

Reps stop planned auction of \$1bn oil assets

The House of Representatives has asked the Federal Government, through the Nigerian Petroleum Development Company, to suspend the planned auction of Oil Mining Licence 11 for \$250m when it had been bid for \$1bn. At the plenary recently the House particularly urged the Federal Government, particularly the NPDC, to suspend the planned auction and sale of the OML 11 asset until relevant issues were resolved. The House also mandated its Committee on Petroleum (Upstream) to "urgently investigate the planned auction, among other matters, and report back within four weeks." The sponsor of the motion of urgent public importance leading to the resolutions, Victor Mela, noted that the oil field under OML 11 was formerly operated by the Shell Petroleum Development Company under a joint venture and it had been idle since the firm was forced out of Ogoni land in 1993.

Mela noted that in a Court of Appeal judgment of August 16, 2021, the SPDC joint venture lost its right to renewal of the operating licence, while the OML 11 was thereafter renovated and invested in an operating subsidiary of Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited. He said, "The House is worried that there are unresolved issues between the government and the host communities of Ogoni that are currently fueling resistance and restiveness amongst the people." "The House is worried that the government is involved in under-the-table or covert arrangements to auction the OML 11 assets to Sahara Energy Limited for a paltry sum of \$250m as against the \$1bn offered by the SPDC." "The House is concerned with the need to urgently clarify and resolve issues associated with the planned auction among other matters.

NBA demands N5bn for slain lawyer's family

The Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) says it will demand N5 billion compensation for the family of a lawyer, Omobolanle Raheem, who was allegedly shot dead by an Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP), Drambi Vandi, in the Ajah area of Lagos State on Christmas Day. The NBA equally said it would monitor the trial of ASP Vandi, who allegedly shot its member dead. This was contained in a statement issued on Thursday by a member of the NBA Lagos branch and rights activist, Ebun-Olu Adegboruwa, SAN.

Adegboruwa, who noted that he was appointed to lead the monitoring team, stated that the NBA Lagos branch, in conjunction with the NBA President, Y.C. Mikyau, SAN, has decided to be part of the prosecution of the police officer to ensure a quick and effective justice for the family of the slain lawyer. "In this regard, the NBA will be partnering with the Ministry of Justice during the trial." "Mr. Adegboruwa has in turn obtained relevant briefing from the Hon. Attorney-General of Lagos State and has secured the assurances of an accelerated prosecution once the case file is received from the police." "The NBA is also seeking monetary compensation for

the family of Mrs. Raheem from the government of Lagos State, the Federal Government, and indeed the Nigeria Police Force and the Police Service Commission, through its Human Rights Committee. "The NBA will seek for payment of damages not less than five billion naira in addition to the prosecution of the killer cop," he noted. Adegboruwa urged Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, to follow the process he adopted during the EndSARS Judicial Panel to "pay compensation to the family of Mrs. Raheem immediately since it is an established fact that her life was terminated illegally by a policeman." He also called for the immediate implementation of the EndSARS Judicial Panel Report in which far-reaching recommendations were made in relation to:

"1. Psychological orientation for all police officers in the handling and use of weapons; 2. Training for police officers on basic human rights observance and enforcement; 3. Improving the welfare of all police officers in terms of their take-home pay, conditions of service, their places of work, and residences in order to make them more conducive; 4. Recruitment of more police officers to reduce the pressure upon the existing officers whose number is not adequate to effectively police the country." The NBA member, therefore, urged the government and the relevant authorities to "go beyond mere press statements of lamentations on the gruesome murder of Mrs. Raheem and to accelerate the prosecution of the killer and payment of compensation to the family of the deceased and all other victims of police brutality."

