

IF NOT  
**NOW**  
WHEN



# NATIONAL ECONOMIC DIALOGUE REPORT

YARADUA CENTRE, ABUJA | MAY 20, 2022 | 10:00AM - 1:00PM

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NATIONAL ECONOMIC DIALOGUE



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20th May, 2022

<b>Theme</b>	Critical Challenges Confronting the Nigerian Economy
<b>Welcome Address</b>	• <b>Mr. Asue Ighodalo</b> – Chairman, NESG
<b>Presentation</b>	• <b>Dr. Olusegun Omisakin</b> – Director of Research & Development, NESG
<b>Plenary Session Discussants</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Prof. Osita Ogbu</b> - Professor of Economics/ Director, Institute for Development Studies, University of Nigeria</li> <li>• <b>Dr. Olisa Agbakoba</b> - Senior Partner, Olisa Agbakoba Legal</li> <li>• <b>Mr. Samson Itodo</b> - Executive Director, Yiaga Africa</li> <li>• <b>Dr. Hussaini Abdu</b> - Country Director, CARE International Nigeria</li> <li>• <b>Mr. Ari Aisen</b> - Resident Representative of IMF in Nigeria</li> <li>• <b>Ms. Tosin Faniro-Dada</b> - Managing Director &amp; CEO, Endeavor Nigeria</li> </ul>
<b>Moderator</b>	• <b>Mrs Nancy Illloh-Nnaji</b> - Journalist/Executive Producer, Anchor, Moneyline with Nancy on AIT
<b>Event Compere</b>	• <b>Mr. Aruoture Oddiri</b> - News Anchor, ARISE News
<b>Closing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What's Next? <b>Mr Chinenye Mba-Uzoukwu</b>, Chairperson, Central Organising Committee (CoC) for 28th Nigerian Economic Summit (NES #28)</li> </ul>

## Welcome Address

In his welcome address, Mr Asue Ighodalo, the Chairman of the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG) set the tone for the conversations that ensued. He noted the purpose of the event which is to discuss the critical challenges in the Nigerian economy and the steps to be taken towards the betterment of the Nigerian State. He further noted that there is no better time for these conversations than now, as the nation is ten (10) months away from the 2023 general elections.

He also pointed out the importance of leadership and the responsibility of the citizenry in ensuring that competent leaders are elected through the organised political party structures. He said, "... once again, Nigerians will have a historic chance to choose a future different from the past." This can be achieved when there is a reflection on the past to chart the future and if the desired economic growth goals are clear.

While he emphasised the importance of leadership, he noted that it is essential that those who aspire to lead the nation in different capacities understand the challenges of the Nigerian State. He also admonished the parties to present viable candidates by verifying their pedigree, and past achievements/contributions to nation building. According to the Chairman, the aspiring candidates should be fit-for-purpose and have: the capacity, a grasp of issues, integrity, courage and love for the country.

In discussing the responsibility of the citizens, he stressed the need for the people to support and ensure accountability at the political party level; they should insist that the politicians reshape their goals towards transformational progress. He also encouraged the people to be more involved, selfless, tolerant and inclined to acting in the national interest.

The following are the six (6) critical challenges, noted to be causing economic dysfunction, that requires the government's utmost attention: macroeconomic instability, infrastructure deficits, human capital deficit and skills gap, national insecurity and weak economic competitiveness.

Mr Ighodalo further emphasised the importance of making right choices towards and during the coming general elections. Right choices would lead the nation into a transformed state within the next decade. The country will break-free from decade-long policies, regulatory and legislative constraints, and the judiciary will be stronger and more stable to uphold the rule of law. The country will indeed move towards structural and institutional reforms. With the right policies in place, there will be poverty reduction, job creation, improved health care system, better education, to mention a few.

In closing his remarks, he assured that NESG will continue to provide a platform for non-partisan engagements and dialogues on matters of national development. The NESG will also make available all reports on the state of the economy to prepare the political parties and populace for the task to make right choices towards good governance. The Chairman's full address can be accessed [here](#).



