

# POLICY COORDINATION IS TO ENSURE THAT GOVERNMENT DELIVERS ON ITS SOCIAL CONTRACT WITH THE PEOPLE

*Says; Bala-Usman*

By Isaac Taiwo



*In this interview, the Special Adviser to President Bola Tinubu on Policy and Coordination, Hadiza Bala-Usman, speaks on how the current administration is a departure from the past in terms of effectiveness, and efforts being taken to ensure governance is hallmarked by performance across board, among other issues. .*



performance indicators. We're having a retreat in the first week of November, and that is where we're going to further conclude on this KPIs and deliverables. On this basis Mr. President is going to sign a performance bond with each minister and that bond would be what we would use to monitor your effectiveness and how much you're able to deliver. The other side of it is that we have looked to ensure that all of these deliverables form part of our 2024 budget.

The MTEF has been developed and it contains the content of exactly what the sectoral policy trusts are. They are detailed to recognize what

***What basically is your office about and what is expected of you in terms of deliverables?***

My role is that of Special Adviser to the President on Policy and Coordination. As the name indicates, there's a component of it, which is policy, and there's another component that speaks to coordination. As we started putting together administration to institute the structure and the implementation mechanism, we are working on developing a large monitoring and evaluation (M&E) structure across the board for all the ministers. The president has a list of identified priority areas; they are eight. And in these areas, we have worked on developing deliverables for each ministry. So, each ministry has details of its deliverables, which are linked to a priority. And within those deliverables, their key performance indicators, we got all of these arising from the policy advisory council report, the national development plan that Nigeria has for 2021 to 2027. We have various components of policy documentation on which basis each sectoral deliverable was defined in order for us to, as I mentioned, structure our monetary mechanism.

We worked on scheduling bilateral engagements with each ministry. Of the 35 ministries that we had, we have engaged each ministry; we've made submission to them detailing their deliverables. Each minister with his team has looked at the deliverables, has reviewed the deliverables, and we've had one-on-one technical sessions of the team. The permanent secretaries, the head of their planning directories have looked at it. We felt the need for the ministers to take ownership of these deliverables. We felt that it was important for them to have a key understanding of what their mandate entails. So, logically, we know that you have a mandate as a minister and your vision of what you want to do. And the ministry in itself already has work plans of what it's planning to do. Merging that and looking at deliverables that arose from the Policy Advisory Council that has now been reviewed in totality and reduced into these key

the administration intends to do within these four years. And we'll be taking it annually. So, the budget circular that is being issued to the ministries provides clearly that your budget provision needs to be in line with the deliverables that has been detailed and accepted by you. We also felt the need to allow for 2023 for the ministers to be in preparatory mode to look at what it is that they need to have done to conclude on their planning. And all manners of assessment will commence in 2024. Q 1 2024 would be the time when we're going to commence an assessment of the ministries and which would at that point have the budget 2024 in place. This is work that has been done in the last eight weeks to get things in line.

***Are those performance bonds going to come with penalties? How would you ensure they are not mere performance bonds on paper?***

One of the things is consequence management. There's a whole section of consequence management that the president is going to implement, which means inability to deliver on certain mandates will attract a consequence. We've also recognized the interplay and linkage between sectoral ministries and their own aspect of deliverables because in certain instances, your deliverable is tied to another sector, another ministry. Our job in coordination is to ensure that we debottleneck all of that, to allow you focus on delivering your own core activity, while recognizing that our role will be to debottleneck that coordination aspect for you. Yes, consequence management is a huge part of it, which the president will implement because, at the end of the day, it is his mandate, deliverable, promise and endurance that he needs to ensure it's been done. And any person that has been so appointed by the administration is a tool for him to achieve that. And his inability to achieve that will definitely attract a consequence.

***What could the consequences be?***

We haven't concluded on what the consequences are with President but clearly everybody understands that inability to perform and deliver would attract a consequence. The strengthened consequence management mechanism is what President Tinubu is going to deploy at our retreat and unveil what that would entail. But as you mentioned, without a strong and implemented consequence management framework, we would be really back to square one where people are getting away with what they're doing. The other part of it is the baseline with which we're doing the assessment. Maybe that's the next question you may want to ask. So, in determining what your baseline of assessment is, a lot of data may not be available in certain sectors, but we have looked to engage civil society groups to also partner with us to provide us with this baseline data. That way, we know where we're starting. So, our assessment would commence with a particular baseline that speaks to the understanding by civil society, by the government itself. And there's a full ownership of what the baseline is, on which basis we would proceed.