Senate passes N21.8 trn 2023 budget

The Senate, on Wednesday, passed the N21.8 trillion 2023 budget. This followed the adoption of the report of the Senate Committee on Appropriation at plenary. Presenting the report, the Chairman of the Committee, Sen. Jibrin Barau said that the committee did a thorough job by examining inputs from its sub-committees before reaching the final figure. "We hereby recommend that the Senate do consider and approve a Bill for an Act to authorise the issue from the Consolidated Revenue Fund (CFR) of the Federation the total sum of N21.8 trillion. "Of which N967 billion is for Statutory Transfers, N6.5 billion only is for debt service. "N8.3 trillion is for recurrent (Non-Debt) expenditure. "While N5.9 trillion for contribution to the Development Fund for Capital Expenditure for the year ending December 2023," he said. He said that the budget was raised from the N20.5 trillion submitted by the Executive by N1.3 trillion. Barau said that President Muhammadu Buhari had on Oct. 7, laid before a joint sitting of the National Assembly the 2023 Appropriation Bill christened "Budget of Fiscal Consolidation and Transition". He said that the President had proposed an oil price benchmark of 70 dollars, which was raised to 75 dollars by the National Assembly. "The Executive proposed an

exchange rate of N435.57 to a dollar while the national assembly approved same," he said. In his remarks, Senate President Ahmad Lawan, said that the passage of the budget was in line with the National Assembly's pledge to reverse to the January-December budget cycle.

"This our fourth budget and last before the expiration of our tenure and we have kept that promise," he said. Lawan also urged the executive to strive hard to implement the 2022 supplementary budget. "We have also passed the supplementary budget for 2022. We expect total implementation. No selective implementation," Lawan said. Meanwhile, the Senate has adjourned plenary until Jan. 17, 2023.

Buhari Sacks NIRSAL MD, Abdulhameed Over N5.6bn Alleged Fraud

By Our Reporter

President Muhammadu Buhari has sacked the Managing Director of the Nigeria Incentive-Based Risk Sharing System for Agricultural Lending (NIRSAL), Aliyu Abdulhameed. His removal may not be unconnected with multiple allegations of corruption, including a 2018 N5.6billion wheat project meant for farmers in Kano and Jigawa states. Daily Trust had in January this year carried out an investigation on how a multi-billion naira loan guaranteed by NIRSAL for three investor companies for the cultivation of 20,000 hectares of dry season wheat in Kano and Jigawa was allegedly diverted by the companies in connivance with NIRSAL officials. In the course of the investigation, our correspondents visited the affected communities in the two North West states where farmers said they were deceived. Community leaders said they were told the project was aimed at changing the lives of 20,000 smallholder farmers. Some of the farmers said they would never forget the deception. "After making my farm available for the project, they promised me fertiliser and a well as source of water and other input for the wheat plantation. But I never saw any of these thereafter," Araya Alhaji Idi, one of the farmers at Ringim in Jigawa had lamented. "They never came back or communicated to us through anybody from this community. Indeed, we were scammed," he said.

The embattled NIRSAL MD had denied the allegation saying they were the handy work of faceless individuals meant to tarnish his image and that of the organization. However, following the report, operatives of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) invited him and other officials of NIRSAL for questioning over their roles in the wheat project scandal. Apart from

the EFCC, the ICPC and the police had also launched their investigations into the matter. Insider sources who confirmed the development said the MD's sack was approved by the Board of the CBN following approval from the Presidency. "The MD was ousted last Thursday afternoon and escorted out of premises shortly after he briefly addressed staff," one of our source said. Although he was yet to officially handover, a source who wouldn't want to be named said the Board of the CBN was billed to name an acting MD. Also, a senior CBN official squealed that a new MD would be appointed soon.

The MD, Abdulhameed and NIRSAL's spokesperson, Anne Ihugba, did not respond to calls and text messages sent to them to respond to the development. However, a close aide to the MD who spoke with Daily Trust Saturday in confidence said Abdulrasheed was not sacked but only stepping aside for further investigation into the allegations. "As you may be aware, there have been several petitions and the Presidency has asked him (MD) to step aside for further investigation," the source said. NIRSAL is a \$500m non-bank financial institution, a creation of the CBN mandated to manage agribusiness-related credit risks in Nigeria.