**Mr. Asue Ighodalo**

*Chairman, Board of Directors, NESG*

**We are at  
significant  
cross-roads.**

**– Mr Asue Ighodalo**

## Presentation on the State of the Economy

The Director of Research at the NESG, Dr Olusegun Omisakin in his presentation provided an evidence-based context on the state of the Nigerian economy. He noted top five critical socio-economic narratives that need to be urgently addressed as follows:



### 1 Weak and Non-inclusive Economy

- Is the economy really growing? The compound annual growth rate is estimated at 1.92 percent between 2012 and 2021, which is below the yearly population growth of 2.6%.
- As of 2021, the strategic sectors, including Agriculture, Manufacturing, Construction, Real Estate, ICT, and Finance, grossly underperformed their vibrant performances in 2012.
- Is the economy actually growing in real terms? After netting out inflation and other costs, the real size of the Nigerian economy has remained relatively the same since 2012 - which implies that the country is experiencing economic stagnation.
- What does economic stagnation mean for an average Nigerian? The real income of an average Nigerian has continued to decline since 2012 – implying that welfare is worsening.

### 2 Highly Volatile Macroeconomic Environment

- The sharp decline in labour productivity growth from 16.9 percent in 2012 to 1.7 percent in 2021 reflects the extent of macroeconomic imbalance/instability in Nigeria.
- Nigerians are currently facing tough times as inflationary pressure remains heightened and labour market conditions deteriorate. The unemployment problem is pervasive irrespective of gender, location and educational qualification.
- Despite improving global oil prices, the economy suffers from worsening external trade position and dwindling foreign investment inflows. This suggests that Nigeria has failed to appropriate the benefits of rising oil prices due to low crude oil production, high production costs, low investment and a fuel subsidy regime.

### 3 Weak Economic Competitiveness

- Since 2017, Nigeria has maintained the 133rd position out of 133 countries on the global complexity index – implying that Nigeria's productivity base is fundamentally archaic and structurally deficient.

## 4

Infrastructure  
and Social  
Sector Collapse

- About 100 million Nigerians do not have access to electricity.
- Nigeria's healthcare system ranked 178th out of 192 countries in 2018, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO).
- About 20% of global out-of-school children are Nigerians.
- Nigeria ranked 161st out of 189 countries in 2019 on the global human development index (HDI), with the country's life expectancy averaging 54 years.

## 5

National  
Insecurity

- In 2021, Nigeria ranked 146th out of 163 countries on the Global Peace Index and was the 8th least peaceful in Africa.
- Nigeria has not fared well with the different dimensions of human security: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security.

Dr Olusegun Omisakin further posed the question on how do we change the current narrative and what could constitute the game changer? As a leading private-sector led think-tank, the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG) proposes the following seven (7) pragmatic policy actions to address the socio-economic challenges in Nigeria:

- **Rethink socio-economic development:** There is a need to reconsider what socio-economic development means for an average Nigerian. The Nigeria of Our Dream is one in which fundamental human rights are guaranteed, and economic opportunities are distributed equitably.
- **Rethink the role of the market and the private sector:** There needs to be a reconsideration of the role of the market and the private sector in Nigeria's socio-economic development. A free-market orientation should guide policy interventions and reforms. This will support growth, deepen social inclusion, ensure appropriate pricing, and unlock private capital for national development.
- **Deepen sectoral reforms:** Critical sectoral reforms are urgently needed to support broad-based economic growth and Nigeria's global competitiveness. Achieving this requires addressing value chain constraints in critical sectors of the economy and prioritising value-addition across products where Nigeria has a high comparative advantage, particularly agricultural products and crude oil.
- **Adopt integrated (national and subnational) approach:** An integrated national and sub-national approach to economic inclusion will aid the realisation of Nigeria's critical

developmental goals. As a result, economic cooperation between subnational governments is encouraged. This will aid intra-regional wealth transfer, as well as the reduction of socio-economic polarisation across the country.

