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The Reforms

Championing good governance, Driving Development



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50th Edition

From Hospital Wards To Factory Floors: Nigeria's New Healthcare Growth Strategy



Dr. Iziq Adekunle Salako, Honourable Minister of State for Health and Social Welfare (m), with others at the opening of the World Health Expo 2026 in Lagos

The federal government, led by **President Bola Ahmed Tinubu**, is increasingly positioning healthcare not only as a public service sector but also as a strategic pillar of Nigeria's economic transformation agenda. At the opening of the World Health Expo (WHX Lagos 2026) in Lagos, the Minister of State for Health and Social Welfare, **Dr. Iziq Adekunle Salako**, outlined a policy direction aimed at expanding healthcare manufacturing, diagnostics, medical technology deployment and infrastructure development

as drivers of investment, job creation and industrial growth. **Enam Obiosio** highlights the development at the event and the government's ongoing reforms seeking to reduce import dependence, strengthen local healthcare value chains and position Nigeria as a leading healthcare investment destination in Africa.

For decades, discussions about healthcare often focused on access to treatment, shortages of equipment, inadequate infrastructure and the

challenges faced by patients seeking quality care. Currently, a broader conversation is beginning to emerge. Rather than treating healthcare solely as a social service, policymakers are increasingly presenting it as a potential driver of industrial development, investment attraction, technological advancement and economic growth.

That shift was evident at the World Health Expo (WHX Lagos 2026), where government officials, healthcare professionals, investors, manufacturers and policymakers gathered to discuss the future of healthcare in Nigeria and across Africa.

Addressing an audience of more than 8,000 healthcare professionals, over 500 exhibitors from more than 40 countries and a wide range of local and international stakeholders, the Minister of State for Health and Social Welfare, Dr. Iziq Adekunle Salako, outlined what appears to be a significant evolution in the Federal Government's healthcare strategy.

At the centre of that strategy is the idea that healthcare can become more than a sector that consumes public resources. It can also become a sector that produces economic value. The government's vision involves expanding domestic pharmaceutical manufacturing, strengthening healthcare technology deployment, increasing diagnostic capacity, encouraging medical innovation and building infrastructure capable of supporting both healthcare delivery and economic activity.

According to Salako, one of the challenges confronting the region is its heavy dependence on imports.

"Across West Africa, between 85 and 99 percent of medical equipment and in vitro diagnostics are imported. Nigeria must move from being primarily a consumer market to becoming a strategic hub for healthcare manufacturing, diagnostics, innovation, and medical technology deployment," he said.

The statement reflects a concern that has become increasingly prominent in recent years.

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The COVID-19 pandemic exposed vulnerabilities within global healthcare supply chains. Countries that depended heavily on imported medicines, equipment and diagnostic tools often faced shortages and disruptions when international supply routes came under pressure.

For Nigeria, those experiences highlighted the risks associated with relying extensively on imported healthcare products. The issue extends beyond emergency situations.

Foreign exchange fluctuations, rising import costs and global supply constraints can all affect the availability and affordability of healthcare products. As a result, policymakers have increasingly focused on developing local production capabilities as a way of strengthening resilience.

The strategy being pursued by the Federal Government seeks to address these concerns through a combination of industrial policy, infrastructure development and private-sector participation. Several initiatives form the foundation of the effort.

These include the Presidential Initiative to Unlock Healthcare Value Chains, the Presidential Executive Order for the Pharmaceutical and Allied Sectors, the Sector-Wide Approach (SWAp) to health sector reform and infrastructure partnerships involving the Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority.

Together, these programmes are intended to support the development of local healthcare value chains while expanding healthcare infrastructure and attracting investment into the sector. The scale of the ambition is substantial.

Government plans include the establishment of 22 diagnostic centres, six oncology and nuclear medicine centres and seven cardiac catheterisation laboratories distributed across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones.

In addition, N402 billion has been allocated to healthcare infrastructure, while the Sector-Wide Approach reform initiative is backed by approximately \$1.2 billion in support.

These projects target areas that have traditionally required Nigerians to seek services abroad or travel long distances within the country.

Diagnostic services, cancer treatment and specialised cardiac care remain among the most resource-intensive aspects of healthcare delivery. Expanding domestic ca-

Nigeria remains one of Africa's largest pharmaceutical markets, yet much of the industry's inputs and finished products continue to originate from outside the country

capacity in these fields could influence both healthcare access and healthcare-related economic activity. The focus on diagnostics is particularly noteworthy.

Modern healthcare systems increasingly rely on accurate and timely diagnosis as the foundation for effective treatment. Investments in diagnostic infrastructure can therefore affect outcomes across multiple medical disciplines while also creating demand for technology, equipment, maintenance services and specialised expertise. Similarly, pharmaceutical manufacturing has emerged as a strategic priority.

Nigeria remains one of Africa's largest pharmaceutical markets, yet much of the industry's inputs and finished products continue to originate from outside



Dr. Iziq Adekunle Salako, Honourable Minister of State for Health and Social Welfare (cream Kaftan), with other stakeholders at the World Health Expo 2026, in Lagos.

the country. Expanding local production has long been viewed as a pathway toward reducing import dependence while strengthening industrial capacity.

The government's current policy framework appears to place renewed emphasis on this objective.

The broader significance of the strategy lies in how healthcare is being linked to economic development.

Traditionally, healthcare expenditure has often been regarded as a cost necessary to maintain public welfare. Increasingly, however, countries are recognising healthcare as a sector capable of generating investment, employment, innovation and industrial growth.

Hospitals require equipment, pharmaceuticals, logistics networks, information technology systems, engineering services and specialised personnel. The expansion of healthcare infrastructure can therefore create economic activity across multiple industries simultaneously.

In this context, healthcare becomes connected not only to patient outcomes but also to manufacturing, technology development and workforce growth.

Salako underscored this investment dimension when addressing participants at the expo.

"Nigeria is open for healthcare investment. Our hospitals require modern technologies, diagnostic systems, therapeutic equipment, digital infrastructure, and scalable innovations capable of improving care delivery for millions of Nigerians," he said.

The invitation reflects an increasing reliance on public-private collaboration as a mechanism for sector expansion.

Governments around the world frequently partner with private investors, manufacturers, technology providers and healthcare operators to expand healthcare systems. Such partnerships can provide access to capital, technical expertise and operational capabilities that may be difficult to develop solely through public resources.

For Nigeria, attracting such investment could become an important factor in determining whether healthcare infrastructure ambitions are translated into operational facilities. Yet significant challenges remain.

Building healthcare infrastructure is only one part of the equation. Advanced facilities require highly trained specialists, technicians, biomedical engineers, pharmacists, laboratory scientists and support personnel capable of operating sophisticated technologies.

Workforce development therefore remains a critical component of any healthcare transformation strategy.

Financing also presents an ongoing consideration.

While substantial commitments have been announced, the successful implementation of healthcare projects often depends on sustained funding, efficient procurement processes and long-term operational planning.

Questions surrounding affordability will also influence outcomes. Expanding access to advanced healthcare services requires not only physical infrastructure but also financing mechanisms that enable patients to utilise those services.

Furthermore, local manufacturing ambitions may still depend on imported components, raw materials and technologies in the near term. Developing fully integrated domestic value chains typically requires years of investment, skills development and industrial co-ordination. Despite these challenges, the direction of policy is becoming increasingly clear.

Healthcare is being positioned as part of a broader economic transformation agenda.

