

Nigeria losing fight against corruption, NLC, CSOs warn

The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) has warned that the country is steadily losing the battle against corruption and illicit financial flows (IFFs), as entrenched systems of looting continue to undermine governance, economic growth, and citizens' welfare. The warning came at a high-level meeting of trade unions and civil society organizations (CSOs) focused on strengthening coalitions to combat kleptocracy and illicit financial flows, where labour leaders said the country's anti-corruption framework has failed to deliver meaningful results. Speaking at the event, NLC General Secretary, Emmanuel Ugboaja, described the situation as a war for the soul and wealth of Nigeria, noting that despite years of reforms and interventions, corruption remains deeply institutionalized. Ugboaja, who was represented by NLC Assistant Secretary-General, Onyeka Chris cited findings from a labour-backed study which revealed that corruption in Nigeria is no longer limited to isolated incidents but driven by a system of kleptocracy, where public institutions are captured and used to serve elite interests. He explained that massive financial leakages, particularly through inflated contracts, weak regulatory systems, and capital flight, have deprived the country of critical resources needed for infrastructure, healthcare, education, and job creation. The labour leader also criticized what he described as selective enforcement of anti-corruption laws, where low-level offenders are prosecuted while politically exposed persons evade justice through influence and patronage. He further warned that weak rule of law, compromised institutions, and constitutional protections such as immunity clauses have created a culture of impunity, allowing corruption to thrive unchecked.

The GS said: "We are not here to merely discuss problems and produce another communique for the shelves. We are here because we are at war which we seem to be losing. It is a war for the soul and the wealth of Nigeria, and we have assembled the necessary forces to change the terms of engagement. Our people must win and Nigeria must win! "We are confronting a system. A system of kleptocracy, where the state itself has been captured and weaponized by a parasitic elite. They govern for their own gain, treating the treasury as their private account and the nation's resources as their inheritance." Ugboaja further explained that the aim of the engagement was to move from analysis to action by building a coalition that is not just a talking shop but a fighting front. "We will forge a structure with clear roles, responsibilities, and decision-making mechanisms that ensures we are agile, strategic, and effective. We will develop a national action plan that identifies our priority advocacy areas and charts a clear way forward," he added. Also speaking, the Deputy Regional Director for Africa at the Solidarity Center, Margie Peters, said corruption and illicit financial flows pose a direct threat not only to economic stability but also to democracy and social development. Peters noted that African countries continue to lose substantial revenues to illicit practices, weakening governments' ability to provide basic services and protect vulnerable populations. "Illicit financial flows rob citizens of access to essential services and erode trust in public institutions," she said, adding that empowering

workers and civil society is critical to reversing the trend.

In his remarks, James Eustace, representing the Tax Justice and Governance Platform, said civil society groups are intensifying advocacy for transparency, accountability, and fiscal justice, particularly in the implementation of tax policies and financial regulations. He noted that the platform, which brings together organizations such as ActionAid, Oxfam, Christian Aid, and CISLAC, has played a key role in pushing for reforms aimed at curbing illicit financial flows and promoting equitable economic policies. Participants at the meeting agreed that the current anti-corruption approach requires a major shift, stressing that government institutions alone cannot address the crisis without sustained pressure from organized labour and civil society. They called for urgent reforms, including stronger whistleblower protections, enforcement of beneficial ownership transparency, judicial independence, and mechanisms for the recovery and accountable use of stolen assets. The stakeholders also emphasized the need for a coordinated national and international response to dismantle the structures enabling illicit financial flows, warning that failure to act decisively could further weaken Nigeria's democracy and economic prospects.

