

NATHANIEL MAMODU ATEBIJE

SERVICE
with
PASSION
and
DILIGENCE

A Brief Account of the Service of Tpl. Nathaniel M. Atebije, FNITP, PPNITP as the National President of the Institute (November 2022 to October 2024).

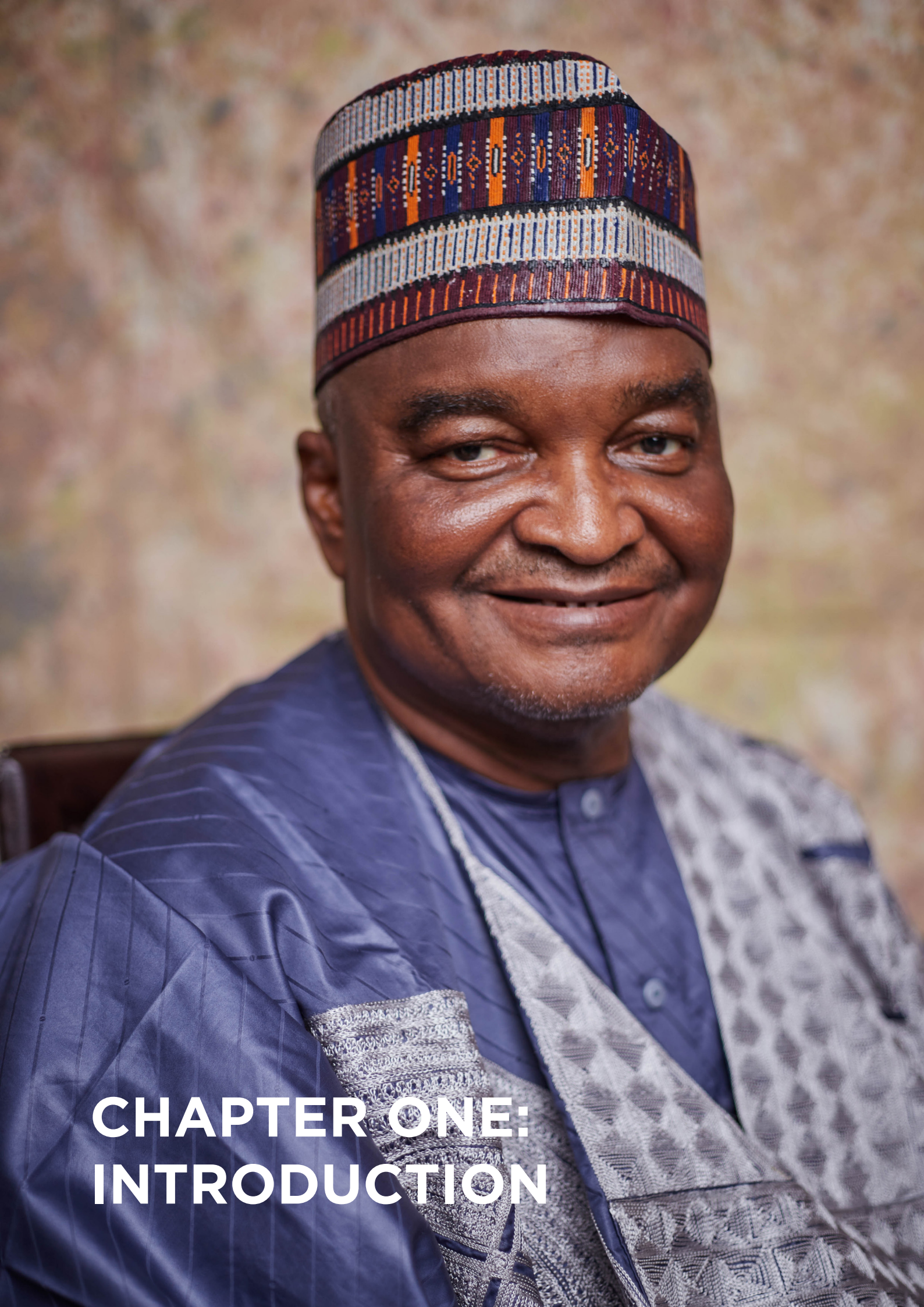
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**CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCTION**

WHO IS TPL. NATHANIEL M. ATEBIJE, FNITP, PPNITP.

Tpl. Nathaniel Atebije was born into the humble ardent Christian family of Late Pa Isaac Mamodu and Late Ma Daina Ochibu Atebije at Adumu-Egume in Dekina Local Government of Kogi State on the 11th day of April, 1955. He started his education in the Christian Religious Instruction (CRI) class in the church from the age of four (equivalent of Nursery School of the current generation). He enrolled for primary education at the CMML (Christian Missions in Many Lands) Primary School, Egume in 1962 and earned the First School Leaving Certificate in 1968. He had his secondary education at Ochaja Secondary School, Dekina Local Government of Kogi State between 1969 and 1973 after which he enrolled to study urban and regional planning in Kaduna Polytechnic. He obtained Diploma (1976), Higher Diploma (1980) and Post Graduate Professional Diploma (1991) in urban and regional planning from Kaduna Polytechnic where he maintained the position of the best student in class for almost all the years of his studies. He was awarded prizes including the prestigious Kaduna Polytechnic Chairman's prize for being the best all-round student in his campus. He later obtained a Master of Environmental Planning and Protection from the University of Abuja.

Tpl. Nathaniel Atebije commenced his career in town planning as an Assistant Town Planning Officer with Benue State Ministry of Works, Lands and Surveys in 1976 after his Ordinary Diploma. Within a period of 18 months, he prepared 20 planning schemes all across the State. He moved over to Comprehensive Design Associates in Jos Office where he was engaged as Assistant Town Planner responsible for the masterplan of University of Jos, as well as master plan project for Keffi, Akwanga, Obi, Toto, Nasarawa Eggon and Nasarawa all in Nasarawa State. While a student in Kaduna Polytechnic, he had an intensive industrial training with the Max Lock Group Nigeria where he would extensively on the regional plan of Niger State and the masterplan for Minna. During the National Service, he served in the Area Planning Office of Cross River State of the Ministry of Lands and Survey at Ogoja. On completion of his national service, he had five offers of employment. He made a choice to be in the private sector to commence practice as a consultant with Habitat Associates. He was faced with the challenge of preparing the masterplans for Gusau and Talata Mafara towns. He handled this assignment creditably well that it earned him two promotions in a space of six months. has lived as a lover of humanity through selfless and sacrificial services. After his professional training and registration with TOPREC, he decided to veer into lecturing at Kaduna Polytechnic. He demonstrated his passion for imparting knowledge as he raised the bar of students' academic performance in the Department. Towards the end of year 1998, he opted to join the Federal Urban Mass Transit Agency in Abuja as a Principal Research Officer and later the Department of Development Control of FCT in 2005. Being adjudged to be a reliable and effective officer, he was deployed to Abuja Environmental Protection Board to restore some level of sanity to the system which had almost collapsed. He retired from service meritoriously in April 2015 on attaining the age of 60 as prescribed by the civil service regulations. He has since then been in private practice as a planning consultant in Abuja where he reaches out to other parts of Nigeria in providing this service.

In the professional association of the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners, where he served in various capacities starting as Chapter Vice Chairman to Chairman, 2nd Assistant National Secretary, 1st Assistant National Secretary, National Secretary, 2nd National Vice President, 1st National Vice President and National President he has

demonstrated his passion for the profession through tireless and timeless innovations in policies, programmes. He has executed enviable projects since he assumed office. He is a Fellow of the Institute. Till date, he remains a strong factor in institutional memory to the Institute.

He has been the National President of his community, Egume Ome Descendants Union. Under his leadership, the community has enjoyed relative internal peace and cohesion. As a leader by practice, he has led various sets of people to achieve successes ranging from professional services to secular and religious interests and community development projects. He is a devout christian, well-respected community leader, mentor, teacher and helper. He is a great team player liberal, sociable and even-tempered person who believes in ascending to positions of responsibility by merit. This virtue, he has imparted to his children who have been adjudged to be hard-working and highly disciplined. As a lover of educational tourism, he has travelled to 15 countries outside Nigeria both for professional and faith related meetings and associations. His hobbies include travelling, music and reading. He is happily married and blessed with four lovely sons.

He sees his life as an uninterrupted circle of God's interventions setting destiny helpers along his path. Wherever there seemed to be no way, he sees God opening wider openings giving assurances of His abiding presence. Even in this programme, this is the testimony we have. That God set some men up to initiate and organize it to celebrate a man not born with even a wooden spoon, to be so honoured by your presence to grace this occasion including our lovers and mentors who are participating online from all over the world. Only God would reward you all for the sacrifices you made to be here. God bless you.

Vision and Character of Service at the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners

Tpl. Nathaniel Atebije has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to building the next generation of planners through his Brighter Future Vision and guiding mantra. His philosophy is rooted in mentorship, capacity building, and advocacy, ensuring that young planners are equipped with the skills, knowledge, and ethical foundation necessary to shape sustainable urban environments.

Atebije's Brighter Future Vision visualizes a future where town planning in Nigeria and beyond is driven by professionals who are not only technically proficient but also deeply passionate about creating livable, efficient, and inclusive cities. The Vision focuses on:

- **Mentorship & Leadership Development** – through actively mentoring young planners, guiding them to understand both the technical and socio-political aspects of planning.
- **Education & Capacity Building** – Through workshops, seminars, and training programs, to equip upcoming planners with modern planning tools and critical thinking skills.
- **Ethical & Professional Standards** – by instilling strong ethical foundation, emphasizing integrity, accountability, and a sense of duty to the public good.

Atebije's guiding mantra, "**Brighter Future: Planning with Purpose, Impacting the Future**" emphasizes that planning must go beyond theoretical frameworks; it must be

purpose-driven, leading to **tangible impacts** on society. This mindset has inspired young professionals to:

- Approach planning with a problem-solving mindset.
- Strive for excellence and innovation in the profession.
- Advocate for policies that benefit communities and drive sustainable development.

Through these efforts, Atebije is not only shaping the present but also securing the future of town planning by ensuring that the next generation is well-prepared to address urban challenges with confidence and vision.

A Visionary Leader and Catalyst for Change

Tpl. Nat. Atebije is known to be a remarkable individual, a go-getter whose leadership has left an enduring impact on Nigeria’s urban landscape. His visionary leadership of the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners (NITP) has set new benchmarks for professionalism, innovation, and advocacy in urban planning. Tpl. Atebije has tirelessly worked to improve the cities we live in, with a clear-eyed focus on creating sustainable, inclusive urban spaces for generations to come.

A Visionary Leader with Unwavering Determination

Tpl. Atebije’s career has been defined by a profound sense of purpose and a drive that sets him apart. His leadership at NITP was not just about titles or positions—it was about creating tangible change. A natural leader, he embraced challenges as opportunities for growth and development. Whether advocating for sound urban policies or leading training initiatives for town planners, Tpl. Atebije consistently demonstrated the rare ability to turn complex problems into actionable solutions. He is a true go-getter—someone who sees the potential in every challenge and approaches it with determination and a strategic mindset.

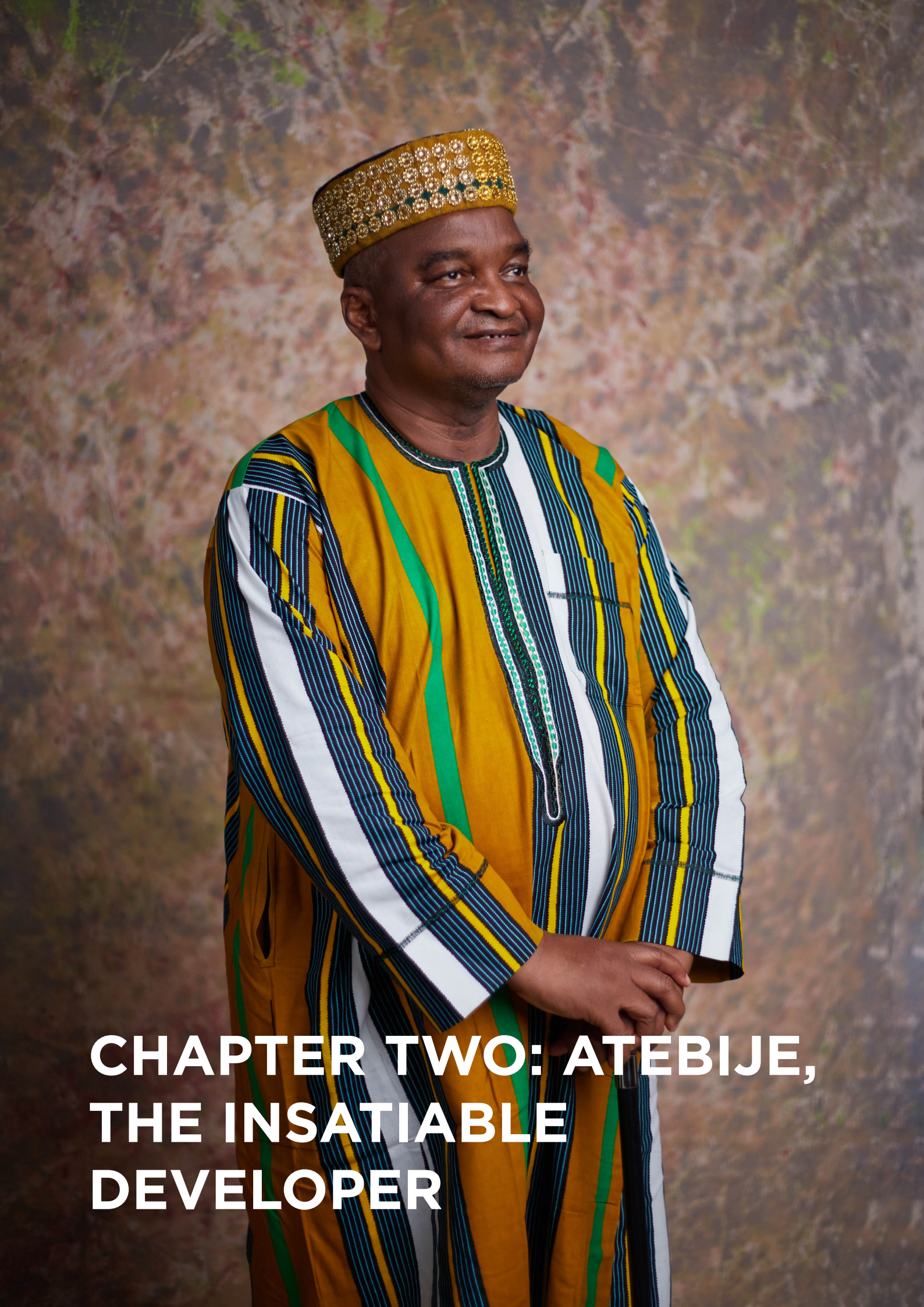
Tpl. Atebije’s work ethic is matched only by his passion for his profession. His leadership has been a beacon of hope for the planning community, setting high standards for others to follow. He has been an advocate for putting planning at the forefront of national development, understanding that the future of our cities depends on sound planning principles and effective implementation.

A Man of Integrity, Commitment, and Compassion

Beyond his professional achievements, Tpl. Atebije is a man of great integrity. His honesty, dedication, and unwavering commitment to excellence have earned him the respect and admiration of colleagues, government officials, and fellow professionals alike. He believes in the power of collaboration and inclusivity, ensuring that every voice is heard and valued in the planning process.

What sets Tpl. Atebije apart is his deep-rooted compassion for the communities he serves. His work has always been motivated by the desire to improve the lives of ordinary Nigerians, especially those in underserved urban areas. Whether advocating for affordable housing or working towards better urban mobility, he has consistently placed the needs of the people at the heart of his advocacy.





**CHAPTER TWO: ATEBIJE,
THE INSATIABLE
DEVELOPER**

TASK 1: COMPLETING THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE OLD NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

Tpl. Nathaniel Atebije: A Leader Who Overcame the Odds to Deliver the Reconstructed NITP Secretariat

Leadership is not just about inheriting responsibilities – it is about taking them to the next level, even in the face of overwhelming odds. When Tpl. Nathaniel Atebije assumed office as the National President of the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners (NITP), he inherited a project which was initiated by his immediate predecessor, Tpl. Olutoyin Ayinde, FNITP, PPNITP i.e. the reconstruction of the old Secretariat building. Many leaders might have hesitated, citing challenges, limited resources, or the difficulties of continuing what someone else started. But not Tpl. Atebije. He saw the project not as a burden, but as an opportunity to demonstrate what true leadership means: resilience, strategic action, and an unwavering commitment to results.

Facing the Challenges Head-On

The reconstruction of the old Secretariat building was no small task. The project, though initiated by his predecessor, faced several obstacles that threatened its completion. These included:

- i. Financial Constraints – The funds available were insufficient to complete the work, and raising additional resources was proving difficult.
- ii. Project Delays and Rising Costs – Construction projects are notorious for unexpected setbacks, from inflation affecting material costs to administrative bottlenecks.
- iii. A Demoralized Professional Community – After years of stalled projects, many NITP members had little hope that the Secretariat would ever be fully completed.

Rather than being discouraged, Tpl. Atebije did what he knows best – he took bold, decisive steps to turn things around.

Strategic Action and Unyielding Determination

Tpl. Atebije approached the Secretariat reconstruction with a clear, no-nonsense strategy:

- Rebuilding Trust and Securing Resources – Understanding that funding was the key to unlocking progress, he reached out to members convincing them that this time, things would be different. His transparency in handling financial matters and his clear road-map for project completion reassured stakeholders and encouraged support.
- Ensuring Work Did Not Stall – Despite financial difficulties, he made sure that construction never came to a halt. Through careful resource management, phased execution, and tireless fundraising efforts, he kept the project moving forward, bit by bit.
- Engaging the Planning Community – He actively involved NITP members, rallying them to see the Secretariat’s completion as a collective responsibility. By reigniting their sense of ownership and pride in the project, he was able to secure contributions and in-kind support.
- Overcoming Bureaucratic Challenges – Where administrative roadblocks threatened progress, Tpl. Atebije used his negotiation skills to minimize barriers, ensuring that approvals, permits, and other regulatory requirements did not delay the work.
- Maintaining Quality and Functionality – Unlike some rushed projects that sacrifice qual-

ity for speed, he ensured that the reconstructed Secretariat was built to last, reflecting the professionalism and standards of the Institute.

A Triumph Against the Odds

Tpl. Atebije's relentless efforts bore fruit—the reconstructed Secretariat was completed, standing as a symbol of what is possible when determination meets strategic leadership. What had once been a stalled, uncertain project became a reality under his watch. The Secretariat, once a source of disappointment, was transformed into a source of pride for the Institute and its members.

This achievement speaks volumes about Tpl. Atebije's character. He is not a leader who makes excuses. He is a leader who delivers results, no matter how tough the circumstances. Where others saw obstacles, he saw opportunities. Where others hesitated, he took action. And where others doubted, he proved that with the right vision and persistence, success is inevitable.

A Testament to His Leadership: A Call for Support

Tpl. Atebije's success in completing the reconstruction of the old Secretariat is not just about a building—it is about restoring faith in leadership, proving that commitment and strategic planning can overcome even the most daunting challenges. Today, the Institute has a befitting structure to accommodate its administrative functions.



TASK 2: ACQUIRING 2.7 HECTARES OF LAND FOR NITP RESOURCES LIMITED AT APO TAFYI DISTRICT, ABUJA.

Tpl. Nathaniel Atebije's relentless efforts, strategic networking, and boundless energy were instrumental in securing the 2.7-hectare land allocation for the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners (NITP), in the name of NITP Resources Limited which is a subsidiary of the Institute, at Apo Tafyi District, Abuja. His foresight and determination transformed what seemed like an uphill battle into a landmark achievement for the profession, securing a prime asset now valued at not less than N800 million.

Strategic Efforts and Advocacy

Atebije recognized the urgent need for the NITP to own a befitting space for mixed-use development, ensuring the Institute's long-term sustainability. To achieve this, he engaged key government agencies and navigated the complexities of land administration by persistently engaging the Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA) and the Department of Land Administration ensuring that NITP's application received the needed allocation. He presented a strong case by articulating the professional and public benefits of the project and convinced stakeholders that NITP's presence at Apo Tafyi would enhance the district's urban development landscape. With God on our side, NITP received the favour to be granted the land allocation.

Powerful Networking and Stakeholder Engagement

Recognizing that land allocation in Abuja requires high-level engagement, Atebije:

- **Mobilized NITP Leadership and Senior Planners:** He galvanized support from senior planners, past presidents, and influential professionals to advocate collectively for the land.
- **Built Alliances with Policymakers:** Through strategic relationship-building, he engaged key figures in the FCT Administration to push the allocation through bureaucratic hurdles.

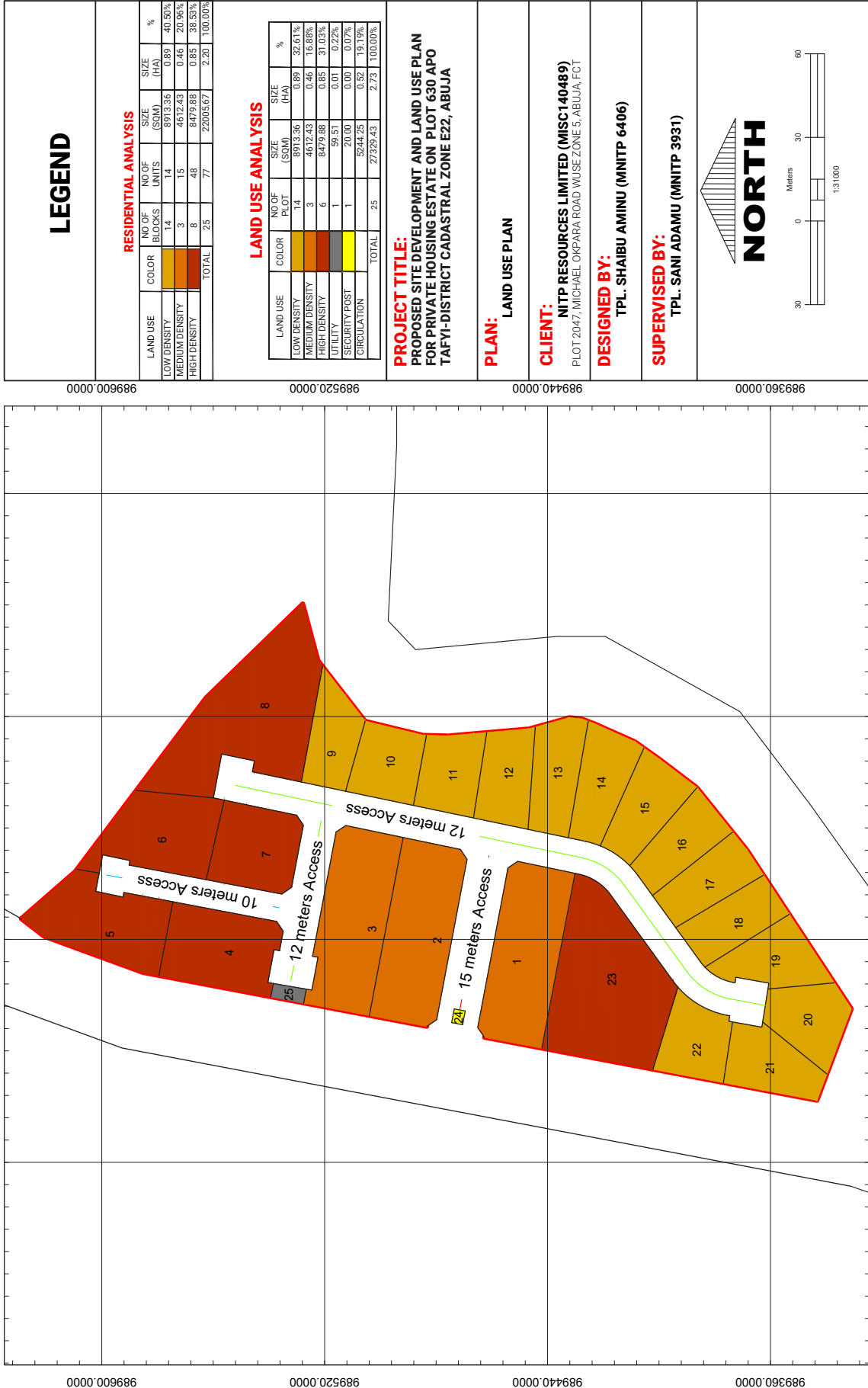
Energy and Resilience in Overcoming Challenges

The process of securing such a valuable parcel of land required deployment of much energy combined with resilience. Many times, through calls and visitations to relevant stakeholders both at work and outside offices, reminders were placed to ensure the application got the required attention.

Legacy and Impact

Through his vision, determination, and strategic execution, Atebije has left an indelible mark on NITP. The Apo Tafyi land, now valued at over N800 million, stands as a testament to his leadership, ensuring that the institute has a strategic asset for future development, revenue generation, and professional growth. His achievement is a model of how proactive planning, advocacy, and resilience can yield monumental results for the planning profession in Nigeria.

