

## EU supports Nigeria's economic policies with €1.125m, says it's Africa's major political force.

The European Union (EU) is supporting the implementation of Nigeria's National Economic Policies Project with a total sum 1.125 million Euros. Besides, the Union is also offering technical assistance to strengthen the capacity for the policy implementation, including documentation of the EU projects in the country. The Head of Cooperation, EU Delegation to Nigeria and ECOWAS, Ms Cecile Tassin Pelzer, disclosed this at the flag-off the EU funded support for the implementation of the Project (EU SINEP), by the Minister of State Finance, Budget and National Planning, Prince Clem Ikanade Agba in Abuja. Explaining the Union's decision to support the country, the EU Chief said, "Nigeria is a major political and economic force in West Africa and a significant player on the continent with an estimated population of over 200 million, expected to double by 2050.

"Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and over 60% of that population are under the age of 25. Nigeria has a wealth of natural resources, a thriving entrepreneurial culture and creative industries, yet the country is confronted with numerous political, socio-economic, environmental, and security challenges. "It is the objective of the EU-Nigeria partnership to make the most of the country's endowments and contribute to overcoming the obstacles. The EU and Nigeria have a very substantial intertwined, bilateral relationship which encompasses political, security, economic and commercial cooperation."

Speaking while flagging off the project, the Minister of State described EU-SINEP as an important milestone in expanding the frontiers for excellence by the Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning for the delivery of one of its key mandates of National Development Planning. He commended the EU Delegation for facilitating the approval of the Financing Commitment for the Technical Assistance, saying that the Project was conceived as a support measure under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF) National Indicative Programme (NIP) in demonstration of the EU's commitment for the promotion of government's



effectiveness, capacity development and service for sustainable growth and poverty reduction in Nigeria.

"I wish to therefore extend the deep appreciation of the Government and good people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to the EU for the strong support and assistance, which brought this project into fruition. "The EU-Support to Implementation of National Economic Policies Project is not the usual one-off capacity building programme. The Support goes beyond the organisation of traditional training sessions to include: on-the-job mentoring, coaching and backstopping of personnel for delivery of key tasks.

"At a time when the Managers of the economies of various nation-states are reviewing their processes, approaches and modalities to cope with the uncertainties arising from the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Technical Assistance Project is critical to supporting our efforts in instituting enduring economic policy frameworks required to build-back better for resilience. "It is gladdening to note that the overall objective of the 11th European Development Fund Support to Public Outreach, which this Project is a part of, is to strengthen operational structures, address capacity gaps, as well as provide tools for better outcomes in the implementation of key development initiatives piloted by the Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning.

"Besides facilitating the review and preparation of strategic and sectoral plans, the Project is expected to support the elaboration of identified opportunities to accelerate new investments for critical projects as well as evolve frameworks for the resolution of complex inter-agency

problems inhibiting private investments in our economy. "Though the Project has a modest financial outlay and a short implementation period, it is very evident that the outlined activities to be undertaken are sufficient to make a difference as they are designed to catalyse positive action in different aspects of our economy.

"In consideration of the activities earmarked for the implementation of the EU-Support to Implementation of National Economic Policies Project, opportunities abound to apply the lessons to be learnt and results to be achieved towards developing and implementing proven initiatives using national budgetary resources. "In this regards, I am confident that the skills and lessons to be acquired in the Project's Component for documentation of the EU infrastructure project in various communities across the country would be applied in articulating a comprehensive database or digital map of the total infrastructure stock in Nigeria.

"This is desirable for evidence-based decisions in harnessing the full potentials of our investment in infrastructure over the years. Another area of interest in the Project is the planned activities for strengthening the framework for economic and fiscal sustainability both at the national and sub-national levels. "This is germane for the harmonisation and strengthening of our systems for appropriation and commitment of budgetary resources for fiscal stability and inclusive growth. We will continue to engage the citizens towards removing the legacy challenges on our fiscal capacity, the Minister added.

He also commended the Implementing Partner, Messrs IBF International Consulting, SA and the Technical Assistance Team "for steering this project from the Inception phase to this Implementation stage". As part of the flag off, a sensitization workshop was organised for the staff ministry on the National Development Plan 2021 – 2025, with the main objective of producing a pamphlet version which would easily be translated into Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba languages, Pidgin and Braille, for the promotion citizen's participation in governance.

