

MINUTES OF THE TOWN HALL MEETING WITH STAKEHOLDERS HELD ON 2019 BUDGET.

VENUE - GLASS HOUSE GOVERNMENT HOUSE, LOKOJA, KOGI STATE

DATE - 30TH OCT., 2018

TIME- 10.00AM

The meeting started at about 11.30am with the National Anthem and followed closely by the opening prayers offered by Pastor Aiyesimi John from the Ministry of Water Resources, Lokoja which

Opening Remark

The Honorable Commissioner of Budget and Planning, Hon. P.Z. Maiwada gave the opening remark; where he thanked the participants for honoring the invitation. He emphasized that the need for the meeting was to ensure that we work together to fast track participatory budgeting process.

The Commissioner concluded his remarks by saying that if the stakeholders were on the same page in terms of articulating our development needs, the state budget will surely address the yearnings and aspirations of the citizens.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

The keynote address was delivered by His Excellency Alh. Yahaya Bello, who was represented by the Hon. Commissioner of Finance and Economic Development, Hon. Asiwaju Idris Ashiru. He expressed appreciation to the stakeholders for complementing the development efforts of the State Government that have positively uplifted the quality of life of the people. He acknowledged the existing challenges, saying they were not unexpected in a reforming system.

The Governor briefly reflected on the factors that ushered the country into recession in 2016. According to him, oil had remained the mainstay of the economy contributing over 80% of the national revenue but unfortunately, in 2016, the price on the international market crashed, leading to a significant fall in oil revenue from N4,075 Billion in 2014 to N1,438.76 Billion in 2016. Based on this ugly development, the Federal Government in consultation with states swiftly responded with

Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP), the outcome of which he said led to a favorable growth in the non-oil sector and grew the GDP but not significant enough to ensure an inclusive growth. For the nation to experience inclusive growth, according to the ERGP projection, GDP would have to grow by 7% in order to counter the effect of the growth in population which was growing at about 3% per annum.

The Governor opined that based on the above background details, the State had no option but to look inwards to strategize and reposition itself for inclusive growth, economic diversification and prosperity, saying there was no better time to act than now. He expressed regret for the inability to hold the stakeholders meeting before now, promising improvement next year. According to him, this meeting was the beginning of much better engagements to come in the period ahead.

He told the meeting that the bulk of the state economy was in the LGAs which, he said underpinned the need for this engagement in order to fix the state development challenges.

He declared that the essence of the meeting was to request for three priority infrastructure needs in each of the 21 Local Government Area as well as the contributions of other stakeholders for inclusion in to the State Development Plan and by extension the State Annual Budget.

The Governor drew the attention of the stakeholders to the fact that the State website was scanty compared to the existing economic possibilities of the State. Kogi State, he said, was blessed with rich human and material resources for which it had global competitive advantage. He emphasized the need for us to sell the state to the world by populating the state website with available opportunities in the Local Government Areas. He maintained that investors around the world required information on the available opportunities in the state, charging the stakeholders to come up with robust documentary that captures the areas of competitive advantage in their areas for upload on the state website.

In conclusion, he informed the gathering that a lot of inspiring engagements were taking place between the State Economic Management Team and potential investors, saying by the time this engagement started to yield fruits, the state would witness significant progress.

MATTERS ARISING- the first person to speak after the Governor's speech was:

COMR.(MRS) ESTHER AUDU from the Small Scale Women Farmers Organization in Nigerian (SWOFON) observed that a Budget line for Women in Agriculture had been inactive for quite a long time, requested that the Government should make more efforts to fund women farmers in the state in 2019. She also said government should intervene in farmlands affected by the recent floods.

GIFT OMONIWA from Action Aid /PIBCD- She commended the Ministry of Budget and Planning for organizing the Town-hall meeting and advised that subsequent meeting should be more participatory and inclusive. She said that Call Circulars issued by Ministry of Budget and Planning should request the MDAs to consult with non-government stakeholders for their inputs. She also recommended that subsequent meetings should start from the Local Government. She commended the initiative of putting 2018 Budget online but expressed concern that not everyone had access to the internet, saying more hard copies of the Budget should be produced. She advised that a citizen version of the Budget should be prepared so that the ordinary persons can better grasp what the Budget was all about. She advised that the preparation of a citizen Budget was the global best practice, saying Kogi State should not be an an exception.

HAMZA ALIYU from (INGRA-PFA) kogi – In his contribution observed that, the Kogi State government was not ready for an election in the Local Government Area and that the performance of the 2018 Budget is less than 40%. He then asked what are modalities of improvement in the 2019 Budgets.

OKWUTEPA AMINU from LUGARD YOUTH-Observed that the Budget line allocation on youth empowerment was too low, calling for its upward review. He also advised that Ministry of Youths and Sport should be supported to champion all youths related activities in the 2019 Budget.

IDRIS OZOVEHE (PFA –NGO) KOGI: - Observed that with the recent flood disaster in the state and the destruction of farm lands, what was the government's plan for recovery? He also advised that government should intensify on diversification especially in the Agriculture Sector.