PROPOSED SITE DEVELOPMENT AND LAND USE PLAN FOR PRIVATE HOUSING ESTATE ON PLOT 630 APO-TAFYI DISTRICT CADASTRAL ZONE E22, ABUJA



LEGEND

RESIDENTIAL ANALYSIS

LAND USE	COLOR	NO OF BLOCKS	NO OF UNITS	SIZE (SQM)	SIZE (HA)	%
LOW DENSITY	[Light Brown]	14	14	8913.36	0.89	40.50%
MEDIUM DENSITY	[Orange]	3	15	4612.43	0.46	20.96%
HIGH DENSITY	[Dark Red]	8	48	8479.88	0.85	38.53%
TOTAL		25	77	22005.67	2.20	100.00%

LAND USE ANALYSIS

LAND USE	COLOR	NO OF PLOT	SIZE (SQM)	SIZE (HA)	%
LOW DENSITY	[Light Brown]	14	8913.36	0.89	32.61%
MEDIUM DENSITY	[Orange]	3	4612.43	0.46	16.88%
HIGH DENSITY	[Dark Red]	6	8479.88	0.85	31.03%
UTILITY	[Yellow]	1	59.51	0.01	0.22%
SECURITY POST	[Yellow]	1	20.00	0.00	0.07%
CIRCULATION	[Yellow]	1	8244.25	0.82	19.19%
TOTAL		25	27329.43	2.73	100.00%

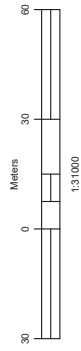
PROJECT TITLE:
PROPOSED SITE DEVELOPMENT AND LAND USE PLAN FOR PRIVATE HOUSING ESTATE ON PLOT 630 APO TAFYI-DISTRICT CADASTRAL ZONE E22, ABUJA

PLAN:
LAND USE PLAN

CLIENT:
NITP RESOURCES LIMITED (MISC140489)
 PLOT 2047, MICHAEL OKPARA ROAD WUSE ZONE 5, ABUJA, FCT

DESIGNED BY:
TPL. SHAIKU AMINU (MNITP 6406)

SUPERVISED BY:
TPL. SANI ADAMU (MNITP 3931)



TASK 3: BREAKING THE JINX; BUILDING THE MAIN SECRETARIAT COMPLEX AND REMOVING THE STIGMA

Tpl. Nathaniel Atebije's Transformational Effort in Securing Investors for the NITP Secretariat Complex

For 35 years, the dream of a befitting National Secretariat complex for the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners (NITP) remained just a dream. The project, which was meant to be a symbol of the Institute's institutional strength and professional pride, instead became an unfinished legacy, a source of frustration, and, ultimately, a stigma on the reputation of NITP. Year after year, the Secretariat remained an abandoned vision with little hope of realization. As part of his vision in service which was crafted before he was elected as National President of the Institute, he promised to take up the challenge with his characteristic determination, strategic foresight, and an unyielding commitment to transforming impossibilities into achievements.

Tpl. Atebije's approach to the Secretariat challenge was not one of lamentation or excuse-making. Instead, he saw it as an opportunity to demonstrate that true leadership is about solving problems, not merely inheriting them. His resolve to deliver the project was rooted in his belief that NITP, as the foremost body of professional town planners in Nigeria, must not only advocate for planned cities but also demonstrate the principles of effective project execution in its own affairs.

Upon assuming office, he refused to accept the status quo. He chose to focus on what could be done. He understood that the biggest obstacle to the project was funding, and without credible investors, the Secretariat would remain an unfinished monument to lost opportunities.

Tpl. Atebije knew that securing investors for a long-abandoned project required more than just persuasion—it required credibility, transparency, and a compelling vision. He embarked on an extensive search for investors who shared his vision of transforming the Secretariat into a functional, edifice that would reflect the prestige of NITP. He brought proposals to the various management structure of the Institute, (Board of Trustees, Management Committee, National Executive Committee and the National Council) for consideration.

His engagement with investors was marked by a meticulous strategy:

- i. **Restoring Confidence in the Project** – Investors needed to see that this was not just another abandoned project but a viable, strategic development opportunity. Tpl. Atebije worked tirelessly to reshape the narrative around the Secretariat, presenting it as a project with strong institutional backing and a clear roadmap for completion.
- ii. **Ensuring Transparency and Accountability** –Understanding this, Tpl. Atebije prioritized openness in negotiations, laying out detailed plans, timelines, and investment security measures that reassured stakeholders of the project's credibility.
- iii. **Leveraging Partnerships and Networks** –His ability to connect with decision-makers and articulate the importance of the project played a crucial role in moving the process forward.
- iv. **Innovative Funding and Investment Models** – Instead of relying on the traditional, limited fundraising methods that had failed in the past, he explored creative investment models. These models provided a win-win scenario, ensuring that investors saw tangible returns while the Institute gained a modern Secretariat without bearing an unsustainable financial burden.

Finally, a historic breakthrough which will eventually make the Secretariat a reality.

Through his relentless pursuit, Tpl. Atebije secured credible investors committed to bringing the Secretariat to completion. The required legal documentations were prepared and endorsed by the Board of Trustees. The project has commenced and currently on the second-floor slab. It is to be completed to taste before the end of 2025. His success was not just in finding willing partners but in ensuring that agreements were signed, work commenced, and there was a clear pathway to project completion.

This singular achievement was not just about erecting a building; it was about restoring the dignity of the Institute. No longer would the NITP Secretariat be an embarrassment or a symbol of stagnation. Instead, it would stand as a testament to what is possible when visionary leadership meets unwavering determination.



TASK 4: STAFF WELFARE

Under the leadership of Tpl. Nathaniel Atebije, the welfare of the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners (NITP) Secretariat staff was given top priority. He believed that a motivated and well-supported workforce was crucial to the success of the Institute's operations. Immediately he assumed office, he observed the low salary earned by the staff members especially the junior staff. He presented the case to the Management Committee and other structures of the Institute for improved salary. The proposal was graciously approved and an improved pay-pack came into force.

During his administration, the government's removal of fuel subsidy led to a sharp increase in fuel prices, creating hardship for many Nigerians, including the Institute's staff. Recognizing the immediate impact this would have on their daily lives, Atebije moved swiftly to cushion the effect by setting up a committee to study the impact of the hike of petroleum prices and make appropriate recommendations. The recommendations were considered by the administrative structures of the Institute and received the approval of the National Council.

Beyond financial incentives, Atebije's concern for staff welfare was further demonstrated through receiving the National Council's approval of lateral promotions for all staff members. Some staff who improved on their educational qualifications were upgraded. These not only boosted morales but also created a sense of fairness, recognition, and opportunity for career advancement within the Secretariat. By these actions, Nat Atebije reinforced his reputation as a leader who genuinely cared for his team, ensuring that under his tenure, no staff member was left behind in the face of national economic challenges.

TASK 5: PERSISTENT AND DILIGENT ADVOCACY TO GIVE PLANNING ITS PRIDE OF PLACE.

Advocacy

- In advocacy, he had more than 160 engagements with the media consisting of NTA National and States, AIT, TVC, Arise, Wazobia and Silverbird Television, BOJ Tv, Abuja, Funmi Iyanda Tv, Aso Tv, Human Rights Radio/Television and Kaftan Tv.
- The Institute enjoyed a lot of patronage from radio stations such as Radio Nigeria, Breeze FM, Akure, Law FM, Lagos, Maria FM, Abuja and Police Radio as well as many other State Radio Stations. The support we had from the print media was enormous especially the Guardian, Punch and Tribune.
- The Institute got to the watershed of the television media broadcast when our Honorary Fellow of the Institute, Barr. Festus Adebayo established the Housing Tv Africa. Through collaboration he gave us weekly airtime at the station which is called “**City Pulse**” at no cost at all. There some other weekly intermediary programmes where he engaged us to analyze issues on urban planning.
- The **social media** handles which he invested in, shared our news and issues widely.
- He had eight quarterly **National Press Conferences** to address major issues of professional and contemporary relevance to shape thoughts and policies of government, address failures in the provisions of dividends of democracy as well as the lack-luster attitude to physical planning in Nigeria. This helped some States to engage in the preparation of physical development plans.
- **Courtesy Calls:** visits were made to relevant Committees of the National Assembly and MDAs of the Executive.
- **National Issues** were diligently analyzed and recommendations were made to relevant agencies of government and communities through our Issues Committee.
- His advocacy efforts initiated the maiden edition of **Lagos Physical Planning Summit**. It was a well-organized and robust engagement on how to enhance the physical planning and development of Lagos.
- He held eight virtual engagements with the members and the public through a programme called **An Evening with the National President**. These engagements attracted wide publicity and interactions on all our media platforms.
- He reached out to aspirants of political offices through memoranda that went to all Presidential candidates and Governorship aspirants in the last general elections to appeal to them for proper positioning of physical planning as the effective tool for the achievement of the contents of their manifestos and delivery of the dividends of democracy. He particularly called on them to ensure the creation of a specialized Ministry for Physical Planning and this was done. Today, we can look back and appreciate the value of this advocacy as the Federal and some State Governments have already created these Ministries.
- He took advocacy to the tertiary educational institutions on the need to create masterplans for their campuses as well as ensuring that the position of the Director of Physical Planning is occupied by professional town planners. taken further to TETFund, they directed that institutions must have masterplans prepared by professional planners to enjoy their facilities. This policy has escalated the fortunes of consultants as well as reducing employment of town planners.

TASK 6: REBUILDING THE WEBSITE OF THE INSTITUTE

Tpl. Nathaniel Atebije, with his characteristic drive for excellence, was not satisfied with the outdated and unappealing website of the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners (NITP). He believed that an Institute of such national importance deserved a more interactive, modern, and user-friendly digital presence that could effectively represent its vision, activities, and membership to the world. Rather than merely voicing his concerns, he took bold, proactive steps. He initiated the idea of building a completely new website for the Institute – one that would be visually appealing, easy to navigate, and equipped with features that would allow for better communication and engagement among members, students, and the public.

Understanding the financial constraints that could delay such a project, he turned to his personal network of friends and professional associates. With his persuasive reputation for selfless leadership, he mobilized voluntary financial contributions from this circle, ensuring that the Institute did not have to bear the immediate financial burden. Through his leadership, the new NITP website had reached 85% completion before he left office. It should be commissioned as soon as possible. His action demonstrated once again his commitment to excellence, innovation, and service beyond the call of duty.

TASK 7: BOOK PRODUCTION

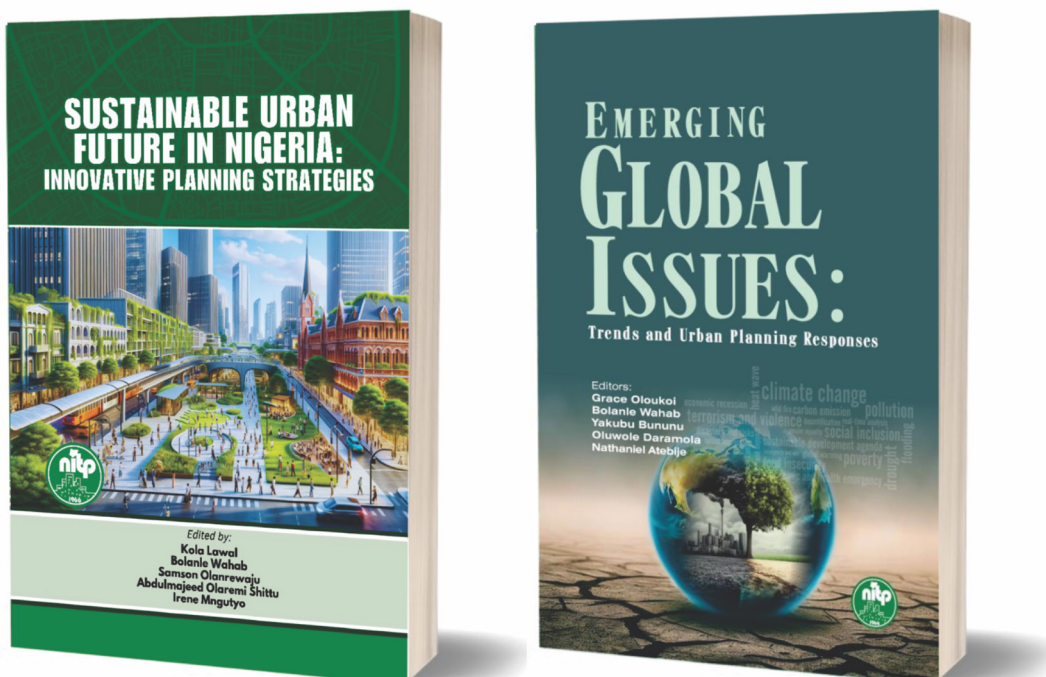
Tpl. Nathaniel Atebije’s motivation to set up the Book Production Committee was deeply rooted in his unwavering passion for advancing the frontiers of planning knowledge and practice in Nigeria. He recognized that the planning profession was at a critical crossroads, facing emerging global challenges – from climate change to rapid urbanization – that demanded new thinking, deeper reflection, and bolder professional responses. Driven by a vision to create a platform, it became an opportunity where planners, academics, and policymakers could engage with contemporary issues and contribute to shaping a sustainable future. He believed that books are enduring tools for education, advocacy, and capacity building. Thus, he initiated the Presidential Book Production Committee to systematically harness the wealth of knowledge and experience among professionals and to document insights that would inspire action.

This initiative led to the production of two significant books:

- **Emerging Global Issues** – a collection that explores critical global trends impacting planning and development.
- **Sustainable Urban Future in Nigeria** – a volume dedicated to charting pathways toward achieving more resilient and livable cities within the Nigerian context.

Building on this momentum, Atebije also inspired a third important work, **Communication and Change Management: Essentials for Urban and Regional Planners**, recognizing that no matter how sound planning ideas are, they can only effect transformation when effectively communicated and properly managed through change processes. This third book emphasized the vital role of communication skills and strategic management in achieving planning objectives.

In essence, Atebije’s driving motivation was the urgent need to empower planners with knowledge, sharpen their advocacy tools, and position the profession to lead Nigeria – and indeed the world – toward a more sustainable urban future.



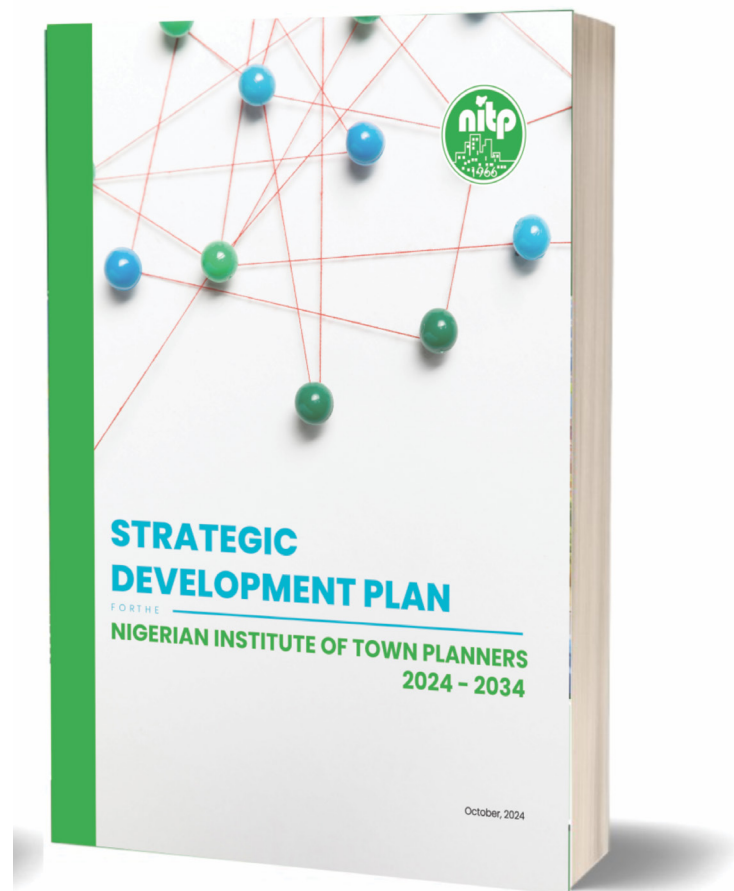
TASK 8: TEN-YEAR STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR NITP

The Committee originally set up to produce the Ten-Year Strategic Development Plan for the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners (NITP) had faced several setbacks and was unable to complete its assignment since 2019. Recognizing the critical importance of a strategic plan for the future of the Institute, Tpl. Nathaniel Atebije, upon assuming leadership, made it a personal priority to rejuvenate the Committee and see the project to completion.

Atebije brought renewed energy and focus to the effort. He reconstituted and expanded the membership of the Committee by bringing in committed professionals with proven track records of delivering results. He provided clear terms of reference, set strict but realistic deadlines, and emphasized accountability at every stage. Regular progress meetings, close monitoring, and encouragement ensured that the Committee remained focused and motivated.

Importantly, Atebije inspired a shared sense of purpose among Committee members – stressing that the strategic plan was not just a document, but a critical roadmap for repositioning the NITP to meet emerging challenges and seize future opportunities.

Through this determined leadership and hands-on engagement, the Committee completed its work. The Ten-Year Strategic Development Plan was formally finalized and successfully launched during the 2024 National Conference of the NITP – a major milestone and a testament to Atebije’s characteristic vision, persistence, and ability to drive institutional change.



TASK 9: REVIEW OF THE NIGERIAN URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING LAW

The Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law, enacted in 1992 and slightly amended in 2004, has long suffered from poor implementation and lack of domestication across the States. Over time, certain provisions of the law became outdated, unable to address the evolving complexities of urban growth, technological advancement, and sustainable development needs.

Recognizing the urgent need for reform, Tpl. Nathaniel Atebije took decisive action. Understanding that without a relevant, functional legal framework, the planning profession would remain constrained, he set up a Special Committee specifically tasked with reviewing the existing law and proposing comprehensive amendments.

This was not a simple assignment. It demanded deep technical knowledge, wide consultations, and careful balancing of legal, administrative, and practical planning realities. The Committee worked diligently under Atebije's leadership, producing a robust set of proposals that reflected both contemporary global best practices and the unique planning needs of Nigeria.

With strategic advocacy and persistent engagement, the proposals were formally transmitted to the National Assembly. As of December 2024, the amendment bill had already gone through the first reading — a significant legislative milestone that had eluded the profession for decades.

This achievement stands as a testament to Atebije's visionary leadership, tenacity, and his unwavering commitment to securing a stronger legal foundation for planning practice in Nigeria. It reflects a historic step toward revitalizing planning law to better serve present and future generations.

TASK 10: CREATING AN ANTHEM FOR THE NITP

The idea of creating an anthem for the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners (NITP) was first conceived during the tenure of Past President Tpl. Toyin Ayinde. The vision was to have a unifying anthem that would reflect the ideals, aspirations, and professional pride of the Institute. However, despite the enthusiasm, the process proved far more challenging than initially anticipated, and the project remained incomplete until the presidency of Tpl. Nathaniel Atebije.

The journey toward completing the anthem was marked by several challenges. First, there was the difficulty of articulating the spirit and philosophy of town planning in a manner that would resonate with the diverse membership of the Institute. Crafting lyrics that were both inspirational and technically reflective of the profession required more than poetic skills – it demanded deep understanding of the ethos of planning.

Secondly, achieving consensus among members posed a significant hurdle. Different perspectives emerged regarding the tone, language, and thematic focus of the anthem. Reconciling these views required extensive consultations, patience, and diplomacy.

Recognizing these complexities, Tpl. Atebije provided decisive leadership by engaging professional consultants skilled in musical composition and lyrical development. Under his guidance, the process became more structured and focused. He ensured that members' opinions were sought through a transparent and inclusive procedure, while also insisting on maintaining professional standards that would give the anthem lasting relevance.

It was a laborious and painstaking exercise, involving multiple drafts, reviews, and critical evaluations. Yet, the commitment to excellence and the determination to forge a shared symbol of identity kept the effort alive.

Ultimately, through resilience, collaboration, and visionary leadership, the NITP successfully adopted one anthem – a historic achievement that gave the Institute a new tool for unity, pride, and public identity.

TASK 11: EXPOSURE OF MEMBERS TO INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICES

Recognizing the importance of international exposure in broadening professional horizons, deepening competence, and enhancing global relevance, Tpl. Nathaniel Atebije placed a strong emphasis on creating structured opportunities for Nigerian Town Planners to participate in major international conferences. Through the strategic work of the Committee on International Conferences, a deliberate effort was made to mobilize and coordinate Nigerian participation in key global events.

In 2023, this effort notably led to the successful participation of many Nigerian Town Planners in conferences held in the United Kingdom, as well as in the **World Urban Forum 12** in Cairo, Egypt – two landmark events that offered immense value.

The internal exposure gained through these conferences was transformative on multiple fronts. First, it allowed Nigerian planners to engage directly with cutting-edge ideas, innovations, and best practices in urban and regional planning from across the world. They interacted with international experts, expanded their professional networks, and brought back valuable insights into emerging global trends like smart cities, climate-responsive planning, sustainable urbanization, and inclusive governance.

Second, it elevated the profile of Nigerian planners on the global stage. Their participation demonstrated the country's commitment to contributing to the international planning discourse and learning from global experiences to improve local practice.

Third, it fostered a renewed spirit of professional confidence and aspiration among Nigerian planners. Seeing how their peers operated in different environments inspired many to aim higher, advocate for reforms, and pursue excellence in their own practice.

In essence, the initiative to promote international exposure under Atebije's leadership was not just about travel; it was a strategic investment in the intellectual capital, global relevance, and professional empowerment of Nigerian Town Planners – positioning them to be stronger agents of change at home.

TASK 12: CAPACITY BUILDING FOR MEMBERS AND STAFF

- Under the leadership of our celebrant, the flagship programme capacity building outfit jointly organized with TOPREC, **Mandatory Continuing Professional Development Programme** recorded an unprecedented participation of 1,256 members and others and a profit of N19 million. Part of this profit was used in publishing the proceedings of the programme while the balance was shared between the two bodies after reserving the seed fund for the 2025 edition.
- **The Leadership programme** for National and Chapter Executive members were improved upon. Participation was also robust; bringing improved information and skills for leadership in the Institute.
- **Staff capacity building:** Staff were encouraged to pursue higher education and gain professional certifications to improve on their performances.
- **Our young professionals** were encouraged to participate in the online workshop organized by APBN which we subscribed to. The workshop was also rich and engaging.
- **Student members were encouraged** to participate in the capacity building programmes such as the MCPDP and the Professionals' Summit of APBN.

CHAPTER THREE: HE SPEAKS TRUTH TO POWER BOLDLY



ADVOCATING BOLDLY WITH PASSION: SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER

Tpl. Nathaniel Atebije has served as a bold voice for physical planning in Nigeria.

As the National President of the Institute or even before he assumed that status, he has never been one to shy away from difficult conversations. As a professional town planner, he has always spoken truth to power—firmly, courageously, and with the intellectual depth that commands respect. Unlike those who tiptoe around sensitive issues, he believes that when it comes to the future of our cities and the well-being of our people, there is no room for silence, ambiguity, or diplomatic evasion. **His message has been consistent and clear: *We must embrace physical planning, or we will perish with our cities.***

When he addresses policymakers, government officials, and key stakeholders, he does not mince words. He speaks with the authority of experience and the weight of evidence, challenging those in power to take urban planning seriously before it is too late. His arguments are never driven by emotion alone; they are backed by well-researched data, case studies, and compelling real-world examples. At various high-profile fora, he has fearlessly pointed out the crisis in Nigeria's urban centers—chaotic traffic, uncontrolled development, flooding disasters, slums expanding faster than planned areas, and the increasing collapse of infrastructure. He does not sugarcoat the truth: *If we continue to neglect planning, our cities will become unlivable, unsafe, and ultimately unsustainable.*

He maintains that leaders must be held accountable. While many professionals shy away from confronting government failures, Tpl. Atebije has repeatedly challenged leaders to take responsibility for the urban chaos that poor governance has created. Without disrespect, but with undeniable clarity, he has told policymakers:

- *You cannot keep approving buildings without planning infrastructure to support them.*
- *You cannot allow unchecked urban sprawl and expect orderly development.*
- *You cannot neglect physical planning and expect economic growth, because planning is the foundation of sustainable development.*

He presents planning as a solution, and not just a complaint.

Unlike critics who only highlight problems, he offers solutions and has repeatedly explained to policymakers that physical planning is not an abstract theory but a practical tool for improving lives and economic prosperity. He has justified why governments must:

- *Integrate town planning into national development strategies.*
- *Fund and empower planning institutions.*
- *Implement policies that prioritize sustainability.*
- *Involve professional planners in decision-making rather than allowing political expediency to dictate urban growth.*

He has perpetually maintained and warned policy makers that the cost of ignoring urban planning is catastrophic; hence, in his characteristic straightforward manner, he warns that ignoring planning today will result in disasters tomorrow. He has always boldly declared:

- *If we fail to plan, we are simply planning to fail.*
- *If we continue down this path of negligence, our cities will collapse under the weight of their own*

mismanagement.