***How are you going to manage the intended reforms?***

One of the things we've done also is that within the deliverables, we have the single windows instrument, which has been lingering for the past eight years – talking about its implementation. And that is key tools that will enable us debottleneck some of the enhanced indices within the cargo evacuation process. So, we have mandated, it is specified within the deliverable of the ministries to ensure that that is done. We've also recognized that the data on sectoral data, for example, the turnaround time of vessels or wherever such is applicable, now have the global best practice for our sub region. One is for the larger continent and then for the sub region. And then we apply it, looking at what exists and what has been existing in Nigeria. The same thing with healthcare; we are very conscious that some of the data in healthcare are data that come from development partners. So, we're looking to ensure that those data are data that Nigerian government owns and understands. We're also very careful about ministries putting low targets for themselves. It's one of the things that you put a very low target so you're able to achieve. We have assessed the targets they've given us. We've looked at

what is expected of such targets within, having ensured that you have all you need, meaning you've budgeted for an activity, you have all the approvals necessary for that activity, and all the areas that are interacting with other sectors have been debottleneck for you. So, you have no basis, sort of, not to perform.

***There is the issue of dichotomy between monetary policy, fiscal policy and trade policy, how are you going to ensure coordination?***

There's clarity in the linkage between monetary, fiscal and trade policies. We understand the huge interrelation more recognizing the issue of foreign exchange, the need for us to attract. So, we've identified that and the interrelated coordination mechanism has been developed. We note that some of the data and indices that



we have for those sectors are at a very low stage. We're working to see how we can improve it. But regarding unveiling our targets, we are going to do that at our retreat. The retreat will unveil our consequence management to also unveil our data in terms of what it is. We have expectations, as I mentioned, we also want to have citizen assessment. There's a component of our monitoring and delivery aspect that engages the citizens. So, for example, we have the deliverables for the finance sector, which speaks to clearly on the policies and we're going to have that unveiled in the public. So, all Nigerians would now be able to provide us feedback on the fact that, oh, this deliverable has not been met. These are our basis; this is where we've arrived at the data, which says that this deliverable has not been met. We seek to ensure that the larger scope of monitoring and assessment and evaluation is not just, does not just sit with government for us to monitor ourselves, but we also

want to have citizens be part of the assessment.

When we say for example, we're going to develop X number of jobs in the digital economy, we're going to have it out there. And we would have citizens assess us and citizens send in their own assessment to determine what has been done. But the exact details for each deliverable for each ministry will be unveiled at the retreat whereby would encourage citizens to do that. In addition, you mentioned the issue of culture and reorientation is a huge part of the work that we've been doing to get people to key into the renewed hope agenda, to also key into the fact that we are at an emergency in a country. We all need to sit up and pull up our boots so that we can achieve our mandates. In so doing, these bilateral engagements with the ministries we usually have, all directors are there, the permanent secretaries and heads of agencies are in those meetings. And we convey the urgency on the need to reorient them on that. Another aspect of that orientation is to mainstream digitization across governance.

We have put it in every ministry to ensure that we have electronic data management systems deployed for all ministries and agencies and ministry will be assessed on utilizing this EDMS who also ensure that the mainstream performance management, HR deployments, are all done electronically. Every ministry will be required to ensure that deliverable is done for themselves and the agencies they're supervising. That of course, attracts a whole component of IT deployment. How many staff we have, are we able to provide the number of equipment computers that they need? All of those are a function of having made it your deliverable. You need to now determine it and budget for it appropriately. And government will now assess, have we budgeted and provided you resource to enable you to do your EDMS? If government hasn't provided the resources, then the issue of assessing will be determined based on the resources that have been assigned to you. There's a whole, I'll say, value reorientation that is going on that also as I keep referencing, will sit with us having a retreat. But even before that, the president has given that sort of matching order for everybody to hit the ground running in recognizing that we are at a stage where all hands must be on deck and all hands and more, I'll say, needs to be on deck too.

