

The Reforms

Championing good governance, Driving Development

Nigeria's Debt Debate Requires Facts, Accountability, Results

- Understanding The Real Drivers Of Nigeria's Rising Debt
- Why Stronger Revenues Must Now Deliver Measurable Improvements For Citizens

*Public debt has become one of the defining issues in Nigeria's economic conversation. Every announcement of a higher debt stock triggers fresh concerns about fiscal sustainability, future generations and the country's ability to finance development. Yet, debt figures alone rarely tell the full story. Behind every headline are policy decisions, exchange rate movements, inherited liabilities and budget realities that require careful examination. The recent engagement between Nigeria's economic management team and the Senate Committee on Finance offered more than a defence of government policies. It exposed the difficult balance between restoring macroeconomic stability and delivering tangible improvements in the lives of Nigerians. For the country, the real issue is not simply how much has been borrowed, but whether public finance is being managed in a way that advances national development. **Enam Obiosio** writes...*

For months, public discourse has been dominated by claims that President Bola Tinubu's administration borrowed between N75 trillion and N80 trillion, fuelling fears that Nigeria's debt burden has expanded at an alarming pace.

The figures have become a rallying point for critics and a source of concern for many Nigerians already grappling with high living costs. However, during a four-hour engagement with the Senate Committee on Finance, the Honourable Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Mr. Taiwo Oyedele, argued that the public conversation has largely overlooked the factors responsible for the increase in the country's debt stock.

His explanation deserves attention, not because it settles the debate, but because it introduces important context that should inform it.

According to Mr. Oyedele, the President Tinubu



Mr. Taiwo Oyedele, Honourable Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy

administration has not borrowed anywhere close to the figures circulating in public discussions.

"For external loans, we always require the approval of the National Assembly. What usually happens is that once the National Assembly approves a borrowing plan, many people interpret that as money already borrowed. We have not even taken half of what the National Assembly approved."

The minister explained that over N40 trillion of

the increase in Nigeria's public debt resulted from the depreciation of the naira following exchange rate reforms. Since a significant portion of Nigeria's external obligations is denominated in foreign currencies, the weakening of the naira automatically increased their value when converted into local currency.

CONTINUES ON PG 2

He also noted that another N33 trillion reflected the securitisation of inherited Ways and Means advances from the previous administration rather than fresh loans contracted by the current government.

"The actual amount this administration has borrowed is nowhere near what many people believe. Even for domestic borrowing, much of it is refinancing. Debt that was borrowed previously matures, and the government raises new debt to refinance it. That is not new borrowing."

These explanations distinguish between new borrowing, currency revaluation and debt restructuring, three issues that are often treated as one in public discussions. They also highlight why interpreting debt statistics requires more than looking at headline numbers.

However, providing context should not be mistaken for resolving every concern surrounding Nigeria's public finances.

While the administration's explanation clarifies why the debt stock increased so sharply, it does not diminish the fact that Nigeria's debt obligations remain substantial. Regardless of how the increase occurred, government must still service those obligations from public revenues.

That is precisely why the Senate's intervention during the session was equally significant.

Rather than disputing the accounting explanations, lawmakers focused on a more practical question. If federal government revenues are improving, why are citizens not seeing faster implementation of national budgets and capital projects?

That question came most forcefully from the Senate Chief Whip, Senator (Sen.) Tahir Monguno.

"If revenue performance has improved so significantly, it appears inherently contradictory that the government is still struggling to implement the budget. Where is the revenue going?"

His concern reflects a broader public expectation. Economic reforms are not judged solely by improved fiscal indicators. They are ultimately assessed by whether they improve roads, hospitals, schools, security and economic opportunities.

Sen. Monguno further observed that the 2025 Appropriation Act had required an extension because implementation remained incomplete, while implementation of the 2026 budget had barely gathered momentum.

He warned: "The dividends of democracy are delivered through the implementation of the budget, particularly capital projects. If the budget is not being implemented, then the fundamental purpose of government is undermined."

Perhaps his strongest criticism concerned security funding. "All the security agencies that have appeared before this committee informed us that they have received zero capital releases."

That observation raises legitimate policy questions. If revenues are rising, then the efficiency of expenditure deserves the same level of scrutiny as revenue generation.

The administration, however, maintains that stronger revenues are already beginning to strengthen Nigeria's economic fundamentals.

Mr. Oyedele disclosed that tax revenue reached N21.6 trillion between January and June 2026, representing a 49 percent increase over the corresponding period of the previous year.

He attributed the growth to tax reforms, digitalisation and stronger compliance.

"Allowing tax evasion to persist amounts to taxing honest taxpayers while rewarding non-compliance. That is not the kind of country we seek to build."

The minister also highlighted improvements in other macroeconomic indicators.

According to him, Nigeria recorded 3.8 percent gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the first quarter of 2026, while external reserves rose above \$51 billion, their highest level in 17 years.

He argued that reforms initiated over the past three years have helped stabilise an economy that was previously under severe strain.

"Three years ago, our economy was on the brink of severe distress. Today, we have made significant progress."

These indicators suggest that some aspects of Nigeria's macroeconomic environment are improving.

Yet macroeconomic stability and citizens' welfare are not always achieved at the same pace.

Higher reserves do not immediately reduce food prices. Improved tax collections do not automatically create jobs. Stronger GDP growth does not instantly repair public infrastructure.

This explains why many Nigerians continue to question whether recent reforms have translated into meaningful improvements in their daily lives.

The Senate Committee on Finance also looked beyond debt and revenue by questioning the country's budgeting framework itself.

Committee Chairman, Sen. Sani Musa, argued that Nigeria should gradually move towards a performance and priority-based budgeting system, where

.....



Mr. Taiwo Oyedele, Honourable Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy

.....

public expenditure is more closely aligned with measurable outcomes.

"Nations have been adopting performance and priority-based budgeting systems and it has been working for them."

He stated that government must scrutinise recurrent expenditure and overhead costs to ensure that available revenues produce greater public value.

This recommendation deserves serious consideration. For years, Nigeria's fiscal debate has centred largely on how government can generate more revenue. Equally important is how efficiently those resources are allocated and monitored.

A country can improve revenue collection significantly and still struggle to achieve development if public spending remains inefficient or poorly prioritised.

That is why the Senate's oversight role remains critical. Healthy democratic governance requires lawmakers to challenge official assumptions, de-

mand transparency and ensure that public resources are used effectively.

At the same time, the executive has a responsibility to communicate complex economic reforms in language that citizens can understand.

While the administration's explanation clarifies why the debt stock increased so sharply, it does not diminish the fact that Nigeria's debt obligations remain substantial

.....

Much of the public misunderstanding surrounding Nigeria's debt profile stems from the absence of sustained public communication on how exchange rate movements, refinancing and inherited liabilities affect official debt statistics.

Improving that communication would help build greater public confidence in ongoing reforms.

Ultimately, the Senate hearing revealed two realities that can exist simultaneously.

The first is that Nigeria's fiscal reforms appear to be strengthening important macroeconomic indicators. Rising tax revenues, improved external reserves and moderate economic growth provide evidence that policy adjustments are beginning to stabilise the economy.

