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90-Day Plan Targets The Gap Between Economic Reform, Household Relief



Vice President Kashim Shettima (m), with others at the NEC 's 161st meeting

The National Economic Council (NEC)'s endorsement of a 90-day economic action plan signals a renewed focus on translating macroeconomic reforms into tangible household benefits. From food affordability and transport costs to investment barriers and project delivery, the plan's credibility will depend on how quickly federal and state governments convert commitments into measurable improvements in daily life. ***Enam Obiosio*** *writes...*

Nigeria's economic recovery faces a critical challenge: translating changes in fiscal and monetary policy into lower living costs, stronger household security and better opportunities for businesses. The National Economic Council (NEC)'s endorsement of a 90-day economic action plan reflects growing recognition that macroeconomic progress must be felt beyond official indicators.

Presented by the Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Mr. Taiwo Oyedele, the plan was endorsed at NEC's 161st meeting, chaired virtually by Vice President Kashim Shettima. According to a statement by Stanley Nkwocha, Senior Special Assistant to the President on Media and Communications, the initiative is designed to consolidate President Bola Tinubu's economic reforms while addressing pressures on households and businesses.

The plan identifies five priorities: food affordability, tax harmonisation, completion of high-impact projects, resolution of investment bottlenecks and regulated household support. Together, these priorities address different parts of the economic challenge. Food prices affect household purchasing power, fragmented tax administration can increase business costs, unfinished infrastructure constrains productivity, and regulatory obstacles can delay investment and employment creation.

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Vice President Kasim Shettima virtually chairing NEC's 161st meeting

MREIF

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However, a 90-day plan is a short implementation window for challenges that have developed over years. Its value will depend less on the number of initiatives announced than on clearly assigned responsibilities, measurable targets and evidence of progress.

From economic indicators to household relief

Mr. Oyedele expressed optimism about the reform programme and Nigeria's economic outlook, identifying the reduction of headline inflation and interest rates to single digits by 2027 as key policy objectives. Achieving those outcomes will require coordinated action across federal and state institutions, as well as sustained improvements in the conditions affecting production, distribution and investment.

Inflation and interest rates influence household purchasing power, business financing and the cost of expanding productive capacity. Yet lower inflation does not automatically mean that prices will fall. It generally means prices are rising more slowly. For households already struggling with high food, energy and transport expenses, the distinction matters.

The plan's emphasis on food affordability and regulated household support is therefore significant. Targeted interventions could help vulnerable households manage immediate pressures, but their effectiveness will depend on transparent eligibility criteria, reliable delivery systems and safeguards against diversion.

Vice President Shettima framed the broader objective in terms of economic security, arguing that prosperity must give Nigerians greater confidence to make decisions about their future.

"The first dividend of prosperity should be the confidence to plan a life. Our task is to make such confidence less dependent on fortune," he said.

That principle places public service delivery at the centre of economic policy. Shettima urged governments to improve affordable transportation, healthcare, employment opportunities and financial security, stressing that reform gains must translate into better living conditions.

Transport costs and the price of connectivity

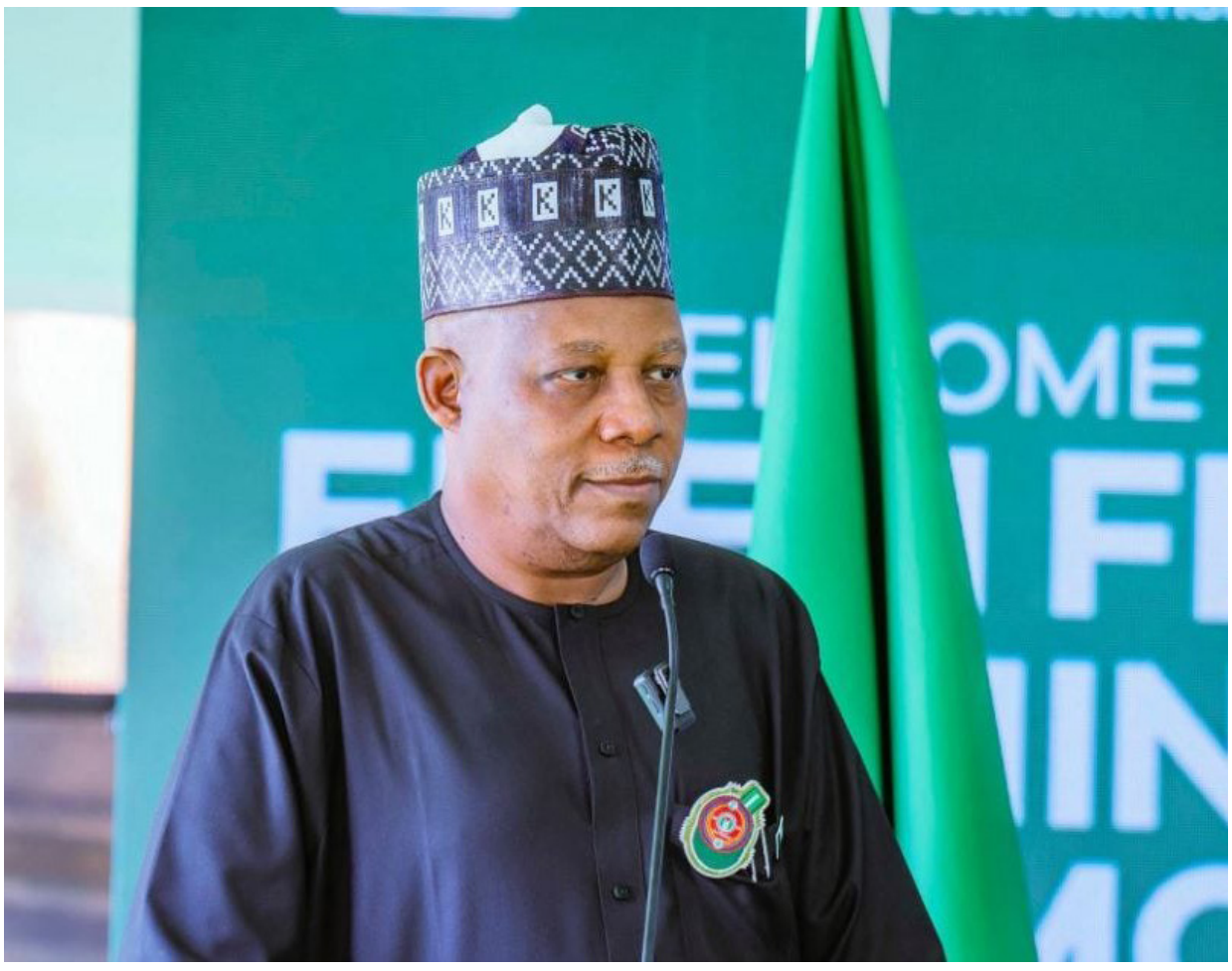
Transportation provides a practical illustration of the government's commitment to household relief. NEC considered the National Affordable Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) Transit Programme and resolved to establish a joint financing framework for the federal and state governments to accelerate the deployment of CNG and electric vehicles.

