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WAVES GLOBALLY
... VICE CHANCELLOR

DANGOTE AUTOMOBILES KICKSTART OPERATION IN NIGERIA

NCDMB: WE HAVE MADE

TREMENDOUS PROGRESS

...ENGR SIMBI WABOTE







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CATHOLIC CHURCH IN NIGERIA AND THE LIES OF DOMINATION

...A CASE STUDY OF IGBO AND YORUBA BY VINCENT EGUNYANGA

Rev Fr James Anelu of Holy Trinity Catholic Church Ewu Owa, Ikorodu in Lagos has opened another fault lines in Nigeria drive to a nationhood, Unity and Progress.

The parishioners sang in Igbo during second collection. He got angry with them for singing in Igbo and warned that they cannot dominate the his parish as they allegedly dominated Benin Archdiocese where they allegedly installed Akubueze as the Archbishop. He even went further to state they the Spirit of God only understand local languages during prayers.

Since then a lot of comments have been made about the Igbo trying to dominate others even in the church. Some of these commentators are ignorant and the priest himself is ignorant of the History and Development of the church he is serving or leading as the case may be. In the light of the above I will strongly recommend some changes in the curriculum of Seminaries in Nigeria to bring it up to date with realities of the present day Nigeria.

Am a Catholic and I have been a Catholic all my life, and have practiced my Catholic faith in all the Regions of the country. It is the same all over.

Am from Issele Uku, in Aniocha North Local Government Area of Delta state. Born in Ososa, somewhere in Ijebu Ode Area of Ogun state, grew up in Ibadan, Oyo state, Lived in Lagos for many years. Lived in Anambra and Enugu states. Worked and lived at various times as a Journalist in Katsina, Kano, Benin. Port Harcourt and now in Abuja. Nobody know Nigeria more than me.

In Catholic Church there is no domination of any group over another and there is no attempt by any group to dominate the other.

Christianity came into Nigeria through the British people. They came colonized our people and brought their own way of life and thinking on our people. At the end of the slave trade or the Trans Atlantic Trade many freed slaves were converted into Christianity and went to school in England. They used these freed slaves to

spread Christianity into Africa especially those who were able to trace their roots back to Africa.

Through these freed slaves they built churches, schools like the CMS Grammar school, Methodist Boys High School etc both in Lagos. One of such Africans sent to bring Christianity to Nigeria was a Yoruba man known as Samuel Ajayi Crowther. In fact he brought Christianity to Asaba and Igbo hinterland before the coming of the Catholic church in the East.

But as at the time Christianity came to Nigeria, the Yorubas also started the Revolution of African Churches. So the Anglican Church, CMS, BAPTIST, CATHOLIC CHURCH were like engaging in competition with African Churches like the Christ Apostolic Church, Cherubim and Seraphim Church, Celestial Church, Aladura church etc also sprung up. So for some reasons that cannot be explained many Yorubas joined these churches. These African Churches is the foundation of what we have now as Pentecostal churches like Redeemed Christian Church of God, Winners chapel, Mountain of Fire and Miracle. Deeper Life etc.

So the Yorubas virtually abandoned the Catholic Church and others for these Pentecostal and Protestant churches. It is their choice and it is their rights to so do. But nobody should try to blame others who wish to remain in the catholic church.

Coming back to the Catholic church, the church has tried as much as possible to make every part of the country equal. No one group dominating the other. The Church is divided into Provinces. Presently there are 9 Provinces in the country. Yoruba has two and Igbo has two.

The Provinces are LAGOS, IBADAN, BENIN, ONITSHA, OWERRI, ABUJA, KADUNA, CALABAR, JOS PROVINCES.

In all these Provinces there is nowhere outside the South East where masses are said in Igbo Language. Growing up in my primary school in a place called Idi Ayunre about 14 kilometers from Ibadan on the Ibadan\ Ijebu Ode road, I attended St Michaels Catholic church. Masses were said in Yoruba even when majority of the people who were present at mass were Igbos. We enjoyed the masses and were always happy to learn how to follow the mass in Yoruba language. In Ibadan we had white priests that had to learn to say Mass in Yoruba. I remember particularly Rev Fr Phonse Flattley an Irish Priest. All in attempt to bring more Yoruba into the church. IN Lagos I remember Fr Dennis Slattery of St Finbarrs college and parish priest of St Dennis catholic church Bariga tried to say mass in Yoruba to a majority non Yoruba parishioners and we enjoyed the mass.

Only once in a while that choruses, hymns and Praises were done in different languages including Igbo and that cannot go for domination.

A Catholic Priest is always in charge of his parish. He decide what language to use during mass, he decides what language to use during homily, so to insult the Igbo for just singing one igbo song during second collection which in most cases is done after mass show the priest need more training and is not even fit to be a catholic priest.

Secondly why the insult on the Catholic Archbishop of Benin Archdiocese. During ordination a priest take a vow to respect the Bishop. By insulting a Bishop Fr Anelu has violated his vow.

Thirdly he talked about Spirit of God understanding only language of the local community. The Acts of the Apostles made us to understand that when the Apostles of Jesus received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, they spoke in different Languages and the people who heard them in their various tribes, Races and places understand them not just the local language spoken in Jerusalem at that time.

The case of Rev Fr James Anelo is an indication that the catholic church deserve pity. It has exposed many poor training of its priests that require urgent attention if the church is to progress and the training of the priests in the Seminary need urgent review.

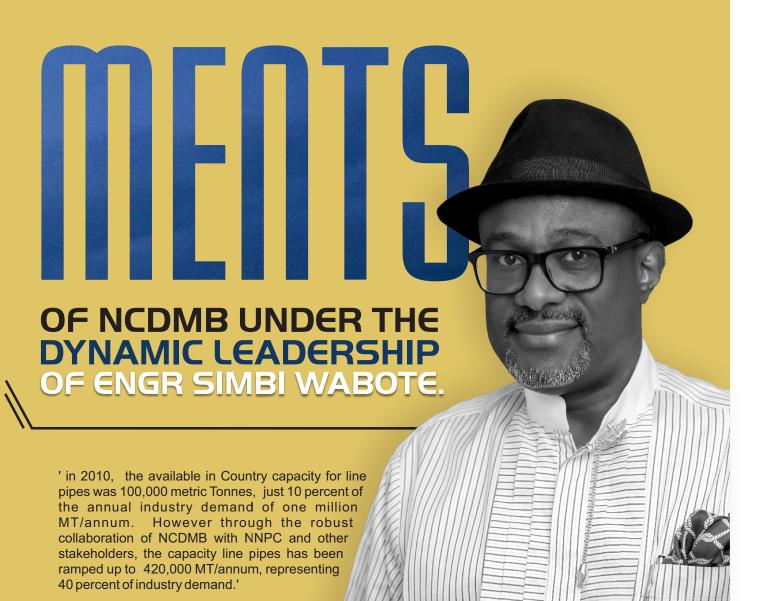


he impact of the of the Nigerian Content in the oil and gas industry has stimulated other sectors like Information and Communication, Automobile, Construction and Power to adopt some of the templates in their policy formulation.

'we are proud that some African Countries like Kenya, Congo Brazzaville and Uganda as well as Gabon and Angola have come to Nigeria in the past for mentorship on Local Content initiative."

These were the words of the then Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Petroleum Resources Dr Folashade Esan at the 8th Prsactical Nigerian Content Workshop organized by NCDMB in Yenagoa, Bayelsa state, recently. Dr Folashade Esan is now the Head of Service of the Federation of Nigeria.

The Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) has also expressed satisfaction on the Achievements of the Local Content in various sectors of the Nigerian economy. The Corporation noted that



This testimony was given by no other person than the former Group Managing Director of NNPC Dr. Maikanti Kacalla Baru at the same workshop 2018.

The local Content has achieved so much in

all ramifications. It has created and actually employed over 300,000 people so far and has saved the country over two billion dollars (\$2b).

Nigeria has saved \$2b on Engineering Procurement and Construction contract for Nigeria LNG Train 7 project through the Nigeria oil and Gas industry Content Development ACT implementation.

Evidence have proven that sustainable Local Content practice reduced the cost of oil and gas projects in addition to creating job opportunities and Economic prosperity.

Executive Secretary NCDMB Engr Simbi Wabote who spoke at a workshop for the Judiciary via zoom which drew over 117 participants including Justice of the Supreme Court, Appeal Court, National Industrial Court, Federal High Court and External Solicitors gave example with the LNG Train 7 EPC bid, where Saipem Contracting Nigeria and its Consortium won the contract with lower bid, leveraging on 50 years commitment to local content and investments in Nigeria.

He said 'in the concluded LNG Train 7 project contract awarded, the difference in price between Saipem that had established itself in Nigeria and the Second lowest bidder coming from outside the country was \$2b. That's huge sum of money that this country would have lost if not for the drive for the development of local content.

When President Muhammadu Buhari reappointed Engineer Simbi Wabote, Executive Secretary of NCDMB critical stakeholders in the oil and gas industry received the news with excitement, given his achievements in the office in the last four years.

Since he took over the management of NCDMB Engr Wabote dedicated his time and energy to ensure the engagement and patronage of indigenous companies in the execution of major life transforming projects in the country which hitherto were exclusive preserve of expatriates.

One good instance is his role in inspiring and building of a local vessel of TOTAL'S Egina Floating Production storage and offloading, FPSO. This vessel is capable of producing 200,000 barrels of oil per day.

This ingenuity created 3,000 jobs within one year. It translated into lifting thousands of Nigerians out of poverty.

Apart from providing access to intervention fund to encourage the growth and development of indigenous operators in the oil and gas business, the Wabote led management has changed the narrative of the modular refinery concept from mere political talks to reality.

An example is the NCDMB'S strategic equity investment in Azikel Modular refinery, an indigenous company located in Bayelsa state with a capacity of

12,000 barrels per day. The Waltersmith Modular Refinery located in Imo state which has a capacity of 5,000 per day.

The good news about these strategis initiatives is that it has improved the economy of the host community created jobs which has translated to taken thousands of restive youths in the Niger Delta region off the streets with meaningful engagements, thereby contributing to the relative peace in the oil and gas producing communities for growth and development of the nation's economy.

Another key initiative of the WABOTE led Administration is the oil and gas park scheme. The oil and gas scheme (NOGaPS) is one of Board's flagship projects that will further help alleviate poverty and unemployment in the oil and gas producing communities. Under the scheme, NCDMB develop world class oil and gas parks in the Niger Delta region that serve as manufacturing hub for equipment and component parts that are used in the oil and gas industry.

The oil and gas park scheme have been launched and is fully on stream in Cross Rivers and Bayelsa states.

When Engr Wabote took over the leadership of NCDMB in 2016, local content practice achieved a much higher pinnacle. Drawing from his wealth of experience in the oil and gas Industry spanning over 20 years especially with Shell Petroleum Development and Production company, he began to initiate and drive rapid changes.

