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# Rebuilding Nigeria's Economy through Non-Oil Exports: A Strategic Imperative

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# List of Acronyms

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AGOA	African Growth and Opportunity Act
CAC	Corporate Affairs Commission
CFIA	Canada Food and Inspection Agency's
CTBA	Centre for Trade and Business Environment Advocacy
CBN	Central Bank of Nigeria
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EDF	Export Development Fund
EEFP	Export Expansion Facility Programme
EEG	Export Expansion Grant
ESF	Export Stimulation fund
FINTECH	Finance and Technology
FMITI	Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment
FTA	Free Trade Area
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GSTP	Global System of Trade Preferences among Developing Countries
ITC	International Trade Centre
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MD	Managing Director
MDAs	Ministries, Department and Agencies
MSMEs	Micro, Small and Medium Scale Enterprises
NAC	National Action Committee
NAFDAC	National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control
NAQS	Nigerian Agricultural Quarantine Service
NECEA	Non-Oil Export Conference, Exhibition and Awards
NEPC	Nigerian Export Promotion Council
NEPZA	Nigeria Export Processing Zones Authority
NEXIM	Nigerian Export-Import Bank
NIMASA	Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency
NIPC	Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission
NPEN	Network of Practicing Non-oil Exporters of Nigeria
OWIT	Organization of Women in International Trade
PDF	Policy Development Facility
PEBEC	Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
SON	Standards Organisation of Nigeria
US	United States
WTO	World Trade Organization

# 1.0 Event Overview

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The Non-Oil Export Community of Practice became the vehicle through which exporter voices became heard and grew in strength and in numbers. By the end of the PDF II program, the Community of Practice was formalised into a registered Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) called the 'Network of Practicing Non-Oil Exporters of Nigeria (NPEN)' to continue the efforts initiated during the PDF II. NPEN was set up as an umbrella platform for collaboration among the different actors in Nigeria's non-oil export value-chain. NPEN convened its major flagship event, the annual Non-oil Export Conference, Exhibition and Awards (NECEA) which is also a vehicle for actualizing its objectives.

The 2021 NECEA brought together critical stakeholders in the non-oil sector including top officials of government, civil society, private sector, the media and academia to dialogue on how to refocus the country's non-oil sector, for a more effective participation in global trade, especially within the framework of the recently operationalized African Continental Free Trade Agreement. Given also the current state of Nigeria's economy as evident in the downward spiralling of the Naira, there is certainly a need to revitalize the economy primarily through non-oil exports. The NECEA was a good medium to beam the spotlight on the alternative to oil as the mainstay of the economy.

Speakers and Panellists during the Conference include Prince Adetokunbo Kayode, Chairman, Board of Trustees, NPEN, Mr. Olufemi Boyede, CEO Koinonia Ventures, Mr. Suleman A. Audu, Director, Commodities and Export Department, Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment, Mr Ogoegbunam Chukwurah, Export Market Development Lead, National Action Committee (NAC) on AfCFTA, Mr. Leonard Ugbajah, Executive Director, Centre for Trade and Business Environment Advocacy (CTBA), Dr Charles Akhigbe, MD, Edo Inland Dry port, Mr Hope Yongo, Technical Adviser to the MD of NEXIM, Mr Jimmy Adebakin, Managing Director, Free On Board Global Logistics, Mrs Adetokunbo Adewoyin, Principal Consultant of Fortress20 Commodities, Mrs Olanrewaju Nwankwo, Organization of Women in International Trade (OWIT) and Mr Emmanuel Nneji, NICERT Limited.

During the Conference, panellists noted that after six decades of independence, crude oil still contributes about 90 percent to foreign earnings and it is still a major driver of the Nigerian economy. Panellists expressed the view that the survival of the Nigerian economy is dependent on the success of diversification – improving the non-oil sector as well as non-oil exports. The government at all levels must see the effective diversification of the economy as an urgent task which will have huge positive implications on employment, poverty reduction and the overall competitiveness of the Nigerian economy.

The need for Nigeria to have a robust non-oil export strategy was discussed extensively at the Conference. While the Zero-oil plan which was conceived as a response to the recession in 2016 had some laudable goals for non-oil export, implementation of the plan was below par due to little input from exporters in the conception and design of the plan, among other factors. In developing the new export strategy, stakeholders must be consulted and carried along all through the process to ensure ownership and accountability during implementation.

Compliance with relevant standards and certification is a key factor that influences the acceptability of Nigeria's non-oil export and its competitiveness. Exporters were urged to pay more attention to meeting the specification of the buyers/importing countries as this is fundamental to reducing rejects of Nigerian goods in other countries.

Participants highlighted the challenge of lack of synergy among government ministries, departments and agencies involved in exports. In addition, some heads of government agencies serve as a roadblock to exporters. To address this, participants called for MDAs to work together to support non-oil exports and exporters. A cabinet committee supervised by the (Vice) President or the Vice President was proposed to synchronise independent organizational policies and programs.

Federal and state governments were urged to intensify the development of infrastructure such port access roads, border access roads, dry ports, seaports, railway, etc. The provision of quality infrastructure has a direct impact on the competitiveness of non-oil export in Nigeria.

# 2.0 The Event

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## 2.1 Opening

The Conference began at 10:10am with an opening remark from the conference facilitator, Mrs Senami Ohiomokhare. She welcomed participants including the virtual attendees. Mrs Ohiomokhare noted that the purpose of the conference is to advance the dialogue on how to reposition Nigeria's non-oil export for competitiveness in the light of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement.

### 2.1.1 Welcome Address

**Alhaji Ahmad Rabi, President, Network of Practicing Non-oil Exporters of Nigeria (NPEN)**

The Executive Council, on behalf of the Board of Trustees and members of the Network of Practicing Non-oil Exporters of Nigeria (NPEN) is pleased to extend warm greetings and best wishes to everyone.

We are pleased to host the first edition of the NPEN Non-Oil Export Conference, Exhibition and Awards, NPEN-NECEA 2021 with all of you in attendance. As you may be aware, this is a hybrid event with significant participation online via zoom and a controlled number of participants in this hall. We have observed the COVID-19 protocol to ensure that everyone here is socially distanced and wearing a face mask. We want to thank all participants online and physically present for taking out the time to be with us today.

The 2021 event has been appropriately themed: **“Rebuilding Nigeria’s Economy through Non-Oil Exports: A Strategic Imperative”**. This is deemed pertinent at this time in the nation’s economic life where it can be rightly inferred that non-oil exports offers the only plausible solution towards a timely reversal of the fast-dwindling revenues of non-oil exports and a dramatic drain of the nation’s foreign reserves.

This event is planned as an annual event that will attract all stakeholders in the non-oil export sector including Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), leading exporters, banks, shipping lines, insurance companies, chambers of commerce and industry including government agencies involved in non-oil export. As the biggest gathering of stakeholders in the sector, it will offer ample opportunities for participants to network and forge new alliances, marketing and collaboration for new business strategies.