The second is that these gains have yet to produce the level of budget implementation and public service delivery that citizens rightly expect. Lawmakers' concerns over delayed capital releases, infrastructure spending and accountability remain valid and require urgent attention.

The national interest is therefore best served by avoiding two extremes.

It would be inaccurate to dismiss every reform as ineffective simply because economic challenges persist.

It would be equally premature to declare complete success while significant implementation gaps remain.

Nigeria's fiscal debate should move beyond arguments over whether the debt stock is N75 trillion or N80 trillion.

The more important questions are whether the country's debt remains sustainable, whether borrowed funds are financing productive investments, whether stronger revenues are being translated into better public services and whether reforms are improving the lives of ordinary Nigerians.

The President Tinubu administration has provided a detailed explanation of the country's rising debt profile. The National Assembly has responded with equally important demands for accountability and better budget execution.

Both positions serve the national interest.

Going forward, the administration's credibility will depend not only on explaining debt figures but also on demonstrating that improved fiscal performance leads to faster infrastructure delivery, stronger institutions, better security, quality healthcare, improved education and expanded economic opportunities.



Addressing the housing sector challenges with long-term, low-cost mortgage financing for Nigerians at scale



FINANCING NIGERIA'S NON-OIL EXPORT GROWTH

OUR PRODUCTS

- Export Credit Insurance
- Small & Medium Enterprise Export Facility
- Rediscounting & Refinancing Facility
- Foreign Input Facility
- Local Input Facility
- Stocking Facility
- Women and Youth Export Facility
- Export Development Facility
- Trade Finance Facility
- Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board Fund

CORPORATE HEAD OFFICE

NEXIM House
Plot 975 Cadastral Zone AO,
Central Business District, Abuja
phone +234 209 4603 630
fax +234 9 4603638
email neximabj@neximbank.com.ng

ONLINE

[f](#) [i](#) [o](#) [m](#) /neximbank

neximbank.com.ng

REGIONAL OFFICES

Lagos Regional Office
18A, Gerrard Road, Ikoyi, Lagos
phone +234 916 863 4108
email lagosregionaloffice@neximbank.com.ng

Maiduguri Regional Office
41, Sir Kashim Ibrahim Way (West End)
Adjacent to UBA and Ecobank, Maiduguri, Borno State
phone +234 916 863 4106
email bornoregionaloffice@neximbank.com.ng

Enugu Regional Office
House 11, Coal City Garden Estate
GRA, Behind CBN, Okpara Avenue, Enugu State
phone +234 916 863 4113
email enuguregionaloffice@neximbank.com.ng

Akure Regional Office
10, Ado-Owo Road
Alagbaka, Akure, Ondo State
phone +234 916 863 4100
email akureregionaloffice@neximbank.com.ng

Calabar Regional Office
Calabar Export Processing Zone Murtala Muhammed
Way P.M.B. 1127, (Free Trade Zone), Calabar, Cross River
State phone +234 916 863 4105 email
calabarregionaloffice@neximbank.com.ng

Kano Regional Office
No 2, Sokoto Road, Opposite Audu Bako
Secretariat, Kano, Kano State.
phone +234 916 863 4104
email kanoregionaloffice@neximbank.com.ng

Makurdi Regional Office
10, Ogiri Oko Road
Opposite Mobile Police Headquarters
Adjacent Central Bank of Nigeria
Old GRA, Makurdi, Benue State
phone +234 916 863 4107
email makurdiregionaloffice@neximbank.com.ng

THE TEAM

Publisher/Editor-in-Chief
Yunusa Tanko Abdullahi

Editorial Consultant
Enam Obiosio

Associate Editors
Tony Tagbo
Jerome Kris
Felix Omoh-Asun

Special Project Editor
Muftaba Ibrahim

Editorial/ Production Manager
Jennete Ugo Anya

Senior Correspondents
Musa Ibrahim
Oluwatoyin Bamidele

Correspondents
Ahmed Ahmed
Anita Dennis
Kingsley Benson
Majeed Salaam

Reporter
Albert Egbede

Business Development
Adedamola Bello

Advertising/Photo
Safwan Yusuf Jibo

Enquiries
08023130653

Marketing
Elizabeth Akamai

Subscriptions
Sandra Usman

Graphics
Gabriel Olatunde Emmanuel

D2-32 Atiku
Abubakar Crescent,
Cityview,
Dakwo, Abuja.

EDITORIAL

Universal Metering Is the Foundation Nigeria's Power Sector Needs

Nigeria's electricity sector has witnessed numerous reforms over the past two decades. Successive administrations have introduced new policies, reviewed tariffs, attracted private investment and sought to improve power generation. Yet, one persistent challenge has continued to undermine these efforts: the country's huge metering deficit. In our opinion, the federal government's plan to deploy about 7 million electricity meters under the Presidential Metering Initiative and the World Bank-supported Distribution Sector Recovery Programme represents one of the most significant interventions in recent years because it addresses the foundation upon which a sustainable electricity market must be built.

For too long, estimated billing has been a source of frustration for millions of Nigerians. Consumers have complained about arbitrary charges, while electricity distribution companies have struggled with revenue leakages, customer distrust and weak commercial performance. We believe no electricity market can function efficiently when a substantial number of customers are billed without accurate measurement of their consumption.

The decision to combine multi-lateral financing with domestic policy initiatives demonstrates that the government recognises the strategic importance of universal metering. According to the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE), the combined implementation of the Presidential Metering Initiative and the Distribution Sector Recovery Programme

is expected to deliver about 7 million meters, exceeding the country's estimated metering deficit of 5.6 million. If successfully implemented, the initiative could significantly improve billing transparency, strengthen utility revenues and restore consumer confidence.

However, we believe Nigerians should measure the programme by results rather than projections. The country's power sector has never suffered from a shortage of ambitious announcements. Instead, it has often struggled with delayed execution, procurement bottlenecks and incomplete implementation. This initiative must not become another well-designed programme that falls short of its objectives.

In our opinion, the true success of the metering programme will not be determined by the number of contracts awarded or meters procured. It will be measured by the number of households and businesses that receive functional meters within the promised timelines. Government agencies, electricity distribution companies and installation contractors must therefore be held accountable for delivering measurable progress.

We also commend the programme's emphasis on engaging trained young Nigerians in meter installation. Beyond expanding electricity access, the initiative has the potential to create employment opportunities, develop technical skills and stimulate local economic activities. Such an approach demonstrates that infrastructure investment can generate broader

economic benefits when properly designed and effectively implemented.

We urge the federal government to institutionalise transparent monitoring of the programme. Publishing periodic progress reports showing the number of meters delivered, installed and activated across each distribution company would strengthen public confidence and improve accountability. Consumers deserve regular updates on a programme that directly affects their daily lives and economic activities.

At the same time, electricity distribution companies must recognise that universal metering comes with greater responsibility. As estimated billing gradually gives way to accurate measurement, consumers will rightly expect improved service delivery, faster complaint resolution and greater operational efficiency. Metering should not simply improve revenue collection. It should also strengthen the relationship between service providers and their customers.

