

The

AN NGF MONTHLY PUBLICATION

EXECUTIVE

SUMMARY

NIGERIA
GOVERNORS'
FORUM



Vol.2, No. 35, January, 2022



**Open Government
& Partnership**
**EASE OF DOING
BUSINESS**



Plateau State Wins Open Government Partnership (OGP) Global Award For Transparency And Accountability



Plateau State has won the Open Government Partnership Award for Increasing Transparency and Accountability in Extractives at the 2021 OGP Local Innovation Awards held on 14th December 2021 in Seoul, South Korea and broadcast worldwide on social media platforms.

To emerge victorious, Plateau State participated in the competitive process which generated 60 applications in the Local Innovation Awards category where over 11,000 members of the OGP community voted across the world.

It came first in the Africa and Middle East Region followed by Nandi-Kenya in second place, and Tangier-Morocco in the third place.

Announcing the Awards, the OGP recognized the efforts of the Plateau State Government in entrenching transparency and accountability in governance through various initiatives that support prudent resource management, involvement of the citizens, blocking leakages and building institutions that enhance and deepen transparency in governance.

The Award is also in recognition of the level of stakeholder engagement in budgeting, adherence to laid down procedures in government expenditure, and deployment of structures

such as the Efficiency Unit, Bureau for Public Procurement, Project Monitoring and Result Delivery Unit among others adopted by the Lalong administration in managing the resources of the State.

Governor Simon Lalong while reacting to the Award said he was excited to receive the news which attests to the efforts of his Rescue Administration to give value to the people through prudent management of resources, accountability and transparency.

He said "I am happy that our efforts in redefining governance in Plateau State are receiving local and global attention. Last year, we were adjudged to be the second least corrupt state in Nigeria by the National Bureau for Statistics which made it very easy for us to be accepted into the OGP.

Shortly after joining the OGP, we have been assessed and awarded with the recognition for transparency and accountability. This is a great morale booster which will spur us to do more as we continue to give value to our people and deliver the dividends of democracy".

He commended the OGP State Focal office and the entire bureaucracy of the State for playing their roles in ensuring that transparency and accountability is implemented and recognized at home and abroad leading to the Award.



COMMENTARY

A Newer and Fresher 'Executive Summary'

The life of our in-house publication, **The Executive Summary**, has run full circle after only five years of existence. Like it or not, the Nigeria Governors' Forum Secretariat has become a household name in the scheme of things in Nigeria under the able leadership of the current management garnished by the intellectual nous of its current Chairman and Governor of Ekiti State, Dr. John Kayode Fayemi.

This reference, however, does not subtract from the concomitant contributions of the Forum's Vice Chairman and Governor of Sokoto State, Rt. Hon. Aminu Waziri Tambuwal, and of course several other governors like Edo's Godwin Obaseki, Plateau's Simon Lalong, Kebbi's Atiku Bagudu, Nasarawa's Abdullahi Sule, Jigawa's Muhammadu Badaru, the irrepressible Umahi of Ebonyi and the Forum's legal luminary Governor Akeredolu of Ondo State, who all seem to constitute an available think tank for providing solutions to Nigeria's myriad problems at the subnational level.

Of course, there are other high-value state chief executives like Kaduna State's Malam Nasiru el Rufai whose commitment and dedication to project Nigeria cannot, by any means, be discountenanced. His committee on the subsidy issue comes readily close and the contributions of Governors Okowa of Delta State towards resolving the pandemic brouhaha and all other matters associated with the health sector cannot be underestimated.

As one looks at the contributions of governors to nation building, one simply arrives at the conclusion that Nigeria is a much-endowed country but is left with a big question, why are we so blessed? Why do we have such quality leadership as the indefatigable Zulum (Borno), the introspective Abdulrazaq (Kwara) and Darius (Taraba), forward-sighted Dapo Abiodun (Ogun), the young and energetic Makinde in Oyo, the experienced and versatile Bala Mohammed of Bauchi and the very hardworking and socially compassionate Inuwa Yahaya of Gombe and yet be so criticised by the Nigerian people?

It is important to state that all our current governors are genuinely sensitive to the yearnings and aspirations of their people beyond measure and have variously put one thing or another to etch their names in gold in their states; yet they have remained largely unsung. That is why the new look Executive Summary will turn a new leaf in its life beginning from its cover design.

The layout henceforth will be tighter, brisker, and more reada-

ble with less matter in the narrative. The content will spread across eighteen states in each edition, in no particular order, but the emphasis will still remain on the six core mandate areas, (agriculture, health, education, the economy, security, infrastructure and policy) of the NGF without giving any room for compromise. The idea is to play up the Forum's flagship peer review mechanism to deepen the impact of governance at the subnational level.

The Executive Summary promises to begin from this year, 2022, to discuss the translucent impact of the governors in their respective states, to further beam light on their performances now that the election year is around the corner. From February, **The Executive Summary** will display the giant steps in Rivers State, Lagos State, Kaduna State and Ebonyi State, where physical and abundantly tangible achievements have been remarkably recorded by the men at the helms and with a dignified contribution of the Nigeria Governors' Forum Secretariat. This development-specific coverage will be extended to other states as well.

This editorial rejuvenation is drawn from the fact that the Forum is known by many Nigerians for many different reasons and if it (Forum) does not aggregately control its narrative, others will, knowingly or unknowingly, disseminate a narrative of their own, about its existence.

To a large extent, **The Executive Summary** will elevate the attention that governors give to human capital in their respective states. How are governors responding to job provision and the reduction of unemployment figures? What are governors' reactions to the immediate needs of their people in terms of providing security to the citizenry and enabling the ease of doing business in their domains?

What actions are governors taking to ensure a level playing field for all and make their states attractive to their peoples so that they feel encouraged to turn away from the rural-urban drift that has made the Federal Capital Territory and the state capitals the only attractive destinations for job seekers? These are a few of the roles that the governors' performance score sheets will be measured on and **The Executive Summary** promises to dwell heavily on them to draw attention to the impact of the subnational governments in nation building.

The die is cast.

Follow us on:



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

Social Media Officer

Isioma N. Ononye

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 CHUKA



NEWS FROM THE STATES



Lalong

Insecurity: Governor Lalong, Chair Northern Govs Forum Decries Attacks on Traditional Rulers

Plateau State Governor and Chairman, Northern Governors Forum, Simon Bako Lalong has decried the upsurge of attacks on traditional rulers in Nigeria saying it is an attempt by criminals to intimidate them against exposing crimes within their domains in order to totally subdue the entire population.

Governor Lalong, speaking at the annual Sir Ahmadu Bello Memorial Foundation Lecture, in Kano, said it was very worrisome to see that traditional rulers have become victims of kidnapping, murder and other violent attacks by criminals simply because they stand against their activities or mobilise their subjects to reject them.

Lalong, chairman of the event, said this development portends danger as the criminals seek to dominate the environment and dictate the affairs of society through criminality. This he said must be fought with vigor as criminals must be flushed out in every community.

Lalong said, "We condemn in strong terms this shameful and unacceptable act, and call on the security agencies to ensure that these incidences are dealt with swiftly. As governors, we will activate all machineries to ensure that such persons and their sponsors are brought to book. Failure to do so will not only weaken the traditional institution but also damage its reputation thereby making it incapable of contributing to finding lasting solutions to the lingering security challenges in the Northern Region and the nation at large.

Let's work Towards a United Nigeria - Ortom



Ortom

Benue State Governor, Samuel Ortom has encouraged all Benue people and Nigerians in general not to lose hope in project Nigeria but to continue to work together to build an indivisible Nigeria. The Governor gave the advice in a goodwill message to Benue citizens and Nigerians to celebrate the 2021 Christmas.

The Governor says the yearly commemoration of the birth of Jesus Christ signifies the love God has for mankind and noted this is an opportunity for all Nigerians, irrespective of ethnic, political or religious affiliation to come together and work consciously to dislodge the terrorist forces destabilising the country.

Governor Ortom regretted the pain activities of terror groups have wreaked on the political, economic and social life of Nigerians which have dragged the country to its knees.

In his words, "as we celebrate the birth of Jesus

Christ, let us celebrate as one big Nigerian family with love and care for one another. Let us avoid divisive tendencies where religion, ethnicity and political differences have eaten deep into our lives. This is not the Nigeria we looked forward to."

He went on, "This season presents to us, a unique time to share love genuinely, first to our immediate families and also to the larger Nigerian family where we speak and act for the unity of country irrespective of our political or religious differences. We must not allow this criminality by terrorists and their sponsors to continue and destroy our nation. Lets come together to end it now for the benefit of our children and future generations."

While admonishing Christians to pray for the peace, harmony and tolerance of the country, Governor Ortom also encourages them to pray for President Muhammadu Buhari, State Governors, members of the National Assembly as well as ministers and all those in positions of authority for the peace of the country.

Governor Ortom also admonished Benue people to be security conscious and at alert as they celebrate during this festivities, saying that "given the recent security alert raised by security agencies, Benue people should be conscious of their environment now. Let them report suspicious movements of people to the security agencies so that together, we can fish out the bad eggs amongst us."

The Governor appreciates the state civil servants and the state senior citizens for their understanding and the cordial relationship they have shown towards government.

He prayed that this year's Christmas celebration may reinforce the faith of the people in God and make Nigeria a better place for everyone.

Northern Governor Felicitate With President Buhari At 79, Congratulate Gov. Sani Bello At 54

The Northern Governors Forum has felicitated with President Muhammadu Buhari on his 79th birthday while congratulating Governor San Bello of Niger State who turned 54.

Chairman of the Forum and Governor of Plateau State, Simon Bako Lalong in a statement described the President as a man of integrity and leader with patriotic zeal to develop the nation and secure the future for the younger generation.

Lalong said the President has in the last six years confronted very many challenging situations that sought to threaten the unity and peace of the country such as insecurity, poverty, corruption, poor infrastructure among others, with high successes.

He said the President has remained a father to all by embracing all parts of the nation and

ensuring that projects are distributed to all zones irrespective of political and other considerations, a situation which speaks volumes of his penchant for justice and fairness.

Lalong said the Northern Governors Forum has enjoyed the support of Mr. President in dealing with challenges such as insecurity, poverty, illiteracy and disease which are being substantially contained due to the synergy between the States and the Federal Government.

While wishing the President many more years of good health and wisdom, the Northern Governors urged him to remain steadfast and committed to giving his best in the service of the nation especially at this time when the Government is working hard to deal with several challenges.



NEWS FROM THE STATES



Bagudu Lauds WACOT Rice for transforming Economic Landscape of Kebbi

Governor Abubakar Atiku Bagudu of Kebbi State has commended an International Rice Milling Firm, that is based in Argungu, Kebbi State, WACOT Rice Nigeria Limited, for transforming the economic landscape of the state.

He spoke recently in Birnin Kebbi when he received the Chairman of WACOT Rice, Alhaji Faruk Gumel, the Chairman of the company on a courtesy Call.

According to Bagudu, the current expansion of the firm from its initial installed capacity of 120,000 metric tonnes to 240,000 metric tonnes was an indication of the tremendous confidence it had in the economy of the state and Nigeria.

Bagudu also acknowledged the myriad of social responsibility projects that are being executed by the company, including assisting over three hundred women rice producers.

