

CG Adewale Adeniyi's and his magic wand in the Nigeria Customs Service

Since his appointment as the Comptroller General of Customs (CGC) over a year ago, on June 19, 2023, Bashir Adewale Adeniyi, MFR has displayed a rare dynamism in running the affairs of the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS). This is anchored on the fact that he has recorded multifaceted feats since assuming office. Indeed, it is a case of a success story. On assumption of office, Adeniyi reviewed the performances of past administrations and in line with modern trends, re-strategized for greater achievements. His agenda of Compliance, Collaboration and Continuous Improvement therefore become the magic wand with which, in just one year he has taken the service to an enviable height. In fact old ways gave way to new ones leading to real technological revolution in NCS mandate of revenue generation and anti-smuggling operations. In order to achieve this core function of the NCS, Adeniyi, since assumption of office crafted a blueprint that improved the revenue profile of the Service. Talented officers in relation to Tariff and Trade are posted to that department to get the desired positive result. A testimony of this assertion is the commendation given by the 100% Compliance Team, of the National Association of Government Approved Freight Forwarders, (NAGAFF) to the Deputy Comptroller-General, Tariff and Trade, (DCG T&T), Caroline Niagwan for her commitment and dedication to trade facilitation. The National Coordinator of the NAGAFF 100% Compliance Team, Alhaji (Dr) Tanko, attributed this feat to the leadership style of the Comptroller General (CG), which has led to increased revenue. A drastic overhaul of the system enabled the service to exceed the monthly revenue targets by 6.71% for the first time in 2023. This, no doubt, was anchored on Adeniyi's strategic move by establishing a Revenue Review Recovery Team that continues to sustain the efforts of the NCS, in optimizing revenue collection for the ultimate good of the country.

In order to achieve the 5.1 trillion Naira target set by the federal government for the year 2024, the CGC vowed to meet up, hence every naira and kobo collected, blocked, remitted becomes of essence. To this end, the following measures put in place by the CGC are sure to further take the NCS to the next level in revenue generation. In his first year as Comptroller General the Service reported a 70.13% increase in average monthly revenue collection compared to the previous year. In the first quarter of 2024 revenue collection increased by 122.35%. Under his leadership the NCS recorded a total revenue collection of 4.49 Trillion between June 2023 and May 2024, a remarkable 74% growth when compared to the N2.58 Trillion collected during the corresponding period of the previous year. With a specific vision of transforming the economy, delivering inclusive growth and impacting lives, Adeniyi's mission is to forge partnerships and incept innovations that would transform the national economy through maximizing the potential of the NCS for economic growth and simultaneously humanizing the Service. Perhaps, this is not surprising, given the fact that Adeniyi is a thoroughbred professional in customs administration and human relations. He also possesses a deep understanding of the complex and constantly evolving international trade landscape. Versed in customs regulations, laws and procedures, he possesses the ability to navigate and adapt to changing policies and regulations. He has demonstrated excellent communication and leadership skills responsible for leading teams of customs officials, working closely with stakeholders across a variety of industries.

Under the leadership of Adeniyi, the Nigeria Customs Service has registered several governance positives despite the challenging period. It could be recalled that Adeniyi assumed office when



Nigeria, Africa and the world are standing on the brink of substantial disruptions – and of considerable opportunity – as new business and political models challenge traditional playbooks. On assuming office, Adeniyi committed to turning around the fortunes of the Service and continuously improving his knowledge and skills to stay ahead of the ever-changing customs landscape. He also promised to collaborate with stakeholders in an attempt to find lasting solutions to resolve the festering challenges in cargo clearance procedures. He has shown dedication to promoting trade and economic growth, while ensuring compliance with all relevant laws and regulations. Adeniyi is known to maintain the highest standard of integrity and professionalism.

According to the Mr. Adeniyi 'These strategic engagements and collaborative approaches have yielded remarkable results across our core statutory responsibilities "I am pleased to announce that the Nigeria Customs Service hit its 2024 revenue target of NGN 5.07 trillion, collecting NGN 5,079,455,088,194.38 with more than a month remaining in the fiscal year. This exceptional performance – projected to exceed our target by 10%". According to him these feat is attributable to our new strategy in revenue collection and trade facilitation. Adding that this achievement is not merely about numbers; it demonstrates how enhanced stakeholder collaboration, improved processes, and modernized systems can deliver tangible results for our nation's economy".

A time release study conducted in collaboration with the World

Customs Organization (WCO) and other International Partners to obtain a scientific study of clearing cargoes from the port shows the strengthening of the Post Clearance Audit (PCA) unit and Introduction of the Advanced Ruling system, thereby aligning the NCS operations with global best practices. Equally the Implementation of the Authorized Economic Operators (AEO) concept for Compliance Traders and the establishment of Customs Laboratory and adoption of geospatial technology have been put in place. The Integration of data system with the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), to block illegal entry of vehicles into the country and the Installation of Virtual Reality Technology (VRT). The Integration of Advanced Artificial Intelligence (AAI) and the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the General Administration of Customs of the Peoples Republic of China (GACC) to foster bilateral relationship for the enhancement of economic growth are all measures aimed at improving efficiency and better service delivery. Some other measures include the Collaboration with the post-mortem sub-committee of the Federation Account Allocation Committee (FAAC) and the Review of trade facilitation agreement between Nigeria and the Benin Republic. The Collaboration with the German International Cooperation Agency (GIZ), in trade facilitation under the Nigeria Energy Support Programme as well as the Implementation of the Lagos continental document, produced through intensive stakeholders' engagement and participation at the 2023 CGC Conference. These measures represent the strong commitment of the CGC to strengthening, the relationship with all stakeholders for maximum revenue generation.