Ultimately, we believe universal metering is more than an infrastructure project. It is a structural reform capable of addressing one of the electricity sector's longest-standing weaknesses. A transparent and fully metered electricity market will improve investor confidence, reduce commercial losses and create a stronger foundation for future reforms. Nigeria's power sector does not merely need more electricity. It needs a system built on fairness, accountability and trust. Universal metering offers that opportunity, and the government must ensure it is fully realised.

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.



managed by



GET YOUR MREIF MORTGAGE TODAY

9.75%
interest rate
per annum

10%
Minimum
Down Payment

Get up to ₦100 million in mortgage loans with low interest and flexible terms.

Call us today on **0201-330-5005** or
email us at **mreif@arm.com.ng**.

Visit: [mreif.com.ng](#)

NEXIM Bank Pushes Domestic Capital Mobilisation To Drive Nigeria's Economic Growth



Hon. Stella Okotete, Executive Director, Business Development at NEXIM

By Jennete Ugo Anya

Mobilising domestic capital has become increasingly important as Nigeria seeks to finance infrastructure, support businesses and reduce dependence on external funding. While international investments remain valuable, development finance institutions are under growing pressure to unlock local resources that can accelerate industrialisation, strengthen small businesses and promote inclusive economic growth. NEXIM Bank's participation in the 6th Annual General Assembly of the Association of Nigerian Development Finance Institutions (ANDFI) reflects this national effort to build a more resilient development finance ecosystem.

Held in Abuja under the theme, 'Unlocking Domestic Capital for Development Financing,' the assembly brought together federal and state develop-

ment finance institutions, policymakers and industry leaders to explore practical strategies for expanding access to long-term finance and supporting private sector growth.

Leading NEXIM Bank's delegation was the Executive Director, Business Development, Hon. Stella Okotete, accompanied by members of the bank's senior management team.

In her goodwill message, Hon. Okotete reaffirmed the bank's commitment to supporting Nigeria's economic transformation through expanded access to finance and strategic investment in productive sectors.

She stated that NEXIM Bank remains focused on advancing sustainable economic growth, increasing financing opportunities for Nigerian businesses and supporting initiatives that unlock domestic capital for national development.

Her remarks align with the bank's broader mandate of promoting export development, facilitating

non-oil trade and strengthening Nigeria's productive capacity through development finance.

The annual assembly provided a platform for stakeholders to examine how domestic financial resources can be better mobilised to address investment gaps, improve business competitiveness and support long-term economic development.

The event attracted key leaders across Nigeria's development finance landscape, including the Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Taiwo Oyedele, the Managing Director of the Bank of Industry (BoI), Dr. Olasupo Olusi, the Director-General of Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), Dr. Charles Odii, alongside other senior officials from development finance institutions.

Discussions focused on strengthening Nigeria's capital markets, improving access to finance for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and addressing systemic barriers that continue to limit private sector expansion.

Participants also examined financing gaps affecting businesses and explored reforms capable of creating a more efficient and inclusive development finance system.

The conversations reinforced a growing policy consensus that achieving sustainable economic growth requires stronger collaboration among government institutions, development finance organisations and the private sector.

For NEXIM Bank, participation in the assembly underscores its continued role in supporting initiatives that expand financing for businesses, promote exports and contribute to Nigeria's broader economic diversification agenda.

As Nigeria pursues reforms aimed at accelerating industrialisation and private sector-led growth, mobilising domestic capital will remain central to financing investment, creating jobs and strengthening economic resilience. Greater collaboration among development finance institutions, as demonstrated at the ANDFI Assembly, has the potential to deepen access to long-term finance and support more inclusive and sustainable national development.

The annual assembly provided a platform for stakeholders to examine how domestic financial resources can be better mobilised to address investment gaps, improve business competitiveness and support long-term economic development



Funding Nigeria's Agriculture, Growing Prosperity

NCC, REA Partner To Expand Rural Connectivity Through Clean Energy



NCC and REA officials after signing the MoU in Abuja, introducing a new phase of collaboration to align power and telecommunications infrastructure in support of Nigeria's digital development.

Photo: Abdullahi Lamino

By Anita Dennis

Reliable electricity and digital connectivity have become inseparable drivers of economic development. Yet across many rural communities in Nigeria, weak power infrastructure continues to limit telecommunications services, leaving millions of people outside the country's growing digital economy. A new partnership between the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) and the Rural Electrification Agency (REA) seeks to address both challenges simultaneously by combining renewable energy with telecommunications infrastructure to improve connectivity in underserved areas.

The NCC and the REA have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to deploy renewable energy solutions that will expand telecommunications services to rural and underserved communities across Nigeria.

The agreement, formalised in Abuja, is designed to connect telecommunications base stations to existing and planned renewable energy mini-grids, reducing dependence on diesel-powered generators while improving network reliability and extending digital services to communities with limited access to electricity.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, the Executive Vice Chairman of the NCC, Dr Aminu Maida, said the collaboration represents a practical approach to strengthening Nigeria's digital infrastructure by leveraging existing clean energy investments.

Represented by the Executive Commissioner for Technical Services, Engr Abraham Oshadami, Maida disclosed that implementation would commence immediately, with both agencies already identifying renewable energy mini-grids located within one to two kilometres of telecommunications sites.

According to him, the initiative will maximise ex-

isting infrastructure, reduce operating costs for network providers and improve mobile connectivity in areas that have historically remained underserved.

He stated that the partnership would ensure more reliable telecommunications services in off-grid communities while supporting broader participation in Nigeria's digital economy.

Looking ahead, Maida said future renewable energy projects would be planned alongside telecommunications infrastructure so that electricity and digital connectivity are delivered simultaneously, reducing deployment costs and accelerating rural development.

On its part, the REA described the agreement as a significant step towards integrated infrastructure planning.

Executive Director of Technical Services at the REA, Engr Umar Abdullahi, said the partnership moves beyond isolated agency interventions by promoting a coordinated approach to expanding both electricity access and digital services.

According to him, a joint implementation committee has already been established to identify priority communities, supervise pilot projects and coordinate nationwide implementation.

Engr. Abdullahi disclosed that one of the first initiatives under the partnership would involve migrating diesel-powered telecommunications towers to renewable energy supplied through mini-grids, a transition expected to lower operating costs while improving network coverage and service reliability.

The collaboration reflects a growing recognition that expanding digital access requires dependable energy infrastructure. By integrating renewable energy with telecommunications development, the initiative has the potential to improve mobile connectivity, reduce energy costs and support more sustainable network operations in rural communities.

FG, BOA Launch Farm Financing Scheme To Boost Grain Production

By Kingsley Benson

Nigeria's battle against rising food prices will ultimately be won on the farm. While short-term interventions such as food imports and market controls can ease supply pressures, sustainable food security depends on increasing domestic agricultural production. The federal government's new partnership with the Bank of Agriculture (BOA) reflects this long-term strategy by combining affordable financing, improved farm inputs and extension support to help millions of smallholder farmers produce more food, raise incomes and strengthen the country's agricultural value chain.

The BOA, in partnership with the federal government, has launched the Renewed Hope Smallholder Agricultural Financing Programme, an initiative designed to increase Nigeria's annual grain production from about 11 million tonnes to 25 million tonnes.