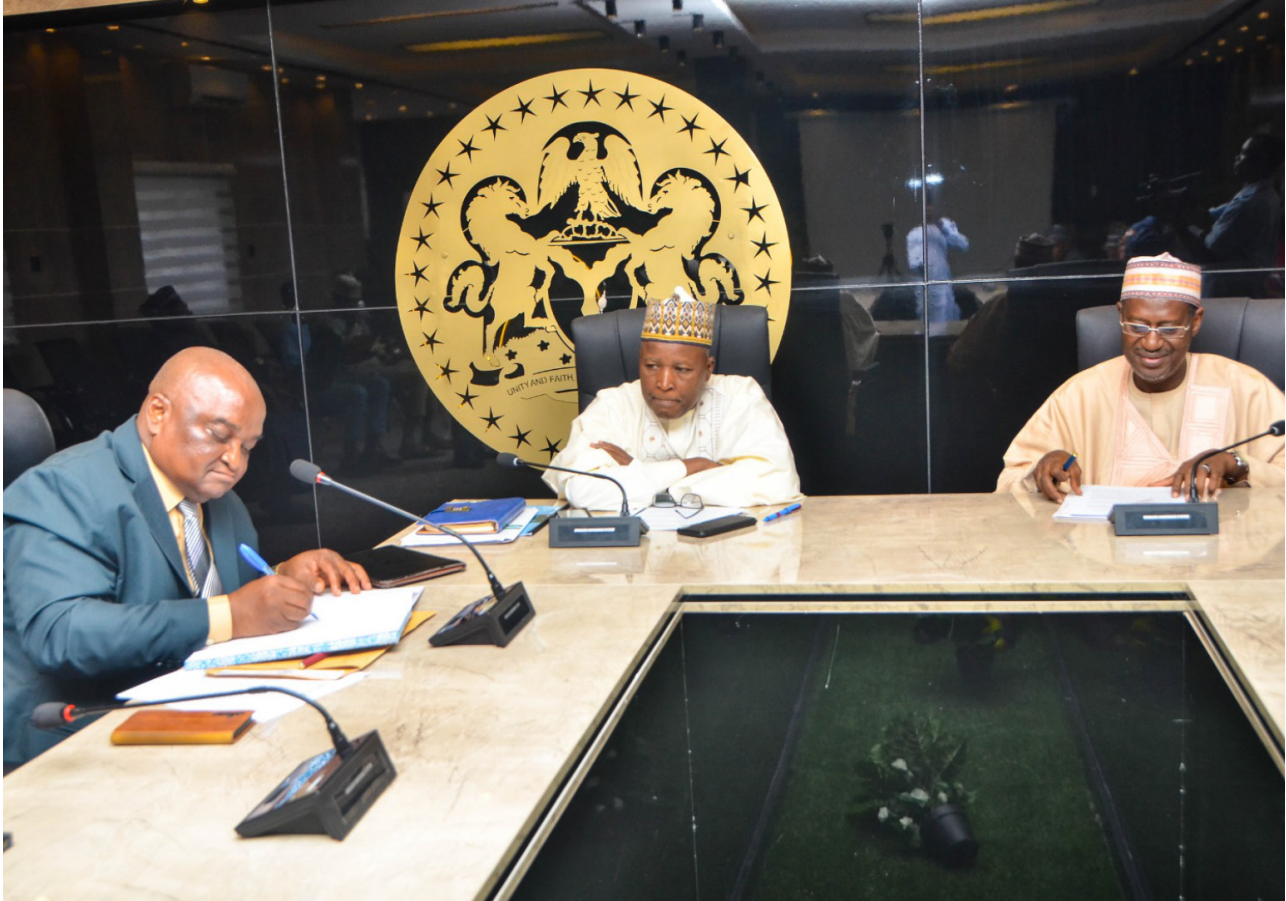
- *Planning is not an option – it is a necessity. Without it, our urban centers will become centers of crisis.*

When called to discuss with skeptics, he has always won them over.

Even in the face of resistance, he has a way of making people listen. His eloquence, deep knowledge, and passion for the subject make it difficult to ignore him. Many who initially dismissed physical planning as a bureaucratic obstacle have changed their stance after listening to his compelling arguments that even hard and skeptic policy makers have been convinced that:

- *Cities that embrace planning thrive economically and socially.*
- *Planning is an investment, not an expense.*
- *Sustainable urban development is the key to national progress.*

His fearless advocacy for physical planning is not just about words – it is about action.





CHAPTER FOUR: PRESS CONFERENCES





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FIRST PRESS CONFERENCE OF TPL. NATHANIEL M. ATEBIJE, FNITP, THE 25TH NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE NIGERIAN INSTITUTE OF TOWN PLANNERS HELD AT NITP NATIONAL SECRETARIAT, ABUJA, ON 9TH DECEMBER 2022.

THEME: THERE CAN BE NO PROSPERITY IN THE JUNGLE

Nigeria has groped in darkness and confusion for many years. The dream of prosperity has been an illusion and recurring mirage. Various and successive governments have wallowed in the “near or no success syndrome”. Hopes of the citizenry have been dashed times without number. The poor are getting poorer and the bargain for safety has been costly and unaffordable. Slum living, inadequate social and engineering infrastructure are the hallmarks of our human settlements. Impunity and survival of the fittest built on the foundation of selfishness and greed put the nation out of touch with the principles of sustainable development which our leaders endorsed along with many other international treaties. This is the character of the “giant of Africa”. Whoever then calls Nigeria as a jungle is right and not far from the truth.

A jungle is a place that has no plan. Each member of a jungle navigates its own way. Some members in a jungle are predators while others are preys. Nigerian settlements are a caricature of space, a travesty of order and display of environmental cacophony. Our finite space is treated as if it has limitless or unlimited elastic limit. Because our space has been turned into the similitude of a jungle, the right people have never been placed to organize, order and manage our environments. Priorities are misplaced. Budgets are traded with and for the highest bidder. Little is known by people who have been in power that the order in the environment determines order in other spheres of life. Where physical planning is not achieved, economic planning and development remain a mirage, because all economic activities take place on land. Prosperity is achieved where the environment is orderly, functional, aesthetically pleasant and safe. These are the attributes that any planned space is endowed with.

What explanation can the government give to the people of Nigeria for not effectively activating the law on urban and regional planning which it enacted about 30 years ago? What justification can the government give to the people of this nation for relegating the most important function to the back space by making urban and regional planning an appendage to other organs of government? For effective function, it is believed that “square pegs should be kept in square holes”. But wither Nigeria; where non-experts in physical planning are the team leaders in decisions that affect the use of land? Common sense demands that experts should guide lay men; but the reverse is the case with issues that relate to urban and regional planning in Nigeria. There is no surprise in the results we now have, which have graduated to become difficult and almost intractable problems such as catalogue of physical, economic, social and environmental challenges. We are faced with insecurity, insurgency, lack of safety, flooding, desertification, diseases, slum, environmental filth and squalor making it difficult for Nigerians to live good lives. And because the leadership of Nigeria

has paid deaf ears to physical planning, they have opened their ears to being reactionary by standing by to combat disasters through humanitarian services, hence the creation of a Ministry for Disaster Management and Humanitarian Services. It is not as though the Ministry is not important, however, if planning (which is the vehicle to avoiding disaster is not embraced, then we have become bed-fellows with disaster. This is a grossly misplaced priority. Planning should be the priority; to enable us logically organize our environments; and where, through natural means or man-made errors we are faced with disaster, it could be easily tackled. Physical planning must be made a top priority.

We make bold to say that any group of people, community or government that neglects physical planning has sealed a contract to perish and has enrolled to be on the judgement line of posterity. We boldly say that posterity can never judge such persons with mercy.

Time has come and now it is, for Nigeria to chart a course for a Brighter Future for the prosperity of Nigerians and its citizens. We therefore, call on governments at all levels and the people of this nation to:

- i. Urgently activate the law on urban and regional planning which was enacted in 1992 and set up relevant structures to promote the planning and development of our human settlements;
- ii. Create a permanent Ministry of Physical Planning rather than making it an appendage to any other organ of government;
- iii. Recruit town planners to beef up the manpower gap in offices of government; train and retrain the planners in public establishments to enhance their professional capacities, provoke improved performance and effective service delivery.
- iv. Ensure that land (which is our natural and common inheritance and patrimony for all generations) should not be dispensed and shared among people as reward for political patronage. It should only be used judiciously after it has been properly planned by registered town planners.
- v. Prepare national, regional and local area master plans respectively to tackle and mitigate flooding and other environmental disasters in Nigeria within the framework of twenty to twenty-five (20/25) years' time frame.
- vi. Engage town planners to prepare physical development plans to guide location of land uses for effective harnessing of resources to promote their economic and social benefits. These plans would include National Physical Development Plan at the national level, Regional and Sub-Regional Development Plans, Urban and Rural Master plans, Sector Plans, District Plans, Detailed Site Development Plans and Action Area Plans at the State and Local Government levels. It will also require the engagement of professional Town Planners in both private and public sectors as consultants and operators/implementers of the plans.

Conclusion

It is only in jungles that nature acts without a plan, control and direction. When jungles are to be turned into habitable places for humans and other components of life, it becomes an environment to develop and prosper. Nigerians must therefore, plan their cities. Governments must be at forefront to promote planning. communities must demand from their representatives the plan for promoting the prosperity of their communities and abstain from empty and deceitful campaign promises. We can turn Nigeria from jungle to organized spaces if we plan, I mean physical planning.

Thank you for listening.



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SECOND PRESS CONFERENCE OF TPL. NATHANIEL M. ATEBIJE, FNITP, THE 25TH NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE NIGERIAN INSTITUTE OF TOWN PLANNERS HELD AT THE SHOPRITE MALL, WUSE ZONE 5 ON 8TH FEBRUARY 2023.

THEME: SO LONG, BUT NOT SO FAR

National Officers of the Institute, Your Excellences, Gentlemen of the Press, Ladies and Gentlemen, I count it a great privilege to speak with you again today through this press conference. In my interaction with you in December 2022, I lamented over the quality of human settlements in Nigeria which is akin to the jungle where prosperity would remain a mirage due to lack of commitment to physical planning. The time between our last discussion and now might not have been too long to expect a dramatic change in direction of policy and attitude of the policy makers, but however, sufficient for whoever has ears to hear and possibly commence appropriate action or propose to take action. We do not sound alarmist because we want to make noise, but to draw attention of those who are in power or intend to be in power to be guided into taking right courses of action for us to realize the dream and vision of sane, rational and coordinated development in all its ramifications. We are not prophets of doom neither are we pessimists but we are not shy to talk to the circumstances of the moment. And if the moment does seem to smell well, the hopes of a better and Brighter Future would be bleak and can only turn into a mirage.

People learn from mistakes of the past but can we comfortably say that concerning our nation and its leaders? That Nigerians are living by luck and chance is not news because hardly can anyone project what the next moment will provide in every sphere of life. No hopes concerning the next meal, nor how to pay children's school fees, queues for petroleum products, pvc and new naira notes have become our bedmates, slums grow by the day, we fear and tremble during the rainy season because of incidences of flooding, building collapse, land grabbing, environments are filthy for lack of sufficient provisions for refuse management, people sleeping under bridges and shanty and naturally un-inhabitable places for lack of housing dot our urban and rural landscapes and a catalogue of social, physical, economic and environmental problems. What then can we lean on or rely upon when people grope with hopeless days and sleepless nights?

Governments have come and gone with unclear visions and unfulfilled promises; hopes are usually rekindled at their inceptions but woefully dashed unfulfilled at their ends. Governments are still coming in future and in deed in a matter of countable weeks from now, but what hopes do we have to provide human settlements that are physically efficient, aesthetically pleasant, sufficient infrastructure, adequate housing, socially stable and economically buoyant for the citizenry? This is the cry of the people in this country. We have been on this journey for so long but not so close to the answers we need. We have gone so far in creating constitutions, institutions and governments but not so far in governance or creating enabling environment for the people of this country to benefits of democracy which they are

paying dearly with the proceeds of the God-given (natural) and man-made resources of the land.

I took my time recently to study the manifestos of the political class clamoring for various positions. They are loaded with ideas and ideals of activities and programmes. The political parties must have engaged persons who are versatile and endowed with grammar to write good treatise for them that spans between national security to other issues as conflict resolution, job creation, agriculture and food security, industrialization, infrastructural provision, oil and gas development, education, health care, senior citizens, youth, sports, culture, women empowerment, environment, foreign policy, power, justice, democratic restructuring, human capital development and many other issues. A lot has been promised to give Nigerians the hope of getting into the Promised Land through infrastructure, industrial development, educational improvement, expansion and diversification of the economy, accelerating social development, easing transportation and improving convenience of living. But the real question concerning the lofty proposals is the reality of their thoughts. Another question is whether the conceivers of these plans are aware that implementation must be on the solid land. Thirdly, do the promise makers know that there are some people who are trained and have become experts in the organization of landuses to bring the highest beneficial dividends to developments on land? And except these questions are answered through good knowledge or advice to the policy makers, we may end up again building castles in the air. But let me be quick to appreciate the efforts of some States and their institutions that have made remarkable progress in their planning efforts such as Lagos, Ogun, Kaduna, FCT and a few others. There is no doubt that human settlements in these places are more livable than others. The few States that have made efforts need to support with relevant strong institutions, adequate manpower, funding and strong political will. Those that have not started the process of domesticating and implementing the Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law need to take urgent steps; while a State like Kwara that has got it completely wrong needs to retrace its steps to avoid the results of putting the cart before the horse or putting square pegs in round holes.

Back to our concern; looking through the plans of action of the political parties, there are a few indications of positive intensions for building a prosperous country. One of the manifestos indicated that if they are voted into power, **they will ensure full compliance with town planning and environmental laws and edicts.** Another party intends to embrace village and urban renewal programmes; encourage private-public partnership in housing development; improve and beautify the environment by establishing open space, parks and gardens for recreational purposes in cities, towns and within housing estates; and will not only provide affordable housing but will seek to build more inclusive communities comprising a mix of different income brackets and promises that their housing vision will be guided by equity and inclusiveness.

These indeed are good thoughts. But I got worried at seeing the location of these proposals in their documents. If the arrangement of the document would be the logic and priority of implementation, then urban and regional planning will be the last point of call. And if that becomes the reality, infrastructure, education, housing and all other developments will now be carried out before they come to urban and regional planning. The result of this again would be growth without planning or growth in confusion. It will result in mis-investment and under-development. This is why it appears that this nation has been long on the journey to development but yet no so close. Our efforts have gone so far but we are still not so close to hope to turn our dreams into the reality. Sustainable development is normally preceded by laid out physical plans which take into consideration the economic potentials, social

characteristics of the populace and environmental dispositions of space.

Before I round up this discussion, let me sympathize with families who lost their loved ones during the building collapse disasters we have recorded this year. That within a month, we recorded five collapses is unacceptable. Information at our disposal give indications of lowered professional standards, negligence on the side of professionals in construction coupled with incompetence, multiplicity of authorities in charge of granting development permits within urban areas and impunity.

Nigerians have high hopes that there will be a turn-around in the conception and implementation of developmental ideas to impact positively on citizens and their environment which will in turn boost their entire lives. We therefore recommend to the political parties and their flag-bearers at all levels of election to:

- a. Review their manifestos to reflect the critical role of physical planning in their agenda; and to carry out development in line with the provisions of the Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning, 1992 as amended in 2004; and in doing that, be prepared to establish relevant structures for their implementation as well as equipping them with the manpower needed, plant and equipment, infrastructure for administrative operations and adequate political will.
- b. Enforce city management and building control standards stringently to minimize disasters of building collapse. Let the authorities for once make offenders and violators to face the wrath of the law with possibilities of capital punishment. This will possibly scare people in the production process of buildings and make them to strictly comply with extant regulations.
- c. Understand that leadership is given by God; hence it should not be a “do or die” affair. Each contestant should know that “tomorrow is another day” and appreciate that their families are not ready to trade them for any position or money. They can only be useful to them while they are alive.
- d. Ensure they work with the agreements entered into with INEC and other relevant agencies to have rancour-free electioneering campaigns and voting process devoid of any violence;
- e. Educate the electorate to vote wisely.

Conclusion

We have been on the journey to prosperity for so long but at a speed so low because our intensions towards development have not been well-articulated through planning. This has weakened the hopes of citizens. Time has come for us to change the narrative, to change the speed and sequence of growth and development. Let us prepare to develop with professionally conceived plans. Engage town planners effectively to enable citizens enjoy the essence of politics and governance. With these, we can proudly join the rest of the world to preach and implement the gospel of sustainable development.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Press, I thank you all for gracing this event and we look forward to your publications as soon as possible.



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THIRD PRESS CONFERENCE OF THE 25TH NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE NIGERIAN INSTITUTE OF TOWN PLANNERS HELD AT THE NITP SECRETARIAT, WUSE ZONE 5 ON 19TH JUNE 2023

THEME: THE NEW DAWN: WE ARE EITHER DONE OR DOWN

National Officers of the Institute, Your Excellences, Gentlemen of the Press, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I want to first of all congratulate the President and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, His Excellency, Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, on his election and swearing in to the exalted position to become the Number One citizen of the most populous country in Africa. We also congratulate the Vice President, Senate President, Speaker of the House of Representatives, State Governors, Senators, Honourable Members of Federal House of Representatives and State Assemblies for their victories at the polls and being sworn in to their various positions. We wish you well with the strong hope that each person would perform his duties with the fear of God and to redeem Nigeria from its current state of affairs and place the nation at a higher pedestal for growth and development.

Dear Compatriots, it is a pleasure for me to address you all again today on issues that border on the planning and development of our nation. Our need for development in the right direction is so crucial to us because it is the pivot on which the peace and prosperity of this nation lies. In the light of this, in December 2022, I spoke to you and lamented on the despicable quality of our environment which is akin to the jungle in which prosperity remains a mirage; all because of the lip service being paid to physical planning of the nation. I then called on governments at all levels, individuals and corporate organizations to embrace physical planning to give a sane environment where the tenets of sustainable development are imbibed. In my second press conference held in February this year, I diagnosed the environmental calamities of Nigeria to include lack of physical planning, urban sprawl, slum development, urban decay, poor infrastructure, problems of refuse management due to challenges ranging from institutional inadequacy, technological insufficiency, passive political will or none at all in some parts of the country and other endemic maladies. These need urgent positive and determinate intervention of government, people in positions of authority to re-jig and restructure physical planning and environmental management policies, plans and institutions in Nigeria to facilitate rational growth and development. We are yet to see any visible improvement in efforts towards physical planning. However, in the strong belief of the imminent change in administration, we presented memoranda to political parties and their flag bearers to put them on notice and prompt them that if they won, the best tool to facilitate the delivery of the dividends of democracy is urban and regional planning. We still reiterate that there is no short cut to sustainable development outside physical planning. We either plan before we develop or muddle through in confusion to our peril. I say it again that there is no better alternative to town planning if our development efforts would make any sense.

The New Dawn

Earlier in the year, elections were held across Nigeria; they were keenly contested by several political parties, out of which four emerged with prominence. These include All Progressives Congress Party, Peoples Democratic Party, Labour Party and New Nigeria People's Party. There was no landslide difference in the votes cast for these parties, but APC won. On 29th May, despite the trepidations generated by pessimists, the Almighty God granted us a peaceful transition to a new administration at the Federal level and many States of the Federation. This heralded a new dawn. The politicians promised to give a new hope to Nigerians and we hope that our dreams will come to pass. Perhaps if an understanding is gleaned from the party symbols or logos there could be some expectations of a better Nigeria.

APC is represented by broom held by a strong hand for the purpose of sweeping off dirt and cleaning wastes. Several dirt and wastes have polluted our socio-economic environment. Corruption, nepotism, insurgency, banditry and petty house breaking are components that require frontal attack. If we are able to combat these vices reasonably, then we are done or else we shall be down again. But we must understand the underpinning principles of the broom which dictates that it is only in unity and togetherness that our goals and objectives will be achieved. Every stick of the broom is important and critical. The ruling party should therefore be seen to be far away from the Cabalism Syndrome where only a few corrupt, selfish and greedy bootlickers call the shots to misguide leadership. People to serve should be engaged on merit and capacity irrespective of the parties they belong to; the right institutions should be set up with clear mandates and good understanding of their deliverables. Other parties should come up with the spirit of sportsmanship to cooperate and collaborate with the ruling party instead of seeing themselves as opposition to attack initiatives of the ruling party. The emblems of other parties are also instructive in content and purpose.

PDP has the emblem of an umbrella which is to protect whoever uses it from scorching sun, rain and other adverse weather conditions. It depicts provision of shelter which translates to housing, infrastructure and safety. Labour Party's emblem depicts the picture of a united family (Papa, Mama, Pikin). It portrays inclusiveness and team spirit; harnessing the potentials of everybody for the betterment of Nigeria. NNPP has the logo that intends to transform Nigeria into the agricultural hub capable of feeding the nation and nations beyond our boundaries. The cock of APGA crows to announce a new dawn. Turning Nigeria into an industrial nation to meet up with the first world like it was done to turn Singapore to become a first world country from the third world community. We call on the ruling party to avoid the error of winner takes all; be open to advice and collaborate with other parties to move Nigeria to enduring peace and prosperity.

The new administration has taken off. There seem to be a good start, and we look forward to effective and purposeful leadership. I listened to the inaugural address of the President with loads of hope and appreciation. There seem to be a focus. But the focus needs some level of trimming to ensure we get our priorities right. The President spoke profusely on security, economy, job creation, agriculture, infrastructure, monetary policy, foreign policy and other matters. Such lofty dreams have been shared in the past but they went unfulfilled because of lack of planning. I reiterate that all the listed activities take place on available land; and unless there is plan of where such projects are to be located, the best of the investments may not be realized. We should bear in mind that land is fixed and demands on it expand every day. To ensure that the right project is in the right place at the right time by the right developer, town planners must be engaged as consultants to plan our settlements and manage them.

The Challenge of GIS Consultants in Nigeria

One of the new technological tools to aid physical planning is the application of Geographical Information Systems. GIS serves as both a database and a toolbox for urban planning. In a database-oriented GIS, spatial and textual data can be stored and linked using the geo-relational model. GIS supports efficient data retrieval, query, and mapping. When combined with data from other tabular databases or specially conducted surveys such as socio-economic surveys, geographical information can be used to make effective planning decisions. As a toolbox, GIS allows planners to perform spatial analysis using geo-processing functions such as map overlay, connectivity measurement, network analysis and buffering.

The most frequently involved sectors of urban planning are land use, transport, housing, land development, and environment. At each scale of planning there are different stages namely the determination of planning objectives; the analysis of existing situations; modelling and projection; development of planning options; selection of planning options; plan implementation; and plan evaluation, monitoring, and feedback.

We lament over the recent quiet invasion of foreign syndicates on Nigerian Governors who confuse them with figures concerning the benefits of GIS. They inform them that they can carry out assignments beyond their core competences. They engage in physical planning. The end result is poor planning and waste of resources for an unprofessional job. Giving such jobs to foreigners has its security implications. We enjoin all Governors of States to minimize patronage of foreign consultants in physical planning and GIS because Nigerian consultants have come of age to provide such services; even where there are deficiencies in Nigerian consultants, they can invite foreigners to assist; but our land data and information would be kept within our boundaries.

The Challenge of Ocean Surge

In a recent disaster in Aiyetoro, a riverine community in Ilaje Local Government Area of Ondo State, ocean surge displaced over 2,000 people while 200 houses were destroyed. We sympathize with the victims of this catastrophe. The need to take more practical and positive action is overdue. Permanent solutions such as relocation of residents to a more secured planned environment should be sought instead of the temporary relief measures provided by Emergency Management agencies of government. We call upon the State Government and the Federal Government to step up actions through intensive studies and production of implementable plans to arrest this menace. Similar steps should be taken in other parts of the country where flood disasters occur.

Demolitions in Kano

We have observed recent efforts of the Governor of Kano State and his officials to bring sanity to the physical development of Kano city. Good as it may, it is important that such actions are carried out after detailed studies. Time it was when we planned for people, now we plan and execute the plan with the people, moreso because we are practicing democracy. As at last count, it was revealed that properties worth N126 billion had gone down the drain in an ailing national economy. We call on the government to exercise some restraint in these actions and carry them out logically and professionally.

Conclusion

We want to remind the ruling party of their campaign promise that they will ensure full

compliance with town planning and environmental laws and edicts to set up institutions to implement the Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law which was enacted about 30 years ago such as National Physical Planning Commission to embark on the preparation National Physical Plan.

We call on the Federal Government again to restructure its agencies and create a single Ministry of Physical Planning rather than being an appendage to other ministries.

We call on the ruling party to avoid the error of winner takes all; be open to advice and collaborate with other parties to move Nigeria to enduring peace and prosperity. Other parties should wipe out the concept of opposition and compliment the activities of the ruling party to enable us enjoy peace and prosperity in the land.

We call on the Federal Government and Ondo State Government to take quick steps to arrest the perennial menace of ocean surge and flooding in Aiyetoro and other vulnerable places which suffer similar environmental distress as well as we enjoin all dwellers in places prone to flooding to relocate to safer places to avoid disasters this year.

We call on the government of Kano State to handle the enforcement on illegal developments professionally, logically and with human face especially because of the impact of the actions on the economy; taking note that democracy is practiced through consensus and collaboration.

With these we can jubilate that the New Dawn, Nigeria is Done for higher development and never to go Down again.

Your Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Press, I thank you all for gracing this event.



