

FG set to retire over 500 directors in federal public service

Following the unveiling of the revised Public Service Rules (PSR), by the Head of the Civil Service Folashade Yemi-Esan, more than 500 Directors across the Ministries, Departments and Agencies are to be forced to proceed on compulsory retirement soon. Recall that at the public service lecture held at the Presidential villa in Abuja in commemoration of the civil service week, the Head of Civil Service the Federation, Folashade Yemi-Esan said the Implementation of the revised Public Service rules had commenced. According to a circular dated July 27 2023, Yemi-Esan, called on Permanent Secretaries, Accountant-General of the Federation, Auditor-General for the Federation, and Heads of Extra-Ministerial Department to ensure compliance with the document. The revised PSR stipulates that a Director (GL 17) or its equivalent as may be prescribed by other MDA's shall compulsorily retire upon the attainment of eight years in that position. "A Director or its equivalent by whatever nomenclature it is described in MDAS shall compulsorily retire upon serving eight years on the post," PSR 020909 states. Similarly, a Permanent Secretary shall hold office for a maximum duration of eight years in two terms of four years each, renewable only subject to satisfactory performance. Sources in the Federal Civil Service have indicated that as much as 500 Directors who have spent eight years on Grade Level 17 could be affected by the policy which will invariably create vacancies within the system and encourage career progression.

Another notable change in the revised PSR is the adoption of virtual meetings and engagements, to encourage the use of technology to facilitate efficient and timely interactions among government officials, stakeholders, and the public. This move is expected to streamline decision-making processes and improve coordination within the public service. The PSR also replaces the Annual Performance Evaluation Report (APER) with a new Performance Management System (PMS), which focuses on measurable output of employees in relation to specified competencies. According to our sources, by shifting the emphasis from mere evaluations to performance-based assessments, the new approach is designed to foster a results-oriented culture within the civil service. Additionally, the revised PSR introduces a framework for recognizing and rewarding outstanding work and meritorious service, aimed at motivating employees by acknowledging their exemplary performance and contributions to the public service.

Subsidy: independent marketers blame dDSS, Police extortion for fuel price increase

The Independent Petroleum Marketers Association of Nigeria has blamed the recent hike in the price of fuel partly on the alleged extortion by the operatives of the Department of State Services and the police and other levies by Federal Government agencies. The National President of the association, Chinedu Okoronkwo, made the allegation at a public hearing convened by the House of Representatives ad hoc

Committee on the recent hike in the pump price of fuel. Okoronkwo added that IPMAN members no longer engage in the direct importation of fuel as they are presently owed about N250 billion by the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited. This is just as he called on the Federal Government to instruct all its agencies to put a stop to arbitrary charges which are built into the price of fuel by marketers.

On how to address the challenges in the oil sector, the President recommended a switch to Compressed Natural Gas even as he added that the only way for Nigeria to make meaningful progress was to remove fuel subsidy to enable the government to save to fund critical infrastructure. "In spite of the excruciating pain of subsidy removal, it is something that can act as a succor in the country if we must live and be happy. "Energy everywhere is critical. It is on the security list of every nation and God has given us the best in gas that can last for over 500 years. "What we require now is to build the market; the demand will be there. We need this House to help us build the market. "Everyone is feeling the pinch, everyone has taken the bullet and palliatives are just for some time. Also, a partner of IPMAN and the Managing Director of Gas Analytics and Structural Index, Brian Amonu, said that Nigeria has more gas than crude oil. Amonu noted that the reason a lot of gas is flared in the country today despite its environmental hazards is that there is no organised market for the product. "This solution lies in the Central Bank of Nigeria; in it lies a N250 billion gas expansion facility.

"The objective of that facility is to support the utilization of natural gas; we have written to CBN since last year way ahead of subsidy removal. We have had meetings convened by the former Finance Minister and the CBN, NNPC, and other stakeholders and we told them the solution to subsidy removal can be implemented in one day. "Nigerians, vehicle owners, and state government should be given access to borrow N200,000 to convert their vehicle or tricycle from that N250 billion.