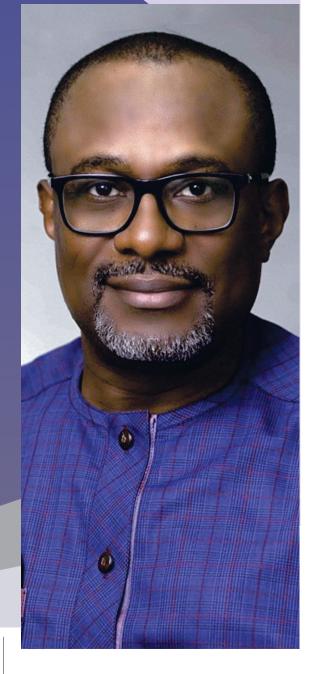
He started by resettling, simplifying and automating the internal processes. He took down unnecessary bottlenecks and cut down red tape, that is delay in government business. He introduced business agility to propel speed in service delivery.

Within one year in office, he had reorganized and repositioned the Board for higher efficiency and productivity by automating and optimizing its processes and implementation tools. He insisted on simplifying reporting templates and shortened the turnaround time for all the Board's touch points in tendering process.

Wabote initiated the use of Service level Agreements (SLA) way ahead of any other Federal Government Agency, to ensure ease of doing business. He developed a 10 year strategic roadmap, designed to increase Nigerian content level to 70 percent by 2027 with clear performance indicators, which include the creation of 300,000 jobs, retain at least \$14billion out of annual industry spend and activate manufacturing of vital oil and gas tools and spare parts in the country.

In less than four years, Engr Wabote has not only increased the momentum of local content practice, but also completely transformed the Nigerian oil and gas landscape, raising the bar of local content performance in the oil and gas industry. This explains the growing call for the extension of local content to other sectors of the economy.

PRESIDENT BUHARI REAPPOINTED SIMBI WABOTE NCDMB BOSS



he performance of the Nigerian Content Development Board (NCDMB) in keying into President Muhammadu Buhari's 3 points Agenda of Economic Development, Security and fight against Corruption got a boost and Executive Support with the reappointment of Engr Simbi Wabote as the Executive Secretary of NCDMB.

AS part of the Economic Development plan, The Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board lived up to its responsibility of Increasing Indigenous participation in the oil and Gas industry, built capacity and competences of Indigenous operators, create linkages to other sectors of the National Economy and also boost industry contribution to the growth of Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product. (GDP).

On the fight against corruption the Board has continued to make integrity its watchword. The Executive Secretary and the Board members have proven that they are personalities of impeccable integrity. No wonder the Nigerian Content Board is ranked number one in the audit of oil and gas industry conducted by Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. (NEITI).

THE summary of contributions of the NCDMB to the Federal Government's

agenda is summed up in the Executive Secretary's write up to mark achievements of the Board thus, 'The Board's strategic implementation of the NOGICD ACT has been impactful in the Oil and Gas industry and the wider economy. Several Nigerian service providers have invested in sophisticated vessels, Rigs, Assets that used to be Exclusive preserve of foreign companies. Local firms now enjoy patronage and even exclusivity in certain areas, retaining huge industry spend in the economy, employing Nigerians and building skills. Many Hi Tech fabrications, Manufacturing and Engineering facilities have also been developed and upgraded, domiciling most industry work that used to be exported.

Nigerian Content has also grown remarkably on the production side. Indigenous and marginal field producers now account for about 15 percent of Nigeria's crude oil production. They also contribute about 53 percent Domestic Gas supply requirements with NPDC, SEPLAT, ND WESTERN, FRONTIER, AITEO etc been major producers.



My Greatest achievement is the LOCAL CONTENT Intervention fund

...1.8m Jobs to be created ... Engr Wabote

he Local Content policy of the
President Muhammadu Buhari's
led administration is recording
massive achievements under the
direction of the Nigerian Content
Development and Monitoring Board
(NCDMB). In an Interview with
Journalists, its executive Secretary Engr
Simbi Kesiye Wabote speak on the short
and long term vision of the organization.

You have consistently clamoured for the Extension of Local Content into other sectors, arguing that it would boost the Economy and add to the Nation's GDP. How so.?

I think it is very important we do that. When we started the discussions around the Local Content some years back the intent is on how to retain value in Country and also create the needed jobs and also create opportunity for our people. For a very long time since the discovery of oil in Nigeria, the government focused primarily on revenue, taxes from the activities of oil and Gas sector and also Royalties without necessarily dwelling on the value chain that is associated with oil and Gas industry. So, in the process, we did not derive enough benefit from that sector. Oil was discovered in Nigeria about 56 years ago and during the exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbon in oil and Gas sector, we have lost a lot of revenue as a country. Prior to the discussions and enactment of the Local Content Act only about five percent of what is gotten in the oil and Gas sector value chain was retained In Country. The bulk of it was exported out of this country, nothing was done in Nigeria apart from the fact the oil is in the ground., they couldn't extract the oil elsewhere but they have to come here. So, everything related to the industry from fabrication, work activity, Engineering design, conceptual design, front end Engineering design, all of these were done outside the country. And it is only when it comes to installation that the work happens in country and through that, we derive less than five percent in the value chain associated with the oil and Gas sector. So the discussion started years back on how do we plough back some of these revenues that are being lost and jobs that are being lost in the country. In total, Nigeria lost about \$350billion on capital flights as a result of taking work out of the country while

nothing was coming into the country. I recall when I started my career in Shell in 1991 as an oil and Gas Engineer, we were in the envy of our colleagues who read Law, Economics because for every projects that is executed in the industry, we had to travel either to Houston, Aberdeen or Calgary to do front end engineering work, detailed engineering design work and the rest of it all. In the process, we lost two million jobs out of the country. So when the Local Content discussion started, it was all about how do we plough back and derive benefits apart from what we were depended on in the past which are taxes and Royalties. So, we started looking at the process where we bring back jobs into the country. Up until a policy on Local Content was enunciated during the Buhari regime and then discussions were around how do we institute that policy and who is going to drive that policy. The policy then was to increase Local Content to 45 percent by 2027 and to 75 percent by 2050 as the case may be. But the truth is, there was no driving force behind that. So when the government decided to institute that within NNPC, of course the NNPC being the senior partner in most of the joint ventures with IOCs, they were given the responsibilities to drive that policy. So they did their best with all manner of directives that they give to the oil industries in order to drive the Local Content and even coming out with what is called the 23 directives at some point. And some of these were the initial building blocks to the Local Content Law. So the department was created in NNPC, they pushed the needle a bit, but there was serious resistance by most of the International oil companies. At some points they tried their best but when push came to shove, they tell you that there is no legal basis with which they had to what they had to do. So, the then National Assembly saw the opportunity to say look, we need to need to back up this policy with some legal framework that would drive local content development. The discussion started for almost about eight years. The Law was in the National Assembly, so they kept on pushing the boundaries up until 2010 when eventually the ACT was signed into Law, by the Jonathan Administration and then this organization called the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) was created as a Regulatory Agency with the Legal backing to drive the development of the Local Content in Nigeria. So since then, we have made tremendous progress. Don't forget from less than five percent when we started, today we about

32 percent in terms of local content attainment, which is phenomenal . And when you talk about the spending in the Industry, on the average in the past, the industry spends about \$21b year on Year. So with the establishment of the Board and until date , we have been able to plough back substantial amount of money from \$21billion . Almost \$5b were retained in country and our objective is to plough back 70 percent of that annual spend by the year 2027. So with the Buhari Administration coming on Board, I was appointed in September 2016 and the first thing we set out to do , given the vision of the Administration , to drive long term planning , was to develop our strategic 10 year road map , which we did in 2017.

Part of the strategic road map is to take local

content to about 70 percent attainment trajectory.

When we took over, we had attained almost about 20percent, we are about 32 percent attainment now. So it's a gradual growth because of the nature of the local content development. It involves a lot, it involves Research and Development, it involves Capacity building, it involves setting up capabilities in country. I usually say local content is not a sprint, it's a marathon, because when you look at those building blocks, you have to develop them over time. It takes a lot of time to develop human capacity . it is not a flicker of the switch where you put it off and on and it happens. So when you look at a trajectory to develop it, it takes quite sometime. And we have been able to push the boundaries, primarily because of the belief by this administration to remain focused on policy direction and to support strategic plans. It is not a knee jerk reaction. Its about what are the plans and you need to put them in place and conscientiously follow through on the development of those plans. So far so good. For the past four years, we have achieved quite a lot. Just a quick example, there was no fabrication that was done in Country prior to the enactment of the ACT today, Nigeria can actually fabricate 120,000 tonnes per annum in terms of fabrication capacity, because we have been able to develop a lot of world class fabrication yards. And it might interest you that the world's largest floating production system was integrated here in Nigeria, about 200,000 barrels per day at the Samsung/Ladol facility in Lagos, so the clamour for push of local content to other sectors, you could make a business case for it. If you take the oil and gas sector as an example. But the idea is that you have to be focused in the area you want local content to be introduced. An example is the construction sector, it has come of age. A lot of Nigeria companies have been established to get into housing, roads, bridges and stuffs like that. That's a good area to look at.

The mining sector is also another good area to look at. What people forget is that it is the maturity of the oil and Gas sector that enabled the local content journey. For certain sectors that are not matured enough, there is no point trying to introduce local content, because you would stifle that development of that particular sector . A good area to also look at is the ICT sector. So, we need to look at strategic sectors that has huge capital spend and also huge potential.

Talking about attaining 70 per cent Local content by 2027 that brings us to the deregulation of the downstream sector. One of the strategies of the government is the opening up of modular refineries to develop local refining capacity. Can we achieve this objective in the nearest future.

Absolutely, in the short and long term, we are ready. When I joined the oil and gas sector all the upstream operations in the country were handled by expatriates. They dominated it. As Nigerians, we never saw an opportunity to become managers not to talk of Directors. But today, you have companies with Nigerians as Managing Directors, as well as Directors within those International Oil Companies. Today Nigerians are running the upstream sector and they have been very successful . An example is Seplat. When Seplat bought that acreage from SPDC, It was producing about 15,000 barrels per day. Today that acreage is producing almost 100,000 barrels per day, And 98 percent of the Management of the Seplat are Nigerians . Same thing you could say about Aiteo and others. These are all Nigerian managed upstream companies. So in terms of getting ready for the downstream, I think we have the capacity for us to get into it.. NCDMB like you know is a regulator and part of our mandate is to develop capacity in Country and we find ourselves fixated to government policy in terms of where government wants to add value. So, government came out with the policy of establishing modular refineries in order to augment the refining capacity of the country and save huge sums of money in foreign exchange that we spend in importing petroleum products.

So we got into partnership with Walter Smith as a catalyst for the development of modular refineries. Today there are about four modular refineries that we are supporting.

Going into specifics now, your Board believes that by boosting local Content about 300,000 jobs would be created and an addition of \$14 billion to our local GDP. Can you dwell more on this.