"These efforts of WACOT are showing how much Nigeria has and more companies are following suit like Dangote and others. Nigeria is a very big market, just as it's not an island as soaring global energy prices, COVID-19 and other extraneous factors are affecting prices, including those of food items," Bagudu added.

N450m Balance Payment for Registration Fees of Kebbi Students Approved

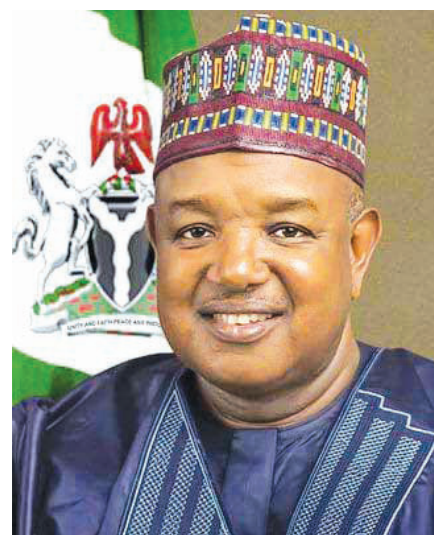
Governor Abubakar Atiku Bagudu has approved Four hundred and fifty million, one hundred and fifty three thousand, six hundred and two Naira (N450,153,602.00) being balance of registration fees for Kebbi State students.

Further "On 18th December, 2021, Governor Atiku Bagudu graciously approved \$1,060,000.00 to cover tuition fees, accommodation, feeding and modest pocket money to students travelling abroad for studies.

"In addition, N355,000,000.00 was approved to cater for logistics including international and local air fares, visa processing fees police screening, crime free certification, drug free certification from Federal Ministry of Education and Foreign Affairs for 262 Kebbi indigenes to study in India, Sudan and Ukraine in the fields of medicine, engineering and critical paramedical areas.

"Professor Mukhtar Umar on behalf of students, parents and the entire good people of Kebbi State expressed immense appreciation to Governor Atiku Bagudu for committing such enormous resources to support and sponsor indigenes of the State for studies, without which many could have dropped out of school".

Such commendable and historic land-



Bagudu

mark by the Governor has charged the landscape and manpower climate for the better since 2015.

"It was worth mentioning that the number of graduates of Kebbi State origin from various institutions of learning both within and outside Nigeria has multiplied manifold since Senator Atiku Bagudu took over the mantle of leadership of the State."

Retirees' Gratuity: Governor Bagudu Approves N6bn for Payment

Governor Abubakar Atiku Bagudu of Kebbi State has approved the release of N6 billion for the payment of State, Local Government and LGEA workers gratuity. Retired workers who disengaged from service in 2017 and 2018 and had received part payment of their gratuity will be paid their remaining balance. While other retirees from 2019, 2020 and 2021 will also receive payment of their gratuity.

This was part of the outcome of an earlier meeting between the Chairman, Audit Committee for State and Local Government Pensioners, Acting Head of the Civil Service and the state

Chairman, NLC.

It was unanimously agreed that labour unions and the Nigeria Union of Pensioners should be involved in all stages in the preparation and payment of gratuity to the deserving retirees."

The Acting Head of Service, Safiyanu Bena stated the Governor's gesture aligned with his administration's policy and aspiration of improving the general welfare of retired workers in the state.

Bena further added that arrangements for the payment would commence from Monday, January 17, 2022.



The Economy Is Central To Human Development

Dr. Fayemi

Governor Kayode Fayemi of Ekiti State and Chairman, Nigerian Governors Forum (NGF) argues in this encounter with Arise Television that beyond regime security of the President and Governors, food security, shelter security, human rights of the people, citizens' security should be upscaled. He also shares compelling perspectives on the economy, multi-level policing, Covid-19 pandemic, fuel subsidy and more. Excerpts...

ECONOMY

We are monitoring all the developments in our global economy. The economy is central to everything we are about because that is what will give the people a feel-good sense.

There is hope and optimism in the air that 2022 is going to be a lot better than what we experienced last year and clearly issues around the headwinds in the world would impact Nigeria. It would impact for example, oil prices and that is our major commodity that also services our own economy.

There are also other local issues that we must grapple with: fuel subsidy or no subsidy in the wake of budget 2022 and the promise that by mid-2022, we may not have provision for oil subsidy in the current budget that we have.

I would say that our administration can do a lot better. I would also say that circumstances have also intervened in our capacity to deliver a lot more. I will give you an example. There are things that I have had some support for here which COVID-19 had not allowed to happen. I've had a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations to join us, set up 50,000 housing estates here. It could not happen because the team was not allowed to visit Nigeria according to UN strictures. I'm sure there are many projects like that all over the country.

Take South Africa - what has happened in the South African economy is also the same here. Take the United Kingdom. Economies all over the world have been battered by this pandemic. Plans have been thrown overboard.

When you look at the GDP formulation, you'd see that how much oil contributes to the GDP now. It contributes the largest revenue but not the largest

gross domestic product. Agriculture still contributes that. Revenue is what we need to diversify and generate more from non-oil products.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

On the pandemic, I believe that the pandemic has become an epidemic. It is just flu now and when you see the figures that are being bandied around... In Europe, over 300,000 infections a day; there is just no way. Unless we want to completely paralyse the world economy, we would continue to focus on the pandemic.

Luckily, the Omicron Variant has proven to us that it is not necessarily something we should worry too much about especially if you are vaccinated. It is no longer the death warrant it used to be with Delta. We might as well get on with our lives. Take the vaccinations the way we take the flu jab and begin to run our lives as normal and taking the necessary precautions of course.

If we continue to allow the pandemic to disrupt travel, to disrupt employment, then the economy won't pick up. The prediction is that our GDP growth rate is around 3% average in Nigeria, and I hope that we do better than that. We should ensure that the economy generates the necessary impetus for it to grow but grow with concrete development and not just grow in isolation.

SECURITY IN NIGERIA

We haven't done as well as we really should have. Nigerians really wanted us to make a significant difference. If you look at the case of the North-East insurgency, which was the big issue during our election, we have made some significant progress from about 27 local governments that were not under the

government control. It has significantly improved. IDP camps are being shut down. People are returning to their homes in Borno State as we speak.

Adamawa is relatively safe in the three local government areas that Boko Haram use to operate and Yobe is also relatively safe. It's much better than what they used to experience. However, the relative success in the North-East has led to the exit of the rampaging elements into other parts of the country.

That's an area where I don't think we have done enough because of the proliferation of banditry is not unconnected with the exit of the insurgents from the north-east and then they are spread to other parts of the country. We need to cut the oxygen of funding that is coming from external sources.

We need to provide our military officers with additional equipment and additional incentives. We need to recruit more men to address this. Virtually every single one of the 36 state has a military presence and internal security because the police can't handle the issue because they are



not many.

If people are seeing more insecurity in their region, they will say that the government is not doing enough but you also need to know that some of the things that we say are happening now are due to cumulative effects. The way insecurity operates is that what is not possible under authoritarian military regime becomes easily possible under a democratic space.

People are taking advantage of that space to express secessionist agitations which you would not do under a repressive government. We need to have multi-level policing that does not just depend on federal level policing as a cure all solution to all the security challenges that we have. This is the position that Governors' Forum has embraced. We have

Economic Council and to the National Police Council.

We hope that at some point when the National Assembly completes the constitutional re-engineering process that they are on about, this is something that would feature strongly in it because taking that in and off itself would help us deal with this.

Whether people believe it or not, we (the states) are the funders of the police. We support them in their equipment. We buy the vehicles for the police. We run the police. The only thing we don't do that is we do not pay their salaries, and, in most cases, we also pay allowances to those in our states. This is in every state and not Ekiti alone. I discuss this with my colleagues.

It is the extent to which you have built a positive rapport with your commissioner that will determine whether he carries every request to Abuja.

We have argued at the Governors' Forum that there is a National Police Council in the constitution of Nigeria where all Governors, Vice President and Police IG are members and Mr. President is the Chairman.

Why don't we use the National Police Council the way the National Judicial Council is used for promotion, for disciplinary matters and for all judiciary officers be there federal or state?

Security is expensive. We have in Nigeria today for a population of 210 million people, we have 350,000 police-

men. For a population of 80 million or a hundred million, Egypt has one million policemen. The boots on ground must be addressed.

What people want us to do is to focus. If it means that security would take 50% of our national budget to stem the tide of insecurity, countries have done this in the past.

It's not just a money issue with security. Money is a critical point to address but I'm also talking about a structural problem. You cannot have an over-centralized security system that is not responsive to the citizens at the local level. That is not money. That is structure of the security architecture itself.

I'm also saying that don't just concentrate on just the boots on the ground. Look at security holistically. Food security, shelter security, human rights of the people, citizens security, not just regime security because that is what we used to have when we looked at the security of the President, the Governors and not the citizens.

NATIONAL DEBT

You can never quantify the impact of infrastructure. As a matter of fact, it is a trigger for economic development in most countries. However, we are always going to find ourselves in this invidious debate if government sits down and pays salaries. The same citizenry would come out and say that the government is doing nothing. All they are doing is paying to a few people.

We are in a choiceless situation, but leadership is not about making excuses. The President has made a choice and his choice is that I would rather leave Nigeria with better infrastructure after my eight years in office.

I believe that we need to address the poverty challenge that we have in the country. The way to address it is not by doling out money to people. It is by creating an enabling environment.

Nigerians are doing well in certain areas where they don't have government strictures. Look at what we are doing in the creative industry. Look at what the young ones are doing in entertainment. Look at the number of unicorns that have emerged in IT without government support.

Why don't we do something in providing the necessary enabling environment for young Nigerians? They are the future. In fact, they are the present.



taken it to the National



NEWS FROM THE STATES

Incessant Attacks on Shiroro Communities Insane, Barbaric, Unacceptable - Bello

Niger State Governor Abubakar Sani Bello has said that the recent attacks in some communities of Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State that left scores of villagers dead by a terrorist group as insane and unacceptable.

He said the act was barbaric and inhumane, stressing that efforts would be intensified by government and security agencies to ensure that desperate terrorists, who are on the run, are captured and brought to justice.

While commiserating with the victims of the affected communities, especially in Nakudna and Wurukuchi, the Governor said that he shared in their pains and grief, promising that more decisive actions would be taken to guarantee the lives of the inhabitants of the communities.

However, the Governor said that the worrisome part of the security challenges is the inability of the farmers to harvest their farm produce which may likely trigger food scarcity in the state.

...Bello Expresses Hope Amidst Pervasive Security, Economic Challenges

Niger State Governor and Chairman North Central States Governors' Forum (NCSGF) Abubakar Sani Bello has called on the citizens to continue to have hope and trust in the ability of his administration to work for the progress, growth and development of the state.

The Governor, who made the call in his 2022 New Year message said the state government will work towards successful actualization of its programmes and policies as captured in the 2022 budget.

He urged the citizens to show optimism and be encouraged by

Gov Bello Signs 2022 Appropriation Bill into Law



Niger state Governor Abubakar Sani Bello has signed over N211 billion 2022 Appropriation Bill passed by the state Assembly into law. Governor Bello signed the bill at the Council Chamber of the Government House, Minna, shortly before commencement of the weekly executive council meeting.

The Governor who appreciated the efforts of the lawmakers in passing the bill in record time, maintained that his administration has been enjoying cordial relationship with the Legislative arm of government.

The Governor commended the doggedness of the lawmakers in ensuring that the right thing is done always, adding that their insistence in most cases have been of help to his administration.

