

Alleged ₦8.8 Trillion Off-Budget Spending Nigeria Cannot Ignore this Fiscal Emergency

**— HURIWA Demands Independent Probe, Prosecution of
Indicted Officials, Recovery of Public Funds**

The Human Rights Writers Association of Nigeria expresses profound concern over the disturbing revelations arising from the recent International Monetary Fund Article IV Consultation, which reportedly indicates that public expenditures equivalent to about two per cent of Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product were not reflected in Nigeria's official budget documents. If these revelations are accurate, they point to one of the gravest cases of fiscal opacity in Nigeria's democratic history. A constitutional democracy cannot permit trillions of naira in public expenditure to exist outside the statutory budgetary framework without legislative oversight, public accountability and constitutional scrutiny. The allegations, which have also been highlighted by former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, demand far more than political exchanges or official denials. They require a transparent, independent and forensic investigation to determine whether public funds were expended in violation of Nigeria's Constitution, the Fiscal Responsibility Act, the Public Procurement Act and other extant financial regulations.

HURIWA also finds the response credited to the Honourable Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Taiwo Oyedele, to be grossly insufficient and unsatisfactory considering the gravity of the allegations. Rather than relying on broad assurances or technical explanations, the Federal Government owes Nigerians a comprehensive public disclosure, backed by verifiable documentary evidence, detailing the legal authority, appropriation approvals, expenditure records and audit trail for every kobo allegedly spent outside the published budget framework. In a constitutional democracy, public accountability cannot be replaced with administrative explanations. Only an independent forensic investigation can establish the facts and restore public confidence in the management of national resources.

Accordingly, HURIWA calls on President Bola Tinubu to immediately constitute an independent Judicial Commission of Inquiry comprising respected jurists, forensic auditors, chartered accountants, civil society representatives and financial crime experts to investigate the allegations and establish the true state of affairs. We equally call on the National Assembly to immediately invoke its constitutional oversight powers by commencing a comprehensive public hearing into the

alleged off-budget expenditures. Nigerians deserve to know how such enormous sums were allegedly expended outside the framework of legislative appropriation. Furthermore, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission, the Office of the Auditor-General for the Federation, and every other relevant anti-corruption and oversight institution should immediately commence coordinated forensic investigations to trace every naira allegedly expended outside the approved budgetary process.

Should these investigations establish criminal diversion, misappropriation or abuse of public funds, HURIWA demands the immediate prosecution of every indicted public office holder, irrespective of political office, status or influence. No individual should be shielded from accountability where public resources belonging to over 230 million Nigerians are involved.

In addition, every public fund found to have been unlawfully diverted, misappropriated or expended outside constitutional safeguards must be fully recovered and returned to the Federation Account. At a time when millions of Nigerians face crushing inflation, widespread unemployment, rising hunger and deteriorating living conditions, every stolen or unlawfully spent public fund must be restored to the national treasury.

This matter transcends partisan politics. It goes to the heart of constitutional governance, fiscal discipline and the survival of Nigeria's democratic institutions. The credibility of government financial management is at stake, and silence or half-hearted responses will only deepen public distrust.

HURIWA therefore urges the media, organized civil society, professional bodies, development partners and all Nigerians of goodwill to insist on a transparent investigation that is free from political interference and capable of restoring confidence in public financial management. Nigeria's democracy can only flourish where transparency triumphs over secrecy, accountability prevails over impunity, and public office remains a sacred trust rather than an avenue for unchecked financial recklessness.