"That will catalyse investments along the value chain because you need to have a large pull of converted vehicles to justify the investment to deliver that gas to every part of the country. "The solution is here; we have been preaching this since last year. The government does not have to do anything new; there is funding at CBN to support this. "The only way natural gas can be a substitute is by providing loans for vehicle users; every country that transitioned from petrol subsidy to natural gas- India, Egypt, Bangladesh, Iran either gave free kits. Subsidize the kits or give access to loans to make it easy for people to convert vehicles and catalyze investments," he said.

Nigeria, other African countries should prepare for high food prices – USAID

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has warned Nigeria and other African countries to prepare for higher food prices, citing the recent developments that have temporarily halted Ukraine's food exports to African countries as the root cause. USAID's Deputy Administrator for Policy and Programming, Isobel Coleman, said this recently at a virtual press conference.

She said that Russia's decision to withdraw from the Black Sea Grain Initiative had already begun to trigger higher food

prices around the world. She added that the impact of this food price hike would be more felt in developing countries that were import-dependent and had conventionally relied on grain imports from Ukraine.

Coleman said, "One of the world's largest breadbaskets is Ukraine. By doing this, Russia is increasing food prices globally. We've already seen how global food prices came down over time after the Black Sea Grain Initiative came into place. Since Russia has pulled out of the agreement, food prices have again been on the rise." "This affects every country around the world, but it affects, most acutely, large import-dependent developing countries that have to spend much of their precious foreign exchange resources to purchase food to feed their population."

The Black Sea Grain Initiative was conceived to specifically allow for commercial food and fertiliser (including ammonia) exports from three key Ukrainian ports in the Black Sea, which are Odessa, Chornomorsk, The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, led to a complete halt of [maritime grain shipments from Ukraine, previously a major exporter via the Black Sea](#). Additionally, Russia temporarily halted its grain exports, further exacerbating the situation. This resulted in a rise in world food prices and the threat of famine in lower-income countries such as Nigeria, and accusation that Russia was weaponising food supplies.

To address the issue, discussions began in April 2022, hosted by Turkey (which controls the maritime routes from the Black Sea) and supported by the UN. The resulting agreement was signed in Istanbul in July 22, valid for a period of 120 days. With ratification of the initiative, food prices which had increased significantly, began to decrease. However, on July 17, 2023, the deal expired, and Russia refused to renew it on the ground that global sanctions were blocking its agricultural exports. According to Coleman, Russia's withdrawal from the initiative, which in principle, prevented Ukraine from exporting grain to Nigeria and other developing countries, would have dire consequences of food security in these countries. Through the initiative, she said, Ukraine was able to export 33 million metric tonnes of food, 65 per cent of which went to developing countries, while 20 per cent went to the least developed countries. According to a report by United Nations Comtrade, Nigeria imported about \$500m worth of grain from Ukraine in 2021; showing the termination of the Black Sea Grain Initiative inevitably spelt higher food prices. Russia, on its part, had promised to fill the space arising from Ukraine's inability to export its grain, but USAID remained adamant that the Kremlin, which was trying to capitalise on a crisis it had engineered, was not equipped to fill this void, nor should it be allowed to. Speaking further, Coleman said, USAID was already making plans to explore alternative means through which Ukraine could export its grain without the current hindrances surrounding the conventional maritime route (Black Sea). She also noted that in the wake of the last food crisis which rocked global food security, the US government had made substantial investments via its 'Feed The Future' campaign, to make developing countries more resilient to food crises.

She added, "We have invested in more than 40 countries across Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. We have 20 target countries that have high levels of poverty and hunger and a strong potential to drive economic growth and

transform food systems." The Assistant Administrator in the Bureau for Europe and Eurasia, Elizabeth McKee, who also spoke, described the situation as dire, especially considering Russia's announcement that henceforth, any ship heading towards Ukrainian ports would be viewed as military targets. According to her, in the last nine days, 26 port facilities and infrastructure had been hit by the Russians, while five civilian vessels had been targeted, and 180,000 tonnes of precious grain crops destroyed.

