



Being the Communique Issued at the End of the One-Day Debt Advocacy Meeting on Nigeria Debt Management on 30th November, 2020, at Reiz Continental Hotel, Central Business District Area, Abuja, Nigeria.

Preamble

The Africa Network for Environment and Economic Justice, (ANEEJ) in collaboration with African Forum for Debt and Development, (AFRODAD) convened a one-day debt advocacy meeting as part of advocacy campaign on debt management initiatives. The objectives of the meeting include: To engage debt management stakeholders in Nigeria, on Nigerian debt management concerns; to review current state of indebtedness in Nigeria amidst of COVID-19; to extensively evaluate Nigeria's debt sustainability indicators; to review, discuss and draw lessons from previous debt reports on Nigeria and to share stakeholder perspectives on how to effectively manage Nigeria's debts.

The meeting had in attendance participants representing a wide range of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) across Nigeria. The meeting also had in attendance representatives of international CSOs, the Federal Ministry of Budget and National Planning. After exhaustive deliberations on the issues, the following observations and recommendations were made by participants:

Observations:

Participants at the meeting made the following observations:

1. The weak fiscal responsibility and its impact on transparency and accountability claims of Government in the loan and debts management is of great concerns to the participants.
2. The short fall in revenue of the government has led Nigeria into various massive borrowings that further limits development vide annual debt service.
3. In spite of the current war against corruption, there are still leakages in government spending at all levels.

4. Cost of governance in Nigeria is too heavy and not in consonance with the level of poverty in the country.
5. African governments are still involved in irresponsible borrowing and some creditors are involved in irresponsible lending with a latent motive to continually dominate African nations unknown to irresponsible borrowing African nations and queried the rationale of federal and state governments to obtain loans for purposes that cannot repay such loans.
6. That CSOs should create awareness at the grassroots level to raise citizens understanding and holding their elected representatives accountable when it comes to borrowings.
7. Recognised the Africa Borrowing Charter Principles developed by AFRODAD and need for its popularization among stakeholders in African countries.
8. Weak capacity deficit of state officials and CSOs to effectively and efficiently engage with creditors and governments on issues of loan procurement, debt management and monitoring.
9. The about 25% proposed for debt servicing in the 2021 Federal Government Appropriation Bill before the National Assembly is capable of undermining Nigeria's sovereignty, response to Covid-19 and fight against poverty and underdevelopment.
10. Thank and appreciate the donor community for their support to Nigeria and other developing countries as their response thus far to the covid-19 pandemic.

In the light of the above observations, participants at the debt advocacy meeting made the following **recommendations**:

1. Call for debt relief for Nigeria and other poor countries amid covid-19 as discussed during the G-20 meeting in Saudi-Arabia. Multilateral and bilateral donors should increase their grants, not loans to poor countries in their further response to the covid-19 pandemic.
2. Called on the Federal Government to place an embargo on further collection of new loans and take concrete steps to improve Domestic Resource Mobilization at all levels.
3. Demand for public debt audit for the period 2010 - 2020 with a view to identifying gaps that would help prevent frivolous and reckless spending of procured loans
4. All future loans should be channeled to projects and services that can repay such loans
5. Deepen the war against corruption and increase monitoring of use of all currently procured loans to prevent their looting.
6. That debts sustainability analysis needs to be reviewed constantly to meet the current realities amid the COVID -19 Pandemic.

7. That government should show more commitments to partner with relevant stakeholders especially NGOs on advocacy on debt management to review our borrowing plans to attain Sustainable Development Goals before 2030 deadline.
8. That the government should redirect utilization of the borrowed money to development that will give room for citizens and CSOs to engage with relevant government functionaries to track and carry out third party monitoring of utilization of loans.
9. Civil Society to raise a think tank that will review loans procured across the country and make recommendations to the government
10. Multilateral donors should tighten conditionalities attached to their loans to reduce the 'quick take' syndrome as multilateral loans remain the biggest external current debt burden of Nigeria.
11. Government should embrace and encourage Private Participation in infrastructural development by creating an enabling environment including guaranteeing of loans for large scale projects and divests itself from such ventures going forward.
12. That our future borrowings should concentrate on emergency issues rather than borrowing for social amenities or consumptions and encouraging proper and coordinated small and medium enterprises initiatives that will add more values to the economy.
13. That implementation of Africa Borrowing Charter principles in Nigeria will present an opportunity to pull together initiatives such as the OGP and the National Anti-Corruption Strategy to effectively address corruption and establish greater synergy between state and non-state actors in debt management processes in Nigeria.

Conclusion:

Participants expressed their appreciation to ANEEJ and AFRODAD for convening the meeting. Stakeholders fully demonstrated readiness to further collaborate with all stakeholders on issues of debt management for sustainable development as a tool to fast-track development in Nigeria.

Signed:

1. **Leo Atakpu**, Africa Network for Environment and Economic Justice (ANEEJ)
2. **Lukman Adefolahan**, 21st Century Community Empowerment for Youth & Women Initiatives
3. **Taiwo Akerele**, Policy House International
4. **Tijani Abdulkareem**, Social Economic Research and Development Centre (SERDEC)
5. **Joshua Felix**, Civil Society Org. Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE)
6. **Maryam Garba**, Fahimta Women & Youth

7. **Adeduntan Adewale**, ActionAid Nigeria
8. **Joseph Gimba**, Center for Peace Education and Community Development
9. **Bibian Ama**, Society for Water and Sanitation (NEWSAN)
10. **Emmanuella Nwahisi**, African Centre for Leadership, Strategy & Development (Centre LSD)