agriculture, water, power, infrastructural development, governance, job creation and the capacity to grow internally generated revenue, the State governments have showed varied and innovative approaches to connecting and satisfying the yearnings of their citizens.

However, we have noticed a common trend in all the States visited which is that governors face similar challenges in the following three key areas: time management, capacity around the governors and weak/faulty feedback mechanism.

All these would be catalogued in our final report.

We project that this exercise would be concluded within the first quarter of 2010. Please, find below our next steps in respect of the peer review exercise:

- Conclude visits to States
- Prepare full report
- Develop peer review framework
- Obtain approval for peer review mechanism and implement
- Continuous review and improvement of mechanism

Finally, I want to state that the development partners have shown enthusiasm in the whole exercise and have pledged commitment in seeing to the success of the peer review exercise.

2. Update on the Permanent Secretariat

At the last meeting, the attention of members was drawn to a letter that the Secretariat received from the authorities of Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA) on the risk faced by the Forum of losing the site of the permanent Secretariat if we failed to commence construction immediately. However, the total contribution of members to the project is less than what is required to get the project off the ground. The Secretariat is at present engaged with the Project Architects and all other stakeholders on all options to enable the take off of this project.

3. States' Financial Commitments

We must express our gratitude to the Forum for the support we have been getting from members but wish to state that the financial challenges confronting the Secretariat persist.

The matrix below shows total outstanding obligations by members on annual dues, payment for Secretariat project and to the family of late Senator Mamman Ali, former Executive Governor of Yobe State:

S/ N	Item	Total Expectation	Total Actual Payment	Outstanding	
1.	Annual Dues	99-03	N36, 000, 000	N35, 000, 000.00	N1,000,000
		03-07	N36, 000, 000	N34, 000, 000	N2,000,000
		07	N72, 000, 000	N66, 000, 000	N6,000,000
		08	N72, 000, 000	N58, 000, 000	N14,000,000
		09	N72, 000, 000	N36, 000, 000	N36,000,000
2.	Secretariat Project	N3, 060, 000, 000	N1, 161, 291, 667	N1,898,708,333	
3.	Senator Mamman Ali Welfare Fund	N72, 000, 000	N36, 000, 000.	N36,000,000	

We want to bring to the fore the challenges of transport that the Secretariat is experiencing at the moment. The Secretariat is in need of operational vehicles. This will certainly enhance our day to day operations. Meanwhile, I wish to express our profound appreciation to His Excellency, the Chairman of the NGF who donated a bus to the Secretariat last month. Also, His Excellency, the Governor of Delta State had earlier in the year donated a Toyota Camry saloon car and a Toyota Hilux pick-up truck to assist the Secretariat meet some of its transport needs. I wish to use this medium to plead with our principals to help the Secretariat with some vehicles.

4. Malaria Eradication Programme

Your Excellencies would recall that at the last meeting of the Forum, the Honourable Minister of Health made a presentation on the efforts of the Federal Government to eradicate Malaria from the country. The Minister in his update to the Forum proposed the Cuban model as part of the Federal Government's effort to eradicate **malaria**. This has been used successfully in various parts of South America and was estimated to cost about \$78.68m for a first year malaria elimination plan for the whole country. The Minister informed the Forum that Nigeria has signed a Letter of Intent with Labiofam, SA, a Cuban Government Pharmaceutical Company. The meeting was also informed that the Rivers State government had also indicated interest to purchase the biolarvicides and establish a factory that would produce the chemicals and had also signed an Agreement to that effect.

The meeting was also informed that Nigeria was part of an ECOWAS driven programme to adopt this malaria elimination programme through the use of vector control and that there were preliminary arrangements by ECOWAS to source for funding for this project through a grant from the Government of Venezuela.

The Minister enlisted the support of Governors for this Malaria Eradication Initiative not only by supporting Malarial Control Programmes in the States but by making budgetary allocations to progress this process.

The Secretariat was part of a delegation that visited Cuba. Our report is attached.