Global economic growth to drop to 3.0% in 2023-24-IMF

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) says global growth is projected to fall from 3.5 per cent in 2022 to 3.0 per cent in both 2023 and 2024. This is according to the IMF's latest World Economic Outlook (WEO) Update Report for July 2023: "Near-Term Resilience, Persistent Challenges" released recently. The report said ~~though the forecast for 2023 was modestly higher than predicted in the April 2023 WEO, it remained weak by historical standards.~~ "Compared with projections in the April 2023 WEO, growth has been upgraded by 0.2 percentage points for 2023, with no change for 2024." "The forecast for 2023–24 remains well below the historical (2000–19) annual average of 3.8 per cent. "It is also below the historical average across broad income groups, in overall Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as well as per capita GDP terms." The report said advanced economies continued to drive the decline in growth from 2022 to 2023, with weaker manufacturing, as well as idiosyncratic factors, offsetting stronger services activity. "For advanced economies, the growth slowdown projected for 2023 remained significant, from 2.7 per cent in 2022 to 1.5 per cent in 2023. "About 93 per cent of advanced economies are projected to have lower growth in 2023, and growth in 2024 among this group of economies is projected to remain at 1.4 per cent." While the report said in emerging markets and developing economies, the growth outlook was broadly stable for 2023 and 2024, although with notable shifts across regions. "For emerging market and developing economies, growth is projected to be broadly stable at 4.0 per cent in 2023 and 4.1 per cent in 2024, with modest revisions of 0.1 percentage point for 2023 and –0.1 percentage point for 2024." The report showed growth in Sub-Saharan Africa is projected to decline to 3.5 per cent in 2023 before picking up to 4.1 per cent in 2024. It revealed that economic growth in Nigeria in 2023 and 2024 is projected to gradually decline, in line with April WEO projections, reflecting security issues in the oil sector. The report showed that economic growth in Nigeria is projected at 3.2 per cent in 2023 and decline to 3.0 in 2024. The report said Global headline inflation was expected to fall from 8.7 per cent in 2022 to 6.8 per cent in 2023 and 5.2 per cent in 2024. "Underlying (core) inflation is projected to decline more gradually, and forecasts for inflation in 2024 have been revised upward." It said inflation could remain high and even rise if further shocks occur, including those from an intensification of the war in Ukraine and extreme weather-related events, triggering more restrictive monetary policy. The report said financial

sector turbulence could resume as markets adjust to further policy tightening by central banks. "China's recovery could slow, in part as a result of unresolved real estate problems, with negative cross-border spillovers. "Sovereign debt distress could spread to a wider group of economies." It, however, said on the upside, inflation could fall faster than expected, reducing the need for tight monetary policy, and domestic demand could again prove more resilient. The report said in most economies, the policy priorities remained to achieve sustained disinflation while ensuring financial stability. "Therefore, central banks should remain focused on restoring price stability and strengthening financial supervision and risk monitoring. "Should market strains materialise, countries should provide liquidity promptly while mitigating the possibility of moral hazard. "They should also build fiscal buffers, with the composition of fiscal adjustment ensuring targeted support for the most vulnerable. The report said improvements to the supply side of the economy would facilitate fiscal consolidation and a smoother decline of inflation toward target levels.

JAPA: 1,200 Nigerians died in Sahara Desert, Mediterranean Sea In 2023 – IOM

International Organisation for Migration (IOM) has said at least 1,200 Nigerians have died while trying to migrate through the Sahara Desert and Mediterranean Sea this year. The acting Deputy Comptroller General of the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), Kemi Nandap, disclosed this recently during the 2023 Anti-Smuggling of Migrants Nationwide Sensitization and Enlightenment Campaign at the NIS headquarters in Abuja. The event was held in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the NIS. The team visited Jabi Park, the Federal Government Boys College Apo, and Garki. Nandap, who is in charge of the Directorate of Migration, lamented that many Nigerian youths were losing their lives while trying to seek greener pastures abroad through irregular routes. "We have a big problem in this country and that is the issue of 'Japa syndrome'. We have so many of our youths who are dying in the Sahara, dying in the Mediterranean Sea. They are dying for no cause," she said. Nandap urged Nigerians wishing to 'Japa' to reach out to the migration desk in all the NIS state commands for necessary information.