Nigeria, Others Facing Huge Debt Crisis - World Bank

The World Bank has said that Nigeria and other developing countries are facing debt crisis, noting that the situation has intensified. The World Bank Group President, David Malpass, disclosed this in a statement titled, 'Debt-Service Payments Put Biggest Squeeze on Poor Countries Since 2000'. According to the World Bank, its new International Debt Report revealed a rising debt-related risk for all developing economies — low- as well as middle-income economies.

Speaking on this, Malpass said, "The debt crisis facing developing countries has intensified. A comprehensive approach is needed to reduce debt, increase transparency, and facilitate swifter restructuring—so countries can focus on spending that supports growth and reduces poverty. "Without it, many countries and their governments face a fiscal crisis and political instability, with millions of people falling into poverty."

The Washington-based bank stated that the poorest countries eligible to borrow from its International Development Association now spent over a tenth of their export revenues to service their long-term public and publicly guaranteed external debt. It said at the end of 2021, the external debt of these economies totaled \$9tn, more than double the amount a decade ago with the total external debt of IDA countries nearly tripling to \$1tn. It said, "Rising interest rates and slowing global growth risk tipping a large number of countries into debt crises. About 60 per cent of the poorest countries are already at high risk of debt distress or already in distress. "At the end of 2021, IDA-eligible countries' debt-service payments on long-

term public and publicly guaranteed external debt totaled \$46.2bn — equivalent to 10.3 per cent of their exports of goods and services and 1.8 per cent of their gross national income, according to the report.”

Similarly, the World Bank Public Finance Review report has warned the Federal Government against disregarding Section 38 of the CBN Act, which limits borrowings to 5 per cent of the previous year's revenue. The warning is coming on the heels of the Central Bank of Nigeria's loans to the Federal Government which have exceeded N22tn. The loans come in the form of ways and means. According to the Debt Management Office, these advances have pushed the Federal Government's borrowing from the CBN from N17.46tn in December 2021 to N23.77tn in October 2022. The government borrowing from the CBN is now contrary to Section 38 of the CBN Act, 2007, having exceeded the legal ceiling placed on such borrowing. The Act read in part, "The total amount of such advances outstanding shall not at any time exceed five per cent of the previous year's actual revenue of the Federal Government." According to the World Bank, borrowings through ways and means were more expensive than other domestic sources of financing and had shorter grace periods. Part of the report read, "Ways and Means financing from the CBN is amplifying the fiscal costs associated with interest payments, as CBN borrowing is more expensive than other domestic sources of financing and has shorter grace periods." In its recommendation, the Washington-based bank noted that regulations to prioritise treasury bills to finance fiscal shortfalls over CBN financing should be implemented.

Reacting, The Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer of Cowry Asset Management Limited, Johnson Chukwu, recently said the central bank's lending to the government was putting pressure on the exchange rate and the inflation rate, with "liquidity that has no productivity attached to it coming into the system." A development economist, Dr Aliyu Ilias, criticised the government for its constant reliance on borrowing, which was unhealthy for the economy. He urged the government to seek better revenue sources rather than persistently borrow from the apex bank.

Military won't be goaded into compromising 2023 polls... CDS Irabor

CHIEF of Defense Staff (CDS) Gen. Lucky Irabor has assured Nigerians that the armed forces will not betray public trust in their resolve to defend democracy. The CDS restated the determination of the military to resist all pressures to compromise the 2023 general election. According to him, security agencies are constantly under pressure to compromise the electoral process, but the military has chosen to stay neutral.