The council also directed relevant authorities to engage transport unions and operators to ensure that savings from alternative-energy vehicles are reflected in passenger fares. A committee is to coordinate financing arrangements, stakeholder engagement and implementation.

The Vice President warned against measuring success by vehicle numbers rather than public benefit.

"The cost of reaching a livelihood should never consume the livelihood itself," he said, stating that affordability and access should guide the assessment of public transport programmes.

The distinction is important. Lower fuel costs for operators will not necessarily produce lower fares without appropriate incentives, competition, monitoring and enforceable arrangements. The programme's impact must be assessed by the cost of daily journeys, service availability and the extent to which commuters benefit.



Vice President Kashim Shettima

NEC also approved a national dashboard to track ongoing projects across the federation, with particular attention to transparency, accountability and accurate reporting on the use of proceeds from fuel subsidy removal.

Such a dashboard could improve public scrutiny of government expenditure and help identify projects that are delayed or inadequately funded. Its usefulness, however, will depend on whether data are regularly updated, independently verifiable and sufficiently detailed to show expenditure, completion rates and actual benefits.

The focus on completing high-impact projects and removing investment bottlenecks similarly recognises that infrastructure spending must produce economic returns. Better roads, transport links and public services can reduce business costs, improve market access and support job creation. But project selection, procurement discipline and coordination between tiers of government will determine whether public investment delivers those outcomes.

The first dividend of prosperity should be the confidence to plan a life. Our task is to make such confidence less dependent on fortune

As Vice President Shettima put it, "Our separate jurisdictions must serve a common public interest." His appeal highlights a central implementation challenge: federal initiatives often depend on state-level cooperation, local knowledge and effective administration.

Beyond the 90-day window

The council's other decisions reinforce the connection between economic development and institutional capacity. On health security, Minister of Health and Social Welfare Prof. Muhammad Ali Pate outlined measures to strengthen Ebola preparedness, including surveillance, laboratory testing, essential supplies and strategic communication. He said 21 states had updated their response plans and urged the remaining 15 to establish appropriate arrangements.

NEC also directed states to strengthen polio eradication through post-campaign reviews, timely counterpart funding, routine immunisation and improved coordination in insecure communities. On livestock development, the Council acknowledged the sector's potential to create jobs, improve livelihoods and support economic growth, calling for stronger federal-state collaboration.

These initiatives extend beyond immediate cost-of-living relief, but they matter to economic resilience. Public health emergencies can disrupt livelihoods, while effective immunisation and productive livestock systems can support human capital, employment and rural incomes.

Ultimately, the 90-day plan will be judged by evidence rather than endorsement. Nigerians need to see whether food becomes more affordable, transport costs ease, public projects advance, investment delays decline and support reaches intended beneficiaries.

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EDITORIAL

Electricity Decentralisation Must Prove Its Value To Consumers

A state can take control of its electricity market without giving households more reliable power or businesses a stronger basis for growth. We believe this is the central test facing Nigeria's electricity decentralisation: whether the transfer of regulatory authority will produce measurable improvements in electricity supply, attract private investment and protect consumers, or simply create another layer of administration.

Under the Electricity Act 2023, states have an opportunity to shape electricity markets around their economic needs and infrastructure priorities. Seventeen states have received regulatory responsibility, with Akwa Ibom becoming the latest. We recognise this as significant progress, but we caution against treating regulatory transfers as proof of reform success. The real test begins when state institutions must enforce market rules, attract investment and deliver better outcomes for electricity consumers.

We believe states must demonstrate that they can build capable institutions, enforce market rules and create conditions that encourage long-term investment. Without these foundations, decentralisation risks transferring responsibilities without resolving the weaknesses that have constrained electricity supply for years.

The Federal Ministry of Power's Permanent Secretary, Mahmuda Mamman, has emphasised the importance of strong state institutions and commercially viable electricity markets. We agree. Investors need clear regulations, predictable commercial arrangements and confidence that contractual obligations will be respected. Consumers, in turn, need reliable service, transparent billing and effective channels for resolving complaints.

We also recognise the importance of the Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF)'s work on a standard tariff framework intended to protect consumers while encouraging investment. We urge state governments to ensure that tariff arrangements reflect the need to sustain electricity businesses without placing unreasonable burdens on households and enterprises. Consumer protection and commercial viability should reinforce each other, rather than be treated as competing objectives.

We see the proposed National Electricity Reform Peer Review and Implementation Framework as a useful mechanism for strengthening accountability. Its value, however, will depend on whether it produces credible assessments, identifies implementation gaps and encourages states to act on its findings. We urge participating authorities to establish measurable benchmarks for electricity availability, investment mobilisation, regulatory performance, consumer complaints and service quality.