"I have seen reasons in their stubbornness sometimes and I must confess I really appreciate it because most times they are right and that is how it should be. So when we have our differences we come back and we reconcile", he said

He said his administration is poised to fund the budget completely as it is the last full budget to be implemented by the present administration, stressing that the Board of Internal Revenue is also determined to improve the state Internally Generated Revenue in addition to the other sources of revenue to the state.

"On our part, we will try and see that we implement the budget but of course it is subject to availability of funds. As we are all aware the budget is just a statement, we hope that we are able to fund it 100%", he said.

In his remarks, the Speaker Niger State House of Assembly, Abdullahi Bawa, said the responses from various Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) were encouraging during the budget screening process.

The Speaker however said the budget was adjusted to Carter for some MDAs that were hitherto not captured properly.

He assured that the State Assembly will through its oversight functions, ensure full implementation of the budget.

Governor Abubakar Sani Bello had on the 4th of November, 2021 presented a budget size of over N198 billion with the Capital expenditure of N124 billion while recurrent expenditure was at N74 billion.



Sani

the fact that the APC-led administration in the state will not relent in sustaining the ongoing Infrastructural revolution aimed at improving the general well-being of the people.



COMMUNIQUE



ISSUED AT THE END OF THE 1 ST MEETING OF THE NIGERIA GOVERNORS' FORUM HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 19TH JANUARY 2022.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,
We, the members of the Nigeria Governors' Forum at our first meeting of the year 2022, deliberated on several matters of national importance and concluded as follows: 1. On the electoral act, Governors commended the Senate of the Federal Republic for accelerating the removal of the contentious clauses in the draft electoral bill and hope that the second chamber, the House of Representatives would also follow suit so that the revised electoral bill can return to Mr. President for assent so that this can then enable the various institutions particularly INEC to proceed her pace with its responsibilities towards the various elections in 2022 and 2023. 2. The Forum also discussed the issue around petroleum subsidy and concluded to engage the

leadership of the Nigerian Labour Congress and the Trade Union Congress on how best to address this issue without causing any disaffection or with the view to savaging the Nigerian economy for the Nigerian people at the end of the day.

So, we shall be engaging the Nigerian Labour Congress as sub national leaders with the view to ensuring that the outcome of our engagement will also be fed into the national discuss. 3. We also discussed the health update particularly in relation to COVID-19 infections and expressed happiness that the current Omicron variant has been declining progressively. However, we also noted that there is the need for States led by us to ramp up the COVID-19 vaccination exercise. On Nutrition which remains a priority of the Government, Governors concluded that there is need to increase our support in terms of budgetary provisions for nutrition. 4. We received a presentation from

the Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council, (PABEC), on the ease of doing business and discussed the next phase of doing business survey with the special adviser to Mr. President on ease of doing business, Dr. Oduwole, and the country director of the World Bank, Dr. Shubham Chaudhuri. The presentation elaborated on the need to step up the reforms towards improving the investment and business climate at the sub national level. 5. Governors also reviewed the recently launched national development plan 2021- 2025 with the view to ensuring that the national development plan is aligned to individual state development plans that have been produced or in the process of being produced to ensure synergy between the development efforts by the Federal as well as State Governments.

*Governor Kayode Fayemi Chairman,
Nigeria Governors' Forum 19 th January
2022*



Fuel Subsidy Fog: Situating Governors, Labour Challenge

Despite impressive inroads by renewables, crude oil remains a foremost commodity that powers modern civilisation. Data compiled by US-based Futures Industry Association (FIA) rates it as the most traded commodity in the world. More specifically, FIA ranks West Texas Intermediate (WTI - also known as Texas Light Sweet), Brent Crude and Natural Gas as the most actively merchandized commodities on the planet.

Significantly, this sector also gives Nigeria which is endowed with premium oil grades the critical infusions of funding she needs to drive her socio-economic transformation. Besides its role as the bedrock of the Nigerian economy, the petroleum industry has been one of the key defining features of the country's post-independence history.

This fact centralizes Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) in the nation's political economy, given its assigned role in the industry. Not surprisingly, the corporation's experience

has been marked by struggles over what the corporation controls and over who controls it.

Perhaps, this unique centrality of the corporation in the nation's governance trajectory has spawned its fair share of challenges and reproach. A 2010 joint report by Transparency International and Revenue Watch Institute found that NNPC had the poorest transparency record out of 44 national and international energy companies examined. To-date, perhaps with some positive changes being incepted by its new management, the corporation's poor story still subsists.

In Nigeria, the key fuel derivatives of crude oil - petrol, diesel, kerosene, and aviation fuel - particularly petrol - have spawned considerable heat pivoting around subsidy funding the federal government has always claimed it was dispensing. For several decades, a puzzling opacity has always surrounded the fuel subsidy story and many see it as a piranha pond of corruption.

Many believe that properly and vigor-

ously implemented, the new Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) can represent the gold standard of natural resource management, with clear and separate roles for the subsectors of the industry; the existence of a commercially-oriented and profit-driven national petroleum company; the codification of transparency, good governance, and accountability in the administration of the petroleum resources of Nigeria and more.

The foregoing unflattering scenario underpins the latest flare up in the quirky policy template when the federal government disclosed with a straight face, late January, that petrol consumption is a debatable 65.7 million litres daily and revealed the national oil corporation had submitted a whopping N3trillion budget to finance fuel subsidy in 2022. It also announced the suspension of its plan to remove fuel subsidy in June 2022, informing it has shifted the implementation of the Petroleum Industry Act by 18 months.

But the Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) and the Nigeria Labour Con-



and particularly doubted the NNPC's fuel consumption figures. The NGF and the NLC harmonised position represented part of the sub-nationals' resolutions from their meeting in Abuja.

According to a statement by NGF spokesman, Abdulrazaque Bello-Barkindo, the meeting which was held at the NGF secretariat in Maitama, Abuja, brokered a partnership between the NGF and the NLC, as both parties agreed that the lacuna in the subsidy removal agenda was hidden in the untruths bandied by administrators of the subsidy, particularly the NNPC, which both groups identified as the arrowhead of the mismanagement of the proceeds accrued therein.

In his opening remarks at the meeting also attended by the Trade Union Congress (TUC) president and a host of other leaders of organised labour in the country, the chairman of the NGF and Ekiti State Governor Kayode Fayemi, argued that the nation's economy is at the precipice and it had become necessary for the two groups to carefully verify all of NNPC's estimates to ensure that whatever action is taken on subsidy, it would be the people that get direct benefits and not a few wealthy individuals and their cronies.

A clearly miffed Fayemi stated that only eight states were benefiting directly from fuel subsidy while all the others have to contend with the issues by themselves.

gress (NLC) immediately challenged the NNPC over what they described as the mismanagement of the fuel subsidy regime

Excerpts: "Fayemi told the labour leaders that subsidy removal had remained an ongoing conversation not just among governors but the country at large and emphasised that governors could not but be part of

the solution providers in this onerous task that is confronting the nation.

"There are raging questions of accountability associated with subsidy removal in the country and observed that the NGF and the NLC can jointly work together to proffer solutions that heal the economy and provide succour to the Nigerian people.

"We need a partnership with the NLC to confront the challenges of what the NNPC is about... because there is a lot of fraud in the consumption and distribution figures that the country is getting and we can only move forward if the NLC engages all those who are knowledgeable in the field like PENGASSAN (Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria) to conduct a thorough research into the sector before any further action is taken on subsidy."

On their part, the NLC president Ayuba Waba, and his counterpart from the Trade Union Congress of Nigeria, Quadri Olaleye, expressed concerns as to why the subsidy issue had always been shrouded in secrecy on the part of the government. The union leaders faulted the conflicting figures from managers of the petroleum sector, calling it objectionable.

It is beyond dispute that lack of refining capacities and opaque petroleum subsidies have caused the country to lose considerable foreign exchange and her ability to fund infrastructural development. These have also significantly caused the deterioration of the nation's foreign exchange reserve, dollar scarcity, Naira devaluation, and hence inflation.

More, the subsidy also leads to serious supply leakages, where more than 40% of subsidized products are being arbitrated in neighbouring countries. In effect, Nigeria is essentially creating a business opportunity for rent-seekers to buy the Nigerian subsidized petrol and then sell it at an expensive market to make a profit. This is a big revenue leakage that petroleum subsidy causes.

The governors and labour leaders strong intervention provide a critical synergy. Now, certain specific posers require clarification. What exactly is the state of the nation's refineries; what is needed to bring the refineries back to maximum use; and what is the place of modular refineries in the big picture?

Now activated, the sub-nationals and Labour must sustain this momentum to ultimately clear the fuel subsidy fog.





Exclusive: Exchange Visit To Lagos State Revenue Agency

The State Exchange Visit (SEV) activity is one of the six components of NGF SFTAS Technical Assistance project deliverables. It is designed to address specific key result areas of the SFTAS programme and based on needs assessment.

The SEV aims to promote participatory peer to peer learning among State Government officials or MDAs and allows for sharing of information and tactics for effective domestication of reforms.

The visit duration is designed to be short-term, such as a maximum of 5 working days involving a minimum of four states with a maximum of four participants from each visiting state.

The second SEV to Lagos held from



THE VISIT DURATION IS DESIGNED TO BE SHORT-TERM, SUCH AS A MAXIMUM OF 5 WORKING DAYS INVOLVING A MINIMUM OF FOUR STATES WITH A MAXIMUM OF FOUR PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH VISITING STATE

15th-18th November 2021 with a total of 14 officials from seven states - Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Bauchi, Edo, Kaduna, Kogi and Oyo states participating.

The visit focused primarily on land administration and internally generated revenue (IGR) which speaks to SFTAS DLI 11.3 – capturing of property records in urban areas and DLIs 4.2 - State annual nominal IGR growth rates. Specifically, the adoption of technologies for improving land administration, tax processes (enumeration, assessment, and payment), procedures, enforcement and revenue growth were identified as priority study areas.

The 4-day SEV programme commenced with a brief opening ceremony hosted by the LIRS executive



Members of the LIRS and NGF teams during the Farewell Dinner of the Lagos Exchange Visit



Members of the Lagos State Land Bureau. The Lagos State Land Bureau narrated their processes in great detail to the visiting team. From Land registration, settling land disputes, and the use of technology.

management team at the Conference Hall of the Protea Hotels, Ikeja.

The keynote address was delivered by the Executive Chairman LIRS represented by the Assistant Director Tax Audit department who warmly welcomed participants to Lagos State and gave a brief overview of the LIRS and their notable achievements over the past decade driven by the political support from the executive governor and a professionalised and high performing workforce.

This was followed by an address by the Senior Programme Associate NGF SFTAS, Ms. Zubaida Abiola who reiterated the objectives of the visit and its significance of being more than just a study tour, but a learning experience aimed at driving sustainable reforms.

She also implored participants to consider themselves as 'Change Agents' and to make the most of the opportunity to learn, take-home useful lessons for adoption and domestication in their various states post-visit.

Core activities for the SEV comprised daily technical sessions involving presentations from top LIRS officials and walkthrough visits for participants to gain insight into the daily operations of the State Internal Revenue Service (LIRS), Motor Vehicle Administration Agency, Lands Bureau Office and Survey Generals

office and their contributions to generation of internal revenues and development of Lagos State.

