

**REPORT OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, CONFERENCE AND AWARD ORGANISED BY NEPAD BUSINESS GROUP NIGERIA (NBGN) ON THURSDAY OCTOBER 18, 2012 AT THE EXTERNAL BALL CONFERENCE HALL, FEDERAL PALACE HOTEL, VICTORIAL ISLAND, LAGOS**

**Background**

The relevance of NEPAD Business Group Nigeria (NBGN) to economic development of Nigeria is certainly not in doubt. Its capacity to drive the private sector for employment and wealth creation is equally not in contest. However, how much can the body contribute and how fast it can act in a hostile economic environment and unstable economic policies is actually the question.

Therefore, acting in consonance with its founding objectives of eradicating poverty and placing African countries, both individually and collectively, on a path of sustainable growth and development, NBGN recently put-up a three prong programme to assess itself and re-strategize on one hand , critically analyze Nigeria business environment and to motivate the drivers of economic growth on the other.

The programme attended by the brightest cream of the economic sector turned out to be a huge success in thought provoking and re-assuring that Nigeria is not only on the path of growth but indeed a big market with untapped opportunities. It was also an eye opener that NBGN is a potential catalyst for accelerated economic growth of Nigeria and Africa at large.

**Preparation**

About two months ago, NBGN Board at its meeting decided to contract the services of TVL Consulting Limited – strategic management firm with verse experience on Nigerian Business Membership Organizations (BMOs). It was therefore agreed that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Group should hold with a Conference to discuss topical issue and present Awards to deserving Executive Governors in Nigeria. The President/CEO of TVL Consulting Limited, Mr. Akin Iroko promised to package the event and ensure success.

TVL Consulting deployed all machinery to ensure participation of top echelon of businesses and industries. It also sourced appropriate resource persons who are not only capable but reputed and befitting for the caliber of NBGN. The firm also labored to ensure that the event was adequately sponsored.

Furthermore, though with great difficulties and extensive consultation in spite of time constraint, the organization critically assessed all Nigerian governors and finally decided on ten as meritorious and well deserving of NBGN maiden Award of Excellence and Good Governance. The governors so chosen and ratified by NBGN Board are Ogbeni Rauf Aregbesola of Osun State, Mr. Babatunde Raji Fashola of Lagos State, Mr. Peter Obi of Anambra State, Comrade Adam Oshiomohle of Edo State, Dr. Emmanuel uduaghan of Delta State, Godswill Akpabio of

Akwon Ibom, Owelle Rochas Okorochoa of Imo State, Alhaji AbdulFatai Ahmed of Kwara State, Alhaji Musa Kwakwaso of Kano State and Alhaji Sule Lamido of Jigawa State.

With the approval of the NBGN Board, all the governors were immediately communicated. However, it was very difficult getting confirmation from all of them probably because of their tight schedules. Only Ogbeni Aregbesola responded positively about two weeks to the programme. He also gave a strong indication he was coming in person to accept the award. In fact, thinking it was an evening programme, reports had it that he would fly in from Akure with about 30 persons.

With a dicey situation at hand TVL's contacts in each of the states were constantly put under pressure through phone and mail to extract words from the offices of the governors. About a week to the programme four of ten governors had confirmed their acceptance of the award. Kwara Governor personally wrote to accept and delegate Commissioner of Trade and Investment, Alhaji Raji Mohammed to represent him. Governor Peter Obi equally wrote while only words came from Governor Fashola. Less than 48 hours to the programme, Kano and Delta State Governors put a call through to Mr. Akin Iroko to express their acceptance of the Award and promised to attend. Governor Uduaghan of Delta State spoke with Mr. Iroko that he would fly from Abuja to Lagos to receive the award but was later delayed by President Goodluck Jonathan. In essence, six (6) executive governors were represented at the event

On participation, a total of 208 directors and business leaders actively participated at the event. To achieve this, TVL Consulting deployed the use of personalized bulk SMS to reach out to target audience. There was no print media advertisement placed for the event but the SMS strategy produced better result. However, media was engaged for publicity and a Press Release was issued on the award in one hand and the AGM and the Conference on the other.