States must also communicate their plans clearly to residents and businesses. Consumers need to understand who regulates their electricity market, how complaints are handled, what protections are available and how tariff decisions are made. We believe public communication should be treated as part of regulatory responsibility, not an afterthought.

We further urge federal and state authorities to coordinate where electricity markets, infrastructure and commercial arrangements cross jurisdictional boundaries. Decentralisation should not create regulatory uncertainty or unnecessary barriers for investors seeking to operate across multiple states.

Ultimately, we believe the success of electricity reform must be measured by outcomes rather than administrative milestones. The number of states that have assumed regulatory responsibility is useful, but it cannot substitute for evidence of improved supply, stronger investment, fairer market practices and better service delivery.

We call on state governments to move beyond establishing regulatory structures and demonstrate what those structures can achieve. We also urge the federal government and the NGF to support implementation through consistent standards, transparent performance reviews and practical cooperation.

Nigeria's electricity reform will gain credibility when households experience more dependable power, businesses can plan around a more reliable supply and investors find markets governed by clear and enforceable rules. We believe that is the standard by which state electricity markets should ultimately be judged.

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 T*he 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 storytelling 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.

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Nigeria Launches 5-Year Plan As 80m Children Face Lead Exposure



Dr. Iziaq Salako, Minister of State for Health and Social Welfare, (2nd r), with others at the ministerial briefing and stakenolders' dialogue to mark the 2026 International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week.

By Jennete Ugo Anya

The federal government has launched a five-year strategic plan to eliminate lead poisoning in Nigeria, warning that an estimated 80 million children are exposed to the toxic substance and face potentially serious, long-term health consequences.

Minister of State for Health and Social Welfare, Dr. Iziaq Salako, announced the plan at a ministerial briefing and stakeholders' dialogue in Abuja to mark the 2026 International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week.

Salako said the strategy would prioritise preventing exposure at its source, strengthening surveillance, improving product safety and enforcing standards across industrial and consumer activities.

"We cannot treat our way out of lead poisoning. We must prevent exposure where possible," the minister said, calling for coordinated action to identify and eliminate contamination sources.

The plan provides a framework for addressing environmental and occupational exposure, improving surveillance and response, and ensuring accountability. Salako added that a national roadmap was being developed to translate its priorities into time-bound actions, while state-specific prevention plans were being pursued for Lagos, Ogun, Zamfara and Sokoto.

The focus reflects the risks associated with lead exposure, particularly among children, pregnant women and women of childbearing age. Exposure may occur without obvious symptoms, making early detection, environmental investigations and appropriate clinical assessment essential.

Chief Consultant Epidemiologist at the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Dr. Ganiyu Jamiyu, said the strategy would address multiple sources of exposure, including artisanal mining, lead-acid battery recycling, cosmetics and other consumer products.

We cannot treat our way out of lead poisoning. We must prevent exposure where possible

Recalling Nigeria's response to the 2010 lead poisoning incident in Zamfara State, Jamiyu said the country was moving towards a broader preventive approach rather than waiting for people to become ill.

"We do not want to wait until people become ill before taking action," he said, noting that treating lead toxicity could be expensive.

The Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON) is also strengthening controls on lead in paint. Clement Paul, the organisation's Group Head of Chemical Technology, said SON had engaged manufacturers on compliance with prescribed limits, conducted market sampling and provided training on paint reformulation and safer alternatives.

Development partners have pledged support for the initiative. Okeoma Obasi, Principal Adviser at Resolve to Save Lives, described prevention as the most effective and cost-effective way to protect children. UNICEF Nigeria, represented by Sarah Ango, reaffirmed its commitment to working with stakeholders towards ending childhood lead poisoning by 2040.

The Federal Ministry of Environment also pledged continued collaboration with relevant agencies and development partners.

Salako urged Nigerians to avoid lead-containing products, maintain good hygiene, wash children's toys and wet-wipe floors rather than dry-sweep potentially contaminated areas. He also advised keeping children and pregnant women away from battery recycling sites and workshops where lead may be released.

The success of the five-year plan will depend on effective enforcement, reliable testing, public awareness and sustained coordination across government and industry. Preventing exposure before it causes harm remains the central challenge.

nadf Funding Nigeria's Agriculture, Growing Prosperity

FG Begins Zonal Consultations To Strengthen Food Crisis Preparedness

By Kingsley Benson



Participants at zonal Consultation

The federal government has begun a series of zonal consultations to develop a national framework for anticipating food and nutrition crises, as climate shocks, insecurity and economic pressures continue to pose risks to food systems.

The Presidential Food Systems Coordinating Unit (PFSCU), in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) in Nigeria, opened the first of six consultations in Maiduguri, Borno State, recently. The exercise is aimed at developing the National Food and Nutrition Crisis Preparedness Plan (NFNCPP), which seeks to strengthen early warning, risk mitigation and coordinated responses to emerging threats.

According to the coordinating bodies, food and nutrition crises often result from overlapping pressures, including extreme weather, insecurity, production constraints, market disruptions, macroeconomic difficulties and interruptions to regional and global supply chains. These risks can reinforce one another and spread across state boundaries, making coordinated intervention essential.

Welcoming participants, Borno State Commissioner for Agriculture and Natural Resources, Engr. Bawu Musami, said the state's experience in supporting farming communities through difficult seasons could contribute to a stronger national response system.

"Every state brings knowledge and systems that can strengthen the whole country. When we share information, identify risks early and act together, we can reduce their impact, support farmers sooner and protect livelihoods more effectively," Musami said.

The Maiduguri consultation brings together representatives from Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe states, alongside federal institutions, security agencies and development partners.

Participants are examining existing early warning and response mechanisms, identifying areas for collaboration and contributing state-level experiences to the proposed national framework.

A central element of the plan is interoperability, which involves improving how government institutions, information systems and stakeholders exchange data, coordinate resources and respond to emerging threats.