Unveiled recently in Zaria, Kaduna State, the programme seeks to provide affordable financing, quality farm inputs and technical support to smallholder farmers while promoting sustainable agricultural production through a revolving credit model.

Speaking at the launch of the Renewed Hope Smallholder Support and Value Chain Fund, the Managing Director of BOA, Mr. Ayodeji Oludare-Sotinrin, said the initiative is structured to address one of the biggest constraints facing farmers, which is access to affordable production financing.

Unlike previous interventions that relied mainly on grants, the programme will provide subsidised fertilisers, certified hybrid seeds and other agricultural inputs through the bank's single-digit interest loan facility at nine percent, allowing farmers to access financing while ensuring the long-term sustainability of the scheme.

According to Mr. Oludare-Sotinrin, the objective is to increase farm productivity without creating dependence on government subsidies.

The programme's rollout will begin with 500,000 farmers during the current farming season before expanding to 2 million farmers next year and eventually reaching 5 million farmers nationwide.

To ensure effective implementation, BOA selected 20 farm aggregators from more than 1,240 applicants, based on their technical capacity and ability to support participating farmers throughout the production cycle.

Mr. Oludare-Sotinrin expressed confidence that expanding access to quality inputs and improved farming practices could significantly transform Nigeria's grain production.

He projected that if 5 million farmers each cultivate one hectare and achieve an average yield of five tonnes per hectare, Nigeria could produce 25 million tonnes of grain annually, enough to satisfy domestic demand while creating opportunities for agricultural exports.

Beyond increasing food availability, he said higher production would reduce dependence on food imports, stabilise domestic food prices, create employment in rural communities and support broader economic growth.

Recognising that year-round farming is essential for sustained productivity, the BOA Managing Director also disclosed that the bank is developing irrigation financing and irrigation-as-a-service initiatives to reduce reliance on seasonal rainfall and improve farmers' incomes.

He urged beneficiaries to use the inputs strictly for farming activities, comply with extension service recommendations and repay their loans promptly to sustain the revolving financing model for future participants.

Also speaking at the event, the Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Senator Abubakar Kyari, reaffirmed the federal government's commitment to addressing food inflation by expanding domestic agricultural production rather than relying on imports.

According to Sen. Kyari, food affordability ultimately depends on increasing supply, making improved access to quality farm inputs a critical pillar of the Tinubu administration's food security strategy.

Nigeria Reaffirms Global Road Safety Leadership At UN High-Level Meeting



Shehu Mohammed, Corps Marshal of the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) (left), and others, during the UN High-Level Meeting on Road Safety

By Majeed Salaam

Road safety has become an increasingly important public policy issue as countries seek to reduce preventable deaths, improve transport systems and achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For Nigeria, strengthening road safety is not only about enforcing traffic regulations but also about improving infrastructure, embracing technology and aligning transport reforms with global best practices. The country's participation at the United Nations (UN) High-Level Meeting on Road Safety reflected its growing engagement in international efforts to make roads safer while advancing domestic reforms.

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu nominated the Corps Marshal of the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), Shehu Mohammed, to lead Nigeria's delegation to the UN High-Level Meeting on Improving Global Road Safety at the United Nations General Assembly Headquarters in New York.

The high-level meeting brought together Heads of State, ministers, policymakers and road safety experts to accelerate the implementation of global commitments aimed at reducing road traffic deaths and injuries by 50 percent by 2030 under the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety.

Presenting Nigeria's national statement on behalf of President Tinubu during the plenary session, Corps Marshal Mohammed reaffirmed the federal government's commitment to strengthening road safety governance through institutional reforms, technological innovation and strategic partnerships.

Speaking on the conference theme, 'Scaling Up and Accelerating Implementation of Commitments to Halving Road Traffic Deaths and Injuries by 2030,' the Corps Marshal said Nigeria remains committed to improving road safety in line with the administration's Renewed Hope Agenda.

He highlighted measures the federal government had undertaken to strengthen the operational capacity of the FRSC, including the deployment of

technology-enabled enforcement systems, improved emergency response mechanisms and expanded public education campaigns aimed at reducing road crashes and fatalities.

The Corps Marshal also showcased Nigeria's growing leadership in road safety across Africa.

He informed delegates that Nigeria recently launched the Nigeria Road Assessment Programme (NigeriaRAP) in partnership with the International Road Assessment Programme (iRAP) to improve road infrastructure safety through the globally recognised Safe System Approach.

He further noted that Nigeria hosts the Secretariat of the African Association of Road Safety Lead Agencies (AARSLA), providing a continental platform for collaboration, knowledge exchange and institutional

... road safety remains a national priority under President Tinubu's administration ...

capacity building in road safety management.

According to the Corps Marshal, Nigeria is also integrating road safety into its broader transport and environmental agenda through the Presidential

Initiative on Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) and Electric Vehicles (EVs), while developing improved safety standards for heavy-duty vehicles and emerging transport technologies.

While acknowledging the progress already recorded, Corps Marshal Mohammed emphasised that achieving the global road safety targets will require stronger international cooperation.

He called for increased collaboration in areas such as intelligent traffic enforcement technologies, road infrastructure safety assessment, institutional capacity building and technology transfer.

The Corps Marshal urged development partners and the international community to deepen technical cooperation and support capacity-building initiatives that would accelerate progress towards shared global road safety objectives.

Reaffirming Nigeria's commitment, he stated that road safety remains a national priority under President Tinubu's administration and pledged continued collaboration with international partners to build safer roads, save more lives and contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.

The UN High-Level Meeting, convened by the President of the UN General Assembly in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), adopted a Progress Declaration to guide global efforts towards achieving the target of halving road traffic deaths and serious injuries by 2030. The conference also reviewed countries' progress since the 2022 Political Declaration and the Fourth Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety held in Marrakech, Morocco, in 2025.

Nigeria's participation at the UN meeting reinforces its commitment to aligning national road safety reforms with global best practices. As the country continues to invest in safer infrastructure, technology-enabled enforcement, public education and regional cooperation, sustained implementation of these initiatives could contribute to reducing road fatalities, strengthening transport safety and supporting broader national development objectives.

FG Launches AI Crop Monitoring System To Strengthen Nigeria's Food Security



From Left: Driss Kitane, Chief Executive Officer of Ground Truth Analytics; Senator Ibrahim Hadejia, Deputy Chief of Staff to the President (in the Office of the Vice President), and Alaffi Laadel, Chief Executive Officer of OCP Africa, at the signing of the MoU on National Agro-Productivity System between the PFSCU, OCP Africa and Ground Truth Analytics at the Mohammed VI Polytechnic University in Ben Guerir, Morocco, recently.

By Anita Dennis

Food security is no longer determined solely by how much a country produces. It also depends on how accurately governments can track production, anticipate shortages and respond before crises emerge. For years, Nigeria has struggled with weak agricultural data, making it difficult to plan food reserves, manage imports and support farmers effectively. The federal government's launch of the country's first satellite and artificial intelligence-powered national crop monitoring system marks an important shift from reactive decision-making to data-driven agricultural planning.