- **Pragmatic social sector reforms:** A functioning and efficient social sector is critical to developing a strong and resilient economy. There is a need for pragmatic social sector reforms, particularly in education and health.
- **Develop workable and inclusive national security strategy:** In a peaceful environment, economic progress leads to robust prosperity. To this end, the NESG advocates for developing a practical and inclusive national security strategy across all dimensions.
- **Institutional, Regulatory and Structural Reforms:** Finally, the NESG believes that deep institutional, regulatory, and structural reforms are the most reliable way to ensure long-term development outcomes. Workable policy and institutional reforms are needed to promote stability in the macroeconomic and policy environment.

In closing, Dr Olusegun Omisakin noted that the nation has a unique opportunity to learn from the economic management and policy choices of the past in order to make better choices, and tough choices, if need be, in the future. Here is the [link](#) to the presentation.

## Plenary Session

### Discussants:

- Professor Osita Ogbu - Professor of Economics/Director, Institute for Development Studies, University of Nigeria
- Dr Olisa Agbakoba - Senior Partner, Olisa Agbakoba Legal
- Mr Samson Itodo - Executive Director, YIAGA Africa
- Dr Hussaini Abdu - Country Director, CARE International Nigeria
- Mr Ari Aisen - Resident Representative of IMF in Nigeria
- Ms Tosin Faniro-Dada- Managing Director & CEO, Endeavor Nigeria

### Moderator:

- Mrs Nancy Illoh-Nhaji - Journalist/Executive Producer, Anchor, Moneyline with Nancy on AIT

### Summary of Session:

Never in the history of Nigeria has over fifty (50) aspirants expressed their intentions to run for the office of the president. The 2023 presidential election will be the most hotly contested election in the political history of Nigeria. However, despite the surge in the number of candidates regardless of political parties, economic issues have not been at the forefront of discussions. The presidential and gubernatorial aspirants do not have enough information about the socio-economic challenges they stand to inherit. This plenary session addressed the critical issues on the state of the Nigerian economy and recommended solutions to the socio-economic challenges in the following areas:

- Weak and non-inclusive economic growth
- Macroeconomic instability
- Infrastructure deficit
- Human capital deficit and skills gap
- National insecurity
- Weak economic competitiveness.



## Perspectives:

The following are **Professor Osita Ogbu's** perspectives on the Important considerations that should be made towards solving the priority issues to ensure macroeconomic stability and inclusive growth:

- Inequality is pervasive and it undermines the trust, solidarity and mutuality upon which responsible citizenship is based. Therefore, emphasis should be placed on inclusive growth and equality.
- People need to elect an honest and effective government. According to Lee Kuan Yew in his book, *From Third World to First: The Singapore Story: 1965-2000*, public order, economic growth and social progress are not natural. They are the outcomes of an honest and effective government that the people must elect.
- Politics is superior to the economy. Fixing politics is a major step to fixing the economy, because major economic decisions are made by politicians. To achieve macroeconomic stability, politics must be fixed.
- Nigeria has no consistency in national planning.



**On how to make the macroeconomic climate more investment and business-friendly, and how to deal with constraints for growth in key sectors, Professor Osita Ogbu noted the following:**

- Without raising productivity, the country cannot grow; without growth, there is no income, and without income, the country cannot reduce poverty. The Ministry of Industry requires attention to be raised to the level of the Ministry of Agriculture. Reduced productivity is a critical problem in the country.
- Food insecurity is a result of low productivity. It is important to have large and mechanised farms built around Institutions of knowledge such as a University of Agriculture.
- NESG should have a presence at the sub-national level. States should be transformed into engines of prosperity and centres for policy innovations.
- No country has successfully made a transition from poverty without a robust manufacturing industry. Therefore, efforts should be made to increase the productivity/contribution of the manufacturing sector from the current 10-12% to about 40%.
- The boards that govern the Special Economic Zones should understand their roles.
- There is a need for a committed leader who understands the urgent need for transformation.