Tinubu's economic reforms pushes more Nigerians into poverty — Report

Economic reforms introduced under President Bola Tinubu have pushed Nigeria's poverty rate to about 63 per cent, according to a new report unveiled recently. The report, conducted by Agora Policy with support from the Nigeria Economic Stability and Transformation (NEST) programme and the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), was released at a Stakeholder Dialogue on Sustaining and Deepening Economic Reforms in Nigeria organized by the policy think tank in Abuja. Findings from the study showed that the national poverty headcount rose sharply following the removal of petrol subsidy and electricity tariff adjustments, increasing from 49.8 per cent before the reforms to about 63.3 per cent afterwards. The report explained that while the reforms have strengthened government finances and improved some macroeconomic indicators, they have also intensified the cost-of-living crisis for many Nigerians. According to the findings, the removal of petrol subsidy and other policy adjustments triggered a surge in consumer prices, significantly eroding household purchasing power. Data presented in the report showed that the average cost of a healthy meal rose from N515 in June 2023 to N1,611 by July 2025, while intercity bus fares increased from about N4,000 to N7,700 during the period. Average rent prices also climbed from N1.79 million in 2023 to about N4.50 million in 2025, worsening financial pressure on households.

The study noted that low-income households were the most affected, with poverty levels rising sharply among this group after the reforms. It added that government social protection measures, including cash transfers to vulnerable households, provided only limited relief and did not significantly reduce

the poverty impact. Beyond the statistical analysis, the study incorporated focus group discussions across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones to capture the lived experiences of households and businesses.

Participants reported a sharp erosion of purchasing power, forcing families to adopt coping strategies such as reducing food consumption, trekking instead of using public transport, cutting electricity use and borrowing to meet basic needs. Businesses also reported rising operational costs due to higher fuel and electricity prices. Many small and medium enterprises said they had to increase prices, downsize staff or switch to alternative energy sources to remain operational.

Despite these challenges, the report acknowledged that the reforms have improved some fiscal indicators. Nigeria's external reserves rose from \$35.09 billion in May 2023 to \$50.45 billion by February 2026, while government revenue also increased.

Speaking at the event, Chair of Agora Policy, Ojobo Ode Atuluku, said the stakeholder dialogue was organized to assess the progress of ongoing reforms and explore ways of strengthening them. Atuluku said the event formed part of a broader initiative supported by the NEST programme to promote economic growth and transformation in Nigeria. She stressed that reforms must be constantly reviewed to ensure they remain inclusive and that their benefits are widely distributed while minimizing the burden on citizens. Atuluku added that economic policy should be a continuous conversation involving policymakers, implementers and citizens affected by the reforms. "We are gathered here to deliberate on how to sustain, deepen, and improve current economic reforms while laying a stronger foundation for future ones. "Economic policy must never be a one-off event. It should be a constant conversation between those who design reforms, those who implement them, and those who are impacted by them," she said. She explained that Agora Policy's work under the programme focuses on three key areas: conducting independent research on economic reforms, convening stakeholder dialogues to encourage constructive discussions, and producing actionable policy recommendations to guide future reforms. The dialogue featured panel discussions involving representatives from the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), the Special Adviser to the President on Economy and Finance, the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry, civil society organizations and the World Bank.

Fiscal Storm: Actionaid Slams ₦34trn Revenue Deductions, Calls for Transparency

ActionAid Nigeria has called for an urgent forensic audit of Nigeria's revenue management system following revelations that more than ₦34 trillion was deducted from federal earnings before allocation to the three tiers of government. The organization said the scale of the deductions—accounting for over 40 per cent of federal revenue in recent years—points to systemic weaknesses in public financial management and poses a serious threat to fiscal stability and development financing. In a statement issued on Thursday, ActionAid said findings by the World

Bank confirmed that a significant portion of government income is being absorbed through pre-distribution charges, including cost-of-collection frameworks and agency remittances, with limited transparency on their composition and utilization. "These findings reinforce long-standing concerns about Nigeria's widening fiscal constraints and rising debt burden," the group said. "The persistence of large-scale revenue leakages represents both a governance failure and a missed opportunity to strengthen fiscal stability." According to the organization, the deductions—estimated at more than ₦34 trillion—have continued to rise alongside government revenues, leaving federal, state, and local governments with significantly reduced resources to fund public services. ActionAid warned that the trend is worsening Nigeria's reliance on borrowing, citing projections by the International Monetary Fund that the country's debt-to-GDP ratio could climb to 33.1 per cent by 2027.