Rather than viewing the sector solely through the traditional lens of public health expenditure, policymakers are increasingly treating healthcare as a platform for industrialisation, technology adoption, investment attraction and job creation.

This shift mirrors developments in several emerging economies where healthcare has evolved into a significant contributor to economic output while continuing to serve its primary role of improving health outcomes.

For Nigeria, the approach represents an attempt to address multiple objectives simultaneously: improving healthcare access, reducing import dependence, attracting investment, expanding domestic manufacturing and strengthening economic resilience.

Whether these ambitions are fully realised will depend largely on implementation, financing and institutional coordination.

What is clear, however, is that healthcare is increasingly being discussed not only as a social necessity but also as a productive economic sector.

As hospitals, laboratories, pharmaceutical facilities and healthcare technology platforms become more closely linked to industrial policy and investment strategies, the sector's role within the national economy may expand considerably.

The transformation being proposed is therefore about more than healthcare delivery alone. It is about redefining healthcare as a source of economic opportunity, industrial capability and long-term national development, while continuing to meet the fundamental objective of improving the health and wellbeing of millions of Nigerians.



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Dakwo, Abuja.**EDITORIAL****Education Should Not Be A Foreign Exchange Battlefield**

For years, one of the quiet tragedies of Nigeria's foreign exchange crisis was the plight of families struggling to pay tuition fees for children studying abroad. Parents who had legitimately earned their income, secured university admissions and planned educational journeys often found themselves trapped in a maze of foreign exchange scarcity, administrative uncertainty and market distortions. In many cases, the greatest challenge was not gaining admission into a foreign institution but securing the foreign currency needed to pay for it.

That is why the Central Bank of Nigeria's decision to increase the tuition remittance limit from \$15,000 to \$25,000 per semester deserves recognition.

We see this not merely as a technical adjustment within a foreign exchange manual but as an acknowledgement of economic reality. The truth is that international tuition costs have risen substantially over the past decade. In many countries, annual tuition fees now far exceed what the previous remittance limit could reasonably accommodate. The result was predictable. Families were forced to seek alternative funding channels, split payments across multiple transactions or resort to the parallel market at enormous cost.

A policy that does not reflect reality eventually loses relevance. The old limit increasingly belonged in that category.

The new framework demonstrates a more pragmatic approach. Rather than imposing artificial restrictions that ignore prevailing education costs, the Central Bank has chosen to create a more realistic ceiling while maintaining oversight through documentation requirements and regulated banking channels.

This matters because confidence is one of the most valuable currencies in any foreign exchange market.

When citizens believe legitimate transactions can be processed through official channels, they are less likely to seek informal alternatives. When businesses and households understand the rules,

uncertainty declines. When procedures become predictable, market credibility improves.

The increase in the tuition remittance ceiling therefore serves a broader purpose than facilitating education payments. It is part of the ongoing effort to rebuild trust in Nigeria's foreign exchange administration.

For too long, foreign exchange management in Nigeria operated within a scarcity mindset. Policy often focused more on restricting demand than facilitating legitimate economic activity. While such measures may have appeared necessary during periods of severe pressure, they frequently created unintended consequences. Genuine users of foreign exchange found themselves competing with speculators, while informal markets flourished in response to rigid controls.

The Cardoso-led Central Bank appears to be pursuing a different approach.

The revised tuition framework reflects a philosophy that legitimate demand should be accommodated within transparent and regulated channels rather than pushed outside the formal financial system. That is a welcome shift.

However, we must also confront an uncomfortable reality.

While the policy helps families meet educational obligations abroad, it simultaneously highlights the continuing weaknesses of Nigeria's domestic education system. Every dollar remitted for foreign tuition represents not only an educational investment but also evidence of unmet demand at home.

The scale of outbound education spending by Nigerians should concern policymakers. Families are not sending children abroad merely because they prefer foreign institutions. Many are responding to concerns about capacity, infrastructure, stability, research quality and global competitiveness within local institutions.

In this sense, the new remittance limit addresses a symptom rather than the underlying condition.

We therefore caution against celebrating the policy as a complete success. It is a necessary and sensible reform, but it should also serve as a reminder of the urgent need to strengthen Nigerian universities. A country of more than 200 million people cannot sustainably depend on foreign institutions to educate a significant portion of its future professionals.

The long-term solution is not unlimited foreign exchange access for overseas education. The long-term solution is building universities capable of attracting Nigerian students and international students alike.

Nevertheless, within the context of current realities, the Central Bank's decision is the correct one.

The separation of tuition remittances from maintenance allowances demonstrates a balanced regulatory approach. The retention of documentation requirements preserves accountability. The use of authorised dealer banks strengthens transparency. Most importantly, the revised limit better reflects the actual costs facing Nigerian families.

The broader significance lies in what the reform signals about foreign exchange policy.

We are gradually witnessing a transition from arbitrary restrictions towards rules-based facilitation. That transition is essential if Nigeria hopes to build a credible and efficient foreign exchange market. Markets function best when participants understand the rules and trust the institutions administering them.

The increase in tuition remittance limits will not solve Nigeria's foreign exchange challenges. It will not eliminate exchange-rate volatility. It will not reduce demand for foreign currency overnight. But it sends an important message that legitimate economic activities should not become casualties of administrative rigidity. Education should never be treated as a foreign exchange problem. It is a human capital investment.

DID YOU KNOW?

That President Tinubu's reforms are part of the Renewed Hope Agenda, designed to reposition Nigeria across critical sectors including education, energy, infrastructure, and innovation.

Stay tuned for more updates on reform milestones, policy impact, and opportunities for Nigerian citizens. Have feedback or questions? Send us an email at: editor@thereforms.ng

Time to Tell Nigeria's Story — The Position of The Reforms Newspaper

For far too long, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) has been misunderstood, misrepresented, and misquoted — not for a lack of achievements, but for a tragic deficit in communication. Today, *The Reforms*, a National Newspaper, rises not as a mouthpiece, but as a credible national platform to correct the narrative and restore public confidence in Nigeria's reform-driven trajectory.

Let us be blunt: in the past, government's communication structures had been lethargic, inconsistent, and often reactive. Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs), despite overseeing groundbreaking reforms across agriculture, power, finance, education, digital innovation, energy, and infrastructure, had largely failed to communicate their successes with clarity and consistency. In their silence, distortions flourished. In their delays, misinformation had taken root.

This was not just a national communication failure — it was a vacuum of narrative power.

It is precisely in this void that *The Reforms* has emerged as a strategic imperative. Our mandate is not to whitewash governments' actions or spread propaganda. We are not beholden to spin doctors or political handlers. We are beholden only to the truth — the verifiable, policy-driven, people-impacting truth of Nigeria's reform journey.

The FGN has rightly endorsed *The Reforms* as the non-partisan channel through which MDAs and private sector partners can boldly articulate the ongoing transformation of the Nigerian economy and society. From economic diversification and tax reforms to housing delivery, digital governance, energy transition, and ease of doing business, among others, — we are committed to amplifying facts, not fiction.

Nigeria is not standing still. The country is moving — and moving fast. But without strategic story-

telling rooted in fact and transparency, that movement may be missed or, worse, maligned.

To the MDAs: You are implementing reforms. But reforms do not speak for themselves. You must. And *The Reforms* is here to help you do just that — professionally, objectively, and impactfully.