By connecting existing capabilities and leveraging technology, the NFNCPP is expected to provide a shared national picture of food and nutrition risks, enabling authorities to make better-informed decisions and intervene before conditions deteriorate into emergencies.

FAO Representative in Nigeria and to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Dr. Hussein Gadian, said Nigeria needed to move beyond responding to crises after they had escalated.

"Recurrent climate shocks, economic pressures, and security challenges mean we can no longer afford to rely on reactive responses to food crises," Gadian said.

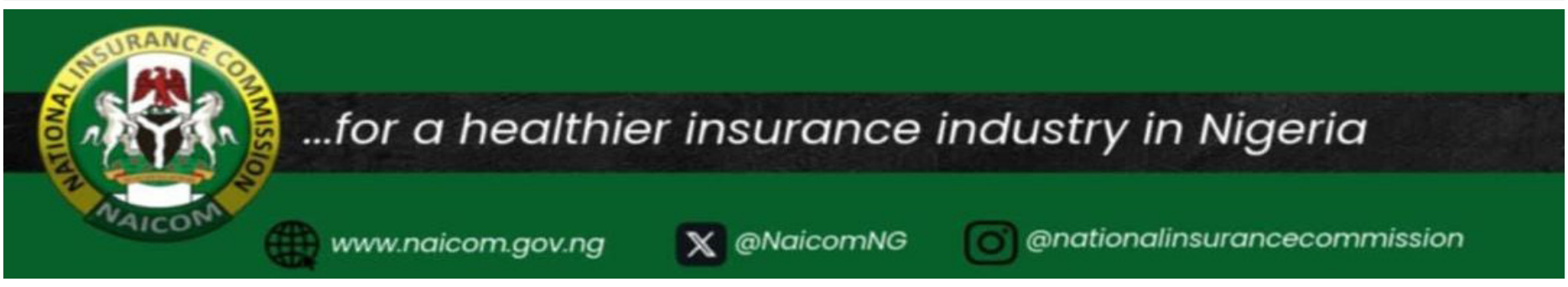
He added that the consultations would allow local insights and field data to shape the national preparedness framework, reaffirming FAO's commitment to helping the government translate early warnings into anticipatory action to protect vulnerable farming communities.

The consultations are scheduled to continue across the remaining five geopolitical zones throughout October. Inputs from participating states are expected to inform an integrated preparedness system responsive to Nigeria's evolving food and nutrition security challenges.

The effectiveness of the proposed plan will ultimately depend on how well participating institutions share timely information, coordinate resources and translate identified risks into practical interventions that protect food supplies and vulnerable households.



Participants at zonal Consultation



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Nigeria's Human Capital Challenge Requires More Than Policy Promises

By Jennete Ugo Anya

Nigeria's efforts to improve the wellbeing and productivity of its population will depend on how effectively governments translate policy commitments into better health, education and economic opportunities, according to a Gates Foundation presentation on Human Capital Development (HCD) in Nigeria.

The presentation, titled *Human Capital Development in Nigeria: A Shared Vision for Impact*, was delivered on April 30, 2025, by Ekenem Isichei, Deputy Director of Policy Advocacy and Communications at the Gates Foundation. It outlines an integrated approach to human capital development that places health, agricultural development and economic opportunity at the centre of national development.



Sen. Ibrahim Hassan Hadejia, Deputy Chief of Staff to the President in the Office of the Vice President and Chairman HCD C0re Working Group

...every Nigerian has the opportunity to live a healthy and productive life

The foundation defines its vision for human capital development as ensuring that every Nigerian has the opportunity to live a healthy and productive life. Achieving this, it argues, requires coordinated interventions across sectors rather than isolated programmes.

Under its health systems priorities, the foundation identifies realistic state primary healthcare service delivery plans, stronger performance management and improved coordination as essential measures. Its family health priorities include maternal and newborn health, family planning, nutrition, immunisation and disease control.

The presentation also highlights interventions such as multiple micronutrient supplementation and the postpartum haemorrhage prevention bundle as potential tools for addressing maternal health challenges. It further identifies vaccine financing, malaria control and efforts to reach children who have not received routine immunisation as areas requiring attention.

Beyond healthcare, the foundation's framework links agricultural productivity to human capital development. Its priorities include biofortified seeds, strengthening Nigeria's rice value chain, advancing the Nigeria Cassava Investment Accelerator and implementing a national livestock investment plan covering dairy, poultry and animal feed.

The framework also identifies financial inclusion, women's economic empowerment, digital public infrastructure and improved access to cooperative markets as important components of economic opportunity.

Building institutions for sustained progress

The presentation traces the Foundation's involvement in Nigeria's first Human Capital Development programme, HCD 1.0, to concerns arising from the country's poor ranking on the Human Capital Index.

According to Isichei, the foundation partnered with the federal government and other stakeholders to shape and execute HCD 1.0. Its grant supported the programme's secretariat through the Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF), including the establishment and operationalisation of the HCD Secretariat.

The foundation also supported the creation of national and subnational structures for cross-sector engagement and the development of the national human capital agenda.

These institutional arrangements provide a foundation for coordination, but the presentation's recommendations point to the need for stronger implementation, accountability and financing.

It calls for human capital data and evidence to be embedded in governance systems, with scorecards institutionalised across the National Economic Council (NEC) and other governance platforms. It also recommends regular public updates on progress and the integration of human capital analytics into national and subnational policy frameworks.

Financing and accountability remain central

The foundation identifies increased budgetary allocation, stronger state-level capacity and improved domestic resource mobilisation as key enablers of better outcomes.

Its proposed priorities include raising federal and state health allocations from 5 percent to 7 percent, while increasing education allocations from 7 percent to 9 percent at the federal level and from 13 percent to 15 percent at the state level.

The presentation also emphasises the role of private-sector partners in mobilising domestic resources to scale interventions addressing child survival, stunting, immunisation, learning poverty, school exclusion and youth unemployment.