"The widening gap between gross revenue and distributable income is constraining development financing and increasing dependence on debt," the statement added. The group expressed particular concern over what it described as "opaque and fragmented" revenue channels, noting that substantial portions of national income pass through multiple layers before reaching the Federation Account. It said the lack of public disclosure around these deductions—including their justification, structure, and end-use—raises critical accountability questions. "There is limited transparency on how these funds are managed," the organization stated. "This opacity weakens fiscal oversight and undermines public trust in governance." ActionAid also pointed to broader implications for national development, warning that reduced public revenue is limiting government capacity to invest in essential sectors such as healthcare, education, security, and social protection.

The Country Director of ActionAid Nigeria, Andrew Mamedu, said the consequences are already being felt by millions of Nigerians. "For citizens grappling with rising inflation, declining purchasing power, and economic hardship, the continued reduction in available public resources means fewer investments in essential services," he said. He added that weakening fiscal capacity is also exacerbating insecurity, as economic pressures fuel crime, displacement, and social instability. "At a time when livelihoods are becoming more fragile, the erosion of public revenue further limits the government's ability to respond effectively to these challenges," Mamedu said. The organization further criticized the lack of transparency surrounding major public expenditures, citing concerns over projects such as the Nigeria Revenue Service building, where cost details and procurement processes have not been publicly disclosed. "Citizens have a right to know how public funds are utilized," the group said, stressing that accountability must extend beyond revenue collection to expenditure. ActionAid warned that without urgent reforms, Nigeria risks entrenching a system where public resources are consistently depleted before they can deliver meaningful impact. "The continued expansion of unchecked deductions poses a direct threat to equitable development, fiscal stability, and public trust," it said. To address the issue, the organization called on the Federal Government to undertake a comprehensive and transparent review of all revenue deduction frameworks, with a view to ensuring

accountability and efficiency. It also demanded the immediate publication of detailed breakdowns of all deductions, strengthened independent oversight of revenue-generating agencies, and reforms to eliminate systemic leakages. In addition, ActionAid urged the National Assembly to intensify its oversight role through public hearings and scrutiny of deduction structures, while calling on state governments, civil society, and the media to increase pressure for transparency. “An independent forensic audit of all deduction mechanisms is critical to restoring public confidence,” the organization said. ActionAid added that Nigeria's development trajectory depends not only on revenue generation but on how effectively public resources are managed and deployed. “This is not just a fiscal issue; it is a matter of justice,” Mamedu said. “Every naira that fails to reach essential services denies Nigerians access to healthcare, education, and dignity.”

FG denies revenue diversion, clarifies World Bank report

The Federal Government has dismissed reports alleging hidden spending and diversion of federation revenue, describing it as misinterpretations of the World Bank Nigeria Development Update. The Minister of State for Finance, Taiwo Oyedele, made this known via a statement issued on Sunday, April 19, 2026. Oyedele said reports suggesting large-scale diversion of federation earnings misrepresented the World Bank's findings and reflected poor understanding of Nigeria's fiscal system. Oyedele said deductions by the Federation Account Allocation Committee (FAAC) were wrongly labelled as waste or missing funds in some reports. Oyedele explained that FAAC deductions cover statutory transfers, security spending, investments, cost of collection and refunds to Ministries, Departments and Agencies. He said transfers and refunds to states and other tiers of government were legitimate fiscal obligations, not leakages or hidden expenditures. The minister also criticized selective use of outdated data by some commentators, saying recent reforms were ignored in their analysis. He noted that the World Bank acknowledged ongoing fiscal reforms, including a 2026 Executive Order to improve petroleum revenue remittances and enhance transparency. Oyedele said the reforms were expected to increase distributable revenue by about 0.4 per cent of Gross Domestic Product annually. He added that the report presented a positive outlook, highlighting broad-based economic growth across sectors. According to him, inflation is gradually declining due to deliberate policy actions of government. Oyedele also cited improvements in Nigeria's external reserves and a current account surplus, adding that debt indicators had improved, including a reduction in the debt-to-GDP ratio for the first time in over a decade. Oyedele maintained that the World Bank report did not suggest fiscal collapse but affirmed that ongoing reforms were yielding results. The minister said sustaining and deepening reforms would help translate macroeconomic gains into inclusive growth. He reiterated the