We wish to bring to YE's attention the presence of 27 out of 100 doctors who studied in Cuba and who owing to their brilliant performance were offered scholarships by the government of Cuba to pursue their post graduate studies. However, the scholarship was meant to cover tuition without more while the Nigerian government was supposed to take care of the rest. The 27 doctors currently in Cuba are there though their own efforts and are going through very challenging and difficult times to put themselves through school. We urge YE's help in alleviating the suffering of these doctors and ensuring that the remaining go back to complete their studies.

5. Update on the Midwives Service Scheme (MSS)

Your Excellencies would recall that the Honourable Minister of Health had at the last meeting also briefed members on the Midwives Service Scheme (MSS). This is a programme designed to improve maternal and child health care in Nigeria through the distribution of midwives at Primary Healthcare Centres around the country. To that end, he informed the Forum of the need for an MOU that would detail the responsibilities of the Federal Government (FG), the States and the Local Governments (LGs). The MOUs were circulated to members for execution by States.

11 States have signed and returned their MoUs while we await response from the other 25 States. Please find enclosed in the meeting file a status report of States that have signed MoUs and those that are yet to sign.

6. Meeting with Development Partners

Your Excellencies, at my last briefing, I stated that a number of development partners have expressed the strong desire to work with the States through the NGF Secretariat

especially in areas of capacity building. We are meanwhile developing an engagement framework for this.

The DFID through its State Partnership for Accountability, Responsiveness and Capability (SPARC) programme is assisting the NGF and the Secretariat in developing strategic and operational plans and would in the next three weeks be working on this effort. During this period, the team from DFID plans to interface with some members as part of the attempt to produce the strategic/operational plans. Whilst the Strategic Plan is for the Forum itself, the Operation plan would be designed for the Secretariat. The Plans would set out how the DFID intends to assist the NGF. The expectations are that the draft strategic and operational plans would be ready by the end of the week of 16th November, 2009.

Similarly, the Secretariat on October 15, 2009 met with the Country Director, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and his senior officials and they expressed a strong commitment to assist the NGF in its developmental efforts. The Country Director recalled on-going efforts to provide assistance to States in building their technical capacities to pass and implement the Fiscal Responsibility (FR) and Public Procurement (PP) laws.

The Secretariat was further represented at a recent UNDP-anchored meeting between development partners, the Nigeria Governors Forum (NGF), the Debt Management Office (DMO) and the Federal Ministry of Finance (FMOF) to deliberate on a proposal to provide coordinated assistance to the States for the discussion, passage and effective implementation of the FR and PP laws in order to achieve development outcomes through more transparent and accountable use of public resources.

A Committee/Technical Group (that includes representation from the NGF Secretariat) was set up to take stock of the status of the FR and PP laws, map development partner support to facilitate coordination of the exercise and work on an MoU that would guide the proposed project and generally progress the relationship. The MoU would be between the NGF, FMOF and the Development Partners. The Committee was mandated to turn in its report to the wider group by 30th November, 2009.

The committee held an initial meeting on Wednesday, 4th November and agreed amongst others that:

- i. The Department for International Development (DFID) will provide support to the NGF in developing an approach and a set of questions (to be included in a questionnaire) which would request: a) The current status of the FR and PP Legislations b) Whether there was a need for sensitisation of the States' Legislatures with regard to the laws c) Whether it would be useful to have support with an assessment of the States' capacities to implement the laws and d) Whether it would be useful to have support with capacity development to assist with implementation of the legislations.
- ii. The MoU would be drafted by the DFID and would outline the responsibilities of the parties in relation to the development of the FR and PP laws. The draft MoU being worked on jointly by the Committee members would be ready for discussions/comments on Tuesday, 10th November, 2009.

YE would recall the NGA last working visit to the United States. Prior to that visit, the Secretariat opened up communication with the National Governors' Association (NGA) which services all the 50 States and five U.S. territories (American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands). As part of the NGA's commitment to working with the NGF, it has agreed to a mentoring programme for the management of the Secretariat in May 17 – 24, 2010 at the NGF headquarters in Washington, DC. The NGA has also agreed to officially invite six of our governors to their annual conference in Boston, Massachusetts in July 9 – 11, 2010.