To ensure active participation, delegates were issued daily learning logbooks to fill at the end of each day (learning dairy session), and each state was required to submit a post-visit report highlighting learning outcomes and a detailed reform action plan to their principals with the NGF in copy.

The 4-day Exchange visit ended with a closing dinner and presentation of a photo album by the NGF SFTAS team on behalf of the Director

General Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) to the LIRS in recognition of their supporting the SFTAS Exchange Visit to States activity.

Planning and Selection of States

A series of preparatory planning meetings were held between the NGF SFTAS and Lagos Internal Revenue Service (LIRS) team on behalf of the Host State between September and October to review the agenda and agree on the date for the visit and finalise all necessary arrangements including logistics and accommodation.

Drawing lessons from the last visit, it was agreed that the number of participants would be reduced from four to two participants per State to improve learning effectiveness and extension of the SEV from three to four days with considerations based on compliance with COVID-19 safety measures of social distancing, overcrowding during visits to MDAs as well as learning effectiveness.

After extensive consultations, 15th to 18th of November 2021 was mutually agreed as the dates for the visit. Amongst MDAs to cover during the visit were the LIRS Headquarters and the Ikeja tax station, Motor Vehicle Administration Agency Headquarters, Lands Bureau Department and the Office of the Lagos State Surveyor General. Each day was designed to also involve presentation from senior officials for the LIRS, Question and Answer and Learning Dairy sessions.

The criteria for the selection of the 'host State' for the SEV is based on the level of GIS (Geographical Information Systems) deployment, maturity of the land administration system, IGR year-on-year nominal growth (going back at least 5 years, 2015 - 2020), technology deployment for tax administration as well as the existence of enabling laws/



ESTABLISH PLATFORM FOR FUTURE PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS POST VISIT AMONG VISITING STATES AS WELL AS THE HOST STATE MDAS



During a tour of the Office of the Surveyor-General of Lagos State, participants were shown the e-GIS mapping operations. This system supports Lagos State's revenue generation activities by providing information on land administration and property taxation

regulations.

The methodology for selection involves thorough assessment using primary and secondary information such as progress in-house reports on DLI 4.1, 4.2, 11.3, 2018 and 2019 APA results, NBS IGR annual and quarterly data (aggregate and disaggregated data).

Lagos State was selected one again as 'Host State' having met all the stated requirements as well as their willingness to host the second SEV as expressed by the LIRS Management team at the end of the first SEV held in May 2021.

In addition, seven other states drawn from across the six geo-political zones namely; Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Bauchi, Edo, Kaduna, Kogi and Oyo were selected as "visiting States" for the second SEV based on interest, APA performance and learning prospects assessment.

A total number of 14 participants (two from each of the seven states) representing the Land Bureaus/GIS office Tax and SIRs were nominated to attend, accompanied by a team of NGF SFTAS Staff including the Senior Programme Manager, Senior Programme Associate, Lead IGR expert, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, Researcher, and a Project Officer.

APPRECIATE THE BENEFITS OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) IN DRIVING ORGANISATIONAL EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS

Also invited to participate as observers during SEV programme were; The Coordinator, Federal Component USAID/DAI Nigeria (currently supporting two of the participating states; Akwa Ibom and Bauchi under the State2State project) and The Project Consultant for Akwa Ibom GIS.

The overall aim of the 4-day SEV to Lagos was to provide visiting states an on-site peer learning opportunity to share knowledge through an open

exchange of ideas, experiences, and best practice. The visit focused specifically on studying the deployment of GIS technologies for enumeration of property records (geotagging), the existing legal framework and other institutional arrangements for effective land administration and driving revenue growth in Lagos State. Expected outcomes at the end of the SEV were for participants to;

- Develop understanding of the core operations of tax administration system in Lagos State.
- Appreciate the benefits of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in driving organisational efficiency and effectiveness.
- Gain practical insight into deployment and adoption of GIS technologies for land administration and capturing property tax records in Lagos State.
- Identify areas of good practice as well as critical success factors required for implementing related reforms back in their various states.
- Establish platform for future partnerships and collaborations post visit among visiting states as well as the host state MDAs.

- This report was provided by Gbenga Oloke.



NEWS FROM THE STATES

Ikpeazu Lays Foundation Stone of Obingwa Traditional Rulers Council Chambers



Governor Okezie Ikpeazu has assured that the Obingwa Traditional Rulers Council Chambers will be completed within six months.

The Governor gave the assurance during the foundation laying ceremony for the Obingwa Traditional Rulers Council Chambers and unveiling of maiden edition of year 2022 almanac of the Obingwa Traditional Rulers Council held at Mgboko, Obingwa Council headquarters.

He described the occasion as a special one and the building project which is the initiative of the Traditional Rulers in Obingwa as commendable, adding that the almanac that was unveiled was significant as it captures the traditional Igbo market days amongst others.

The Governor used the opportunity to announce that in the remaining months, Abians would see massive developmental projects, assuring that he is committed to

completing the construction of the new Government House and the JAAC building before the expiration of his tenure. He disclosed that funds have been released to contractors handling such roads as Owo-Onicha Ngwa Road, Agalaba ring road, Umuaro-Nenu road, Azikiwe Road, Omuma road, Faulks Road, etc.

The Governor, who later unveiled the 2022 almanac of the Obingwa Traditional Rulers Council with a cash donation, thanked the Royal Fathers and Abians at large for their sustained support to his administration.

In his speech, the Executive Chairman, Obingwa LGA, Hon. Ibe Nwoke said the Local Government Council is grateful to have Dr. Okezie Ikpeazu as the State Governor and appreciated his developmental strides in the State. He lauded the Governor for coming to identify with the Royal Fathers' building project and assured him of their sustained support to him.

Enyimba Economic City Project: Gov. Ikpeazu visits, Updates President Buhari

Governor Okezie Ikpeazu of Abia State met with President Muhammadu Buhari at the Presidential Villa, Abuja, recently to brief the President on developments at the Enyimba Economic City Project and inform him of the next level plans for the mega project.

The Governor who was accompanied on the visit by the Chief Executive of the Enyimba Economic City Project, Mr. Darl Uzu, thanked the President for the support given by the Federal Government to the Project, particularly the 20% stake taken up by the Federal Government in the project and the consistent approvals given by relevant federal authorities to important applications made on behalf of the project after fulfilling all legal and other relevant requirements.

The President was further informed that all the international financial institutions involved in the project, from the World Bank, the International Finance Corporation, the African Development Bank to the Afrexim Bank had all fulfilled their obligations to the project.

With this development, all investors in the project are expected to crystallize their investments while the formal ground breaking of the Enyimba Economic City Project is expected to be performed by the President between the end of the first quarter and beginning of the second quarter of 2022.

ABIA

Governor Okezie Ikpeazu Signs 2022 Appropriation Bill of N147.3 into Law

According to a statement by the Chief Press Secretary to the Abia State Governor, the budget provides for a capital expenditure of N79,779,887,500.00 while recurrent expenditure would gulp N67,502,318,700.

Governor Ikpeazu had on December 14, 2021, presented to the state House of Assembly an Ap-



Ikpeazu

propriation Bill of N147,787,781,300. He expressed gratitude to the Speaker

and members of the Assembly for their display of patriotism in the expeditious review and passage of the Appropriation Bill.

He assured the Assembly and the entire people of Abia State that he would be relentless in the implementation of the budget to enhance the peace, order and welfare of the people of Abia State.

He tasked agencies of the state government with specific obligations in the budget to take their assignments very seriously.

In particular, he challenged revenue-earning agencies in the state to redouble their efforts and execute their mandates with greater transparency and a deeper sense of patriotism.

1ST MEETING OF THE NIGERIA GOVERNORS' FORUM HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 19TH JANUARY 2022



Governor at the 1st NGF meeting of 2022



Governor Fayemi watch Gauduje, Oyetola in a handshake



NGF Chairman Fayemi Addressing the meeting



Governor Fayemi watch Gauduje, Obiano and Sule in a handshake



NGF Addressing the media



Governor Gauduje, Fayemi and Sule



Governor Gauduje and Makinde



DG brify Chairman Fayemi and Obiano of Anambra



Governor Fayemi and Obiano and Gauduje



Tackling Universal Health Coverage in Nigeria

During the advent of COVID-19, nations around the world had to take a good look at the health systems provided in their communities. Nigeria was no different as it continues to assess its healthcare.

Now, as Nigeria gets ready to approach an election season in the coming years, the big question is how our political leaders will ensure that health is a priority?

That was the centre of the discussion for the first Universal Health Coverage Summit in Nigeria. The theme was putting health and health security on the political front burner.

There were high dignitaries in attendance such as His Excellency, Senator Dr Bukola Saraki, the Senate President, 8th Assembly of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Rob Yates, the Director of the Global Health Programme, Executive Director, Centre for Universal Health Coverage, UK, Professor Alike Ahmed, the Associate Fellow for the Global Health

Programme, Chatham House, UK, Dr Ahmad Abdulwahab, the Senior Health Adviser at NGF and many others.

Chief Mrs Moji Makanjuola, the Chair of the UHC 2023 Forum said the election period creates a policy window to create a course of action that will address health issues in Nigeria.

She stated that this invitation has been sent to all political parties.

“Through this Nigerian-led initiative, we seek to do things differently and create the right health agenda,” she said.

Mrs. Makanjuola also added that she believes that we must start looking at people from the grassroots because that leads to the success story.

“For me, starting from the bottom up is important and we should also use our local languages to communicate,” she said.

Senator Dr Bukola Saraki said Universal Health Coverage is a topic that is close to his heart. He wants the Governors to come together and drive the process.

“The tools are there, what is needed is the process,” he said.

He also added that he believes there is funding for health care.

“The money is there but there is a lack of political will to address the process. We need to speak to the political leaders and ask them what they are doing for health?” he said.

Dr Ahmad Abdulwahab represented the Director General of the NGF, Mr Asishana B. Okauru.

He said the Director General sends his congratulations. This is an occasion for us to be proud off.

As far as the role of the NGF in tackling health, Dr Ahmad stated at his panel discussion that at NGF, when it comes to the equity fund, we have many different models.

“We continue to ensure advocacy and we have a tracker. We also put pressure on the Governors.”

He added that we also need to question the interventions that are being done.



“What are the high impact interventions? It’s not simply about building hospitals but it is also about articulating the right process and educating others about the process,” he said.

Dr Ahmad furthermore stated that this summit should be different.

It shouldn’t just be a one-off event. There is the need to engage with the political class. That is when the importance of this group would be highlighted.

“This is just starting the process. What would be important is what comes after,” he said.

At the summit was a representative of the World Bank, the Senior Health Specialist: Dr. Olumide Okunola.

He stated that health coverage is of importance to the World Bank.

“We know that globally, millions fall into poverty and there is the importance of measurement to understand what progress is being made.”

He added that there is a Global Monitoring Report. The global report will measure the dimensions of the UHC to assess our performance.

The next step would be to have a clear pathway that we can all agree on in Nigeria.

During the summit, there were pres-

entations made from Rob Yates and Professor Aliko Ahmed.

Mr. Yates said the aim of the summit is to discuss the political reforms of Universal Health Coverage and how to specialise in a political economy of health reforms.

“There is a correlation between the impact of democracy and citizens health outcomes,” he said.

In his presentation, he highlighted the indicators for Democracy which includes freedom of expression, freedom of association, suffrage, free and fair elections.