**“Government has absolutely business in business because it is the government that incentivises; it is the government that directs; it is the government that creates the environment.”**  
– Prof. Osita Ogbu



**Dr Hussaini Abdu** shared perspectives on the ASUU/ NASU strike and how to revitalise the health sector and reduce brain drain among doctors. He noted the following:



- The level of investment of the government in health services is extremely poor. 77% of health service delivery in Nigeria comes from out-of-pocket expenditure. Health insurance is not working; it only captures a few public servants, and the poor are not getting those services. Financing the health service through this process is not sustainable, and it does not work anywhere in the world.
- Nigeria is in a huge social development crisis with a major crisis in the education sector.
- The number of universities has increased in the last twenty (20) years. Universities have become more like constituency projects. They are being created without the capacity to support their growth and invest in them. Nigeria is heading towards a 5 months ASUU strike.
- The crisis in the university is a reflection of the larger crisis in the education sector.
- COVID-19 induced closure of schools has negatively impacted the number of out of school children in Nigeria.
- Insecurity in some parts of the country in the Northwest has led to the closure of several schools which in turn, has increased the number of out-of-school children.
- The number of out of school girls is huge and unacceptable and it is peculiar in the Northern part of the country, particularly the Northeast and Northwest where less than 50% of girls attend primary schools. For the Northwest, it is about 47.3% while for the Northeast, it is about 47.7%, the lowest in the country. Countries like Botswana boasts of 88% literacy rates, while Nigeria is around 57% literacy.
- Government invests in the physical side of schools without a corresponding system to sustain or encourage people to go to those schools and also retain them in schools.

**The state must come in to protect the weak and ensure that their livelihood is not threatened**  
– Dr. Hussaini Abdu

**Dr Hussaini Abdu** discussed how to use data to better understand and direct human capital investment and how to select the right leader. The following are his perspectives:

- The country needs to take the issue of demographic transitioning seriously and adequately prepare for the changing demographics. Preparation can be done by having the right data to support the planning process. Any leader that emerges must understand the demographic crisis and respond clearly to the need for

Nigerians to plan. Nigeria cannot continue on the current biological production trajectory of massive population growth without an adequate plan.

- In dealing with demographic transitioning, opportunities must be created. Smallholder farmers, particularly the women, who are actually involved in micro-production and processing, and who are the largest tillers of lands, need to be protected, and given support to grow their businesses.
- Development conversation is not just about mega-production, the protection of the smallholder farmers is also important. Businesses are informal because of the lack of capital. Business formalisation is not done by law nor by decree, it is done by a proper capital injection into the production process. And this is what Nigeria needs to do in the demographic transition. There is no single African country that has been fed by large farms; food security is sustained by smallholder farmers. Although large farms are export farms that need to be strengthened to facilitate foreign exchange, it is important to support the growth of small farms as well.
- The political system in Nigeria should produce a leader that is prepared to produce. Nigeria is a very hyperactive country that needs a very engaging and mobile leader that can communicate.



**Mr Ari Aisen discussed the lessons from Covid-19 and Russia/Ukraine conflict for Nigeria to avoid global supply disruption:**



- The global economy has been hit by this second shock of the Russian/Ukraine war exactly when the global economy was just recovering from the pandemic that puts the global economy in a very difficult situation. Therefore, as regards inflation, Nigeria cannot escape from the predicament of global increasing commodity prices. However, if trades function well, it can extensively help to keep prices low when shocks of global nature happen.
- The country should concentrate on strategic areas of empowerment, especially in the area of food security which is a major concern. Therefore, increasing productivity and domestic production of food should be prioritised in Nigeria. From the shocks, it has been observed that food security is an important objective, and effort must be made to increase productivity.
- The economies that are more diversified in Sub-Saharan Africa, like Rwanda, are well-positioned to mitigate shocks. So, it is important to diversify the economic structure in Nigeria from oil to other domestic sectors where the country has comparative advantage e.g., agriculture, to become more resilient to macroeconomic shocks. The private sector should be the main engine for growth & diversification and job creation in the country.