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FOURTH PRESS CONFERENCE OF THE 25TH NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE NIGERIAN INSTITUTE OF TOWN PLANNERS HELD AT THE NITP DELTA STATE CHAPTER SECRETARIAT, ASABA ON SATURDAY, 21ST OCTOBER 2023

THEME: PLAN WELL AND LIVE WELL

National Officers of the Institute, Your Excellences, Gentlemen of the Press, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I thank God for another opportunity to address the Press on some issues worth considering in the growth and development of our nation again. But permit me to first of all give glory to the Almighty God for granting us journey mercies to come from various parts of this country and the good success we recorded in the management of the affairs of our Institute for the past one year. I am grateful to all of you (especially the Gentlemen of the Press) for the support you have given us. I would not take this for granted but only to express our profound gratitude for the unflinching support. May God bless you all. Let me use this opportunity to thank the people that have been placed in the positions of authority and service in the nation for the leadership roles they have played so far especially since the inception of the new administration. I want to particularly appreciate the Governor of Delta State for the support we have received from him so far and of course the more that we look forward to.

Distinguished Countrymen, it is a thing of joy for me to speak on some issues that relate to the growth and development of Nigeria; and to address these issues with a view to placing our nation tall in the comity of nations. The address today is the fourth Press Conference since I became the National President of the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners on 11th November 2022. Beyond the Press Conferences, there have been many other engagements in the print and electronic media through which we identified critical challenges facing the nation and proffered solutions to them. For the purpose of those who did not participate in the earlier conferences, I wish to give a few highlights of the issues we talked about. The first Press Conference dwelt on redeeming Nigeria from its jungle-like environmental disposition, to position it for rational development. The second one identified endemic environmental maladies of our nation and called for planning and attitudinal changes to put Nigeria on the path of good development. The third Press Conference saw the leadership change in Nigeria as a new dawn with renewed hope and prayed that the nation would not be pushed lower than where we were but rather lift us higher in the ladder of positive purposeful development.

Plan Well and Live Well

The root of every success lies in planning. The absence of planning dictates confusion, chaos and anarchy. Our settlements have been riddled with uncoordinated developments because of lack of physical planning which exposes them and their inhabitants to environmental,

social and economic challenges such as insecurity, poor infrastructure, vulnerability to effects of climate change, disasters, impunity, compromised and conflicting landuses. When city authorities are confronted with the insanity which such developments pose, they resort to demolition of structures. Demolition of illegal structures is the surgery procedure for stemming the tide of urban decay and illegalities. While it answers to the need, it throws us always into the “syndrome of development by destruction”. This is much worse, when in some cases, the demolition is done with symptoms of vendetta and abuse of power. It impacts negatively on the economic and social fabrics and health of the city system. While we invoke such actions to address illegalities in the development of the city, they are not accepted as the hallmark of city management. They are rather the visible demonstration of the failure of planning or the lack of it. Effective city development starts with planning carried out by qualified and licensed professional town planners, and its development is controlled by statutory authorities well-equipped with relevant manpower and technical ability to respond to incursions before they reach sympathy levels. It is worthy of note that one of the guaranteed fundamental rights of the citizens as provided in the constitution is the provision of security. An unplanned settlement is an unsafe settlement. Therefore, for this right to be ensured, towns, cities and rural areas must be planned. Planning should be taken as the first fruit of the dividends of democracy. Citizens must demand for the planning of our cities since it is the bedrock of growth and development. It is more to be desired than asking for improvement in minimum wage because wages amount to waste if the environment to enjoy them are poor. We therefore, call on governments at all levels to note the high rate of decline in our cities due to lack of planning, insufficient manpower and equipment to enforce plans and declare a “State of Emergency” on our unplanned urban environments. Plans should be reviewed by experienced consultants, where they exist, to meet contemporary needs; required technical and professional manpower should be engaged by public authorities, equipment needed to monitor and enforce expedited compliance should be provided to minimize the “development by destruction” syndrome in our cities. This is the right course to take to facilitate good and profitable development of human settlements. I say again that if we plan well, we shall live well. If we live well, we shall prosper well.

Accreditation of Planning Schools

Tertiary institutions in the country are expected to produce high level manpower of proven professional status for the development of the nation. The quality of academic knowledge is expected to be embellished by practical experience. This is why government has set up regulatory bodies which are expected to confirm the quality of professional information given to would-be professionals through the accreditation process. But it is becoming visible that tertiary institutions hardly care about accreditation of the regulatory bodies but rather depend on the academic accreditation carried out by the National Universities Commission. Some of them claim lack of budget for accreditation procedures while the real reason is lack of equipment and tools for training. They end up producing half-baked graduates who may not be able to stand the test of professionalism; send them into the labour market as quacks to perform professional services, the result of which is costing the nation losses in lives and properties.

We call on proprietors of planning schools to adequately equip their departments with necessary tools for professional training. We call for sufficient funding of planning programmes to enable them perform optimally. We also call for the harmonization of the activities of NUC and the Regulatory Bodies of the professions to minimize the frustrations that our young professionals are thrown into after graduating from their institutions. We call on all universities in the nation that offer planning education to ensure that their courses in Urban

and Regional Planning are fully accredited at any point in time.

Return of Geography to Secondary Schools

In yester-years, geography was a core subject of studies right from the primary schools to drive environmental consciousness into students right from childhood through teenage to adulthood. Geography, as we know, is a discipline related to space and seeks to understand spatial characteristics and attributes, patterns of distribution, location and concentration of phenomena over space. In view of the critical characteristics of land, being first among equals in the production and value chain systems, it becomes a knowledge that should be compulsory to almost all that have anything to do on earth. Unfortunately, there has been a fast decline in the study of this course at the secondary education level. This is affecting enrollment of students to acquire planning education. And if town planners who are so few to manage our towns and cities presently further decline in number, then the country will be engulfed in more serious physical planning and environmental crisis. We therefore, call on the Ministry of Education to critically review the curriculum of secondary schools and re-introduce geography course to this level; if it cannot be made a compulsory subject for general knowledge of the environment, it should be made optional. The longer we tolerate this compromise and neglect, the worse for rational application of our resources. We must study geography. This is necessary to save the future of towns and cities; a knowledge that is critical to the planning and development of human settlements to make us live well.

Conclusion

We call on the Federal Government which has promised Nigerians “Renewed Hope” to bring the hope alive through physical planning of our living environments. We still want to remind the ruling party of its campaign promise that it will ensure full compliance with town planning and environmental laws and edicts to set up institutions to implement the Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law and review the sections of the law that are running into the crisis of relevance. Other Parties also made their commitments to ensure the delivery of organized environments. Let all States key into the pathway of the Federal Government by creating a specialized Ministry for Physical Planning.

We call on the tertiary institutions that offer courses in urban and regional planning to ensure that their programmes are fully accredited by the Town Planners Registration Council of Nigeria to minimize the pains and agonies that their products face upon graduation.

We call on the Federal and State Ministries of Education to review the curriculum of secondary schools with a view to ensuring that geography is taught to give students a fair view of their environment as inputs to good governance, entrepreneurship and investment possibilities.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Press, I thank you all for gracing this event.



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FIFTH PRESS CONFERENCE OF THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE NIGERIAN INSTITUTE OF TOWN PLANNERS HELD AT THE SHOPRITE HALL, WUSE ZONE 5, ABUJA ON THURSDAY 15TH FEBRUARY 2024.

THEME: WAKE UP, NIGERIA AND PUT ON STRENGTH

1st and 2nd National Vice Presidents,
National Officers of the Institute, (Past and Present),
Past Presidents,
Fellows,
Your Excellences,
Professional Colleagues,
Gentlemen of the Press,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Preamble

This marks the fifth Press Conference since I assumed office as the National President of this Institute. The essence of this conference is to undertake serious diagnosis of issues related to the growth and development of our nation particularly as it relates to physical planning of the land resources of Nigeria with a view to making recommendations to catalyze national growth and development. Before I go into details of this conference, let me appreciate God who has made it possible for us to be counted among the living. I see it as giving us more chance to contribute to building humanity and the settlements in which they live. Let me refresh our memories on earlier Press Conferences to enable us keep a track of our concerns for the growth and development of Nigeria. The first Press Conference dwelt on redeeming Nigeria from its jungle-like environmental disposition, to position it for rational development. The second one identified endemic environmental maladies of our nation and called for planning and attitudinal changes to put Nigeria on the path of good development. The third Press Conference saw the leadership change in Nigeria as a new dawn with renewed hope and prayed that the nation would not be pushed lower than where the newly elected leaders met it, but rather lift us higher in the ladder of positive purposeful development. During the fourth Press Conference, I spoke on the need to plan well to live well; highlighting the need for focused action against the vices which affect the growth of Nigeria. Today, we are calling the nation to wake up from our slumber to put on strength to make good

progress through urban and regional planning.

Appreciation

We want to deeply appreciate the Honorable Minister of Aviation and Aerospace for his deep understanding of the need to plan for development and the dangers inherent to development before planning. In his recent declaration of the intention of government to ensure that our airports must have masterplans to guide their developments, he purposed to engage experts in the field of physical planning. We admonish that indigenous consultants of good repute should be engaged rather going for expatriates.

In a similar vein, we commend the Management of Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TET-Fund) for their recent policy on need for educational institutions to have approved physical development masterplans before benefiting from the agency's intervention programme. This will go a long way in ensuring sane, rational, sustainable and cost-effective developments in our tertiary institutions. We implore other public and private institutions to embark on preparing physical development plans by qualified and certified town planners before they carry out such developments. This is the only way to get value for money.

The Annual Budget

The Nation went into the ritual of preparing annual budget for the year 2024 – a syndrome of treatment without diagnosis that has perpetually plagued the nation's resource allocation and development process. The financial appropriations tagged "Renewed Hope Budget" proposed an expenditure of N27.5 trillion consisting of Capital expenditure (31.6%), recurrent (36.1%), debt servicing (30.0%) and others (2.2%) with the total deficit of N9.18 trillion. A breakdown of the budgetary expenditure estimates showed that the Defense and security sector has the largest share of the total (12%), followed by sectors others such as Education (7.9%), Health (5%), Infrastructure (5%), and Social Investment (2%). Generally, little attention has been given to physical planning in the national budget.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development was given an envelope of N99.92 billion with a recurrent expenditure of N2.99 billion and capital expenditure of N96.99 billion. Its total project volume amounts to 483 consisting of 138 on-going and 345 new projects. In our analysis, we found that the top five priorities include construction of two major housing programmes and construction of Federal Secretariats in Abia, Ebonyi and Kebbi States. It still indicates lack of priority for physical planning as even the few mentioned are remedial projects to address problems already created (such as slum upgrading, urban renewal, etc) due to lack of planning.

And talking about the housing programme, we give kudos to the President and Ministers that birthed the ground breaking of the Renewed Hope Cities on Thursday 8th February 2024. There is no doubt that the programme is lofty, gigantic and may possibly be beneficial to Nigerians. However, there are still some puzzling questions that agitate our minds to ask if the houses are built, are they intended to increase the numerical strength of the nation's housing stock or to make dwelling units available and affordable to vulnerable and underprivileged Nigerians. These are the people that are homeless and are crying for safe shelter each day. Further to this, there are some basic and fundamental technical processes for such project to undergo before construction commences especially in a city like Abuja. These include submission of development proposals for technical and public scrutiny by stakeholders, submission of environmental impact assessment report and development permit from the development control department. These are contained in sections 28 to 33 of the Nigeri-

an Urban and Regional Planning Act CAP. 138 LFN of 2004. We want to observe that good intentions prosecuted through infractions on extant laws (as in this case) may be indicators of procedural short-circuiting in physical development which will produce a dysfunctional environment on the long run. We already have Gwarimpa on our shoulders as a prospective slum of the future; we cannot afford to create another in the same city; definitely not in our Number One City.

We want to draw the attention of Nigerians and their leaders to the fact that all the problems in and around Nigeria are tied to the amount of land we have and the use we put them into. The use we put them into can only be productive if the land is planned. Poor health is a function of poor hygiene which is traceable to poor environmental disposition. The same scenario applies to education, industrial and commercial development. Many of these sectors compete and agitate for higher percentages of resource allocation in comparison with other nations without understanding the environmental dispositions of such countries. We declare that no budget solves the problems of national growth and development if physical planning is not given the topmost priority it deserves.

Wasting Opportunities through Bad Governance

Being called to lead is an opportunity given by God and people. Everybody is a leader at his own level. From the cleaner to the Chief Executive, everyone has a leadership role to play which should not be taken for granted. To waste opportunity is the easiest thing to do. Negligence of duty, corrupt practices such as embezzlement of public funds, tribalism, nepotism, religious bigotry, oppression of the under-privileged and several other practices which are inconsistent with morality and godliness are visible evidences of wasted opportunities. They make others to suffer for the benefit of the greedy ones. These vices have eaten deep into the flesh and fabric of the Nigerian society. I see this as the reason for the under-development of this nation economically, socially and physically. The under-development of Nigeria is glaringly evidenced by the lingering security challenges of the past two decades, lack of economic diversification, corruption in governance, infrastructural deficit, unemployment and youth restiveness, poor health care delivery, declining education, ethnic and religious rivalries. These issues need urgent attention of the government, civil society, private sector and international partners.

The Challenge of Insecurity

Nigerians have been going through a lot of stress and harrowing experience due to security challenges that have engulfed the nation for the past two decades. These range from unprecedented security challenges such as Boko Haram Terrorists (BHTs) attacks, militancy, armed robbery, banditry, kidnapping for ransom, herders - farmers clashes, cultism and other social vices. They give Nigerians hopeless days and sleepless nights. It has affected food production and economic activities of citizens. Scarcity, lack and poverty have become bedmates of Nigerians. Recently, there were massive protests of citizens in various parts of the country to cry out in desperation for intervention of government. Furthermore, the unprecedented and galloping rise in prices of commodities has made life so difficult for people. We therefore, call on the President and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces to frontally tackle the menace of insecurity by enhancing the budget and welfare of the security personnel, giving them adequate hardware for combatting insurgency, pragmatically addressing socio-economic problems to minimize poverty, unemployment, inequality, and invest job creation, skills development, education and infrastructure.

The Bodija Explosion

Bodija area of Ibadan, the State Capital of Oyo was engulfed in an accidental explosion at about 7:30 pm on Tuesday, 16th January, 2024 with serious impacts on lives and properties of residents. Although, the root-cause of the explosion could not be immediately ascertained, the release by the Oyo State Government confirmed a conjecture that it was an explosion from an explosive in a residential building due to illegal storage of explosives by some illegal foreign miners, whose activities were not fully comprehended nor controlled by any agency of government. This incident might have happened as a result of illegal change of use of the building where the explosives were stored.

To minimize the occurrence of such incidence, we recommend that relevant State Physical Planning agencies step up development control and environmental monitoring activities at all stages of construction and post construction. The development control authorities should be empowered with modern and effective surveillance systems for easy detection of misuse of properties by unscrupulous elements of the society, including locals and foreigners.

Conclusion

If, with about six years to the end of the vision of transforming our world through the 2030 Agenda for realizing the Sustainable Development Goals, Nigeria is still battling with unplanned, haphazard development, intense security challenges, critical economic difficulties, corruption and poor governance, unimaginable engineering, social and physical infrastructural deficit, grievous unemployment and lack of youth empowerment, poor access to quality health care and education, intense negative impacts of climate change and environmental degradation, ethnic and religious tensions, then we must have been detached from the rest of the world. We need urgent actions to be carried out by massive load of professionals in this nation to turn the table around for the benefit of the nation and catch up with the spirit and purpose of the bilateral and multi-lateral agreements we have signed with other nations of the world. **As a nation, we need to wake up and put on our strength to achieve the development we desire.**

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Press, I thank you all for gracing this event. God bless you all. God bless Nigeria.



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SIXTH PRESS CONFERENCE OF THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE NIGERIAN INSTITUTE OF TOWN PLANNERS HELD AT THE HOUSE OF KITS AND FITS (HOKF) NO. 794 NGOZI OKONJO-IWEALA STREET, WUYE DISTRICT, ABUJA ON TUESDAY, 25TH JUNE 2024.

THEME: WHAT SHALL WE SAY: GAINS OR PAINS OF DEMOCRACY?

1st National Vice President,
National Officers of the Institute, (Past and Present),
Past Presidents of the Institute,
Fellows of the Institute,
Your Excellences,
Professional Colleagues,
Gentlemen of the Press,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Preamble

It is with great joy today to address you on some issues that are important to the growth and development of our dear nation. This Press Conference is an opportunity to critically diagnose our developmental strides, identify challenges and chart the course forward. Let me again, appreciate God for His mercies upon Nigeria for guiding our leaders and granting us the grace to live together in peace and relatively free from devastating epidemics and disasters.

The current administration in our country has spent one year in office. We can look back and thank God for the successes recorded and look forward to minimizing the challenges with a view to achieving better progress in the second year of service to our dear nation. Again, for the purpose of refreshing our memories, let me recapitulate earlier issues raised.

This administration was inaugurated on 29th May 2023. It has spent more than one calendar year in office. We can say that it has made some strides in some sectors of our national life. It spans from economic reforms of removal of fuel subsidy with the aim of redirecting the funds towards provision of critical infrastructure and social welfare projects to infrastructure development, agricultural initiatives, improvement in security, health and education, enhancement of digital economy, social welfare programmes and international relations. Road and rail projects have been embarked upon to improve transportation networks. We

particularly applaud the efforts in Lagos and FCT as well as a few other States where improvements in road and mass transportation are easing vehicular transport and commuting in cities. We hear that efforts to enhance power generation and distribution, including partnerships with private investors to boost capacity and reliability in the power sector are on-going. We applaud the government of Abia State for the giant stride in improving the provision of power in Aba. The reliable power supply has transformed the city into an industrial power house. Beyond economic growth, the Aba IPP has significant social and environmental benefits. With reduced reliance on diesel generators, air quality will improve and greenhouse gas emissions would decrease. This bold step would indeed strengthen the nickname of Aba as the “Japan of Africa”. We call on government to ensure that other Independent Power Plants and fully operational to enhance the development of the country.

Hopes are, that boosting agricultural productivity through various initiatives aimed at supporting farmers with better access to finance, inputs, and markets will yield expected dividends. This includes the launch of programs aimed at enhancing food security and reducing dependency on food imports. Initiatives to strengthen the capacity of the Nigerian military and police forces to combat insurgency, banditry, and other forms of insecurity have been established.

Further to the foregoing appraisal, we cannot shy away that Nigeria still needs to stand tall to earn and bear its name as the giant of Africa. The quality of life is evidently related to the quality of the environment a man lives. Nigerians are living below acceptable livable environmental standards. This is because, it is faced with rapid urbanization, inadequate infrastructure, weak institutional capacity, environmental challenges, economic problems, housing shortage and land administration problems.

Nigeria’s cities are experiencing rapid population growth, leading to urban sprawl. The rise in urban population has led to the proliferation of informal settlements and slums, where residents often lack access to basic amenities such as clean water, sanitation, and electricity. Settlements suffer from poor transportation infrastructure, resulting in severe traffic congestion, inadequate public transit systems, and poorly maintained roads. There is a significant gap between planning and implementation due to inadequate resources, lack of skilled personnel, and poor coordination among planning authorities. Nigeria’s planning is impeccable on paper but a far cry in implementation. Painfully, success measurement is denoted by the extent of expenditure of budgets and not in the visible project implementation. This is the tap root of corruption, mismanagement and misappropriation of public funds. There is an urgent need to change style in assessing our plan implementation strategy to ensure that projects are properly implemented for Nigerian citizens to enjoy the benefits and dividends of democracy. The challenge of lack of security to land tenure has become endemic to the extent it has become a high militating factor to investment in property.

Our settlements face significant pollution issues, including air and water pollution, largely due to industrial activities and inadequate waste management. This exacerbates health problems. Combined with poverty and hunger in the land, mortality rates in Nigeria have sky-rocketed while medical facilities are nothing more than ghosts of what they are meant to be. Discussions on climate change are contemporary household deliberations with increasing incidences of flooding, coastal erosion, and other climate-related issues which pose risks to urban infrastructure and housing. But what positive actions have we taken beyond rhetoric?

Economic inequalities and gaps are getting wider and magnified. In a place that feeding is difficult, shelter is below standard, environment is squalid and disease infested because of social and numerical overcrowding, what stainless banner can we count as gain to hand unto our children? We call on the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to listen

and sympathize with the cries of the masses. and minimize the stress of the population.

We condemn the jungle attitude exhibited in the process of carrying out enforcement procedures in Plateau State recently during which lives were lost and properties were destroyed. Such calamities could have been avoided if the Metropolitan Development Board was adequately staffed with planners and other professionals as well as monitoring facilities. We call for a detailed investigation into that crisis with a view to bringing culprits to book to serve as deterrent to others. The government needs to strengthen the institutional frameworks for physical planning, engage professional planning consultants to prepare plans and promote implementation through massive employment of town planners and related support professionals in the implementing agency. This should be accompanied by strong political will, funding, capacity building and better coordination. The need to create enabling planning laws cannot be overemphasized.

Nigeria must continue to pursue vigorously and practice the concepts and principles of sustainable development to address environmental challenges and promote resilience. We must report realistic efforts and steps taken to implement treaties earlier signed with other nations of the world who will be coming to show case theirs during the forthcoming World Urban Forum. We call on the Federal Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and other stakeholders to prepare for a robust outing to Egypt in November 2024 where all nations shall gather to review the progresses, they have made in achieving the goals of sustainable development.

To make our planning efforts effective, we need strong community involvement in the planning process to ensure that development meets the needs of the people. We need also to embrace technological integration by adopting advanced technologies and data-driven approaches for more effective planning and management.

Federal Capital Territory needs to take decisive measures on disaster preparedness and management. The territory is back to another regime of flooding. The flooding which ensued yesterday as a result of the downpour was speculated to have drowned some lives in a popular residential estate. Poor drainage systems have made the location flood-prone and vulnerable to flooding during the rainy season. Actions are impeded by court orders at the expense of human lives. We hereby call on judges to consider safety of human lives when granting orders to retain inconsistent developments.

Addressing the challenges facing Nigeria requires a concerted effort from government authorities, private sector stakeholders, and the community to create sustainable, livable urban environments. While the administration seems to have made some achievements in its first year, it is essential to acknowledge the complexities and challenges that remain. Continued focus on implementation, transparency, and inclusive growth will be crucial for sustaining and building the nation to enable them enjoy the dividends of democracy. We look forward to getting the gains of democracy instead of its pains to give us a Brighter Future and hand unto our children a banner without stain.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Press, I thank you all for gracing this event. God bless you all. God bless Nigeria.



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SEVENTH PRESS CONFERENCE OF THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE NIGERIAN INSTITUTE OF TOWN PLANNERS HELD AT THE NATIONAL SECRETARIAT OF THE INSTITUTE, PLOT 2047 MICHAEL OKPARA STREET, ZONE 5, WUSE, ABUJA ON THURSDAY, 22ND AUGUST 2024.

THEME: FROM PROTESTS TO PROJECTS AND PROGRESS

1st and 2nd National Vice President,
National Officers of the Institute, (Past and Present),
Past Presidents,
Distinguished Fellows,
Professional Colleagues,
Gentlemen of the Press,
Your Excellences, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Preamble

I welcome you all to another press conference of the National President of the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners. This makes the seventh in the series of press conferences since I became the National President of the Institute in November 2022. I want again to appreciate God for His mercies upon us to keep us among the living despite the stress of the times. May we not disappoint God through wasted opportunities and the grace accorded us. This Press Conference is intended to make observations on the developmental challenges of the nation with a view to making recommendations for facilitating physical growth and development of Nigeria. We do hope that both the executive and legislative arms of government and indeed concerned Nigerians will give consideration to the issues being discussed to enable all of us develop the nation and achieve the essence of our living.

We wish to first of all appreciate the efforts of the federal government and other strata of public administration in the bid to provide sane environment, affordable housing, food, security, transportation and health facilities as well as other social amenities to improve the quality of life of Nigerians. However, if public opinion is anything to go by, then the efforts of the government do not seem to go in the direction of the desires and expectations of Nigerians. As a result of this, the nation was engulfed in a nation-wide series of protests recently because of intense economic hardships and rising cost of living perceived to have emanated from bad governance. In a nation plagued by economic uncertainty, the imminence of

hunger looms large over majority of its population while health challenges are reducing the distressed population in staggering numbers daily. Our economy is characterized by high unemployment, reduced industrial output, and lethargic growth. This presents a particularly grim scenario. The allusion to bad governance has serious deleterious manifestations which can heat-up the polity and the sensibilities of citizens as manifested in the recent protests. The outcome of the protests manifested in loss of lives and destruction of properties (both public and private) of unimaginable value. Such actions damage the economy and pulls back the development of a nation in dire need of positive development.

Bad governance often leads to negative outcomes for society and the economy. It is denoted by corruption, misuse of public office for private gain, bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, and favoritism, lack of transparency; all these and other related policies, actions/inactions of government erode public trust. It further manifests in inefficiency in public services, poorly managed public services, such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure and a failure to meet the needs of the population. Bad governance is revealed in weak rule of law resulting in human rights abuses, injustice, and a lack of legal protection for citizens, especially the vulnerable. In such places, poor economic management indicated by excessive inflation, unemployment, and a widening gap between the rich and poor persists; thus, creating social inequality. Above all, one critical hallmark of bad governance is lack of proper physical planning which is the door-way to environmental degradation, slum development, urban sprawl, land racketeering, unchecked pollution, deforestation, and depletion of natural resources accompanied by its long-term negative impacts on public health and the economy.