Declaring the event open, the acting Comptroller General of the NIS, Wuraola Adepoju, urged Nigerians wishing to relocate abroad to take the regular route. She gave this advice while declaring open the 2023 Anti-Smuggling of Migrants Nationwide Sensitization and Enlightenment Campaign at the NIS headquarters in Abuja in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the service. The acting CG said it was pertinent to educate Nigerians about the ills of irregular migration, adding that Nigeria was losing too many youths on the illegal routes. "The government of Nigeria is against smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons and we know that education and sensitisation is an effective way of prevention. "We do not want to continue to lose youths to the dangerous trans-

Sahara route and the treacherous Mediterranean Sea in their attempt to seek greener pastures. "We know that many people want to go abroad seeking greener pastures. It is not bad but these journeys must be safe, must be orderly, and must be regular," she said.

Head of Service indicts IPPIS desk officers for allegedly perpetrating fraud in MDAs

The Head of Service of the Federation (HoSF), Mrs Folashade Esan, has indicted desk officers of Integrated Payroll and Personnel information System (IPPIS) in Ministries Department and Agencies (MDAs) of Government for perpetrating fraud in recruitment exercise. She, however, denied getting 10 per cent job slots from MDAs. Esan said this while appearing before the House of Representatives committee investigating job racketeering in MDAs and mismanagement of IPPIS in Abuja. She said many MDAs violated waivers in job recruitment, adding that she also discovered that some IPPIS staff were perpetrating evil in MDAs. She said once the HoSF discovered such foul play in enrollment, it immediately informed the ICPC. She said aside reporting such officers, the HoSF immediately swung into action by commencing disciplinary action against those officers, adding that several officers had been disciplined for perpetrating such.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that Rep. Wole Oke (PDP-Osun), a member of the committee, had posed a question to the HoSF, asking if it was true that the HoSF got 10 per cent of job recruitment allocation from MDAs. Esan had also Responded that: "I want to categorically state that the HoSF renders service to MDAs and we do not request such a percentage from any MDA." "The first time I heard it, I asked the director in charge that I must not hear such a thing any longer and that if they were doing it before I came, it must not happen again. On the issue of waiver for employment, Esan said the HoSF often go around to monitor such, noting that though the HoSF could not be in every establishment, it ensured proper monitoring. "All we do is to monitor to ensure they have not exceeded waiver. We ensure that IPPIS does not enroll unless they have approval from the Federal Character Commission, HoSF and the Budget office," she said. "Some MDAs are in the habit of employing more than the waiver given, but the HoSF always ensures that it is difficult to enroll them on IPPIS as a mechanism to checkmate such MDAs.

"Many agencies have violated waivers and we have discovered that some IPPIS staff are perpetrating evil in the MDAs. "Once we discovered foul play in the enrolment, we informed ICPC and started disciplinary action against those officers. "We have several officers that we have disciplined for perpetrating fraud in MDAs," she said. She said when the HoSF gave universities a waiver for recruitment, it often discovered that school usually prioritised non-academic above academic staff. She added that the National University Commission

agreed with her that such instance was becoming a big problem.

Reps ask CBN to explain transactions on Excess Crude Account

The House of Representatives has urged the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to reveal without delay, all the interests and principal sums on the investments in the Excess Crude Account (ECA) Petroleum Profits (PTT) and Royalty Account to the Auditor-General for the Federation's Office.

The call was sequel to a unanimous adoption of a motion by Rep. Esosa Iyawe (LP-Edo) at plenary on Thursday. Moving the motion earlier, Iyawe said that the CBN is the banker to the Federal Government's Banker and custodian of investment vehicles, including the PPT and the ECA among others.

He said that the 2015 Annual Report of the Auditor-General for the Federation showed that an interest of One hundred and \$1.82 million dollars was deposited in the ECA as interest on Investments. According to the lawmaker, there were no details as regards the principal sums deposited, the tenor and the interest rate. "The CBN has flagrantly and consistently refused the requests by the Auditor-General for the Federation to disclose the details regarding the management of interests accruing from the PPT/Royalty and Foreign Excess Crude Account;

"Reports which revealed unapproved and indiscriminate withdrawals from the ECA, including current year expenditures, fuel subsidies, debt financing and power projects, all of which are outside the fund's mandate. "Disturbed that the 2016 audit report revealed the disappearance of over \$9.5 million interest accrued from the PPT investment," he said. Iyawe said that obscurity has consistently characterized the management of interests accruing on Federal Government investments, which is in contravention of the accountability principle, and points to misuse of much-needed government funds.