NPEN was borne out of the need to amplify the voices of MSME non-oil exporters in the making and implementation of policies that affect them. There is a critical need to balance the voice and

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interest of the big businesses with the voice and interest of the MSMEs in the formulation and implementation of government policies affecting the private sector. NPEN represents the voice and interest of MSMEs in the export value chain with the view to improving the performance of non-oil exports in Nigeria. The areas of focus would include access to finance, standards and certification, market access, port processes, export logistics, etc. Some of the methods that would be adopted towards realizing our goals include periodic public private dialogues, studies, targeted advocacy, media engagements, presentation of well researched position papers on matters of interest, among others.

This time last year, NPEN was launched at the Eko Hotels, Lagos. We were just a name on paper. But our journey to becoming solidly grounded today has been one that we appreciate very deeply. We want to say a big thank you to the PDF Bridge Programme that has supported NPEN with building a solid governance structure and facilitating valuable collaborations for advocacy and capacity building programmes. As PDF Bridge programme is ending this month (March 2021), we say thank you for leaving a legacy. NPEN is that legacy.

I want to thank NEXIM Bank, our Silver sponsor for the support we have received. You surprised us and made us smile. Keep up the good work that you do at the Bank. NPEN will work with you in positioning exporters to access export financing effectively and efficiently. Thank you once again.

I would like to like to close by encouraging everyone present to sit back and enjoy today's ride with us. Our presenters, moderators and speakers are ready and so are we. For our online audience, please note that you will be given a chance to speak as well. Our technical team will manage that part. Please ensure that your microphone is muted throughout today's proceedings except when you are called to speak, and this will require raising of the hand using the Zoom icon.

I want to congratulate all our Export Excellence awardees; you have been selected because you stand out. Keep up the good work of showcasing Nigeria to the world.

Thank you everyone, I wish you fruitful deliberations and a splendid event.

### 2.1.2 Keynote Address

#### **Rebuilding Nigeria's Economy through Non-Oil Exports: A strategic Imperative by Dr Titilola Akindeinde, Programme Manager PDF Bridge**

Good morning ladies and gentlemen. I welcome you to the first Annual NPEN Non-Oil Exporters Conference, Exhibition and Awards (NPEN-NECEA 2021). You will all agree with me that this conference, and in particular the theme "Rebuilding Nigeria's economy through non-oil exports: A Strategic Imperative" could not be better timed than now as we continue to grapple with the unprecedented health and economic crises brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic exposed the global economy to major disruptions compounding the effects of the global

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oil price shocks. For a largely oil dependent economy like Nigeria's, the crisis has led to a recession, the second within 5 years.

Although diversification has been a long-conceived ambition of successive administrations in the last four decades or more, it is now time to move from aspiration to taking decisive steps towards rebuilding this economy on a more solid foundation beyond oil. Economic diversification is no longer an ideal aspirational state for the Nigerian economy, but rather an imperative for sustainable economic growth. The pandemic, despite the hardship it brought upon the entire world also opened some windows of opportunities for developing countries like Nigeria to reposition themselves in the global non-oil trade space. In addition, the newly created African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) has opened another window of less stringent conditions for trade among the 54 economies that have signed the agreement. The AfCFTA presents expansive regional market covering 55 countries with about 1.2 billion people and cumulative Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of over US\$ 3 trillion.

Overtime, Nigeria has identified various pathways towards diversification as included in various short, medium, and long-term plans of the government including the: Economic Transformation Agenda, Change Agenda, Economic Recovery and Growth Plan and Economic Sustainability Plan. Despite emphasis on non-oil sector and pronouncements of various incentives including the Zero-oil Plan designed by the Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) in 2016, zero reject policy, export expansion grant (EEG) and export stimulation fund (ESF) designed to generate the desired non-oil export driven growth, the impacts have remained relatively low. There are challenges that hinder the realisation of the objectives of these incentives. These include production and trade related infrastructure deficits, business environment concerns, subsisting gaps in interaction between the non-oil export community and policymakers.

According to the World Trade Organization (WTO) (2016), MSMEs account for most non-oil exporting firms and jobs globally. Studies commissioned by the UKAid PDF Programme are consistent in attributing low performance of non-oil export sector to the inability of the MSMEs to participate competitively in the global trade value chain due to stifling challenges in the business environment which require urgent attention. Some of the challenges hindering MSMEs participation in non-oil export identified in the studies include:

- **Dominance of informal operators** in the sector which hinders their ability to upscale and maximize their potential by limiting access to production and export market enabling infrastructure.
- **Complex trade systems and processes.** Although the Nigerian Government has invested significant resources into business environment reforms programmes and projects since 2016, a lot remains to be done to deepen the reforms and reduce the complexity of business processes.
- **Limited inter-agency coherence.** Lack of inter-agency cooperation and collaboration towards the "one government" principle contained in the executive order on business



environment reform. Government agencies still relate to one another as though they are competitors which impact negatively on time and cost of doing business.

- **Information and Capacity gaps.** MSMEs have limited capacity to understand and meet technical regulations, trade standard and compliance, product development, in addition to insufficient access to export market intelligence and digital applications to trade leading to inadequate capacity to compete.
- **Limited Access to Markets and finance.**

The studies proposed some important recommendations, including:

- On informality in the MSME space, operators should be strategically reached and integrated into the formal system to enable them to access business related development incentives to grow their business and the non-oil export sector in general.
- On business environment complexities, trade processes and systems, simplification, harmonization and automation of export processes and business processes in general is required. Trade regulators are encouraged to place trade facilitation above revenue generation to effectively build economic prosperity on non-oil export.
- On Inter-agency coherence, it is important for trade support institutions to collaborate and work with private sector with one focus in mind - process improvement and facilitation rather than excessive regulation. One-stop process points are required to create efficient, effective, and profitable environment for non-oil exports.
- On Capacity, MSMEs in the non-oil export ecosystem should be targets of comprehensive and easily accessible capacity build programmes particularly in the areas of compliance to regulations and standards, requirements for access to finance, and export readiness and access to export market.
- On access to Markets and Finance, structures that enable foreign market linkages are required including systems of aggregation of MSMEs and linking them to structures that facilitate access to foreign market without unnecessary difficulties. Financial systems should give special consideration to the MSMEs by customizing access to finance strategies that suit their peculiarities in Nigeria.

Implementation of these recommendations often requires active collaboration between the public and the private sectors. However, despite the importance and potential of the MSMEs in these interactions, their voices and concerns remain inadequately considered in the design of policy and processes that impact their export businesses.

Having identified this gap, the PDF took the lead in supporting MSMEs' participation in the non-oil export sector by creating institutional linkages between the exporter groups and the policy makers. This led to the creation of a non-oil export community of practice in 2017 to perform the following functions:

- Provide inclusive platform for linkages between non-oil export MSMEs community and the trade regulating institutions through dialogues, roundtables.

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- Provide opportunities for capacity building and bridging of knowledge gaps in the non-oil export sector
- Create system for collaboration to conduct actual export.

To sustain the gains from the Community of Practice, PDF facilitated the registration of the Network of Practicing Non-oil Exporters of Nigerian (NPEN) which was launched on March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020. NPEN became a special purpose vehicle created to unify the voices of underrepresented groups in the non-oil export space. NPEN is now immersed in advocating for favourable policies and business environment that will foster the growth of MSMEs, job creation, contribute economic growth and poverty reduction.