To the private sector: You are stakeholders in the reform process. Let your voice be heard. Let your innovations and contributions to national development be documented in a newspaper founded on the principle of national interest above noise.

It is time we tell our own story — the Nigerian story — not through borrowed voices or external media filters, but through a deliberate, intelligent platform that understands the nation and its nuances.

This is not a plea. This is a national call to action. Partner with *The Reforms*. Let the story of Nigeria's rebirth be told by those who live it, lead it, and believe in it.



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NCC Leads Nigeria's Push Towards The Next Generation Internet



Dr. Aminu Maida, Executive Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of NCC (5th right), with members of the newly inaugurated Board of the Nigerian Internet Protocol version 4 (IPv4)

By Ahmed Ahmed

As Nigeria's digital economy continues to expand, the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) is intensifying efforts to ensure that the country's internet infrastructure remains capable of supporting future growth, emerging technologies and increasing digital connectivity.

In a move that underscores that objective, the commission recently inaugurated the new board of the Nigerian Internet Protocol version 6 (IPv6) Council in Ikeja, Lagos, reaffirming its commitment to accelerating Nigeria's transition from Internet Protocol version 4 (IPv4) to the more advanced IPv6 platform.

The inauguration comes at a time when global demand for IPv4 addresses has exceeded available supply, creating increasing pressure on countries, telecommunications operators, internet service providers and technology companies to migrate to next-generation internet infrastructure.

For the NCC, the transition is not merely a technical upgrade. It is increasingly viewed as an important component of Nigeria's broader digital transformation agenda.

The newly inaugurated council will continue to be chaired by Mr. Muhammed Rudman, Chief Executive Officer of the Internet Exchange Point of Nigeria (IXPN), while a representative of the NCC will serve as Co-Chairman. Other members include representatives of key institutions within Nigeria's digital ecosystem, including the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), Association of Telecommunications Companies of Nigeria (ATCON), Nigeria Internet Registration Association (NiRA), Association of Licensed Telecommunications Operators of Nigeria (ALTON), Internet Service Providers Association of Nigeria (ISPON), and the Nigerian Research and Education Network (NgREN).

The council is also supported by veteran technology professionals Dr. Chris Uwaje and Prof. Latif Ladid as advisers.

The composition of the board reflects the commission's recognition that successful migration to IPv6 re-

quires collaboration across government institutions, telecommunications operators, internet service providers, academic institutions and private-sector organisations.

Although largely invisible to everyday internet users, internet addressing systems are fundamental to digital communication.

Every device connected to the internet requires a unique address to send and receive information. The

One of the council's primary responsibilities will be developing and implementing strategies to increase awareness of IPv6 across the country

IPv4 system, which has served as the foundation of global internet connectivity for decades, was developed during a period when the number of internet-connected devices was a fraction of what exists today.

The rapid growth of smartphones, computers, cloud services, digital platforms and connected devices has placed unprecedented demand on available address

resources.

As a result, countries around the world are increasingly transitioning to IPv6, which offers a significantly larger address capacity and is designed to support future digital expansion.

For the NCC, ensuring Nigeria's readiness for that future is becoming a strategic priority.

The commission's support for the IPv6 Council reflects a broader objective of creating a digital environment capable of supporting next-generation technologies such as fifth-generation mobile networks, cloud computing, smart infrastructure, artificial intelligence applications and the Internet of Things (IoT).

Speaking following the inauguration, Rudman highlighted the strategic importance of the transition.

"The transition to IPv6 is a strategic national priority. It is essential for enabling Nigeria's digital transformation, economic growth, and global competitiveness. The council's strategy identifies IPv6 as a primary catalyst for national development, focusing on three pillars: supporting emerging technologies such as 5G and the Internet of Things (IoT), promoting economic diversification, and providing enhanced security and performance compared to legacy solutions such as Network Address Translation (NAT)," he stated.

His remarks align closely with the NCC's broader vision of expanding digital infrastructure as a foundation for economic growth and technological advancement.

The commission has consistently emphasised the role of telecommunications and digital services in supporting innovation, financial inclusion, education, healthcare delivery and business development. As these sectors become increasingly dependent on internet connectivity, the underlying infrastructure supporting digital services assumes greater importance.

One of the council's primary responsibilities will be developing and implementing strategies to increase awareness of IPv6 across the country.

Many organisations continue to operate on legacy systems despite the growing need for migration. To address this challenge, the council plans to organise workshops, stakeholder engagements and awareness campaigns aimed at encouraging adoption.

In addition to awareness-building activities, the council will focus on strengthening technical capacity.

Training programmes for network engineers and information technology professionals are expected to form a key part of the migration strategy. These programmes will target internet service providers, telecommunications companies, educational institutions, financial organisations and other entities responsible for managing digital networks.

The objective is to ensure that local expertise develops alongside infrastructure upgrades.

The council will also monitor adoption levels across sectors, identify implementation challenges and recommend measures that can support wider deployment of IPv6 throughout Nigeria's digital ecosystem.

Regular reports will be submitted to the Federal Government to provide updates on progress and emerging issues.

For the NCC, these activities form part of a longer-term effort to strengthen the resilience and competitiveness of Nigeria's digital infrastructure.

The commission's support for the IPv6 Council reflects an understanding that digital transformation extends beyond expanding broadband access or increasing internet penetration. It also involves ensuring that the technical foundations of the digital economy remain capable of supporting future growth.



Funding Nigeria's Agriculture, Growing Prosperity

Customs Reform Is Reshaping Nigeria's Trade Environment



L-R: Zahrah Mustapha-Audu, Director-General of PEDEC; Mr. Adewale Adeniyi, Comptroller-General of Customs, and Dr. Zach Adedeji, Executive Chairman of NRS, during NCS collaboration with PEDEC in launching a result-driven reforms agenda.

By Musa Ibrahim

Global trade depends heavily on the speed and predictability of customs processes, where even minor delays can ripple across supply chains. For importers and exporters, the efficiency of clearance procedures at ports and borders often defines cost structures, delivery timelines and overall market competitiveness.

It is against this backdrop that the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) has been pursuing a series of reforms aimed at modernising customs administration and improving the experience of businesses that interact with the country's trade system.

The latest indication of those efforts emerged during a two-day retreat organised by the Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council (PEBEC) for heads of Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and reform champions in Abuja.

At the event, Nuhu Mustafa Mohamed, representing the Reform Champion of the Nigeria Customs Service Trade Facilitation Unit, outlined measures undertaken by the Service to improve operational efficiency and support business activity. According to him, the reforms have included stakeholder engagement, continuous process reviews, mystery shopping exercises and service delivery assessments across customs operations.

The initiatives contributed to the Nigeria Customs Service being recognised as one of four "Super MDAs" in the Business Environment and Enterprise Performance Accelerator (BEEPA) Report, a framework used to assess institutional performance and service delivery

within the public sector.

While the recognition itself attracted attention, the broader significance lies in the direction of the reforms and what they reveal about the evolving role of customs administration in Nigeria.

Traditionally, customs agencies have been associated primarily with revenue collection and border enforcement. In recent years, however, customs administrations around the world have increasingly become central actors in trade facilitation, balancing regulatory responsibilities with efforts to improve the movement of goods across borders.

The reforms being implemented by the Nigeria Customs Service reflect this broader shift.

toms Service reflect this broader shift.

According to Mohamed, the Service has prioritised engagement with officers and stakeholders while placing greater emphasis on monitoring service standards and assessing user experiences through mystery shopping exercises. Such approaches are commonly used by organisations seeking to identify operational bottlenecks and evaluate how services are delivered in practice rather than solely through internal reports.