As part of our strategic road map which has a 10 year outlook, we have done three years already, so we are looking at a seven year window. like I said because we spend an average of \$21billion in the oil and gas industry, we believe that between now and 2027 we should be able to plough back \$14billion, which would be in country value addition through the participation of Nigerians in the oil and gas sector, both downstream, upstream and midstream. Through the policy of domiciliation and domestication, we would add in country value. And in the process, we hope to create 300,000 direct jobs. Now it is important to break that down, The oil and gas industry is not known to create so many jobs, because of the high equipment, intensive and high technical nature of it, however the supply chain that it creates has the capacity that 300,000 by six, for every one direct job you

create in the oil and gas sector, you create six others in the supply chain that follows it. So you can as well multiply that 300,000 by six talking about the Direct, Indirect and the induced jobs that are going to be created. Look at the Walter Smith refinery, which is probably not going to employ more than 50 people running it. But think about the truck drivers that will come to lift AGO, think about the food vendors that would set up shops around where you have the trailer parks that would feed those truck drivers, think about the young men and women that would support the truck drivers as they crisscross the country with their products, think about the hotels that would be created around it.

Fuel subsidy has been stopped now and the idea is to achieve self sufficiency in refined petroleum products. How soon can we make this happen.

There is a saying that necessity is the mother of invention. You have to take some very hard decision to be able to get people to think differently. If you continue to leave that decision to fester, people will never think differently. I believe that having taken the decision (fuel deregulation) give it a couple of months , you will see people beginning to see the opportunity to establish that refining capacity in country. The IOCs refused to invest in building refineries because of the subsidy. They didn't think it was a good business to go into, because when I build my refinery and I sell fuel, I have to beg to be paid the subsidy associated with it.

That's not a good business. I want to sell my fuel, I want to get my money, I don't need to beg anybody. So, having taken that very hard decision, I sincerely believe that give it a couple of months, you would see people who would begin to think about in country, because we have got the market. 203 million people is a whole lot. We have got the market, we have got the consumption power and also when you look at the Sub Saharan Africa region, there are no flourishing serious refineries. So if you do it in Nigeria, you have the capacity to capture the Nigerian Market, as well as the Gulf of Guinea market as the case may be.

Recently, the President Signed the Petroleum Industry Act. Can you tell us the Implications of this to the development of Local Content in Nigeria.

It's a separate bill focused on the upstream and downstream sectors. I have looked through it, its not directly conflicting with the Local Content Bill. But it would provide an opportunity for Local Content regulation to regulation to be a lot more robust and a lot more inclusive. And also every operator would be regulated by the ACT, because from what I read, NNPC would become a going concern which would also be regulated actively by the local content law itself. So I see a huge opportunity, I see casting away a lot of the unknowns, because of the greatest uncertainty that has bedeviled the industry is what comes out of the PIA.

I am aware that NCDMB manages the Nigeria Content Intervention Fund. How is that faring.

It has been excellent. That has been one of the most successful achievements so far by the Board that I lead. We started with the \$200m collaboration with the Bank of Industry (BOI) and as at mid this year, that was exhausted and the council thought it was wise to extend that by another \$150m, primarily to support the Nigerian businesses and to contributors to the fund. Don't forget NCDMB does not get the subvention from government, it is contributed by the oil and gas contractors through the contracts that they enter into with the various Oil and Gas companies. We pegged the interest at eight percent but as part of our COVID 19 intervention, it was brought down to six percent. It's fixed for five years and no matter what happens, that interest rate is not going to increase, because this is a fund they contributed in a holding basin that is being utilized to support them. As I speak to you, some other African Countries are currently looking at the model in order to develop the local content policy in their countries.

Your Board recently commissioned a new state of the art complex in Yenegoa, Bayelsa state. We understand that the edifice was designed by a Nigerian and also built by a Nigerian. Tell us more about this.

According to what people say, practice what you preach, we set out on that project four and half years ago. It's a 17 story building erected in a very difficult terrain. The design was by a Nigerian Architectural firm, Portman, Walters managed by Architect Odusote, while Megastar an indigenous construction company handled the real construction. Because of the terrain, I can tell you that half of the 17 story is underground based on the number of piles that we drove into carry the bulding, also 90 percent of the construction materials were sourced locally. All the granite tiles were made here. We got the bulk of it from Kaduna, the paints were manufactured in Nigeria, likewise all the cables. And in terms of the workforce almost 95 percent of them were Nigerians. We have to even build the capacities of some of the locals in order to be part of the projects. Its not just a 17 story, attached to it is 1000 seater auditorium state of the art and also a four story, four level car park, it's a small building with all manner of technology in it. There is also a fire lift within the building in the event of a fir

Despite the challenge in the Niger Delta , we achieved this within four and half years . we put up this structure in record time , thanks to the President and the Hon Minister state for Petroleum Resources for all the support to get us through with that project. We are very proud of it because it's the tallest building currently completed in the South South and South East . We are indeed proud that we were able to set the record.

INDUCTION OF SIMBI KESIYE WABOTE

INTO THE

Reelnews Hall of fame



PRESENTATION BY THE

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, NIGERIAN CONTENT DEVELOPMENT AND MONITORING BOARD (NCDMB), ENGINEER SIMBI WABOTE AT REALNEWS MAGAZINE 9TH ANNIVERSARY LECTURE AT SHERATON HOTEL, IKEJA, LAGOS.



am delighted to be part of the 9th Anniversary
Celebration of the Realnews Magazine and
Publications. For anyone familiar with the statistics of
failure rates of private enterprises, he or she will find
it highly commendable that Realnews has been kept
afloat for nearly a decade Permit me therefore to
offer my Big Congratulations to my sister, Maureen
Chigbo, the Publisher and Editor of Realnews
Magazine and Publications Limited. In line with the
modus operandi of Realnews when it comes to its
anniversaries, I have been invited to deliver a lecture on
one of the topical issues of our time in respect of the need
for greater integration amongst African Economies under
the umbrella of African Continental Free Trade Agreement
(AFCFTA).

I particularly appreciate the focus on getting the oil and gas perspectives in the unfolding integration of African Economies especially as it concerns Nigeria. Beyond all the attention being paid to Energy Transition, Net Zero Emissions, Green Energy, and others, the topic of this year's Anniversary has elected to focus on the nexus between the oil and gas industry and the integration of

African economies.

The outline of my lecture will be in the following order:

- A brief introduction of the African hydrocarbon landscape.
- Describe the key tenets and objectives of the AFCFTA.
- I will thereafter share my views on the key aspects of Nigeria's oil and gas industry as it relates to the AFCFTA.

The Africa oil map reveals the rapid spread of the discovery of hydrocarbon especially in the last two decades. Between 2005 and 2015 alone, we had Ghana, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Mozambique, Kenya, Tanzania, and Senegal as new additions to the league of countries with hydrocarbon resources. Evidently, Africa is practically sitting in oil and gas reservoirs.

In this year alone, Namibia announced discovery of 120 billion barrels of oil comparable to the Permian Basin in Texas, USA. Other discoveries include the 2 billion barrels

discovered in Cote D'Ivoire, 700million barrels in Ghana, and 250million barrels in Angola. With proven crude oil reserve of 37 billion barrels of oil which is the 11th largest in the world and proven gas reserve of 206 TCF which is the 9th largest in the world, Nigeria is also well known as a strategic player in the global oil and gas industry.

In consideration of the share volume of Nigeria's gas reserves, there is a popular saying that Nigeria is a gas province with pockets of oil deposits. It is estimated that even if the current gas consumption level in Nigeria is doubled, the gas reserves could still last for fifty (50) years.

It is also a well-known fact that Nigeria is highly dependent on revenues from the oil and gas industry to power its economy.

With the huge existing, newly discovered, and the yet to be discovered hydrocarbon resources across the African continent, it is pertinent to evaluate the implication of the unfolding integration of African market on the Nigerian oil and gas industry.

On the 1st of January 2021, the whole of Africa became one single market courtesy of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) effectively creating the world's largest free trade area connecting 1.3billion people on the continent with a combined GDP of about \$3.4trillion.

The agreement is meant to address the low intraregional trade in Africa estimated at 17% compared to 69% obtainable in Europe and 59% obtainable in Asia.

Some of the key thrusts and targeted benefits of AFCFTA include:

- Free movement of people, goods, and capital
- * Removal of tariff and non-tariff trade barriers
- * Investing in cross-border infrastructure
- Streamlining trade, investment, and monetary policies

Thus, AFCFTA remains a game changer in turning the fortunes of the continent around as it economic and social benefits cut across multiple sectors such as trade, education, health, finance, agriculture, transportation, manufacturing, and even the oil and gas industry.

Regarding Nigeria's positioning in the emerging integration of the African Market, the following perspectives are pertinent for consideration to ensure the full benefits of the agreement are realised:

- * Infrastructure
- Local Content
- * Energy Transition
- * Funding
- * Resource Utilisation
- Human Capacity Development/Expatriation and Services

Ladies and gentlemen, permit me to briefly deliberate on some of these viewpoints as it concerns the opportunities, and perhaps threats, that could be realised by the Nigerian oil and gas industry against the AFCFTA agreement.

Let me start with infrastructure...The word Infrastructure is defined as the fundamental facilities,

services and systems serving a country, city, or other geographical area, for its economy to function. Infrastructure can also be seen as the physical components of interrelated systems providing commodities and services essential to enable, sustain, or enhance societal living conditions. It is also important to highlight that there are two ways to view infrastructure – hard infrastructure or soft infrastructure.

Hard infrastructure refers to the physical networks necessary for the functioning of a modern industry. This includes roads, bridges, tunnels, water supply, sewers, electrical grids, telecommunications, and others.

Soft infrastructure refers to all the institutions that maintain the economic, health, social, and cultural standards of a country. This includes educational programs, recreational facilities, law enforcement agencies, emergency services, and governance structure.

Specific to the energy sector, the key driver of infrastructure requirement is the need to convert the energy source in its raw form into a useable form and make it available where it is required to power the needs of humans and the society. Examples of such infrastructure include hydrocarbon processing plants, pipelines, power plants, pylons, ports, jetties, terminals, and several others.

The African oil and gas landscape provides huge opportunities for cross-border infrastructure to unlock development of stranded assets or bring energy closer to the people. Such infrastructure also leads to lower unit development costs. For example, the existing West Africa Gas Pipeline (WAGP) and ongoing AKK gas transmission infrastructure provide good opportunity to serve regional markets in West Africa and the Sahel region especially with the recent hydrocarbon discoveries.

Facility such as the SHI-MCI yard in Lagos, the only FPSO integration yard infrastructure in Africa has put Nigeria at a vantage position to serve the wider African market.

The next perspective I will like to share my thoughts on is Local Content practice in the oil and gas industry. It is typical for many to consider local content as being against trade liberalization. I wish to state categorically that AFCFTA and Local Content are not mutually exclusive. No nation is blessed with the full list of natural resources, and none can produce every product it requires.

This implies that a country must be allowed to protect its areas of comparative advantage so that it can be utilized to trade for what it lacks. Discouraging local content laws and practice in the name of free trade is like fostering one-way trading which is not sustainable.

Nigeria continues to lead the way in the practice of Local Content in the oil and gas industry. We have ongoing collaboration with our brothers and sisters in Angola, Ghana, Siera Leone, Senegal, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Niger Republic, Uganda, and many others as we match forward and compare notes in our local content journeys.

These collaborations have fostered integration of thoughts and actions thereby further enhancing the realisation of the objectives of AFCFTA.