AMOHI. O. JOHN from FEPFL- NGO: - Commended the Ministry of Budget and Planning for the innovation in organizing the Town hall meeting. He observed that despite the progress being made in area of security, the budget line should be well defined. He said subsequent stakeholders' town hall meetings should be done or organized at more accessible venue by the ordinary people.

ALHAJI- Also commended the Ministry but observed that budget lines were repeated yearly but were not implemented. He also stressed that government did not prioritize continuation of projects inherited from previous administration. He gave the example of Kogi Hotels.

He also observed that most discussions were based on how money could be expended but not how it could be generated. He advised that workshops and seminars should be organized to educate and sensitize people.

Mr. IDOKO A.S (Director Ministry of Culture and Tourism) – observed that tourism was a major source of revenue for the state, but government had not given attention to their proposals in the past years. He advised that government should address the issue of Kogi Hotels and its rehabilitation in order to boost revenue generation.

MR. LEVI A. OCHENI – from Ministry of Education Science & Technology – He observed that most of the proposals submitted to the Ministry of Budget and Planning were not captured in the 2019 draft Budget. He noted that especially the issue of additional 17 technical schools to be created, recruitment of new teachers and the issue of quality assurance.

ISMAILA ABDULLAH State Director from (FHW) noted that the health delivery system should be improved upon for the benefits of the people.

HAMIDU IBRAHIM ANAYA – from GBOBE in BASSA LGA highlighted on issue related to tourism especially as it affects a Church in his community (i.e Gbobe) built by the late missionary Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther. He explained that it was a tourism goldmine waiting to be exploited but unfortunately Government had not done enough to tap the tourism potential of the Church.

RESPONSES TO COMMENTS

The Governor said that most of the inherited projects from the previous administrations were bonded projects and that it was a crime against the citizens of Kogi State if such projects were abandoned. He also stated that over N200 billion had been paid on the bonded projects. According to him, talks are on about the ongoing projects especially the Diagnostic Centre which commenced since the last two administrations. The Commissioner of Health Hon. SAKA HARUNA further threw some light on the Diagnostic Center. He said that millions had been spent on the project especially the MRI machines which he said was still domiciled in Japan. He noted that millions were being spent in maintaining the machinery and currently the Centre was 95% completed.

On the issue of Kogi Hotels, the Hon. Commissioner of Finance explained that significant work was done in 2018 and this would spill over to 2019. On the uncompleted housing projects for civil servants, over N500 million had been earmarked for the completion of the projects, but the paucity of funds was the reason for the non-completion of the projects. He also announced that just this week, the sum of N3 billion has been released to fund the on-going projects across the (3) three senatorial Zones. On the issue of Agriculture, the Commissioner of Finance and Agriculture, Hon. Oloruntoba responded. They explained that government had released funds for SME's on Cassava, rice and cashew initiative in the three Senatorial zones. Such funds as explained were given at subsidized rates to farmers and in some cases free

The Hon. Commissioner of Agric. Said the Ministry of Agriculture was working in collaboration with the Federal Government to mitigate the effects of the flood, which he said was presently being discussed at the Federal Executive Council level

The Hon. Commissioner of Agriculture assured that by the end of November, Agricultural inputs from the Federal Government would be shared to farmers in the state, adding that more Dams were needed in Kogi state to address flooding issues.

On the citizen Budget, His Excellency explained that it was paramount and key to fulfilling the open governance and fiscal sustainability plans. He emphasized that programs on health and education were

to be given top priority and since not all items can be captured in the Budget, such

Transport, Hon. Awwal Mohammed informed the meeting that the Lokoja mega terminal would soon come on board.

A.O.B

Mr. Amohi John from FEPFL noted that the previous administration's initiative on climate change and women had been abandoned by the present government, advising that the initiative be reactivated especially, the Garri processing machineries & solar machines.

GIFT OMONIWA explained that a citizen budget was not a different budget but an Abridged and summarized version of the Budget.

Mr. Egene Samson (SOSO) – commended the Ministry of Budget and Planning on the stakeholders Town-hall meeting. He advised that since the 2018 Budget was tagged “Budget of Sustainable Growth” the 2019 Budget should be tagged “budget of reproduction.

CLOSING REMARKS- The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Budget & Planning Mr. Ojo Stephen commended his Excellency, Alhaji Yahaya Bello's giant strides and laudable projects and his overall commitment to reposition the state. He also appreciated all Hon. Commissioners for being part of the efforts to move the state to enviable heights. He expressed appreciation to the participants for finding time to attend the meeting, saying inclusive budgeting would put the state among the league of States on the path of sustainable growth. He assured participants that the next year's meeting would start at the senatorial districts.

CLOSING –The meeting closed at 2.03pm.



Idris Asiru Asiwaju
Hon. Comm. Of Finance
(Chairman)



Gift Omoniwa
Action Aid Nig.
(Rep. CSOs)



Sanni H.M
Ag. Director Budget
(Secretary)