At the centre of the transformation agenda is the B'Odogwu Unified Customs Management System, a digital platform designed to support customs process management, reporting and operational interventions.

Digitalisation has become an increasingly important component of customs reform globally. Automated systems can reduce paperwork, shorten processing times, improve record keeping and provide greater transparency in transactions that previously depended heavily on manual procedures.

For traders, importers and exporters, the effectiveness of such systems can influence the speed and predictability of cargo clearance. For government agencies, digital platforms can enhance monitoring capabilities and strengthen administrative efficiency.

Under the leadership of Comptroller-General of Customs, Bashir Adewale Adeniyi, digital transformation and modernisation have been positioned as central elements of the Service's reform programme.

The implications extend beyond customs operations alone.

Efficient customs procedures affect multiple parts of the economy. Manufacturers depend on timely access to imported raw materials. Exporters require predictable processes to meet delivery schedules. Logistics operators rely on efficient cargo movement to maintain supply chain performance. Investors often consider trade infrastructure and regulatory efficiency when assessing business environments.

As a result, customs reform is increasingly linked to broader economic competitiveness.

The recognition received under the Business Environment and Enterprise Performance Accelerator framework may therefore be viewed as part of a wider effort to align public sector performance with national economic objectives. It also reflects a growing emphasis on measuring service delivery outcomes rather than focusing solely on administrative processes.

Challenges remain. The long-term success of digital transformation initiatives often depends on consistent implementation, technology integration, staff capacity development and adaptation by users of the system. As customs operations become increasingly digitised, issues such as cybersecurity, interoperability and change management also become more important.

Nevertheless, the current reforms indicate that the Nigeria Customs Service is seeking to redefine its role within the country's economic landscape.

Rather than functioning solely as a revenue-generating institution, the Service is increasingly positioning itself as a facilitator of trade and a contributor to efforts aimed at improving Nigeria's business environment.

As global trade becomes more dependent on speed, efficiency and digital connectivity, the effectiveness of customs reforms may play an increasingly important role in determining how competitively Nigeria participates in regional and international markets.

Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) has been pursuing a series of reforms aimed at modernising customs administration and improving the experience of businesses

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MREIF Opens New Path To Home Ownership For Nigerians



President Bola Ahmed Tinubu

By Jennete Ugo Anya

Home ownership in Nigeria has long remained a difficult milestone for many households, not because of a lack of demand, but due to the persistent barriers within the housing finance system. While a significant number of families consistently meet monthly rent obligations, access to affordable, long-tenor mortgage facilities has remained limited, effectively keeping ownership out of reach. It is this structural gap in the housing market that the Ministry of Finance Incorporated Real Estate Investment Fund (MREIF) is designed to confront.

According to figures released by the Presidency, the fund has provided N128 billion in affordable mortgages to 1,859 families across 25 states, offering beneficiaries access to mortgage facilities of up to 20 years at a fixed annual interest rate of 9.75 percent and a minimum equity contribution of 10 percent.

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, in a statement issued by his Adviser on Information and Strategy, Mr. Bayo Onanuga, described the initiative as an important step toward expanding access to home ownership. He noted that for years, many Nigerians who could comfortably afford monthly housing expenses were unable to purchase homes because suitable financing options were unavailable.

The development highlights a longstanding gap within Nigeria's housing sector. Despite rapid urbanisation, population growth, and rising demand for residential accommodation, access to mortgage financing has remained limited compared to many other countries. Most prospective homeowners have traditionally depended on personal savings, cooperative schemes, or expensive commercial loans that often come with short repayment periods.

The result has been a housing market where completed houses are available, but many potential buyers

cannot secure the financing needed to purchase them.

MREIF was established to help bridge that gap. Structured as a N1 trillion housing finance platform, the fund is designed to mobilise long-term capital for mortgage lending through a combination of government support, private sector management, and institutional investment. Its pilot phase consists of N250 billion in concessional and commercial funding.

Beyond helping families secure homes, the initiative is also generating wider activity within the housing sec-

The average mortgage recipient is 42 years old, indicating strong demand among working Nigerians seeking opportunities to transition from renting to home ownership

tor. Official figures indicate that the mortgages approved through the programme have unlocked N221 billion in total property value while supporting the delivery of 475 housing units through offtake guarantee projects.

These outcomes suggest that access to financing can play a significant role in stimulating both housing demand and construction activity. While housing projects often focus on building new homes, the availability of affordable mortgages determines whether many of those homes eventually become occupied by owner-occupiers.

Another notable aspect of the programme is the profile of its beneficiaries. The average mortgage recipient is 42 years old, indicating strong demand among working Nigerians seeking opportunities to transition from renting to home ownership.

The fund is one component of a broader housing agenda being pursued by the federal government. Other initiatives include the Renewed Hope Cities and Estates Programme as well as financing and social housing interventions implemented through Family Homes Funds Limited. Together, these programmes are intended to address different aspects of Nigeria's housing challenge, from increasing housing supply to improving affordability and access.

However, the scale of the challenge remains considerable. Nigeria's housing deficit is estimated in the millions of units, and expanding access to affordable mortgage finance will require sustained funding, deeper capital market participation, and continued investor confidence.

That confidence appears to be developing. MREIF's Series 2 commercial issuance has received an AAA rating from Agosto & Co. and an AA rating from GCR Ratings, reflecting positive assessments of the fund's governance structure and long-term sustainability.

While the number of beneficiaries remains relatively small compared with national housing demand, the programme offers a glimpse into what a more accessible mortgage system could look like. For thousands of families already benefiting from the scheme, it represents an opportunity to acquire an asset that has traditionally remained beyond the reach of many middle-income Nigerians.

Whether MREIF can scale sufficiently to transform the broader housing landscape remains to be seen. What is clear, however, is that the conversation around housing is gradually shifting from simply building more houses to ensuring that more Nigerians can realistically afford to own them.

New Initiative Seeks To Expand Women's Role In Nigeria's Economy



Mr. Makhtar Diop, Managing Director of IFC

By Musa Ibrahim

Across boardrooms, workplaces and business communities, conversations about gender inclusion are increasingly moving beyond questions of representation to broader discussions about economic participation and growth.

That shift is reflected in the launch of the Nigeria Gender Country Program (NGCP), a new initiative spearheaded by the International Finance Corporation (IFC), Nigerian Exchange Group (NGX Group) and Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI).

The programme, scheduled for formal launch on July 9, 2026, was introduced during a virtual roundtable involving chief executives and senior executives from NGX-listed companies, IFC client organisations and member companies of the LCCI.

At its core, the initiative seeks to increase women's participation across different areas of economic activity, including leadership positions, quality employment opportunities and access to resources such as finance, technology and markets.

The programme arrives at a time when policy-makers, business leaders and development institutions are placing increasing attention on the role of human capital in driving economic growth.

Nigeria has one of the largest populations in Africa and a rapidly expanding workforce. As the economy continues to evolve, questions about how effectively available talent is being utilised have become part of wider discussions about productivity, competitiveness and sustainable development.

Supporters of the programme argue that barriers limiting women's participation in economic activity can affect both individual opportunities and broader economic outcomes.

Speaking during the engagement, the Director-General of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Dr. Emomotimi Agama, described gender inclusion as an economic issue rather than solely a social objective. According to him, reducing gender gaps has implications for productivity, business performance and national competitiveness.