Next on the list is Energy Transition which refers to

the global energy sector's shift from fossil-based systems of energy production and consumption — including oil, natural gas and coal — to renewable energy sources like wind and solar, as well as lithium-ion batteries.

Energy transitioning is not a recent phenomenon as it has been occurring for centuries. The usual trigger for this is the need to utilise energy that is efficient, effective, and economic. As at the 15th century, biomass was used as the main source of fossil fuel.

Later in the 19th century, biomass was largely replaced by coal as the preferred source of fuel.

A century later, oil was discovered, and it replaced coal as the preferred source of fuel. Crude oil was so much loved and valued that it was nicknamed the 'Black Gold'. In the late 20th century, gas was seen as a cleaner fuel and hence it gained much prominence over crude oil as the preferred cleaner fuel.

Now in the 21st century, renewable energy has been embraced as a much cleaner and environmentally friendly source of energy with increasing clamor for outright shift to the renewable energies.

Some of the key drivers of the push of energy transition in our era include the following:

- * Technological advancements in the creation of other forms of energy. Hitherto far-fetched technology to manufacture solar panels or construct windmill farms are becoming commonplace.
- * Reduction in the acquisition cost of renewable energy source such as solar and wind, as well as the cost of energy storage leading to massive rollout of solar power electricity in homes and the increasing adoption of Electric Vehicles by companies and consumers.
- Environmental regulatory issues and the need to reduce energy related green-house emissions through various forms of decarbonisation.

Depletion of hydrocarbon reserves in most of European hydrocarbon-rich countries. For example, the North Sea that used to be a prolific producer of oil decades ago, peaked in 1999 and is now largely a location for decommissioning of oil production assets. It is estimated that UK's proven oil reserves is not sufficient to sustain its domestic consumption for the next 5 years without increased importation. Netherlands has zero barrels of proven reserves left and relies heavily on oil importation. European Countries are mainly at the fore-front of the push for energy transition as the level of their hydrocarbon resources have plummeted. Some still retain some elements of hydrocarbon in their energy mix. Last September, UK had to restart some of its coal-fired power plants when it could not cope with the prices of gas.

For instance, in 2007, Germany announced its plan to phase out subsidies for its coal industry.

In the year 2016, the Dutch parliament voted for 55% cut in CO2 emissions by the year 2030

Norway agreed to ban the sale of new internal combustion engine vehicles by the year 2025 while Britain also agreed to ban all diesel and petrol cars and vans.

In its Net Zero 2050 Report, the International Energy Agency (IEA) called for an immediate halt in fossil fuel supply projects. Some of the major European banks have heeded this call and announced a halt to financing of hydrocarbon related projects as part of their support for decarbonisation efforts.

These pronouncements have direct and indirect implications on the global energy ecosystem as nations, businesses, and individuals adjust to the shifting energy landscape. It is instructive to note however that, despite the unpleasant narratives about coal, the International Energy Agency in its 2021 Global Energy Review projects that the global coal demand in 2021 is set to exceed 2019 levels and approach the 2014 peak.

While China alone is projected to account for over 50% of global growth, coal demand in the United States and the European Union is also on the upswing.

Last September, UK had to restart some of its coal-fired power plants when it could not cope with high prices of gas.

Back here in Nigeria, and in Africa at large, it is important to emphasise that Africa's industrialisation agenda is at the heart of AFCFTA and fossil fuels remains a very significant part of the energy mix required for industrializing the continent. In addition, the revenues obtained from the sale of the hydrocarbon resources remain key drivers of the economies of the African oil and gas producing countries.

The pull back of investments on hydrocarbon development projects is indeed a challenge for oil producing countries such as Nigeria. There are key areas of focus that could be used to address this challenge: The first is the collaborative platform provided by AFCFTA to provide funding and the technology required to operate and develop hydrocarbon projects.

The second is to have in place an investment-friendly law such as the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) 2021. This will come in handy to attract much needed funds for project developments when the effect of the premature halting of new hydrocarbon projects lead to supply shortages with attendant unbearable price hikes.

The last point I will like to make is on the need to increase in-country hydrocarbon resource utilization. For crude oil, this can be realised through massive refining and production of petrochemicals.

In realisation of the enormous prospects that gas holds as a cleaner, more efficient fuel in Nigeria, His Excellency, President Muhammadu Buhari GCFR, declared year 2021 to 2031 as the Decade of Gas.

As variously espoused by Mr. President and the Honorable Minister of State for Petroleum Resources at various fora, the future of Nigeria's hydrocarbon industry is in GAS. Thus, I am extremely pleased that the Ministry of Petroleum Resources, under the sterling leadership of President Muhammadu Buhari and the Honorable Minister of State for Petroleum Resources, Chief Timipre Sylva, have commenced implementation of several initiatives that seeks to develop the gas sector in line with the "Decade of Gas" declaration.

Construction works on NLNG Train-7 has commenced which will increase the current capacity of the plant by 30%. The 614km-long Ajaokuta-Kaduna-Kano (AKK) gas pipeline under construction by NNPC is expected to transport 3.5bscf/day of gas.

Other initiatives that have been put in place in line with the "Decade of Gas" declaration includes the Nigeria Gas Flare Commercialization Program (NGFCP) and the Nigeria Gas Expansion Program (NGEP) aimed at deepening domestic utilization of LPG and Autogas. At NCDMB, we are also pursuing various aspects of gas development and utilization programs to enhance delivery of government policy directives on gas.

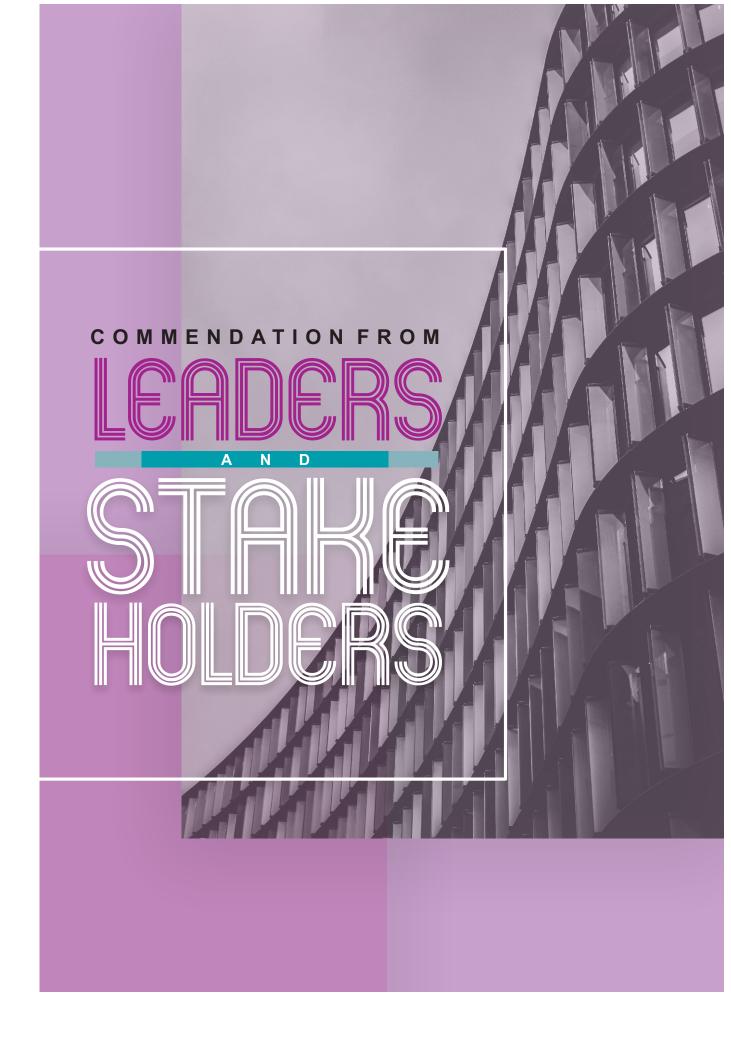
70% of our partnership investment programs are targeted towards gas development projects.

In the last two and half years, we have commenced partnerships to deliver gas value-chain related projects as follows:

- * Partnership with NEDO Gas Processing Company In Kwale, Delta State for the establishment of 80MMscfd of Gas Processing Plant and a 300MMscfd Kwale Gas Gathering hub.
- * Partnership with Triansel Gas Limited for the construction of 5,000MT LPG Storage and Loading Terminal Facility in Koko, Delta State.
- * Partnership with Duport Midstream for the construction of Energy Park inclusive of a modular refinery, power plant and 40MMscfd gas processing facility at Egbokor, Edo State.
- * Partnership with Brass Fertiliser for the development of a 10,000MT/day Methanol Plant and 350MMscfd gas processing plant at Odiama in Brass.
- Partnership with Rungas Group for the manufacturing of 1.2million composite LPG cylinders every year in Bayelsa and Lagos States.
- * Partnership with Butane Energy to deepen LPG utilization in the North with the roll-out of LPG bottling plants and depots in ten (10) Northern States of Kaduna, Bauchi, Katsina, Kano, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, Gombe, Zamfara, Jigawa and FCT Abuja; From all indications, we can see that AfCFTA holds a great promise for the economic growth and development of Nigeria and indeed other African countries.

There is no doubt that the Nigerian oil and gas industry has a role to play in AfCFTA. However, all the key stakeholders in the oil and gas industry need to align the industry to better fit into the AfCFTA regime

On a final note, let me once again seize this opportunity to thank the management and staff of RealNews magazine for inviting me to be a part of this event. Let me also commend you for not joining the bandwagon of FAKE news merchants. I believe you will stay true to the name of the magazine by giving your readers REAL news for many decades to come.





PRESIDENT MUHAMMADU BUHARI:

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

he edifice we are inaugurating today is a befitting birthday gift as you mark your 10th year anniversary as a regulator and developer of local content in the oil and gas industry. I am pleased that this project has been delivered by local contractors supported by other local engineering and project consultants. We must all be proud that we finished what we started.'

...President Muhammadu Buhari during the inauguration of the 17 story NCDMB building.



TIMIPRE SILVA

MINISTER OF STATE PETROLEUM RESOURCES.

he Minister commended NCDMB under Engr Wabote for the numerous achievements it had recorded in the implementation of the NOGICD ACT. He said 'I am quite impressed with what they have done in a very short time of coming to office. The new headquarter building is a testament to that impressive performance.

...The Minister spoke at the conclusion of his first working visit to NCDMB Head office in Yenagoa, Bayelsa state.



JUSTICE TANKO MUHAMMAD

CHIEF JUSTICE OF NIGERIA

he implementation of the local content across the globe is an apparatus through which citizens of oil rich countries derive value from crude oil resources. Justice Muhammad thanked NCDMB for enhancing the Judiciary capacity to dispense Justice from an informed and contemporary position, particularly as it related to Local Content Development and oil and gas operations.

...The Chief Justice of Nigeria was represented by Justice Olukayode Ariwoola, during the workshop for the Judiciary.