The rep said that the ECA has been riddled with controversy, allegations of corruption, and uncertain performance. According to him, its absence of rules governing deposits, withdrawals and investments led to the Natural Resource Governance Institute ranking Nigeria as the second-most poorly governed fund among 34 resource-rich nations. He said that over the years, the ECA has consistently borne allegations of mismanagement along with a barrage of lawsuits challenging its legality as there is no law backing it.

Iyawe said that experts have raised concerns several times over ECA's balances which seem to change at will without any corresponding evidence of withdrawals or approvals of such withdrawals. He said that the lack of transparency from the CBN has significantly affected the revenue accruable to the Federation Account, as well as undermines the Federal Government's efforts to plug leakages, reduce corruption, and improve revenue for the Federation. The house resolved to set up an Ad-hoc Committee to determine the legality of ECA and investigate the status and management of all the principal

sums deposited, tenor, and interest rate of the PPT/Royalty and ECA from 2015 to date. In his ruling, Deputy Speaker Benjamin Kalu, mandated the committee, when constituted to ensure compliance.

IMF Warns FG on Dollar Rise, Weak Economy

The International Monetary Fund has said a 10 per cent appreciation in the dollar, linked to global financial market forces, decreased economic output in emerging market economies including Nigeria by 1.9 per cent. It noted that this decline persisted for two and a half years. The IMF announced that the US dollar strengthened to a 20-year high in 2022, with major implications for the global economy. According to the IMF, a strong dollar meant that trade and financial channels in emerging market economies like Nigeria were affected. It said, "Their real trade volumes decline more sharply, with imports dropping twice as much as exports. Emerging market economies also tend to suffer disproportionately across other key metrics: worsening credit availability, diminished capital inflows, tighter monetary policy on impact, and bigger stock-market declines." The Washington-based lender noted that US dollar appreciations impacted the current accounts of these countries. It explained that current accounts captured the change in saving-investment balances of countries. It stated, "As a share of Gross Domestic Product, current account balances (saving minus investment) increase in both emerging market economies and smaller advanced economies, because of a depressed investment rate (there is no clear systematic response for saving). However, the effect is larger and more persistent for emerging market economies."

Senate Investigates Development Bank Loan Disbursement of N483 billion

The Senate has revisited an alleged uneven disbursement of intervention loans to the tune of N483bn by the Development Bank of Nigeria shared among the six geopolitical zones in the country. The Senate in a bid to resolve the issue raised by Senator Ali Ndume (APC, Borno South) set up a seven-man Ad-hoc Committee to carry out a holistic investigation into the matter and report back to the Senate in four weeks for further legislative action. Senator David Umahi was named chairman of the committee while other members are senators Babangida Oseni, Ali Ndume, Sani Musa, Tokunbo Abiru, Ipalibo Banigo and Chizoba Chukwu. Again, at the plenary, Ndume (Borno South) moved the motion which was supported by 64 other senators on the need to holistically investigate the disbursement of loans by the Development Bank of Nigeria, NIRSAL, and related banks to Micro, Small and Medium Scale

Enterprises in Nigeria from 2015 to date. Ndume and three others were investigated by an ad-hoc committee in the 9th Senate and a report was submitted by the panel headed by Senator Sani Musa (Niger East). Deliberating on the motion at the plenary on Wednesday, the Senate noted the huge disparity and 'uneven' distribution of half a billion naira to states in the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria and the states in the country in 2021 by the Development Bank of Nigeria. Ndume said, "Aware that the bank's annual integrated statutory report 2021 obtained on 13th July 2022 from the organisation's website showed that the bank disbursed a loan worth N483bn only out of which only 11 per cent went to the 19 states of Northern Nigeria, while 47 per cent went to Lagos State alone. "Also, aware that the 13 per cent of the loan that went to the North totals about N53.13bn, while the 47 per cent that went to Lagos State N227.01bn only." According to the breakdown of the loan presented by Ndume, "the South West got 57 per cent worth N274.740bn; South-South got 17 per cent worth N81.94bn; North-Central got 11 per cent worth N53.02bn; South East got nine per cent worth N43.38bn; North West got five per cent worth N24.1bn; North West and North East got just one per cent worth N4.82bn."

