

OVERVIEW OF THE NIGERIA'S NATIONAL ACTION PLAN – 2017-2019.

Introduction

Nigeria has been acknowledged as one of the largest economies in Africa with a maturing political system. While these features should ordinarily attract investors, the country is currently in a recession as is evident in the negative GDP growth rates of -2.06 percent and -2.24 percent in the second and third quarters of 2016 respectively. The declining GDP has been accompanied by a high inflation rate of 18.3 percent in October 2016 and high unemployment rate of 13.3 percent at the end June 2016. With the current weak global oil prices, the country's revenues have experienced a significant decline from the projected values. This has been aggravated by reduced production caused by the militancy in the Niger Delta region of the country, which has resulted in a fall in production from 2.2 million barrels-per-day (bpd) to about 1.4 million bpd in September 2016.

The nation's external reserves also fell to a ten-year low of about \$24.6 billion in November 2016, a 30% decline from the October 2014 figure, reflecting the effect of lower oil prices, falling production volumes and dwindling foreign investments. Insurgency in the Northern part of the country has claimed over 20,000 lives and properties worth billions of naira. All these have put a strain on the country's import-dependent economy and increased the incidence of poverty.

The very discouraging statistics above is partly a consequence of corruption that has been one of the biggest impediments to the country's development. His Excellency, President Muhammadu Buhari who was popularly elected to power in May 2015 promised to make the fight against corruption a cardinal part of his policy. Since his election, he has left no one in doubt of the government's commitment to make governance in Nigeria more open,

accountable and responsive to citizens through several important reforms and initiatives already in place.

His commitment to lead by example was brought to the fore when in May 2016, the President attended the international Anti-Corruption Summit organized by the government of the 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 the victims of corruption; and, driving out the culture of corruption.***

Flowing from these commitments, the Federal Government sought to deepen institutional and policy reforms and this led to Nigeria joining the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in July 2016 as the 70th country. The OGP is an international multi-stakeholder initiative focused on improving transparency, accountability, citizen participation and responsiveness to citizens through technology and innovation.

It brings together government and civil society champions of reforms who recognize that governments are more likely to be more effective and credible when governance is subjected to public input and oversight. At the national level, OGP introduces a domestic policy mechanism through which the government and civil society can have an ongoing dialogue. At the international level, it provides a global platform to connect, empower and support domestic reformers committed to transforming governments and societies through openness.

The OGP was formally launched in 2011 when the eight (8) founding governments (Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico, Norway, the Philippines, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States) endorsed the Open Government Declaration, and announced their country action plans. The uniqueness of the OGP process lies in the implementation of the National Action Plan as it provides and organizing framework for international networking and incentives.

The OGP National Steering Committee (NSC) was recently constituted, with the Federal Ministry of Justice as the Coordinating Ministry and Co-chair. As the OGP process requires 50% civil society participation, a co-chair was also nominated by the CSOs. The NSC will also have two incoming co-chairs one each from Government and non-state actors in line with best practices. The NSC is made up of representatives of Government Ministries, Agencies, Departments (MDAs) as well as civil society organizations, organized private sector and professional associations who worked together to co-create this two and a half year (January 2017 – June 2019) National Action Plan (NAP). The NAP aims to deepen and mainstream transparency mechanisms and citizens' engagement in the management of public resources across all sectors.

Through a consultative process between government and civil society, the NSC agreed to consolidate existing and new reforms within four thematic areas in this NAP. **The thematic areas are: (1) promoting fiscal transparency; (2) access to information; (3) anti-corruption and asset disclosure; and, (4) citizen engagement and empowerment.**

The National Action Plan seeks to promote fiscal transparency through more citizen participation in the budget process, implementation of open contracting in the public sector, enhancing disclosure in the extractive industries, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the tax system and improving the ease of doing business in Nigeria.

Similarly, it will ensure that corruption is rooted out through the establishment of a public beneficial ownership register, the development of a platform for sharing information between government MDAs to detect and prevent corrupt practices, the strengthening of Nigeria's asset recovery legislation and taking appropriate actions to co-ordinate anti-corruption activities.

Under the citizen's engagement thematic area, the NAP will lead to the development of a permanent dialogue mechanism between citizens and government; review of legislation around transparency

and accountability issues; and the adoption of a technology-based citizens' feedback on projects and programs. The last two commitments will improve access to information by increasing compliance with the Freedom of Information Act.

Table 1 below provides a summary of the National Action Plan commitments by thematic areas.

| Table 1: Summary of National Action Plan Commitments by Thematic Areas | |
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| <i>Fiscal Transparency</i> | |
| 1 | Ensure more effective citizens' participation across the entire budget cycle. |
| 2 | Full implementation of Open Contracting and adoption of Open Contracting Data Standards in the public sector. |
| 3 | Work together with all stakeholders to enhance transparency in the extractive sector through a concrete set of disclosures related to payments by companies and receipts by governments on all transactions across the sector's value chain |
| 4 | Adopt common reporting standards and the Addis Tax initiative aimed at improving the fairness, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness of the tax system. |
| 5 | Improve the ease of doing business and Nigeria's ranking on the World Bank Doing Business Index |
| <i>Anti-Corruption</i> | |
| 6 | Establish a Public register of Beneficial Owners of Companies |
| 7 | Establish a platform for sharing information among Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs), Anti-Corruption Agencies (ACAs), National Security Adviser (NSA) and financial sector regulators to detect, prevent and disrupt corrupt practices. |
| 8 | Strengthen Nigeria's asset recovery legislation including non-conviction based confiscation powers and the introduction of unexplained wealth orders. |
| 9 | Take appropriate actions to co-ordinate anti-corruption activities; improve integrity and transparency and accountability. |
| <i>Access to Information</i> | |

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| 10 | Improved compliance of public institutions with the Freedom of Information Act in respect of the annual reporting obligations by public institutions and level of responses to requests |
| 11 | Improved compliance of public institutions with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) with respect to the Proactive disclosure provisions and stipulating mandatory publication requirements. |
| <i>Citizen Engagement</i> | |
| 12 | Develop a Permanent Dialogue Mechanism on transparency, accountability and good governance between citizens and government to facilitate a culture of openness. |
| 13 | Government-civil society to jointly review existing legislations on transparency and accountability issues and make recommendations to the National Assembly. |
| 14 | Adopt a technology-based citizens' feedback on projects and programs across transparency and accountability. |

Beyond the commitments, the NAP also took into consideration crosscutting issues that will empower citizens to engage with the government and ensure proper dissemination and management of information. The crosscutting issues are: (i) Technology and Innovation; (ii) Monitoring and Evaluation; and (iii) Communication Strategy for the NAP. To ensure effective deployment of these tools across all the thematic areas, three working groups have been set up to develop implementation strategies and to articulate action plans to support the work of these groups. The plans are set out in Section 6.

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