

## Nigeria Press Review

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### Welcome to Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung's Nigeria Weekly Press Review

The weekly press review seeks to explore and keep you informed on selected issues relating to politics, business and economy, insecurity, infrastructure and development, health related issues, new trends and matters bothering on the overall situation in Nigeria.

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### **Nigeria's Foreign Reserves Drop by USD 1.82 Billion in Four Months, President Buhari Approves Postponement of 2023 Population and Housing Census, National Population Commission Gives Reasons for Postponement, FG Approves National Block Chain Policy for Nigeria**

Nigeria's foreign exchange reserves have dropped by USD 1.82 billion over the past four months. The forex reserves fell by USD 47.83 million last week to close the first four months of the year at almost two billion USD less than at the close of 2022. The April 2023 closing position represented the lowest point in recent months. Moreover, the external reserve is expected to continue its downward trend in the coming weeks as significant forex sources inflows deteriorate. Official data and reports have indicated that the forex reserves suffered consecutive declines since the beginning of this year. As a result, analysts are expecting the reserves to continue deteriorating. This scenario could worsen the country's currency risks and delay recovery. A member of the Presidential Economic Advisory Council (PEAC) described the outlook for the country's forex reserves as negative. He noted that the Central Bank of Nigeria's inability to meet the pressure of its managed exchange rate would lead to further Naira depreciation. [Sahara Reporters News \(May 2<sup>nd</sup>\)](#) reports.

President Muhammadu Buhari has approved the postponement of the 2023 population and housing census, that was initially scheduled for May 3-7, to a date to be determined by the incoming administration. The Minister of Information and Culture, Lai Mohammed, disclosed that Buhari approved following a meeting with some members of the Federal Executive Council (FEC) and the National Population Commission (NPC) chairman and his last Friday. In deciding to postpone the census, the meeting reiterated the critical need for the conduct of the census 17 years after the last such exercise to collect up-to-date data that will drive the developmental goals of the country and improve living standard in Nigerian. The minister added that the president had further directed NPC to continue preparing for the census to sustain the gains already recorded and provide the basis for the incoming administration to consolidate these achievements. Jimisayo Opanuga, [The Guardian News \(April 30<sup>th</sup>\)](#) reports.

The National Population Commission (NPC) spokesperson, Isiaka Yahaya, has revealed that the census was rescheduled to enable the incoming to actively participate in the census. Yahaya

further said that the election rescheduling destabilized the NPC's plans as the census would be most efficient in a stable environment. He countered rumors that the census was postponed owing to inadequate funding and insisted that the commission was fully prepared. Claire Mom, [The Cable News \(April 30<sup>th</sup>\)](#) reports.

The Federal Executive Council (FEC) has approved the National Blockchain Policy for Nigeria. Briefing State House correspondents, Isa Pantami, Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, said the approval is a significant move and a step towards the country's digital transformation. The minister said the policy would institutionalize blockchain technology in Nigeria and ensure its adoption in various sectors such as banking, security, education and commerce. Pantami emphasized that Nigeria had joined countries such as the United Kingdom, Denmark, Switzerland, Estonia, Georgia, Singapore and the United Arab Emirates in legalizing and approving blockchain technology. In addition, he said the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), Security and Exchange Commission (SEC) and National Universities Commission (NUC) had been directed to develop regulatory instruments within their sectors to facilitate the implementation of the policy. Furthermore, a national steering council would be established to coordinate the efforts of relevant government institutions towards implementing the policy. Busola Aro, [The Cable News \(May 4<sup>th</sup>\)](#) reports.

### **President Buhari Launches New Long-Term National Development Plan, Nigeria Disregards Global Stand On Gas Utilization, Egypt Opens Border for Nigerian Students Fleeing Sudan, First Batch of Nigerian Evacuees from Sudan Arrived in Nigeria, Labour Party Leadership Crisis Worsens, APC Yet to Disclose Zoning Arrangement for 10th National Assembly Leadership Positions, Nigeria to Spend Next 40 Years Repaying NGN 23.72 Trillion**