## **THE EVENT**

The Master of Ceremony, Dr. Segun Aderiye, a former NTA Network Newscaster, kicked start the programme at 10:50 a.m. He gave a background to the programme and invited Guests to the high table. First to be invited was Mr. Goodie Ibru, *OON* the Chairman of NBGN. Others included the Senior Special Adviser to the President on NEPAD, Dr. Tunji Olagunju, Chief (Mrs.) Dr. Nike Akande, *OON*, a former Minister of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; the Chairman of Fidelity Bank, Chief Chris Ezeh, *MFR*, and former Attorney-General of Lagos State, Chief (Mrs.) Eniola Fadayomi. The former Chairman, Cadbury Nigeria Plc and founding Chairman, Dubri Oil Company Nigeria, Dr. Uduimo Itsuelli chaired the occasion. The Special Guest of Honour was former Governor of Delta State, Olorogun Felix O. Ibru. The NEPAD Business Group Cote d'Ivoire and Benin Republic were represented at the event.

A financial expert and Managing Director/CEO of Financial Derivatives Company Limited, Mr. Bismarck Rewane was the Guest Speaker. He discussed the main theme, **NIGERIA CURRENT ECONOMIC OUTLOOK: IMPLICATIONS FOR BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT.**

The Chairman of NBGN Board, Mr. Ibru at 11:14 gave his opening remark. He offered insight into the formation of NEPAD and the establishment of NBGN. He said the major objective was to galvanise the private sector to create employment and wealth. And in doing this, he said NBGN had a number of programmes tied to its objectives. He acknowledged the presence of eminent personalities in attendance and the support of ECOWAS Commission to NBGN. He said NBGN offered elastic opportunity for exchange of idea.

Immediately after Mr. Ibru, the CEO of NBG Cote d'Ivoire was invited to give solidarity message. He spoke about the activities of NBG in his home country and efforts to strengthen business relationship with America. He emphasized the need for more regional cooperation and equally expressed willingness to work with Nigeria on how to promote economic growth of the two countries. He said he looked forward to having economic summit of the two countries in 2013. While expressing concern for the political crisis in his country, he implored NBG to serve as advocacy body that will promote wealth creation and economic boom.

The Chairman of the occasion, Dr. Uduimo Itsueli welcomed all participants and invited the Guest Speaker, Mr. Bismarck Rewane, a seasoned economy analyst and Managing Director of Financial Derivatives Company Limited to deliver his lecture on ***Nigerian Current Economic Outlook: Implications for Business Environment.***

Armed with hard and current statistics, Mr. Rewane critically dissected Nigeria economy, offered insight into various inherent challenges limiting attainment of economic goals and proffered solutions that can invigorate efforts at expanding economic opportunities and development. He projected a bright picture for Nigeria economy saying by 2050 Nigeria will be the 12th largest economy in the world. He charged NBGN to work hand in hand with government so that the bright picture projected was realized and that the hope and aspiration of common Nigerians could be realized.

The thought provoking lecture of Mr. Rewane received many questions that were academically and succinctly answered. The high point of his response to the questions was the challenge he posted to NBGN saying "NBGN must never wait until economic problem arises before it acts. It must envisage problems and act swiftly and proactively to checkmate problems." The conference came to an end after the question and answer session.

Next to the conference was the award ceremony. To be first awarded was the Governor of Lagos State, Mr. Babatunde Raji Fasola SAN who was ably represented by the Secretary to the State Government, Dr. Oluranti Adebule. The Citation of Governor Fashola was read by Ms. Sweet Giwa-Osagie. The Chairman of NBGN, Mr. Ibru was invited to hand over the award to Dr. Adebule on behalf of the Governor. In her response to the award, Dr. Adebule expressed

profound gratitude and thanked to NBGN for recognizing the achievements of Fashola administration. She promised that the governor would continue to do more and justify the confidence reposed in him.

Following Governor Fashola was Dr. Emmanuel Uduaghan, the Delta State Governor. He was equally represented by the Chief of Staff, Dr. Festus Okubor. The Citation of Governor Uduahan was read by Mr. Ayodele Buraimoh. He enumerated the efforts of the current Delta State Government at creating economic opportunities and promoting good health and qualitative education. In response, Dr. Okubor having thanked the Board of NBGN stated that the governor was inviting investors into the state to tap into his new tourism project. The representative of ECOWAS Commission, Mr. Umoessien Enobong presented the award to the Chief of Staff to the State Governor standing for Dr. Uduaghan.