Ultimately, the foundation's position is that sustainable human capital development requires more than policy formulation. Realistic planning, reliable evidence, adequate financing and public accountability must work together to improve the quality of life and economic prospects of Nigerians.



Imaan Sulaima-Ibrahim, Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development (r), with Ekenem Isichei, Deputy Director of Policy Advocacy & Communications at the Gates Foundation

NAICOM Warns Insurers, Brokers As New Law Tightens Industry Oversight



Mr. Olusegun Ayo Omosehin, Commissioner for Insurance (1st left), and others at the recent 2026 national Insurance Brokers Conference and Exhibition in Abuja.

By Anita Dennis

The National Insurance Commission (NAICOM) has pledged strict enforcement of Nigeria's revised insurance regulations, warning that unlicensed operations, ethical breaches, and failure to remit premiums will attract serious consequences.

The Commissioner for Insurance and Chief Executive Officer of NAICOM, Mr. Olusegun Ayo Omosehin, gave the warning at the opening of the 2026 National Insurance Brokers Conference and Exhibition in Abuja. Organised by the Nigerian Council of Registered Insurance Brokers (NCRIB), the conference focused on 'Insurance: Infrastructure Financing and National Development Agenda.'

Mr. Omosehin described the enactment of the Nigerian Insurance Industry Reform Act (NIIRA) as a major shift in the industry's regulatory framework. He said the law was designed to strengthen insurers' financial positions, improve market conduct, protect policyholders and expand insurance penetration.

For insurance brokers, the legislation introduces stricter accountability requirements and higher licensing standards, while creating opportunities to expand professional services. Mr. Omosehin said NAICOM would enforce the provisions firmly to protect consumer confidence and strengthen discipline across the market.

He highlighted the importance of brokers as intermediaries between policyholders and underwriters, noting their role in explaining complex risks, advising clients and negotiating claims. Their expertise, he said, is particularly relevant to infrastructure projects spanning transport, energy, real estate and industrial development, where effective risk assessment and transfer can help protect investments.

The commissioner also urged brokers to adopt digital platforms and insurance technology solutions. He noted that NIIRA formally recognises digital, electronic and web-based insurance channels, creating opportunities to widen market access and improve customer experience.

The law also strengthens provisions for compulsory insurance and institutional investment, linking the sector more closely to Nigeria's infrastructure financing needs. Mr. Omosehin urged brokers to become "capital catalysts" by advising project sponsors, contractors and financiers on the insurance requirements and risks associated with major infrastructure assets.

He argued that addressing infrastructure deficits requires sustainable risk management and greater participation by domestic capital. Insurance companies, he said, could contribute through pooled funds, infrastructure bonds and tailored risk guarantees.

Mr. Omosehin called on the NCRIB and its members to build partnerships across banking, energy, manufacturing and public infrastructure. He also pledged NAICOM's support for professional development, stronger market discipline and industry expansion.

However, the impact of the revised framework will depend on consistent enforcement, compliance by market operators and improved service to policyholders. Stronger regulation alone will not guarantee wider insurance coverage unless consumers have confidence that policies deliver the protection promised.

"Let us work together to build an industry that commands public trust, delivers value to policyholders and contributes meaningfully to Nigeria's economic aspirations," Mr. Omosehin said.

NIIRA formally recognises digital, electronic and web-based insurance channels, creating opportunities to widen market access and improve customer experience

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Abuja-Kaduna-Kano Highway Raises Prospects For Trade, Regional Growth



Sen. David Umahi, Minister of Works (r), and Gov. Abba Kabir Yusuf, Governor of Kano State, during the flag-off ceremony of the 375 km Abuja-Kaduna-Kano hailway.

By Musa Ibrahim

The federal government has linked the ongoing reconstruction of the 375-kilometre Abuja-Kaduna-Kano highway to improved trade, safer travel and stronger economic connections across Northern Nigeria, as work advances on one of the region's major transport corridors.

Speaking at the project's flag-off ceremony in Tamburawa, Kumbotso Local Government Area of Kano State, Minister of Works, Senator David Umahi, said the highway would ease the movement of goods and passengers while supporting economic activities along its route.

Sen. Umahi said the administration of President Bola Tinubu had completed nearly 400 kilometres of inherited and newly awarded roads in the North-West within three years. He also said that more than 149 emergency road projects had also been completed across the zone.

Providing an update on the highway, the minister said 81 kilometres of reinforced concrete pavement between Abuja and Jere in Kaduna State had been completed. Work on Section Two, covering 164 kilometres, had reached 148 kilometres, leaving less than 20 kilometres outstanding, according to his remarks.

The government has also directed the installation of solar streetlights along the entire 375-kilometre corridor. Sen. Umahi said the measure was intended to improve visibility and strengthen road safety, particularly at night.

The project carries economic implications beyond shorter or safer journeys. Better road connectivity can reduce transportation bottlenecks, improve access to markets and make it easier for businesses to move agricultural produce, manufactured goods and other commodities between major commercial centres.

However, the scale of these benefits will depend on the quality of construction, timely completion and effective maintenance after the road becomes operational.

Sen. Umahi identified other major road projects in the region, including the 350-kilometre Sokoto-Zamfara-Zaria Road, the 132-kilometre Kano-Kongolam Road, the 159-kilometre Zaria-Hunkuyi Road and the 1,068-kilometre Sokoto-Badagry highway.

He also cited the Kano Northern Bypass and internal road projects as part of efforts to improve movement within Kano and strengthen links with neighbouring communities.

The minister urged Nigerians to support the federal government's economic reforms, arguing that they were beginning to deliver benefits.

Kano State Governor Abba Kabir Yusuf commended the federal government's commitment to the highway project, emphasising the importance of road infrastructure to the movement of people and goods.

He also appealed to the government to intensify the reconstruction and rehabilitation of federal roads across Kano State to improve service delivery.