Having observed NPEN and its activities in the last one year, we are comforted by the level of its ambition and engagements with different players in the non-oil export space including the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), the NEPC, Nigerian Agricultural Quarantine Service (NAQS), Trade Associations and the likes. It is our hope that the organization will continue with the enthusiasm with which it has started to be an undeniable pillar in “rebuilding Nigeria’s economy through non-oil export”.

Thank you and have a successful conference, exhibition, and award ceremony.

### 2.1.3 Goodwill Message

**Dr. Nasir Sani-Gwarzo, mni, NPOM, Permanent Secretary, Industry, Trade and Investment, delivered by Mr. S.A. Audu, Director, Commodities and Export Department.**

I am honoured to be here today, to represent my Permanent Secretary, at the 1<sup>st</sup> Conference, Exhibition and Awards of the Network of Practicing Non-Oil Exporters of Nigeria (NPEN), themed “**Rebuilding Nigeria’s Economy through Non-Oil Exports: A Strategic Imperative**”.

Please permit me to use this opportunity to apologize on behalf of the Permanent Secretary who wished to be here today but unavoidably absent due to his commitment to a very important National Assignment. He however sends his highest regards and best wishes to the organizers of this laudable event.

The Theme of this conference is very apt, considering the current challenging times. The Importance of economic diversification, through the development of the non-oil sector cannot be over-emphasized and the Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment is putting a lot of emphasis on export growth, as a catalyst for diversifying Nigeria’s sources of Foreign Earnings and reducing its dependence on oil revenue alone.

We may all agree that the economic shocks caused by COVID-19 and its devastating impact on many MSMEs and livelihoods, could have been avoided if proactive measures were taken.

However, the immediate response by the Federal Government during the toughest of those times, prevented matters from getting worse.

For example, the Honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Otunba Niyi Adebayo, recently inaugurated an 11-man Steering Committee for the implementation of a N50 billion Export Expansion Facility Programme (EEFP), under the National Economic Sustainability Plan, to protect export businesses from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, safeguard jobs and de-risk the economy from such economic shocks.

The primary goal of the intervention is to increase Nigeria's export capacity in the near term and its export volumes in the medium term. The N50 billion Export Expansion Facility programme will focus on driving economic growth through exports and the facility is targeted at providing support to exporters, particularly Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

This intervention is one of many policies and programmes which the Government is using to facilitate the development of the non-oil sector and its players and the monetary stimulus package, as provided in the EEFP. The programme would significantly help in reviving not only MSMEs, but big corporations in the non-oil export sector, which have been negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Without much ado, I wish to reiterate the unwavering support of the Ministry towards the development of the MSME Sector as they are the backbone of any economy. The Ministry will continue to design policies and programs to create an enabling environment for businesses to thrive and produce global standard products, towards receiving premium foreign exchange earnings.

Finally, I wish to congratulate the NPEN for this successful maiden conference, exhibition and awards ceremony.

## 2.2 Panel Session 1: Rescuing the Nigerian economy through AfCFTA and other non-oil export enabling windows

**Moderator:** Dr Olumuyiwa Alaba, Trade Policy Expert, PDF Bridge

**Lead presenter:** Mr Olufemi Boyede, CEO Koinonia Ventures

### **Panellists:**

- Mr. Suleman A. Audu, Director, Commodities and Export Department, Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment
- Francis Anatogu Secretary, National Action Committee (NAC) on AfCFTA represented by Ogoegbunam Chukwurah, Export Market Development Lead
- Mr. Leonard Ugbajah, Executive Director, Centre for Trade and Business Environment Advocacy (CTBA)
- Dr Charles Akhigbe, MD, Edo Inland Dry port
- Mr Hope Yongo, Technical Adviser to the MD of NEXIM

### 2.2.1 Presentation: Rebuilding Nigeria's Economy through Non-oil Exports: A Strategic Imperative

**Mr. Olufemi Boyede, CEO Koinonia Ventures**

The presentation began with an explanation of Nigeria's export history. It highlighted the Nigeria in the early decades of independence, the current challenges and recommendations to improve non-oil exports.

#### **Where were we?**

By independence in 1960, Nigeria was the world's fourth largest producer and exporter of Cocoa. Within the same period, the northern region of Nigeria boasted of producing about 50% of the total groundnut production in West Africa. Eastern Nigeria used to be a world reference in palm oil, but Nigeria has rapidly spiralled to being the fifth largest palm oil producing country with less than 2% of total global market production of 74.08 million MT.

Compared to the 50s and 60s, Nigeria is nowhere near successful when it comes to production and exportation of non-oil products like, cotton, beans, sesame, cashew nuts, cassava, gum arabic, kolanut, maize (corn), melon, millet, palm kernels, palm oil, plantains, rice, rubber, sorghum, soybeans and yams.

In the mid-70s, when Nigeria shifted from agriculture to crude oil, the groundnut pyramids disappeared, the cocoa barns became empty and palm oil production became

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insignificant. The exploration of crude oil began in the 1970s and other sectors of the economy were ignored. Decades later in 2021, crude oil accounts for over 90% of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings.

Nigeria's discovery of crude oil was not the problem. The real problem was the country's sharp disconnect from the economic development preceding the oil boom.

### **Why is Nigeria repositioning?**

Nigeria is repositioning because of the following:

- The importance and urgency of rebuilding Nigeria's non-oil exports.
- The need to recapture the glory of the past - a very possible, though demanding task.
- To tap into a significant share of the current global export market/wealth.
- To become a strong player in the future of global exports – AfCFTA in mind.

### **How huge is the non-oil export market?**

- African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) recorded \$18.4 billion as aggregate export to the United States (US) in 2020. Nigeria only made approximately \$5 million.
- The handicrafts export market is one of the fastest growing, with the potential to grow by \$514.92 billion during 2021-2025. (Currently dominated by Asia).
- AfCFTA will become the largest Free Trade Area (FTA) in the global economy that covers a market of 1.3 billion Africans with a combined GDP valued by the World Bank at \$3.4 trillion, expected to reach \$29 trillion by 2050.
- Global trade in services export reached \$6.16 trillion in 2019, according to the World Bank. This is an all-time opportunity confirming the dynamism of services exports, higher than commodity exports.

### **Nigeria's Current Approach to non-oil export- NEPC's Zero Oil plan**

- The plan was conceived as a response to the recession in 2016 when international crude oil prices crashed.
- It geared towards diversifying the economy.
- It was introduced to boost Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings through non-oil exports.
- The plan identified 22 major products projected to generate up to US\$30 billion in foreign exchange a year.
- It has an estimation of improving Nigeria's foreign reserve by \$150 billion over 10 years but the plan was conceived and designed with little input from exporters.

### **The Challenges**

- Inability to consistently engage stakeholders across the value chain.

