



November 2020
Nigeria Office

Nigeria Press Review

6.11. – 13.11.2020

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 COVID-19 and the situation in Nigeria.

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FG ratifies AfCFTA, Analysts Express Concerns over Nigeria's Economic Outlook

The federal government has formalized its membership in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The disclosure was made by the Minister of Information and Culture, Lai Mohammed, at the end of the Federal Executive Council (FEC), meeting presided over by President Muhammadu Buhari. The main objectives of the "AfCFTA are to create a single continental market for goods and services, with free movement of business persons and investments, and thus pave the way for accelerating the establishment of the Customs Union". Olalekan Adetayo reports [Punch News \(11th November\)](#). The federal government has also granted Dangote Cement access to export cement despite its border closure policy. The development has faced backlash from Nigeria business community. This was revealed to Bloomberg by the Chief Executive Officer at Dangote Cement, Michel Pucheros. This follows the signing of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA). However, the reason for the development remains unclear. Oladeinde Olawoyin, [Premium Times \(10th November\)](#) writes.

On another note, David Whitehouse in the [Africa Report \(10th November\)](#) examined the petroleum market, and the role of Dangote's new oil refinery for free trade. The refinery is set for commissioning next year. However, the ravaging effect of the Coronavirus and the recent protests which affected businesses may push the project to 2022. Jean Marc Ricca, the managing director of BASF West Africa sees the immense potential of the refinery to change Nigeria's crude-dependent economy. However, moving products from the refinery would be difficult if the road system is not improved. According to Dangote Group Director, Devakumar Edwin, an expanded road network combined with shuttle boats will be used for distribution. Whitehouse also stressed the importance of a better road system for the success of the AfCFTA, concluding that a good road network should be established first before the AfCFTA gets formalized.

Still on economy, an article by Vincent Nwanma in [Global Finance News \(11th November\)](#) examined the state of the nation's economy despite being rich in oil and gas resources. Nwanma cited the economic chart of the country and the economic turmoil created by the Covid-19 pandemic which threw oil and the 2020 budget off

balance. He concluded that diversification of the economy would be a necessity for further development.

On another note, Ruth Olurounbi in [the African Report \(6th November\)](#) raised alarm over the foreign exchange rate crisis as the oil market continues to battle the dwindling effect of the Coronavirus on the economy. She noted the effect of the second wave of Coronavirus pandemic on oil demand and supply might further plunge the global economy. Olurounbi cited that most recovering economy may be overshadowed by "fragile conditions and growing skepticism about the pace of the recovery". She analysed the implication of the second wave shutdown on the economy of Nigeria which is already losing the European oil market share to the United States (US) and also the foreign exchange crisis the country faces due to a drop in oil prices as well as the forex crisis. She stressed the need for Nigeria to retain its European market share. Olurounbi also analysed the 2021 budget proposal with focus on the proposed oil production volume which is projected to grow the economy by 3% in 2021. She called for caution as tougher times are ahead. She also called for economic diversification.

Stakeholders Banter over FG's Move to Regulate Social Media

The Oyo State House of Assembly (OSHA) has decried the move by the federal government to regulate social media. The Speaker of the OSHA, Adebo Ogundoyin, declared their stance via a tweet. Ogundoyin added that the legislature will not support the move to restrict freedom of speech/expression. [Sahara Reporters \(10th November\)](#) reports. On the same note, the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria has charged the federal government to reinforce their efforts towards good governance rather than the regulation of social media. The secretariat's Social Communications Director, Mike Umoh made the disclosure during an interaction with press men. This is coming following the role of social media in the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) Protest. Mr. Umoh cited that "Social media is a revolution and a phenomenon, it is a revolution that is bigger than any government and a phenomenon that will outlive any government". [Premium Times \(10th November\)](#) explains.

However, governors and monarchs in the South-West region, pledged their support to the federal

government's move for the regulation of the social media. This was contained in a communique issued after a meeting between governors, traditional rulers and a Presidential delegation in Lagos. They stressed on the negative effect of fake news promoted on social media during the recent #EndSARS protests and the attendant violence. Kayode Oyero, [Punch News \(9th November\)](#) writes.

Meanwhile, an article in [Daily Sun News \(10th November\)](#) examined the influence of social media on the #EndSARS protest. The article analysed the growing concerns over the social media regulation and the impact on the #EndSARS protest which gave rise to the recent call for regulation. The article also examined the concerns of the government citing the opinion of the Minister of Information, Lai Mohammed who stated that "No responsible government will sit by and allow fake news and hate speech to dominate its media space, because of the capacity of this menace to exploit our national fault lines to set us against each other and trigger a national conflagration. That is why we will continue to evolve ways to tackle fake news and hate speech until we banish both." The article outlined the importance of social media and expressed concerns over the government's constant move to regulate social media. The article cited the obligation of citizens to scrutinize political leaders and the adoption of a social media law which is geared at silencing public opinion. Meanwhile, 29 civil society groups have asked the Senate to publish the report of the public hearing conducted on the Social Media Bill. Condemning the regulation of social media, the groups stated that it was an infringement of human rights. [Sahara Reporters \(12th November\)](#) details.