***You seem to have so much on your table. How are you going to be assessed?***

My assessment would be in ensuring that there's a full buy-in from the ministries and all the, the president has full buy-in into this. But to make them understand that this is something that is very important. And as I keep saying, tracking and monitoring is key and having consequence management. So even with our need to increase our production, our good production, we also, NNPC has their tracking mechanism. The agencies that supervise the addressing the insecurity in the Niger/Delta have their supervising mechanism. But we

have discussed with ministry of defense yesterday, the need to sort of pull it up all together so that we can see X resources have been deployed in the Niger Delta to address the issue of insecurity. And over this period we have increased X number of barrels having invested X number into the issue of addressing the insecurity.

These are the mechanisms we're using to ensure that there is a sort of, you visibly see what you've done. I've invested this in addressing this and this is the outcome of what I've done. **In so doing, we're also going to demystify governance to a certain extent because we're openly up governance to invite citizens to see what we're doing. Like this is deliverable of the ministry for youth. I want you as citizens to tell us the fact that they have not done it. There's also an app we're going to unveil also at the retreat where we would encourage citizens to track projects in this instance, meaning that all the projects that are so detailed across sectors, you'll be able to give feedback and the app would be unveiled where you are going to see how you report it and the receipts that you've been given upon reporting. And also our own response to your reporting. Because sometimes we also need to call ourselves out as government to call ourselves out where we have not responded to a feedback. If you give us a feedback and we don't respond, we need to also acknowledge it and call ourselves out.** So, importantly is one consequence management is really at the top of this. Once we have a few examples of consequence management that would get everybody to sit up and, and get their work going.

***Are you going to have representatives in each ministry?***

There actually is, there are delivery task teams in each ministry. Each ministry has delivery task teams that work with them and support them to not, I wouldn't say support them, because they're part of the ministry. So each ministry has identified a team that is its delivery team within that ministry. And they're the ones that work with the central coordination and delivery unit that would harness and mock up what is required. So each ministry has those delivery units that work with the minister and with the director for planning and research to ensure that this is done. But importantly mainstreaming it across the ministries and also mainstreaming it to the department and agencies of government. There are department and agencies that fall outside of ministerial supervision. We're also working on setting up their own delivery mechanism where whoever is sort of chairing in certain instances, vice president chairs these agencies boards and some are under the secretary to the government, which we're also working to see how we can mandate to the regular report to the president or the chief of staff progress on what you're doing. There's always this risk that happened with the last... with the ease of doing business thing where you seem to

be improving on the ranking but practically on the street nobody's feeling any impact. How do you guide against that?

***How are you handling the issue of citizens' feedback?***

We are working with our development partners to see how we can develop a mechanism for supporting non-project based performance. Because there's some that is not a building, it's not this, but it's more it intricate part of governance. So that mechanism is being developed. But importantly this stakeholder feedback is what we encourage to have citizens telling us that that has not been done. Also within the deliverables of each ministry is stakeholder engagement, meaning sectoral, stakeholder engineer. You are mandated to have town hall meetings within your sector, your mandated to engage stakeholders within your own ecosystem to ensure that they have knowledge, a buy-in of what you're doing and are also effectively supposed to monitor you. In the ministry of defense for instance, they might be able to hold quarterly stakeholder engagement where they are providing information to Nigerians on what they are doing on security. And also engaging Nigerians to see what they're doing on security.

One of the things that we raised also is data on security data. We have various civil society has their own data, because we had one of our resource persons that is a civil society expert on security. He had his own data on insecurity. The Ministry of Defence has their own data police. So, we agreed on the needs to harmonize and have one data gathering mechanism. It'll not be the data itself that's harmonized, but the modality and mechanism with which the data is gathered so that when we come to compare, you are not saying, oh, I use X, Y, Z mechanism. You use X, Y, Z mechanism. These are the sort of things that we seek to do.

***Who are some of your development partners?***

We have a team of technical consultants; we have Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office that have been supporting the CDCU. We are looking to see, we also have our own consultants that we've hired private sector consultants to help us. But for that, what we do is we also want to inculcate that as what we do in government. We are not quick to always go for resource or technical patterns, but having our own team, having an understanding and ability to drive this, which is what is being done with the ministerial task teams in each ministry on the deliverables, the delivery unit for each ministry to sort of cascade the knowledge sharing that way we're not always going back to consultants or always going, going back to development partners. But they bring to us international best practice. They bring to us knowledge sharing. They get sectoral experts to come on short terms, to train the staff and have that knowledge sharing. We also have to enable institutes that also working with us in conceptualizing all of these

frameworks that we're working on.