Whereas the indicators for the health outcomes are infant and child mortality and maternal mortality.

Mr. Yates further elaborated on his thoughts on elections and health of the citizens.

He said elections and health of the citizens are inseparable. Some points highlighted are that:

- Good democracies are more likely to catalyse improvements in citizens health outcomes

- Free and fair elections provide greater incentives for participation and improves government’s accountability and transparency

- Good democracies are correlated with increases in public health spending

but not with GDP/Capital

Going forward, the collaborations for Universal Health Coverage in Nigeria will include

- Specialist technical assistance and advice on issues relating to the political economy of UHC in Nigeria

- Generate political commitment for UHC emphasising the health, economic, societal, and political benefits

- Share experiences with successful UHC models

- Public events, forums, summits, and media engagements

- Private roundtables and briefings including advice and political strategy

Professor Aliko Ahmed joined Mr. Yates in the presentation. He added that democratic institutions can influence health priorities.

He said it is time that African leaders emphasize vaccine inequity.

“The key question is how is democracy connected to health outcome?”

Professor Ahmed concluded that elections and health are tied together. That a good democratic experience is needed and more likely to live longer.

At the summit, there was also a panel discussion elaborating on how states are making health a priority.

Dr. Ben Nkechika, the Director General of Delta State Contributory Health Commission represented the Governor of Delta State, Governor Dr Ifeanyi Okowa.

He said Delta State has been successful in enrolling many to their universal health coverage. He attested this to a strategic plan in their state.

Dr Nkechika added that you must be deliberate with actions to get the desired actions.

“We need to stop looking at health insurance from a country perspective to a national perspective,” he said.

As far as the next steps of the summit, the Executive Director of LISDEL, Mrs Juliana Abude-Aribo said the next step would be putting together everything heard today into a roadmap for UHC to track.

There would be a follow up with every stakeholder.

They would engage the community structures and traditional leaders to provide some direction in this.

They would develop an engagement strategy to ensure that no one is left behind and to have a sustainable structure going forward.





COMMUNIQUE



Sustaining The State Of Emergency Against Gender Based Violence Communique Issued At The End Of The Policy Dialogue On GBV On The 2nd Of December 2021 And Statement To Mark The End Of The Global 16 Days Of Activism Campaign Against Gender Based Violence November 25th

In June 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Nigerian Governors' Wives came together to establish a forum known as Nigerian Governors Wives against Gender Based Violence (NGWA-GBV). What started as a small working group for interested Governors' Wives has now become a flagship program of the Nigerian Governors' Wives Forum (NGWF) with all State First Ladies involved.

The process of coming together to work on Sexual and Gender Based Violence provided us with an opportunity to commit to working together collaboratively as State First Ladies to maximise our impact. The first major accomplishment of the NGWF in this area, was the successful advocacy with the Nigeria Governors' Forum which led to the declaration of a State of Emergency on Sexual and Gender Based Violence in Nigeria on June 10th 2020.

In December 2020, during the Global 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence,

we organised a Policy Forum with State Governors and First Ladies, to discuss ways in which the State of Emergency could move beyond rhetoric to really mean something in the lives of Nigerian women. Since the December 2020 conference, the NGWF has been keenly focused on fulfilling all its own commitments. Over the past one year, as Nigerian Governors' Wives, we have managed to accomplish the following:

Advocacy for expedited action for passage of the VAPP Law. In June 2020, only fourteen States had domesticated the VAPP Act. As of December 2021, 31 States (32 if FCT is included) have passed the VAPP Law. This is an indication that the consistent advocacy of Governors' Wives, in collaboration with civil society organisations and development partners, has been very effective.

Implementation of the NGWF GBV Action Plan which was launched at our December 2020 conference.

Providing leadership for State GBV Coordinating Mechanisms, hereby facilitating the implementation of the VAPP Act. Several First Ladies Chair the State GBV Coordinating bodies.

Increase in the number of Sexual Assault Referral Centers (SARCs) as well as shelters for women and their children. Production and dissemination of eight advocacy videos and radio programs in various languages.

Production of a SGBV Resource Manual to support the work of First Ladies and their teams. Establishment of a GBV Survivors' Fund that enables Governors' Wives respond to GBV cases as a way of providing solidarity and raising awareness. In March 2021 44 SGBV Survivors were supported in States across the country, and on November 25th 2021, another round of grants was disbursed which will support at least 60 SGBV survivors.

Work with grassroots communities and local stakeholders such as traditional rulers and



religious leaders to seek their active support In February 2021, The Ford Foundation started a pilot project called Pathways to addressing Sexual and Gender Based Violence' with four States – Abia, Edo, Ekiti and Niger States.

This initiative has supported the participating States to strengthen their GBV responses and implement the VAPP Act effectively. Examples of some of the project outputs include Development of Standard Operating Procedures for GBV interventions, adoption of comprehensive referral pathways for GBV interventions, a GBV Training manual, community Town Hall meetings, Anti-GBV clubs in schools, radio and film production and more.

► Recently, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy provided technical and financial support to Cross River, Ondo and Osun States on their VAPP implementation strategies.

► The NGWF recently received a generous grant from MacArthur Foundation. With this support, the NGWF will be able to support the establishment of additional Sexual Assault Referral Centers, provide support to GBV Survivors, develop GBV Standard Operating Procedures, Training Manuals, produce directories of GBV Service Providers, media campaigns and more, in States across the country.

On December 2nd 2021, the NGWF organised another Policy Dialogue on Sexual and Gender Based Violence with the theme 'Sustaining the Gains of the SGBV State of Emergency' at Transcorp Hilton Hotel, Abuja. The Policy Dialogue featured HE Dr Aisha Buhari, First Lady of Nigeria, HE Dr Kayode Fayemi, Governor of Ekiti State and Charman Nigerian Governors' Forum, HE Senator Abubakar Atiku Bagudu, Governor of Kebbi State and Chairman, Progressive Governors' Forum, Dame Pauline Tallen, Minister for Women Affairs, senior government officials at Federal and State level, Development Partners, members of the Diplomatic Corps and Civil Society Organisations. There were also 30 State First Ladies and their delegates in attendance.

The objectives of the Policy Dialogue were as follows:

► To seek commitments from State Governors that the State of Emergency on GBV is still a priority

► To highlight ways in which Governors' Wives are supporting the fight against GBV

► Listen to GBV survivors and service providers as they discuss care and protection and access to justice

Strengthen partnerships, networking and information sharing as part of the Global 16 Days Against GBV campaign.

At the policy dialogue, HE Dr Aisha Buhari thanked all the Governors' Wives for their hard work and dedication, and encouraged them to keep up their efforts.

All the development partners and collaborating organisations who gave goodwill messages acknowledged the efforts of NGWF

and how they have become dependable allies in the fight against SGBV. At the event, the NGWF placed some requests before the Nigeria Governors' Forum. The Chairman of the Forum, HE Dr Kayode Fayemi, affirmed that all the requests would be comprehensively and speedily addressed. The requests were as follows:

► That the 5 remaining States who have not domesticated the VAPP Law do without further delay. The States are Kano, Cross River, Gombe, Zamfara and Katsina.

► That the Governors who have not assented to the VAPP Law after passage by the State House of Assembly do so as soon as possible. The States are Kogi, Yobe, Kebbi, Imo, Rivers, Plateau, Taraba and Borno.

► That the Governors put in place required resources such as Sexual Assault Referral Centers (SARCS) and Shelters. Currently we have 32 SARCS in 18 States and the FCT, which leaves 18 States in the country with no SARCS. That each State should have a GBV Resourcing Framework for the financing and sustainability of GBV interventions.

The theme for 2021 is Orange the World: End Violence Against Women Now.

This carries a sense of urgency and that is the spirit in which the State of Emergency was declared in 2020. We still need urgent action. We need to ensure adequate funding of all interventions, respond effectively to the needs of survivors, intensify strategies for prevention of GBV and collect relevant data for analysis and planning. We all need to leverage whatever platforms and competencies we have to make this happen. During the 16 Days of

Activism for 2021, the NGWF joined millions of women around the country to demand for an end to all forms of

violations against women and girls. As State First Ladies we organised and led marches, workshops, empowerment programs, town hall meetings and training in our respective States.

We thank our Matron, HE Dr Aisha Buhari, First Lady of Nigeria for all her encouragement and support. At NGWF we appreciate her leadership and commitment to a better deal for Nigerian women and girls. We thank all our donor partners who made the conference possible - The Nigeria Governors' Forum, The Ford Foundation, MacArthur Foundation and Westminster Foundation for Democracy. We also acknowledge our collaborating partners the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, UN Women, Women Advocates Research and Documentation Centre (WARDC) and National Academy of Science. We thank all our speakers and resource persons for being willing to share their experiences and knowledge with us.

Together we can all make the world a much safer place for women and girls.

We need movement, we have talked for long enough. We need action to end violence against women now.

HE ERELU BISI FAYEMI

First Lady Ekiti State And Chair, Nigeria Governors' Wives Forum





NGF Director General's 'amazing' 60th birthday celebration with his Igarra community



The Igarra community in Edo State, Nigeria's South-south, saw an unprecedented burst of economic activities in the first week of January 2022 as people from diverse walks of life and from different parts of the country poured into the quiet community.

They were there to celebrate the Director General of Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF), Asishana Okauru, as he marked his 60th birthday.

Perhaps more fascinating was that the week-long activities, organised from January 4 to January 8 to mark the event, were solely for the empowerment of the community; a deviation from the usual partying for such events among Nigerians.

DG of NGF, Asishana Okauru and wife, Ifueko Okauru, former Chairperson of FIRS For Mr Okauru, these programmes were planned for Igarra because, according to him, the community has helped him tremendously in his progress in life.

"The connection with my community is grounded well and I think that the fact that I was programmed to do a number of things within an environment that is ethical, played a huge role and as a way of giving back," Mr Okauru told PREMIUM TIMES.

"I am just trying to tell the youths that this is one way," he added.

His wife, Ifueko Omoigui-Okauru, the former chairperson of the Federal Inland Revenue Service, said the activities were planned for the community as a means to thank God for the life of a dear husband.

Besides the guests who came to support him, his family and community people appeared to have bought into Mr Okauru's vision of giving back to the society.

This was demonstrated on the first day of the event, with the crowd seen at his family house dutifully executing diverse roles – cooking, sorting accommodation, transporting guests from one location to another.

Till late into the night, almost everyone deliberated over the day's activities and re-strategised for the next day, a ritual they continued till the last day of the event.

There was more. The following day, over 50 residents of the community freely volunteered to serve in several roles to make the events possible.

Donations to the widows in Igarra community With this passion, the events commenced with donations of rice, oil and other foodstuff to over 500 widows and some other households. Similar donations were made to the general hospital and the primary health centre in the community.

On another day, about 300 women sat through different sessions by about six resource persons who taught them how to develop and maintain positive spirit, self-confidence, how to handle gender-based violence, and how to have a balanced life, between family and career.

The youth were taught the secrets to success, the importance of making right



and humility” and that she cherishes every moment she shares with him.

Mr Okauru’s Chief of Staff, Ayo Daisa, described him as a “philanthropist and humble person with a good heart.”

His niece and nephew, Ometere and Samuel Onyanna, reminisced the period Mr Okauru stood by them when their mother died. They said they have been inspired by the man’s humility and generosity.