His comments reflect a growing international trend in which inclusion is increasingly discussed in economic terms. Rather than focusing exclusively on representation targets, many organisations are examining how workforce participation, lead-

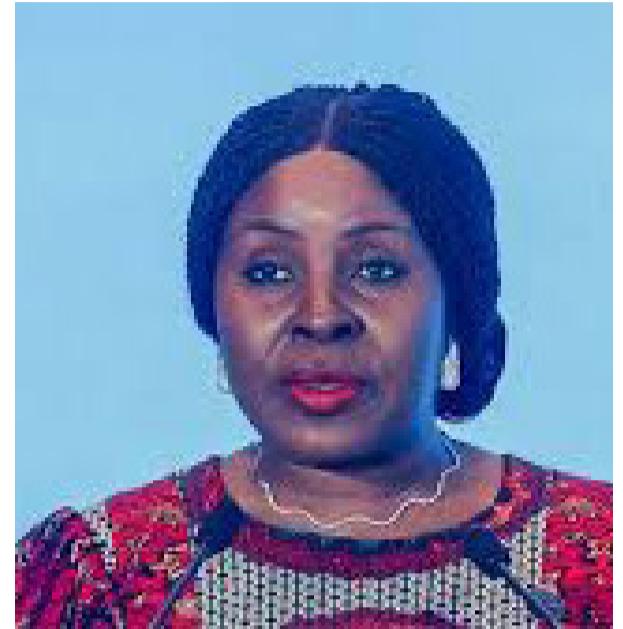
ership diversity and access to economic opportunities influence overall performance.

The Nigeria Gender Country Program appears to be built around that approach.

Its priorities extend beyond increasing the number of women in leadership positions. The programme also focuses on expanding access to employment, finance, technology and markets, areas that often determine whether individuals and businesses can participate fully in economic activity.

For women entrepreneurs, access to capital and market opportunities remains a recurring challenge. For professionals, advancement into senior management and executive roles continues to attract attention within many sectors. The programme's structure suggests an attempt to address multiple points along that participation pathway.

The involvement of institutions such as the IFC, NGX Group and LCCI also reflects the increasing role of the private sector in conversations about



Dr. Chinyere Almona, DG/CEO of LCCI

and access to economic resources are made within businesses themselves.

According to Temi Popoola, Group Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of NGX Group, the programme provides an opportunity to deepen inclusion across corporate Nigeria by expanding access to leadership roles, employment opportunities, finance and markets.

The broader significance of the initiative lies in how it frames inclusion within the context of economic performance.

Around the world, businesses and investors are increasingly examining workforce diversity, talent utilisation and governance practices as factors that may influence long-term resilience and competitiveness. As a result, inclusion is becoming part of wider discussions about business strategy rather than being treated solely as a social responsibility issue.

For Nigeria, where small businesses, entrepreneurs and a growing labour force play important roles in economic development, efforts to widen participation could have implications across multiple sectors.

The success of the programme, however, will likely depend on implementation. Announcements and commitments can establish direction, but measurable outcomes often depend on how effectively institutions translate objectives into practical opportunities.

Questions surrounding access to finance, workplace advancement, business support systems and leadership development will remain important indicators of progress.

As the programme moves from launch to execution, attention is likely to focus on whether increased participation translates into tangible changes within companies, industries and business ecosystems.

The initiative reflects an evolving conversation about economic development in which growth is increasingly linked not only to investment and infrastructure, but also to how effectively a country's human resources are integrated into productive economic activity.

In that context, the NGCP represents an effort to expand participation within the economy while placing greater emphasis on the relationship between inclusion, opportunity and long-term economic performance.

Around the world, businesses and investors are increasingly examining workforce diversity, talent utilisation and governance practices as factors that may influence long-term resilience and competitiveness

inclusion.

Historically, many gender-focused initiatives have been driven primarily through public policy or development programmes. The NGCP places significant emphasis on corporate participation, bringing together listed companies, business associations and private-sector leaders.

This approach recognises that many decisions affecting employment, leadership opportunities



Mr. Temi Popoola, Group MD/CEO of NGX Group

NESG, Transport Ministry Seek Stronger Collaboration On Infrastructure Connectivity



Engr Funsho Adebisi, Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Transportation (5th left); Mr. Nnanna Ude, leading NESG delegation (6th left), with other delegates from the Ministry of Transportation and NESG, during the strategic engagement.

By Kingsley Benson

Every day, millions of Nigerians rely on transport systems to move people, goods and services across the country. Farmers transport produce to urban markets, manufacturers move products to distribution centres, traders depend on road networks to reach customers, and commuters navigate increasingly complex urban transport corridors.

The efficiency of these movements often has a direct impact on business costs, productivity and economic growth.

It is against this backdrop that the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG) recently met with officials of the Federal Ministry of Transportation to discuss ways of strengthening collaboration on transport infrastructure development and sector reforms.

The engagement, which involved members of the NESG's Infrastructure and Allied Services Policy Commission and senior officials of the Ministry of Transportation, focused on challenges affecting the sector as well as opportunities for improving connectivity across the country.

Led by NESG Board Director, Mr. Nnanna Ude, the delegation met with the Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Transportation, Engr. Funsho Adebisi, as part of ongoing efforts to encourage dialogue between policymakers and private-sector stakeholders.

While no new project or funding initiative emerged from the discussions, the meeting reflects growing concern about the role transportation plays in Nigeria's economic performance.

Transport infrastructure serves as one of the foundations of economic activity. Roads, railways, ports, inland waterways and logistics networks determine how efficiently goods move from producers to consumers and how easily people access jobs, services and markets.

When transport systems function efficiently, businesses often benefit from lower operating costs and

faster delivery times. When they do not, delays, congestion and inefficiencies can increase expenses across entire supply chains.

Nigeria's transport sector has long faced challenges associated with infrastructure gaps, uneven connectivity and limited integration between different modes of transportation.

Road networks carry the majority of passenger and freight traffic, while rail, maritime and inland water transport systems continue to evolve at varying rates. In many instances, these transport modes operate independently rather than as components of a fully integrated network.

The result can be higher logistics costs and reduced efficiency in the movement of goods and services.

This is one reason why discussions about infrastructure are increasingly moving beyond the construction of individual projects to broader questions about connectivity.

An integrated transport system seeks to create stron-

For businesses, such integration can improve supply chain performance. For consumers, it can influence travel times and access to services. For the economy, it can affect competitiveness and investment attractiveness

ger links between roads, railways, ports and other transport facilities so that people and goods can move more seamlessly between locations and across regions.

For businesses, such integration can improve supply chain performance. For consumers, it can influence travel times and access to services. For the economy, it can affect competitiveness and investment attractiveness.

According to the NESG, the objective of the engagement is to strengthen partnerships that can contribute to the development of "an efficient, integrated, and sustainable transportation system that drives economic growth, enhances mobility, and improves national competitiveness."

The emphasis on collaboration reflects a wider shift in how infrastructure issues are being approached.

Historically, transport development was often viewed primarily as a government responsibility. Increasingly, however, policymakers, private-sector organisations, development institutions and industry stakeholders are participating in discussions about infrastructure priorities and implementation strategies.

This approach recognises that transport systems influence a broad range of economic actors and that solutions often require input from multiple sectors.

The engagement also comes at a time when infrastructure competitiveness is receiving growing attention globally.