CBN to Freeze Accounts of #EndSARS Sponsors, Activist Sues Protest Promoters, Senate President Demands Provisions for Youth Employment Opportunities in 2021 Budget

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has received a directive from the Federal High Court in Abuja to "freeze the accounts of 19 individuals and a public affairs company linked to the #EndSARS protests till January". Abiola Odutola, [Nairametrics \(6th November\)](#) details. The order was granted by Justice Ahmed Mohammed. According to Aondowase Jacob of the CBN, an investigation was conducted into the accounts by the Head of the Economic Intelligence Unit Department of the

CBN, which revealed the accounts were allegedly linked to terrorist activities. Eniola Akinkuotu and Adelani Adepegba write in [Punch News \(11th November\)](#).

On the same note, the Chairman of the South-West Governors' Forum and Governor of Ondo State, Rotimi Akeredolu, has asked individuals whose accounts were frozen to "justify the legitimate source and use of funds in the frozen accounts". He stated this during an interview and commended the government for freezing the accounts. Kayode Oyero, [Punch News \(11th November\)](#) reports. Meanwhile, the Senate Committee on Judiciary, Legal and Human Rights Matters and the Attorney General of the Federation (AGF), Abubakar Malami have made no comment on the legality of freezing bank accounts owned by #EndSARS protesters and promoters. Queen Esther Iroanusi, [Premium Times \(10th November\)](#) details.

Meanwhile, an activist, Kenechukwu Okeke has filed a lawsuit against active promoters of the protest before a Magistrate Court in Abuja. Okeke is accusing 50 persons of influencing the #EndSARS protest that fueled a riots which led to the destruction of his property. He is asking the court to bring the promoters to justice. Davidson Iriekpen and Alex Enumah, [This Day News \(11th November\)](#) explain.

On another note, the Senate President, Ahmed Lawan has advised that provisions for employment opportunities for youths should be included in the 2021 budget. Lawan made this disclosure during the 2021 agriculture budget defence by the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Sabo Nanono, who appeared before the Senate Committee on Agriculture to defend the ministry's 2021 budget. He added that providing jobs for the youths would prevent another protest in the country. Lawan also stressed the need to domesticate the Nigerian economy and the agricultural sector. Queen Esther Iroanusi, [Premium Times \(10th November\)](#) explains.

Umahi Reveals Plan to Defect from PDP to APC, Gives Hint for 2023 Presidential Election, Analyst Optimistic on a New US-Nigeria Relationship

Following wide speculations that the Governor of Ebonyi State, Dave Umahi will be defecting from

the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to the All Progressives Congress (APC) over his alleged 2023 ambitions, Umahi has revealed that he would be leaving the PDP to the APC in order to protect the interest of the South-East zone in the 2023 elections. Umahi made this known in a meeting with the National Working Committee (NWC) of the PDP led by the National Chairman, Prince Uche Secondus at the Ebonyi State Governor's Lodge Abuja. Reports indicated that Umahi threatened to maintain his position if the PDP refuses to zone the presidency to the South-East. Olusola Fabiyi, [Punch News \(11th November\)](#) writes. Reacting to the development, the Presidency welcomed the move by Umahi acknowledging him as the highest performing governor in the South-East zone. This was disclosed via a tweet by the Special Assistant to the President on Media, Bashir Ahmed. Ahmad stated that "When you apply its actual term, the all politics is local, His Excellency will be welcomed to our great party, the APC, a great person, one of the performing governors in the country, arguably the best in his region. It's just a homecoming!". John Owen Nwachukwu, [Daily Post News \(12th November\)](#) reports.

On another note, Jude Akintunde in [This Day News \(10th November\)](#) called for a speedy passage of a reformed electoral bill to avoid electoral flaws like those in the 2019 election. He also stressed the ethnic issues the country faces when it comes to the distribution of power. With the Igbos claiming turn to produce an Igbo president he sees the country moving into a risky stalemate. The only way out for him would be restructuring the federation towards more regional autonomy.

Ruth Olurounbi of the [African Report \(9th November\)](#) examined the impact of Joe Biden's win in the United States (US) presidential election on the US-Nigeria relations. African leaders including President Muhammadu Buhari congratulated Biden on his win. She referred to the opinion of analyst Femi Soneye who speculates that the Biden's administration would revive the relations between Africa and the US, similar to the existing relationship of former President Barack Obama's regime. According to Olurounbi analysts also expect that the relations between the US and Nigeria will improve under a Biden-led government. This also includes probably lifting the immigration-ban that was imposed on Nigerians by President Trump. It is, however, expected that a Biden-led government will also expect significant

improvements with respect to human rights issues in Nigeria.