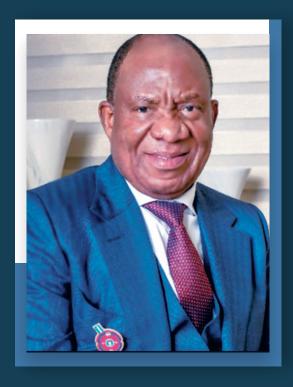


JUSTICE ALFA BELGORE

FORMER CHIEF JUSTICE OF NIGERIA

he award given to Wabote is given to only 'people who have made outstanding contributions to the promotion of the Rule of Law, oil and Gas and the general economic growth and development of Nigeria.' Describing the Wabote led NCDMB as 'the most outstanding Federal Agency'.

...Justice Belgore spoke when he presided over the maiden edition of Juris Law office award in Abuja.



DR. LEEMON A. IKPEA

EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN LEE ENGINEERING

our reappointment as the Executive Secretary of NCDMB by President Muhammadu Buhari is an eloquent testimony of your exceptional professional competence, impeccable character and incurable passion for excellence which has largely transformed the Nigerian business landscape, especially in the oil and gas industry. Your inspiring antecedents and committed style of exemplary management at NCDMB has incontrovertibly made your reappointment most deserving.

MAY ALMIGHTY GOD GRANT YOU THE REQUISITE WISDOM AND GOOD HEALTH TO RENDER YOUR USUAL HIGH QUALITY SERVICE TO NATION BUILDING AND HUMANITY. MAY HE CONTINUE TO BLESS THE GOOD WORK OF YOUR HANDS.

...Dr Leemon Ikpea in his congratulatory message to Engr Wabote on his reappointment by President Muhammadu Buhari.



jaw Youths Council (IYC) Worldwide has warned blackmailers and mischief makers hiding under civil society organisations to steer clear of the Executive Secretary, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB), Mr. Simbi Wabote.

The President, IYC, Peter Timothy Igbifa, in a statement described attempts by such persons to tarnish the image of Wabote using a subjudiced matter in the USA as laughable, deceptive and childish.

Igbifa explained that no court in the USA had found Wabote guilty of any wrongdoing saying persons behind reports accusing Wabote of perjury should be arrested and tried for causing public nuisance and civil unrest.

Describing Wabote as a frontline Niger Delta son and an upright public servant, Igbifa said the persons raising unnecessary dust had no locus to make a defamatory suit filed by Wabote himself a matter of public discussion.

Igbifa said IYC had compiled the names of persons behind attempts to pull down Wabote, whom he described as one of the rising Ijaw stars, and warned them to thread cautiously or risked burning their fingers.

He said Wabote had repositioned and reformed the NCDMB making it the only agency without political interference and using it to champion development across the states in the country.

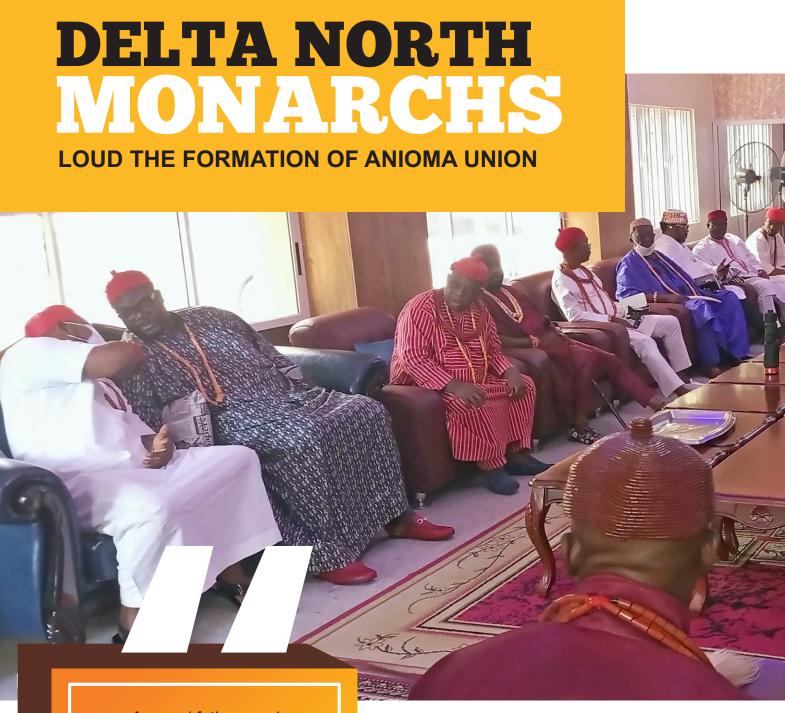
Igbifa said: "Wabote has made us proud as an Ijaw man. His professionalism in the management of the affairs of NCDMB is outstanding and his achievements as the executive Secretary of the Board are extraordinary. Therefore, IYC under my leadership cannot allow any campaign of calumny designed by envious losers to embarrass him.

"NCDMB under Wabote is the only agency in the heart of Niger Delta that has operated without any political interference. Under Wabote's NCDMB, youths across the country are trained, employed and empowered in various fields of endeavour. We won't allow anybody to destroy the character of this performer.

"Recently, some IYC leaders from Central Zone were given leadership training by NCDMB. Also over 100 youths are undergoing boat operation training in Delta State. Wabote's NCDMB has given numerous skill acquisition trainings to many Niger Delta and Nigerian youths".

Igbifa said persons angry with Wabote because they had yet to directly benefit from NCDMB should retrace their steps and consider the general interest of the region.

Advising Wabote not to be discouraged by the antics of desperadoes, Igbifa called for synergy from all stakeholders to tackle the challenges facing the Niger Delta.



As royal fathers and custodians of Anioma land and the people, we believe the natives of Delta North must come together under one huge umbrella in unity, love and oneness to project and protect their common desires and interests not only in Delta but Nigeria as a whole.

raditional rulers in Delta North senatorial district have thrown their weight behind the formation of a Pan-Anioma group known as ANIOMA UNION.

Rising from a special meeting which held at the palace of the Obi Of Owa ,in Ika North East local government area, the monarchs resolved that the proposed ANIOMA UNION, encompassing the socio- cultural quadrants of Aniocha, Oshimili,Ika and Ndokwa,would advance the development of Delta North.

The Obi of Owa, His Royal Majesty, Obi Dr. Emmanuel Efeizomor 11, JP, OON, who spoke on behalf of the Kings expressed confidence that the ANIOMA UNION would promote the social, cultural, political and



economic development of Anioma land.

Obi Efeizomor called on those behind the pan Anioma group to ensure that the aggregate interests of all sons and daughters of Delta North are taken into consideration for the betterment of all.

In the words of Obi Efeizomor:

The forum of Delta North traditional rulers said the senatorial district needed a strong, United and powerful voice that would advance the interest and aspirations of Anioma region and her people in Diaspora ,in the mould of Arewa, Afenefere, Ohaneze Ndigbo, Urhobo Progressive Union, Ijaw National Congress and Isoko development among other socio cultural organizations.

The Monarchs noted that Anioma Nation had made

outstanding contributions to the development of modern Nigeria, from the colonial to the post independent era with the salutary impact of her sons and daughters ,spanning all spheres of life endeavours in Africa 's most populous country.

While appealing for total support towards the success of the pan Anioma group,the traditional rulers advised that the ANIOMA UNION should faithfully serve the general interest of all, to stand the test of time, as the umbrella body of the present and future generations of Anioma people.

The Monarchs who prayed for peace and sustainable development in Anioma land and Delta state in general, were drawn from all the 9 local government areas in Delta North.

NIGERIA 2023: .

TAKE THE LEAD.









he door to the <u>2023 presidential campaign</u> hasn't been formally opened yet but the line of potential contenders is already crowded and getting longer all the time. It's shaping up to be a wide-open race, especially on the side of the All Progressives Congress (APC), but plenty of members from both leading parties are perceived to be stepping up to audition for President Buhari's job.

There could be as many as two dozen aspirants with at least a semiserious rationale for running when the dust settles before the end of 2022. But here's a quick look at few of those who could make noise in 2023.

Alhaji Atiku Abubakar:

In 2010, he returned to the PDP to contest in the presidential primaries but was bested by President GoodluckJonathan who had succeeded Yar'Adua months

earlier.

In 2014, Atiku joined the newly registered mega party, All Progressives Congress, and contested in the primaries but was defeated by General Muhammadu Buhari and then Kano State Governor, Rabiu Kwankwaso. Not daunted, Atiku again returned to the PDP in 2018 where he won the presidential primary.

In 2019, he contested in the presidential election where he garnered 11.2 million votes and won 17 states, including the nation's capital, Abuja. However, this proved not to be enough as Buhari polled 15.1 million votes, a victory margin of 3.9 million.

Atiku has, however, shown no signs of backing down. Last year, his son Adamu revealed that he would be contesting again in 2023. "Personally, I don't see anything wrong with my father contesting for the presidency. In 2023, my father will be aspiring to the number one office in the land because he has been an astute, strategic, master politician for almost four decades," he told journalists.

With his seemingly growing popularity in southern Nigeria, stupendous wealth and the support of some northern elements who believe the north should retain power, many believe Atiku could still become president of Africa's largest nation, since Buhari also accomplished this feat after three failed attempts.

Prof. Yemi Osinbajo:

Although, Vice President Yemi Osinbajo has not declared interest in the 2023 presidential race, his loyalists believe he perfectly ticked the box of the next president of the country as visualised by Babangida during his recent interview.

With less than 527 days to the presidential election, various support groups of the Vice President are no longer waiting for his official declaration as they have embarked on political journies to some states selling his candidacy and the need to continue the legacy of Buhari after 2023.

Political observers are of the views that Osinbajo is the most eligible to take over from Buhari in 2023. First, he is a Christian of the Pentecostal denomination. Two, he is from the South-west. Three, he is in his sixties. His capacity and capability to combine both politics and the economy for a smooth governance is equally not in doubt.

During the 2019 presidential campaign for the reelection of Buhari, Osinbajo took the campaign to the door step of the masses by visiting various markets across the country, relating with Nigerians and connecting with them. His campaign strategy went a long way in winning the election for the APC whose electoral fortune had taken a nosedive then.

With the country's frail fault lines at the moment, the Vice President has been an advocate of a united Nigeria. He is of a firm believe that Nigerians have much more to gain from being citizens of a united country than they may derive from any secessionist entity that emerges from the nation's fragmentation. To many, Osinbajo represents the best

chance to unify the county. But the main question still remains, will he throw his hat in the ring? I guess time will tell.

Rt. Hon. Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi:

Political Engineering is not offered in any conventional institution as course of study. It is a strange Nigerian subject that crops up intermittently when the <u>polity</u> is at explosion point. Chibuike Rotimi <u>Amaechi</u> will soon be the next topic.

There are subtle moves to prepare the Minister of Transportation as the next President of the country. Plans are still in the <u>works</u> with so much taken into consideration. The project has no direct supervisor but its operation is monitored by stakeholders who are bent on restoring peace.

The major drive is insecurity all over the land. In the recent past, it was confined to the North -East where the extremist Islamic group, Boko Haram opened camp and acquired territory. Beyond that axis, other parts of the North were relatively peaceful.