Countries seeking to attract investment and expand trade are increasingly examining how transport efficiency affects economic performance. Reliable transport systems can influence manufacturing activity, export competitiveness, regional integration and overall business confidence.

For Nigeria, where economic activity is spread across a large geographical area, connectivity remains particularly important.

Efficient transportation links can help connect agricultural zones with urban markets, support industrial activity, facilitate trade through ports and strengthen economic interactions between regions.

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Foreign Capital Returns To Nigeria, But Investors Remain Cautious



By Anita Dennis

Foreign capital inflows into Nigeria recorded a significant increase in the first quarter of 2026, suggesting renewed international interest in the country's financial markets after a prolonged period of economic uncertainty and investor caution.

Data released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), based on information from the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), showed that total capital importation rose to US\$10.37 billion between January and March 2026. The figure represented an increase from US\$5.64 billion recorded during the same period in 2025 and was also substantially higher than the US\$6.44 billion recorded in the final quarter of 2025.

The sharp increase points to a shift in investor sentiment at a time when Nigeria continues to implement reforms in foreign exchange management, monetary policy and broader macroeconomic administration.

Yet behind the headline figures lies a more nuanced picture of where foreign investors are placing their money and what that may indicate about perceptions of the Nigerian economy.

The vast majority of the capital entering the country during the quarter was directed toward portfolio investments, which accounted for US\$9.86 billion or more than 95 percent of total inflows. Portfolio investments typically include purchases of government securities, bonds, treasury instruments and other financial assets that can be bought and sold relatively quickly.

By contrast, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), often associated with factory construction, business expansion, technology transfer and long-term corporate commitments, accounted for just US\$135.08 million, representing 1.3 percent of total inflows.

The difference is significant because the two forms of investment often reflect different levels of commitment. Portfolio investors generally seek financial returns and market opportunities, while direct investors usually make longer-term decisions tied to production, infrastructure, employment and business operations.

The first quarter figures therefore suggest that while international investors are returning to Nigeria, much of that confidence remains concentrated within financial markets rather than the productive sectors of the economy.

The sectoral distribution of inflows reinforces that trend.

The banking sector attracted US\$7.55 billion, accounting for nearly three-quarters of all capital imported during the period. The financing sector followed with US\$2.43 billion. Together, both sectors absorbed more than 96 percent of total inflows.

Production and manufacturing received US\$152.27 million, representing a relatively small share of the overall capital entering the country.

This pattern highlights the central role financial institutions are currently playing in attracting foreign funds. It also suggests that investors continue to view Nigeria's financial markets as the primary entry point for capital deployment.

The geographical origin of the inflows offers another perspective on Nigeria's investment relationships.

The United Kingdom remained the largest source of foreign capital, contributing US\$5.08 billion or approximately half of total inflows. The United States accounted for US\$3.18 billion, while South Africa contributed US\$983.83 million.

Together, the three countries provided close to 90 percent of all capital imported during the quarter, indicating that Nigeria's strongest investment connections remain concentrated among established global financial centres and long-standing economic partners.

Financial institutions also played a critical role in facilitating the movement of capital. Standard Chartered Bank Nigeria Limited processed the largest share of inflows at US\$4.41 billion, followed by Stanbic IBTC Bank Plc with US\$2.78 billion and Rand Merchant Bank with US\$930.82 million.

The broader significance of the figures extends beyond the banking sector.

Over the past several years, foreign investors have closely monitored Nigeria's efforts to address foreign exchange market distortions, improve liquidity, strengthen monetary policy transmission and enhance transparency within the financial system. The increase in capital inflows may indicate that some of those measures are beginning to influence investor decisions.

However, the concentration of inflows in portfolio investments also highlights a familiar challenge. Portfolio capital can enter and exit markets relatively quickly, often responding to changes in interest rates, exchange-rate expectations and global financial conditions. As a result, such flows can provide liquidity and support market activity but may not always translate into long-term economic transformation.

For policymakers, the next phase of the challenge may therefore involve creating conditions that encourage greater levels of direct investment in sectors such as manufacturing, infrastructure, agriculture, technology and industrial production.

The first quarter data shows that foreign capital has returned to Nigerian markets in substantial volumes. What remains uncertain is whether that renewed interest will evolve into deeper long-term investment commitments capable of expanding productive capacity, creating jobs and supporting sustained economic growth.

For now, the figures point to a recovery in investor confidence, particularly in Nigeria's financial architecture. Whether that confidence extends beyond financial assets into long-term productive investment may become one of the most closely watched indicators of the country's economic trajectory in the months ahead.

Quotes of the Week

Nurudeen Abubakar Zauro, Technical Adviser to the President on Economic & Financial Inclusion

The journey toward a one-trillion-dollar economy by 2030 will not be achieved by policy declarations alone; we must collectively build systems that are efficient and fair.

Mr. Aigboje Aig-Imoukhuede, Chairman of Access Holdings Plc

Africa is not on the margins of global change; it is at the centre. But potential alone will not deliver transformation; capital mobilisation, institutional strength, and execution will.

Hadiza Bala Usman, SA to the President on Policy & Coordination

More than two decades later, Nigeria has changed. Technology has changed. The economy has changed. The expectations of citizens have changed. What was once largely understood as voice connectivity has become the foundation for digital trade, e-commerce, financial technology, digital identity, public service delivery, education, health, agriculture, security, disaster response, innovation, and job creation.

Revenue Sharing Review Reopens Debate Over Nigeria's Fiscal Future

By Majeed Salaam

How should Nigeria's national revenue be shared among the federal, state and local governments?

It is a question that has shaped public finance discussions for decades, influencing government budgets, development priorities and the financial capacity of sub-national administrations. Now, that debate is entering a new phase as the Revenue Mobilisation Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC) begins a nationwide data verification exercise aimed at supporting the review of the country's revenue allocation formula.

The exercise, which commenced in the South-East geopolitical zone, forms part of a broader process to update the information used in determining how federally collected revenue is distributed across the federation.

According to the Chairman of RMAFC, Dr. Mohammed Bello Shehu, who was represented by Commissioner representing Ekiti State, Mrs. Omowumi Ogunlola, the verification exercise is intended to validate and update key socio-economic indicators that influence revenue-sharing decisions.

Teams deployed by the commission are expected to engage ministries, departments and agencies, as well as local government authorities, to gather and verify data considered critical to the review process.

The initiative follows a federal government directive for comprehensive due diligence in the development of a new revenue allocation formula and comes as the commission moves deeper into what it describes as an advanced stage of the review.

At the heart of the exercise is a recognition that the country has changed significantly over time.

Population growth, urban expansion, infrastructure development, migration patterns and shifting economic activity have altered the realities facing many states and local governments. As these changes occur, questions inevitably arise about whether existing allocation formulas continue to reflect current conditions.

According to Shehu, periodic verification has become necessary because the indicators that support revenue-sharing decisions must keep pace with changing realities across the country.

The review process therefore extends beyond administrative procedures. It touches on broader issues of fiscal equity, resource distribution and the balance of financial responsibilities within Nigeria's federal structure.

The review process therefore extends beyond administrative procedures. It touches on broader issues of fiscal equity, resource distribution and the balance of financial responsibilities within Nigeria's federal structure

Revenue allocation remains one of the most consequential aspects of public finance because it determines how resources are distributed among different levels of government. The outcomes influence public spending on infrastructure, education, healthcare, social services and economic development projects across the country.