Gen. Irabor spoke at one of the weekly editions of the ministerial briefing, organised by the Presidential Communication Team at the Presidential Villa Abuja. Noting that pressure come through inducements, the CDS said necessary measures have been put in place to ensure that the military obey President Muhammadu Buhari's directive to maintain neutrality. In his remarks at the opening of the Chief of Army Staff's Annual Conference in Sokoto, President Buhari directed the military to remain apolitical and continue to work within the bounds of the Constitution. He told the Army to improve on its human rights obligations during operations in line with global best practices, reminding that personnel are being trained to be more professional with the rules of engagement before, during and after the elections codified and distributed to them.

Tasking them to evolve enduring strategies that will consolidate their efforts in securing the country, the President said: "As a key element of our national power, the Nigerian Army will continue to be a major catalyst for our development especially by providing the needed aid to civil authority. "This administration has therefore maintained a robust policy towards modernisation of the Nigerian Army and the Armed Force Forces in general.

"It is evident that the ongoing progressive modernization of the Nigerian Army under our administration has greatly improved the capabilities as well as combat efficiency of the service to discharge its roles." The CDS said of the presidential directive: "I'm glad that you reiterated the Commander-in-Chief's directive to the armed forces. I'm afraid you say you have a worry. Rather than worry, I would rather think that trust should be anchored. Why?

"Of course, there will always be pressure from all quarters, wanting to induce security forces, not just the military, the security forces, the police, and that's what criminal enterprise is all about, that is what something that is wrong is all about. "But what makes the difference is the professional approach to dealing with those issues and that's what the military, we, are committed to doing. "Now, the reason why we have ramped up our training in that regard, sensitization, a lot of engagement across the formations and units, is being undertaken and then more so to no articulate code of conduct for all our personnel, which has been done and distributed. "So, how they should act before, during and after the elections, these are being codified in the SOP that have been issued to them. So, it remains the duty of the commanders to ensure that the directive as indicated and the contents of the SOP are adhered to by every personnel in the armed forces. "So, please, cease from worrying, rather trust and also engage others to trust that we will keep faith to these desires."

He noted that the armed forces have heightened operational engagement across the country to tackle contemporary and emerging threats, putting contingency plans to facilitate the smooth conduct of the 2023 General

Elections in support of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in conjunction with other security agencies.

He spoke of the key achievements of the military in the effort to keep the country safe including more recruitment into all branches of the security services, routing of insurgency and banditry as well as the action to curtail oil theft leading to increase in crude oil production. He also said that over 300,000 people have been freed from the hands of abductors since 2014 while refugees who fled the Northeast due to insurgency have started to return. Gen. Irabor also said that the repentant insurgents now being trained will graduate in February next year before their reintegration into the society.

On the fight against banditry, the CDS said the armed forces have strangled bandits supply chain and destroyed several hideouts. On crude oil theft, he noted Nigeria's colossal loses of oil revenue as at 2014 that was about N1.92 trillion, saying that piracy and kidnapping were unprecedented just as several illegal pipeline connections were used to steal crude oil and illegal entry of unauthorized vessels undetected.

He affirmed that between January and July 2022, Nigeria lost about 437, 000 barrels of oil per day to criminal entities. Gen. Irabor said as part of the solution, Falcon Eye Maritime intelligence facility was commissioned in July 2021, offshore Patrol Vessels were purchased, and operational deployments and capabilities were rejigged. "The President directed the CDS to coordinate the kinetic and non-kinetic interventions to curb oil thefts. Through several joint operations, security operatives destroyed 959 metal tanks, 737 ovens, 452 dug-out pits, 355 cooking pots, 179 wooden boats, recovered 35.8 million litres of crude, 22 million litres of diesel, 25,000 litres of PMS, 207 pumping machine and 12 welding machines."