- Lop-sided consultation and poor ownership mentality. This sidelines most producers and exporters, therefore, missing out critical inputs emanating from on-the-ground realities being experienced.
- Discontinuation of successful templates by previous administrations. Example: NEXIM's *Sealink* project aimed at exporting Nigerian non-oil products. CBN's ESF.
- Export promotion at the detriment of export development.
- Proliferation of Nigerian agencies regulating export from Nigeria. Example, overlapping duties by different Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) claiming to play different but same roles. Examples NEPZA, Nigeria Customs Service, SON, NAFDAC, NIPC, Shippers Council, NIMASA, Forwarding Agents, Shipping lines, Plant Quarantine Services, Museum & Monuments.
- Inefficient implementation of export incentives and support programs that could increase producers/exporters outputs.

## Recommendations

Some recommendations for key stakeholders are identified below:

### Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment must

- Spearhead the development of a national export strategy, and trade policy. A national export strategy is different from the "framework for a national export strategy" that is currently gazetted.
- Embrace the consultation approach. NEPC's zero oil plan was a brilliant concept that would have been easier to implement and more successful if the relevant players and other stakeholders had been consulted and included in the process.
- Align various parties across Nigeria's non-oil export chain – State Governments, international development partners, transporters, regulators, producers, etc.

### Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN)

- The CBN needs to support the export process and not just develop a thirst for export proceeds.
- The CBN must consult broadly with the aim of designing a solid framework to address Nigeria's dwindling foreign reserves and address exchange rate challenges.
- There is need to simplify the process of accessing export incentives and other support facilities. An example is the N500 billion Export Stimulation Facility (ESF). Can CBN list 10 Nigerian exporting companies that have accessed the ESF?
- Commend NEPC for the recent EEFP. After the N50Bn (out of which N5bn is being used to activate the EDF), what should exporters expect next?

### The NPEN Proposal

- The NEPC, as the national agency with the mandate, needs to properly consult and thereafter launch an all-stakeholder-owned harmonious national export strategy.
- Work to synchronize how independent organizational policies and programs hinder the process of boosting exports. The answer cannot be found in the current National Council on Exports. A cabinet committee supervised by the (Vice) President is required.

NPEN is happy and available to support through a collective process. The beauty of every collective owned concept is that it will be collectively implemented.

### 2.2.2 Panel Discussion

**Moderator: The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement involves 54 out of 55 countries. It covers about 1.2 billion people with a GDP of US\$3.4 trillion. Certainly, there are huge opportunities in Africa as a result of the deal. You have been at the forefront of the AfCFTA and you are aware of these opportunities. What is Nigeria doing to leverage these opportunities? Are there any gaps and if there are, how can they be closed?**

**Mr. Leonard Ugbajah:** It is great to see that NPEN is now an organization. It has been a long journey so far and I am glad to be part of it.

Nigeria is in a situation where it needs to grow non-oil exports to survive. But the big question is whether we are ready to make the desired changes. Recently, it was announced that export cargoes would be barred from Lagos ports for two weeks. This will have huge implications on production line, perishable goods, employment, exports, etc. A lot of work needs to be done in the areas of policy, regulation, and institutional capacity. Nigeria has a huge governance problem, and this influences key decisions and actions. For instance, despite several advocacy efforts, Nigeria still does not have a single window for exports. There are many agencies playing the same roles without proper coordination.

There is also the challenge of archaic legislations that are yet to be reviewed. As an example, we recently reviewed 110 policies and laws affecting trade and small businesses in Nigeria. From the study, it was found that beans, yam and cassava and its derivatives are commodities that should not be exported by law but the government continuously promotes the exportation of these commodities. Also, the Export Incentives Act makes provision for an Export Development Fund (EDF) but this fund has been moribund for several years. Even with the Export Expansion Grant (EEG), Nigeria has been deviating from the law in the way it is being operated. The EEG should be a cash incentive which should go to the manufacturer of exportable products. But the EEG guide has introduced several provisions such as employment capacity, etc, which are not contained in the act. Nigeria needs to amend its export and trade laws to ensure alignment.

**Moderator: What is the Ministry doing in terms of policies that will facilitate access to markets for exporters?**

**Mr. Suleman A. Audu:** Recently, the Director General of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala visited Nigeria and issues relating to trade were discussed. It is important to note that the AfCFTA is about to be operationalized and there are also several pre-existing initiatives such as African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) and Global System of Trade Preferences among Developing Countries (GSTP) that can be leveraged. The Nigerian government will always create access to markets by leveraging on WTO, ECOWAS, and other organisations. The key question is how do we take advantage of the opportunities? The fact is that Nigeria has not been able to take advantage of these opportunities.

On policies, the Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment (FMITI) is currently reviewing Nigeria's trade policy to ensure it is 21<sup>st</sup> century compliant and takes into consideration key areas such as investment, domestic regulations, etc. The ministry will be working with other relevant agencies and will also engage stakeholders including Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON) and National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC). The FMITI also reviews any government policy that has implication on trade.

Services is a huge sector in Nigeria. Despite the potential of Services, the sector is not being regulated by any Ministry.

Specifically, on the AfCFTA, an Impact and Readiness Assessment study was conducted and stakeholders were engaged in the process. The study showed that Nigeria can benefit from the AfCFTA and the President also stated the need for Nigeria to produce what it consumes and consume what it produces.

The Ministry has always been present at stakeholders' engagement sessions. The Ministry is also open to having one-on-one engagements with both government and non-government agencies. Recently, it received members from the Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council (PEBEC) who were performing a review on the activities of the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC).

**Moderator: You are one of the key persons in the implementation secretariat of AfCFTA. What are you doing in terms of engaging stakeholders? Does Nigeria have what it takes in the next 3 months to access markets and benefit from the AfCFTA?**

**Mr Ogoegbunam Chukwurah:** The Committee has been engaging sub-nationals on Nigeria's strategy for the AfCFTA to bring them on board and create partnerships. At the National Action Committee (NAC), work is ongoing in developing the AfCFTA strategy for Nigeria. One of the key success factors identified is building regional value chain. There is an urgent need to grow Nigeria's trade with African countries; ensure Nigeria is a premium investment destination; create



jobs and deepen the value chain. The AfCFTA is a platform that can be leveraged to prepare Nigeria for the post-crude oil economy. The Committee has several workstreams and thematic groups to engage stakeholders including those at the grassroots. The Committee will consolidate findings from all these engagements which will serve as an input into the broader strategy being worked on. The Committee has also mapped products and services in which Nigeria has competitive advantages and where there are clear opportunities.

**Moderator: Most trade activities in Nigeria are informal in nature. Are there efforts to make them formal?**

**Mr Ogoegbunam Chukwurah:** We commissioned a study through PDF Bridge which showed how these informal trade activities can be formalised. The study identified strategies as well as groups that can be used to achieve this objective.

**Moderator: Logistics is a major challenge. Why is Nigeria not taking advantage of the dry port? What are we doing to make traders to access AfCFTA opportunities?**

**Dr Charles Akhigbe:** Nigeria is stuck in its old ways. Despite the potentials of the AfCFTA, Nigeria could fall among the countries that will not benefit from the deal if care is not taken. Sadly, Nigeria does not have the required infrastructure to leverage the opportunities of the AfCFTA. In countries that are committed to improve non-oil exports, rail systems are usually connected to inland dry ports. This means less congestions at seaports.

