

Reps Query CBN, NNPC, Others Over Unaudited Accounts



The House of Representatives Committee on Public Accounts has submitted its report on ministries, departments and agencies of the Federal Government who failed to render their audited accounts within eight years. Prominent among those indicted in the report laid at the plenary on Thursday by the committee's Chairman, Oluwole Oke, were the Central Bank of Nigeria, Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (now Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited), Niger Delta Development Commission, and Revenue Mobilisation Allocation and Fiscal Commission. It was titled, 'Report of the Committee on Public Accounts on the Deliberate and Reckless Refusal by Ministries, Departments and Agencies of Government to Render Audited Accounts for the periods 2014–2018 and 2019–2021 to the Auditor-General for the Federation and Approve the Recommendations Therein.' In the report, the committee recommended the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission prosecution, warrant of arrest issuance against chief accounting officers, and sanctioning of various MDAs. The committee urged the Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning; the Accountant General of the Federation; and Auditor-General for the Federation to jointly issue a government circular specifying strong sanctions against agencies that violated Financial Regulation 3010 for the 2019 -2021 financial years. The committee also stated that "many agencies often violate the Appropriation Act by deliberately subjecting their internally generated revenue to some committees (of the National Assembly) directly overseeing them for approval and expend same illegally without Mr. President's assent." In its findings in the first batch of investigations covering 2014 to 2018, the



committee said some MDAs complained that the procurement process of hiring their external auditors was cumbersome, which was the reason for operating during these periods without being audited.

The committee said it also discovered gross negligence by directors of finance and accounts/bursars in some MDAs in ensuring the accounts were audited duly, including delay in the appointment of governing councils/boards and in approving/signing audited accounts by the governing councils/boards.

According to the committee, some incumbent chief accounting officers refused to sign audited accounts prepared by former CEOs, while some MDAs submitted unsigned accounts. Also, some letters evidencing remittance of audited accounts to the Office of the Auditor General for the Federation had either faint or no acknowledgement of receipt stamp. The committee, therefore, recommended that all MDAs should be directed to submit their audited accounts on or before May 31 every year. It also recommended that board or governing council meeting should be convened to sign audited accounts immediately after it was submitted by external auditors, noting that in the absence of a board or governing council, the supervising body of the MDAs should sign audited accounts in order to avoid delay in rendition to the Office of the Auditor-General.

"No outgoing CEO should exit office without duly completing the process of audited accounts, signed and rendered to the Office of the Auditor-General," the committee further recommended. The report read in part, "All chief accounting officers of the 54 government agencies listed on Pages 4 – 6 that refused to appear to defend their positions during the public fearing without any written reason, prominent among them are CBN, NNPC, NDDC, RMAFC, etc., should be issued warrant of arrest to compel their

appearance to respond to the matter within a week, in line with section 89 (d) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended)." On the Nigeria Maritime Administration and Safety Agency, the committee stated that "the reckless and deliberate refusal by the management of the agency to render their audited accounts for the past five years (2005 – 2019) is a violation of Section 85 (3) (b) of the 1999 Constitution."

According to the report, the Federal Housing Authority submitted audited accounts last in 2003. "The Agency could not provide proof for the rendition of 2014 audited accounts. This act negates Section 85 (3) (6) of the Constitution. Therefore, all former MDAs, DFAs and external auditors should be handed over to the EFCC and sanctioned accordingly," the committee recommended."