PREVENTION, better option to address malnutrition in Nigeria.. **Experts**

By Peters Omokhagbo

Nutrition stakeholders have agreed that prevention, is key to attaining optimal nutritional status in the country. At a technical consultation workshop to operationalize actions on implementation of Nigeria roadmap to reduce wasting, they stressed the need for Nigerians to have access to healthy diets and at an appropriate time especially children below the age of five to reduce malnutrition. The two-day workshop was organised by the National Council on Nutrition in collaboration with USAID Advancing Nutrition in Abuja. Representatives from the government and private sector attended the workshop including nutrition partners and local producers of Ready to Use Therapeutic Foods

(RUTF). Speaking, the Maternal Infant and Young Child Nutrition Advisor, USAID Advancing Nutrition Project in Nigeria, Pauline Adah, noted that the workshop is targeted at providing opportunity for stakeholders to understand the ongoing strategies for the prevention and treatment of wasting, develop prioritise actions to operationalise the Nigerian roadmap and also to define innovative and sustainable methods of strengthening local productions of nutrition products like the RUTF.

She said "This technical workshop is borne out of one of our earlier workshop on wasting this year in the month of June, from that workshop we have been able to refer back to Nigeria Global Action Plan for wasting to see and strategies on ways to increase the coverage of treatment for wasting.

"The essence of this workshop is to bring together nutrition stakeholders skills and analyse the nutrition status of children in Nigeria in terms of wasting, look back to the Global Action Plan put together years back and see what implementation is working right now and where do we need to strengthen to improve wasting treatment coverage in Nigeria to hit that target. The target is that, by the year 2025, the treatment coverage of wasting would have been up to 50%", She noted.

Also, the Chairman Technical Advisory Group of National Council of Nutrition (NCN), Prof Kola Matthew Anigo expressed concern that Nigerian children are dying from wasting daily. According to him "When a child is wasted, the chances of dying is very high. The aspect to address the problem is more or less focused on the aspect of treatment and like they say, prevention is better than cure.

"If we must achieve the SDG 2030 and World Health Assembly 2025 target, then we have to refocus and reprioritise our policy, to ensure that we are not just focusing on treatment but also on prevention", he added. He also stressed the need for collaboration of relevant stakeholders in the sector for the operationalisation of this Global Action Plan and the country roadmap to aid prevention and treatment of malnutrition. According to him "The government must take leadership; the government must take it as a responsibility. The government cannot do it alone, that is the reality but they must take the lead. "As the government show commitment definitely the partners and the other stakeholders like the private sector will also key into what the government is doing because one of the greatest problem is the issue of fragmented actions being taken here and there including the partners, but if the government shows serious commitment and focus, even those partners will also be brought online.

"Another thing is the issue of inadequate funding, there is need for serious commitment in terms of funding. The issue of transparency and accountability is also a critical issue. And again critical is the aspect of monitoring, we need to be able to monitor to evaluate what is being done, and we also account and from there we can learn and use

that to correct whatever issue we have and move ahead.

The Senior Special Assistant to the Vice President on Nutrition, Abimbola Adesanmi pointed out that the National Food Consumption record of wasting increased to 11.6% compare to 2018 where it was 7%. She said the country's target is to ensure it drops to 5%. The presidential aide however stressed the need for sensitization in ensuring that the masses are aware of the danger of malnutrition.

There's hope for Africa's greatness – Lumumba

A former anti-corruption chief in Kenya, Prof. Patrick Lumumba, has tasked African countries to work collectively and harness the resources and potential of the continent. Lumumba said this in Abuja as Guest Lecturer at the National Institute for Security Studies, Bwari, Abuja. His lecture themed, "Conspiracy Theory and the Future of Democracy and Development in Africa," was part of the institution's graduation lecture for the 78 graduates of 2022 Executive Intelligence Management Course 15. While blaming the crises situation in Africa on the poor governance, the motivational speaker said African leaders must unite to tackle the challenges and harness the resources and potentials, or the continent will continue to plunge.

He said, "if African leaders can work as a team under the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063 agreement, there will be improvement in all the sectors of health, research, climate change, women participation, energy, agriculture and communication among others.