Nigeria's AfCFTA documents did not capture the opportunities of the Inland dry ports. NPEN, as an organisation needs to examine different means of aggregation of exportable produce at the inland dry ports. Exporters can take their goods to the port and transfer the risks to the inland port operators who will ensure the products get delivered to the importing country in due time. There must be a consensus of using the dry ports in Kano, Kaduna and Benin to grow the wealth of exporters.

Nigeria is placed in the most advantageous position in the world. There are several important trade routes that cut across Nigeria like the Trans-Saharan Trade route but the country is not taking advantage of these. Border access roads in Nigeria are in terrible shapes. The current road system is not working.

Nigeria needs to do more in growing non-oil export. Michigan, a state in the US, exports agricultural goods worth US\$6.5 billion per annum to China, despite their short season. Government agencies in Nigeria need to come together and work in a circle. In Nigeria, every agency that interfaces with businesses serves as a roadblock rather than as an enabler. This must change.

**Moderator:** A couple of years ago, the federal government passed an executive order which says all government agencies must act as one. This is a challenge for MDAs. I would like the representative of NEXIM to speak about the Sealink project and the Export Fund of N500 billion. How much of this fund has been disbursed and what is the percentage of small businesses that have accessed the fund?

**Mr Hope Yongo:** The fund is housed at the Central Bank of Nigeria. The CBN will have details about how much has been disbursed but generally, over 95% of the beneficiaries of NEXIM funding are small businesses. Businesses in agriculture are often the largest recipients. Interventions in the mining sector are suboptimal, likewise the services sector. Efforts are needed to improve intervention in the services sector which accounts for about 52% of the economy. Finance and Technology (FINTECH) subsector in Nigeria has attracted investments worth over US\$500 million. Creative industry is also a subsector with immense potentials. Nigeria needs to attract investments into the sector. In essence, services could be a gamechanger for Nigeria.

On the Sealink project, Nigeria spends about US\$5 billion in freight services because of an underdeveloped maritime sector. Meanwhile, Nigeria is endowed as a coastal nation. In several countries, 60% of petrol and diesel is carried via inland waterways, which is one of the cheapest forms of transportation. The British used this form of transportation in Nigeria.

The purpose of Sealink is to connect Africa. It is not surprising that whoever controls logistics controls trade. Nigeria needs to be deliberate with its policies to make sure it reaps the benefits of the AfCFTA. Policies should be result-oriented. With Sealink, the project will create synergy. There are plans to make the Ikorodu port a regional port. There is also a plan to upgrade the Ajaokuta port.

It is also important to consider navigational safety. By April 2021, a survey will commence and it will identify gaps and provide useful information on the level of work that is required to improve inland waterways and ports. The Burutu port has been identified as a port to be used for aggregation to connect the inland waterways.

### 2.2.3 Audience Participation/Q&A

**Mrs Lanre Nwankwo:** The representative from NEXIM mentioned that Nigeria needs to be deliberate with its policies but whose responsibility is it? Nigeria has been exporting to other African countries, but the major challenge is that these exports are usually not captured. There are many unregistered borders mainly because the main border routes have too many roadblocks. There is need to have plans that cater for businesses that are informal.

**Prince Adetokunbo Kayode:** The issue of policy clarity is very important. The available Export Strategy document from NEPC covered from 2015 to 2018. This means that the document needs to be updated. The document did not make efforts to ensure synergy across board. Funding for exports appears very unclear. There are about 26 roadblocks along the Badagry-Seme route, and

this is a major challenge that must be addressed. Certainly, Nigeria will benefit from the AfCFTA but there is need for more cooperation among stakeholders.

**Alh. Ahmad Rabi:** The federal government needs to issue an order for all MDAs in export to work together and these MDAs should provide a plan on how they will ensure Nigeria benefits from the AfCFTA. It is important to improve competitiveness of Nigerian products by addressing issues of infrastructure (rail, roads) and efficiency at ports.

**Mr Ibukun Akinrinde:** Quality infrastructure and domestication of instruments are important. In addition, creating an export single window and ensuring agencies work together are vital factors for Nigeria to benefit from the AfCFTA. The Sealink project is contracted and implementation of the project has been slow.

### 2.2.4 Closing Comments from Panellists

**Mr Hope Yongo:** On NEXIM, part of the reasons for contracting the project is because agencies of governments are not efficient in executing their task. There is need to back executive orders with Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and sanctions. Agencies must be held responsible for the KPI.

**Mr. Suleman A. Audu:** All the comments will be taken back to the Ministry and relevant concerns will be addressed. Developing non-oil export is a collective responsibility of all stakeholders. When the trade policy was drafted in 2012, stakeholders were engaged in the process. There is need for constant effective feedback and monitoring. The Ministry is doing its best to improve non-oil export. During COVID-19, the Ministry created an emergency operation centre that supported businesses and ensured exports were not halted.

**Mr. Leonard Ugbajah:** There is no clear mechanism for managing consequences. There are several efforts by government ministries and agencies, but the major hurdles are political in nature.

**Mr Ogoegbunam Chukwurah:** Corridor development is an integral part of growing MSMEs. SMEs aggregation reduces time and costs. The corridors are opportunities for investments. This conversation is ongoing.

**Dr Charles Akhigbe:** Trade cannot be efficient if there is no better infrastructure. The Nigerian government must deliberately fix this problem. The recent blocking of export cargo justifies the point that Nigeria's port infrastructure has broken down. Having functional dry port is one of the solutions and Nigeria must take advantage of this.

## 2.3 Panel Session 2: Improving the competitiveness of Nigeria's non-oil export sector in international markets

**Moderator:** Bamidele Ayemibo, Lead Consultant, 3Timpex Limited

### **Panellists:**

- Mr Jimmy Adebakin, Managing Director, Free on Board Global Logistics
- Mrs Adetokunbo Adewoyin, Principal Consultant of Fortress20 Commodities
- Mrs Olanrewaju Nwankwo, Organization of Women in International Trade (OWIT)
- Prince Ajibola Oluyede, NICERT Limited represented by Emmanuel Nneji

### 2.3.1 Presentation

**Prince Adetokunbo Kayode, Chairman, Board of Trustees, NPEN**

#### **Export competitiveness: What are the challenges?**

Some of the problems that prevents Nigeria from achieving export competitiveness or its international trade targets and economic development include: export finance, export marketing, inadequate government policies, incentives and support programs, foreign exchange, physical infrastructure deficit, interest rates, trade regulations, among others. From these litany of complaints, two issues are clear. Nigeria has challenges as to its Export Promotion strategy as well as the *corporate Export Strategy*.

*Export Promotion* is principally policy driven by government via agencies like Nigeria Export Promotion Council (NEPC), NEPZA, etc. While *Export Strategy* is generally individual exporter driven even though it may still be impacted, negatively or positively, by government policy or lack of it.

#### **Export Promotion Strategy**

The challenges about policy deficiency and its impact on the export economy is given and applies equally to both the international as well as to Nigeria's African trade especially within the framework of the AfCFTA. If Nigeria gets the basic policy strategy for exports right, there will be minimal issues about profiting from the opportunities that the AfCFTA brings. Nigeria must get it right.