Adeniyi has over the past one year, been able to create an Effective Enforcement Measure to tackle the menace of smuggling that has caused so much pain and embarrassment to the nation. To this end, he has adopted the following measures to tackle these challenges. The dissolution of the hitherto CGC strike force and streamlining enforcement under the Federal Operations Unit (FOU) and engendered a Sustained /resolute stance against combating illicit trade in Animal/wildlife.

In other to enhance border security Adeniyi has instituted some key measures amongst which are; the installation of virtual reality technology to curb Smuggling. Collaboration with Nigerian Navy to combat Smuggling across the waterways, and to enhance the capacity of Customs Marine Officers. The launch of Operation Whirlwind to combat Smuggling/insecurity. Constitution of a Special Task Force on illegal oil bunkering. Prioritizing intelligence-driven operations with other Security Agencies. Review of the five-year-old Harmonized Standard Operating Procedure (HSOP) for Monitoring Maritime crimes. This as is submitted, is a real dynamic approach to quell what has attempted to pose as a hydra-headed monster. A Justification here is the statistics of about 3,806 seizures made in the period, with a Duty Paid Value of ₦16,049,023,262, arising from the vigorous campaign against smuggling and illicit trade. Leveraging on the new funding regime of not less than 4% of the Free-on-board value of Imports according to international best practices, as provided in the NCS Act, 2023, the CGC has demonstrated a definite commitment to improving the welfare of the NCS workforce. All directives of the federal government on improved salary as a result of the subsidy withdrawal are promptly complied with. Plans are underway subject to the NCS Governing Board's approval to further improve the salary and other retirement benefits of the officers. Also in ensuring maximum comfort for the NCS staff, offices and Quarters are being renovated and new ones acquired appropriately. The furnishing of the NCS Corporate Headquarters that has been commissioned previously is a top priority and very soon occupation will take place. It is often said all work and no play makes jack a dull boy. To distance the NCS from this, the CGC has introduced enhanced personnel welfare programs. The introduction of the work life balance (WLB) is a case in point. The

initiative inaugurated at the Customs Headquarters in September 23, 2023 is to promote mental and physical being of officers and men of the NCS. The CGC believed in balancing for a better tomorrow thereby representing the NCS commitment to Consolidation, collaboration and Innovation. The CGC during the inauguration stated that, with over 32 Clinics and Medical Centers in NCS formation nationwide to take care of health needs, it was worthwhile to have a more sustainable approach which lies in the effort to a healthy work-life balance among officers. This initiative entail the headquarters of the NCS and all commands, taking some hours off in a day on a weekly basis, to engage in different physical fitness exercises that will characterize the work-life balance.

This, no doubt, would sustain optimal performance in the NCS. Related to this, is the plan by the CGC to establish a Customs Polo club in recognition of the efforts of some officers who distinguished themselves by coming victorious in a tournament at the Nigeria Army Polo Resort in Abuja. The NCS Polo shirt was also unveiled by the CGC as efforts to maintain Customs dominance in the sports Circle. The benefits derived from the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) as provided by the Songhai health service provider, which was discontinued at a time for non-contributory performance were addressed by Adeniyi. To this end, the NCS went into collaboration with Songhai Health Trust for effective health insurance. The benefits of this cannot be over-emphasized, as officers will enjoy a cost-effective means of high-quality health Care to be provided via Songhai.

Adeniyi's flair for human development is unequaled. This is underscored by the fact of his background as a young officer where he held sway in the Public Relations Unit of the NCS, spending well over 10 years as its mouthpiece His stints of over a decade in the unit earned him a Master in Customs Administration having unprecedented knowledge of the workings of the service. This feat cemented by his other accomplishments; skills, service decorations, and educational attainments culminating in reputed published academic works became the background to his appreciation of the need to enhance human development in the NCS.

As a result, a comprehensive model for the development of officers was adopted and pursued vigorously by the Human Resources Department. A booster to this is the merit-based appointment of an academically inclined personality and a member of the national institute, DCG Greg Itotoh, as the head of the department. The training/courses/workshops undertaken in the last year are too numerous but suffice to mention some here to buttress our point. They include:-Rules of Origin workshop co-organized by the Alliance for Trade Facilitation, GIZ, and the WCO training on harmonized system coding and Customs laboratories to improve duty collection and enhance service efficiency. Workshop on installation and operation of VRT system. Training of over 300 officers to upscale service delivery WCO Technical Support in capacity building on Tariff Classification and Rules of Origin towards the implementation of Advance Ruling. The training /Courses/Workshops are in various fields of operations, and demonstrate the sincerity of the Adeniyi's led management to develop the workforce thereby enhancing professionalism. The climax is the grand plan of Adeniyi to build a specialized University for Customs. His dream for the Institution is that of a robust curriculum that will deliver the kind of objectives set by the NCS. The University is to draw support from other Customs administrations, established universities, and the National Defence College. There is no gain saying that from the early signs and what is on ground so far Comptroller Adeniyi will continue to take the NCS to the next level, by promoting economic growth and national development through collaboration, innovation and strategic measures, which have become the hallmark of his leadership.