"At the moment, Africa is disunited, weak and disrespected as we are mentally captured and there is urgent need for decolonization." He urged the graduates to put their experience into practice in order to change the narrative of African over the continued dependence on former colonial masters. Earlier, while congratulating the graduates, the National Security Adviser, Maj.-Gen Babagana Monguno, represented by Mr Aliyu Muhammad, urged them to deploy their knowledge to enhance the nation's security architecture. Highlight of the event was a book launch in honour of the Director-General, State Services, Yusuf Magaji-Bichi, entitled, 'Manning the Gates.'

Many Nigerian hospital's are over-prescribing Antibiotics, NCDC raises alarm

The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC) says many patients in the hospitals are overprescribed antibiotics that have a higher risk of bacterial resistance selection which is above the 60 percent target set by the World Health Organisation (WHO). NCDC Director-General, Dr Ifedayo Adetifa,

stated this in Abuja recently in commemoration of the 2022 National Antimicrobial Awareness (AMR) Week. He said seven out of 10 persons in the community access antibiotics outside licensed health facilities or pharmacies. He said globally, antimicrobials are increasingly becoming ineffective due to the inappropriate use of these drugs, including the prescription of and use of antibiotics, which target only bacteria, during viral infections (like the flu) or as a growth promoter in agriculture. Quoting WHO, he said there were 15 priority antibiotic-resistant pathogens causing the greatest threat to human and animal health, four of which had been detected in Nigeria. According to him, available evidence and projections suggest that by 2050, AMR could cost \$300bn to \$1 trillion annually, globally.

Chairman, Nigeria Antimicrobial Resistance Coordination Committee, Dr Tochi Okwor, noted that taking antibiotics without prescription drives antimicrobial resistance, and has many dangers. She said: "The best way to take antibiotics is to go to the hospital, have a health worker check you and take your sample, have your result come out in a timely manner and use what we call antibiotics formulary, we have guidelines of antibiotics to prescribe according to the specific guidelines."

Representative, Chief Veterinary Officer of the country, Dr James Inuwa Balami, said antimicrobial resistance (AMR), is a global public health and development threat, adding that its consequences can affect both human and animal health. Dr Daniel Onwuliri, Senior Technical Advisor, USAID, MTaPS, Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA) Program, said the antimicrobial use problem where unregulated access to antimicrobials is rife creates a great burden for the health system and for communities working to tackle AMR.

Data Governance will Ensure Maximum Value Derivation from Digital Economy -NITDA Boss

As data affects how we make decisions on the path to creating a sustainable future especially in the post-COVID-19 era and the emerging challenges, the Director General, National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), Kashifu Inuwa CCIE said that the governance of data and how Nigeria as a country seeks to position herself in this agenda is key to ensuring that maximum value is derived, and provide the needed support for the thriving innovation ecosystem. Inuwa who was represented by the Acting Director, Digital Economy Development Department (DED), Engr. Salisu Kaka made this statement while delivering his welcome address at a stakeholders' engagement on the Draft National Data Strategy (NDS) organised by NITDA in Abuja. The Stakeholders' Engagement is to provide information about the proposed NDS; opportunities for stakeholders to discuss their opinions and concerns;

address expectations and misconceptions regarding the NDS and discuss the potential impacts of the strategy. Inuwa stated that, "the non-depletion characteristics of data make it a special asset for the creation of value and is of key strategic importance for both the public and private sectors. Its proper utilisation can create a competitive advantage, especially for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises in this era of data economy." Speaking on the Draft, Inuwa noted that the strategy seeks to create an enabling environment for access to data to develop the digital economy, adding that it also supports the development of Data Infrastructures, Data for Public Good, Open Government Data, Data Privacy and Protection, and Upskilling Nigerians in both public and private sectors".