Export policy or Strategy are usually government measures which are intended to actually or potentially promote and enhance exporting activity by a company, industry or national level in an economy sector or industry which the country considers it has greater potential, comparative or competitive advantage in the world market or the target market.

Export promotion is one of the principal opportunities for government to influence the volume and

types of good and services exported from a country. This is the basis of the comparative advantage theory in international trade. It basically postulates that a country must specialize in the export products that uses its most available or possessed factors of production.

Export policies provide incentives for sales in foreign markets; improve resource allocation according to comparative advantage; ensure greater capacity utilization; generate technology improvement in response to competition abroad and contribute to increased employment. The policy must support and protect industries that have the potential for export. Thus, the structure of the export industry must be in harmony with the country's productive structure.

The International Trade Centre (ITC) has suggested what is called the secret of strategy template for a comprehensive harmonization export sector with the national economic target within the framework of 4 paradigms (a) Production efficiency and export management (b) market growth (c) Trade facilitation (d) developmental impact of exports in synchronicity with national development,

To achieve strong economic growth, we must diversify the economy and export development is envisioned as a key requirement for economic diversification and growth with employment and poverty alleviation through enhanced competitiveness.

It follows therefore that to achieve and enhance export competitiveness, whether within the AfCFTA framework or in international trade in general, we must support, assist, force, cajole government to do the following (i) support existing exports to sustain and enhance competitiveness; (ii) embrace goods and service exports to promote export orientation among national producers, (iii) provide and deliver efficient fiscal incentives leveraged towards enhanced value addition and export expansion and (iv) support potentially competitive companies to become intentionally, successful players. (v) Assist non-competitive firms to translate into new products and competitive models.

To achieve these strategic objectives, we must support government to do the following:

1. Reform or enact trade policies and trade negotiation strategies.
2. Set a plan of action enhancing export performance.

The aim is to highlight the importance of export as a major contributor to national economic growth and development; and the gains to the national economy bear the following indicators (a) Increase foreign exchange earnings; (b) increased employment; (c) improved balance of trade and (d) increase enterprise growth and output.

## NATIONAL POLICY

The main aim of a national policy in export is to identify national focus on export. This is a crosscutting matter in content and context. It involves several ministries and agencies of government. Coordination and collaboration have been extremely difficult. This is part of the

challenges we have had - lack of symmetry. I suggest that this challenge should be dealt with at the level of the National Economic Council. As hinted earlier, there are critical crosscutting issues that will readily militate against the efficacious implementation of the national policy. There will be territorial or turf fights. We therefore suggest that NEC institute or constitute a National Export Development and Promotion Advisory Committee. This will be an advisory body made up of key federal state government officials, and the private sector to facilitate Public-Private Partnership (PPP) in the implementation and coordination of a national export strategy to enhance export trade and international competitiveness. The body will also deal with all cross-cutting issues emanating from the implementation of the National Export Policy.

In the NEPC 2015-2018 Strategy paper five key issues were identified as its mandate. Among these, the core mandate is to PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT DIVERSIFICATION OF NIGERIA EXPORT TRADE. The remaining four mandates are mainly supportive within the matrix. They are important but are not an end in themselves.

In the 2015-2018 Strategic Plan, the NEPC set out to achieve four key social-economic outcomes:

1. Diversification of the national economy
2. Grow export revenue
3. Create jobs
4. Facilitate export-based industrialization

It projected a 30% growth in non-oil export (NOE) up to about \$13billion by 2018 (that was three years ago). To achieve this laudable target, nine strategic objectives were set out. They were:

- (i) Strengthen NEPC;
- (ii) Promote SMEs in export business;
- (iii) Develop priority exports products;
- (iv) Set-up regional trade offices RITOs;
- (v) Establish an Export Training Institute;
- (vi) Develop Funding Sources;
- (vii) Develop Export Trade Data Bank;
- (viii) Leverage Global trade partnerships and
- (ix) Align Export Incentives.

On the third item, the NEPC identified 13 focus products or priority sectors. They are under agriculture: with commodities such as Palm oil, Cocoa, Cashew, Sugar, Rice. Under Industry there are cement, Auto part, Cars, Aluminium, Petroleum Products, Fertilizer, Urea, Petrochemicals and Methanol. Nigeria is still a net importer of many of these commodities.

## FOCUS –PRIORITY SECTORS

Determining the focus export products is as important as the products themselves. So, there must be a rational basis for choosing or determining the prioritized sectors. I suggest principally 3 key areas with the specific products identified and specifically developed for exports.

### **Agriculture: fresh products**

Government must support production and processing of agriculture products for export and actively discourage export of raw agricultural products. Nigeria needs to start exporting processed cocoa, cashews, ginger, sesame seed, hibiscus (zobo), palm oil.

### **Industry: Cement**

Nigeria also needs to identify export opportunities in the services sectors. Two sectors are important: **Technology** - Data storage, data services, fintech, applications and **Creative industries** - Music: Production and Performance; Entertainment, Nollywood production and value chain, Event managements, MICE, Trade Expo and Arts and Craft including Carnival Art.

There must be a clear strategy to delineate critical measures for increasing the national share of the global market by national artistes and entertainers.

#### Key Areas

- Development of proper marketing channels and mechanism for market penetration and social media.
- Entrepreneurial programs and incentives geared towards transforming economic practices that are essentially of cultural origin to viable commercial ventures or enterprises.
- Education and skills development to enhance the quality of output
- Improved linkages with tourism and other export sectors to enhance accelerated growth.

### **Information Technology**

It is very crucial to highlight the criticality of the technology sector as it is today. Nigeria is already making waves. So, we must also identify and stimulate this as a viable and dynamic sector for commercial service. Deeper entrepreneurial interest is advocated in terms of human resources development in digital skills and streamlining of financing arrangement to increase the level of funding and investment to the sector.

There also must be a clear policy to address the high cost of telecoms infrastructure and services as well as measures to safeguard intellectual property rights as additional incentives to prospective investors.

It is our suggestion that NEPC work with NPEN and other relevant stakeholders to:

- Facilitate the development of sector specific strategy for each of these products and sectors. This will be within the larger framework of National Export policy.
- Set out an implementation or developmental plan for each product and sector along with the milestones and timelines for that product and
- Recognize and support one business association or group to jointly drive the sector or

enhance focus and service delivery

## EXPORT CROSS-SECTORAL ISSUES

There are six critical cross-cutting sectors vital for the efficient Implementation of a competitive and growth driven export regime. They are:

1. Capacity Building (including Human resources and technology, marketing etc)
2. Trade Information
3. Packaging
4. Quality control and Standards
5. Export Trade Finance
6. Transport and Logistics

These are the sectors that service an efficient export industry and it is very important that a good export policy identify and cover these areas.

Before conclusion, there are three important points to consider. One is the current regime for implementation of export incentives is too grey. It is not functional, efficient, or effective. A new export policy must tackle this and put in place a clear and transparent structure for an effectual export support programme. Exporters must be able to access incentives provided or promised by government, for export development, promotion, or expansion. The procedures for accessing these interventions must be open, clear, and straightforward.