His profile

Mr Okauru was born on January 7, 1962. He has two bachelor degrees – one in Economics at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ife, and the other, a law degree at the University of Ibadan.

choices, the importance of education, alternative career options, and how to become a positive influence in the community.

They were also taken through the destructive effects of drug, alcohol addiction and gambling.

Participants at photography training session An award-winning photographer, Paul Odijie, through Mr Okauru’s invitation, was there to teach the youth how to tell stories with photography.

After the training, Mr Okauru donated two cameras to the participants who were divided into two groups.

To round off the activities, the elderly and the youth received free medical check-ups by specialists, including surgeons, dentists, and ophthalmologists. There were 62 health workers and the medical mission lasted for two days.

Chairman of Nigeria Governors’ Forum, Governor Kayode Fayemi with the Okaurus

There was a thanksgiving ceremony

He had the option of gathering powerful Nigerians, including state governors, to dine and wine with him in Abuja where he works and lives but chose to travel to his Igarra community in Edo to celebrate his birthday in a unique way with his people.



later, with the Ekiti State Governor and the Chairman of the NGF, Kayode Fayemi, and the Commissioner for Health in Edo State, Obهي Akoria, in attendance.

Another fascinating attribute about the Okaurus is their devotion to God and inclusivity as they invited both Christian and Muslim leaders to another prayer session.

Tributes and prayers for Okauru

Jimmy Imo, special adviser and Abuja liaison officer to the Governor of Imo State, said at the event that he is a mentee of Mr Okauru.

He thanked Mr Okauru for his mentorship over the years which he said has made him to be where he is today.

Mr Okauru’s daughter, Shana, said she appreciates her father’s love which she described as “gentle, kind and unconditional.”

She said she admires her father’s “leadership, optimism, perseverance,

He also obtained a joint Masters’ degree in Business Administration and Information Science from North Carolina Central University and another in Public Administration at Harvard Kennedy School of Government.

He once worked as a cab operator and a security guard while pursuing different degrees and certifications.

Mr Okauru previously worked at the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, and also as a pioneer director of the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit, before he became the director general of Nigeria Governors’ Forum.

He had the option of gathering powerful Nigerians, including state governors, to dine and wine with him in Abuja where he works and lives but chose to travel to his Igarra community in Edo to celebrate his birthday in a unique way with his people.

Such a mindset, according to family members, friends and co-workers, speaks volumes of the kind of man Mr Okauru is.



AFDB'S SAPZ PROGRAM: *Adesina Hosts Ogun, Kaduna, Imo, Oyo Governors in Abidjan*

Support for inclusive and sustainable agro-industrial development was prioritized when African Development Bank (AfDB) President Dr. Akinwumi Adesina hosted four Nigerian executive governors and the Chief Executive Officer of the Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority (NSIA) at the Bank's Abidjan head office on Tuesday, January 25, 2022.

Invited were Governors Dapo Abiodun of Ogun State, Seyi Makinde of Oyo State, Nasir Ahmad El-Rufai of Kaduna State, Hope Uzodinma of Imo State and NSIA Managing Director Uche Orji.

Top of the agenda was discussion

of what will be the rapid rollout of the first phase of the Bank's Special Agro-Industrial Processing Zones (SAPZ) program in their states. AfDB set up the flagship SAPZ program to support inclusive and sustainable agro-industrial development in countries across the continent.

Further, the discussion underscored the important underlying role of the Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority as an honest broker of the program, as well as the commitment of all the governors to it.

In Nigeria, the program will soon get underway in seven states. In Dr. Adesina's words - "the special

agro-industrial processing zones will be game changers for agriculture in Nigeria. They will provide world class infrastructure to support food agribusinesses located close to zones of production, develop competitive value chains supported by logistic systems that will drive food processing and value addition. The SAPZs will help create massive wealth and jobs in rural areas and turn rural areas away from being zones of economic misery to zones of economic prosperity".

A communiqué signed by all parties affirmed all parties' joint commitment and acknowledgement that the SAPZ program was one that would be deployed to trans-



Governors Dapo Abiodun, Ogun state; Nasir Ahmad El-Rufai, Kaduna State; Dr. Akinwumi. A Adesina; Hope Uzodinma, Imo State; Seyi Makinde, Oyo State, during their visit to the African Development Bank headquarters in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire



form agriculture quickly and at scale across Nigeria. Also attending the meeting by video link from the Nigerian capital, Abuja, was the country's Minister of Agriculture Dr. Mohammad Mahmood Abubakar.

The AfDB president also invited Arise IIP, a company that specializes in setting up industrial zones, to make a presentation on its experience establishing these zones in different countries in the region - including in Benin Republic, Togo and Gabon. Meeting participants heard how agro-industrial zones in these countries had been instrumental in bolstering growth in the processing of timber, cotton and cashew nuts.

Adesina reiterated the African Development Bank's commitment to Nigerian agriculture, which he said had the potential to be a powerhouse in food provision. It would be recalled that last December, the Bank's board of directors approved a \$160-million loan to get the program underway in seven Nigerian states and the Federal Capital Territory Abuja.

Additional co-financing for the first phase of the program will come from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Islamic Development Bank (ISD) in the amount of \$150 million. The Nigerian government will provide roughly \$18.05 million toward the program's rollout and implementation.

Expressing great enthusiasm for the SAPZ program and enjoining his peers to take advantage of its value for development growth, Governor El-Rufai of Kaduna State said: "We are committed to the SAPZ program, all of us as governors, and I speak also on behalf of the President of Nigeria."

Governor Abiodun of Ogun State noted: "This promises to be a very successful and transformational initiative, for Ogun

agricultural development in their states, each, like their peers, extolling the many pluses of their states as investment hubs.

NSIA managing director Uche Orji stressed that agriculture was a key focus area of his agency. According to him, "The NSIA pledges to work with governors to ensure that procurement is done professionally and on time." He said the National Sovereign Investment Authority, owned 52% by states, and 48% by federal government, would play a key role in the rollout of the program.

So far, the Special Agro-industrial Processing Zones project has al-

ready attracted significant interest from private sector food and agro businesses in Nigeria. Investments of at least \$1 billion are expected in these zones by the private sector.

Adesina commended the governors for the enthusiastic manner in which they had embraced the program, enjoined them to continue to be the brilliant chief marketing officers for their states that they are, and to share their ideas about how to attract private sector investment.

He also urged the Nigeria Sovereign Authority to develop a roadmap for the governors to follow in rolling out the initiative. "I want this to work at scale in Nigeria. We need to standardize and avoid being bureaucratic," he said.

NSIA Managing Director Uche Orji signed a letter of intent committing the agency to provide strategic assistance in procuring transaction advisory firms and other companies to implement world class infrastructure in the hubs.

A meeting communique also committed the NSIA to revert with a draft framework within one week for the state governors as well as to the holding of monthly progress meetings between the Governors and AfDB President and relevant Ministries, to fast-track implementation. The success of the SAPZ program in Nigeria is expected to have continent-wide impact.

AfDB has committed over \$750 million to the goal of setting up 23 agro-industrial hubs across 11 African countries. The push, part of the Bank's Feed Africa priority, will follow a government-enabled, private sector driven approach to drive agribusiness. The sector is widely seen as one where Africa has both a comparative advantage and, given its arable land, scope to develop exponentially.

President Muhammadu Buhari is expected to preside over a ceremony in Nigeria in February to officially launch the first phase of the SAPZ program in the country. The presidents of AfDB, IDB, and IFAD, and various investors are also expected to be present.



**THE SECTOR IS
WIDELY SEEN
AS ONE WHERE
AFRICA HAS BOTH
A COMPARATIVE
ADVANTAGE
AND, GIVEN ITS
ARABLE LAND,
SCOPE TO DEVELOP
EXPONENTIALLY**

State and for the country. This initiative is an important step toward reducing unemployment, a challenge that we face in Ogun State with the growing number of educated young people that are completing their studies with no jobs. There is a nexus between unemployment and insecurity."

Governors Makinde and Uzo-dinma of Oyo and Imo states, respectively, similarly emphasized how the program would shore up



Nation-Building: Between Restructuring and Autonomy

What would have been Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe's idea of nation-building amidst the centrifugal forces emerging from almost all parts of the country to challenge the foundations of our nationhood as a united Nigeria? It seems to me that it would be fair to say, as Azikiwe would have done, that national security and development are dependent on a resolution of the National Question and the associated demands of nation- and state-building.

History and comparative experience teach us that where a broad consensus has been built on the fundamental issues underpinning the National Question, security and development becomes much easier to attain and sustain. One of the most critical factors for the success of any nation is the achievement of a broad and enduring consensus among the elite drawn from various walks of life on a fundamental set of questions that are germane to the establishment and nurturing of a stable foundation for the pursuit of security and development.

Yet, on the other hand, this is not a charge to be left to political elites only as doing so is bound to create resentment and feelings of exclusion among lay citizens. A nation's theory of development can only derive from the consensus that has been forged on key national questions, especially those related to the issues of identity, religion, participation, justice, and the overall management of diversity. How these are mobilised to define the value of citizenship and to set the parameters for inclusion or exclusion within the nation's socio-economic and political space. As such, there can be no successful nation-building in our current climate where a wide section of our citizens are apathetic to the very idea of the nation-state and perceive the political institutions that govern them as enemies. For many, nation-building is no more than age-old idealistic rhetoric that has no bearing on lived realities.

My argument has always been though, that we cannot speak of national development without first resolving the key issues of nation-building. I make bold, therefore, to say that the security challenges that are confronting us in all their various dimensions and ramifications, and all the issues of governance instability that we are confronted with are directly consequential upon our inability to settle some fundamental questions of nationhood and find points of convergence in a plural society like ours. Where the very existence of the nation itself is easily brought to question at the slightest provocation, it should serve as a warning

to us that the very foundation upon which the nation stands is either weakening or has collapsed. In either case, measures aimed at reinforcing that foundation must be adopted speedily. Settling our foundational challenges, and doing so frontally, is a sine qua non for the successful forging of consensus that is needed for moving the country forward with a unity of purpose, a common vision of our greatness, shared values of solidarity, and a sense of equity, and justice.

Yet the challenges of nation-building are not exclusive to Nigeria. African states are often as-erstwhile nation-states in that they are falling short of their cohesive ideals and grappling with the challenges of national divisiveness. In the case of Nigeria, some have argued, with some merit, I must admit, that we cannot build Nigeria into a true nation.

ethnic or linguistic groups that are too resilient to be simply swept aside artificially. This is true for most nations of the world, but even more so for post-colonial African states that emerged out of the European partition of continent in 1884/85. None of us chose to be Nigerians. But having found ourselves in this geographical space called Nigeria, we are left with two real alternatives. One is to make it work for everyone. The other is to break it up and let everyone return to their ethnic enclaves. The latter option has never proven to be better or more sustainable than the former.

Speaking in the context of Nigeria's three regions in the early years of independence, Dr. Azikiwe noted as follows:

"Each of our three Regions is vastly different in many respects, but each has this in common: that, despite variety of languages and custom or difference in climate, all form part of one country which has existed as a political and social entity for fifty years. That is why we believe that the political union of Nigeria is destined to be perpetual and indestructible."