We seek to build a Nigerian capability that is adapted to our conditions, understood and managed by our institutions, supported by Nigerian expertise, and sustained through knowledge transfer

The initiative, unveiled through a Memorandum

of Understanding (MoU) signed in Ben Guerir, Morocco, introduces the National Agro-Productivity System (NAPS), a platform designed to provide real-time intelligence on crop production, land use and emerging food security risks across Nigeria.

The agreement was signed by the Presidential Food Systems Coordinating Unit (PFSCU), OCP Africa and geospatial technology company Ground Truth Analytics, with deployment expected to begin across 15 priority states before nationwide expansion.

Signing on behalf of the federal government, Deputy Chief of Staff to the President (Office of the Vice President), Senator Ibrahim Hassan Hadejia, said the initiative represents more than the adoption of advanced technology. It is also about building Nigeria's capacity to develop and manage its own agricultural intelligence systems.

"The problems we face should not define the limits of our ambition. They should inspire us to develop the technologies, institutions, and capabilities required to overcome them."

His remarks reflect a broader policy direction under the President Tinubu administration, which has prioritised food security since declaring a national emergency on the sector in 2023.

Nigeria's food challenges have been compounded by insecurity, flooding, climate change and rising production costs. At the peak of the crisis in early 2025, food inflation exceeded 40 percent, exposing the limitations of planning systems that relied largely on projections rather than verified field data.

The new platform seeks to address that weakness by using satellite imagery and artificial intelligence to monitor crop cultivation throughout the farming season.

According to Sen. Hadejia, the system will strengthen seasonal planning, agricultural investment and policy coordination by providing governments with reliable and timely information.

"Our ambition goes beyond the deployment of

technology. We seek to build a Nigerian capability that is adapted to our conditions, understood and managed by our institutions, supported by Nigerian expertise, and sustained through knowledge transfer."

For policymakers, one of the greatest advantages of the platform is its ability to verify what farmers are actually cultivating instead of relying solely on planting declarations.

Executive Secretary of the PFSCU, Marion Moon, described weak in-season monitoring as one of the biggest gaps in Nigeria's agricultural planning.

"Monitoring during the season has been our biggest weakness. We reach the end of a season and find we did not hit the targets we saw at the beginning."

She explained that real-time monitoring could prevent costly policy errors involving food reserves, imports and exports. "If a farmer said they were going to plant maize, did they actually plant maize, or did they switch back to rice? If we believed everyone was leaving rice and opened our reserves accordingly, only to discover they planted rice after all, we end up with a surplus."

The government says the system has already shown encouraging results during pilot implementation. According to Moon, the programme has covered 13 states, reached about 250,000 farmers, surveyed more than 50,000 producers across over 2,000 communities and generated more than one million agricultural data points covering five major commodities.

Technology partners also highlighted the platform's practical capabilities.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Ground Truth Analytics, Driss Kitane, said artificial intelligence can automatically identify individual farm plots from satellite images, determine the crops being cultivated and monitor their growth stages without physical field inspections.

"Every parcel you see here has been delineated by artificial intelligence. Nobody manually drew them. We can do this at massive, country and even continental scales."

He disclosed that similar technology already predicts Morocco's national wheat harvest up to three months before harvest with between 90 and 95 percent accuracy, while financial institutions and farming cooperatives use it to support agricultural lending and verify farm activities.

Addressing concerns about data sovereignty, Kitane assured that all information generated through the project would remain under Nigeria's control.

"Everything we develop is sovereign to Nigeria. It will be hosted on Nigerian servers."

Also speaking, CEO of OCP Africa, Alaffi Laadel, said the partnership is designed to strengthen Nigerian institutions through knowledge transfer and local capacity development rather than simply introducing new technology.

The success of the initiative will ultimately depend on effective implementation, sustained institutional collaboration and the ability of policymakers to translate better agricultural intelligence into faster and more informed decisions. If successfully deployed, the National Agro-Productivity System could reduce uncertainty in food planning, strengthen farmer support programmes and improve Nigeria's capacity to respond to emerging food security challenges. In a sector where timely information can determine harvest outcomes and market stability, investing in reliable agricultural data may prove as important as investing in seeds, fertiliser and irrigation.

NDIC Hosts Africa's Deposit Insurance Leaders To Strengthen Financial Stability



Mr. Thompson Oludare Sunday, MD/ CEO of NDIC (right), and others, at the IADI ARC Annual Meeting and workshop in Abuja

By Jennete Ugo Anya

Confidence in the banking system remains one of the strongest pillars of economic stability. During periods of financial uncertainty, effective deposit insurance, clear public communication and coordinated crisis management help protect depositors, strengthen confidence and minimise systemic risks. As financial systems across Africa become increasingly interconnected and exposed to emerging threats such as cybercrime and rapid financial technology innovation, regulators are placing greater emphasis on crisis preparedness and institutional resilience. Against this backdrop, Nigeria recently hosted Africa's leading deposit insurance institutions to advance regional co-operation and strengthen financial safety nets.

The Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation (NDIC) hosted the 2026 International Association of Deposit Insurers (IADI) Africa Regional Committee (ARC) Annual Meeting and Workshop in Abuja from July 20 to 23, 2026, bringing together deposit insurance leaders, financial regulators and policymakers from across Africa to deepen collaboration on depositor protection and financial system stability.

The details of the meeting were contained in a statement issued by Hawwau Gambo, Head of Communication and Public Affairs Department of the NDIC.

The four-day meeting was held under the theme, 'Safeguarding Stability: Public Aware-

ness and Crisis Readiness for a Stronger Future.'

The regional engagement attracted chief executives, directors and senior officials of deposit insurance institutions, financial regulators and

The workshop provided a platform for peer learning and experience sharing among African deposit insurers facing similar regulatory and financial stability challenges

other stakeholders within Africa's financial safety net to examine strategies for strengthening public awareness and improving crisis preparedness in line with the revised IADI Core Principles.

Discussions focused on sustaining depositor confidence, strengthening communication during periods of financial stress and improving

coordination among financial safety-net institutions to enhance the effectiveness of crisis response mechanisms.

Participants also explored practical approaches to crisis management and bank resolution while examining how deposit insurers can better respond to emerging risks associated with financial technology innovation and cyber threats.

The workshop provided a platform for peer learning and experience sharing among African deposit insurers facing similar regulatory and financial stability challenges.

Technical committee meetings, plenary sessions and interactive roundtable discussions examined public awareness strategies during both normal and crisis periods, crisis preparedness and management, system-wide response operations and simulation exercises designed to test institutional readiness.

Declaring the conference open, the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Olayemi Cardoso, underscored the importance of strong financial safety-net institutions in preserving confidence in the banking system and supporting financial stability.

The Honourable Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Taiwo Oyelede, delivered the keynote address, highlighting the role of effective deposit insurance frameworks in supporting broader financial sector reforms and economic resilience.

The meeting also featured contributions from the Secretary General of the International Association of Deposit Insurers, Eva Hüpkes, the Chairperson of the IADI Africa Regional Committee, Julia Oyet, and other senior officials from deposit insurance institutions across the continent.

Hosting the conference, the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of the NDIC, Thompson Oludare Sunday, reaffirmed the corporation's commitment to strengthening collaboration among deposit insurers and promoting international best practices in depositor protection and crisis management.