The second point is that the government must put in place a policy that enables export receipts to be repatriated and accessed by both the CBN and the exporters with minimum acrimony. Thirdly, another critical issue in this discussion for overall export competitiveness is the need for the country to develop an export value. What is the purpose of export earnings? Is it to export luxury goods, or to import critical luxury materials, machines, and equipment to develop local industries, to create jobs, to reduce import dependence? Government policy on this must be clear.

## CONCLUSION

On the issue export promotion for export competitiveness, a clear policy is needed. The policy must also have an implementation plan with milestones and timelines. Implementation is always a challenge but from my personal experience in government, it is possible to implement a policy which is benchmarked to time. Lack of funding always has a negative impact for policy implementation, but it is not the sine qua non where a clear implementation plan exists with timelines.

NPEN and other stakeholders are tasked to support the government in crafting an export policy. Such policy is needed to diversify the economy. Nigeria must diversify or perish!

**EXPORT STRATEGY:** The second key issue that will impact on Nigeria's export competitiveness is a poor export strategy by exporters. This is a major challenge. There could be several reasons



for this but since we have suggested that the focus should be on three key areas, it is expected that the challenges peculiar to the three areas could be dealt with and resolved to the benefit of our exporters.

**AGRICULTURE:** Key focus areas include processing, storage, packaging, logistic transport, warehousing. Exporters must also meet the standards required by the buyer or importer in terms of quality, origins of seeds, chemicals used for planting, traceability, packaging, transportation, halal compliance etc.

**MINERALS:** Mining for export, beneficiation, value addition, storage packaging, warehousing and transport logistics are key areas.

**DOCUMENTATION:** Compliance with basic export documentation

**MARKETING RESEARCH & STRATEGY:** Exporters must be clear about the reasons for export. There must be a clear export action plan. Exporters must also research overseas target markets, study legal and tax issues and above all, engage an expert.

### 2.3.2 Panel Discussion

**Moderator: What are the challenges facing the competitiveness of non-oil exports in Nigeria?**

**Adetokunbo Adewoyin:** There are two basic challenges. They include:

1. **Mindset:** An exporter is literally a Nigerian ambassador. Exporters should have this at the back of their minds when exporting to other countries. The reason being that export business should not only be to make profits but also to properly represent Nigeria in the international market.
2. **Internal challenges:** Even if all the internal challenges are resolved in Nigeria, are Nigerians export ready? Compliance with buyer's specification is important. As an export farmer, it is important to know the specification of the international market and produce to meet these specifications.

**Jimmy Adebakin:** Because 80% of export is about logistics, Nigeria needs to have its national carrier and vessel lines. Nigeria cannot continue to be at the mercy of foreign lines.

Nigerian exporters must be willing to comply with relevant procedures and specifications in the importing countries. This will reduce the number of products being rejected.

Domestic aggregation of export produce is needed to reduce cost and drive efficiency.

Nigerian embassies must have commercial attaches that search for new markets and opportunities for Nigerian exporters.

There is need for deliberate policies to support the non-oil industry and non-oil exports. MSMEs engaged in exports must be supported.

**Emmanuel Nneji:** One key challenge facing the competitiveness of Nigerian non-oil export is the lack of market intelligence. Many SMEs in Nigeria do not understand the products specifications in the importing country. This is also linked to the lack of awareness of standards and certifications. In addition, informal export is huge in Nigeria.

**Olanrewaju Nwankwo:** Several challenges include the following:

1. Policy makers do not interface with export practitioners.
2. Lack of information: Citizens are not engaged. There is need for consistent dialogue.
3. The support for exports in Nigeria should be driven by a clear understanding of Nigeria's comparative strengths.

**Moderator: What are the specific solutions to address the challenges?**

**Olanrewaju Nwankwo:** Infrastructure development is critical for exports. Secondly, Nigeria's foreign exchange policies need to be favourable to exporters. There needs to be a reward system for exporters that repatriate their funds into Nigeria.

**Adetokunbo Kayode:** There is need for clarity of policies and rules regarding export earnings.

**Moderator:** To the previous Central Bank Governor, the rules of 'Unfettered access to export proceeds' were very clear. Exporters were given unfettered access to their proceeds. The current CBN governor has redefined this unfettered access. Many exporters do not have easy access to these proceeds. This is part of why the inflow of foreign currency into Nigeria is low.

**Emmanuel Nneji:** Many SMEs cannot afford the fees of certification services. NICERT is currently considering different ways to subsidize certification cost. NICERT is also in touch with foreign organisations to cover a part of the cost of certification of Nigerian produce. Before now, experts are brought from other countries to conduct relevant trainings and inspections. Now, there are Nigerian experts that have been trained. This has reduced costs. Nigeria needs a nationwide sensitization on standards and certifications.

NICERT is currently working on a rural group certification programme that aggregates smallholder farmers to reduce cost. There is need for a Nigeria Good Agricultural Practices (Nigeria GAP) to ensure compliance with relevant standards. Nigeria needs to have a national database of plant protection products to ensure inputs of farmers are in line with relevant international standards.

**Jimmy Adebakin:** FOB Global Logistics plans to take responsibility of Cost, Insurance, and Freight (CIF) away from exporters. This will require the use of warehouses to aggregate farm produce, conducting inspection and ensuring proper certification of exportable products. Having such exportable goods in large volumes will reduce cost of transportation.

**Adetokunbo Adewoyin:** Every player in the export value chain - insurance, legal, certifications, processing, logistics, ports, etc., has an important role to play and their role has an enormous impact on the quality of the export produce. Players across the value chain must understand this important role and work to improve their services.

### 2.3.3 Audience Participation/Q&A

**Mr. Leonard Ugbajah:** By law, export proceeds can only be used for export purpose.

**Ibukun Akinrinde:** It is important to adopt virtual approach for sensitization. Public-Private Partnerships models need to be considered in improving logistics.

**Participant:** Chambers of Commerce in Nigeria needs to provide assistance to exporters.

**Participant:** Export should not be viewed as an opportunity to make money. Exporters need to focus on value addition and quality delivery of service. The Nigerian government must improve the competitiveness of exports and work with Nigerians in the diaspora. Government agencies must improve their level of efficiency and provide response to queries from regulatory or trade agencies from the importing country as at when due.

**Mr Femi Boyede:** Government regulatory agencies in Nigeria need to step up and intervene, especially in countries where Nigerian exporters face discrimination. As an example, Nigerian yam is not on Canada Food and Inspection Agency's (CFIA) list of products allowed into the country. NAFDAC or the relevant government agency can write to the Canada Food and Inspection Agency (CFIA) to allow the exportation of Nigerian yam into the country, especially given that it is a staple food for the Nigerian community living in Canada.

Export needs to be under the command of the Vice President who oversees the economy. Heads of government agencies that interface with businesses often serve as an authority and thereby limit the growth of businesses in the country.