Ultimately, the highway's significance will be measured not only by kilometres completed, but also by its contribution to lower transport costs, stronger market access and increased commercial activity across Northern Nigeria.

Quotes of the Week

Dr. Tony Okpanachi, Managing Director/ CEO of DBN

The major reforms are now in place. How do we make sure their benefits reached the trader in Onitsha, the fabricator in Aba, the farmer in Kebbi and the young founder in Yaba.

Vice President Kashim Shettima

The cost of reaching a livelihood should never consume the livelihood itself. The passenger's experience must guide our ambition, because the value of public transport resides in the journeys it makes possible. We should assess success through affordability and access, rather than fleet size alone.

Dr. Jumoke Oduwole, Minister of Industry, Trade & Investment

Every trade agreement signed by Nigeria must advance our economic interests by supporting industrial development, expanding market access, increasing exports and improving investment prospects.

Borno Opens 400-Bed Teaching Hospital To Reduce Medical Tourism



Vice-President Kashim Shettima (1st r), with others at the commissioning of the Kashim Ibrahim University Teaching Hospital in Maiduguri

By Ahmed Ahmed

Borno State has commissioned a 400-bed teaching hospital equipped with advanced diagnostic technology and specialist departments, in a move aimed at reducing medical tourism, strengthening healthcare delivery and expanding medical training in the North-East.

Vice-President Kashim Shettima commissioned the Kashim Ibrahim University Teaching Hospital in Maiduguri on Friday, alongside other projects delivered by the administration of Governor Babagana Umara Zulum.

The hospital is designed to bring advanced diagnostic and specialist services closer to residents who might otherwise travel outside the state or country to access certain forms of medical care.

The facility comprises 13 specialist departments covering diagnostic services, medicine, surgery, emergency care, paediatrics, internal medicine and physiotherapy, among others. Its supporting infrastructure includes a medical college complex, a students' hostel, a 200-unit staff estate and an oxygen plant complex.

Its diagnostic equipment includes a 1.5-tesla magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scanner, a 160-slice computed tomography (CT) scanner, three conventional and two mobile X-ray machines, three 4D ultrasound machines, a fluoroscopy system and a digital mammography machine.

Beyond clinical services, the institution is expected to strengthen the training of doctors, nurses and allied health professionals, addressing healthcare workforce shortages affecting Borno State and the wider North-East.

The hospital could also serve patients from neighbouring communities and populations across the Lake Chad region, potentially expanding access to specialist care beyond Borno's borders.

Speaking at the commissioning, Vice President Shettima commended Zulum's investments in healthcare and education, describing them as institutions capable of delivering lasting benefits beyond the administration that established them.

"We shall be judged by what survives our time in office, the offices we held, the aides who surrounded us, and the length of our convoys will have surrendered their importance. What will endure are the institutions we built, the roads we built and the lives we improved through service," the Vice-President said.

He linked the hospital and the state's education projects to the broader task of rebuilding Borno, arguing that recovery must translate into tangible improvements in public services.

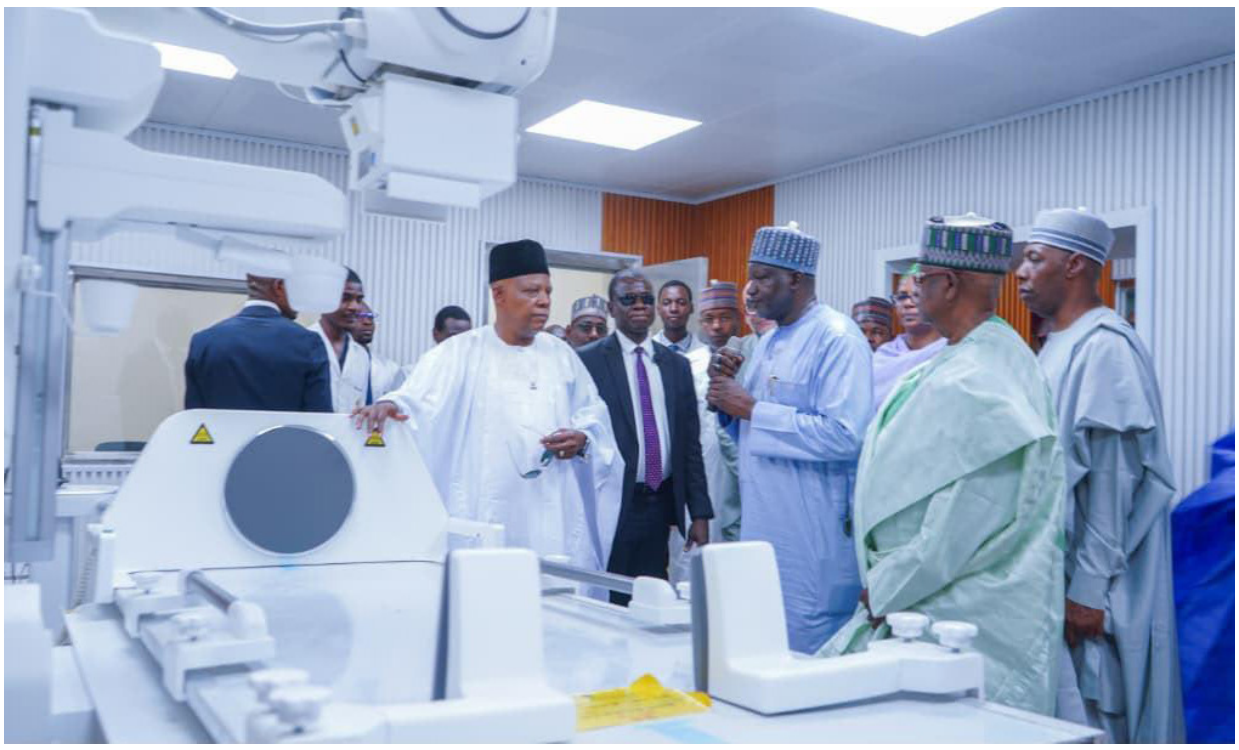
"The ultra-modern Kashim Ibrahim University Teaching Hospital and the school that dotted our landscape in Maiduguri and across the state give substance to his belief that Borno recovery must reach the patient awaiting treatment and the child sitting in a place in the classroom," Shettima said.