The conference reinforced the importance of coordinated action among financial regulators as African economies continue to navigate evolving financial risks and increasing digital transformation. Participants agreed that stronger public awareness, effective communication and institutional preparedness remain essential to maintaining confidence in financial systems during periods of uncertainty.

Nigeria's hosting of the regional gathering further demonstrated its commitment to advancing financial sector stability and strengthening cooperation among African financial safety-net institutions. As financial services continue to evolve, sustained collaboration, knowledge sharing and stronger crisis preparedness frameworks will remain critical to protecting depositors, enhancing banking sector resilience and supporting sustainable economic growth across the continent.



WHOSE DEPOSITS DO WE INSURE?

The NDIC insures bank deposits of natural persons and legal entities, both Nigerians and other nationals resident in Nigeria.

NDIC Help Desk:

0800 6342 4357

helpdesk@ndic.gov.ng | [www.ndic.gov.ng](#) | @ndicnigeria

President Tinubu Calls On Diaspora Doctors To Strengthen Nigeria's Healthcare Reforms



President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (1st r); Mrs. Abike Dabiri-Erewa, CEO of NIDCOM, with a delegation of the Nigerian Diaspora Medical Association Worldwide in the State House.

By Majeed Salaam

A stronger healthcare system requires more than increased funding and improved infrastructure. It also depends on attracting skilled professionals, expanding medical expertise and building lasting partnerships that improve service delivery. As Nigeria continues to reform its health sector, the Federal Government is increasingly looking to the country's highly skilled professionals abroad to contribute their knowledge, experience and innovation to national development. President Bola Tinubu's latest engagement with Nigerian medical professionals in the diaspora underscores this strategy of leveraging global expertise to strengthen healthcare delivery at home.

Receiving a delegation of the Nigerian Diaspora Medical Associations Worldwide at the State House, Abuja, President Bola Tinubu called on Nigerian doctors and other healthcare professionals living abroad to return home and contribute to the transformation of the nation's healthcare system under the Renewed Hope Agenda.

The delegation, led by the Chief Executive Officer of the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NIDCOM), Mrs. Abike Dabiri-Erewa, was in Abuja as part of activities marking the 2026 National Diaspora Day Celebration.

Addressing the visiting professionals, the President acknowledged the important role that Nigerian experts abroad can play in building a more resilient and globally competitive healthcare system.

"Nigeria needs the knowledge, innovation, experience and patriotism of its highly skilled professionals abroad to build a resilient and world-class healthcare system for all citizens."

Reflecting on his own professional journey, President Tinubu recalled returning to Nigeria after working with Deloitte and Touche and Mobil, saying his decision was driven by a desire to contribute to national development.

He encouraged members of the diaspora to make similar contributions by bringing home their expertise and supporting ongoing reforms in the health sector.

The President reaffirmed that healthcare remains a central pillar of the Renewed Hope Agenda, noting that the Federal Government is implementing reforms to strengthen primary healthcare, expand access to quality medical services and deepen collaboration with Nigerian professionals living overseas.

He also commended the delegation for its recent medical outreach programmes conducted across the country, including in the North-East, North-West, South-East and South-West.

According to the President, the voluntary initiatives, which provided specialist consultations, surgeries, health education and other life-saving medical services, demonstrated the compassion, professionalism and patriotism of Nigerian healthcare professionals abroad.

The President urged the visiting doctors to become ambassadors for Nigeria's healthcare transformation by encouraging more diaspora professionals to reconnect with the country through partnerships, investments, knowledge exchange and, where possible, permanent return.

Earlier, Mrs. Dabiri-Erewa reaffirmed the commitment of Nigerian healthcare professionals in the diaspora to support the government's healthcare agenda through continued medical missions and professional collaboration.

She said the recent nationwide medical outreaches reflected their determination to contribute meaningfully to improving healthcare delivery in Nigeria.

Also speaking, the Minister of State for Health, Dr Salako, said the growing involvement of diaspora medical professionals demonstrates the increasing impact of the Renewed Hope Agenda within the health sector.

He disclosed that the Federal Ministry of Health will institutionalise the collaboration by making engagement with diaspora healthcare professionals an annual event.

The delegation included leading Nigerian medical professionals from across the diaspora, among them Dr Jide Menakaya, Dr Kunle Akanbi, Dr Uche Menakaya, Dr Itua Iriogbe, Professor Afekhide Ernest Omoti, Professor Rotimi Jaiyesimi and several other specialists committed to supporting healthcare development in Nigeria.

Quotes of the Week

Sen. Ibrahim Hassan Hadejia, Deputy Chief of Staff to the President (Office of the Vice President)

Our ambition goes beyond the deployment of technology. We seek to build a Nigerian capability that is adapted to our conditions, understood and managed by our institutions, supported by Nigerian expertise, and sustained through knowledge transfer, institutional capacity development, and continuous learning.

Mr. Taiwo Oyedele, Minister of Finance & Coordinating Minister of the Economy

The actual amount this administration has borrowed is nowhere near what many people believe. Even for domestic borrowing, much of it is refinancing. Debt that was borrowed previously matures, and the government raises new debt to refinance it. That is not new borrowing.

Mr. Olasupo Olusi, MD of BoI

The goal is industrialisation, import substitution through local cocoa powder production, export promotion of butter and liquor to ECOWAS and the Gulf, and job creation for young Nigerians. For at the Bank of Industry, we hold to a simple conviction: we are not in the business of financing commodities. We are in the business of financing value creation.

BOI's €60m Cocoa Fund Can Help Nigeria Earn More From Every Bean

By Musa Ibrahim

Nigeria has long ranked among the world's leading cocoa producers, yet the country continues to earn only a fraction of the wealth generated by the global chocolate industry. While thousands of tonnes of cocoa beans leave Nigerian ports every year, much of the value is created elsewhere through processing, packaging and manufacturing. The Bank of Industry (BoI)'s latest €60 million financing agreement with the European Investment Bank (EIB) signals a deliberate effort to reverse that trend by shifting Nigeria's cocoa industry from commodity exports to value creation.

Speaking at the Cocoa Value Addition Summit in Abuja, themed 'From Bean to Brand,' the Managing Director of the BoI, Dr. Olasupo Olusi, announced that the bank had secured a €60 million credit facility from the EIB to strengthen cocoa processing and manufacturing across the country.

The financing will support cocoa processing, ingredient manufacturing, packaging and chocolate production, sectors widely regarded as the missing links in Nigeria's cocoa value chain.

Dr. Olusi said the facility addresses one of the biggest constraints facing indigenous processors, which is limited access to affordable long-term financing.

"An example of this is the €60 million credit facility we received from the European Investment Bank to develop the cocoa sector. This will help Nigerian processors compete more fairly with multinationals that have access to cheaper finance."

The intervention goes beyond providing loans. According to Dr. Olusi, the BoI intends to establish dedicated financing windows covering every stage of cocoa processing while laying the foundation for an integrated industrial ecosystem.

"We are not approaching cocoa as a lending programme; we are building an industrial ecosystem."

He disclosed that the bank is exploring the establishment of a Cocoa Value Addition Park in Nigeria's cocoa-producing belt, featuring shared processing facilities, quality laboratories, reliable electricity, effluent treatment systems and digital traceability infrastructure.