Presently neither the North nor the South is safe. We have moved from insurgency to killer herdsmen, bandits and seccessionists. It is a frightening development that continues to threaten the existence of the country. And not much has been achieved by government.

The root of the present decay lies somewhere in politics and politicians. As the 2023 presidential election approaches, it does appear man and the elements have conspired to drive peace from the landscape.

Some <u>die</u> hards in the ruling APC want President Muhammadu Buhari to hand over to another Northerner in 2023. This is neither politically correct nor advisable at this time for Nigeria is seen as a country of two deep divides, North and South.

It is in the bid to keep the country afloat that some moderates within APC circles and concerned stakeholders in the Nigeria Dream have zeroed in on Amaechi as a possible successor to President Buhari. It is a smartly packaged project.

Project Amaechi is meant not to scare the North. It is a move that is expected to woo the South-East and appeal to the South-West. The South-South is not given any consideration because the candidate is from that Geo Political Zone. This also automatically inters the Bring Back Jonathan eulogy.

Amaechi, as governor of Rivers State was a major stakeholder of the Buhari Presidential contract in 2015. And he delivered. He has so far remained a Buhari loyalist. He has given the North the Kano-Maradi and Kano-Dutse Standard Gauge rail project worth over two billion dollars.

The South-East is being given the Irabor treatment. Amaechi may be from the South-South but the idea is that the South-East will not cry buckets. That is the story of General Lucky Eluonye Onyenuchea Irabor. He is from the South-South and speaks the Ika dialect of the Igbo language as a Delta man.

Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi speaks the Ikwerre dialect, similar to the Igbo language and hails from Rivers. His wife, Judith Obiajulu (nee Nwankwo) hails from Enugwu Ukwu in Anambra State. Her mother was from Ndoni in Rivers, same hometown as Odili.

For the South-West, the name Rotimi should ring a bell. Beyond that, while rail services in the East are being reconstructed, <u>Amaechi</u> has animated the business in the <u>Lagos-Ibadan axis</u>. He is very popular among journalists around the <u>Lagos</u>/West environment.

This is all power play. And events in the South appear to have jolted the North. It was never imagined that the South-East and South-West could find a common threat from the upper divide. Amotekun scares the North, more than Nnamdi Kanu and Sunday Igboho exchanging ideas. Field Marshal Rotimi Akeredolu spits fire like the lion of Judah.

Looking the way of <u>Amaechi</u> is believed to be an antidote to agitations in the South-East. It is also another ploy to check the ambitions of Peter Obi, should the PDP hand him a Presidential ticket. So far, he is seen as a strong candidate.

Former Vice President Atiku is not considered a threat as age seems to be against his dream. The belief is that supporting another Northerner by the North through PDP will offend Southern sensibilities. And after Buhari, there is need to look for younger choices.

Moderates in the North flaunt the stronger Middle Belt/ South ties as warning that power must shift from the Northern part of the country in 2023. And they have found in <u>Amaechi</u>someone who can fill in a lot of gaps and fit into many shoes.

All these explain the clement weather observed after the suspension of Hadiza Bala Usman, Managing Director of Nigeria Ports Authority by Amaechi. She is from Katsina like Buhari and has blood links with the Kano and Katsina ruling families.

Amaechi has an everlasting willingness to fight against the odds and he backs himself to win every single time. It was the trait he displayed when rising through the ranks to eventually become governor in Rivers State. It was the same trait he displayed while defying a sitting first lady and breaking with tradition to join the opposition as Rivers State governor.

It is the trait he continues to display, which has helped him survive for 5 long years as the most visible southern face on president Buhari's cabinet.

You may be wondering why the minister of Transportation turns out in traditional Igbo red cap and Ishiagu. Amaechi would describe the <u>Super</u>Eagles as 'agba ekperechi', Igbo for in God we trust. The game is on and those who know, know.

Bola Ahmed Tinubu:

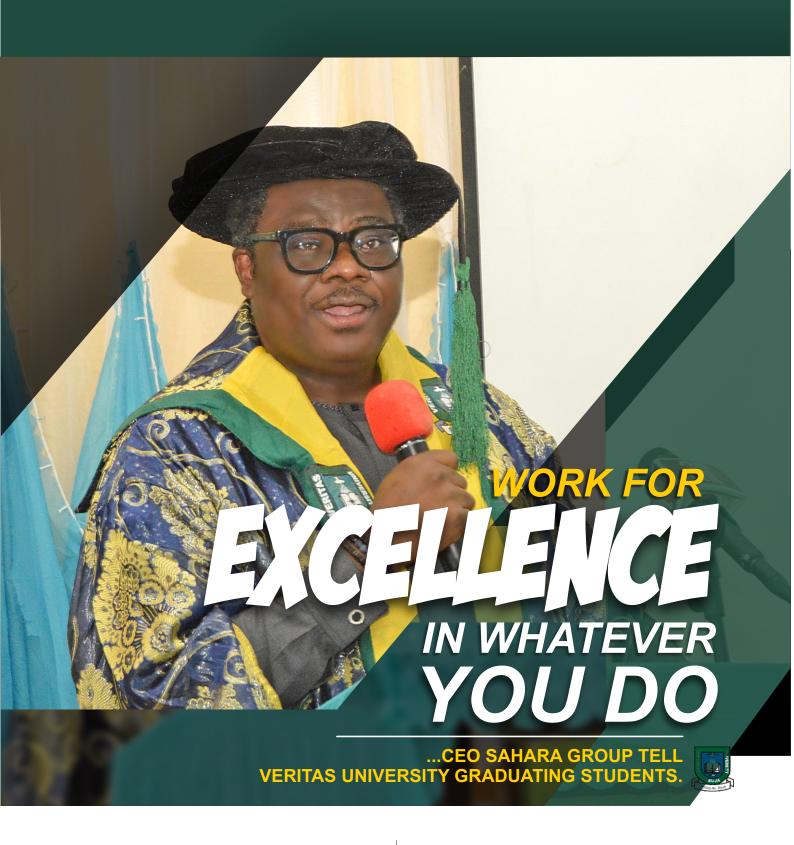
Recent developments in and around the political empire of Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu (BAT) point to the reality that his rumoured aspiration to bid for the presidency of Nigeria, has moved beyond the realm of conjecture and into actual jostling. For over a decade, and even soon after his two term run as the Governor of Lagos State, the man Tinubu had been associated with the prospects of his possible emergence as Nigeria's president. In the context of the foregoing, he had also been involved in one scheme or the other, either to network contacts across the length and breadth of the country, as well as positioning his acolytes in strategic positions in the nation's political firmament, ostensibly to build a formidable base to shore up support for him in any future contest. Some recent developments however suggest that Tinubu's days of reaping dividends from his enterprise may have commenced.

Late 2020 featured perhaps the most elaborate showcasing of BAT by his loyalists as their anointed President-in-waiting, with at least one rally at Libadanto press home their agenda. In another outing was when a group of prominent Yoruba politicians that goes by the name South West Agenda (SWAGA) met in Ibadan to launch perhaps the most audacious rally for a Tinubu presidency come 2023.

It is also significant that SWAGA cited as the core features of 'Tinubus credentials for bidding for the presidency, his superlative performance as governor of Lagos State between 1999 and 2007. Also cited by SWAGA as the basis for his eligibility his 'messianic' role in the birthing of the APC as well as collaborative efforts in the enthronement of the current Muhamadu Buhari administration. How far these two purely parochial achievements will sell him across a mult-cultural Nigerian society when the chips are down, is a matter of interest to political pundits. For except a more nationalistic agenda is projected for him, the touted bid for presidency stands on the shaky ground of a mere sense of entitlement and compensation for him. Put succinctly, it amounts to pedestrian political consideration to sell to the country the argument that Tinubu should be compensated with the Presidency just for the role he played in development of Lagos and the advent of both APC and the Buhari administration.

Just as well, with the backdrop of the SWAGA initiative the stage for 2023 Presidential race seems set with Tinubu projected as a constant fixture against whom shall stand any other aspirant from the APC, as well as whichever candidate emerges from other political parties. Nevertheless, this foretaste of the 2023 presidential race, still remains ephemeral and susceptible to the possible impact of several factors; a situation which SWAGA and the rest of the Tinubu lobby need to watch out for before clinking glasses. These factors include how the Nigerian public reads whatever special relationship that exists between the man Tinubu and the present administration of Muhamadu Buhari, future developments in the APC and the general turn of events in the highly effervescent Nigerian political space.

Without doubt, the issue of who becomes President of Nigeria in 2023, goes beyond installing any individual just on the basis of entitlement or compensation for good behavior in the past, but lies more on the capacity to move the country genuinely to the next level. Will Tinubu be considered for Buhari's job? Again, only time will tell.



he Group Managing Director of Sahara group Kola Adesina has enjoined graduating students of Veritas University, Abuja to always strife for excellence in whatever they do in life in order to succeed.

Speaking as the guest speaker at the 10th
Convocation Ceremony of the University
recently Mr Adesina said in order to succeed in life you
have to be guided by four principles. These include

CREATIVITY, ADAPTABILITY, RESPONSIBILITY AND DIVERSITY.

He told his audience that Value chase Excellence and that to be successful in life they must work for excellence pointing out that 'Producers will always be rich while consumers will always be poor'.

He said Nigeria must develop its Educational sector to have a meaningful future.

The Chancellor of the University who is also the ArchBishop of Abuja Archdiocese Ignatius Kaigama





was full of praises to the Vice Chancellor of the University Rev. Fr. Prof. Hyacinth Ichoku for the measures put in place security and safety of lives and properties of the institution.

Speaking in the same vein the Pro Chancellor of the University Bishop Onah said the University Vice Chancellor is a risk taker. He said not all Universities have consistently held their convocation like Veritas University that has consistently held theirs in the last ten years.

He said he has taken cognizance of the tremendous transformation going on in the University and that quality Education is guaranteed.



REV. FR. PROF. HYACINTH ICHOKU VICE CHANCELLOR, VERITAS UNIVERSITY

ignificant progress has been made by the Veritas University, Abuja since the last convocation ceremony in 2021.

The Vice Chanellor of the University Rev. Fr. Prof. Hyacinth Ichoku stated this at the 10th Convocation ceremony of the University in ABUJA.

He said the first set of students have been admitted into the Law Faculty and they have commenced academic activities.

In addition the National Universities Commission has sent its team for Resource Verification for other new undergraduate and graduate programmes.

The new undergraduate programmes according to the Vice Chancellor include Pharmacy, Nursing, and Medical Laboratory Sciences. The graduate programmes include Msc in computer Science, M.Ed in Counseling, PhD Accounting, PhD English and Literary studies and PhD Mass Communication.

He said, 'Futhermore in keeping with our policy of operating within the ambit of the Law and Regulatory authorities, it is important to note that all our programmes are accredited by the National Universities Commission and other professional Regulatory bodies.'

Professor Ichoku also took time to acknowledge the performance of the graduates of the University at various levels of life stressing that many of the graduates have found very good jobs in the labour market in spite of the tough economic times.

'many have got employed in the financial and real sectors of the economy even as many are reporting excellent performance in Universities abroad. Recently one of our students in the Department of Entrepreneurship, Abel Ayuba was invited to Berlin, in Germany to address a global audience on the software he is currently developing with his team in Veritas University.