President Muhammadu Buhari on Wednesday launched the Nigeria Agenda 2050 (NA 2050), Nigeria's new long-term national development plan, named: Nigeria Agenda 2050 (NA 2050). He explained the plan supported the vision of a dynamic, industrialized and knowledge-based economy that generates inclusive and sustainable development for the country. The new policy framework aims to ensure that the country attains a per capita gross domestic product of USD 33,328 per

annum, placing Nigeria among the top middle-income economies in the world by 2050. Commending the national steering committee, led by the Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, Zainab Ahmed, and the Minister of State, Budget and National Planning, Prince Clem Agba, for delivering on this critical national assignment, the Buhari described the unveiling and public presentation of NA 2050 as another milestone in Nigerian history. The Minister of Finance stated that the process of the preparation of the plan was participatory and consultative as well as inclusive and involving all critical stakeholders such as all federal ministries, departments and agencies, all 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) as well as the representatives of local government areas. [Premium Times News \(May 3<sup>rd</sup>\)](#) reports.

Despite the push by climate activists and developed countries to displace fossil fuels, including natural gas, with renewable energies, Nigeria will continue to explore the resource needed to ensure its energy security. Stakeholders, including vice president Yemi Osinbajo and group executive officer of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC) Mele Kyari, noted that gas exploration for industrial development remains sacrosanct for Nigeria, given the prevailing energy crisis. However, the vice president said that the country's energy transition plan offers fresh hope for solar and renewable energy, adding that the plan is to develop 250 gigawatts of solar power by 2060. Kyari pointed out that the role of gas remained critical for the nation's economic growth, adding that the national oil company would focus on extracting the resources, especially through the decade of gas policy. Kingsley Jeremiah, [The Guardian News \(May 3<sup>rd</sup>\)](#) reports.

The Egyptian government has opened its border to Nigerian students fleeing the crisis in Sudan to be evacuated home. The students had been stranded on the Egyptian-Sudanese border following the refusal of the Egyptian government to grant them access to an airport on its territory to be airlifted. However, the chairman of the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NIDCOM), Abike Dabiri-Erewa, announced that the border opening was linked to strict conditions, after president Muhammadu Buhari had intervened with the Egyptian president. Victoria Ojeme, [The Vanguard News \(May 2<sup>nd</sup>\)](#) reports.

This led to the first group of evacuees from Sudan arriving in Nigeria on Wednesday. They experienced some delays due to the formalities issued

by the Egyptian authorities to allow them to be airlifted to Nigeria. One commercial plane operated by Air Peace arrived with 278 passengers while another Nigerian Air Force plane arrived with 98 passengers. Abike Dabiri-Erewa, chairman of the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NIDCOM) expressed hope that those yet to reach Egypt would be airlifted without any further delays. For stranded Nigerians in Port Sudan, efforts are undertaken to get flight tickets as it is even more difficult to evacuate from there. But once airlines get landing permits, they would quickly airlift stranded Nigerians. Solomon Odeniyi and Gift Habib, [The Punch News \(May 3<sup>rd</sup>\)](#) report.

The Labour Party's (LP) leadership crisis has escalated further, with supporter groups of Julius Abure and Lamidi Apapa holding separate national working committee (NWC) meetings in Abuja and Bauchi respectively. The LP leadership crisis broke out when the Federal High Court in Abuja barred the national chairman (Abure) and three others from parading themselves as national officers of the party. As a result, Apapa claimed the role of acting chairman, pending when the court order would be vacated. The Abure-led NWC refused to recognize the leadership of Apapa. At the Abuja meeting, the Abure group warned that any elected member of the LP found to support Apapa risked having his seat declared vacant. But at the Bauchi meeting, the Apapa group announced that it had pardoned LP's presidential candidate for the February 25 election, Peter Obi and his running-mate, Datti Baba-Ahmed, for attending last month's meeting of the NWC in Asaba, Delta state. LP's acting national publicity secretary, Obiora Ifoh, claimed there were plans by "detractors" to continue instigating crisis in the party. Frank Ikpefan and David Adenuga, [The Nation News \(May 4<sup>th</sup>\)](#) report.