It was the turn of Kano State Governor after Delta. The Governor was represented by Alhaji Aminu Muktar, the Special Adviser to the Governor on Economic Affairs. Mr. Gabriel Owopo who read the citation of Alhaji Kwakwaso praised the governor for his efforts at developing social infrastructures in the state. Responding to the award, the Special Adviser to the Governor expressed the gratitude of his boss who was unavoidable absent due to other pressing assignments. He pledged the Governor would do more to develop his state and Nigeria at large. The award was presented by Chief (Mrs.) Akande

The Kwara State Governor, Alhaji AbdulFatah Ahmed was represented by Mr. Raji Mohammed, the Commissioner for Trade and Investment. Mrs. Margaret Essien read the citation of the governor while Chief (Mrs.) Eniola Fadayomi presented the award. In his response, the Commissioner thanked NBGN for the recognition. He further highlighted the achievements of his boss to include production of agricultural produce in export quantity and attraction of Foreign partners to the sector.

Osun State Governor, Ogbeni Rauf Aregbesola who could not make it at last was represented by his Deputy Chief of Staff. The citation of the governor was presented by Mr. Ifeanyi Udu of UBA Plc. He praised Ogbeni Aregbesola for creating employment for his people and developing social and economic infrastructure. The Chairman of the occasion, Chief Itsueli who presented the award charged the governor to further dedicate himself to the service of his people. The representative of the governor responded that the governor would not let NBGN down with the maiden award of excellence and good governance.

Just as the award ceremony was about to be over, the Deputy Governor of Anambra State, Mr. Emeka Sibeude called that he had been held back by flight delay and traffic within Lagos. He however said he would still make the programme and receive the award on behalf of the Governor. However, he could not make it to the programme as the AGM which followed the award ceremony lasted just ten minutes.

The Executive Secretary/CEO of NBGN, Dr. Aniebo Roberts read the Notice of the AGM at 4:36pm. The Chairman, Mr. Ibru read the election of the new Officers. Chief Chris Ezeh, *MFR* is the new NBGN Chairman, Chief (Mrs.) Dr. Nike Akande, *OON*, the 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chairman, Chief Victor Oyolu, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chairman, Chief (Mrs.) Eniola Fadayomi, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice Chairman, all the 15 Directors were returned un-opposed. At about 4:45 the AGM was brought to an end with a short prayer.

Following the closure of the programme, participants were asked to proceed to the Hotel Restaurant for dinner. The dinner hardly started when the Deputy Governor of Anambra State emerged. It was therefore right inside the Restaurant that the award was presented to the him by the duo of Chief Chris Ezeh and Mr. Goodie Ibru.

### **Lessons Learnt**

- 1 Enough time was needed for the preparations for the programme. Perhaps enough funds could have been generated for sponsorship if preparation had been much earlier.
- 2 Media coverage of the programme was not enough as money became a major determinant. A programme of this stature requires elaborate adverts in the print and broadcast media and a press conference to kick start it for maximum awareness, patronage and response from government and attendance by the public.
- 3 Absence of a prepared speech for the NBGN Chairman as opening remark was not good enough. The Chairman was supposed to touch on a number of issues as he is stepping down with a three prong programme and in fact a major and perhaps the largest public programme of NBGN since formation

### **Recommendations**

- 1 The Award of Excellence and Good Governance should be institutionalized to come up every two years. While another award for Corporate Social Responsibility and Business Excellence should alternate for Private Sector.
- 2 Planning for the Award and any other public programme of this nature must start a minimum of six months ahead of time. Time line must be drawn for each item to be executed.
- 3 Administrative roles should be clearly spelt out and must never be transferred to consultant handling or managing any event on behalf of the organization.
- 4 Board members must be implored to personally seek sponsorship for NBGN programmes in the future.
- 5 NBGN Board or secretariat must immediately design collaborative programmes with the six governors that sent delegation to receive the award on their behalf.
- 6 Efforts must be made to present or send the plaque to the remaining four governors of Edo, Akwa Ibom, Imo and Jigawa.

- 7 Proactive use of media for a positive corporate image of NBGN, economic policy review or endorsement and or lobby of government must be embarked upon immediately.
- 8 The drive for membership must be stepped up and good and beneficial programmes must be drawn and executed to sustain members' interest and support