The removal of fuel subsidies and the depreciation of the naira led to skyrocketing inflation, which hit 34.19% in June 2024. Food inflation, in particular, surged to over 40%, significantly increasing the cost of living for most Nigerians. These economic strains were exacerbated by rising food and transportation costs, leaving many Nigerians struggling to afford basic necessities. The response of government by the distribution of palliative and increasing the minimum wage of civil servants to N70,000.00 did not appear to have an answer to the questions being agitated in the minds of Nigerians in the face of rapidly increasing living costs. We cannot, but view that these protests highlight the urgent need for meaningful reforms in governance and economic management to address the root causes of discontent among Nigerians.

The supposed good intentions of policy and law makers hardly see the light of the day because of lack of inclusiveness. Many developments conceived as constituency projects budgeted for do not meet the expectations of the intended beneficiaries, thereby end up as ghost or orphaned projects. Budgets are wasted because of misalignment with community needs, resulting in unforeseen challenges during implementation, delays, cost overruns or project failure in places where such projects had political will and cash-backing. At other times, (which is the fate of most projects) they end up in the coffers of the initiators of the projects; alas, this is a nation where budget performance is not measured by physical development but by the amount of funds released, even if they went to pockets of individuals.

But we must rise above and beyond protests to achieve meaningful projects and progress through good governance to address the current developmental, physical planning, environmental and socio-economic challenges being faced in Nigeria.

Addressing the problems of hunger, energy, and transportation crises in Nigeria require a multifaceted approach that tackles the root causes by evolving strategic planning, policy reforms, and innovative solutions. This could be achieved through agricultural revitalization by investing in modern agriculture and providing farmers with access to improved seeds, fertilizers, and modern farming techniques. Adoption of climate-smart agriculture to increase productivity and resilience against climate change needs to be adopted. Government

should improve rural infrastructure, such as roads, storage facilities, and irrigation systems, to enhance food production and reduce post-harvest losses. Better roads will help farmers transport their produce to markets more efficiently. Financial support, access to credit, and training for small-holder farmers, who are responsible for the majority of Nigeria's food production should be facilitated by government. There is the need to strengthen agricultural value chains by ensuring that farmers have access to markets, fair prices, and transparent trade practices. Promote local consumption of locally produced food.

The federal government would need to frontally address the energy crisis through diversification of energy sources, upgrading the power grid and implement policy reforms that encourage investment in the energy sector, remove bottlenecks, and ensure transparent and efficient regulatory practices. There is also the need to promote energy efficiency in industries, homes, and public buildings by encouraging the use of energy-efficient appliances, reducing waste, and optimizing energy use.

Transportation systems should be improved upon through investing in building and maintaining critical transportation infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, railways, and ports. Special attention should be given to improving rural roads to connect remote areas to markets and services. The federal government and other levels of government should develop and expand public transportation networks in urban areas, including bus rapid transit (BRT), light rail, and other mass transit options. Efficient public transportation would reduce traffic congestion in our cities, lowers pollution, and makes travel more affordable and safer.

We call on the government to:

- Embark on cross-cutting solutions such as investing in education and training programs to build the capacity of local communities and professionals in agriculture, energy, and transportation sectors with a view to creating a skilled workforce capable of driving these solutions forward.
- Improve on governance and anti-corruption measures by ensuring transparency, accountability, and efficient management of resources and projects.
- Leverage technology and innovation to address challenges in these critical sectors through development and using mobile apps for market access in agriculture, smart metering in energy, and traffic management systems in transportation.
- Encourage partnerships between the government and private sector to pool resources, share expertise, and accelerate the development of these sectors.
- Explore and deploy the often-underutilized resource of creativity naturally inherent or acquired by Nigerian youths as a vital tool for survival and resilience, capable of turning the tide against hunger in the harshest of economic climates.

By implementing these strategies, Nigeria can effectively tackle the challenges of hunger, energy, and transportation, paving the way for sustainable development and improved quality of life for its citizens. These strategies can only make sense and bring forth effective implementation if they are articulated in integrated plans at various scales. For example, there is no economic plan that would be realistic without the physical development plan. Operational activities of government departments and participation of the private sector must be anchored in physical planning because all developments happen on land; it only makes sense to achieve our yearnings by engaging relevant professionals. Nigeria must

rise above development by impulse and embrace rational courses of action encapsulated in a vision which is longer than four years or the tenure of a political regime. We must grow beyond being reactive and practice planned development process.

While vision, dedication and commitment of leadership to the development of Nigeria are key elements to facilitate sustainable development, physical planning is the anchor to the realization of abundance in food production to end or minimize hunger, economic problems and other social ills. Engagement in physical planning will significantly facilitate development in Nigeria by providing a structured and sustainable approach to managing land use, infrastructure, and resources. Government at the federal level, in its own wisdom, created intermediary strata for governance for political exigencies and the delivery of services up to the grass roots. These geo-political regions, States and Local Governments can conveniently be used for other developmental activities to enhance balanced regional development by creating regional development plans that focus on the equitable distribution of resources and infrastructure thereby reducing disparities between urban and rural areas and promoting balanced growth across the country. Engaging physical planners to conceive relevant development plans for regions, urban and rural areas will boost infrastructure development, create efficient transportation networks to improve connectivity, reduce the cost of goods and services, and facilitate trade and movement of people. Good governance delivers effectively in the provision of utilities and services which are crucial for both economic activities and improving the quality of life. Through planning, settlements will achieve sustainable landuse zoning to ensure that land is used efficiently and appropriately avoid conflicts and promote orderly development. We reiterate that physical planning, when it is allowed to be conceived by qualified town planners and effectively implemented, will transform Nigeria's landscape, making it more conducive for economic growth, social development, and environmental sustainability.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Press, Nigeria bear and answer her name as the giant of Africa through planned development. We must rise from protests to projects and progress. This is the only safe way to land in the Brighter Future. I thank you all for gracing this event. God bless you all. God bless Nigeria.



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EIGHTH PRESS CONFERENCE OF THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE NIGERIAN INSTITUTE OF TOWN PLANNERS HELD AT BRIDGE WATERS HOTEL, ENUGU, ENUGU STATE ON SATURDAY, 19TH OCTOBER 2024.

THEME: OF FLOOD AND FRAUD

1st and 2nd National Vice President,
National Officers of the Institute, (Past and Present),
Past Presidents,
Distinguished Fellows,
Professional Colleagues,
Gentlemen of the Press,
Your Excellences, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Preamble

I want to welcome all of you and the rest of Nigerians who might be watching us from far and near to this Press Conference. I want to express my deep appreciation to God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the Sustainer of life for the privilege to count us among the living today. It is a privilege we cannot take for granted. At the same time, I want to thank God for the good men and women, destiny helpers and builders that God has given to us to assist and guide us in the things we do. Ours, have been special and spectacular. We were given a rare privilege of serving this Institute at the driver's seat for the past two years. This privilege is not one that anyone can easily forget in this life. We thank all the members of this Institute for such benevolence.

This marks the eighth Press Conference since I assumed office as the National President of this Institute in November 2022. Through our Press Conferences, we made good efforts to undertake serious diagnosis of issues related to the growth and development of our nation particularly as it relates to physical planning and environmental management which is primary activity ordained for man; and make recommendations to address observed challenges and take advantage of available opportunities.

Before I go into addressing the issues of today, I feel obliged to refresh our memories on earlier issues we discussed and expressed our opinions on. The first Press Conference dwelt on redeeming Nigeria from its jungle-like environmental disposition, to position it for rational development. The second one identified endemic environmental maladies of our nation

and called for planning and attitudinal changes to put Nigeria on the path of good development. The third Press Conference saw the leadership change in Nigeria as a new dawn with renewed hope and prayed that the nation would not be pushed lower than where the newly elected leaders met it, but rather lift us higher in the ladder of positive and purposeful development. During the fourth Press Conference, I spoke on the need to plan well to live well; highlighting the need for focused action against the vices which affect the growth of Nigeria. At the fifth edition of our Press Conference, we called the nation to wake up from our slumber to put on strength to make good progress through urban and regional planning. In our sixth Press Conference, we poised to ask a question tagged “What shall we say: Gains or pains of democracy?”. In our analysis, it was our opinion that the loud pains because of poverty and hunger in the land is a function of poor management of the resources and potentials of Nigerians hence the leadership of the nation should engage in more rational exploitation and deployment of our opportunities for gains to the populace. When we spoke to the nation in the last Press Conference, we admonished our countrymen to rise above protests to investments that would promote projects and progress.

The theme of my discussion today is **“Of Flood and Fraud”**. Nigeria has suffered so much from the impact of flood. Flooding occurs when there is an overflow of water onto a normally dry land typically due to excessive rainfall, river overflow, storm surges or the failure of dams and levees. It occurs when water accumulates faster than the land or infrastructure can absorb it or drain it. This leads to submersion of roads, homes, farmlands and urban centers. It may be as a result of natural causes or human activities. Floods in Nigeria have had significant social, economic, and environmental impacts in recent times. They have been exacerbated by climate change, poor urban planning, deforestation, and inadequate drainage systems, making their impacts more severe in recent years. These impacts include loss of lives, displacement of people, destruction of property, disruption of agriculture and food security, waterborne diseases, economic losses, disruption of transportation, disruption of education, environmental degradation, forced migration, psychological and social imbalance. The stress and trauma caused by floods, especially for displaced families, can lead to mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Floods result in the loss of livelihoods and economic opportunities, pushing already vulnerable populations deeper into poverty. Poorly managed responses can erode public trust and create tensions between communities and authorities.

The recent flood in Maiduguri, Borno State, in September 2024 was catastrophic, largely caused by the collapse of the Alau Dam after heavy rainfall. Over a million people were affected, with around 400,000 officially displaced and 30 reported deaths. The flood submerged large parts of Maiduguri, including homes, schools, and hospitals. It also led to extensive property damage, disrupted essential services like clean water and electricity, and caused major disruptions in transportation. In addition to the human toll, the flood wreaked havoc on the local wildlife. Around 80% of the animals at the Sanda Kyarimi Zoo were either killed or escaped, posing additional dangers as species like crocodiles and snakes were seen in the streets. A jailbreak also occurred, with over 280 inmates escaping from a local correctional facility after it was submerged. The scale of the disaster has been overwhelming.

Fraud refers to deliberate deception, trickery, or dishonesty intended to result in personal gain or to cause harm to another party. It occurs in various forms, such as financial fraud, misrepresentation, or manipulation, often involving the concealment of facts or violation of trust to deceive others. Without mincing words, fraud has had severe and widespread impacts on Nigeria, affecting the economy, governance, businesses, and the society at large. It has led to economic losses, erosion of public trust, increased poverty and inequality, limited economic opportunities, undermining governance and development, negative internation-

al image, travel restrictions and sanction, loss of credibility in financial systems, impact on business environment by stifling of entrepreneurship: Fraud and corruption make it difficult for honest entrepreneurs to thrive and higher operational costs, social and moral decay through normalizing dishonesty and contributes to the breakdown of societal values and ethics, as dishonesty, bribery, and cheating become normalized. This leads to an erosion of moral standards, particularly among young people, who may view fraudulent practices as the quickest path to success. Other challenges related to fraud are disillusionment and brain drain, political instability as seen in electoral malpractices leading to the election of unqualified or corrupt leaders.

Fraud in Nigeria has far-reaching consequences that hinder the nation's progress on multiple fronts. It stifles economic growth, deepens poverty, weakens institutions, and tarnishes the country's global image.

The most devastating in Nigeria today is environmental fraud.

Environmental fraud is the illegal manipulation or misrepresentation of environmental data, activities, or conditions for financial gain or to avoid regulatory compliance. This includes falsifying environmental impact assessments, concealing pollution, engaging in illegal waste disposal, or misreporting emissions levels. The aim is often to bypass environmental laws and regulations, reduce costs, or avoid penalties, while causing harm to ecosystems and public health. Some of the fraudulent environmental activities of man that cause flooding includes illegal land use and deforestation, illegal sand mining, poorly regulated urbanization, waterway encroachment, failure to implement drainage systems, Environmental fraud undermines efforts to protect the environment, often leading to degradation of natural resources, increased pollution, and harm to communities. These acts are perpetrated by individuals, corporations, or even government agencies that fail to adhere to environmental standards.

Lack of physical planning or poorly regulated urbanization is the fundamental environmental fraud in Nigeria. In many human settlements, developers bypass and abuse environmental laws through corrupt practices, neglect of physical planning, unchecked urban sprawl, impunity, carelessness and recklessness in the location of developments lead to poorly planned urban expansion. Wetlands, which act as natural sponges by absorbing excess water, are often filled or encroached upon for development projects. When wetlands are compromised and drainage plans are not implemented, settlements lose a crucial buffer against floods. Corruption and lax enforcement of zoning laws allow illegal structures to be built on floodplains and near riverbanks. By obstructing natural waterways, these structures cause water to overflow into urban and rural settlements during heavy rains. Painfully, some of these developments might have got development permit through bribery or political connections, leading to a violation of environmental laws that protect flood-prone areas. The social and economic costs of environmental fraud are usually unquantifiable as it leads to displacement, loss of lives, and destruction of property. The economic toll is immense, with the nation spending billions on relief efforts and repair of the little infrastructure which we have. What can we say of the loss of agricultural lands to floods can trigger food shortages and price increases, leading to social unrest and exacerbating poverty levels in vulnerable regions.

We need to make credible efforts to avert flooding in Nigeria. This requires a multi-faceted approach that combines aggressive physical planning by particularly engaging indigenous consultants, enforcement of plans through employments of planners in the establishments responsible for physical planning and development control. We reiterate that physical planning and development control are first among the requirements for averting flooding. En-

enforcement of building regulations, strict adherence to zoning and building codes should be enforced to prevent the construction of buildings on floodplains and areas prone to flooding. Unregulated urban sprawl, especially in flood-prone areas, contributes to increased flooding. Authorities must ensure proper urban planning that incorporates flood risk assessments.

We need to embark on infrastructure development, policy reforms (amendment of outdated planning laws), rigorous public awareness, and environmental management. The government and the people of Nigeria need to embark on improving drainage systems, ensure proper waste disposal, construct and maintain dams, desilting rivers and water channels, afforestation and reforestation, encourage tree planting, protect wetlands and forests. Government needs to provide effective early warning systems and public awareness. Good collaboration with the private sector, NGO's and other international agencies are important. Investing in advanced meteorological and hydrological systems can provide accurate and timely flood forecasts.

Government should implement watershed management practices through sustainable land use and reforestation to prevent excessive water runoff. In places where they are needed, erosion should be addressed through the construction of terraces, retaining walls, and other soil conservation techniques to help prevent excess runoff into rivers and streams, reducing flood risks.

There is the need for relocation of vulnerable communities. People in flood-prone areas or high-risk flood zones, particularly along riverbanks and coastal areas should be relocated. Government should develop affordable housing schemes for people resettled from flood-prone regions to safer locations.

Attention should be given to climate change mitigation by improving infrastructure resilience, creating policies for water management, and promoting eco-friendly practices. There is the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by promoting efforts to lower emissions and promote renewable energy to slow the progression of climate change, which worsens flood risks.

Conclusion

While flooding is often seen as a natural disaster, human actions, particularly environmental fraud, play an undeniable role in worsening its effects. The illegal exploitation of the environment for short-term gain creates long-term vulnerabilities, exposing societies to the devastating impacts of floods. Addressing this issue requires a concerted effort from governments, communities, and international organizations to ensure that environmental laws are not only enacted but strictly enforced, preserving the natural defenses that protect us from these disasters. We conclude that flood is the product of fraud. It is conceived through evil conspiracy and neglect of the essence of physical planning. The principal antidote to flooding is to eschew environmental fraud, engage qualified town planners to prepare physical development plans, create and strengthen institutions for its implementation, enact and review laws and policies that would facilitate guided and sane development of our settlements.

Long live Nigerian Institute of Town Planners

Long live the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Thanks for listening.



CHAPTER FIVE: CONSTANT DIALOGUE WITH THE PRESS

INTERACTIONS OF THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT
WITH THE PRINT MEDIA

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF TOWN PLANNERS TO THE MANAGEMENT OF PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT IN NIGERIA.

- 1. Nigerian Institute of Town Planners (NITP) use planning to revitalize physical facilities in towns, cities, and metropolitan areas. Can you assess your members' contributions in the management of the physical planning and environment in the country?**

Physical planning is the articulation of thoughts and ideas to create the orderly development of human settlements. It attempts to balance the competing demands for the use of land by various social and economic needs of members of a community (which may span from a rural community to urban spaces). Physical planning is preventive, prescriptive and curative. It can address the issues of poor and conflicting landuses manifested in slums, environmental chaos and anarchy or by its futuristic tendency prevent incompatible uses. Physical planning is a basic social service that the government owes citizens. It is therefore the responsibility of government to engage town planners who are trained and have the requisite competences to plan and manage the physical development of settlements. The competences of Nigerian town planners have not been fully exploited because most people at the policy-making status do not understand the purpose of planning. Town planners have not been adequately involved in the management of physical planning and environment in Nigeria. The first activity needed to manage physical development is planning. But how many towns and rural settlements have masterplans? Very few indeed. Where plans do not exist, response to management of physical spaces would be spontaneous, reactionary and impulsive. On the whole, except for Abuja and a few other urban areas, the impacts of town planners have not been sufficiently felt in the development of Nigerian settlements and communities. Much needs to be done by government and policy-makers to engage town planners to organize the physical environment of this country.

- 2. The Nigerian Urban and Regional Law of 2004 (as amended) has attained a near zero implementation. What has been the problem? Do you think or subscribe to opinion that it should be reviewed? Why is such step necessary?**

The major problem which has frustrated the implementation of the Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law in Nigeria is the lack of political will on the side of government. The Federal Government which would have blazed the trail of implementation has done virtually nothing to enforce the provisions of the law. The basic institutions and structures which would have been created at the Federal level such as the National Urban and Regional Planning Commission is yet to be established. This agency of government would have been responsible for preparing the National Physical Development Plan from which lower order levels of physical plans would have been derived. Thirty years down the line after the law was enacted, nothing has been done about creating this agency. Meanwhile, the Urban and Regional Development Department of the Federal Ministry of Works and Housing has been battling with performing the tasks meant for this agency; and has not been able to make any reasonable progress. This plan has been on the drawing table for the past twelve years without any reasonable progress.

Further to the failure of government at the Federal level to create relevant institutions, most State governments have not domesticated the law. The few that made efforts made laws which were corrupted by interests and intrigues which are inimical to effective implementation. To make matters worse, some State governments which domesticated the law are now being beguiled to abandon it for another instrument. A serious case of this is Kwara

State where the Urban and Regional Planning Law was repealed to give way to GIS Law. It is a grand demonstration of deceit and ignorance which needs urgent redress, if only the government would give listening ear to the voice of reason and professionalism.

Other reasons related to the non-implementation of the law are poor funding and insufficient professional personnel.

It must also be noted that the law was created with deficiencies from the outset. For example, a good proportion of the law was dedicated to the least function of planning. Development Control (which is the last function of planning activities) has over 70% of the provisions of the clauses while other activities (core planning assignments such as regional and sub-regional planning, urban and rural master planning, sector, district, subject, action area and neighborhood planning) that should precede development control account for less than 30%. There is an urgent need to review the law to meet contemporary needs of physical and environmental planning in Nigeria.

3. Currently, some State governments are appointing non-planners to be in charge of Ministries of Physical Planning and Urban Development, how does your Institute view this? Does it conflict with the Nigerian Urban and Regional Law?

There has been a disastrous level of impunity being indulged in by policy makers and the political class. There is a general injunction of not putting square pegs in round holes because they will mis-match each other and will thereby unfit for effective performance. But unfortunately, this is the general practice when it comes to appointment of persons to offices in planning agencies. It is usually under the deceit that at the top level of appointments, decisions are taken through the advice of professionals at lower cadres. The law provides that at the State level, an urban and regional planning Board shall be established to cater for planning services. It further states in section 8 that the Board shall comprise of a Chairman, Secretary and a representative of some relevant professions such as town planning, architecture, civil engineering, land surveying, etc. It specifically states that "...the Chairman referred to in subsection 8 (1) (a) of this section shall have been in professional practice for a minimum of five years and shall have been registered with the Town Planners Registration Council. (3) The Secretary referred to in subsection 8 (1) (f) of this section shall be a registered town planner with a minimum of five years professional practice..."

Unfortunately, most State governments have abused it. For example, in Benue State, the position of the Chief Executive of the Urban Development Board was given to a journalist until recently when an architect was appointed which is still a violation; and even to head the planning department of the Board in Benue State, a non-registered planner was appointed. In Kaduna State, a non-planner is the Chief Executive; in Kwara, the planning law was repealed to give way to GIS Law and a non-planner is the Chief Executive; in Bayelsa and Imo States, the job of enforcement in Development Control has been ceded to task forces who are not town planners. Even in the Federal Capital Territory which should be the image of planning practice in the nation, the Urban and Regional Planning Law has not been domesticated; it relies on the FCDA Law. The Abuja Municipal Management Council which would have been appropriately constituted to work in this position has severally been headed by administrators (without any knowledge of urban and regional planning) since 2005 when it was created except for when it commenced with Tpl. Jummai Kwanashie, FNITP for only two years and recently by Tpl. Umar Shuaibu, FNITP. These infringements on the law abound everywhere across the length and breadth of the country because these appointments are given as rewards for political patronage. Only Lagos State seems to be working in the right direction with the recent steps being taken.

The Nigerian Institute of Town Planners frowns at this violation of the law and has called the attention of the States in question to retract their actions and do the right thing. However, it is painful to observe that the States in violation are not getting the right results and posterity will not hold the heads of governments (Governors) taking such decisions guiltless.

4. Urbanization poses serious challenge to continued existence of cultural heritage sites as physical planning laws and institutions do not give due consideration for their protection and integration to physical plans and development in Nigeria. What's the solution?

Urbanization poses serious challenge to the existence of heritage sites where it occurs without a plan and law to guide. Where it occurs in such a manner, I would refer to it as blind urbanization by which cities grow by impulse and developers invest without considerations to critical elements of the urban fabric such as cultural heritage sites and historic elements. Another dimension to this problem is the weakness of our traditional systems and institutions. Custodians of tradition and culture through greed have traded with cultural values. They can permit illegalities for monetary gains. But where rational planning is allowed to precede urbanization, such places are preserved.

The Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law has made ample provisions from sections 64 to 70 on preservation of places and sites of historic and cultural values. The only way to curtail invasions and destruction of our cultural and heritage sites is to embrace planning and establish laws and institutions to enforce them.

5. Most Nigerian cities are bedeviled with endemic traffic bottleneck and attendant psychological, social and economic trauma. Can we say this is due to the failure of town planning? Why is there poor level of regulatory and institutions to support town-planning services?

Traffic challenges are common scenes in Nigerian Urban centers where people spend long hours in traffic for commuting. Traffic moves in tides especially in journey-to-work in the form of morning and evening tides. This is because of the arrangements of landuses. Some places are located as dormitories while others are work places. When hard separations are made between complimentary landuses, transportation and traffic challenges are bound to occur because people will have to travel long distances for their daily activities. Frustrations occur to many travelers within cities; it has created health problems for some people by increasing blood pressures, even the gaseous emissions from vehicles decrease the quality of the air and the noise from vehicles reduces the ambience and serenity of environments. In many cases, emergency services and rescue operations are defeated for lack of space for such vehicles to pass to attend to emergencies. In the process, lives and properties have been lost.

It is not the failure of planning but the failure to plan. Where there is planning, it is a complete and cyclic process which gives room for monitoring and evaluation where considerations are given to trends and appropriate actions are initiated to ensure right results are obtained. Most administrators believe that widening roads is the solution to traffic bottlenecks in cities. But this is far from the truth. Traffic is a factor of landuse. Where high traffic generating landuses are located without provisions for parking on insufficient road spaces or without functional public transportation in the cities, bottlenecks are to be expected. It is therefore imperative to begin to seriously consider more compact land use distribution to reduce travel times and for state governments to make provisions for safe and functional

public transport systems within cities. The failure to plan lies squarely on policy makers; and that is why our towns and cities are failing and are becoming dreadful to live.

6. There has been clamor to regulate and standardize the business of real estate development by regulating transactions. Do planners support such move, which would ensure transparency in real estate development? What's your expectation?

The business of real estate has two major sides i.e. the title to land and planning regulations on one side and the financial transactions on the other. There are established procedures for acquiring titles to land and there are planning standards and regulations to be met before any legal estate business is contracted. Perhaps where the problem may be would be on the financial transactions with subscribers. The proposal of members of estate developers association to constitute themselves into a parallel regulatory body is inconsistent with extant laws and unacceptable to town planners. They cannot re-invent the wheel. In an earlier submission, we made our views known to them on their proposed legislation. They should simply abide by the laws which are already in place.

7. What's your agenda for the Institute? What do you want to do differently to raise awareness about town planning in Nigeria?

Our vision is to create a Brighter Future for town planners in Nigeria. To widen the horizon of knowledge and practice of urban and regional planning with a view to enhancing sustainable development and improve on the wellbeing of practitioners in all ramifications. We shall build on the successes of the past to achieve a Brighter Future. As enabled by God, our drive towards achieving the vision shall be hinged on Five 'C's which shall include but not limited to:

- Continuing on the Advocacy Project of the Institute;
- Completing the Remodeling of NITP/Bawa Bwari House;
- Commencing construction of NITP Headquarters Project;
- Capacity building for members and staff of the Institute;
- Creation of avenues for wealth for the Institute and its members.