He said a lot has also been done on the infrastructural development of the University. These include the Mega female Hostel, the Faculty of Health Sciences building, the proposed Engineering and Innovation building, the New University clinic, the new staff building, the Chaplain's house, the E Library, among others.

DANGOTE AUTOMOBILES KICKSTART OPERATION IN NIGERIA WITH 120VPD CAPACITY



igerian billionaire, Aliko Dangote's jointly owned automobile company, Dangote Peugeot Automobiles Nigeria Limited (DPAN) has kickstart assembling operations in Nigeria. According to officials from the facility, between 2022 and 2023, DPAN will deploy the Land Trek, 3008, 5008 and the new 508 into the system with the help of their newly built Green field plant.

Dangote Group which earlier expressed interest in the Peugeot plant finally receives approval from the regulator. The company which has an assembly capacity of 120 vehicles per day has so far recruited Nigerian youth to undertake several duties geared towards the success of their operation.

The company said, "With the New Green Field Ultima Assembly Plant, a lot is being done by DPAN to ensure visibility of the Peugeot brand and availability of spare parts to the network and the generality of Nigerians. DPAN will be encouraged by our technical partner to reposition the brand in the short, medium, and long term as we ensure customer satisfaction and sustainability.

"This dream has started with the re-launch of the Peugeot brand in Nigeria as well as the local assembly of the 301 at our new Kaduna plant and thereafter the introduction of the Landtrek, 3008, 5008 and the new 508...Nothing is being spared to enable market recapture, hence all hands are on deck to ensure not just survival but also continued growth in a market with potential for cars in excess of 100,000 units per year and growing."

According to source documents, Dangote Peugeot Automobiles Nigeria Limited (DPAN) is jointly owned by Nigeria billionaire Alhaji Aliko Dangote, the Kaduna and Kebbi State Governments and also a technical partner called Stellantis Group.

Promotes Random Acts Of Kindness, Urges Global Participation

andom Acts of Kindness will be the focus of leading energy conglomerate, Sahara Group this February as the energy giant moves to promote spontaneous and thoughtful acts geared towards bringing energy to the lives of beneficiaries.

Sahara Group has since 2018 devoted the month of February to highlighting critical societal issues and amplifying the need for relentless and collaborative approach towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially in developing economies.

Nicolas Mignot, Chief Financial Officer, Sahara Energy Resources Int'l (Geneva), said the #RandomActsOfKindness campaign aims to make a difference by leveraging the positive impact of unplanned interventions on mental and physical health.

"February elicits so much excitement for us at Sahara as we ride on the prevalent love theme surrounding Valentine's Day to lend our voice to issues that can transform and make the world a better place for everyone. We usually implement each year's theme across our locations in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East, sometimes working with regional and global partners. This year, we will be spreading Random Acts of Kindness with the sincere hope of transforming lives. We urge everyone to join us and share their acts of kindness moments with us on Twitter and Instagram by tagging @iamsaharagroup," Mignot said.

Some acts of kindness that will feature during the month include



promoting tree planting/water and energy conservation, sending surprise meals and gifts to health workers, sending thank you cards to teachers, reaching out to the homeless, orphanages, and Senior Citizens, volunteering to teach/mentor, giving monetary donations to support fledgling entrepreneurs and small businesses, and donating books, clothes, shoes and toys, among others.

Noting that the world could do with a "huge dose of kindness" as the fight against covid-19 pandemic continues, Mignot added: "this is a good time to light up downcast faces with smiles, pull up bowed knees with care and set dreams alight with generous giving. Regardless of how you choose to demonstrate your acts of kindness this February, Sahara is urging everyone to make this a way of life, leaving no one behind."

In 2018, Sahara Group launched an initiative to shift the focus of Valentine's Day from a one-day event to a month-long activity aimed at taking the celebration of love to the level of giving more attention to serious global issues.

The #GreenLove initiative was the maiden theme for 2018 and the focus was on promoting environmental preservation and protection. In 2019, #PinkLove campaign zeroed in on increasing cancer awareness. The 2020 campaign, #CleanLoveFeb targeted awareness creation and targeted messaging to people caught in the web of substance abuse.

Last year, Sahara celebrated #ReachOutThisValentine, urging concerted efforts towards cushioning the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and galvanizing more sustainable interventions through a "global coalition of responders".

FOR 2022

Senator Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso attended the Economic Committee meeting for 2022 at Eko Hotel in Ikoyi in Lagos State. The meeting was held on (4th-6th February, 2022) and among the main guests were; Lagos State Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu, Ebonyi State Governor Dave Umahi, HE Peter Obi, HE Adams Oshiomole, HE Saminu Turaki and others.













OSAN GENERAL MEETING











Dangote Refinery Won't Guarantee Nigeria Cheaper Petrol, Says Renowned Economist Rewane



he Chief Executive
Officer of Financial
Derivatives
Company Limited (FDC),
Mr. Bismarck Rewane, has
advised Nigerians not to
entertain the illusion that
the Dangote Refinery
would guarantee them
cheaper supply of refined petroleum
products.

Rewane said the most the Dangote refinery would guarantee was improved supply of petrol in Nigeria's domestic market, but would not affect the foreign exchange position of Nigeria significantly.

He said this during the 2022 virtual economic outlook organised by the Stanbic IBTC Group, where he projected that the refinery would become operational in the Q1 2023.

Rewane said: "Nobody should expect that the Dangote Refinery is going to make petrol cheaper (in Nigeria). It is going to make it more available at any point in time. I doubt it whether he is going to collect his money in Naira

because Dangote has costs.

"Dangote Refinery technically and theoretically is outside Nigeria as it is situated at the export processing zone. We have a deep sea ports where the ships will take the refined products. But rather than buying from Amsterdam we will buy from Dangote and ship to Atlas Cove, Bonny and Port Harcourt.

"The saving (to Nigeria economy) is that rather than shipping a tanker from Amsterdam to Nigeria, we will be shipping it from Lekki. Another savings is because Dangote refinery is 45 percent more efficient than other refineries because of its cutting edge technology. This will further reduce the cost."

He said what would happen was that Nigeria would take 450,000 barrels and make it available to Dangote under a swap arrangement instead of giving it to refineries in Europe.

The CEO of the FDC said taking the crude to Dangote Refinery would be quicker than shipping it to, and bringing the refined products from Europe.

"I think that it is quite clear that it will not solve all our foreign exchange problems because it does not change things much. So, it is wrong notion to say that we spend all our money (FX) importing fuel.

"No, it is our own fuel that is being refined for us abroad, which will now reside with Dangote. Apart from that I do not think that there is any much difference. The reason is that the price differential will probably be on transportation cost. It is not going to change dramatically our foreign exchange situation," he said.

Rewane also pointed out that that the Nigerian government was in a precarious financial position because, "we have a situation now where the government is desperate. There is a shortfall in government financing cannot be fixed through subsidy removal."

He said the unsung economic reality in 2022, was that Nigeria would be the poverty capital of the world as ordinary Nigerians on the bottom of economic ladder would spend 101 per cent (sic) of their official income on foods alone.

Rewane said food inflation could force many Nigerians to switch to substitutes to actually reducing the amount of food they are consuming.

"A study last year said that 25 per cent of Nigerians are consuming less in quantity than what they were consuming earlier while 50 per cent are consuming less quality than they are consuming previously. This will compromise their immune system and render them more fragile for other reasons.

"In 2015, 63 million Nigerians were gainfully employed in Nigeria. In 2020 it dropped to 31 million people that were fully employed. That is why we are having kidnapping," he said.

The CEO of StanbicIBTC Holdings, Mr. Demola Sogunle, said that the event was to discuss investment and planning as election period draws near.

FCT MINISTER INAUGURATES TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON N200 BILLION FCTA SUKUK ISSUANCE

...CHARGES MEMBERS ON DUE DILIGENCE AND RESPONSIBILITY

The FCT Minister, Malam Muhammad Musa Bello has in a u gurated an 8-man Technical Committee drawn from the FCTA and Debt Management Office (DMO) for the issuance of N200 billion Sukuk for the FCT 2022 statutory budget with a charge on members to carry out their assignment diligently with a great sense of responsibility.

Speaking at the inauguration, which took place at the conference room in his office, Malam Bello described the event as a giant leap in furtherance to the fulfilment of the FCTA's mandate of building a world class national capital.

The Minister said: "We consider the inauguration today of the technical committee on the proposed FCT issuance of SUKUK of the sum of 200 billion Naira for the FCT 2022 statutory budget as a landmark event that will propel us faster to meeting our desired objective of building a world class city for Nigeria.

Malam Bello used the occasion to explain that the pressure on existing infrastructure, occasioned by the influx of people into the FCT as well as dwindling allocated funds necessitated the need for sukuk fund as an





alternative source of funding of capital projects that have great bearing on residents of the Territory.

He said: "Resources available for the development of the Territory no longer matched the infrastructural need, with a resulting fear that Abuja may not achieve the dreams of its founding fathers.

"For this reason, we needed to rehabilitate and expand some existing roads in the city as well as open up some others to arrest traffic gridlocks along major roads within and around the city and satellite towns. Hence the need to seek for an alternative source of funding outside our statutory funding to finance the completion of some projects with huge capital outlay but with the potential for maximum positive impact on residents", he added.

The Minister commended the government of President Muhammadu Buhari for making Sukuk, under the Debt Management Office, available to the FCT adding, that, "Sukuk has come to the rescue", while reminiscing the era of the PTF projects which he said the Sukuk projects across the country reminded him of.

He said the N29 billion Sukuk previously approved for the FCT is being used for the completion of various road projects that would further open up the FCT and put an end to the hardship motorists experience while navigating from one point of the



FCT to another. Malam Bello added that the proposed N200Billion Sukuk would focus on the completion of major on-going water, street lightening and additional road projects.

In reading out the Committee's Terms of Reference which amongst others include; Developing a framework for accessing Sukuk fund for the FCTA; Review and advise on the procedure and options for obtaining sovereign Guarantee for the issuance of Sukuk; Prepare a budget estimate for the issuance and advise on requisite approvals, Malam Bello charged it to carry out its assignment diligently.

Malam Bello also commended the National Assembly, especially, lawmakers overseeing the FCT whom, he said, he had enjoyed their support and guidance since he became Minister.

In her remarks, the DG, Debt Management Office, Ms Patience Oniha commended the FCT Minister for his drive and foresight while expressing excitement that the SUKUK fund was being used well and the result visible in the projects being executed in the FCT.

Speaking, the Chairman, Senate Committee on FCT, Senator Abubakar Kyari advised the FCTA to also focus on the development of satellite towns of the FCT to relieve the pressure on the Federal Capital City, (FCC), a sentiment echoed by the Senator representing the FCT, Senator Philip Aduda.

Present at the inauguration were, the Chairman, House Committee on Appropriation, Hon. Igariwey Enwo, FCTA Permanent Secretary, Mr Olusade Adesola, Chief of Staff to the Minister, Malam Bashir Mai Borno, Secretary, Economic Planning, Revenue Generation and PPP, Hon. Agboola Lukman Dabiri and other management staff of the FCTA.