Recall that the Development Bank of Nigeria exists to alleviate financing constraints being faced by Micro, Small, and Medium Scale Enterprises in Nigeria by providing finances, partial credit guarantees, and technical assistance to eligible financial intermediaries on a market-conforming and fully financially sustainable basis. Ndume also noted that the top five sectors considered for the loan were oil and gas (42.0 per cent), manufacturing (16.0 per cent), agriculture, forestry, and fisheries (7.2 per cent), trade and commerce (6.3 per cent), and transportation and storage (3.5 per cent).

Senate begins probe of subsidy payment under Buhari

The Senate has commenced the probe of oil subsidy and under-recovery regime operated by the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari. It specifically frowned at the N9.3 trillion spent on the subsidy regime by Buhari from January 2021 to June 2023. The Senate is also asking for a living wage for workers as a way of cushioning the effects of subsidy removal and as well, seeks for the establishment of three functional refineries for local production and distribution of refined oil with a view to bringing down the pump price from N540 per litre to between N300 to N350 per litre. The resolutions were sequel to a motion sponsored by Chiwuba Ndubueze.

In the motion: "Need to Investigate the controversial Huge Expenditure on Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) under the subsidy/under-recovery regime by the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL)," Ndubueze said the step taken by President Bola Tinubu on subsidy withdrawal in May was commendable but the regime needed to be investigated. He specifically submitted that while within 10 years (2006 – 2015), the Federal

Government through NNPCL claimed N170 billion as under-recovery, it expended N843.121 billion on under-recovery between January 2018 and January 2019. He said: "Very worrisome of the expenses made on subsidy/under-recovery by NNPCL during the period under review, particularly from January 2021 to June 2023 was N9.3 trillion claimed to have been spent.

"The money as shown by available records, shows that in 2021, N1.42 trillion was expended in 2022, N4.3 trillion and in the first six months of 2023, N3.6 trillion, totaling N9.3 trillion." Many of the senators, who contributed to the debate on the motion, frowned at bogus expenses made on the subsidy regime by NNPCL and supported all the prayers sought for, in the motion. The Senate, accordingly, resolved that its standing committees on Petroleum (Downstream), Petroleum (Upstream) and Finance, should when constituted, carry out a holistic investigation on all controversies surrounding subsidy and under-recovery regime.

It also urged the NNPCL, in conjunction with some major international oil companies (IOCs) in Nigeria, to form three different consortiums and build three refineries for stabilization of the oil market and the nation's economy generally. The Senate has also mandated its Committee on Works, when constituted, to investigate the award of contracts for the rehabilitation of Aba-Ossisioma, Port Harcourt, and Umuahia-Ikot-Ekpen roads. It specifically mandated the committee to investigate the level of funds released, utilisation and the level of work done so

Subsidy Palliatives N5bn won't Solve Poverty – NLC declares

The President of the Nigerian Labour Congress, Joe Ajero, has noted that the N5bn palliative package per state as announced by the Federal Government won't amount to N1500 per person when shared among over 133 million Nigerians who are multi-dimensionally poor. Ajero, who made this known in an interview on the Politics Today show on Channels Television, argued that there was no way N185bn would amount to something impactful, when shared among 133 million Nigerians who are multi-dimensionally poor, according to statistics he got from the National Bureau of Statistics. The Labour Union leader maintained that even if the funds were converted to the value of six trailers of rice, it wouldn't amount to a cup of rice per individual when shared. He added that from the time of the first increment of pump price for petroleum to the last one, more Nigerians had gone beyond the borderline and had slid into a very high level of poverty. "Let us assume that it is a palliative and not a loan, you will agree that it is difficult to feel the impact of such an amount at a time like this when the Bureau of Statistics has come up to say that over 133 million Nigerians are multi-dimensionally poor. "You start to wonder about the impact of N185bn to 133 million people by their admittance, who are multi-dimensionally poor. "In fact, from the first increase in pump price of petrol and the last one, a lot of people moved from the borderline to a very high level of poverty. If you calculate and do an arithmetic on that, you will discover that it won't amount to N1500 per person and you ask if that's the impact that we want to achieve," he

said.