**You need to have more revenue to be able to service your debt. At the same time, you need more revenue to be able to produce and provide public goods**  
**– Mr. Ari Aisen**

**Mr Ari Aisen** further spoke on Nigeria's public debt situation and what can be done:

- A country cannot continue to borrow without returns in terms of growth and revenues coming back as a form of return on investment.
- Debt to GDP has increased from 29% to 36% with the potential to reach 42%.
- Nigeria needs more revenues to be able to service debt and provide public goods.
- There is a need for a social contract. People should be willing to pay taxes and the government must use the taxes to provide public goods.
- The government must have targeted spending. Government spending should not only benefit a few people e.g., subsidies. Spending should be directed to infrastructural development, etc.
- The government needs to create an enabling environment that positions the private sector as an engine for growth.

**Dr Olisa Agbakoba** gave his insights on the importance of the rule of law and its enforcement to foster a prosperous economy as thus:

- Leadership failure is the singular reason why Nigeria is doing poorly. From 1960 to date, Nigeria has failed in leadership. The Index of Failed States also ranked Nigeria as a nation in a low-grade civil war. Abuja cannot continue to be the only State driving the economy, all States must be involved. Nigeria needs to elect its own Lee Kuan Yew.
- Legal failure is obvious in the country and it needs to be addressed.



Considering the failure in the political systems, **Dr Olisa Agbakoba** shared his perspectives on whether Nigerians are getting the leaders that they deserve:

- Democracy has four oscillations, Authoritarian, Semi-authoritarian, Illiberal, and Liberal.
- Nigeria has moved from semi-authoritarian to illiberal and in such a situation, politicians are controlling the process making votes not to count. It will take a while for the votes to count.

There can't be a dream without a visionary leader. The realistic truth is that for Nigeria, there is no dream.  
- Dr. Olisa Agbakoba

Below are **Dr Olisa Agbakoba's** views on the Nigerian dream:

- There can't be a dream without a visionary leader. The realistic truth is that there is no Nigerian dream.
- Nigeria is technically insolvent, yet there is an abundance of resources that are not well utilised.
- Seaport efficiency: of the six (6) ports in Nigeria, only two (2) are working, however, not efficiently e.g., the Apapa port, if well managed can generate about 7.3 trillion Naira a year which will boost government revenue.



**Mr. Samson Itodo's** responses to the question on "what kind of political process does Nigeria need?" are as follows:

- The current political system and process that Nigeria has cannot produce the leaders that the country desires and deserves in 2023.
- The conception of public leadership needs to be reviewed, revisited and redesigned. The process where people come to public leadership from a standpoint of political or financial investment, or non-service to the people will continue to produce failed leaders.
- The recruitment process within political parties is about the highest bidder. There is a need for a new political mobilisation strategy.
- There is a need to sensitise Nigerians on the importance of electing capable leaders.
- Critical discussions on the state of the economy are not held in places where politicians are having conversations about the 2023 election. It is important to force these discussions and NESG can facilitate this. Reports from such sessions should be simplified for the members of the political parties to understand.
- It is important to ensure that we have informed voters.



**If the political process is highly commercialised and monetised, if the political process is plagued with a deficit of idea competition, if the political system is exclusionary of the vast majority of the people, then there will exist a ruling elite political class that is disconnected from the reality.**  
**– Mr. Samson Itodo**

**Below is Mr Samson Itodo's position on whether the upcoming election is a waste of time:**

- Whatever is done now till the election is not a waste of time because the election is not only for the executive position but also for the legislature. The degree to which agencies within the democratic system are protected is vital to the election process and success.
- If we continue to hold the view that things will not work, and that we are wasting our time, things will never change.
- Recently, there is a surge in citizen's activism i.e. the people are becoming more involved in politics.
- The aspect of democratic life that has recorded tremendous growth is the electoral process. Today, there is an improved register of voters compared to what it was previously.
- The agenda should be to increase the turnout of informed voters that can make informed decisions. It is unacceptable that for presidential elections, only 35% of voters turned out.

- There is a need to support and consolidate the efforts of citizens that want to make the system work.

**Mr Samson Itodo's perspectives on how to hold the delegates accountable:**

- Delegates should think about the future and the consequences of the choice that they make. Candidate selection should be based on competence, character and capacity to hold the office.
- NESG should educate Captains of Industries on the negative consequences of funding candidates (or parties) that do not have the competence to lead.