It was a message to say that despite differences of various types, we are not confronted with cleavages that are insurmountable as we invest in the building of enduring parameters for nationhood. No political union is created perfect and none enjoys permanent a permanent What is which





ship that is “perpetual and indestructible.” In the context of the many historical events that have unfolded in the country over the years since independence, some have been tempted, in the thick of zero-sum partisanship, to suggest that perhaps Zik had too much faith in project Nigeria or allowed himself to be blinded to the many dysfunctions that have wracked the nation-building process. In my considered opinion, both suggestions are wrong and unhelpful insofar as they betray a fundamental understanding of the roots of his nationalism which set great store by unity in the march to greatness. As a key architect in the making of contemporary Nigeria, it would have been too much to expect that Azikiwe would also easily embrace a path that would lead to its dismemberment. To do so would have amounted to a wholesale self-repudiation.

The greatest test which he faced came at the onset of the Nigerian civil war and the polarization which required all key actors to pitch their tents with one side or the other in the conflict. It had to be one of the most difficult moments in his entire political life watching the potential disintegration of Nigeria while also seeking to understand the fullness of the grievances in Eastern Nigeria that unfurled the drive towards the creation of Biafra. One of the enduring controversies of the Nigerian civil war was the actual role that Dr. Azikiwe played – or did not play – in that conflict. It was the real-life equivalent of being caught between the rock and the hard place. Treading with the utmost caution, he did stick out his neck to make a plea for the abandonment by the conflicting parties of the resort to violence and a resumption of dialogue. Perhaps there is something in this approach that contemporary gladiators in the ongoing challenges to Nigerian nationhood may want to take as food for thought.

Like all people imbued with a profound intellect, Azikiwe's favoured strategy for tackling differences was encapsulated by the French word “Parlement”, or parliament in English, which means discussions, meetings, or negotiations until a compromise can be forged. In the fight for Nigeria's independence, Zik insisted that “we would not shed blood. We would not force the British to shoot at us.” And he advised all of his fellow anti-colonial nationalists around Africa to adopt the same strategy. In embracing the philosophy of non-violence, Zik was undoubtedly influenced by his experience with the civil rights movement in the United States and the example of Mahatma Gandhi. But apart from a deep commitment to humanism and the sanctity of human life, Zik's non-violence was also borne out of pragmatism. He did not think there was any wisdom in taking to the battlefield against an enemy that is more powerful than you. However, armed with the heavy artillery of your intellect and the morality and justness of your cause, you can make an enemy retreat. Di-

alogue is more compelling and can oftentimes be even more resounding than the staccato of the Kalashnikov.

Zik's non-violence also had nothing to do with a surrender mentality as some have suggested. Thus, even as he made efforts to stop the Nigerian civil war from becoming an inevitability and escalating, he also made it clear that justice, fairness, and equity in the administration of the commonwealth were fundamental pre-conditions for peace and unity to be won and sustained. He called for an end to the war hostilities and the reintegration of the Biafrans back into Nigeria, “provided,” he said that:

“Nigeria will continue to ensure the safety of persons and properties of Biafrans in one united country where all its citizens will be treated as equals without any discrimination. And where there would be opportunities for all citizens and inhabitants.”

History has taught us that wars, especially civil wars, could be one of how a country self-introspects and finds its true identity and a pathway to transformation. As with the American civil war which historians have suggested was also America's war socio-economic transformation, there have been suggestions that out of the wreckage of the civil war, Nigeria might successfully reconstruct itself and move on to the path of structural change. All things considered, amidst the optimism unleashed under the banner of the three “Rs” of post-war reconstruction, reconciliation, and reintegration, few will disagree that we are yet to achieve the high hopes that flourished amidst the oil boom of the 1970s that we were well on the way to fulfilling our destiny to greatness. With persistent challenges of state and nation-building and a myriad of developmental discontents, the rise of separatist agitations in recent years, and the rhetoric of such agitation indicates that there are still people in this country who feel that Nigeria is not working for them; who still feel marginalised in the scheme of things; who frame this discontent in ethnic, religious, or regional terms; and who, therefore, believe that the only solution is for them to be allowed to go and form their own country.

It is important to note that complaints about marginalisation are not exclusively or always solely directed at the federal centre. Within the regions and states that have made up the Nigerian federation at various times



Fayemi

since 1960, people who feel they are not getting a fair deal or equality of opportunities also complain of marginalisation. The standard solution that has been pursued has been to clamour for more states in the expectation that the interests of those who feel marginalised would be better served if they have a state of their own to themselves.

Going by the persistent agitation for the creation of more states, it is easy to assume that discontent at the sub-National level is real, persistent, and widespread. Since the 1946 Richard constitution that created the three regions of the Nigerian federation, agitations for the creation of more regions had been rife, particularly among the minority ethnic groups. The subsequent creation of states in 1967, 1976, 1987, 1991, and 1996 has not stemmed the vociferous demand for more states. While the 2005 National Political Reform Conference set up by the Obasanjo administration concluded that the creation of new states was not feasible, the 2014 National Conference by the Jonathan administration recommended the creation of 18 new additional states to make Nigeria into a federation of 54 states.

The infinite political market for the crea-



tion of an ever-increasing number of states in the Nigerian federal system is an indicator of the fact that the successive rounds of state creation which we have had to date have not produced the el dorado that successive generations of agitators thought the exercise would produce. The more states are created, the more new perceptions of marginalisation have multiplied. It cannot be viable to steer the country into an over-fragmentation that cancels out the effectiveness of the administration of the common good.

Another argument by those who are still clamouring for the creation of more states is that doing so will bring government closer to a particular people who were otherwise marginalised under a current arrangement. Even if this were true, it is debatable whether mere geographical proximity can deliver good governance and improve the quality of lives of the people without a corresponding commitment to development generally. Shared geographical space does not automatically translate into shared resources and equitable and fair distribution. Solidarity can at times be situational and if there is nothing more than agitation for states without deeper commitments to what constitutes shared values between state and citizens, the centre may not hold. There is no such thing as a homogenous society, not even a homogenous family. The ties that bind are the mutually shared values that accommodate differences. In the absence of this, conflict is almost always inevitable.

Perhaps, of greater concern, is the growing evidence that many of our states are fast becoming economically unviable. This situation would get worse as the amount that would be available for allocation from the centre dwindles in tandem with the decline in oil revenues. It is, therefore, reasonable to argue that the solution to the problem of lack of equity or marginalisation within a state is not the creation of more states, which may end up only creating new arenas of conflicts. Even if it were possible to ensure that only people of the same ethnic group or religion occupy a State, this would still not stop the complaint of marginalisation as some people would always be better off than others. I am from the most homogeneous state in Nigeria and I can confirm this.

The argument against the agitation for the creation of more states can also be extended to those who think that the best solution to the problem of real and/or perceived marginalisation in Nigeria is outright secession from the country. While it is easy to understand the sentiment that drives the kind of extreme position adopted by groups like the MASSOB or IPOB, one would still have to question whether this is indeed the best solution in the best interest of the people on whose behalf they have claimed to pursue the struggle. In attempting a response, it may be pertinent for us to remind ourselves of the experiences of countries that have faced the same kinds of challenges to unity and nationhood in recent



Fayemi

times. I would like us to pause and look at the experience of these countries.

Amidst massive global goodwill, South Sudan declared independence from Sudan in 2011, following an agreement signed in 2005 to end what was regarded as Africa's longest civil war. According to South Sudan sources, the war was fought to resist "Islamisation and Arabisation" by the North and to preserve their ethnic identity as Africans, animists, and Christians. The discovery of rich deposits of crude oil in the South also added fuel to the conflict and reinforced agitations for separation, especially after the death in an air crash of the historic leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, John Garang. Those who had expected independence to bring the long-overdue peace to the Sudan, North, and South, were sorely disappointed when within two years of winning the freedom to self-determination, a civil war broke out within South Sudan itself, leading to the death of over 400,000 people and the displacement of an estimated 4 million more.

In the period since then, the young country has alternated between conflict and uneasy peace, complete with a UN peace-keeping mission. In the meantime, in what was left of Sudan after the separation of South Sudan and its accession to independence, various mini-conflicts underwritten by an assortment of armed groups challenging the authority of Khartoum have been the order of the day. Darfur in Sudan became both an embodiment and symbol of the tragedy of war that befell the country even as South Sudan was also locked in a violent struggle for power-driven by inter-ethnic distrust and an unreconstructed system of political monopoly. Since the ousting of President Omar Al-Bashir in 2019, the North itself had been trapped in an unhappy transitional arrange-

ment that has culminated in a second flexing by the military of its muscle in the domestic political process.

Those who are sold on the logic of secession may counter this analogy by outlining the differences between South Sudan and the South East of Nigeria and how the outcome of "independence" would be different in both cases. It is true that while the South East of Nigeria is relatively homogenous in language, culture, and religion, South Sudan has about 60 different ethnic groups. However, it is important to remember that when they were united in the fight against Khartoum for independence, the South Sudanese put up a united, practically "homogenous" front. The breakdown in their unity only burst into the open as independence loomed. No matter how homogenous it may appear, no society is ever bereft of differences and cleavages that require to be managed on an ongoing basis through engaged and visionary leadership.

If the simple fact of apparent ethno-cultural homogeneity was an absolute guarantee for stability and progress, we may never have had a cycle of genocides in Burundi and Rwanda or a broken Somalia on our hands. It is, therefore safe to state that while diversity does not guarantee a slide into war, homogeneity does not guarantee a sustained peace either. In fact, as the award-winning author Yuval Harari has argued, it is by our common conflicts and dilemmas that we define our identity, not by our common traits. Therefore, he observes, "the people we fight most often are our own family members. Identity is defined by conflicts and dilemmas more than by agreement." As we say in Yorubaland, "it is the person that you lie in the same bed with that you bump into." We must, therefore, learn to manage our differences and do so in order to achieve the goal of a better and more perfect union.

If separation and secession are not as easy or simple as their proponents imagine, and given that they do not provide any guarantees that a better future can be secured through them, the demands for a national restructuring would seem to me to be worth keeping on the table for deeper consideration. In doing so, we have a duty to frame and contextualise the quest for restructuring as part of a normal process of regular and periodic adjustment and recalibration of governance arrangements to changing times and contexts. This would represent a departure from the negative and adversarial connotations which proponents and opponents have attributed to the idea of restructuring, turning it into another source of rancour, recrimination, and division. However, at the end, when all the dust around the issue settles, we find that we are all confronted with the same fundamental question: How do we make Nigeria work best for every Nigerian? Like the great Zik posited, how do we build a nation where the safety of every citizen is assured and where there would be equal opportunities for all, regardless of the language they speak, the place they come from, or how



place they come from, or how they worship God.

Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe envisioned a country that would be “perpetual and indestructible” on account of its ability to remain adaptive and responsive to the shifting challenges and its commitment to meet the aspirations of every generation of Nigerians. The indestructibility of Nigeria, as envisaged by Zik is indeed best assured when the majority of Nigerians are emotionally connected to Nigeria because of what Nigeria is able to do for them. In essence, the legitimacy of the nation-state is not in making demands of patriotism but in the quality of life it provides for its citizens towards building mutual trust and the common good.

The question, therefore, is this: is Nigeria as currently structured capable of delivering the full benefits of citizenship to every Nigerian? The answer to this is obvious. Certainly, the growing army of our frustrated and disenfranchised youths do not think so. One might even argue that our generation of young people are actively engaged in alternative spaces of micro nation-building projects of their own in the absence of a perceived nurturing state. We see this in the ways common identities and aspirational notions of what Nigeria could be in new media spaces, entertainment, and other forms of identity-making projects youths have taken up, and successfully too.