Insecurity: UAE Sentences 6 Nigerians to Prison for Funding Boko-Haram Activities, UN asks FG to Protect Amnesty International against Threats

A Federal High Court in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirate (UAE) has sentenced 6 citizens to prison for allegedly funding Boko Haram activities. Two of the convicts, Surajo Abubakar Muhammad and Saleh Yusuf Adamu, were sentenced to life imprisonment while the others, Ibrahim Ali Alhasan, AbdurRahman Ado Musa, Bashir Ali Yusuf and Muhammad Ibrahim Isa were sentenced to 10 years imprisonment respectively. An investigation conducted revealed alleged cash transfers favoring the sect to the tune of \$782,000 in 2015 and 2016. Families of the convicts have refuted the accusation stating that the convicts were deceived in a legitimate bureau de change business they run. The Attorney General of the Federation (AGF), Abubakar Malami, stated that the federal government is aware of the situation and has written to the UAE to send records of the proceedings and is yet to receive feedback. [VOA News \(10th November\)](#) and Mohammad Q. Sidq Isa et al, [All Africa News \(9th November\)](#) explain. Also the Governor of Borno State, Babagana Zulum, has commended the conviction by the UAE. This was contained in a statement by the spokesperson for Zulum, Isa Gusau. Zulum urged the federal government to follow up with the investigation by setting up an investigation panel that will broaden the search of Boko Haram sponsors. Sodiq Oyeleke, [Punch News \(10th November\)](#) and Michael Olugbode [This Day News \(11th November\)](#) detail.

On another note, the Ministry of Justice has stated that it would need N2bn to cover its legal services which includes "civil litigation, prison decongestion, trial and prosecution of Boko Haram criminals, administration of criminal justice system and payment for international legal obligations". This was revealed during the 2021 budget defence, before the Senate Committee on Judiciary, Legal and Human Rights Matters. The Senate cited some irregularities in the budget and asked for further clarification. Queen Esther Iroanusi, [Premium Times \(9th November\)](#) reports.

Meanwhile, the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) has stated that it expects delivery of 19 additional aircrafts to help in the fight against insurgency. The Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Sadique Abubakar stated this during the budget defence session before the Senate Committee on Air Force. Abubakar added that NAF had trained 119 pilots from Liberia Air Force in support of the West African military and about 200 personnel are being trained in several countries. Speaking on this, a member of the Senate committee, Senator Sani Musa called for the federal government's support through resources and technology in the war against insurgency. Sunday Aborisade, [Punch News \(10th November\)](#) details.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General, Amina Mohammed, has stated that Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are tired of living in camps and want to return home. Mohammed disclosed this following an interaction with IDPs in the border town of Banki in the Bama Local Government Area of Borno during a visit by United Nations officials to assess the situation in the state. She cited observations from untold hardship, to overcrowding and damaged economy following the escalating attacks that bedeviled the town. Maina Maina, [Daily Post News \(11th November\)](#) reports. Also the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP), agencies of the UN have warned of the risk of famine and food insecurity for four countries with severe security crises including Burkina Faso, Yemen, north-east Nigeria and South Sudan. This was contained in a report which analyses the driving factors that would cause food insecurity. [All African News \(9th November\)](#) writes.

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Dr. Vladimir Kreck, Resident Representative
Vera Ali, Project Assistant / Editor Press Review

Nigeria Office

www.kas.de/nigeria

www.facebook.com/kas.nigeria

vladimir.kreck@kas.de / vera.ali@kas.de



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In new reports, there are growing expectations following the involvement of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the investigation of the October 20 Lekki Toll Gate Shootings. A petition had been signed by 100,000 persons, calling for the prosecution of the Inspector General of Police (IGP), Mohammed Adamu. Another petition also came up following the Lekki Toll Gate incident. The federal government has set up judicial panels in states across the nation to investigate the #EndSARS protest events. However, there are concerns if a proper investigation would be carried out or if the issue gets buried. An article by the [Vanguard News \(10th November\)](#) cited some cases handled by the ICC and expressed optimism that the ICC's investigation into the situation will "help curb the excesses of leaders and armed state agencies, and protect the right to life of lawful protesters".

In new report, the United Nations (UN) has charged the federal government with the responsibility of protecting Amnesty International (AI) following a quit notice threat by the Centre for Africa Liberation and Socio-Economic Rights assuring dire consequence to AI for non-compliance. Civil society groups have expressed concerns over the issue. The Country Director of the UN, Ronald Kayanja, stated that the federal government is the only authority permitted to expel AI from the country. Kayanja reiterated the main goal of the UN to ensure peace and added that anything which threatens peace around the world is of interest to the UN. [Vanguard News \(11th November\)](#) explains.