“ There are citizens in this country who are making contributions and want to make this system work, let's support and consolidate on their efforts

– *Mr. Samson Itodo* ”

**Ms Tosin Faniro-Dada's perspectives on how to ensure that the youths are skilled and well-trained:**

- There is a need to create an enabling environment for businesses to thrive. MSMEs contribute over 50% of Nigeria's GDP and over 80% of employment. Also in 2050, the population will double and 25% of the population will be young people less than 25 years old. MSMEs and Tech companies will provide jobs and the multiplier effects of more scalable companies. MSMEs and Tech companies can help Nigeria in economic transformation, as well as, wealth creation. The sector is actively working to solve challenges in payments, logistics, and commerce, digitising the supply chain for pharmacies, and hospitals, and also digitising the informal sector.
- Reinventing the wheel is a major problem. At the State level, some agencies like the Lagos State Employment Fund and the Edo Jobs are well-positioned. These initiatives are government initiatives and they're collaborating with the private sector and international development agencies to support entrepreneurs and reduce unemployment in the respective States. The new administration should support existing agencies and allow them to scale. These initiatives should be supported and replicated in other States.
- Infrastructure is critical to development. The inconsistency in power generation creates additional costs for entrepreneurs.



**Ms Tosin Faniro-Dada's perspectives on prioritising women for effective policy creation and getting them to participate:**

- There is a need to employ a deliberate financial inclusion strategy to include women. Representation is key. Women need to be in places where conversations are taking place.
- Globally, there is a significant gender disparity in investment, innovation, decision making, and access to finance. However, it is important to put capital in the hands of women so that they can be able to help themselves.





## Issues and Challenges

**A Non-inclusive Economic Growth:** Nigeria is facing many challenges, including being a poverty capital of the world among other challenges like high unemployment and youth unemployment, income inequalities, and high insecurity. This situation is primarily due to the non-inclusiveness of Nigeria's economic growth. There is a strong link between socio-economic outcomes, especially inequality and insecurity. The non-inclusiveness of the country's growth process is a recipe for the current abysmal socio-economic situation, with many citizens losing hope in the social contract between government and people.

**Infidelity to National Planning.** Politicians in Nigeria make major economic decisions. Hence, instability in the political environment spills over to economic management. The annual budgetary allocation is also a political instrument for managing the country's economy. In all, these issues tend to affect macroeconomic stability in Nigeria as people or leaders tend to play politics with development and economic management.

**Poor Social Indicators.** The performance of Nigeria on the human capital index is abysmally alarming. A key manifestation is the current crisis in Nigeria's university education system in the past 20 years. This crisis reflects the larger problem in the country. Other statistics show that 18.5 million out-of-school children have a literacy rate of 57%, among others.

Universities have become more like constituency projects. The number of universities has increased in the last 20 years without adequate capacity to support the growth. As a result, the frequency of strikes has gone up in the country. Nigeria is heading towards five (5) months of ASUU strike.

Insecurity in some parts of the country, especially in the Northwest has led to the closure of several schools and has increased the number of out-of-school children. Also, the negative impact of COVID-19 has led to the closure of schools.

Literacy rates in Nigeria remain low when compared to other African countries like Botswana. The number of out-of-school girls is unacceptable, and it is peculiar in the Northern part of the country. For the Northwest, it is about 47.3% while for the Northeast, it is about 47.7%, the lowest in the country.

## Issues and Challenges

The Government also invests in the physical side of schools without a corresponding system to sustain or encourage the retention of students in schools.

- **Low Investment in Health Services.** People directly pay for 77% of health service delivery in Nigeria. This type of financing is not sustainable for the health sector. Also, health insurance only captures a few people, leaving out the marginalised population.

**Global Economy Downturn.** The global economy faces a compounding wave of shocks, including the Russian-Ukraine war, escalating commodity prices, and rising inflationary pressure. These crises put the global economy, including Nigeria, in a complicated situation, while the protectionism stance of some countries is also worsening the challenges.