We shall depend on the foundations and building blocks already laid together to create enduring legacies for the present and future generation. We shall tap from the good advice of our Past Presidents/Members of National Council/Fellows, harness the energies and innovative ideas of young planners, enjoy the enthusiastic sacrifice of various organs of the Institute, strengthen international linkages and promote global visibility to increase the growth and development of the association and town planners in Nigeria.

ON THE NON-AFFORDABILITY OF HOUSES TO THE NEEDY IN NIGERIA.

1. According to the National Bureau of Statistics construction services earned N12.9tn while real estate contributed N7tn to the GDP, despite this, why is it that more people are unable to afford own homes or rent apartments?

There is no doubt that a lot of investments have gone into the real estate sector of our national economy. But a good number of Nigerians are living in slums and squalor. The nation is known to have a staggering housing deficit which has been variously estimated to be between fifteen to twenty-two million units. Affordability of houses either for rent or ownership is factored by cost of building materials, cost of land and infrastructure. The cost of these inputs to housing grows everyday due to the galloping inflation, taste for foreign building materials and the provision of infrastructure by developers instead of government. It is worsened by the level of poverty in the land. Wages are low, value of money has been in summersault for quite a while.

The number of people without houses continues to increase because of lack of implementable public policy on housing. Nigerian government especially those responsible for formulating policies and others who legislate on them have not provided a workable environment for responsive policies to be formulated; and even the policies that have been made do not have the political will and cash-backing for implementation. Home ownership should be seen and enforced as a fundamental human right.

It is important that lack of physical planning contributes to challenge of affordability and ownership of houses. If towns and cities were planned, location of most suitable locations for housing would have been determined. Due to lack of planning, locations of housing areas either by government are in incidental places. Hence, they may be far from other components in town thereby increasing the challenge of commuting in a place without good transport infrastructure.

2. Professionals have been complaining of lack of jobs; do you think these statistics are realistic?

Of a truth, the statistics is realistic that professionals lack jobs. Both public and private developers prefer to give their works to quacks because of the cheapness of their fees. Unknown to them, the cost of development would be far higher than what a professional would have done for them. At the design stage, technicians and draughtsmen are engaged, who copy designs blindly. The end result could either over-design or under-design. Either way, negative consequences such as fatal and incessant collapses of buildings, construction failures and other environmental hazards detrimental to the wellbeing of inhabitants will be the result.

Secondly, even the government patronizes quacks. Professional services are contracted to non-professionals at cheap rates just to populate budgets. Consultancies are given out to persons who are not qualified as rewards for political patronage. For this reason, our Institute presented memoranda to the National Council on Lands, Housing and Urban Development in 2021 and was further followed up in a similar meeting this year (2022) to stop awarding professional and technical services to non-professionals. These memoranda were adopted and approved in the Council meetings. The professional associations are still expecting the effective implementation of these resolutions of Council.

Despite the legislation on local content in provision of services, a good number of projects are awarded to foreigners with claim that they have more experience. Granted that the foreigners have more experience, why can we not turn the legislation the other way round to give the jobs to Nigerians and compel them to engage more experienced foreigners for better quality output. We normally give poser questions to those in the political class and others in executive cadre who award such contracts if they experiences of governorship or legislation before they were voted into power. And the answer was always negative. So why can they not allow Nigerian professionals to get the awards and then engage non-Nigerians who may have more knowledge to assist them.

Finally, recent policy from the Head of Service in which professional qualifications are no longer basis for advancement in civil service inhibits professional development. It makes advancement to be more of how long one stays in service rather than the quality of service that is rendered. If there is no review of this policy, then quality service will go down the drain.

3. What do we lower cost of homes or ensure affordable rent?

Nigeria is so blessed with resources for building. We have good quality local building materials which can be developed to meet our needs in terms of cost. We need to invest in them. We need to encourage research institutions such as Nigeria Building and Road Research Institute and educational institutions where studies can be undertaken to produce lower cost homes. Such buildings should considerations of energy efficiency and environmentally friendly. Financial incentives such as low interest facilities should be given by government to local producers of building materials to enable them produce at affordable costs which will then impact on rents and cost of ownership.

Again, we cannot shy away from the role of planning. good things do not happen by chance, they happen by plans. Every development comes on the platform called land. Therefore, in every thought or action, it must consider place; and the place must be planned. So, if you ask me, how you can lower the cost building houses, first plan the town to show where different developments of the city fabric will be placed; then locate the residential areas; government should provide infrastructure; then design your buildings with cost in mind; check how much funds you have; get qualified professionals to build the houses and you will deliver low-cost houses at affordable costs.

ON HOW NITP IS ACHIEVING ITS DREAMS FOR NIGERIA

1. NITP came into being in 1966 and our mission is to build the Nigeria of our dreams. How are we achieving this as an Institute?

The Institute has pursued its objectives of building an enviable nation by:

- a. **Information Dissemination and public awareness campaigns** of the importance of their living and working environments and the necessity of their protection by organizing conferences, seminars, meetings, exhibitions, town hall meetings, publications and advocacy visits to governments and the general public on the need to embark on physical planning for improved living, growth and sustainable development.
- b. **Training and capacity building** through advancement of Town Planning Education, Training, Research and Practice including organized study tours to other countries where higher knowledge can be obtained. We have organized such tours for our members to Singapore, United States of America, United Kingdom, South Africa as well as effective participation in the UN-Habitat organized World Urban Forum which is held biennially in various parts of the world. The Institute has been running post graduate professional diploma in urban and regional planning for people who have not attained professional status. After successful completion of the programme, they are issued certificates that make them admissible into full membership status and eventually register as professional planners. With this, others have advanced to higher academic qualifications in the field of planning.
- c. **Ethical Discipline** through establishment and enforcement of a code of professional practice and conduct for Town Planning Practitioners in Nigeria.
- d. **Legislation** by initiation and consideration of legislations and policies relevant to the object of the Institute. These include the Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law of 1992 (2004), and the encouragement of its domestication at State levels, Nigerian Urban Development Policy, Nigerian Physical Planning Standards.

2. Rainy season is coming sir, recurrent flooding in some cities is alarming. We all saw what happened last year in Kogi, Delta, Lagos to mention a few. Is there any solution or advice from NITP to Federal Government or affected States to avert what happened last year?

Flooding generally occurs as a result of lack of proper planning. Physical planning practice guides location and distribution of landuses in a settlement and makes provisions for the installation of infrastructure that would guide the flow of storm water. It ensures that buildings are not located in flood plains, wetlands and places that may be susceptible to flooding.

It is important that we note that flooding has many impacts.

- It damages property and endangers the lives of humans and other species.
- Rapid water runoff causes soil erosion and concomitant sediment deposition elsewhere.
- Grounds for fish and other wildlife habitats can become polluted or completely destroyed.
- Prolonged high floods can delay traffic;
- Floods can interfere with drainage and economical use of lands, such as interfering with

farming.

- Leads to financial losses due to damages

Practical steps to avoid flooding should include:

- Early warning and public enlightenment on flooding potentials.
- Planting vegetation to retain excess water;
- Terrace slopes to reduce slope flow;
- Avoid dumping solid wastes in drainage channels and remove them from drainage channels that are already blocked.
- Make permeable pavements.
- Government should continue with dredging programmes of Rivers Niger and Benue;
- The proposed intermediary dam to be built in Nigeria to mitigate the impact of Ladgo Dam water release should be prosecuted.

3. Building collapse: who is to blame Sir – Approving Officer, Town Planner, Builder, Structural Engineer or Developer (House Owner)?

We would blame the greedy, selfish, inhuman and insensitive stakeholders in the construction industry (including the artisans), the developer and the general public who have lost the value of human life; possibly enriched illegally and who want to waste lives of innocent citizens struggling for daily bread. The professionals who are careless about their oath to protect the integrity of their professions, the public who can see wrong things being perpetrated and refuse also to talk or report to appropriate quarters and the government that continues to promise of taking appropriate punitive measures but will never act are all culpable.

4. There is dissatisfaction among Town Planners particularly the young planners on the role of NITP National leadership in not protecting their interest or being emphatic when it comes to appointments as Director of Physical Planning in both the public and private tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Have there been instances where an Urban and Regional Planner is not listed as part of the eligible candidates for the position?

The issue of not listing Town Planners among professionals to contest for the position of Director of Physical Planning in Tertiary institutions came through an error from the inception of these institutions and the approved guidelines from NUC and NBTE. Reasons for the error are attributable to insufficient information about the role of town planners available to the authorities and greed on the part of allied professionals who want to meddle with competences they do not possess. NITP held a meeting with NUC about 12 years back and brought this anomaly to their attention. The Executive Secretary then, Prof. Okojie directed that town planners must be included in the list of professionals to compete for the position of the Director of Physical Planning. It was not effected because the institutions already had approved laws.

However, in recent times, the leadership of the Institute and TOPREC have engaged both NUC and NBTE in discussions and they have yielded positive results. For example, Federal University, Lokoja advertised for the position of Director of Physical Planning and initially excluded town planners from eligibility list. NITP sent in protests and it was re-advertised

to include town planners. To the glory of God, a town planner is the Director of Physical Planning there today. A similar thing happened at the Federal Polytechnic, Idah, and we reached to the institution which in turn forwarded the protest to NBTE and the advert was reversed to include town planners. We are in court with one of the Universities on this matter and we believe that we shall soon get the judgement.

The immediate past President of the Institute took the campaign and advocacy for planning to 27 States of the Federation during which we met with Governors, Deputy Governors, Speakers/Deputy Speakers of State Assemblies, Commissioners, Permanent Secretaries, Vice Chancellors, Rectors, Traditional Rulers, Members of the Civil Society and various other groups of people. It was intended to educate people on the need for physical planning and to create employment opportunities for planners. Some States have through this information and advocacy started engaging planners in preparation of masterplans, regional development plans and other levels of planning. States such as Lagos, Ogun, Edo and a few others have engaged planners to carry out consultancies for them. At the same time, the Federal Ministry of Works and Housing has engaged consultants to prepare Regional Development Plans for the geo-political zones of the country as well as other important studies for urban renewal, resilience planning etc.

So, it is not right to think or say that leadership of the Institute is not protecting the interest of the younger generation. Indeed, we concern ourselves more with the needs of the younger ones than the elderly; that is why the mantra of the current administration of NITP is "Brighter Future"

5. Globally, the issue of climate change adaptation, mitigation and preparedness have been in the forefront of global discuss. Looking at the recent earthquake disasters in Turkey and Syria, what is the capacity of urban planners or the NITP in steering the attention or consciousness of the public particularly stakeholders (government, private sector players etc) to its reality, preventive, mitigation and adaptation measures needed to be put in place in case of similar disasters in Nigeria not forgetting the recent flood disaster in parts of the country last year?

Town Planners undertake courses in Disaster Planning and Management in the course of their training. Climate change is impacting on the lives of Nigerians through increased temperatures, drought and water stress, diseases and extreme weather conditions. These, impact on the health of humans such as incidence of exhaustion, heatstroke, meningitis and other communicable diseases. It also impacts on the quantity and quality of food being produced which invariably leads to famine.

The roles of planners start from pre-disaster while conceptualizing the location and structure of a settlement. Studies of the nature of the underlying earth's crust (including seismic information), 75 to 100 years flood levels and factors that may catalyze disasters would have to be undertaken. This would inform the distribution of landuses and their linkages. For post disaster considerations, planners have to prepare plans for the rehabilitation of affected persons. That is why well-defined public spaces are important in planning of towns. One of the examples of such challenges in Nigeria was during the Covid 19 plague. Public places where patients were to be kept for treatment were lacking; hence some incidental spaces and facilities had to be used which became scaring to other landuses in the neighbourhood.

6. What do you intend to do differently from your predecessors in ensuring physical planning and urban development matters are adequately legislated at the National Assembly as well as the domestication of the extant physical planning laws in States of Nigeria.?

In the character of the Institute, we are building on the foundation laid by our predecessors. It is neither a competition nor any intention to outwit one another but rather adding to what already exists. However, what we have brought to the table in the plan to realize the Brighter Future vision comprises of 5 'C's. These include:

- Continuing on the Advocacy Project of the Institute;
- Completing the Remodeling of NITP/Bawa Bwari House;
- Commencing construction of NITP Headquarters Project;
- Capacity building for members and staff of the Institute;
- Creation of avenues of wealth for the Institute and its members.

We have been on various advocacy programmes already. Committees have been set up and have commenced their activities. Some of the special or peculiar programmes we intend to bring on board are:

- Engagement of NBTE, NUC and Head of Civil Service of the Federation on matters that concern curriculum, position of Director of Physical Planning in Tertiary Institutions and the essence of professional certification as a pre-requisite for engagement and advancement of professionals in government agencies;
- Wealth creation workshops and seminars for planners to make them live well and enjoy post-retirement in wealth;
- Review of existing planning law and encouragement of domestication of the Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law in the States;
- Trusting God for allocation of land in various States of the Federation for building Planners Village. This is to serve as a model settlement and to provide town planners opportunity to be adequately housed.
- Greater outreach to the National Assembly, Ministries, Departments and Agencies of Government for effectual consultation of planners in their development proposals

Nigerian Institute of Town Planners

PRESS STATEMENT BY THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF NIGERIAN INSTITUTE OF TOWN PLANNERS, TPL. NATHANIEL M. ATEBIJE, FNITP, IN COMMEMORATION OF WORLD WILDLIFE DAY, 3RD MARCH 2023

1. Wildlife is one of the best gifts of God to humanity. It includes undomesticated animal species such as mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and invertebrates that grow or live in wild places without being introduced by humans. They can be found in deserts, rainforests, grasslands, forests, plains and other spaces on the planet.
2. They are of immense importance to man in view of their economic benefits, conservation of biological diversities, boosting of agricultural production, provision of ecological balance, facilitation of investigatory reports in medicine, promotion of culture and enhancement of sanctuaries for recreation. Unfortunately, human actions and inactions in the environment are impacting negatively on their existence and survival through uncontrolled hunting and wanton destruction of their habitats for economic and other developmental activities. Many of the species are facing extinction due chronic environmental stress such climate change, disease, pollution and predation.
3. The Nigerian Institute of Town Planners views with deep concern the continuous degeneration and reduction of wildlife species; and wishes to draw the attention of all actors on the human environment to the fact that each organism on the earth's surface has a critical role to play in the ecosystem. The Institute appreciates the commitment of international organizations to provide support against the extinction of these species. The commemoration of World Wildlife Day this year should remind all of us as co-tenants of planet earth of the urgent need to take collective efforts and step up the fight against wildlife crime which has wide-ranging economic, environmental, and social impacts.
4. The Institute calls on governments at all levels to invest in physical planning (particularly regional development planning) to promote healthy wildlife coexistence to ensure that animals have spaces and resources. Such landuse plans aim to balance the needs of plants and animals alongside other environmental, social and economic considerations. Some practical steps would include exclusion of wildlife from developed areas, improvement of habitat security in wildlife corridors, reduction of human-caused mortality, removal of natural and unnatural attractants in developed areas and promoting habitats away from developed areas. Governments should increase capacity for enforcement, improve inter-agency collaboration and facilitate effective communications.
5. We wish Nigeria happy celebration of World Wildlife Day 2023.

ON PROPOSAL TO MERGE FAMILY HOMES FUND, FEDERAL MORTGAGE BANK AND NIGERIAN REFINANCING MORTGAGE BANK; AND REVIEW OF THE LAND USE ACT

1. *The incoming government in its manifesto expressed its desire to merge Family Homes Ltd, FMBN and Nigerian Refinancing Mortgage Bank in order to build more homes. It has also said the Land Use Act will be reviewed.*

What is your reaction? Is it achievable? What possible way can this agenda be best achieved?

The main objectives of Family Homes Ltd, Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria and Nigerian Mortgage Refinancing Bank are to provide funds at affordable rates and build houses to accommodate the teeming Nigerians, especially those in the low- and middle-income brackets. Though their operational modes are slightly different from one another, they are also closely related and have same target of facilitating the access of Nigerians to residential accommodation. One of the challenges of many Nigerian Public Institutions is that they carry out similar schedules. This makes many people in the service redundant without effective contribution to the delivery of the mandate. Besides such duplication of activities bloat the budget of government on recurrent and manpower expenditure. This could have informed the incoming government, under their proposals on constitutional policies to plan the restructuring of government for a leaner, more efficient and adequately compensated public service. The outcome of such policy may be merger of some related institutions. The advantages of such merger would be improvement in synergy, stronger focus and operational efficiency in service delivery.

Under Job Creation and Economic policies in the manifesto of the ruling party, it intends to amend the Constitution and the Land Use Act to create freehold/leasehold interests in land along with matching grants for States to create a nationwide electronic land title register on a State-by-State basis. This is achievable if it is wish of the people. No law is cast in concrete. It must be operated within the dynamics and changing needs of the society. The idea of giving grants to States to create electronic land title registration is quite applauded. However, the real essence of such action should be to provide a platform for physical planning of the land for optimum benefits. In the same vein, the party also has undertaken to ensure full compliance with town planning and environmental laws and edicts.

It needs to be understood that the essence of the intension to amend the landuse Act and land information systems is to provide an environment for effective planning and development of our land resources. Geographical Information Systems are meant to be tools to be used in achieving these purposes. But unfortunately, as a result of greed, selfishness and bad advice (taken from persons who are not professionals in the built environment), many State Governments went into the venture of setting up GIS and took over assignments which they were not prepared for i.e. land parcelization (layout plans without any master-plan for such towns and cities. This has aggravated landuse conflicts in Nigerian towns. The recommendation is that results from the land information exercise should be provided to town planners to use them to make physical development plans for our human settlements.

The proposal to amend the Landuse Act should be carried out with the inclusiveness of all stakeholders. There must be adequate sensitization and appropriately conduction public hearing in the process. This is the only way we can amend the law that meets the essence.

2. *What are your agenda/expectation of the incoming government in the following areas:*

- High interest rate

- Mortgage
- Building collapse
- Reducing housing deficits
- Social and mass housing
- Quackery:

High interest rate

High interest rate indicates inflation and this causes the purchasing power of currency to fall which in turn makes goods and services expensive. This has been the pain that the nation has been going through. The rate of inflation has been astronomical; value of national currency nose-dived to a very dangerous level that its recovery in the visible future would also be a miracle; the level of poverty has followed at the same rate making basic needs of Nigerians unattainable. Housing, food, health, education and many basic needs are unaffordable. One of the antidotes to this problem is to encourage local production and procurement of goods and services. Most of the needs of Nigerians can be produced in Nigeria. Encourage investments in agriculture, implements, textiles, local building materials and even professional services can be provided by Nigerians and minimize imports. For example, basic urban planning services are contracted by State Governments to foreign consultants while Nigerian experts who can provide similar services at affordable costs with better quality and relevance are left without engagements. The end result is capital flight at exorbitant rates. But we must appreciate Lagos State Government and the Federal Ministry of Works and Housing (particularly the Department of Urban and Regional Development) for their encouragement of indigenous consultants. This has greatly reduced the cost of consultancy with end products which are highly responsive to the needs of Nigerians.

Mortgage

Mortgage facilities should be made available to the people in the low- and middle-income groups. Government needs to relax on some of the requirements for granting mortgages. The cumbersome documentations must be minimized and reduced to a one-stop shop. Interest rate should be minimal (low single digit). Primary mortgage institutions should be adequately regulated to ensure that they operate within the rules.

Building collapse

Building collapse has been outcome of lack of value for human life. It is the result of negligence, poor workmanship, engaging unqualified workmen on site and violation of planning laws, regulations and building codes. The problems of building collapse is systemic in the sense that some officials of government that normally vet plans, grant development permit and monitor/supervise/certify building construction are not qualified while others can be compromised through corrupt practices. There must therefore be a continuous process of ethical re-orientation, training and retraining of public officers in the building production process. The government has been dealing with such offenders with kids' gloves. Most offenders have only been punished by revoking their titles to the land which may be collected back by the same offender through the back door in another name. Stiff penalties must be meted to offenders. Qualified and experienced professionals should be the only ones allowed to supervise construction. Other requirements such as insurance for workers as well

as other legal provisions in the building code should be observed and enforced. Interestingly, the manifesto of the ruling party indicated that they shall comply with all town planning and environmental laws and edicts. We look forward to the eradication of impunity and the demonstration of political to enforce this policy.

Reducing Housing Deficits

There have been several frightening estimations of housing deficit in Nigeria. Efforts must be made to bridge this gap. Government should restrict itself to policies, provision of subsidies and leave construction of houses to individuals and corporate organizations. Government should create enabling environment with the provision of sites, infrastructure and services. A good example was laid by Yobe State Government in paying some percentage of the cost of building thereby making them affordable to the needy ones. Similar or other models can be embarked on by other State Governments in collaboration with private corporate institutions. The involvement of professional institutions in the built environment by government as well collaboration with Real Estate Developers Association of Nigeria cannot be over-emphasized.

Social and Mass Housing

Mass Housing as presently practiced cannot make any impact on housing deficit. This is why there are so many unoccupied houses in the urban areas in the name of mass of housing. They are mainly channels for hiding assets for many who do not know where to keep the wealth they have amassed. Indeed, they are colossal waste of land resources. Lack of social housing practice has been the bane of residential accommodation in towns and urban areas within the country. Slums grow because indigent members of the urban community produce make-shift accommodation for themselves. A lot of uncomplimentary activities take place in such environments. Government should invest in social housing programmes to enable the low class benefit from the wealth of cities and enable them make their contributions to the economy of cities.

Quackery

This has been an endemic problem in our environment. It is found in all fields of endeavour whereby people practice what are not sufficiently trained to do. Quackery has led to loss of lives and properties with significant effects on economy and environment. Incidentally, one of the recent policies of the Federal Government (as announced from the Office of the Head of Civil Service of the Federation) indicated that professional certification is no longer needed for advancement in civil service. This is indeed a big boost to quackery. We have observed that this has encouraged poor analysis and judgement of professional issues. We have witnessed places where people who do not have professional certifications in town planning have been made Directors at both Federal and State levels. Government must reverse that policy if Nigeria would develop properly. Regulatory bodies of professional institutions should be encouraged and equipped to effectively monitor practice. National Universities Commission must synergize with professional institutions and their regulatory bodies to ensure elimination of quackery. The use of renewable Practice License must be enforced in all professional bodies to certify those who are qualified to practice. Mandatory training and retraining of professionals should be enforced. Any quack caught must be dealt with as a deterrent to others.

ON THE CHALLENGES OF UNIVERSITY MASTERPLAN PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

1. Many universities are facing challenges with their master plans. What are these challenges?

Universities in Nigeria can be grouped into two categories. Those built and managed by the government and others by the private investors. It is usually mandatory to present the masterplans to the National Universities Commission as part of the documentation before being granted approval and license to operate. However, many of them face challenges in the production and implementation of the masterplans. These challenges arise from engagement of non-professionals to prepare and implement masterplans which eventually manifest in poor space requirement analysis, inadequate and incompetent manpower, low political will and poor funding. Along with the foregoing, It is important to mention that there is a cartel in the agency coordinating preparation and approval of masterplans that ensures that they must be the ones who prepare the plans or else it will not receive approval of NUC. I got this from a personal experience while preparing masterplan for one of the private universities. This is why almost all the masterplans are like edited documents in language and structure.

A good number of the masterplans are usually not prepared by core professional town planners. A plan prepared by non-professionals is bound to face contradictions in the process of conception and implementation such as conflicting landuses and loss of logic in the phasing programme. It therefore ends in confused development content and pattern.

Further to this, many University schemes of service erroneously indicate that persons who are not professional physical planners are to be engaged as Directors of Physical Planning. This amounts to double jeopardy; in the sense that plans are not prepared by professional planners and the implementations are also directed by non-professional planners. There is no how implementation would give the desired result.

Poor space requirement analysis is also a major problem. Land is usually allocated to universities arbitrarily. For example, some universities have land in excess of 10,000 hectares while if properly assessed they cannot need more than 800 hectares for all their indoor and outdoor academic and social activities. Providing infrastructure in such an expansive area becomes a big budgetary challenge. In an era when scarcity of land is competing with the ever-increasing population, challenges abound; land should therefore, be allocated to universities judiciously and economically to enhance its management.

Funding of projects in the masterplans faces a lot of challenges in the dwindling economy. Many of them depend on allocations from the government to fund their projects; their internally generated revenue is low in comparison with their needs, hence, it affects the implementation of their masterplans.

2. There has been a lot of disputes between the landowners and universities. Can we still blame it on non-implementation of the master plans?

There are a lot of disputes between land-owners and universities because in some instances adequate compensations are not paid to land owners. And because of the expansive land acquired by the universities coupled with insufficient funding, they cannot fully take possession of the land through securing it with fencing. When land owners observe that the value of their land has appreciated by virtue of the development of the university and the land has not been developed, they would want to encroach on the land or agitate to sell the land to higher bidders. In a way, it could be blamed on the non-implementation of the

masterplans but largely due to poor assessment of land requirements for the institution, non-payment or low rate of compensation paid to land owners and poor funding to secure the land from encroachment from initial land owners. It is in a chain of extensive amount of land, with lack of resources to implement the masterplan because of poor funding.