The DG opined that data collection/acquisition, transmission, storage/warehousing, processing, use, and protection must be carried out in a manner that is respectful of the rights enshrined in the constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria. He added that Nigeria Data Protection Bureau (NDPB) has also been created to further mainstream data privacy and Protection. Presenting the Nigeria Data Strategy to stakeholders Mr. Lukman Lamid said "the essence of the engagement is not just to have an excellent document but one that can be implemented". He said the vision of NDS is "to make Nigeria one of the top leaders in the global data economy translating into prosperity of all." Mr. Lamid explained that, "the mission of the NDS is harness the economic and social values of data for the advancement of Nigeria. He added that the goal is to make data as accessible, sharable, and actionable as possible for all categories of stakeholders who might need it for economic and social gains." While noting that the value proposition of the NDS is ownership, security and privacy, public good, job creation, and global competitiveness. Mr. Lamid said it will also take cognizance the global issues around Data and Data Strategy such as; data security and protection, data privacy, data sovereignty, and data mobility and cross-border data flows. The event witnessed four break-out sessions. While the first and second break-out session focused and made recommendation on the NDS aspirations (vision, mission, goals, objectives, principles, and value proposition), Governance, and Ecosystem structure, the third and fourth discussed and made recommendations on the NDS enablers, drivers, pillars, and implementation strategy.

UNICEF says 2,400 children die daily in Nigeria over malnutrition

The United Nations Children's Fund has again raised the alarm that Nigeria loses about 100 children per hour due to malnutrition. This translates to about 2,400 deaths daily. It, therefore, called for increased funding and other measures that could help in arresting the

challenge urgently. Speaking, in Lagos recently during an interaction with media executives, UNICEF's Chief Nutrition Officer in Nigeria, Nemat Hajeebhoy, noted that Nigeria was moving towards a nutrition emergency. The event was organised by the National Council on Nutrition, chaired by the Vice President, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo

Hajeebhoy said one-third of children in Nigeria lived in severe food poverty, adding that the first 1,000 days of a child's life offered a unique window of opportunity for preventing undernutrition and its consequences. She stated, "Poor diet is robbing millions of children of their health, development and lifetime prospects, because every hour, almost 100 children under the age of five die in Nigeria. Left untreated, children with severe acute malnutrition are nearly 12 times more likely to die than a healthy child. "Nigeria is ranked number one in Africa and second in the world in terms of malnourished children. This is not the kind of statistics we should be proud of. Without urgent action, UNICEF estimates that approximately 14.7 million children under age five will suffer from moderate and severe acute malnutrition this year. "Nigeria signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991 and access to good nutrition is an important right of every child. In 2003, Nigeria signed the Child Rights Act and 29 out of 36 states have strong Child Rights Act.

"If we have all of these in place, what are we doing about the right of these 21 million children to good nutrition?" She pointed out that the cost of inaction to address the challenge was 15 per cent Gross Domestic Product loss for Nigeria.

She also revealed that energy-only diets cost N707 per household per day while nutritious diets cost N1,687 per household per day, which is unaffordable by 34 per cent of households in the country.

Nigeria Receives \$20.9bn Remittance Flows for 2022, Highest in Sub-Saharan Africa

Remittance flows to Nigeria will rise 7.5% to reach \$20.9 billion this year, according to a World Bank report published recently. That puts its inflows far ahead of other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) including Ghana (\$4.7 billion), Kenya (\$4.1 billion) and Senegal (\$2.7 billion). Nigeria is the largest recipient of remittances in the region (SSA), although it came in second for Africa as a whole, behind Egypt (\$32.3 billion) which is grouped under the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), region. Nigeria which witnessed a sharp recovery in flows during 2021 (13.2 percent), maintained the improved momentum of 2021 into to the first quarter of 2022.