**Leadership Failure:** Bad leadership has been Nigeria's biggest problem since 1960. Nigeria's political process is highly commercialised or monetised. Thus, the process is plagued with a deficit of ideas competition. Since politics is superior to the economy as it provides the process or ecosystem that produces the type of leaders to govern the country, Nigeria's lack of strong leadership with the capacity to understand its problems and solve them is her biggest problem. Due to this bad leadership experience, Nigeria is classified as a nation with low-grade civil war on the Failed Nation Index.

The trajectory of democracy has been weakened over the years.

- Nigeria is about seventy years behind the democracy oscillation. The country has moved from semi-authoritarian to illiberal and in such a situation, there exist political people controlling the process and making votes not to count.
- Critical discussions about the state of the economy are not held in places where politicians are having conversations about the 2023 election.
- The recruitment process within political parties is about the highest bidder and the highest spender; it is not about the one who has the best ideas to fix the problems of the country. Political parties are not interested in debates about core issues.
- The current political system and process that Nigeria has cannot produce the leaders that the country desires and deserves in 2023.

**High Debt to GDP:** Debt servicing takes the largest share of Nigeria's government revenue. At present, the government is allocating about 80% to service its current debt. This is a major economic and development problem. The situation has resulted in liquidity problems as the government struggles to provide public goods.



## Recommendations

**Transformational Leadership:** Nigeria needs a strong leader like Lee Kuan Yew. There is a need for a leader that is emotionally attached to the nation's development, who also understands that the nation needs to be built. Nigeria is a hyperactive country and requires a very engaging and mobile leader who can communicate. With an honest and effective government, Nigeria will achieve inclusive growth and development.

**Improved Political Economy:** There is a need to fix the political system in Nigeria. There is a need to have a new set of people in politics, especially those that understand the larger picture. Every Minister or political appointee must have a certain intellectual capacity to resolve challenges. In addition, it is essential to make the government unattractive in terms of personal benefits.

**Economy Diversification:** There is an urgent need to diversify the economy. Like Rwanda, the more diversified economies in Sub-Saharan Africa are well-positioned to mitigate shocks. For Nigeria to be resilient to domestic and external macroeconomic shocks, it is important to diversify the economic structure from oil to other domestic sectors where Nigeria has comparative advantages, such as agriculture. Also, the private sector should be the main engine for growth and diversification and job creation in the country.

- **Nigeria needs to concentrate on strategic areas of economic empowerment, especially food security.** Nigeria needs to prioritise increased agricultural productivity to cushion the effects of current global shocks from the Russia-Ukraine crisis. This process will come with creating large farms that can deploy the technology. Building these large farms can be a conglomeration of existing smallholder farmers in the country. It is important to have large farms built around institutions that can generate research knowledge to increase productivity. For the country to grow and reduce poverty, it is crucial to increase productivity. Emphasis should be placed on smallholder farmers.
- **Increase manufacturing industry share of GDP.** There is a need to increase the contribution of the manufacturing industry from about 10-12% to about 40%, because no country has successfully made the transition of lifting people out of poverty without a robust manufacturing industry.

**Infrastructural Development:** There is a need to improve infrastructure to support economic growth and development. The current infrastructural gap creates additional cost

for entrepreneurs and reduces economic productivity. Hence, the government needs to improve infrastructure stock and quality, especially energy. In addition, there is a need to scale agencies to support small businesses.

**Public Sensitisation:** There is a need to create public awareness on the importance of electing good leaders. It is important to socialise the Nigerian people on how and why it is essential to elect good leaders. People should be mobilised to raise the bar on participation in the political process and not focus on issues around ethnicity and religion. It is important to raise the bar and ensure that those who will vote in 2023 are informed voters who understand the problems.

**Citizens Support:** It is important to support and consolidate the efforts of citizens that want to make the system work. Consolidation helped in putting an end to the military regime and should be leveraged to take Nigeria to the aspired state.

**Women Involvement:** There is a need for women's participation. Women need to be in places where conversations are happening. Globally, there is significant gender disparity in investment, innovation, decision making, access to finance, and private debt and equity. However, there is a need to put capital in the hands of women so that they can help themselves and support other women. Also, the importance of employing a deliberate financial inclusion strategy to include women cannot be overemphasised.