The Vice-President also commissioned Yerwa Practice Mega Primary School and another mega primary school delivered under the Kashim Shettima Free Education Programme, which provides free education to orphans and vulnerable children.

The hospital's long-term impact will depend on sustained funding, adequate staffing, reliable power and water supplies, equipment maintenance and affordable access to specialist services.

While its commissioning marks a major addition to Borno's healthcare infrastructure, translating that investment into reduced medical travel and better health outcomes will require consistent service delivery and effective management.

What will endure are the institutions we built, the roads we built and the lives we improved through service



Vice-President Kashim Shettima (in black cap), with others during a facility visit at the Kashim Ibrahim University Teaching Hospital in Maiduguri

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FG Targets Export Growth Through Incentive, Special Economic Zone Reforms



Dr. Jumoke Oduwole, Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment

By Anita Dennis

The federal government is moving to reform export incentives and modernise special economic zones as it seeks to strengthen industrial competitiveness, attract productive investment and expand Nigeria's access to international markets.

Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Dr. Jumoke Oduwole, announced the measures in Abuja while unveiling the ministry's 2026 Trade Intelligence Tools and outlining priorities for the final quarter of the year.

Dr. Oduwole said President Bola Tinubu had directed the ministry to clear outstanding claims under the Export Expansion Grant Scheme up to 2022 and develop a more sustainable framework for the programme. A technical working group led by the Commodities and Export Department has been given 60 days to propose reforms that would make incentives transparent, predictable, financially sustainable and tied to performance.

The success of the zones will be measured by the number of functioning enterprises, goods and services produced...

"Exporters investing in production, value addition and international competitiveness must be able to rely on government commitments," she said.

The proposed changes are intended to improve confidence among exporters and ensure public support is linked to measurable economic activity. Their impact will depend on how quickly outstanding obligations are resolved and whether the redesigned scheme provides reliable incentives for businesses expanding production and entering new markets.

The ministry is also working with the Nigeria Export Processing Zones Authority (NEPZA), the Oil and Gas Free Zones Authority, the Ministry of Justice and other stakeholders to update regulations governing free trade and special economic zones. The reforms are expected to improve production, exports, technology transfer and job creation.

Dr. Oduwole said proposed recognition of digital free zones under the Presidential Digital Free Zones Initiative could attract investment in technology, digital services and emerging industries.

"The success of the zones will be measured by the number of functioning enterprises, goods and services produced, exports generated, technology transferred and jobs created," she said.

The agenda supports the government's ambition to build a $1 trillion economy by 2030. Oduwole reported that capital importation rose from about $3.9 billion in 2023 to more than $23 billion in 2025, while exports reached approximately N12 trillion, with Nigerian products accessing more than 120 countries. She cautioned, however, that increased capital flows must translate into productive investment and completed export transactions.

The government is also strengthening its approach to international trade negotiations, with the minister insisting that agreements should support industrial development, market access, exports and investment.

Regional trade platforms are another priority. Oduwole identified CANEX Weekend 2026, scheduled for November 5 to 8 at the Wole Soyinka Centre for Culture and Creative Arts in Lagos, as an opportunity to connect creative businesses with investors and international markets.

She said Nigeria must convert global recognition of its creative talent into "bankable businesses, protected intellectual property, access to quality capital, distribution partnerships and new export markets."

Reforms Nuggets

EIB, FCMB Unveil €85m Facility For Nigerian Cocoa, Dairy Sectors

- The European Investment Bank (EIB) Group and First City Monument Bank (FCMB) have unveiled €85 million in financing for Nigerian agricultural businesses, with at least 70 per cent allocated to cocoa and dairy production and processing.
- The facility aims to expand local processing capacity, improve access to long-term credit, create jobs and strengthen agricultural value chains.
- Announced on the sidelines of the IMF and World Bank Group Annual Meetings in Bangkok, Thailand, the financing is provided through EIB Global, the EIB Group's international development arm.
- The dairy investment marks EIB Global's first investment in the sector outside the European Union. It seeks to address supply gaps, improve local milk production and support businesses across the dairy value chain.
- In the cocoa sector, the funding will support farmers and cooperatives, increase local processing, improve product traceability and help Nigerian producers retain more value from their output.
- The initiative will also support compliance with the European Union Regulation on Deforestation (EUDR), which restricts products linked to deforestation from entering the EU market.
- EIB Group President Nadia Calviño said agricultural value chains were important drivers of food security and economic growth in Africa, while describing the projects as opportunities for European businesses and Nigerian partners.
- European Commissioner for International Partnerships Jozef Síkela said Nigeria needed to retain more value locally from its agricultural resources to generate jobs, strengthen businesses and create economic opportunities.
- FCMB Chief Executive Officer Yemisi Edun said long-term financing could help farmers and agribusinesses move beyond selling raw produce to expanding processing, increasing earnings and accessing new markets.
- EIB Global will provide additional technical assistance to strengthen FCMB's climate action strategy and help agricultural businesses manage environmental and social risks.
- The investment aligns with the EU's Global Gateway initiative and Team Europe Initiative on Green Economy, which support sustainable agriculture, rural development and improved market access.

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Africa Should Strengthen Its Defences Before Signing Foreign Investment Deals



REFORM TALKS
with
Enam Obiosio

Foreign investment can finance infrastructure, expand productive capacity and create jobs, but poorly negotiated contracts can expose governments to costly disputes and long-term financial obligations. I believe African countries must treat legal scrutiny, transparent negotiations and effective contract management as essential parts of investment policy, not as procedures to complete after agreements have been signed.