For this reason, discussions surrounding allocation



Dr. Mohammed Bello Shehu, Chairman of RMAFC

formulas often attract significant attention from state governments and local authorities whose financial resources are directly affected by the eventual distribution framework.

The commission's approach reflects an increasing emphasis on evidence-based decision-making. In recent years, RMAFC has undertaken efforts to strengthen its data management systems, including training programmes for state and local government officials and the adoption of digitised data collection processes.

The objective is to ensure that any future allocation framework is supported by current and verifiable information rather than outdated assumptions.

Yet the exercise has also revived a parallel conversation about the future of government revenue itself.

Speaking during the engagement, Governor Alex Otti of Abia State expressed support for the verification exercise while drawing attention to a broader fiscal concern. According to the governor, while the allocation of resources remains important, the generation of revenue may become an even more critical issue in the years ahead.

His remarks reflect growing awareness of the challenges associated with long-term dependence on oil-derived revenues. As global energy markets evolve and countries increasingly pursue energy transition policies, concerns have emerged about the sustainability of relying heavily on petroleum receipts as the foundation of public finance.

The observation highlights two interconnected dimensions of fiscal reform.

One focuses on how available revenue should be shared fairly among different tiers of government. The other focuses on how governments can expand and diversify revenue sources to reduce dependence on a single commodity.

For many states, internally generated revenue has become an increasingly important component of fiscal planning. Efforts to strengthen tax administration, encourage investment and expand economic activity are gradually becoming part of a broader strategy to improve financial resilience.

Against this backdrop, the RMAFC exercise represents more than a technical review of allocation indices.

It reflects an attempt to reassess the foundations upon which intergovernmental finance is built. By updating the data that informs revenue-sharing decisions, the commission is seeking to align fiscal arrangements more closely with contemporary realities.

The process may also help strengthen confidence in future allocation outcomes by providing a more transparent and evidence-based basis for decision-making.

However, the review is unlikely to be without challenges. Changes to allocation formulas can produce different outcomes for different jurisdictions, potentially generating debate among stakeholders who may gain or lose under revised calculations.

The accuracy of the data collected, the interpretation of key indicators and the eventual implementation of recommendations will therefore be closely watched.

As the verification exercise progresses across the country, the broader significance lies not only in how revenue is distributed today but also in how Nigeria prepares for a future in which fiscal sustainability, economic diversification and revenue generation may become just as important as revenue sharing itself.

The review signals a continuing effort to adapt Nigeria's fiscal architecture to changing economic realities, while raising important questions about how governments at all levels will finance development in the decades ahead.



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NAICOM Advances Risk-Based Capital Transition With EY Appointment



By Anita Dennis

Nigeria's insurance industry is moving closer to the implementation of a Risk-Based Capital (RBC) framework, a regulatory model that links capital requirements more directly to the risks undertaken by insurance companies.

As part of that process, the National Insurance Commission (NAICOM) has appointed global professional services firm, Ernst & Young (EY), as Consulting Actuary to support the completion of the framework's implementation.

The appointment was formalised during a working meeting between NAICOM and EY in Abuja under the commission's ongoing RBC Implementation Project.

The development represents another stage in NAICOM's broader effort to transition the insurance sector from a traditional capital regime to a supervisory framework that places greater emphasis on risk assessment, financial resilience, and regulatory oversight.

According to the Commissioner for Insurance, Mr. Olusegun Ayo Omosehin, the commission has made progress in advancing a risk-based supervisory and capital structure for the industry. The transition follows recent legislative developments and ongoing efforts to strengthen the capital base of insurance operators through the Minimum Capital Requirement (MCR) recapitalisation programme.

The proposed RBC framework is expected to operate alongside the recapitalisation exercise, with implementation planned to align with the completion of the current MCR process.

RBC systems are widely used in insurance markets to ensure that capital requirements reflect the actual risk exposures of insurers rather than relying primarily on fixed capital thresholds. Under such frameworks, insurers with higher risk profiles are generally required to maintain stronger capital buffers, while regulatory supervision becomes increasingly linked to risk management practices and financial health.

For Nigeria's insurance sector, the framework is expected to introduce a more data-driven approach to supervision and capital adequacy assessment. It is also intended to provide regulators with additional tools for monitoring solvency and assessing the capacity of insurers to meet obligations to policyholders.

As implementation progresses, NAICOM plans to undertake Quantitative Impact Studies (QIS) and industry-wide data collection exercises. These activities are designed to provide information required for recalibrating key parameters within the framework and to support the development of final regulatory guidelines.

The data-gathering process is also expected to form

part of wider stakeholder engagement involving insurance operators and other participants within the sector. Such engagements typically serve as an opportunity to assess the operational implications of regulatory reforms and identify areas requiring adjustment before full implementation.

Under the consulting engagement, EY will provide actuarial and technical support to NAICOM throughout the final stages of the project. The firm's responsibilities include assisting with framework development, supporting implementation efforts, and contributing to capacity-building initiatives within the commission.

NAICOM indicated that the objective is to establish a regulatory framework suited to the structure and characteristics of the Nigerian insurance market while strengthening the technical foundations required for effective supervision.

For the insurance industry, the transition to a RBC regime represents a significant regulatory development. Beyond capital requirements, the framework is expected to influence how insurers assess risk, allocate capital, manage investments, and plan for long-term financial stability.

The appointment of EY therefore marks an operational milestone in a reform process that has been underway for several years. The coming phases, including quantitative studies, stakeholder consultations, and final guideline issuance, will determine the pace and structure of the framework's eventual rollout across the Nigerian insurance market.

As regulators continue preparations, the focus is shifting from policy design to implementation, with the industry's readiness likely to play a central role in the success of the transition.

RBC systems are widely used in insurance markets to ensure that capital requirements reflect the actual risk exposures of insurers rather than relying primarily on fixed capital thresholds

Reforms Nuggets

CBN Retains Interest Rate At 26.5% As MPC Battles Inflation, Global Economic Pressures

- The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has retained the Monetary Policy Rate (MPR), the country's benchmark interest rate, at 26.5 percent as policymakers seek to curb inflation and safeguard macroeconomic stability amid rising global uncertainties.

- CBN Governor, Olayemi Cardoso, announced the decision following the latest Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting attended by all 11 members.

- The committee also retained the asymmetric corridor around the MPR at +500 and -100 basis points.

- Deposit Money Banks' Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) was maintained at 45 percent, while Merchant Banks' CRR remained at 16 percent.

- The CRR on non-Treasury Single Account public sector deposits was also left unchanged at 75 percent.

- According to Cardoso, the MPC's decision reflects concerns over persistent inflationary pressures, exchange rate volatility and growing uncertainties in the global economy.

- The committee noted that inflation has recorded marginal increases over the past two months but described the pressures as largely temporary and expected to moderate over time.

- Policymakers highlighted risks arising from geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, particularly their impact on global energy prices, transportation costs and supply chains.

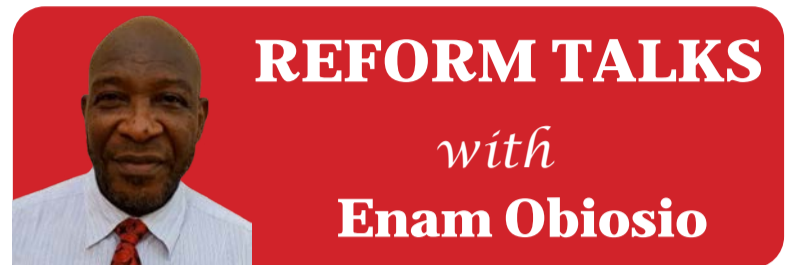
- The MPC, however, observed that Nigeria's exposure to these external shocks has been moderated by recent economic reforms and monetary policy measures implemented by the apex bank.