***Why did President Tinubu appoint you as his policy coordinator?***

I think that's a question that you should reserve for him on why he chose me. But I think as a president, you have the clarity on ensuring that you have coordination in your government. And that is, I think something that off the top of the head, any leader would really want to do that. So, having policy and coordination advisory is an important thing for you coming into an administration, trying to sort of mock up policy positions that are interrelated and ensuring that there's that linkage and connection. Because in a lot of instances, some of our inability to perform speaks to the fact that there is other attendant policy positions that are not being done or are interrelated and they're conflicting. Conflicting policy positions prevent government from achieving its mandate. I don't know why he chose me, but it's evident that that role is very important for any government to succeed – recognizing that coordination is a key enabler in delivery, in governance.

***How do you ensure that you don't get lost because you have so many things to do?***

We are working with the priority areas, the priority areas as the president has. Our focus in is delivering on those priority areas. So even those priority areas are large, it's a teamwork. It's not one person. I may be the special adviser, but I work with a very strong team that are working on the sectors and also the larger knowledge and capacity that sits in the ministries department and agencies that we look to have them be the owners and drivers. Sometimes they, you know, no matter what we do as political office holders, if we don't mainstream our vision and our ideas in improving governance, we will not be able to have that delivered. There is, I think joint ownership and core sharing and being part of the clear vision.

And just to add onto that, I think it's even beyond us in terms of ourselves as individuals, political appointees are that Nigeria is at a stage where every Nigerian wants to see us improve. Every Nigeria is desperate to ensure that we have power, we have all of what it needs to, for the sleeping giants to wake up. So, it's beyond just being there. But I see that commitment and drive from the civil servants to say, you know what, let's just get this thing done. You know, we're capable. Nigerians are all over the globe performing, so why not in Nigeria? And more so when you see people like Dr. Pate giving up global positions to come and work in Nigeria, it inspires Nigerians to say that if he can do that, why can I not give my own in ensuring this is done? I think it's beyond party lines, beyond whether office holder or not, but recognizing that really, you know, Nigeria needs to be great.

***Are you going to be in FEC meetings and what will be your role in those meetings?***

Yes, I'll be in attendance in FEC meetings. My role is to track and ensure that the memorandums presented are in line with the deliverables. And also to note down areas of interrelation and coordination that are required in memorandums being presented at FEC.

***When do we begin to see FEC meetings hold?***

We will see FEC meetings. FEC is a clearing house for approvals across procurement policy and strategy. And a lot of all of that is being prepared to be provided. And the president and the ministers have been working to bring up FEC. So, you're going to see federal executive council meetings being held. But importantly is not about determining is this a weekly FEC? Is this a quarterly FEC? It is that those memorandums relating to procurement, relating to policy and strategy are being addressed and will be addressed in those FECs. Not also that these ministers were sworn in just what, six weeks ago? Six weeks ago. Within those six weeks, at the point where they were sworn in, there was like a detailed sort of program that was given to them. Meaning that you're required to have your ministerial briefings have your hand over, you're required to visit and inspect the facilities that are supervised by you under your ministry.

And following that you are required to sort of develop your strategy on which basis you start with, you can see that the minister economy has avail his strategy, minister of health, I think also. So a number of them. That is what they're doing. If you are aware of what FEC is, FEC is an

approval, approval for, for such. They're working to bring up what will be approved for FEC. Within this period, this is what they have been mandated to do. And you can see a lot of them have unveiled it asking citizens to actually comment on their strategy documents and their policy pronouncements. So those documents, after having engaged internally and externally, they'll now present it to FEC, So, asking why we haven't had FEC is a function that people are working to bring up what will be approved. FEC is actually a combination, it's not a beginning. So people, policy positions, procurement are concluded at FEC they're not initiated at. So for FEC is actually the end of what you've done. So in the last six weeks, they're putting together what they feel is necessary for consideration effect. So when you have us meeting a week, two ministers being sworn in, you should actually ask us what are they presenting because they've barely been in the office a week. What would, what procurement process could they have done that will be at a stage of effect, because if you're familiar with procurement, you know that there's an advert, there's this and that. And FEC is the end. If you're familiar with policy framework, development of policy, it, you need to do this even in strategy FEC is at the end. You could not have done a procurement process and concluded within the six weeks that you've been, in fact. So expecting us to even have it weekly is like, you should actually be asking us what are they actually presenting.

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