3. What are the options for the universities to secure their landed property from encroachments?

Traditionally, land is secured through appropriate demarcation with fence of all sorts of either block wall or metal poles and wires. Other instances include planting trees along the boundary lines of the property. Financial limitation may not allow complete block wall fencing. One of the options could be leasing out the unused space to investors who could develop some facilities along the boundary lines on Build Operate and Transfer model for a number of years that may be agreed upon. Such facilities could be hotels/guest houses, hostels, sports facilities, rental accommodation (real estate), mechanized agricultural practices, etc. With these options, land will always be in active use; and would thus wade off encroachments.

4. Do universities need to review their master plans? What are the steps to take?

A university masterplan is a document prepared by professional planners to serve as a dynamic long-term physical development guide for its future growth and improvement. It takes into consideration the connection between buildings, social settings, and their surrounding environments. It includes analysis, recommendations, and proposals for a site's population, economy, housing, transportation, community facilities, and land use. It is based on public input, surveys, planning initiatives, existing development, physical characteristics, and social and economic conditions. In its characteristic nature, it is limited in the proportion of its contents and proposals to be achieved in implementation because many variables would come to play. These include changes in economy, taste, technology and social characteristics of the users of the campus. For example, technology is fast impacting on the space we need to do so many things. A lot of work can now be carried out on line. Space requirements for students of design are now changing because the use of drawing board is fading out. Large auditoriums may soon lose relevance because a lot of lectures can be taken through zoom connections and other online lecture facilities. Tastes and economy are changing living patterns. Motorization is being minimized for walkable designs; and this would influence the provision of line infrastructure. Hence despite the increase in the population of students, space requirements can be less but more effectively managed.

Therefore, for sustained relevance, the masterplan needs to be reviewed usually at intervals of five years. Initial parameters need to be re-assessed and measured against contemporary conditions. Review would take almost the same process of preparing the initial masterplan. This will involve the following steps:

- Examining the relevance of the initial goals and objectives and modifying them if necessary;
- Carrying out surveys and studies to understand current physical, social, economic and environmental conditions of the campus as well as the current expectations of the type of environment they would want to have;
- Analyze the field data;
- Propose new alternatives for landuse and infrastructural distribution, evaluate them and

select the most feasible option through a process of public presentation and assessment;

- Prioritize projects according to needs and funds per time;
- Commence implementation; and,
- Monitor implementation.

5. How do governments assist the varsities in implementation of their master plans?

Government would need to provide adequate funding, sufficient and relevant manpower to prepare and direct the implementation of the masterplans. The current intervention of TET-FUND in various universities is laudable and commendable. National Universities Commission should review the current policy of all-comers-affair into the directorate of physical planning in universities because it is an exclusive reserve of town planners as provided in relevant statutes of the nation. The Directorate of Physical Planning must be differentiated from Works and even if they are to be led by one professional, it should be by the professional Town Planner because the visioner of the scope and spatial pattern of development of the campus is the town planner. Works only come in the process of implementation which is the contribution of other professionals in the built environment. This understanding is gradually improving. Some universities recently have separated the position of the Director of Physical Planning from Works and appointed qualified town planners to head the Directorate. Definitely, there will be significant positive changes in the design and implementation of their campuses.

ON POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS

1. The Federal Government is embarking on housing census for the first time. What's your expectations from such exercise?

The housing census is so important to us as a nation to enable us to know the statistics of housing needs of the nation. There have been several estimations and projections about housing deficit in Nigeria which are greatly at variance with each other. It is hoped that a more accurate census will be realized this time because of the use of improved technology in the process. However, there may be tendencies which could challenge the integrity of the census because of the quality of information at the disposal of the public. The general notion of getting more resources from the Government through inflated figures of population would raise its head. Enumerators may therefore be compromised to do the bidding of their hosts. If integrity is emphasized and adhered to, then we may have credible census. However, I think the housing data would be closer to the reality than the population figures. We can verify houses through the imageries because they stationary but not so for human beings. People counted in one building may migrate into another one for the purpose of inflating the population figures.

2. Do you think the National Population Commission is equipped to carry such exercise for the country?

With the information available in the public domain, the National Population Commission claims they are well-equipped. This is a common claim in Nigerian Institutions, even if to justify the amount of funds expended on them. But the process of implementation and delivery would usually reveal their deficiencies of doing less than the promises made. The challenge also remains that there are areas where the level of insecurity is high and inaccessible. These are real facts and indeed can inhibit comprehensive and all-inclusive exercise.

3. What will be impact of the housing census on real estate sector?

The housing census will give statistical information on housing demand and supply; and give impression of the deficit. Developers have been producing houses without recourse to valid statistics; though there seems to be none. This is responsible for inappropriate policies and programmes on housing by both government and private developers. In cities, the number of homeless people is tremendous in contrast to the rate of house vacancy especially in the State Capitals. The government policies of indiscriminate allocation of flat rates of constructing houses across Nigeria would now have an informed basis; and government intervention will be more rational. Investments of private sector in housing are more of land grabbing and business interests than meeting the needs of the population. The expected impact of the housing census on the real estate sector will be a boost and provision of direction of the quantity and sizes of buildings that are needed by Nigerians as well as where they are to be located.

4. What's your suggestions on how to better the housing census?

There should be stakeholders' engagement from the outset of such an event. Professionals who use the data should be involved in the creation of formats for data collection.

Census should not be conducted in the same year with national elections. These are too big national events; that the clamor for positions in government by politicians would naturally becloud the information dissemination about census. For example, most Nigerians are more concerned about the problems generated by the last general elections, that only very few are conscious of the census programme.

Senior officers who would handle critical aspects of census need to be taken through continuous instruction on integrity, truthfulness and transparency; they should be made to understand the importance of the tasks (which could be positive by).

Let there be a minimized emphasis of population as a means of attracting resources. There should be penalties for persons who inflate the figures of census to the extent that it can serve as deterrent to others.

5. Did the commission undertake proper consultation with industry professional before embarking on the exercise?

As much as it concerns my professional body, (Nigerian Institute of Town Planners) the consultation was scanty. Town Planners depend on population figures to conceive all levels of physical development plans and distribution of activity areas in settlements and in the country as a whole but the collaboration between the Institute and the Commission was scanty. Indeed, information could only be gleaned from either the website of the Commission or on pages of newspapers or other media.

6. What challenges do you foresee?

Possible challenges could be related to either under-counting or over-counting depending on the interests of the supervisors and targets they would have been given to meet by their sponsors. There may be the usual malfunctioning of the electronic gadgets to be deployed by the Commission. This has become the stock in trade of similar public institutions. The gadgets would have been claimed to be in serviceable condition before deployment only for them to fail when they are needed most and the staff will revert to manual operations which can always be abused.

ON BUILDING COLLAPSE

1. HOW TO CURB RECURRING BUILDING COLLAPSE IN NIGERIA.

It is so disheartening that valuable lives and properties are lost on weekly basis from various parts of the nation. Some of the buildings are at various stages of construction while others are aged buildings.

Buildings which collapse at construction stage are majorly as a result of poor design and workmanship. Some designs could be more complex than what some of the government officials can comprehend to vet effectively before approval. When a faulty design goes to a poor contractor to construct, it makes double jeopardy on the safety of the building.

Government should build the capacity of its technical staff who vet building plans and those who supervise the construction process through training and retraining to enable them key into current international best practices in the industry. Buildings which are above five floors should be advertised in the newspapers on a scheduled day and subjected to public scrutiny, to be analyzed by experts in public and private sectors who could be invited to scrutinize the technical details of the design. Remunerations of the invited experts will be borne by the developer. Contractors for such buildings must be corporate entities of repute who have the expertise and integrity to protect. Stringent penalties (if not corporal punishment) such as life imprisonment and forfeiture of other properties of the developer should be imposed on the developer and the builder including the supervisors of the building. Corporate and personal accounts of the developer should be frozen. Old buildings should be subjected to periodic inspection and test of stability to ensure they are safe. Any one which fails integrity test should be remedied or demolished.

ON BUILDING COLLAPSE

SANITIZING DEVELOPMENT CONTROL TO MINIMIZE BUILDING COLLAPSE IN NIGERIA.

Lagos State Governor has indicted staff of Development Control Agency of aiding corruption that is now fueling building collapse. Most of these staff are town planners. What's your take on this? How do we sanitize the system nationwide to curb structural failures?

Lagos has become the epicenter of building collapse to the extent that most people especially those in the old high-density buildings seem to be perpetually restless concerning their safety in the buildings they live. It is at the same time worrisome that in this era of knowledge, expertise and improved technology buildings under construction are the ones mostly involved in incidences of collapse leading to loss of valuable lives and properties. Building production takes a process. It starts with the submission of designs to the Department of Development Control for vetting and eventual issuance of Development Permit. Development Control is a multi-disciplinary Department consisting of all the professionals in the built environment to make their contributions as to the compliance of the proposal with planning regulations, architectural and engineering standards and the building code. It is usually headed by town planners who coordinate the approval process.

Challenges of the quality of buildings may start from the design stage if appropriate soil studies are not undertaken to form the basis of design. If the design was done by an incompetent engineer and the professionals in Development Control Agency do not have the capacity to adequately vet it, trouble looms at the corner. And it would be worse if the supervising engineer is also incompetent to construct that magnitude of project. Compromises and sharp practices between the professionals supervising the construction and the developer culminate in building collapse.

To allude that corruption is the main cause of building collapse may not be far from the truth; but who is the corrupt person responsible for this situation? It squarely lies on the head of the professional (architect, engineer and builder) who is responsible for supervision of the building production process; and not the town planner. To think it is the fault of the town planner is a function of either ignorance or misinformation. Painfully corruption has become endemic. It pervades every sphere of our national life. Most politicians get into power through questionable means. Corruption has not given Nigeria the opportunity of electing leaders of their choice. Thus, plans are made, budgets are proposed and approved but there cannot be visible evidences to back up the expenditure.

To curb incessant building collapse, I recommend the following procedures.

- a. Government should build the capacity of its technical staff who vet building plans and those who supervise the construction process through training and retraining to enable them key into current international best practices in the industry.
- b. Buildings which are above five floors should be advertised in the newspapers on a scheduled day and subjected to public scrutiny, to be analyzed by experts in public and private sectors who could be invited to scrutinize the technical details of the design. Remunerations of the invited experts will be borne by the developer. Contractors for such buildings must be corporate entities of repute who have the expertise and integrity to protect.

- c. The practice of allowing the Governor to approve multi-storey buildings should be discontinued. Some of the buildings collapse because the approval process is influenced by politicians. This paves way for impunity and the devastating impacts of collapse.
- d. No single individual should be engaged in the supervision of a multi-storey building. It should be contracted to a recognized and experienced engineering company which has professionals in the various fields.
- e. Professional bodies should be involved in the selection of the contractor and supervising engineer through their Practice Committees.
- f. Stringent penalties (if not corporal punishment) such as life imprisonment and forfeiture of other properties of the developer should be imposed on the developer and the builder including the supervisors of the building.
- g. Corporate and personal accounts of the developer should be frozen. Old buildings should be subjected to periodic inspection and test of stability to ensure they are safe. Any one which fails integrity test should be remedied or demolished.

ON BUILDING COLLAPSE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

1. What is your take on the rising incidents of building collapse in Nigeria, especially Lagos, Abuja.

The incessant occurrence of building collapse in Nigeria is an unfortunate embarrassment to the nation. It is as a result of abuse of extant laws and codes especially the Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law and the 2006 Building Code. It diminishes our image and national pride as the “giant of Africa” and other accolades Nigeria has earned in the comity of nations. It is a demonstration of the low values we attach to human lives. President Goodluck Jonathan in his humane character said that his political ambition cannot be equated to the life of any Nigerian. Owners and builders of collapsed buildings are inhuman because all the activities that would have led to the collapse of a building are characterized by inordinate love for money, greed, corrupt and sharp practices, complacency, incompetence and carelessness. The response of government to this matter is glaringly lackadaisical and rhetoric. Nobody has been adequately punished for engaging in any collapsed building other than withdrawing his title to land. However, the new moves being made by Lagos State Government suggest that positive actions are in sight.

1b. How can this menace be curbed?

Building collapse can be curbed through strict enforcement of Planning laws, regulations and Building Code. All agencies that have schedules related to plan vetting (review) to post approval and enforcement of regulations should be under the authority of one supervising officer. There should be strong political will and sufficient budgetary release to the relevant departments for procurement of equipment and recruitment of manpower. Government should embark on aggressive capacity building for the staff of Development Control Departments, engage external consultants and the public in building plan review processes especially for buildings above five floors, and adequate public enlightenment of the provisions of the planning law. Minimize delays in building plan approval process. Stringent penalties should be meted to defaulters. Freeze the corporate and personal accounts of developers and supervising engineers. Existing buildings should be regularly maintained at intervals of not more than five years. The provision for Governor to approve construction of towering buildings should be abolished. Involve professional bodies in pre and post construction phases of any approved building. All constructions should be covered by insurance policy. Recommendations of earlier committees on building collapse should be revisited and implemented.

2. What possible roles can Town Planners play to checkmate the menace?

Town Planners should ensure that any building being constructed has approval from the right authority. Delays in plan approval should be minimized. They should monitor developments and enforce the provisions of the law on buildings in contravention through outright demolition and where possible, and in line with the recommendations of relevant professionals, correct the defects to enhance the strength and stability of buildings. Existing buildings should not be exempted. The buildings that predate the law should be regularized through as-built building plan approval and monitored to ensure it is properly built.

3. Do you think town planners in the public service are doing enough to put an end to the menace of building collapse?

Yes, I believe Town Planners are doing what they can in terms of ensuring development control especially considering the tools at their disposal. We cannot however, claim it is full proof because there are a few who may have challenges in terms of competence and integrity. Normally, a little poison destroys a whole lump. This is why the efforts of majority of town planners are dwarfed by the irresponsibility of a few of them. Again, the planners in civil service can still do better if they are given enabling environment and equipment to coordinate the development process. It must still be understood that town planners are not trained to supervise building construction; and they don't do it. Any town planner who engages in supervision of building construction is illegal; and should be prosecuted and punished adequately. So, the integrity of the building lies squarely in the hands of engineers and builders. The stoppage of the menace of building collapse depends on the cooperation of the engineers and builders to do what is right in building construction.

4. What can you say about the Nigerian cities. Are they growing sustainably.

Cities are supposed to be engines of growth in other climes. Nigerian cities are growing but not sustainably. They are dotted with slums, sprawls and uncomplimentary landuses. Developments are located without conception of their relationships and impacts. Their growths are spontaneous without any plan masterplan. Some of the masterplans that were prepared during the military era have lapsed and would need review. Incompetent and unqualified people take decisions on landuse. Hence, urban areas are characterized by chaos.

4b. If not, what are the issues and how can they be addressed?

To make Nigerian cities sustainable and livable, town planners must be consulted and engaged to prepare relevant plans for the cities and their component parts. Issues that would be addressed include population dynamics, landuse distribution, urban transport, economic base, urban governance, housing, recreation, infrastructure, industrial locations, climate change, urban renewal, waste management and other critical factors for sustainability. They can be addressed through engagement of national consulting planners to prepare the plans while those in public service implement the plans. However, a strong back-up of political will and funding are needed to actualize the plans.

5. Nigeria is in need of over 20 million housing units to bridge accommodation deficit, especially for the low-income and vulnerable Nigerians. How can this be achieved?

Though the quantity of housing deficit is contestable, there is no doubt that many Nigerians need to be housed properly. The low-income and vulnerable Nigerians can be housed through removal of the major clogs to housing development. These clogs include difficulty of access to land, over-dependence on foreign building materials, direct involvement of Federal Government in construction of houses, provision of adequate funding for housing and infrastructure, politicization of housing, planning and location of housing development relative to other existing developments. Housing provision should be treated more through equity than equality. There is the need to make mortgage facilities more accessible to the low-income.

6. What is your take on mortgage system in Nigeria?

The mortgage system in Nigeria is quite poor, but is simply a reflection of the economic situation of the country. To access mortgage, one has to have a steady source of income. This automatically disqualifies about 50% of Nigerian youths and adults who are unemployed and others who are underemployed. With very low wages, extremely high inflation rate, while mortgage banks are not willing to give loans spanning over a long period of time, the low income and vulnerable cannot access mortgage. The subsisting mortgage system can only be accessed by the rich.

7. Who is a town planner?

A town planner is a professional trained from an institution duly accredited by the Town Planners Registration Council of Nigeria (TOPREC) in the science and art of ordering the use of land and the character and sitting of buildings and communication routes so as to secure the maximum practicable degree of economy, convenience and beauty. Further to the training, he must be licensed by TOPREC to enable him to practice. Town planners are driven by the need to achieve sustainable developments of our cities and rural settlements for harmonious living, economic progress, social cohesion, structural stability and environmental conservation.

8. What are the roles of town planners in bringing to bear sustainable development in Nigeria.

Town planners manage the development of new areas in cities, towns and rural areas as well as reviewing existing areas to ensure they are renewed to meet up with minimum standards for livability bearing in mind the environmental and economic impacts of the developments. Town planners develop, review and implement policies and physical development plans at national, regional or local levels taking into account transport, economy, jobs, infrastructure, energy, climate change and the historic environment. Specifically, they prepare masterplans, sector plans, district and neighbourhood plans, subject and action area plans for various types of landuses.

Town planners also conduct studies such as site analysis, landuse planning analysis report (LUPAR), environmental and social impact assessment (ESIA), environmental audit, project feasibility and viability analysis, disaster risk management and resilience studies. They carry out city administration, development control, waste management, street naming and house numbering, outdoor advert management and signages, advocacy and public enlightenment and campaign.

9. Has Nigerian government given urban and regional planning the rightful place in the nation building?

Nigerian governments at all levels have not given urban and regional planning its rightful place in nation building. They have only paid lip service to it. A few examples may suffice. The National government has not implemented the urban and regional planning law it enacted since 1992 by establishing the institutions that should facilitate implementation of the law. Secondly, urban and regional planning which deals with the organization and management of the scarcest resource available to man has perpetually been appendages to various other ministries and other agencies of government. This has greatly affected the quality of focus and vision of the leaders of the Ministry. Government needs, in their effort

at giving urban and regional planning its pride of place, and for the purpose of averting chaos in settlements give urban planning the needed attention and priority. The Federal Government should liaise with State Governments to domesticate the Urban and Regional Planning Act (CAP N138 LFN 2004).

10. Suggestions

Nigeria must stand to bear its title as the giant of Africa through planned development. National and realistic long term vision of our development needs must be conceived while should term targets need to be itemized and programmed.

Economic development plans must be carried out along with physical development plans at all levels of government or else they will amount to little nothing.

National, regional and city physical development plans must be embarked upon vigorously through the use of Nigerian Consultants to enhance relevance and inclusiveness.

There must also be an aggressive recruitment of town planners into public service.

The need to create an independent Ministry of Physical Planning led by an experienced registered town planner is long overdue. The continued location of urban and regional service in Federal and State Governments as appendages to related or unrelated organs of government does not work for coordinated socio-economic and physical development of the nation.

ON THE DELIVERY OF DIVIDENDS OF DEMOCRACY

Please sir, looking at Buhari's performance since 2015 he assumed the reins of presidency, do you think he fulfilled the promises on housing in his manifesto sir?

Let me first of all correct the impression of judging Buhari. He was only the arrow-head of the outgoing government. Evaluation of his performance is an assessment of all of us as Nigerians. He led Nigerians the way they wanted. We had a choice to make if we felt he was not leading us well. Giving him a second term was an attestation to our acceptance of good performance which we wanted to continue enjoying. Personally, I will never blame Buhari, but Nigerians.

If the reports given by various functionaries of government are true, we would commend the outgoing regime. We have got reports of having built almost 9,000 housing units and constructed over 9,000 kilometers of roads all across the country. This translates to 30 housing units in each State and the Federal Capital Territory per year. At such a rate, it would take about 90 years to meet the present estimated housing deficit in Nigeria. In the next 90 years, except with extreme controls, the population of Nigerians would be close to 700 million with a higher level of deficit in residential accommodation. With such a trend, more than 70% of Nigerians would be homeless, sleeping on streets and in un-inhabitable shelters. In the places that housing development were made, most of them lack basic infrastructure, thus creating breeding grounds for slum development in our urban areas. The regime can be appreciated in the spirit of the adage that half loaf is better than none. The provision of housing facilities is a far cry from the need to score a pass mark.

The efforts on infrastructure are also appreciable in the spirit of the same adage. But there are lots of questions to ask at the level of completion. At what stages of completion are these infrastructures? Many roads and other infrastructural projects inherited by the outgoing administration have not yet been completed talk less of new road projects; so how can we lay claims to success on infrastructure. For example, the road from Kaduna – Abuja – Lokoja and beyond, the main door way to the seat of power which was awarded since 2007 is still uncompleted and infact getting worse everyday. These are the main arteries that connect Abuja between the north and south. The rate of road crashes on this road is on the increase. Within the city of Abuja, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan Expressway has been there for years uncompleted and many other infrastructural projects. Construction projects that can be done in months even in Ghana, take years to complete in Nigeria. The truth is that, except for a few, we cannot actually see the projects executed on the ground, they are only on pages of newspapers and screens of televisions. Without doubt, we cannot praise-sing poor performance and non-delivery of campaign promises.

What can one say about safety and security that have so nose-dived or poverty that has escalated to the extent that human life has become valueless to those who seek to make ends meet by all means, even when it is through abominable practices? Transportation safety is worse now than ever before, to the extent that even the train that became the saving grace to travelers between Abuja and Kaduna was endangered.

All that government needs to facilitate affordable housing is to provide enabling environment for development. It starts with physical planning at all levels as provided the Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law of 1992, and details up to the provision of infrastructure; then sane development will have a free course of flow. Access to land should be made easier, mortgage facilities should be simplified for individual and corporate developers of housing, encouragement should be given to local producers of building materials, and indigenous professionals should be engaged in the development process.

We place high hopes on the incoming government to redeem Nigeria from its present predicament in human settlement planning and housing development. Decision makers and advisers should be made out of selfless, committed and trustworthy persons who are experienced and competent to deliver the dividends of democracy rather than clueless Party faithfuls. They should be people who are not greedy for financial gains but men and women who are contented with what they have. Let our towns and cities be planned by competent and accredited professional physical planners to guide growth and development. Then they will take their proper positions as engines of growth for the rest of the nation. Let us take the incoming government as our golden opportunity and chance to pull Nigeria from the doldrums and chart a new course of positive development. If we miss it again, the groaning of this generation will go to the high heavens, the Almighty Avenger will rise to the occasion to show His ability in the affairs of men and this nation, the next generation will curse us and posterity will not see us with kindness.

ON THE IMPACT OF REMOVAL OF PETROLEUM SUBSIDY

1. What's the likely effect of the increase in fuel pump price on the construction sector?

It will definitely impact negatively on the construction industry. Prices of building materials will increase and the purchasing power of intending developers will be weakened. Quite a lot of disasters are looming in construction sector. From manufacturers to developers and professionals, everybody will bear the brunt.

2. What do you foresee happening in the next few months?

Corruption will increase (especially among civil servants) to enable people to meet up with their aspirations such as owning house and other essentials of life. For people in rented apartments, the rates will increase and housing shortage will escalate. There will also be losses in jobs (such as professionals, technologists and artisans in the built environment as well as other services) which will increase the current level of unemployment. There could be more building collapses because affordable sub-standard materials would be used in construction as well as fire disasters through use of sub-standard electrical cables and appliances.

3. Which areas will be most affected and why?

The areas that will be most affected is urban development and housing sector. There will be upsurge in development of squatter and slum settlements and enclaves in urban areas and invariably aggravate social ills. These include robbery, banditry, physical and social overcrowding which may cause spread of diseases and epidemics. Urban infrastructural development will be slowed down. Hopes of the low-income earners to either build or buy houses will be shattered.

4. What steps do you take to assist your members overcome the challenges?

More than ever before, cooperatives should be encouraged among closed groups (in professional associations) and to promote crowd funding of projects. When funds are scarce, professionals could practice and be remunerated in cash and kind (such as compensation with commensurate piece of land where clients have enough to give for services rendered) along with some monetary remunerations. This is mainly for professionals in the private sector. In these circumstances, professionals should know that they and their works shall outlive the present hardships; therefore they should still be diligent in the practice of their professions so that the projects will not stand to stigmatize them or diminish their integrity in the future.

5. How would government ameliorate these changes that will occur on the industry?

Government should focus on physical planning of towns, appropriately locate housing districts, provide infrastructure and encourage access to fair-interest mortgages for people who desire to build houses. Mass movement of people should be facilitated through the provision of well-managed public transit systems such as high capacity buses and rail transport.

ON THE GLOBAL LIVABILITY OF NIGERIAN CITIES

The Economist Intelligence Unit's 2023 Global Livability report has ranked Lagos as the fourth worst city to live in the world in its latest report. Do you think this report is fair?

Lagos is a city I personally dread because of its structure, security challenges and clumsiness, though some parts are good to live. It is a city of survival of the fittest. Ranking it as the fourth worst city using indices of livability may not be too far from the truth. Some of the glaring factors include challenges of security, lawlessness, dirtiness, slums and squatter settlements, high social and numerical occupancy ratio, insufficient water supply, shortage of recreational facilities, traffic problems, insufficient public facilities such as educational, health, socio-cultural amenities, poor infrastructure (roads, drainages and epileptic power supply).

Livability is measured by the availability of some important facilities to make life easier for the inhabitants of a town or city. These include social infrastructure (education, health, cultural facilities), walkability (safety, security), public transport (connectivity, availability of various modes at affordable costs), public open spaces (recreational facilities), housing availability and affordability (for all classes of people), local employment sources of income for all within productive age.