- The committee stressed the importance of sustaining existing monetary tightening measures to preserve gains recorded in foreign exchange market stability, inflation management and investor confidence.

- Cardoso expressed confidence that the current macroeconomic environment remains resilient enough to support a gradual return to disinflation.

- The decision underscores the CBN's cautious policy stance as emerging economies continue to navigate external shocks, currency pressures and uncertain global financial conditions.

Towers Alone Will Not Transform Nigeria's Digital Economy



The federal government's announcement that China Industrial Bank (CIB) will support the Nigeria Universal Communication Access Project (NUCAP) is one of the more significant digital infrastructure developments of the Tinubu administration. The project aims to deploy 3,700 telecommunications towers and extend network access to more than 20 million Nigerians living in unserved and underserved communities. According to the Honourable Minister of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy, Dr. Bosun Tijani, CIB will support the deployment of at least 1,000 tower sites before the end of 2026.

The announcement deserves attention because it addresses one of Nigeria's most persistent development challenges: the exclusion of millions of citizens from the digital economy simply because they live outside commercially attractive locations.

For years, Nigeria's telecommunications success story has been largely urban. Major investments have naturally flowed to cities and densely populated areas where operators can recover their costs quickly. The result is that while urban Nigerians increasingly enjoy access to digital banking, e-commerce, online education, remote work opportunities and digital public services, many rural communities remain disconnected from these opportunities.

The implications extend far beyond the ability to make phone calls or browse the internet. In today's economy, connectivity increasingly determines access to markets, information, finance, education and employment. Communities without reliable network coverage are effectively excluded from many of the economic opportunities driving growth in the modern world. This is why NUCAP matters.

The project recognises that telecommunications infrastructure has become a development necessity rather than a commercial luxury. Roads connect communities physically; telecommunications networks connect them economically and digitally. Without reliable connectivity, efforts to expand financial inclusion, digital commerce, online education and technology-driven entrepreneurship face serious limitations.

Tijani captured the ambition of the programme when he stated: "NUCAP is a wholly green network of modern telecommunications towers that will extend connectivity to these previously unconnected communities, many of them in rural and riverine areas of Nigeria. I am particularly encouraged by the Bank's commitment to supporting our ambition of delivering a minimum of 1,000 tower sites by the end of this year, helping to bring connectivity, opportunity, and economic inclusion closer to millions of Nigerians."

The minister is correct to link connectivity with opportunity and economic inclusion. Across the world, digital infrastructure is increasingly viewed as a foundation for development. Countries that expand access to reliable telecommunications networks often experience improvements in financial inclusion, productivity, access to information and business creation. Connectivity has become one of the basic ingredients of economic competitiveness.

However, I believe Nigeria must avoid making a common policy mistake: confusing infrastructure deployment with development outcomes.

Building towers is important, but towers by themselves do not create economic transformation. Connectivity only becomes meaningful when it translates into productive activity. A telecommunications mast in a rural community is valuable not because it exists but because it enables people to participate more effectively in economic life.

A farmer benefits when connectivity allows access to market information and digital payment systems. A student benefits when internet access provides educational resources previously unavailable. A small business owner benefits when connectivity expands access to customers beyond the immediate community. A healthcare worker benefits when digital tools improve access to information and services. In other words, the real value of connectivity lies in what people do with it.

This is why the success of NUCAP should not ultimately be measured by the number of towers constructed. It should be measured by the economic and social outcomes generated after those towers become operational.

How many people gain access to digital financial services? How many small businesses begin using online platforms? How many students access digital learning opportunities? How many jobs emerge as a result of expanded connectivity? These are the indicators that will determine whether the project delivers meaningful value.

The involvement of China Industrial Bank is also significant. Beyond providing financing support, the investment sends a confidence signal to the market. International institutions do not commit capital lightly, particularly in emerging markets facing economic and operational chal-

Nigeria must avoid making a common policy mistake: confusing infrastructure deployment with development outcomes

lenges. CIB's decision to enter Nigeria through NUCAP suggests continued confidence in the long-term potential of the country's digital infrastructure sector.

That confidence is important because telecommunications infrastructure is becoming one of the most strategic investment categories globally. As economies become increasingly digital, countries that fail to invest in connectivity risk losing competitiveness. Digital services, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, e-commerce and remote work all depend on reliable telecommunications infrastructure.

Nigeria therefore has little choice but to continue expanding network coverage. Yet the challenges should not be underestimated.

Deploying 3,700 towers across a country as large and diverse as Nigeria will not be straightforward. Security concerns remain a significant issue in some regions. Power supply limitations continue to affect telecommunications infrastructure nationwide. Right-of-way disputes, regulatory bottlenecks and community engagement challenges

can all delay implementation.

There is also the question of commercial sustainability. Rural and riverine communities have historically attracted limited private investment because deployment costs often exceed short-term returns. Maintaining infrastructure in difficult terrain can be expensive, particularly where supporting infrastructure such as roads and electricity networks remains weak.

These realities explain why many communities remain underserved despite decades of growth in the telecommunications sector.

This is precisely where government intervention becomes necessary. Universal access has always required a balance between commercial incentives and public policy objectives. Left entirely to market forces, investment naturally concentrates in the most profitable locations. Public policy exists partly to ensure that development extends beyond those locations.

The broader significance of NUCAP lies in the fact that it reflects a changing understanding of connectivity within government. Telecommunications is no longer being treated solely as a communications issue. It is increasingly viewed as an economic development tool.

This shift is important. Digital inclusion affects financial inclusion. It affects educational outcomes. It affects healthcare delivery. It affects entrepreneurship. It affects productivity. Most importantly, it affects the ability of citizens to participate in an increasingly digital economy.

Nigeria's demographic realities make the issue even more urgent. The country has one of the youngest populations in the world, with millions entering the workforce every year. Traditional employment channels are struggling to absorb this growing labour force. Digital opportunities, including remote work, freelancing, technology services and online entrepreneurship, offer alternative pathways. However, none of these opportunities can be fully accessed without reliable connectivity.

That is why NUCAP should be viewed as more than a telecommunications project. It is an economic inclusion project. It is a productivity project. It is a human capital project.

At the same time, optimism must be accompanied by accountability. Nigeria has a long history of ambitious announcements that fail to achieve their intended outcomes. The credibility of NUCAP will depend not on targets announced at conferences but on towers delivered, communities connected and opportunities created.

The public should therefore pay close attention to implementation milestones. Progress should be transparent. Targets should be measurable. Outcomes should be independently evaluated.

Ultimately, the most important question is not whether 3,700 towers will be built. The more important question is whether the infrastructure will help create a more inclusive digital economy.

The promise of NUCAP lies not in steel structures rising across rural landscapes. Its promise lies in the possibility that millions of Nigerians who have remained on the margins of the digital economy may finally gain access to the opportunities that connectivity makes possible.

If the project succeeds, it will demonstrate that telecommunications infrastructure can serve as a platform for economic inclusion and national development. If it falls short, Nigeria will once again be reminded that infrastructure, by itself, is never enough. Real transformation occurs only when infrastructure is converted into opportunity, productivity and prosperity.