



## Federal Ministry of Justice

### **JAMES IBORI: UK TO RETURN 4.2MILLION POUNDS LOOTED FROM NIGERIA**

‘Today being the 9th day of March, 2021 we are at the threshold of another major milestone in our determined quest as a nation to attain full recovery of all looted assets, prevent abuse of recovered assets and also to ensure optimal utilization of such recovered assets for the benefit of our deserving citizens’.

The Honourable Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice (HAGF) Abubakar Malami SAN, made this known in his brief



remarks at the signing ceremony of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the government of the United Kingdom regarding the return and management of stolen assets recovered from the former Governor of Delta State, James Ibori and associates in

*HON. ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE FEDERATION/MINISTER OF JUSTICE, ABUBAKAR MALAMI SAN, AND BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER, Ms. CATRIONA LAING AT SIGNING OF THE ANNEX TO THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FOR THE RETURN OF IBORI'S CONFISCATED ASSETS FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM*

Abuja today, Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2021. The HAGF explained that today's ceremony and the

recoveries attached thereto has again underscored the fact that International Cooperation and Mutual Trust can yield great benefits for the citizenry in developing countries who are the direct victims of acts of corruption. Malami added that the Governments of Nigeria and the United Kingdom have concluded negotiations for the return of £4.2million

pounds to Nigeria pursuant to the **MoU** earlier executed by the two governments in **2016**.

‘It is to be recalled that the Nigerian Government had all along provided the required mutual assistance and backup to the British authorities while the prosecution of James Ibori lasted in London and today, they are rightfully taking benefit of that cooperation’. He said.

‘I cannot but observe that what they are witnessing today is a glaring manifestation of the age long national ties between the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the United Kingdom’ he further explained.

The **HAGF** pointed that it was in consonance with existing framework or model engaged in the management of previous recoveries, the Federal Executive Council under the able leadership of President Muhammadu Buhari has directed that the instant repatriated funds should be deployed towards the completion of the following legacy projects: **the Second Niger Bridge, Abuja - Kano expressway and the Lagos - Ibadan expressway**. He commended the sincerity of purpose of the British Government while asserting that Nigeria looks forward to similar assistance and cooperation in bringing to book all other persons and entities who at the moment are inequitably exploiting the system in the **UK** to shield themselves from justice. While acknowledging and appreciating the unwavering and underlying support of **Mr President, Malami** stressed that Nigeria had established, as a government, a reputation for transparency and accountability of utilization of recovered assets as a nation and promised that these asset will in no way be different in terms of application.

The Solicitor-General of the Federation and Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Justice **Dayo Apata SAN**, in his opening remarks enumerated some of the constitutional duty in the Administration of Justice in Nigeria under Abubakar Malami.

These include the formulation of national strategic action plan for combating corruption; Setting up of the Inter-Ministerial Presidential



*R-L SOLICITOR GENERAL OF THE FEDERATION/PERMANENT SECRETARY, FEDERAL MINISTRY OF JUSTICE, DAYO APATA SAN, GIVING WELCOME REMARKS, HON. ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE FEDERATION/MINISTER OF JUSTICE, ABUBAKAR MALAMI SAN, AND BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER, Ms. CATRIONA LAING AT SIGNING OF THE ANNEX TO THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FOR THE RETURN OF JAMES IBORI'S CONFISCATED ASSETS FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM, HELD 9<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 2021 AT HAGF'S CONFERENCE ROOM, FEDERAL MINISTRY OF JUSTICE ABUJA.*

Committee on the Disposal of Forfeited Assets which provide synergy and coordination of asset recovery and management by government agencies; Setting up of Central Database for recovered assets; Issuance of Executive Order Six (which relates to the preservation of assets connected with corruption), Executive Order Eight (which governs the Voluntary Offshore Assets Registration Scheme (VOARS)

and Executive Order Ten (which is designed to achieve financial autonomy for the State Judiciary and Legislature across Nigeria amongst others.

Apata noted that 'Aside the above testaments and as can be seen glaringly from today's signing ceremony, the Federal Ministry of Justice is now actively involved in boosting the revenue profile of the Federal Government and the provision of critical infrastructures. The forgoing also underscores the readiness and firm assurance of Nigeria to cooperate with the international community in the enforcement of all anti-corruption legal instruments and protocols'. While commending the entire stakeholders who have laboured to ensure that the execution of the predicate MOU in 2016, he noted that the repatriation of the looted funds being witnessed was a bold statement in the anti-corruption drive and also to show that the present administration will not allow looters to enjoy their loot but will ensure that justice is served accordingly.

The British High Commissioner, **Ms Catriona Laing, CB** in her speech explained that the Landmark Agreement represented the first return of



*HON. ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE FEDERATION/MINISTER OF JUSTICE, ABUBAKAR MALAMI SAN, WITH BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER, Ms. CATRIONA LAING WHILE SIGNING THE MOU*

stolen assets confiscated by the United Kingdom under the auspices of the **UK-Nigeria Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** signed in August 2016. **Laing** further explained that the funds were recovered from the associates and family of James Ibori, the former governor of Delta State. According

to her, in February 2012, James Ibori pleaded guilty in a **UK** court to money laundering, conspiracy to defraud and forgery, and was sentenced to a total of 13 years in prison. ‘Transparent asset recovery is a priority for both the UK and Nigerian Governments. The projects on which the funds will be spent will be administered by the Nigerian Sovereign Investment Authority and independently audited. The Federal Republic of Nigeria has established a monitoring team to oversee the implementation of the projects and to report regularly on progresses. She re-emphasized.

The High Commissioner, who signed the agreement on behalf of the **UK**, commented that the Agreement represents culmination of many years of work by Law Enforcement Authorities in UK and Nigeria. She concluded that it was important the Agreement made a strong provision for Transparency, Monitoring and Accountability. ‘It is a guiding principle of

both the UK and Nigerian Governments that the stolen assets should be used for projects that benefits the poor Nigerians’.



*HON. ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE FEDERATION/MINISTER OF JUSTICE, ABUBAKAR MALAMI SAN, IN A GROUP PHOTOGRAPH WITH THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE NIGERIA DELEGATIONS AT THE SIGNING CEREMONY*

In his closing remarks, the British High Commissioner, **TBC Andrew Clowers** said UK has zero tolerance to corrupt and illicit finance because it brings about under development adding that stolen funds will be returned to build infrastructure.

**Clowers** thanked the **HAGF** for his cooperation and noted that the money will be repatriated in few weeks. He advised that the money should be judiciously used for the growth and development of Nigeria.