However, growth fell in Q2 data to 0.5 percent vis-à-vis the same period of 2021. Moreover, the country is reaping little benefit from the surge in crude oil prices, while the expatriate community faces real income losses in the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Euro Area. Financial flows to Africa have been exceptionally volatile over the longer term and continuing into the 2020s, particularly for foreign direct investment (FDI) and portfolio flows. Remittances are expected to constitute 38 percent of total flows in 2022, with official development assistance (ODA) standing at 53 percent. Remittance flows to Africa have maintained secular growth of a favorable 12.5 percent over 2000–22, contrasted with 7 percent gains for FDI, and 8 percent for ODA. Subject to less volatility than other sources of foreign inflows, remittance receipts have offered a degree of support for overall financial flows.

The largest recipients of remittances in the region during 2022—measured in US dollar terms—include Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, and Senegal. Those countries more dependent on receipts as a proportion to GDP include the Gambia, Lesotho, Comoros, and Cape Verde. Relative rankings of the top 10 recipients have changed little in recent years, though the Gambia has moved up in the remittances/GDP group given the dramatic political-economy changes there in recent years.

Notably, Ghana receives the second-largest remittance inflow in dollar terms and the ninth-largest level in relation to GDP. Sub-Saharan Africa remains the most expensive region to send money to. Senders had to pay 7.8 percent to send \$200 to African countries during Q2 2022.

Risk of further adverse developments in the external environment will persist through 2023, and act to lower the pace of remittance flows to Africa to 3.9 percent. Price pressures for wheat, oil, and fertilizers are likely to continue into 2023, although ebbing from peaks of the previous year.

Food affordability and deterioration of real incomes across African states will place a damper on economic growth, while government spending on subsidies and support for farmers will widen fiscal gaps. Nigeria is anticipated to see continued moderation in flows to a 4.5 percent pace in 2023 from 7.5 percent in the current year. Kenya should experience a modest slowing to gains of 5.5 percent.

Election 2023: EU deploys an election observation mission in Nigeria

European Union flag: EU opens portal for young Nigerians to apply for its 2022 Erasmus scholarship programme for access to quality higher education

The European Union (EU) in response to the invitation by

the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has decided to deploy an EU Election Observation Mission (EOM) in Nigeria to observe the general elections scheduled for 25 February and 11 March, 2023. A statement on Wednesday said the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Josep Borrell, has appointed Barry Andrews, Member of the European Parliament, as Chief Observer for the EOM to Nigeria, recalling that the EU previously deployed Election Observation Missions to Nigeria for the 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019 elections. High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell was quoted in the statement to have said: "These elections will be crucial for the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria, and for the stability of the region. This is the sixth time that the EU deploys an election observation mission to Nigeria, reflecting our commitment to work together to consolidate democracy in the country. The elections are set to be competitive and will take place in a challenging security context. It is our hope that Nigerians will be able to cast their vote in a peaceful environment and that any challenges or disputes will be solved through dialogue or through available legal remedies."

The Chief Observer Barry Andrews said: "I am very pleased to have been entrusted with the responsibility for leading this EU Election Observation Mission. The mission is taking place during a period of time when democracy around the globe is in decline. The forthcoming General Elections are therefore not only a key moment in Nigeria's democratic development but also important to the future of democracy in West Africa and the continent at large. I am looking forward to meeting with electoral stakeholders that are playing important roles in the ongoing electoral process." According to the statement, the EU EOM would provide a comprehensive, independent and impartial assessment of the electoral process based on international and regional standards for democratic elections. The Core Team of the EU EOM consists of 11 election experts who will arrive in Abuja during the first half of January. Towards the end of January, 40 long-term observers will join the mission to be deployed across the country and follow the electoral campaign. Thereafter, short-term observers from the EU diplomatic community as well as Canada, Norway and Switzerland will reinforce the mission during election day. The EU EOM will remain in the country until the completion of the electoral process. In line with the EU election observation methodology, the mission will issue a preliminary statement and hold a press conference in Abuja after the election day. The final report, which will include a set of recommendations for future electoral processes, will be presented after the finalization of the entire electoral process.