7. **1st National Conference on Internally Generated Revenue (IGR)**

As part of the efforts by the Secretariat to fulfil its mandate to re-engineer the Forum and make it a one-stop Resource Centre, it has identified key policy areas that need the urgent attention and action of the Forum in order to enhance the entrenchment of an enduring democracy.

The Secretariat cognisant of the challenges confronting the States in the area of creation of revenue sought and secured the permission of the Chairman to organize a round-table conference on IGR.

This Conference has become very necessary in the light of the global economic meltdown. The theme is '**Surviving the Downturn: Refocusing on Internally Generated Revenue**' and will hold from **Monday 16th – Wednesday 18th, 2009** at the **International Conference Centre, Abuja**.

The event parades a roll-call of experts on IGR and governors would serve as both discussants and chairmen of sessions. We plan to cover the programme live on NTA and AIT.

8. **N200 billion federal government commercial agricultural credit scheme (CACCS)**

YE would recall the N200 billion Agricultural grant set aside by the Federal Government to aid commercial agriculture in the country. Part of this amount was deposited in two commercial banks, UBA and First Bank. Following delays in disbursing this grant and intervention by the Forum, the Central bank of Nigeria (CBN) called back the grants deposited in these banks.

The Forum is currently working with the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources (FMAWR) and the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) in order to address the delay in the disbursement of the N200 billion Federal Government Commercial Agricultural Grant.

9. **Meeting with the Executive Secretary, Education Trust Fund (ETF)**

YE, as you probably already know, there are a number of Federal Government grants and facilities that are not being fully accessed by the States. Just like in the case of Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) grants, we found similar difficulties in accessing the ETF funds, hence our visit to the office of ETF.

The leadership of the Secretariat held very useful discussions with the Executive Secretary and gained a lot of insight into the mandate of the ETF as well as criteria for access to the ETF grants. For instance, we learnt that the sole criterion for access to the ETF grants is that States must account for previous grants before new grants could be released and that interest accruing from un-accessed funds was distributed to other States. Currently, the amount of funds yet to be accessed was said to be about N26 billion.

Meanwhile, please, find enclosed in the meeting file a Summary of ETF Allocations & Disbursement to Institutions Nationwide from 1999-2008 as it affects individual States

The above for YE consideration and, where appropriate, approval, please.

COMMUNIQUE

ISSUED AT THE NIGERIA GOVERNORS' FORUM MEETING HELD ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2009. AT THE BAYELSA STATE GOVERNMENT HOUSE, YENAGOA.

In order to show solidarity to our Niger Delta colleagues on amnesty programme, we, the Executive Governors of the 36 States of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, held a meeting on Sunday, November 8, 2009 at the Government House, Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, met and deliberated over a number of issues of national importance and resolved as follows:

1. To partner with the NESG as one of the preeminent private sector led economic think-tank in the country and welcome the opportunity to participate in setting Nigeria's economic agenda together with the NESG and other stakeholders for the purpose of economic growth and development of the country.
2. Sequel to the presentation made by the President of the Ijaw National Congress, and ex-militant leader, Mr. Victor Ben (alias Boyloaf), the governors resolved unanimously to support both amnesty and post-amnesty initiative of government, and call on all the ex-militant leaders to continue to support the rehabilitation and reintegration process which is prone to delays because of checks and balances inherent in a democratic system.
3. Furthermore, the Forum agreed to appeal to the Federal Government of Nigeria to expedite action on all areas needing emergency. While information dissemination machine be improved and in order to properly, inform educate and enlighten the grassroot on what the FGN is doing on the post amnesty initiatives.
4. On the issue of illegal bunkering the Forum is of the view that people arrested engaging in this unwholesome venture must be decisively dealt with in order to act as a deterrent to others that may be interested in engaging in this type of economic sabotage and the names of the illegal bunkerers be made public while drastic measures must be taken against them, it was further resolve that there was a need to have more stringent laws on illegal bunkering.
5. The Forum have resolved to support the principles of deregulation of the downstream oil sector of the Petroleum Industry. However, members agreed on the need for sensitization of the public on the philosophy and benefit behind the process.
6. The Forum unanimously condemned in very strong terms seditious writers and third columnists and called on security agencies to be alert to their responsibilities.