I believe Africa's ability to attract foreign investment should be measured not only by the volume of capital entering the continent, but also by the quality of the agreements through which that capital is secured. An investment deal may promise new infrastructure, jobs, technology transfer and economic growth. Yet, if its terms are poorly understood, inadequately negotiated or weakly monitored, the same agreement can expose a government to liabilities that undermine its development objectives.

This concern was central to the second African Attorneys-General Roundtable in Abuja, where the Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Lateef Fagbemi , urged African governments to scrutinise foreign investment contracts, treaties and agreements for legal loopholes before signing them. The three-day meeting, supported by the African Legal Support Facility and attended by representatives from about 20 countries, examined investment-state dispute settlement and the institutional challenges facing African governments.

I consider this discussion important because governments negotiate investment agreements from positions that are not always equal. Foreign investors may have access to specialised legal advisers, international arbitration experts and substantial financial resources. Public institutions, by contrast, may face fragmented responsibilities, limited technical capacity and pressure to approve projects quickly. These differences do not make foreign investment undesirable. They make careful preparation indispensable.

Prevention is better than arbitration

Fagbemi said Nigeria had accumulated considerable experience in investment arbitration and could share lessons with other African countries. He cited the P&ID and Sunrise cases as examples of disputes from which governments could learn.

I believe the central lesson is that legal disputes should be prevented wherever possible, rather than treated as unavoidable costs of doing business. Arbitration can provide a legitimate means of resolving disagreements, but it can also consume public resources, divert officials from policy priorities and create uncertainty around government finances.

The responsibility for avoiding these outcomes begins before a contract is signed. Governments must establish whether a proposed investment is commercially viable, whether its financial assumptions are realistic and whether the parties' obligations are clearly defined. They must also understand the dispute resolution clauses, termination provisions, indemnities and financial consequences that may arise if a project fails or circumstances change.

Fagbemi emphasised early negotiation, coordination, collaboration and political will. I agree with this approach, but I would add that these principles must be supported by practical institutional arrangements. Legal advisers should be involved from the beginning of negotiations, not called in only to approve agreements already shaped by commercial or political considerations.

Relevant ministries, procurement authorities, regulators and financial officials must also examine agreements within their areas of responsibility. A contract that appears legally sound may still expose the government to unacceptable fiscal, operational or regulatory risks.

Strong institutions must outlast political administrations

According to Fagbemi, the federal government has established a committee to review the Nigeria Investment Act, gas supply regulations and the Arbitration Act to ensure alignment with global standards. He also disclosed plans to digitalise federal government agreements, contracts and related information to improve accessibility.

I see these initiatives as opportunities to strengthen institutional memory and accountability. Digital records can help government agencies identify existing obligations, monitor deadlines, retrieve relevant documents and assess the terms of previous agreements before negotiating new ones.

Governments must establish whether a proposed investment is commercially viable, whether its financial assumptions are realistic and whether the parties' obligations are clearly defined

However, digitalisation alone will not resolve weaknesses in contract management. Its value depends on accurate records, appropriate access controls, clear responsibility for updates and effective monitoring. Where agreements contain confidential commercial information, transparency arrangements must also respect applicable legal obligations while allowing authorised officials to examine the government's commitments.

More importantly, contract oversight should not depend on the interests or expertise of individual officeholders. Governments change, but contractual obligations often extend across several administrations. Institutional systems must therefore preserve records, track performance and alert officials to emerging risks regardless of political transitions.

I also believe that the proposed legal reviews should lead to practical guidance for public institutions. Standard contract clauses, risk-assessment procedures, approval thresholds and clear rules for escalating concerns would help make sound negotiation practices routine rather than exceptional.

Cooperation is essential, but accountability must remain clear

The Abuja roundtable offers African governments an opportunity to exchange experiences and improve cooperation on investment disputes. I support this approach because governments can learn from one another's successes, failures and approaches to negotiated settlements. Early intervention may resolve disagreements before they develop into costly arbitration proceedings.

Nevertheless, regional cooperation must complement, not replace, domestic responsibility. Each government must maintain the capacity to understand its own agreements, evaluate investment proposals and hold officials accountable for compliance with established procedures.

Fagbemi attributed Nigeria's ability to resist what he described as predatory claims to President Bola Tinubu's support and the enabling environment created by his administration. While political backing can help legal institutions defend the public interest, I believe lasting protection must rest on sound evidence, professional competence, independent scrutiny and consistent procedures. No administration can substitute political will for the detailed work required to negotiate and manage complex contracts.

African governments should also avoid treating every disagreement with an investor as evidence of misconduct. Investors require predictable rules and fair dispute resolution mechanisms just as governments require protection from exploitative terms. Credible investment frameworks must preserve the state's ability to regulate in the public interest while honouring legitimate contractual commitments.

Turning lessons into lasting safeguards

Ultimately, I believe Africa must move from discussing investment disputes to institutionalising the practices that prevent them. Governments should strengthen legal and commercial expertise, coordinate negotiations across agencies, maintain accessible contract records and monitor agreements throughout their implementation.

The success of the African Attorneys-General Roundtable should therefore be judged by what follows the discussions: improved national procedures, stronger cooperation and fewer preventable disputes. Foreign capital remains important to Africa's development, but attracting it should never mean accepting obligations that public institutions do not fully understand.

The objective is not to discourage investment. It is to secure investment on terms that advance development, distribute risks fairly and protect public resources. African governments will be better positioned to achieve these goals when legal scrutiny begins before signature and continues for as long as contractual obligations remain in force.

Published by **The 1065 Publishing**
All correspondence to Editor -in-Chief: (0703 382 8294); D2-32 Atiku Abubakar Crescent, Cityview Estate, Dakwo, Abuja.
Email: info@thereforms.ng; **Website**: www.thereforms.ng