1ST ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF CATHOLICS IN POLITICS & CATHOLIC BUSINESS LEADERS

- AGORA CONFERENCE ON 28TH FEBRUARY 2022

SPEECH DELIVERED BY HIS EXCELLENCY, PROF. YEMI OSINBAJO, SAN, THE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA, AT THE FIRST AGORA CONFERENCE, GATHERING OF CATHOLIC POLITICIANS AND BUSINESS LEADERS ON THE 28TH OF JANUARY, 2022.

PROTOCOLS

I am privileged to be here with you at the very first edition of the Agora Conference, this gathering of Catholic politicians and business leaders to devise ways of influencing the course of our society for good, and affirming the imperative that the marketplace and the public square have to be seasoned with the salt of divine values.

By reason of its ministry, the Catholic Church is a force for good. It is probably the largest non-governmental/private stakeholder in our country's education and health sectors.

Long before the State began to make social investments, the Church was already investing in our communities by establishing schools and hospitals. Millions of Nigerians of diverse faiths were nurtured in Catholic schools. At the clerical level, the Catholic Bishops Conference has a long and distinguished tradition of speaking truth to power and through its measured interventions today, it continues to bring moral clarity to bear upon our efforts to address our national challenges.

We are living in times of unprecedented economic and social upheaval. This is so not just in our nation but the world over.

Historically in times like these, parochial prejudices are heightened, there is a retreat into ethnic, religious and other nativist camps. Those that do not speak our language or subscribe to our faith are under great suspicion and they soon become scapegoats for all our challenges. This is why I think that the theme of this summit: "The Advancement of the Common Good towards Justice, Unity, Structure and Development of Nigeria" is both timely and relevant.

It is clear that the pursuit of the common good, the good of all must be the common ground for securing justice, unity, and the development of Nigeria. But by what means do we arrive there? For generations, millions of people all over the world have looked to Catholic Social Teachings as a profoundly powerful tool of social transformation.

These teachings are a body of knowledge around the advancement of social justice,

human development and peace, and they speak to issues of inequality, human dignity, civil liberties and economic rights.

In various countries and communities, they have inspired good works, and have also encouraged acts of courageous activism as well as those of mercy and compassion.

The idea of the common good, which is the theme of this conference is the cornerstone of Catholic Social Teachings. The notion of the common good is founded on divine commands. God commands us to seek the common good of everyone. In Jeremiah 29:7, He says:

"Seek the welfare (shalom) of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf; for in its welfare (shalom) you will have welfare (shalom) also.

In Matthew 7:12):

"In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

In 1st Thessalonians 5:15, "Always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people."

All of these are the foundations for what we describe as the common good, which as I have said, is the cornerstone of Catholic teachings on social justice.

The Catechism, following Pope John The 23rd in Mater et Magistra and Vatican II, defines the common good as: "the sum total of social conditions which allows people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfilment more fully and more easily." And I add that of these conditions justice, and peaceful coexistence are key to what we describe as the common good.

It is noteworthy that a number of the ideas in Catholic Social Teachings mirror provisions of our own Constitution, notably, the Directive Principles and Objectives of State Policy conveyed in the Second Chapter of the Constitution, expresses the same words as all of what we describe as the common good in these Catholic teachings I have spoken about.

Our Constitution will immediately recognize

the shared emphases on human dignity, the prominence given to social and economic rights as well as civil and political rights, the primacy of justice and human development, the protection of the vulnerable people, primacy of human dignity and the impropriety of concentration of wealth in the hands of a few individuals and groups. All of these are contained in one shape or form in the Directive Principles of State policy which is in our Constitution.

When we talk about these social teachings, Catholic teachings, the common good, we are also talking about matters that have already been addressed in our Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

I would go so far as to say that the second chapter of our Constitution articulates what constitutes the common good as an imperative of public policy and governance. Seen in this light, the challenge of actualizing the common good is the same as the quest to actualize the Directive Principles and Objectives of State Policy. Achieving both requires transformational leadership across all levels and spheres of our society. This is where the rubber hits the road.

Leadership is not just a force for good but is a force for the common good. Indeed it is the power of conscious individuals who are animated by a higher purpose that will alter the material circumstances of their communities.

Further, we must acknowledge that the question that transformational leadership seeks to answer is that of the purpose of power. It is in response to this question, that we must define transformational leadership as that model of leadership that operates by serving and uplifting others. It is servant leadership and as advanced by the Gospel it is contrarian in that it says that the purpose of power is service, not domination; it is to uplift and empower others rather than to control or oppress.

This is a model of leadership that is inseparable from our conception of the common good. Transformational leadership is therefore the pursuit of the common good. But the pursuit of the common good is clearly not as easy as it sounds. This is especially so where for example, the

wounds and enmities of ethnic and religious conflicts are deep. The common type of leadership will seek the path of relevance and popularity within their own ethnic or religious camps by seeking only the good of their own.

The servant-leader however, will serve his people by emphasizing the letter and spirit of the gospel, that even our worst enemies were still made in the image of God, and the pursuit of the common good is the pursuit of the good of those who hate us and hurt us even in the recent past.

Transformational leadership means that we do not mourn and condemn the killing of those who belong to our own tribe or faith alone, or seek justice for ours alone, because all men are equal before God (that is foundational for the concept of the common good), and that the pain and anguish of a mother's loss of a child is not different from one faith or tongue to the other.

The second point is how do we attain the common good without building credible institutions? We need to build credible institutions of justice; the rule of law and orderly society are crucial expressions of the pursuit of the common good.

The most progressive expressions of faith are concerned with justice and justice is impossible without taking the institutions that govern public life into account. In this sense, the purpose of governance and public policy is to establish a paradigm of justice which is measured by how well society treats its most vulnerable members, settles disputes fairly and speedily, and how it metes out punishment to violators of law without bias or fear.

Our courts of law must be courts of justice. It means that we must pay attention to the quality and calibre of the men and women who are appointed judges. We must be concerned with their remuneration, and welfare. We must be unrelenting in insisting on their integrity. The cancer of governments anywhere is corruption. When public officials, (be they high or low in the executive, legislature or judiciary) are tollgates for the extortion of the populace, seeking government dispensations if government officials have mounted a tollgate the common good, happy and prosperous lives for the people is impossible. The pursuit of the common good then must involve a relentless pursuit of integrity and transparency of public officers. We must think through the systems that will reduce human discretion in publicfacing institutions. So we must, especially as a collective, condemn and call out corruption and corrupt practices.

Today it is possible for a person to argue that because "I belong to a particular faith or ethnic group, I am more or less immune from corruption charges." We find people defending people of their faith or ethnic group who are accused of corruption or misdeed purely on the basis of those parochial considerations. People hide under all manner of parochial affiliations to be able to dodge justice in one shape or form of the other.

It is important for us as men and women of faith that justice must be balanced and equal; we must call out Catholics, or Protestants, or Pentecostals, or whoever they are, as well as we call out Muslims when they are corrupt or when they violate the laws of our land. When they act improperly, it is our duty to point out to everyone that they have acted improperly. We must be watchful, otherwise, our society cannot thrive on the pretence of the pursuit of a common good.

This is why active participation in the political and economic life of our country cannot be an accidental or a tangential interest for people of faith. It is an obligation, a bounden duty. Men and women of faith must consider politics, the economy of our country as their duty to participate.

Achieving the objectives of the common good is not a task for a few gifted individuals, but something that all people of faith, the entirety of the lay faithful should engage in as a civic duty.

Pursuing the common good in a diverse society demands those of us in the public square and in the marketplace translate our goals into a universal language that can be understood by all including those that do not share our confessional allegiances.

I am in agreement with Father George Ehusani when he says in his work "the Prophetic Church" that the Nigerian Christian elite must be ready to commit to "pulling down walls of hatred and building bridges across rivers of ethnic, religious and social hostilities." He was making an important point; that is, we cannot speak of ourselves as believing in the common good as Christians when we are not prepared to break down the walls of prejudice, hatred so that we build platforms not just within Christianity but outside the faith. We build platforms with Muslims and those who even say there is no God because the question of the common good is relevant to us all. In any event, God created us in His image and He loves all men and women.

This matters because our future will be shaped by how well we make common g with other citizens of progressive persuasions to transform our communities. How do we forge collaborative partnerships not only within ourselves but with other forces which are committed to the common good to positively impact our society?

Fulfilling the immense promise of our nation requires men and women of goodwill from various communities and faiths to collaborate in advancing the common good. This is all more important because it is such coalitions that can heal society of the wounds inflicted by the crude identity politics of religion and ethnicity.

The case for engagement is best encapsulated by the famous dictum put forward by Edmund Burke: "All that is necessary for evil to triumph is that good men do nothing."

History teaches us that everywhere there has been a national transformation, it has

been brought about by public-spirited men and women of goodwill who, inspired by their belief in a higher purpose than their own profit, have entered the public square to champion the common good.

Let me conclude by recalling the words of His Holiness Pope John Paul II on his visit to Nigeria in 1982 in an address at the State House in Lagos. On that occasion, His Holiness said, "Yours is a land of promise, a land of hope. In its efforts to develop, it is bound to suffer the pressures that so often arise from conflicting demands and from the sheer magnitude of the task. Only the spirited efforts of all the citizens under enlightened leadership can overcome difficulties such as this. Only the harnessing of all the forces for the common good, in true respect of the supreme values of the spirit, will make a nation great and a happy dwelling place for its people. The glory of the Government is the wellbeing, the peace and the joy of the governed."

If I may dwell briefly on the idea that our country is a land of promise and hope, then I would submit that our greatest adversary in our task of national renewal is a feeling of hopelessness — a sense of futility that seems almost overwhelming. However, we cannot afford to even indulge in such despondency and despair.

There is hope and there is much work to be done. Contrary to opinion in some quarters, this house will not fall. It is being built and needs yet many more people to commit to building the sort of nation that we want. The throes and pangs of birth must not be interpreted as the pains of impending death. We are by the grace of God more than able to overcome our present difficulties and we will overcome them.

I know that Professor Pat Utomi frequently invokes the imagery of Nehemiah, the biblical hero who led the effort to rebuild his country and I think that this is an entirely appropriate metaphor for the necessity of constructing our nation. Our nation also needs construction and can be constructed, men and women of goodwill just like Nehemiah, calling on people to arise and build our nation. I call upon you also, let us arise and build our nation! Our nation can be built. Why are we men and women of faith if we give up so easily and despair? We are a nation of men and women of hope and we must be able to say that this nation can be built and we will build it.

Before I close let me offer my felicitations to a builder, His Eminence, Cardinal John Onaiyekan on the occasion of his birthday which I understand comes up tomorrow. I join you in celebrating a leader whose contributions to the growth of the faith and the development of the nation are indelible.

I commend the organizers – Catholic Action Nigeria and Catholic Politicians and Business Leaders – for putting together this very important forum. It is my prayer that the mission to which you have been called will result in the enthronement of the common good in every area of our national life.

Thank you very much for listening.













VERITAS UNIVERSITY TABLE WATER

