"Our goal is to finance everything from nurseries and cooperatives to grinding plants, ingredient factories, packaging lines and chocolate manufacturers."

The proposal reflects a growing recognition that Nigeria's competitiveness in agriculture will increasingly depend on its ability to process commodities locally rather than exporting raw produce.

Despite producing more than 300,000 metric tonnes of cocoa annually, Nigeria currently has an effective grinding capacity of only about 50,000 tonnes. The gap means a significant proportion of the country's cocoa leaves its borders without undergoing value-adding processes that generate higher export earnings and create industrial jobs.

Dr. Olusi believes expanding domestic processing could increase Nigeria's export value by between two and four times while reducing dependence on raw bean exports.

"The goal is industrialisation, import substitution through local cocoa powder production, export promotion of butter and liquor to ECOWAS and the Gulf, and job creation for young Nigerians."

His remarks reinforce the BoI's broader development philosophy. "For at the Bank of Industry, we hold to a simple conviction: we are not in the business of financing commodities. We are in the business of financing value creation."



Dr. Olasupo Olusi, MD of BoI (1st left); Sen. John Enoh, Minister of State Trade, Industry & Investment (2nd left); Sen. Abubakar Kyari, Minister of Agriculture & Food Security (3rd left), and other.

The bank's recent performance demonstrates its growing focus on industrial agriculture.

According to Olusi, BoI disbursed more than N164 billion to over 3,500 agro-processing and food businesses in 2025, supporting factories, mills, pack-houses and cold-chain projects while integrating nearly 48,000 smallholder farmers into industrial value chains.

The summit also highlighted that the need for greater value addition extends beyond Nigeria.

The Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment, Chris Isokpunwu, represented by the ministry's Director of

He said expanding domestic processing would increase export earnings, create jobs and stimulate industries such as confectionery, cosmetics and pharmaceuticals.

The call for industrial transformation was echoed by the Chief Executive of the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), Ransford Abbey, who urged African cocoa-producing countries to retain more value within the continent.

"Africa produces about 75 percent of the world's cocoa but earns less than 10 percent of the value generated by the global chocolate industry."

He stated: "This system cannot continue. We must shift the paradigm from exporting raw poverty to creating refined wealth right here on the African continent."

Also speaking at the summit, Massino Deluko, representing the European Union, reaffirmed the bloc's commitment to supporting cocoa value addition in Nigeria while urging governments to strengthen the policy and regulatory environment needed to attract greater private investment.

The discussions at the summit point to a common conclusion. Nigeria's future in the global cocoa industry will depend less on producing more beans and more on processing them into higher-value products. If backed by sustained investment, supportive infrastructure and consistent industrial policies, initiatives such as the BOI-EIB financing facility could help reposition Nigeria from a supplier of raw commodities to a competitive player in the global cocoa manufacturing value chain. Such a shift would strengthen export earnings, create skilled jobs and ensure that a greater share of the wealth generated from Nigerian cocoa remains within the country.

The financing will support cocoa processing, ingredient manufacturing, packaging and chocolate production, sectors widely regarded as the missing links in Nigeria's cocoa value chain

Industrial Development, Mohammed Bala, noted that more than 80 percent of Nigeria's cocoa is still exported as raw beans despite the country's processing potential.



National
Agricultural
Development
Fund

Funding Agriculture
Growing Prosperity

Strength in numbers!

Farmer associations help members access quality inputs, finance, training and markets faster. They also make it easier for government and partners to reach you with support.



How Local Value Addition Can Unlock Africa's Industrial Future



Vice President Kashim Shettima (7th r) , with others, during Shettima's tour of GDIZ in Cotonou.

By Ahmed Ahmed

Africa's abundant natural resources have long sustained global industries, yet the continent continues to earn only a fraction of the value created from them. From cotton and cashew to cocoa and minerals, much of Africa's wealth still leaves its shores in raw form, only to return as expensive finished products. This long-standing economic model has limited industrial growth, constrained job creation and weakened export earnings. Nigeria's latest engagement with the Republic of Benin signals a renewed determination to change that narrative by placing value addition at the centre of Africa's development strategy.

Speaking during a tour of the Glo-Djigbé Industrial Zone (GDIZ) in Cotonou, Vice President Kashim Shettima said the time had come for African countries to take greater control of their resources by building industries that process raw materials into finished products.

His message reflects a growing consensus across the continent that sustainable economic growth cannot be achieved through the continued export of unprocessed commodities.

"We are here essentially at the behest of President Tinubu, in the spirit of his Renewed Hope Agenda, to see and peer-review global best practices," Vice President Shettima said.

The industrial zone offered more than a showcase of modern manufacturing. It demonstrated how agriculture can be integrated with industry to create complete value chains that generate employment, increase exports and attract investment.

During the visit, the Nigerian delegation inspected facilities where locally grown cotton is transformed into yarn, fabric and finished garments. It also toured factories processing cashew, soya bean and other agricultural commodities for domestic and international markets.

For Nigeria, the visit represents an opportunity to learn from a neighbouring country that has successfully linked agricultural production with industrial processing.

The Vice President described the GDIZ as an African model worthy of replication.

"It is an African success story where there is a whole chain of value addition in cotton, cashew and soya bean value chains. Be rest assured that we have learnt a lot of lessons through this visit, and we are going to replicate a lot of that in Nigeria."

Vice President Shettima drew attention to one of Africa's biggest economic paradoxes.

Despite producing significant volumes of cotton, the continent accounts for only about one percent of the global cotton industry, which is valued at \$370 billion.

That imbalance illustrates the cost of exporting raw materials while other economies undertake processing, manufacturing and branding.

According to him, rebuilding Nigeria's textile value chain could generate millions of jobs, expand non-oil exports and stimulate economic activity across the country.

The federal government's response is beginning to take shape.

He disclosed that Nigeria is establishing eight agro-industrial zones across eight states, a move designed to encourage local processing, strengthen value chains and attract private sector investment.

The initiative aligns with the broader objectives of President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda, which places industrialisation and economic diversification at the heart of Nigeria's long-term growth strategy.

"We are setting up eight agro-industrial zones in eight states in our country," the Vice President stated.

The significance of this approach extends beyond manufacturing.

Processing agricultural commodities locally allows countries to capture more value from their natural resources, create skilled jobs, increase foreign exchange earnings and reduce dependence on imports.

It also strengthens rural economies by creating stable markets for farmers and encouraging investment across the agricultural value chain.

Nigeria's delegation, which included the governors of Kwara, Imo, Katsina, Plateau, Zamfara and Jigawa States, underscored the importance of collaboration between the federal government and subnational governments in driving industrial development.

That partnership will be essential if agro-industrial zones are to deliver their intended impact across different regions of the country.

Africa's industrial transformation will not happen through policy declarations alone. It will depend on sustained investment, supportive infrastructure, efficient logistics and a business environment that encourages manufacturers to process locally rather than export raw commodities.

Benin's experience offers practical lessons, but Nigeria's success will ultimately be measured by how effectively those lessons are adapted to its larger economy.