SENATOR, NED NWOKO DEMANDS 5 TRILLION DOLLARS, APOLOGY FROM NIGERIA'S COLONIAL MASTERS

A Nigerian policymaker, Senator Ned Munir Nwoko, has demanded \$5 trillion as reparations from Britain, and other colonial masters for slavery, inhuman, degrading treatment, and exploitation of Africans and African resources. Nwoko, representing Delta North senatorial district, Delta State, also demanded an apology to African people by the colonial powers. He said: "I call for reparations of at least \$5 trillion dollars, not as an act of vengeance, but a pathway to healing and restoration. We must establish a comprehensive framework for reparations to assess the damages inflicted by centuries of injustice."

"I call upon former colonial masters and the International Community to acknowledge the grave consequences of these historical injustices on African nations, especially Nigeria, and expressly apologize to the countries and peoples of the continent." "Britain and other colonial powers must eventually address the specific wrongdoings and blatant rape of Africa's peoples and exploitation of their resources." "It is not enough to issue blanket statements as tokens to assuage their conscience (s). It would entail addressing the specific atrocities visited on the diverse peoples of the continent and implementing the regimes of reparations commensurate with the damage done to each African territory and its people.

"It would be imperative for the colonial powers to rethink and adjust the dynamics of their relationship with African territories that still struggle with the aftereffects of their atrocities. "I beseech former colonial masters to invest in education, healthcare, infrastructure, and economic empowerment within African nations, especially those that have endured exploitation. "I also urge the reparation of culturally significant artifacts taken from the African continent during the colonial period. In recent years, there have been a few instances of selective return of stolen artifacts to the Benin Kingdom. However, what justice demands is a wholesome restoration of these items to the peoples and places from which they forcefully and illegally removed them. "I also challenge the terminology that simplifies the rich tapestry of Africa into a simple label 'blacks. Especially when used in a derogatory and abusive manner. If they refer to people from the Asia continent as Asians, Europe-Europeans, America-Americans, then they should refer to people from Africa as Africans, not blacks," he added.

Matawalle, defends Appointment amidst criticism

Bello Matawalle, the Minister of State for Defence, shared his vision for the ministry in the face of criticism surrounding his appointment. Critics had expressed concerns over his selection, citing the security challenges experienced in his former role as governor of Zamfara State. Despite the skepticism, Matawalle conveyed his confidence in his ability to fulfill

his responsibilities, asserting his commitment to enhancing the nation's security. Speaking at a reception held in his honor in Abuja, the former Zamfara State governor addressed the doubts, stating, "I have been hearing some people saying my brother Badaru (Minister of Defence) and I do not have the capacity to serve as ministers of defence. These people do not even understand what security is." Matawalle emphasized that the core of the matter lies in determination, courage, and the opportunity to contribute positively. He highlighted his experience as a governor, sharing, "When I was governor of Zamfara State, we took all necessary measures to secure the state. There was a time when we went 100 days without any security challenges. We also spent 9 months without a single person being harmed." Reflecting on his successful efforts to address security concerns in his former state, he underscored his deep understanding of security matters and his proactive approach in tackling them. He assured the people of Zamfara State that he is committed to not letting them down, expressing confidence that with divine assistance, they will overcome security challenges. Matawalle concluded by challenging those who doubt his capabilities, affirming that the work ahead is guided by a higher force. Despite the criticisms, Matawalle's determination remains unwavering as he steps into his new role in the Ministry of Defence

NIGER COUP: AU ANNOUNCES SUSPENSION, URGES MEMBER STATES TO IMPLEMENT ECOWAS SANCTIONS

The African Union (AU) has joined forces with the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government by announcing its suspension on the Republic of Niger over the military coup in the country. A communique issued by the Union on 22nd August 2023 revealed that the suspension is in line with the relevant AU instruments, especially, the AU Constitutive Act, the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance. It said the suspension is with immediate effect adding that Niger will not participate in any of the AU activities and its organs and institutions until they restore their constitutional order. And urged member states to fully implement the sanctions imposed on the Nigerien military coup that ousted the democratically elected President, Mohammed Bazoum by ECOWAS and endorsed by the PSC. Thus, calling on the Commission, to regularly update the Council on the progress being made in its consultation even as it calls for the rejection of the unconstitutional change of government across international, bilateral, and multilateral partners while shunning the legitimacy of the illegality of Niger's military regime. The AU further commended the ECOWAS and its leadership for their relentless effort to restore constitutional order in Niger.