**Progressive Tax System:** There is a need for a progressive taxing system. There is a social contract between the government and the people, which is that people will pay taxes, and the government will guarantee the availability of public goods. In Nigeria, the rich need to pay higher taxes because there is a lack of finance for public goods.

**Ease of Doing Business:** Nigeria needs to create an enabling environment for private sector investment. The government needs to understand that it cannot provide all the funds required to develop the country. Thus, the private sector must be the anchor or engine of economic growth while the government should focus on ensuring law and order.

**Subnational Advocacy:** NESG should focus more on advocacy at Sub-national level. There is a need for the NESG to work more on helping the States or sub-national governments transform into engines of prosperity and centres for policy innovations. In addition, the Group needs to consistently engage and inform the government as well as captains of industries about key policies at this level.

**Human Capital Development.** The government needs to be serious about investing in education. There should be a planned approach to funding education. Also, the education curriculum should be reviewed to conform to the contemporary realities driven by technology. **SMEs Support:** There is a need to scale agencies to support small businesses. The new administration should support government initiatives and functioning agencies that support the growth of entrepreneurs and reduce unemployment. New administration should not reinvent the wheel but improve and support initiatives and functioning agencies, and replicate them in States where they do not exist.

**Demographic Planning:** The country needs to take the issue of demographic transitioning very seriously, and adequately prepare for changing demographics. Nigeria cannot continue on the current biological production trajectory of massive population growth without planning. Leaders must understand the demographic crisis and must respond clearly to the need of Nigerians to plan with the use of accurate data.

**Revenue Increase:** Nigeria needs to have more revenues to be able to service debt and provide public goods.

- It is important for government spending to be targeted. Borrowed funds should be invested such that it translates to more income and growth for the country. Government spending should not only benefit a few people e.g., subsidy; it should be directed to infrastructural development, among others.
- The government needs to create an enabling environment that positions the private sector as an engine for growth.
- The efficiency of the seaports: of the 6 ports in Nigeria, only 2 are working. Despite this, if these two are efficient e.g. the Apapa port alone will generate about 7.3 trillion a year which will boost government revenue





### **Closing Remarks - Mr Chinenye Mba-Uzoukwu, Chairman Central Organising Committee for the 28th Nigerian Economic Summit (NES#28)**

In closing the event, the Chairman of the Central Organising Committee for the 28th Nigerian Economic Summit (NES#28), Mr Chinenye Mba-Uzoukwu gave a charge to the citizens and everyone involved in the political process to take personal responsibility for the rebirth of the nation. He emphasised that the Nigerian Dream is only attainable when we have the will for it and take actions towards attaining it. #If Not Now, When?

The full event video can be viewed [here](#).



**Chinenye Mba-Uzoukwu**  
*Chairman, COC, NES#28*

## Other notable quotes

Without raising productivity, you cannot grow without growth, you can't have income without income, you can reduce poverty.

*- Prof. Osita Ogbu*

Achieving the Nigeria of our dreams is the obligation of our government to us, the people.

We, the people also have a strong responsibility and a role to play in ensuring that this is achieved.

*- Mr. Asue Ighodalo*

Businesses are informal, not because people want them to be informal, but because it is within the context of the resources and the capital available to them.

*- Dr. Hussaini Abdu*

A thriving economy, ultimately assures a stable, safe and relatively peaceful country.

*- Mr. Asue Ighodalo*

Government has absolutely business in business because it is the government that incentivizes, it is the government that directs, it is the government that creates the environment.

*- Prof. Osita Ogbu*

## ABOUT THE NESG

The NESG is an independent, non-partisan, non-sectarian organisation, committed to fostering open and continuous dialogue on Nigeria's economic development. The NESG strives to forge a mutual understanding between leaders of thought so as to explore, discover and support initiatives directed at improving Nigeria's economic policies, institutions, and management.

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## ABOUT #IFNOTNOWWHEN

#IfNotNowWhen is an initiative by the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG) geared at sensitizing key Nigerian stakeholders and citizens on peaceful, informed and accountable democratic participation.

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