## 3.0 NPEN Export Excellence Awards 2021 Awardees

The following organisations were award for their contribution towards advancing exports in Nigeria. They are:

Company	Award	Award Category
SACFruits	Excellence in Branding and Packaging of dried fruits	Processed foods
FoodPro	Excellence in Branding and Packaging of Cashew nuts	
Tiger Foods	Excellence in the Production of Quality Spices & Food Ingredients	
Femi Handbags	Excellence in Creative Handbags Design and Manufacturing	Fashion & Lifestyle
Eclectic Chique	Excellence in Creative African Inspired Fashion Accessories	
Outsource Global	For Outstanding contribution to the Services Exports Sector	Services Export
NICERT Ltd.	Excellence in Facilitating Access to Global Certification in Nigeria	Market Access Facilitation
Lakinberg LLC	Excellence in Facilitating Access to International Markets	
Starlink Global and Ideal Ltd	Outstanding Contribution to the Agricultural Exports Sector	Large Scale Agricultural Export
Beta Glass Nigeria Plc	For Remarkable Contribution to Nigeria's Export Earnings through Glass Products Manufacturing and Export	Large Scale Manufacturing Export

## 4.0 Closing Remarks

### **Mrs Blessing Irabor, 1st Vice President, NPEN**

Mrs Irabor thanked PDF bridge for putting the conference together. She thanked all business support organisations, online members, the media and NPEN stakeholders for their participation and support. She specifically appreciated the efforts of Mrs Titi Ojo, the Ag. Executive Secretary and the NPEN board of trustees.

The conference ended at 16:16.

# 5.0 Feedback on event

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During the AAR it was unanimously agreed that the event met its objectives of:

- To provide a platform that will bring together policy makers and sector players to parley, rub minds and chart a way forward for the sector as it deliberates on the measures that need to be put in place to rebuild the non-oil sector as the mainstay of the economy.
- To project NPEN as the undisputed voice of the Nigerian exporter through its advocacy of favourable and competitive business environment for the development of non-oil trade and to create publicity for the network.
- To recognise the contributions of individuals and organisations that have contributed to the development of the non-oil sector while encouraging them to do more as well as others.
- To showcase some export-ready products as a form of support to MSMEs.
- To deliver an excellent and well facilitated event with maximum participation from both the on-line and on-site audience.

## Good points

- Knowledgeable panellists from different backgrounds aided the quality of discussions.
- Good representation from both private sector and public sectors ensured balance in the conference.
- The ambience in the room was excellent. It enhanced the general experience of the on-site participants and also boosted the video quality for the on-line audience.
- Excellent facilitation which ensured smooth progression of the event throughout the various segments from the conference to the exhibitions and awards sessions.
- Although some key government institutions such as CBN and NEPC did not show up, the presence of NEXIM and FMITI filled the vacuum.
- The NPEN documentary which told its story from inception to date was well crafted. It added a lot of value to the event and created the much-needed publicity for the network.

## Concerns

- The allotted time was overshoot significantly. This was partly due to the award segment which took longer than usual as the length of the citation videos played for each awardee was lengthier than expected
- The social media influencers were not tweeting at NPEN's twitter handle (@npen\_ng) though they used the #NECEA 2021 for every tweet. This was a communication gap. TRD should have briefed the media consultant to brief the influencers in turn.
- At the early part of the conference, the signal from the zoom was not in sync with the on-site proceedings. This was quickly corrected by the media team.

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## Opportunities

- NPEN Executive Council to work on engaging the key government institutions which play a vital role in creating an enabling environment for non-oil export development

# Annex 2: Event Communique

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1. The Nigerian economy is still feeling the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, which exposed the vulnerability of the economy to external shocks owing to the reliance on crude oil for export earnings and revenue. The Conference noted that continuous dependence on crude oil will limit the inflow of investment into key sectors of the economy, widen income inequality and increase unemployment and poverty. Participants called for the strengthening of diversification efforts by both the federal and state governments and intense development of the non-oil sector. This is crucial to the survival of Nigeria as a nation.
2. In the light of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement and its potential impact on the Nigerian economy, the Conference noted that Nigeria can only benefit from the trade agreement if it puts its house in order and address the numerous internal challenges including regulatory high-handedness. The Federal Government needs to issue an executive order for Ministries, Departments and Agencies that are involved in exports to work together to support the growth of non-oil exports in Nigeria. Executive orders must also be accompanied with Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and sanctions for non-compliance. In addition, given its importance to the economy, exports development should be under the direct supervision of the Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.
3. To ensure Nigerian products are competitive in the international market, the Conference is of the view that the Nigerian government needs to develop a national non-oil export strategy which should provide clear direction for non-oil exports in the medium term. The process of developing this strategy must be all-inclusive of relevant stakeholders and consultations must cut across Nigeria and across various stakeholder groups. Not only will this strategy provide a clear path for non-oil exports in the medium term, it will also ensure accountability of stakeholders in performing their roles towards the advancement of non-oil exports in Nigeria. The process should be spearheaded by the Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC), working with relevant stakeholders in the private sector and business member organisations.
4. The Conference noted that infrastructure development plays a major role in improving the competitiveness of non-oil exports. The Federal Government of Nigeria must, therefore, intensify efforts to improve the conditions of port access roads; roads along all the land borders; seaports infrastructure and inland dry ports. The government should adopt Public-Private Partnership model in developing these infrastructures. The Conference urged exporters to patronise the inland dry ports in Benin, Kaduna and Kano to ease export transactions and reduce congestion at seaports.



5. The Conference urged exporters to ensure compliance with the relevant specifications of foreign buyers and/or importing countries. Producers and exporters in Nigeria must constantly update their knowledge and intelligence on product specifications in their target markets and produce to meet these specifications. Nigeria also needs to develop a Nigeria Good Agricultural Practices (Nigeria GAP) to ensure compliance with relevant standards. This, among other measures, will reduce rejection of Nigerian products in foreign countries and enhance their competitiveness.
6. The Conference highlighted the need for consistent government support in identifying opportunities for Nigerian exporters and intervening when there is need to. Nigerian embassies must have commercial attaches that will assist Nigerian exporters in penetrating foreign markets and engage in remediation.
7. The Conference observed that Nigeria's export is largely under-reported due to the huge informal export. In view of the AfCFTA, government agencies involved in trade regulation need to work together to incentivise the formalisation of these informal businesses to ensure they are captured, properly catered for and ensure they meet relevant standards and procedures.
8. Participants at the Conference applauded the recent N50 billion Export Expansion Facility Programme (EEFP), which aims to protect export businesses from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, safeguard jobs and de-risk the economy from such economic shocks. Participants, however, stated that it is important to simplify the process of accessing the facility and other export incentive programmes. The government must also ensure transparency and accountability in the disbursement of such facilities which are crucial in improving non-oil exports across the country.
9. The Conference strongly noted that Nigeria's foreign exchange policies must be in favour of non-oil exporters if the country will make progress in attaining its developmental goals. Exporters need to have unfettered access to their export proceeds as this will improve the country's foreign exchange earnings and balance of trade.

## Annex 3: Platform Analysis

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According to the statistics provided, 1,359 persons attended the event live. 54 persons attended on-site while 146 persons joined via zoom. In addition to this, 1159 persons joined on social media platforms, 5- YouTube and 1154- Facebook.

Post event views obtained barely one week after the event showed that 150,057 persons have viewed the event comprising of 154 on YouTube and 149,903 on Facebook.