government's commitment to fiscal transparency, revenue mobilization, and efficient public spending. He urged media organizations and stakeholders to report fiscal matters responsibly to avoid misleading narratives.

Opposition parties unite, want INEC boss out, other demands

Opposition parties in Nigeria have fostered a united front, calling for the resignation of Professor Joash Amupitan as Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), among other demands ahead of the 2027 general elections. Other demands include immediate review of the Electoral Act 2026 by the National Assembly, release of detained leading politicians and the extension of INEC deadline for party primaries. The demands were contained in a communique issued after a National Summit of Opposition Political Parties held in Ibadan on Saturday. According to the release, the call for Amupitan's resignation was as a result of alleged bias and partisanship in favour of the ruling APC. “That the INEC Chairman, Prof. Joash Ojo Amupitan, having shown bias and partisanship in favour of the ruling APC, should not conduct the 2027 general elections as Nigerians across board have lost confidence in him and his capacity to guarantee the required neutrality to deliver free, fair, transparent and credible elections. His continuous stay in office is vexatious and capable of triggering wide spread crisis in our nation,” the communique said. Continuing, the Summit also agreed to present a single presidential candidate backed by all opposition parties, in a bid to resist “all machinations by the APC to foist a one-party State on Nigeria and fight for the survival of multi-party democracy in our country.” The communique, which described the APC-led government as oppressive and anti-democratic, conveyed the summit's position of an urgent “need for urgent, collective action to rescue our nation and the destiny of over 200 million compatriots.” The communique partly reads, “That the National Assembly should immediately review the Electoral Act, 2026 to remove all sections that threaten the sanctity and integrity of the elections and run counter to constitutional provisions. “That all leading politicians that are being detained or harassed on bail able offences be released with immediate effect and allowed to exercise their fundamental rights of participation and inclusivity as Nigerians. “That we consider the recent guidelines released by the INEC as obstacles, deliberately engineered to impose conditions and deadlines on the opposition parties. We therefore demand that INEC extends the deadline for primaries till the end of July, 2026. “The Summit commends Nigerians for their resilience and readiness to work with Opposition Parties to free our nation from State capture. “The National summit of Opposition Political Parties thank the Oyo State Governor Engr. Seyi Makinde and the people of Oyo State for hosting the epochal event.”

SERAP, Editors sue NBC over “Gag Order” on broadcasters

The Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project and the Nigerian Guild of Editors have sued the National Broadcasting Commission, challenging what they call an “arbitrary and unlawful” threat to sanction broadcasters for expressing opinions on air. The suit, filed Friday at the Federal High Court in Lagos as ‘FHC/L/CS/854/2026’, targets a “Formal Notice” from NBC warning stations and presenters against “expressing personal opinions as facts, bullying or intimidating guests, or failing to maintain neutrality.” NBC claimed it had “identified a sustained increase in breaches” of the 6th Edition of the Nigeria Broadcasting Code across news, current affairs and political programmes.

“Vague and Overly Broad”. SERAP and NGE are asking the court to declare provisions of the 6th Edition of the Code “vague and overly broad” and in breach of freedom of expression guaranteed by the Nigerian Constitution and international human rights law. They seek an interim injunction restraining NBC from imposing sanctions on stations and presenters based on those provisions, pending determination of the suit. “Unless the reliefs sought are granted, the NBC will continue to use the Code to threaten and sanction broadcast stations and presenters solely for carrying out their constitutional responsibilities,” the plaintiffs argue.