Reforms Nuggets

CBN Retains Interest Rate At 26.5%

● **CBN Holds Rate:** The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has retained the Monetary Policy Rate (MPR) at 26.5% following the 306th Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting in Abuja.

● **Second Consecutive Hold:** The decision marks the second straight MPC meeting in 2026 where the benchmark interest rate remained unchanged.

● **Unanimous Decision:** CBN Governor Olayemi Cardoso said MPC members unanimously agreed to maintain the current policy stance while monitoring economic developments.

● **Key Policy Parameters Unchanged:**
MPR: 26.5%
Asymmetric corridor: +500/-100 basis points
CRR: 40.5% for Deposit Money Banks
CRR: 16% for Merchant Banks
Liquidity Ratio: 30%

● **Inflation Considered:** The MPC noted that inflation moderated to 15.91% in June 2026, its first decline in three months, but warned that global uncertainties remain.

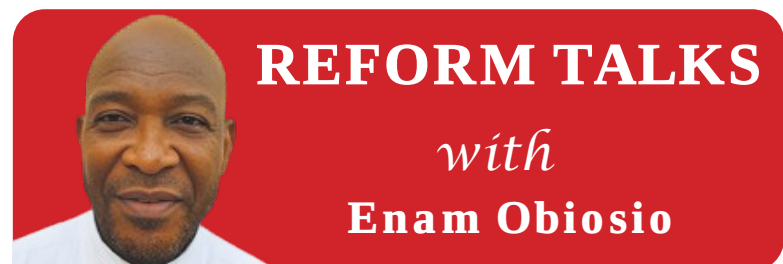
● **Middle East Risk:** Cardoso identified the ongoing Middle East tensions as the biggest external threat to Nigeria's inflation outlook.

● **Economic Resilience:** The committee said Nigeria's economy has remained resilient despite global headwinds, citing coordinated fiscal and monetary reforms.

● **Policy Coordination:** The CBN Governor highlighted improved collaboration between the Federal Government and the apex bank as a key driver of macroeconomic stability.

● **Banking Sector Stronger:** The MPC welcomed the positive outcome of the banking sector recapitalisation exercise, noting improvements in financial soundness and resilience.

US Tariff Signals Nigeria's Need for Urgent Trade Reforms



The United States' decision to impose a 12.5 percent tariff on Nigerian imports over concerns about forced labour should not be dismissed as just another trade dispute. In my opinion, it is a reminder that the rules governing international trade are changing. Today, countries are increasingly judged not only by what they export but also by how those products are produced, regulated and certified.

The United States has explained that the tariff is aimed at encouraging trading partners to prohibit the importation of goods produced with forced labour. Whether one agrees with the approach or not, the policy reflects a broader global trend. Labour standards, environmental compliance and supply chain transparency are becoming integral to international trade. For Nigeria, this development should be seen as an opportunity to strengthen domestic institutions rather than as a reason to retreat from global markets.

I believe Nigeria must respond with reforms instead of rhetoric. It would be easy to portray the tariff as unfair or protectionist. Indeed, some may argue that such measures create additional barriers for developing economies already facing structural challenges. Those concerns deserve attention because trade policies should be transparent, proportionate and evidence-based. However, dwelling solely on the perceived unfairness of the decision will not improve Nigeria's competitiveness.

In my opinion, the more pressing question is whether Nigeria's trade governance framework is keeping pace with global expectations. International buyers are placing greater emphasis on ethical sourcing, labour compliance and product traceability. These requirements are no longer optional. They increasingly determine access to markets, investment opportunities and participation in global value chains.

Nigeria therefore has every reason to strengthen its labour inspection systems, improve supply chain oversight and modernise export certification processes. These reforms are not simply about satisfying foreign governments. They are about protecting workers, improving product quality and making Nigerian businesses more competitive in the global marketplace.

I also believe this development highlights the urgent need to build transparent supply chains. Many Nigerian exports, particularly agricultural products, solid minerals and manufactured goods, pass through multiple layers before reaching international markets. Without credible systems that verify where products come from and how they are produced, exporters will continue to face scrutiny and potential trade restrictions.

Digital traceability, independent certification and stronger customs enforcement should become national priorities. They will not only improve confi-

dence among international buyers but also reduce opportunities for illicit trade and unfair business practices within the domestic economy.

Beyond compliance, Nigeria must strengthen its trade diplomacy. I urge the federal government to engage proactively with the United States and other major trading partners to better understand evolving regulatory expectations and ensure Nigeria's perspectives are adequately represented. Waiting until trade restrictions are announced places the country in a reactive position. Continuous dialogue is far more effective than crisis management.

Trade diplomacy should also involve closer collaboration with the private sector. Exporters, manufacturers and business associations need timely information about changing international standards so they can adapt before compliance issues become trade barriers.

Nigeria therefore has every reason to strengthen its labour inspection systems, improve supply chain oversight and modernise export certification processes

At the continental level, I believe this development carries an equally important message for Africa. The continent cannot continue to rely excessively on external markets while remaining vulnerable to policy decisions taken elsewhere. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) presents an opportunity to deepen regional commerce, expand manufacturing and create stronger African value chains that reduce dependence on distant markets.

That does not mean Africa should turn away from global trade. On the contrary, stronger intra-African trade should complement greater participation in international markets. However, African countries must compete on the basis of quality, transparency and compliance if they are to secure a larger share of global commerce.

I also believe African governments should work together to develop credible continental standards on ethical trade and supply chain governance. A common framework would strengthen Africa's negotiating position while helping businesses meet international expectations more efficiently.

Another important lesson is that institutional reform remains one of Nigeria's greatest economic priorities. Weak enforcement mechanisms often

appear to be administrative problems until they begin affecting exports, investment and job creation. Strong institutions are no longer only governance objectives. They have become economic assets.

The private sector also has responsibilities. Businesses that intend to compete internationally must invest in better record keeping, responsible sourcing and compliance systems. Companies that embrace these standards early will be better positioned to access premium markets and attract long-term investment.

None of this suggests that Nigeria should accept every external trade measure without question. Where there are legitimate concerns about the fairness or proportionality of such policies, the government should pursue constructive dialogue through bilateral engagement and established international trade mechanisms. Protecting national interests and improving domestic standards are not mutually exclusive objectives. Both can and should be pursued simultaneously.

Ultimately, I see this tariff as more than a temporary trade challenge. It is a signal that global commerce is entering a new era where competitiveness depends as much on governance as it does on production. Countries that invest in transparency, compliance and institutional strength will be better positioned to succeed.

I therefore urge policymakers to treat this moment as a catalyst for reform. Nigeria should modernise its trade institutions, strengthen labour compliance, improve supply chain transparency and deepen economic diplomacy. These steps will not only improve access to international markets but also strengthen confidence in Nigeria's economy.

In my opinion, the most enduring lesson extends beyond this particular tariff. The future of trade will increasingly reward countries that combine competitive production with credible governance. If Nigeria embraces that reality today, it will be better prepared to compete tomorrow. The same lesson applies to Africa. Sustainable prosperity will depend not only on the resources the continent produces, but also on the standards by which those resources are traded.

African countries must compete on the basis of quality, transparency and compliance if they are to secure a larger share of global commerce