## FG, World Bank to build watersheds in 2,800 communities in FCT, Northern Nigeria

The federal government has assured of its willingness to support the World Bank supported projects to build watersheds in 2,800 communities of the 19 North states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. The Minister of Water Resources, Suleiman Adamu, gave this promise during a high-level discussion with the World Bank and the AGRO-Climatic Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscapes (ACReSAL) Federal Project Management Team in his office in Abuja.

The team were in the office of the Minister to brief him on ACReSAL Project implementation status. ACReSAL is a 6-year World Bank Assisted Project in 19 northern states and FCT, the project will partner with approximately 2,800 communities in the targeted watersheds.

The project was approved by the World Bank Board of Directors in December 2021 and became effective on the 9th of June 2022, with its Project Development Objective (PDO) to increase the adoption of sustainable landscapes management and enhance livelihood in the targeted watersheds in Nigeria, it has three key components mainly Dryland Management, Community Climate

Resilience and Institutional Strengthening and Project Management. Speaking earlier, Dr. Joy Agene, Senior Environment Specialist, World Bank and Task Team Leader 1 ACReSAL briefed the minister that part of the requirement for project implementation take-off is the approval of the workplan by the lead ministries, (Ministries of Environment, Water Resources and Agriculture and Rural Development), and appealed to the minister for his participation in the forthcoming ACReSAL workshop where the workplan from all the participating states would be looked into by steering committee of ACReSAL which the minister is a co-chairman.

She also informed the minister that Federal Ministry of Water Resources will be playing a key role in the project; under the project component A, Ministry of Water Resources would be responsible for the development of 20 strategic watershed plan. Dr. Salisu Dahiru, the National Project Coordinator, ACReSAL, informed the minister that ACReSAL is the first of its kind among other project in Nigeria that is complex and domicile in three ministries to achieve great mile stones

within five months, this he said is as a result of the harmony and cooperation the project has received from the three ministries. He noted that the workshop/clinic will serve as a training ground for especially 10 new states that were not part of NEWMAP and also an avenue to consolidate on the work plan for effective project implementation.

Minister of Water Resources while welcoming the team, noted that World Bank is an institution the federal government of Nigeria partners with and the Ministry of Water Resources is carrying out its mandate, and the actual focus is on Nigeria. The minister said that he understands the importance of having a workshop especially at this effective stage of the project. He expressed his joy that Ministry of Water Resources will be very much involved in the project implementation and assured the team of all the necessary support as well as collaborations with Ministries of Environment and Agriculture and Rural development towards successful implementation of ACReSAL project.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

### Ortom challenges FG to account for \$1bn Security Funds from States

The Benue State Governor, Samuel Ortom has challenged the Federal Government to give account of the one billion dollars' security funds jointly put together by the 36 states of the federation to fight insurgency in the country. Governor Ortom threw the challenge recently while addressing journalists at Benue Peoples House, Makurdi shortly before the commencement of the State Security Council meeting. He wondered what the Federal Government has done with the money that insecurity has continued to escalate in the country. The Governor mandated the State Deputy Governor, Engr. Benson Aboune who represented him at a virtual meeting of the Nigerian Governors Forum, NGF to seek clarifications on the matter.

“What have they done with the one

billion dollars the Governors Forum gave on behalf of the local governments for security? That money is huge. What have they done with the money that terrorists will kidnap citizens without any rescue mission? “It is even more worrisome and unthinkable that terrorists will threaten to kidnap our President. If that happens, that means we have no country again,” Governor Ortom lamented.

According to the Governor, “the primary responsibility of any responsive government is to ensure safety of lives and property,” stressing that the situation whereby innocent Nigerians are left at the mercy of vicious terrorists is unacceptable. “We must not allow this to continue,” Ortom said. He decried the situation where Nigeria as the giant of

Africa has become helpless to tackle its security challenges, saying “it is very painful to see the country where it is today.”

Governor Ortom affirmed that security issues should be the concern of all, emphasizing that it should not be tailored along political lines as protection of lives and property of citizens ought to be prioritized. While commending the sacrifices of security operatives in the state, he also acknowledged the challenges security officers in the State face in the discharge of their duties. The Governor also reiterated his call on Benue people and other Nigerians to rise and offer support and appreciation to the families of security personnel some of whom he noted have paid the supreme prize.