Yet, when the Nigerian story is told, we very often focus a disproportionate amount of attention on what does not work about our union. And perhaps that in itself may not be a bad thing if, rather than being weaponised to undermine our collective will, it is framed as a clarion call to do more and better and with greater purpose. It is important also not to forget that there exist important glues that bind us together as Nigerians regardless of our differences and these glues also deserve to be reinforced.

I am convinced that the problems that we are called upon to address and redress in building a better country are not beyond our grasp to tackle. With good faith and a generous dose of goodwill, we can, as we have done on various occasions in our history, summon that Nigerian genius to build on the things we have successfully erected together. We must strive to do so in the spirit of the kinds of noble values and principles that inflamed the spirit of a youthful Azikiwe to enrol at Lincoln University in a quest to discover the innate goodness in

A nation's theory of development can only derive from the consensus that has been forged on key national questions, especially those related to the issues of identity, religion, participation, justice, and the overall management of diversity.



Fayemi

the human species with a view to building a better and freer world. We must never abandon the spirit of inquiry and discovery that led Azikiwe to join other nationalists to seek to create a nation-state founded on the best ideals of citizenship anchored on freedom and justice.

“We, the people of Nigeria,” must truly mean that our considered aspirations have fed into the document that would form the fundamental organising principle of our nationhood. The opportunities are there. The question of how to develop a democratic system that meets the expectations of our people and restore people's trust in government; how to bring ethical principles, empathy, and efficiency into the heart of government and leadership at all levels; how to harness our demographic advantage and translate our youth population into an asset rather than a time bomb; how to build a society that is governed by the rule of law; how to build an electoral system that is reliable and efficient; or how to build a trusted, dependable and efficient judiciary. All these are at the very heart of what I see as the broad package of restructuring that we need to work towards. It is a package around which we can forge a broad consensus.

And I believe that we don't need to go through another war or tear down our country to arrive at such a consensus. Of course, the cynics among us would like to ask me that if I am so confident that we can resolve these issues through dialogue or any other form of parliament, how come such previous efforts have failed to lead to the desired outcomes? My answer would be that the national transformation that we seek can only happen through the transformation of the individual and the individual's transformation in relation to fellow citizens and in relation to the nation itself. People create systems and not the other way round. It is only by the transformation of the individual that we can hope to do that which is necessary for the transformation of our country. While the notion of social contract is central in exploring the relationship between the state and citizens, as the Rabbi and moral

philosopher Jeffrey Sachs reminds us – it is inadequate in dealing with our current challenges simply because;

Social contract creates a state; social covenant creates a society. Social contract is about power and how it is to be handled within a political framework. Social covenant is about how people live together despite their differences. Social contract is about government. Social covenant about coexistence. Social contract is about laws and their enforcement. Social covenant is about the values we share. Social contract is about the use of potentially coercive force. Social covenant is about moral commitments, the values we share and the ideals that inspire us to work together for the sake of the common good.

For me, this encapsulates the idea of nation-building at its best. A contract must be founded on cohesion – a covenant to stay true to the agreed contract. All parties must agree to avoid contestations. Achieving a sense of common identity, strong institutions, and shared values as a nation is a process of building trust and finding unity in difference. This is how we build the sort of national relationship that is not an exploitative social contract but a moral commitment that combines individual and state obligations.

Permit me to conclude with this admonition. Regardless of how long it takes and whatever we do in-between, war or violence is never an option. I hold a Doctorate in War Studies. Therefore, I feel adequately qualified to speak about the futility of war and violence. There is absolutely nothing heroic about dying foolishly for a cause for which dialogue and negotiation can provide pathways to workable solutions. Whatever is worth fighting for, is worth staying alive for. I can very much hear this refrain flowing from the life experience and legacy of the great Nnamdi Azikiwe, the first president of Nigeria.

Dr. Kayode Fayemi, CON is the Governor of Ekiti State



Riding on Lagos Blue and Red Lines will be Affordable - *Sanwo-Olu*

- **Feasibility study, traffic count being carried out on other lines**
- **Lagos still has good sustainability ratio for project financing**

While speaking recently on the state of Lagos infrastructure on Channels TV breakfast programme Sunrise Daily, Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State assured that riding on Lagos Red and Blue Lines rail system will be affordable and cost-effective to passengers.

According to Governor Sanwo-Olu, the provision of infrastructure; (construction of tracks, terminals, communication gadgets, acquisition of rolling stock and others), which are items on the Government balance sheet, has limited the factors that will determine the price of riding on the trains to running and maintenance cost, payment of personnel and few others.

He noted: "Our administration is willing to extend the cost-recovery period or tenure of operation in order to ensure that fares on the trains will be affordable. Also, riding at peak and off-peak periods may also attract different fares thus giving passengers the option to plan their journeys cost-effectively.

"We are also working to establish a city-to-city relationship with Istanbul in Turkey, a city with similar demography and metro infrastructure, by which key personnel can be exposed to best practices and trained on regular, general and routine maintenance for operational efficiency".

The Governor also affirmed that the various projects of the administration, driven by the vision to reduce and predict travel time and ensure convenience for mass movement of peo-

ple from one part of the State to another, will provide an efficient transport system that will address the State's traffic challenges.

His words: "There is deep thought to these projects and a strong policy document - the State Transportation Master Plan (STMP) - which dictates that a megacity such as Lagos can only be run when all the transport modes are effectively and efficiently integrated and utilised.

"The initial focus on the development of a new route and track from Okokomaiko to Marina for the Blue Line, along with the expansion and upgrading of the corridor to 10-lane highway, was due to the difficulty encountered in getting the Federal Government approval to use the existing rail alignment for the Red Line; a project which has now commenced.

"The first phase of the Red Line from Alagbado to Oyingbo, which is witnessing massive construction works, will have eight stations at Iju, Ikeja, Oshodi, Ebute Metta and others. Our administration will complete and start the test run of both the Blue and Red Lines by the fourth quarter of 2022 as the terminals and tracks will be ready while installation of complementary facilities such as communication gadgets and other will still be on course."

For safety, he said the Government deliberately ensured the Blue Line has an elevated track from Orile to Marina and the route for the Red Line designed with five overpasses, which is a cheaper option, to avoid conflict with vehicular traffic, including the provision of CCTV, backed-

up by the fibre optic infrastructure, that will be deployed for traffic management and to provide information for traffic and security personnel.

On financing the projects, he maintained that the State is aware of its debt stock and the need to meet existing obligations but still has a lot of rooms in terms of sustainability ratio as it is working to improve the IGR and negotiating for single digit loans from commercial lenders with a tenure of ten to fifteen years, among others.

According to Sanwo-Olu, who confirmed that wet and dry seasons feasibility study and traffic count are being carried out on the other lines with projected completion date of mid-year 2022, the administration worked speedily on road and water transportation projects, with the acquisition of passenger boats of different capacities, building twenty-eight jetties and dredging waterways, as part of the quick plans to expand the transport system and reduce inconveniences because the rail is a capital intensive and long-term project.

"This is why our administration will continue to earn the trust of Lagosians by constantly and continuously engaging with them on the various policies, programmes and projects being undertaken in the State. We can only achieve the needed buy-in of the people for which the projects are being provided by letting them know the plan for them through continuous communication with all stakeholders, especially with the temporal inconvenience that comes with the various construction", he pledged.



NEWS FROM THE STATES

COVID-19: Gov Ganduje Flags-off Mass Vaccination Exercise, Launches Access to Healthcare

To effectively tame of all stages of COVID-19 pandemic, Governor Abdullahi Umar Ganduje of Kano State has flagged-off mass vaccination exercise for the pandemic and launched access to care under Basic Health Care Provision Fund (BHCPF), amid all sectors of health experts, including development partners.

The exercise took place at Coronation Hall, Government House, Kano, recently, as he reveals that, "As we are graduating from vaccination of targeted groups and population, we now open a new chapter, which is called Mass Vaccination."

It was organised by the State Primary Healthcare Management Agency (KSPHMA) in collaboration with the State Contributory Healthcare Management Agency (KSCHMA), through the state Ministry of Health.

He reiterated that, "We took all the necessary measures that were (are) required to tame COVID-19 in the state. That effort was made possible by the Will of Allah."

Adding that, "We also need to appreciate the efforts put by Alhaji Aliko Dangote, Alhaji Abdussamad Isyaka Rabi'u, Alhaji Aminu Dantata, our health workers and of course our security agencies for enforcing COVID-19 protocols."

On access to healthcare he said "Our aim is to have good access to healthcare service delivery across all the 44 local governments. To also have functional primary healthcare for our health facilities."

Encouraging that, the idea attempts to have minimum requirements for personnel, consumables, physical maintenance, among others.

Rescue Chinese Nationals Kidnapped at Zungeru Hydro Power Project, Governor Bello Urges Security Agents



Governor Abubakar Sani Bello of Niger State has urged security personnel to redouble efforts towards ensuring the safe return of the abducted Chinese Nationals working at the Sino-Hydro Electric Power Dam Zungeru, Wushishi Local Government of the state.

While condemning the attack in a message, Governor Sani Bello expressed concern over the audacity of the terrorists to attack the workers despite the presence of security personnel attached to the facility.

He said the attack was really disturbing as it would cause some setbacks to the Zungeru Dam project which the federal government has been making efforts to complete in record time.

According to the governor, "it really saddened my heart to hear about this attack. It is even more worrisome to know that the lives of the labourers were involved. This action might negatively affect the completion of the Zungeru Dam which is of great significance to the country.

"My heart goes out to the bereaved families of the labourers that were killed and those that were injured. I pray that Allah will grant them quick recovery."

It would be recalled that terrorists in large numbers attacked some workers including Chinese nationals working on a transmission line-tower along Gussase-Bosso village.

NEWS BRIEF

Hanifa's Murder: Gov. Ganduje Vows to Okay Death Sentence if Passed by Court

- *NHRC commends Gov's prompt response*

Governor Abdullahi Umar Ganduje of Kano State has promised to abide by the constitutional provision to assent to death sentence in the circumstance, when passed by Court, over the gruesome murder of five-year pupil Hanifa Abubakar Abba, a five-year old pupil, who was kidnapped and killed by her teacher who is also her school proprietor.

Gov. Bello Mourns, Eulogizes Ex-FUT Minna VC, Prof. Daniya

Niger State Governor and Chairman North Central States Governors' Forum (NCSGF), Abubakar Sani Bello has paid glowing tribute to late Professor Muhammad Abubakar Daniya, a renowned Physicist and former Vice Chancellor of the Federal University of Technology, Minna, who died aged 72.

In a condolence message, the Governor eulogized the deceased, describing him as an outstanding, highly respected academic who has enormously contributed to the development of education in the state and country as a whole.

He said the state has lost one of its academic trailblazers, erudite scholar and University Administration whose life time accomplishments and intellectual prowess are enviable and would remain indelibly priceless in the annals of the state.

"We are grieved. It's a huge, painful and irreplaceable loss to the state and country indeed. Late Professor Daniya was a man of demonstrable integrity and discipline who strived to achieve excellence and protect the interest of the tertiary institutions he managed as Vice-Chancellor and Rector respectively."

Stop the
Spread!



Let's not make it easy for the virus