The national working committee (NWC) of the All Progressives Congress (APC) has yet to decide on the zoning of the Senate presidency and speakership of the 10th National Assembly. The meeting was expected to decide on the zone that the principal officers of the 10th National Assembly should come from. The national chairman of the APC, senator Abdullahi Adamu, disclosed that the NWC could not take a position on the zoning arrangement without the input of the president-elect, Bola Tinubu, who was not attending the NWC. While the south-east and south-south lawmakers believed it was equitable to award the Senate presidency to their zones, their northern counterparts insisted that only the parameters of competence and ex-

perience mattered. Leke Baiyewu and Adebayo Folorunsho-Francis, [The Punch News \(May 4<sup>th</sup>\)](#) report.

The Senate approved the conversion of the federal government's (FG) unappropriated NGN 23.72 trillion expenditure funded by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to a 40-year bond through its ways and means (W&M) window. The interest rate shall be 9%. President Muhammadu Buhari had last year asked the National Assembly to approve the amount alongside a fresh NGN 1 trillion planned to take from the window, bringing the total value earmarked for securitization to NGN 23.72 trillion. But the controversy is more about its alleged violation of the CBN Act than the alarming growth itself. For details, follow the provided link. The Senate urged the FG to expedite action on the repayment of the loans through treasury bills and bond issuance, saying it will not condone future accumulation without recourse to the National Assembly. With the Senate's approval, the president's efforts to push through have now narrowed to the House of Representatives, which had rejected the plea for lack of sufficient explanation of the utilization of the facility. Sources said the Representatives might discuss the request for possible approval when they convene next week. When the Buhari administration assumed office, CBN's overdraft to the government stood at N789.7 billion. However, the amount has since 2015 ballooned by 2,902% to its current value (N23.72 trillion). Geoff Iyatse and Azimazi Momoh Jimoh, [The Guardian News \(May 4<sup>th</sup>\)](#) report.

### **Insecurity: President Buhari Inaugurates Infrastructure for Defence Communications, EU Advises Nigeria to Tighten Security Architecture at Seaports, Army Commissions Special Intervention Project in Taraba**

President Muhammadu Buhari on Tuesday inaugurated an advanced communication infrastructure code named Giwa 2 Project. Buhari explained the communication infrastructure was designed to provide secure communication, real-time instant reporting and information exchange between the armed forces and other security agencies. He said it would lead to enhanced collaboration between the defence, intelligence and security communities while providing the platform for the denial of freedom of action to perpetrators of insecurity across Nigeria. According to him, Giwa 2

project initiative is in alliance with some of the main focus areas of the federal government in the areas of security, economic advancement and technology development. The Minister of Communication and Digital Economy, Isa Pantami, claimed deploying the new network would support the nation's security institutions to build trust and enhance their reputation. Pantami said the deployment would go a long way in consolidating the achievements of the Buhari administration in security and also create new opportunities for addressing the security challenges in Nigeria. [Premium Times News \(May 3<sup>rd</sup>\)](#) reports.

The European Union (EU) has advised Nigeria to tighten security architecture at the seaports to help reduce its vulnerabilities and risks. The EU made the call at the closing ceremony of the Western and Central Africa Port Security (WeCAPS) first mission training in Nigeria for ports in Lagos. The mission, which started in August 2022, was sponsored by the EU and driven by Expertise France (EF) with the collaboration of the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) and the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA). The team leader of WeCAPS, Nico Vertogen, called for perimeter fencing of the ports, installation of CCTV surveillance and access badges, among others, to improve the nation's port security. Managing Director of NPA Mohammed Bello-Koko commended the EU for the WeCAPS training mission. NIMASA senior port security expert Mudi Isa noted that with the dynamic nature of maritime security threats, there was a need to take deliberate steps to ensure the sustainability of achievements and reduction in port vulnerability to emerging threats through collaborations. Adaku Onyenucheya, [The Guardian News \(May 3<sup>rd</sup>\)](#) reports.

The Chief of Army Staff (COAS) has commissioned special intervention civil-military cooperation projects in Gembu, Taraba state. The projects were introduced to support communities of serving Nigerian army senior officers across the country who have risen to the rank of Major General. COAS Farouk Yahya, represented by General Officer Commanding (GOC) Abdulsalami Ibrahim, highlighted that the project was part of the Nigerian army's efforts to build relationships with people in communities of operation. The projects are to complement the existing basic social amenities and infrastructures of the state in the communities across the country. Terna Chikpa, [The Tribune News \(May 4<sup>th</sup>\)](#) reports.



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