● **Journalistic Opinion Is Protected.** The suit contends that the Constitution and international law protect both the right to hold opinions and to express ideas. “Value judgments are not susceptible of proof and enjoy heightened protection. Journalism necessarily includes analysis and commentary,” the filing reads. It argues that a “blanket prohibition on the expression of ‘personal opinions by anchors and presenters’ amounts to an impermissible restriction” and that Section 1.10.3 of the Code is “prior restraint” that excludes commentary and value judgments — “the core of journalism and democratic discourse.” SERAP and NGE say the Code’s ban on “bullying or intimidation” lacks clear criteria and risks capturing “critical or adversarial questioning, which is an essential feature of investigative journalism.” They also fault the requirement to always provide “fair hearing to opposing views,” calling it “compelled speech and editorial control” that undermines independence, especially in commentary formats.

● **Reliefs Sought.** The plaintiffs want the court to: ● Declare Sections 1.10.3, 3.3.1(b), 3.4.1(b), 5.3.3(b), 3.1.1, 3.11.1(a), 5.4.1(f), 3.11.1(b), and 5.5.1(b) of the Code unconstitutional for vagueness and over breadth. ● Nullify those sections for breaching rights to freedom of expression and opinion under the Constitution, African Charter, and ICCPR. ● Issue a perpetual injunction stopping NBC from enforcing sanctions based on the challenged provisions. Human rights lawyer Femi Falana, SAN, will lead the legal team for SERAP and NGE. The suit warns that ahead of the 2027 general elections, NBC’s notice “undermines Nigerians’ democratic rights to receive diverse information, hear competing political viewpoints, and engage in open debate.” “Rather than

curbing misuse, such measures risk entrenching self-censorship, limiting scrutiny of political actors, and weakening the media’s essential role in ensuring transparent, accountable, and credible elections,” the filing states. No date has been fixed for hearing of the interim application or substantive suit.

Gongola Ethnic Nationalities warn APC Leaders against imposition of Gubernatorial Candidate in Adamawa state.

Leaders of the Gongola Peoples, the umbrella body of all indigenous nationalities from the former Gongola state and beyond has sent a note of warning to APC stakeholders especially the National and State leadership to immediately desist from imposing a candidate in Adamawa State in the forthcoming gubernatorial election in 2027. In a press briefing held at the NUI Press Centre Abuja Council on the 27th of April 2027, the indigenous ethnic Nationalities from former Gongola State stated ‘We wish to state unequivocally our firm and uncompromising position against ongoing sinister attempt by some elements within the All Progressive Congress (APC) to impose a preferred candidate on the people of Adamawa state for the 2027 governorship election. ‘We stand united as ethnic nationalities without hesitation that we will not accept, tolerate or allow any form of imposition on our people as such undemocratic and dictatorial tendencies represent a clear affront to internal party democracy and a dangerous slide towards authoritarianism. According to their spokesman, Engr. Marcus Gindiri the Coalition of Ethnic Nationalities is ready to resist this imposition with every legitimate means available to us. Speaking further the ethnic nationalities reiterate her support for the return of the President and the consolidation of progressive governance at the national level but added that this support does not and will never extend to the imposition of any candidate at the state level in Adamawa. ‘We make this position very clear, we will not accept any candidate imposed on us by a small clique, never again shall the destiny of our people be determined behind closed doors while the collective will of the party members and the broader populace is sidelined’

The group therefore demand a transparent, free, fair and credible process within the APC where all aspirants must be given genuine level playing field so that whoever eventually emerges as the candidate must have been democratically chosen in open primaries and not because a powerful few have imposed him upon us! The Group decried any form of imposition which according to them only breeds resentment, weakens the party and ultimately guarantees defeat at the general election. ‘We demand democracy, not dictation’ The group warns that any attempt to ignore the voices of the indigenous ethnic nationalities and broader party membership in Adamawa state will be met with unified and resolute resistance pointing out that they remain committed to justice, equity, fairness and genuine empowerment of their people.