

Why Tinubu is big on policy coordination

BY TOPE AJAYI

One thing that has become a refrain in Nigeria for decades is that our country has never been in short supply of beautiful policies. What seems to be the preponderance of views is that our national development was short-circuited as a result of policy inconsistencies and poor coordination. President Tinubu wants to address serious governance issues that have combined to stunt and distort economic growth for many years with the appointment of Hadiza Bala-Usman, former managing director of the Nigeria Ports Authority, as the special adviser on policy coordination. Usman is a very competent and strong-willed woman, who has already set out to deliver on the core objectives of her mandate – to ensure that government and governance deliver value to the citizens.

There is no doubt that the policy environment is fragmented due to many reasons. One of them is that senior government officials fight for turf, instead of working together in synergy. The other reasons are corruption, personal interest at the expense of public good, misalignment of priorities and lack of effective monitoring and coordination. The office of the special adviser will now strengthen the presidency to ensure clarity on all of President Tinubu's priority areas across MDAs and also set performance benchmarks for quarterly reviews for ministers. President Tinubu, at the inauguration of his Ministers, was emphatic when he told them that his administration carries the burden of expectations of over 200 million Nigerians, who will not accept any reason for failure.

The government has embarked on economic reforms that have been hailed across the world, even when it also brought some initial pains to the people. The task before the office of the policy coordination is to now ensure that through efficient service delivery, Nigerians get the gains of the economic reforms. In separate interviews with Bloomberg and TVC, Usman revealed that all ministers in President Tinubu's administration have a shared understanding that they will sign a performance bond with the President, which will be their social contract, on the basis of which they will be appraised every quarter. She also stated that the ministers will have to take full responsibility for the optimal performance of the government agencies under their supervision because there will be key performance indicators and consequence management framework for all appointees who fail to deliver. Essentially, the role of the special adviser on policy coordination is to ensure that government policies and programmes run seamlessly across ministries, departments and agencies. The special adviser has started her work with tripartite engagements and briefing sessions with every Minister to let them understand that

while there are policy deployments across MDAs, the ministers must ensure that expected deliverables are met. In her interview with TVC, Hadiza revealed that the assessment of ministers will commence in January 2024. She said: "We are going to have a cabinet retreat in November with Mr. President. In the end, this would culminate in the performance bond that will be signed by each ministry. Every minister and the permanent secretary would sign a performance bond with the president, which would detail what they are expected to do within the one-year 2024 budget cycle. One thing we are keen to ensure and Mr. President has clearly given us that directive is that performance is a very important thing. He has made a commitment to Nigerians and that commitment is what he is going to ensure is delivered by his respective appointees."

In his address on June 15, during the inauguration of the national economic council, which is constitutionally chaired by Vice-President Kashim Shettima, President Tinubu succinctly captured the philosophy that will drive his administration. This he summed up in his mission to "improving the lives of Nigerians in a manner that not just reflects our humanity but encourages compassion towards one another and duly rewards our collective efforts to resolve social ills that seek to divide us". In the next four years and possibly beyond, the Tinubu administration's eight priorities will be food security, ending poverty, economic growth and job creation, access to capital, security, fairness and rule of law, fight against corruption and social inclusion.

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