



## Federal Ministry of Justice

### **CORRUPTION: A BANE TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT - AGF**

Corruption remains one of the biggest impediments to national development. It consists actions that are often clandestine and practices that those who perpetrate it always try to conceal and it is now acknowledged that many of our political, social and especially economic problems in Nigeria is traceable to corruption.



Centre: Hon. Attorney-General of The Federation/Minister of Justice, Abubakar Malami San, to his left, Mr. Edeatan Ojo, Co-Chairman Open Government Partnership, and Minister of State for Budget/National Planning, Hajia Zainab Ahmed at the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the National Steering Committee of the Open Government Partnership, Nigeria held in, Abuja, on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2017.

The Honourable Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Abubakar Malami SAN, made this known in his keynote address at the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the National Steering Committee of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) on Tuesday March 14, 2017 at Sheraton Hotel , Abuja.

Malami re-emphasised President Muhammadu Buhari's commitment to making governance more open, accountable and responsive to the citizens. He said, "In May, 2016 the President attended the International Anti-Corruption

Summit organised by the government of United Kingdom where he reaffirmed his commitment to strengthen anti-corruption reforms through implementing programs aimed at: Exposing Corruption, Punishing the corrupt and providing support to victims who has suffered from corruption and thirdly, Driving out the culture of corruption".

Malami reiterated that the Open Government Partnership (OGP) is a multi-stakeholder initiative focused on improving transparency, accountability, citizen participation and responsiveness to citizens through technology and innovation, which Nigeria formally joined the initiative as the 70<sup>th</sup> country in July, 2016.

He disclosed that President Muhammadu Buhari has approved the Open Government Partnership National Steering Committee of which the Federal Ministry of Justice is coordinating. The Committee which is made up of representatives of the government Ministries, Agencies, Departments (MDAs) as

well as Civil Society Organisations, Organised private sector and professional associations had worked together to co-create a two-year National Action Plan (NAP) to mainstream transparency mechanisms in the management of public funds across all sectors and citizen engagement.

The Minister gave highlights on the progress made so far since Nigeria joined the Open Government Partnership as follows: the commencement consultation on the implementation of the Beneficial Ownership Transparency of which President Buhari had presented the Money Laundering Prevention and Prohibition Bill, 2016 to the Parliament. The Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) and the Nigeria Extractives Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) are also working together to develop a register of beneficial owners of all companies operating in Nigerian Extractive Industry, he added.

He disclosed that the United Kingdom government has commenced the implementation of beneficial ownership public register in 2016 which was among one of the first to commence consultation process involving a triangular process (Government, Business, and Civil Society) towards the establishment of public register of beneficial owners. Also, in the area of open contracting, the President has recently approved Executive Orders to improve transparency in government contracting.

Amongst other achievements is the Whistle Blowers Policy which the Federal Ministry of Finance just issued to enable voluntary disclosure of stolen assets.

Furthermore, “the application of the Freedom of Information Act is becoming more robust and access to public Information is increasing. The OGP Secretariat plans to train all relevant agencies to ensure effective application of the FOI law”. Also, the government, through the Nigerian Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) is working on adopting a technology based citizens’ feedback on projects and programs within the OGP framework, etc.

He revealed, “We are the first country to recognise civil society as critical in the monitoring of recovered and returned stolen assets, Nigeria Network on Asset Recovery has participated actively in the negotiation of agreements for return of stolen assets thus setting a global standard”.

He assured that participating in the OGP process would provide the requisite hub of coordination, information sharing, innovation and cross-fertilization of ideas within government and with our global partners that will lead to better service deliver that its Citizens yearn for.

The Honourable Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, present at the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the National Steering Committee of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) said that corruption is not a victimless crime; everyone is all victims of corruption. He added that the government intentions

were not to witch hunt anyone but to let Nigerian know what is the cost of corruption in their lives.

He further stated that town hall meetings were conducted for the purpose of the Ministers to give accounts of their achievements and that there was no censored questions. Also, followed is the campaign for **Change Begins with Me**, which cut across all ethnicity and gave the assurance that his Ministry will be committed to work with OGP.

The Minister of Health, Isaac Adewoye who was also present at the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the National Steering Committee, said that Nigerians should be committed in erasing the errors of the past and to ensure that things are done with spot.

The Executive Director, Media Rights Agenda (MRA) and Civil Society Co-Chair of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) Nigeria, Mr. Edetaen Ojo, earlier in his remarks, said that the OGP Steering Committee consists of equal numbers of government and civil society representatives who together oversee the development of the OGP, providing guidance and direction for the process, maintaining high standards for the initiative and ensuring that it is sustainable. He added that the OGP has a rotating leadership group which also comes from both sectors, with government and civil society co-chairs of Steering Committee.

Also present at the meeting were Hajia Zainab Ahmed, Minister of State, Federal Ministry of Budget and National Planning, Dr. Joe Abah, Director General, Bureau for Public Service Reform amongst others.