Livability starts with physical planning of a town. This gives the town a sustainable structure for distribution of landuses, their linkages and functional economic base. It is followed by logical implementation including control of development to ensure that the plan is developed rationally which is enabled by strong political will, capital outlay by both public and private developers and technical servicing. Lagos is already making some efforts along this line as it has been engaging planners and related professionals to prepare plans for sections of the city, installation of infrastructure to ease public transport, provision of social infrastructure as well as creating investment opportunities to boost the economic base of the city. However, the rate of population growth cannot be sufficiently matched by provision of the elements of livability. There are hopes of improvement to move Lagos up the ladder of livable cities if the tempo towards it is maintained and increased.

ON THE EXPECTED BENEFIT OF THE NEWLY CREATED MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT.

1. The Federal Government has created a Ministry of Housing and Urban Development? What will be the benefit to the sector?

The creation of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development is a good step in the right direction. It is an evidence of the Federal Government's resolve to solve the intractable problem of housing and urban development in Nigeria frontally. The benefits will be the deployment of professional knowledge and experience to solving problems facing the sector. It will enhance focus and prioritization of housing and urban development whereby achievable targets could be set and realized. It will assist Nigeria to fully join the league of progressive nations as well as improving the image of the country in fulfilling some of the treaties entered into through bilateral and multilateral agreements.

2. What have been the challenges of combining both as a ministry?

Observing from a distance, the major challenge has been the engagement of non-professionals to manage the affairs of the ministry. People have always believed that the position of the Minister is administrative because he would take decisions based on the recommendations from experts in the ministry. Without knowledge of the profession, he can be misled to take wrong decisions. Why is it that non-professionals have not been allowed to head the ministries of health, justice and others? It is because sound decisions can only be taken by professionals in that field.

Secondly, because of lack of expert knowledge, the sector of works received more attention because of the volume of funds needed to execute infrastructure, therefore, less attention was given to housing and urban development. It has purely a factor of ignorance and this has been responsible for poor coordination and execution of infrastructural projects in the country. Planning must precede development or else development would lose rationality and relevance. Therefore, the step taken this time is both corrective and evidence of sending signals of hope to the people of Nigeria. Let me quickly add that lack of physical planning in Nigeria is the source of most of our problems ranging from overwhelming episodes of ill-health to security, poor educational performance, poor investment opportunities as well as other economic and social problems.

3. What issues should the new Minister concentrate on as a means to rejuvenate the sector?

The Minister should face the following issues;

- Implementing the Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law which should be the basis of any form of physical development and present an executive bill to amend areas of the law that have lost relevance;
- Set up structures to provide and implement national and regional development plans with a view to harmonizing and efficiently harness resources of each geo-political zone and a national development framework;
- Creating a platform for seamless respect, cooperation and collaboration within and be-

tween all the professionals in the built environment; minimizing wrangling that pervade them currently;

- Updating and formalizing the adoption and ensure the implementation of the Nigerian Building Code;
- Facilitating the creation of an agency to collect, analyze statistics of housing with the aim of assessing the deficit in quantity and quality of housing in Nigeria to serve as the basis for effective planning and implementation of housing policy;
- Massive recruitment of professionals in the built environment to meet up the glaring deficit in all fields;
- Embarking on urgent and rigorous capacity building for professionals in the Ministry to aid the performance of their jobs; and at the same time encourage and patronize indigenous professionals to offer consultancy services to the agencies under his ministry.
- Effective training of supporting sub-professionals in the built environment.

4. Now that we have a professional in charge of affairs in the built environment. What are your expectations in housing development?

We look forward to improved housing policies and their implementation; engagement of indigenous professionals and artisans to effectively participate in design and implementation of housing and urban development programmes and plans; enhancement of the delivery of affordable housing programmes; and the achievement of enabling every human settlement to have professionally prepared physical development plans to guide them. We also look forward to quick adoption of the National Physical Planning Standards which has been under consideration of the Ministry as well as adequate deployment of political will and funding for housing and urban development projects.

ON PERSPECTIVES ON HOUSING AFTER 63 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE.

Nigeria is celebrating 63 years of Housing. What are your perspectives?

The nation of Nigeria is celebrating 63 years of “independence”, though housing issues have been with man since creation. There were hopes that with the inception of a national indigenous government and self-rule, we should have a new direction in conceptualizing and meeting our housing needs. Nigerians have only been battling with the provision of shelter while housing (in the real sense of it) receives only lip service.

Housing has been deficient in quantity and quality to meet the aspirations of Nigerians. Good housing has been the reserve of the rich. Housing only makes sense when other attributes for quality living accompany it such as engineering and social infrastructure. Some of the interventions of government have been arbitrary because decisions on where to build houses have based on political considerations.

The way forward is to first of all plan settlements, indicate locations for housing development, collect data on housing need, prepare the layout for housing project in a suitable location, provide infrastructure before commencement of the houses. Nigeria needs a strong and feasible housing policy. The current policy is outdated. A new policy should encourage the participation of the private sector through affordable mortgage arrangements. Such policy should also encourage the advantage of vertical development and discourage low rise buildings. Sufficient power should be provided in such environments to encourage the lifts and other automated systems for internal movements in a building.

“Performance of the real estate industry for 2023 and a forecast for 2024.”

1. How well did the real estate industry perform in the outgoing year 2023 with regards to residential subsector, retail and industrial development?

The performance in the real estate sector for the year 2023 has been so poor and low. New buildings were few, access to land was difficult, a good number of buildings collapsed for poor quality construction, flooding rendered some people homeless, others were demolished either because they were illegal or unsafe for human habitation.

2. What percentage performance was recorded in the industry?

Though there may be no dependable statistics to assess the percentage performance of the real estate industry, a cursory observation would indicate not more than 5% or thereabout. Simply put, it has not been impressive.

3. What were the challenges and how stakeholders solve those pitfalls / what do we need to do to move the real estate industry forward?

The major challenges still remained access to secured titles and tenure, delays suffered in procuring building plan approvals, highly inflated cost of development charges, unaffordable cost of building materials. Recruit Nigerian professionals, minimize involvement of foreign professionals, engage reputable professionals into the real estate sector. The brain-

drain and capital flight from Nigeria are counter-productive to the real estate industry. Both government and private investors should focus on engaging Nigerian professionals.

4. How can govt at Federal and state level help the industry to grow?

Just like the government has improved infrastructure in educational institutions through the establishment of TETFund, it could be useful to intervene in real estate too by establishing such funds. This will create a pool for public and private developers and investors in real estate. If this supplements the mortgage institutions, develop local production of building materials, reduce taxes on building materials and invest in building the capacities of indigenous professionals, improvement may be expected. Let there be improved access to unencumbered and developable land; such land should be properly designated and located in approved urban masterplans and detailed site development plans made by professional planners.

5. What are your projections for the real estate market in 2024?

There seem to be little hope of improvement because the factors affecting the delivery of real estate projects remain unchanged. Incomes of people are dwindling, families are expanding numerically through natural causes, urbanization is still rapid while cost of production of real estate is growing everyday. However, with the doggedness of investors, there could be some improvements but to expect any meaningful or dramatic change will be day-dreaming.

ON COST OF CONSTRUCTION

1. Cost of construction has continued to rise despite efforts by government. What has been the problem?

Cost of construction is a function of several factors, the most prominent is the rate of inflation i.e. the value of our currency. The naira has so nose-dived beyond any record in history. And most of the building materials are imported which are usually imported with foreign currency. Secondly, cost of transportation of materials has sky-rocketed because of the increase in the pump price of petroleum products under the claim of removal of petroleum subsidy. The prices of these products go up almost every week. These and other factors such as the cost of labour have generated high multiplier effects on the cost of construction.

2. Which aspect of materials have been mostly affected?

From my little knowledge and survey, the most affected materials are iron rods, electrical wires, sanitary wares and tiling materials.

3. Can you measure the percentage of increase in construction cost?

I would estimate the percentage increase in the past one year to be in the region of 400%. We are working on a building whose burglary proofing materials were estimated at three million naira by May 2023 but by December 2023, a revised quote took it above eleven million naira. It was unbelievable though real. I am sure, the price must have gone higher by now.

4. What should be done by government to reduce cost of construction?

Government should drastically reduce bureaucratic bottlenecks between project conception and construction, strengthen relevant institutions to research and encourage the use of locally produced building materials, minimize engagement of foreign professionals and contractors in the construction industry and massively engage indigenous professionals and contractors of proven competence and integrity. Customs tariffs on highly essential building materials could be reduced to allow for the importation of high-tech building materials. Importers of such products must apply and get required approvals to import. Access to land and tax waivers should be given to producers of building materials to set up industries and produce in Nigeria.

5. Where is this cost more noticeable, is it housing, bridges or construction?

The cost cuts across all aspects of construction. But the one that is of the greatest concern is that of housing which is the most basic need of man. It is most noticeable in housing because the deficit continues to stare at us and the nation looks helpless in attending to the increasing homelessness, the need to replace the ageing residential properties, failure of which is responsible for the collapse of buildings, killing many illustrious Nigerians. The cost of building materials is the reason for the growing shanties and illegal developments in the form of slums and its attendant problems. Urgent attention needs to be given to the need to reduce cost of building materials to promote sane development and management of our human settlements.

6. What impact will this have on the economy?

Except the increase in the cost of construction is squarely addressed, it will continue to impact negatively on our economy. It has an all-round impact on the health and productivity of Nigerians, psyche and social lives of people to the extent that truth, integrity and hard work will no longer be hallmarks of personalities. The loss of these virtues would eventually lead to the collapse of the economy, the end of which no man can predict.

ON THE FEASIBILITY OF ACHIEVING FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HOUSING PROGRAMME

1. Under the present business climate - volatile forex, high interest rate, exorbitant building materials prices, multiple taxations and other bottleneck, do you think 50,000 new houses per year by the federal government are possible?

Building 50,000 houses per year by the government is a good intention though it is a far cry from what is needed to address the housing deficit that Nigeria is facing. The proposed project, to the man on the street is simply rhetoric, a mirage and looks like clouds without rain. Even if the Federal Government intends to deliver these houses, how is it going to facilitate the involvement of the private sector which should deliver the major part of the needed housing stock?

1b. How?

It is difficult for anyone to be convinced of the possibility of the proposed housing delivery.

2. What are the strategies that will make this happen, considering past failed efforts?

Nigerian housing delivery has failed so many times; and leaders have set up teams and committees to think out solutions. Except where minds are untrainable, if not, where failure was realized, solution becomes its opposite. But in a situation that we continue to set up committees in every regime to look for solutions which are not far-fetched, then we are only demonstrating non-commitment to housing delivery especially for the poor and low income. For the purpose of records, let us remind ourselves again of actions that have been recommended times without number as panacea to resolving the housing crisis which is to provide enabling environment for the private sector to act as the engine of growth in the housing sector. Such enabling environment would include, among others, improved access to land, physical planning of human settlements (to required details), provision of infrastructure, reduction of interest rates and the creation of a viable and accessible mortgage finance.

3. What are your suggestions or advice for this new committees?

The new committees should be realistic in seeking relevant information, analyze them and provide pragmatic solutions outside the known ones. Let the committees not become another jamboree of reward for political support and undue sharing of national cake.

4. What is your advice to the federal government.

The first year of the current administration is almost gone. The reports of the committees may be coming out by their second year in office. Setting up the structures and institutions to implement the report would follow through the normal bureaucracies of public service, while the challenges of funding waits at the corner. If we are lucky enough, not more than between 50,000 and 70,000 dwelling units may be created by the end of four years because we know that third and fourth years of any regime in Nigeria are periods of preparing to win the next election. There can be no successful housing delivery without physical planning. government must aggressively engage town planners to first of all plan major towns

and cities where most of these houses will be located. When the houses are properly located and appropriately serviced, it would meet the needs of Nigerian.

5. What are the challenges militating provision of low- and middle-income housing in Nigeria.

The challenges militating against the provision of housing for low- and middle-income earners in Nigeria are lack of access to land, poor remuneration resulting in low purchasing power of dwelling units of their own and high cost of building materials which are mainly imported.

ON THE SLOW PACE OF HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

1. Is it true that some developers are not going to site anymore?

It is not true that developers are not going to construction sites anymore. There are lots of construction going on in Abuja right now especially since the Minister threatened that undeveloped plots may be revoked. Many developers have rushed back to sites. Again, lifting ban on granting approvals to developments in the satellite settlements opened a flood gate to new legal developments which has encouraged many developers to embark on their projects.

2. How will this affect real estate developments?

The policies on ground would encourage developments in real estate. However, for security reasons, the real owners of the estates may not be frequent on sites to supervise their buildings; and some professionals may not be spending all the time on site to supervise. The impact of this, is that supervision and construction may be left in the hands of artisans which may lead to compromises in terms of quality of construction.

3. What's should be done by government to reduce the tension and protect human life

Government should involve all stakeholders in security matters. There is the need for improved intelligence gathering, mobilize requisite law enforcement and security agents to critical locations in the territory, equip the security organs adequately to curb the challenges.

4. Don't you that this insecurity will affect work of town planners?

Definitely, insecurity affects everybody including town planners. where there is insecurity, site investigations that need to be carried out before planning would be frustrated, monitoring to ensure that the right developments take place as approved could be risky. This has enabled the development of illegal structures and shanties in many places in the FCT, which also serve as hide outs for criminals.

ON LACK OF MASTERPLANS OR ADHERENCE TO THE AVAILABLE ONES.

1. Why do many states ignore master plans for their developments?

Many States in Nigeria do not care to prepare masterplans for urban development mainly due to ignorance. This makes people in positions of authority to think it is costly to plan; and rather divert such funds to projects. The lack of knowledge that urban planning creates betterment for spaces and improvement in environment and economy makes them to think on the short run rather than the long-term benefits. Policy makers and those in the political class want actions that last only when they are in office, and with the four-year cycle of leadership in Nigeria coupled with lack of continuity with programmes of predecessors, they discountenance preparation of masterplans. They also do not know that though masterplans are of long-term goals, the component parts are usually broken into short, medium and long-term actions. Each succeeding administration could now key into the proposals of the masterplan and even review it to meet emerging conditions in social and economic realities. Further to the reasons above, there have been none or low budgetary allocations for masterplan preparation, low political will and lack of professional personnel to implement in the few places where masterplans have been implemented.

2. How many of them have masterplans?

Lagos State tops the few that have committed themselves to masterplans. Nasarawa, Ogun and Edo States have made some good efforts. The Federal Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, as part of their technical assistance to States have also prepared masterplans for some urban areas in various parts of the country apart from the strategic regional development plans they have made for the six geo-political zones. Some of the masterplans are due for review.

3. With advent of technology, do you think master plans are necessary?

With the advent of technology, the need for masterplans becomes much more. There can be success where there is no plan. Technology promotes development, and development is on land, the purpose of masterplan is to manage the use of land for the greater social and economic benefits of humanity. Therefore, technology depends on masterplans to be useful and beneficial to man.

4. Don't you there should be a law to make it mandatory for states to have master plans?

The Nigerian urban and regional planning law implies that physical planning is a necessity and before any development commences, it must have an approval from the appropriate agency of government; and such an agency must have an operative masterplan. This law is to be domesticated by the States for implementation. Only a few States have domesticated it after 32 years of enactment. It is appalling that the response to physical planning is so apathetic. However, the fact still remains that failure to plan is readiness for confusion and anarchy in the environment.

5. What should be the merit and demerits of not having master plans?

There is no merit for not having a masterplan. It is a dis-service to inhabitants of any environment not to have a masterplan for its development. Lack of masterplan is the door way to disaster and confused environmental disposition. Planning provides the pathway to efficient landuse which is accompanied by safety, aesthetic environment, sufficient access to landuses and economic application of land resources. It facilitates improved infrastructure provision, accentuates economic growth, promotes sustainable development, enhanced quality of life and peace. Planning gives a lot of benefits.

6. What laws or policies guide the establishment of the master plan?

The Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law is the main legal instrument that guides planning in Nigeria. it details out the responsibilities of the various levels of government and itemizes the procedures for planning and its implementation including enforcement to correct illegal developments.

ON THE UNCERTAINTIES IN CONSTRUCTION COST

1. Do you believe that there's still uncertainty in construction cost this year?

Definitely, there are a lot of uncertainties in construction cost this year. The problem of rising cost of materials continues unabated. Globally, it is projected that construction costs may rise by about 7%, Nigeria's case is worse off because of the heavy dependence on imported construction materials and equipment. Beyond this, the economic downturn in Nigeria may not encourage construction; hence the cost of construction would not be favorable. The challenges of inflation and fluctuations in interest rate stare at us every moment.

2. What is your expectation in construction cost this year?

Expectations in the construction industry in 2025 cannot be pleasant because the trend over the past 20 months (or rather since the current regime took over administration) have been so frustrating. The sector has suffered significant cost escalations primarily due to high inflation and increased fuel prices, which have driven up material and transportation expenses. Initial projections of annual growth rate in the industry at the about 3.1% from 2025 to 2028 does not seem to be achievable due to the strains of inflation and poor cash flow among the participants in the sector.

3. What key elements will bring change to the construction cost?

The key elements that may cause changes in construction costs would be the combination of economic policies, market conditions, technology adoption, and government regulations. For example, high inflation would increase the cost of construction materials, labor, and equipment; government fiscal policies, interest rates, and currency fluctuations (e.g., Naira depreciation) will impact material costs and overall project budgets. Dependence on foreign or imported construction materials increases capital flight and weakens the Nigerian currency thus making construction more expensive. Energy costs and fuel prices orchestrated by the removal of fuel subsidy have greatly impacted on construction costs. For estate development, changes in land acquisition policies, permit fees, and zoning laws impact construction expenses. The crave for internally generated revenue of government agencies has led to upscaled cost of permit for development projects. A case in question has been the incessant increase in such fees by Lagos State Government which has generated a lot of concern.

4. How will this be handled by the government to bring change into the economy?

For a positive change in the economy, we need to overhaul some policies, encourage industry innovations, and promote strategic investments. These could take the form of strengthening local material production, (for which we have organized so many talk shows without adequate action); encourage the deployment of improved construction technology and enhance investment in vocational training to develop local skilled construction workforce and reduce reliance on foreign expertise. The private sector should be encouraged to participate in construction training programs. Government needs to decisively intervene in reducing energy and transportation costs through vigorous improvement in transportation infrastructure to lower logistics costs of materials and develop rail and inland waterways for bulk material transportation. There is the need to create and improve access to low-interest financing for construction, reviewing of government policies and taxes and provide

tax reliefs and subsidies for affordable housing developers. Government needs to be on the driving seat to promote mass housing development by encouraging large-scale affordable housing projects to create economies of scale, support housing cooperatives and community-led developments and leverage modern construction techniques to deliver low-cost housing efficiently. Embarking on these measures, positive impacts can be created on the economy and can reduce construction costs and enhance infrastructure development.

5. Which key sectors offer opportunity for growth in the economy?

Nigeria is so blessed that every sector provides ample opportunities for them to be harnessed for the growth of the economy. In agriculture, Nigeria has vast arable land and a growing demand for food hence investment in mechanized farming, irrigation, and agro-processing can increase productivity; export opportunities exist for cocoa, cassava, rice, palm oil, and cashew nuts. Construction and real estate sector provide a lot of opportunities in a highly urbanizing country where demand for housing and commercial infrastructure is high. Opportunities in affordable housing development, industrial real estate abound especially in Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt and other cities. There are great openings in renewable energy and power sector; technology and digital economy; manufacturing and industrialization; oil and gas; mining and solid minerals; transportation and logistics, healthcare and pharmaceuticals as well as tourism and hospitality.

However, it must be remarked that the bane of Nigeria's development is the lack of planning. Visions for development materialize on the ground but physical planning which is the cord that ties all thoughts and efforts has not been given its pride of place neither have physical planners been allowed to play active role in the development process. After intensive efforts, the present administration created the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development which is also replicated by a few State Governments but in the budget, little is given to the Ministry that could make it function. In most cases, attention is given to housing which is actually a component of physical planning and urban development. There is the need for a change of understanding and direction to achieve a harmonious growth and sustainable development in this country by giving adequate attention to physical planning.



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TREATISE OF THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE NIGERIAN INSTITUTE OF TOWN PLANNERS, TPL. NATHANIEL M. ATEBIJE, FNITP TO TOPREC COUNCIL MEMBERS ON 1ST AUGUST 2023

Courtesies

1. I bring felicitations from the leadership and entire membership of the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners to this Council. I also want to welcome the newly appointed members to the Council and wish you well with the hope that we shall all join hands to build the Brighter Future for Town Planners in Nigeria. May your tenure bring greater progress to the Council, the profession and pave wider ways for the practitioners of our profession. May the wisdom, health, wealth and strength to fulfil your purpose of being in this Council be given to you by the Almighty God. I would have been in the meeting which was held on 23rd June 2023, except that it was decided by some members of this Council to exclude the presence of the Institute on purpose. I had earlier expressed my feelings on that to the President of TOPREC. To me, it was a purposeful injury on our collective decision to collaborate and take the profession and its practitioners to enviable heights. We shall however, not give up on achieving this goal.

2. I am happy to report that over the past few months, in NITP, quite a series of activities have taken place in building our professional body. We had in-house training for our staff, meetings of Management and National Executive Committees, National Council, advocacy visits, outreaches to the political class (both pre and post-elections). Our statutory and presidential committees, Chapters as well as our affiliate bodies are functioning well. We also participated in meetings of other collaborative professional groups such as Association of Town Planning Consultants of Nigeria, Association of Professional Bodies of Nigeria and Commonwealth Association of Planners. We fully participated in the organization and implementation of the Mandatory Continuing Professional Development Programme for this year. We joined the world in celebrating many international events especially those relevant to our profession. Our major up-coming event for the year is the national conference which is scheduled to take place at Asaba in Delta State from 24th to 27th October 2023. We look forward to hosting a successful conference.

3. As earlier indicated to TOPREC Council, NITP is seldom invited to participate on some critical activities that affect the composition of our membership particularly the accreditation visits to planning schools. What TOPREC has been doing is to pick anybody of their choice to represent NITP without any input from NITP Leadership. At the end of such programmes, such persons never submitted any report to the National President because

he has no obligation to him. We advise again (if the Council of TOPREC places any value on representation from NITP) that when such visits are to be made, an official letter of request for representation is addressed to the National President of the Institute who would delegate a member to represent it. Outside this, it would be taken as perpetuation of the disregard of the protocol of our collaboration.

4. Finally, I want to express the dismay of the leadership of the Institute at the efforts of some Council members to perpetuate their stay in the Council contrary to the spirit and purpose of the law. This is done under the guise of what they view as “lacuna” in the law. I dare say that only when there are insufficient facts and truth that men deploy lacuna. Lacuna is the toy of opportunism and not a potent instrument of proving the right course of action. Good conscience and integrity are stronger than the letters of laws. Good conscience thrives in facts and truth but the contrary flourishes where self, ego and opportunism take the stage. As planners and organizers of human space and activities, who should believe and practice orderliness and fairness, such attitudes should not be mentioned among us. Even if we think we are smart enough to escape the judgement of this generation, we should remember that no one can escape God’s verdict or what people refer to as the law of Karma or the rewards of posterity.

5. Let us be admonished by the provisions of the scriptures which says that “To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted.” A corollary may apply to the situation in question that there is a time to be appointed and another time to end the appointment. William Shakespeare once said that “...All the world is a stage, and all the men and women merely players: they have their exits and their entrances...” Other men of wisdom have admonished that men should quit the stage when the ovation is loudest. Staying in the same position over many years cannot be taken as evidence of progress; it is rather a sign of marking time and retrogression. If desired impact is not made within the time allowed by the spirit and purpose of the law, staying further should be wasteful and loathsome. This Council is seen as the citadel of professionalism in urban and regional planning in Nigeria. It is the “shrine” of the planning profession. But painfully, some members of the next generation are watching some of our activities and tagging them as corruption. Let us reflect on the words of Chairman Mao of China which stated that “*If the citadel of justice is corrupt, what will happen to the body politic? It will be completely rotten and collapse*”. My prayer for us all here today is that this profession would not collapse in our hands; we should rather build it on the foundation and super-structure of truth, transparency, integrity and other virtues of the highest order.

6. Conscience is an open wound, and only the truth can heal it. Let us allow truth into our hearts. When we have played our parts, and our times are up, let us honorably bow to allow the succeeding generations add their own building blocks. I believe in the **Brighter Future**, so I walk the talk.

7. Dear Esteemed Council Members, I thank you for listening.



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14th June 2023

Prof. Adamu Baikie,

The Chairman, Governing Council,

Nasarawa State University,

Keffi, Nasarawa State.

Sir,

APPOINTMENT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PHYSICAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The Nigerian Institute of Town Planners duly appreciates you for your good leadership and commendable performance in decision making towards the development of the University. The laudable achievement of the university today can be attributed to the good governance demonstrated by the Governing Council ably led by you.

2. We also appreciate you for believing in orderly physical development of the university which goes a long way in providing conducive environment for impartation of knowledge and producing great leaders for our country. In the pursuit of these ideals, your prestigious university recently commenced the process of hiring experienced and proficient professional to the office of the Director of Physical Planning and Development. This is indeed visionary, laudable and a good step in the right direction. This, we believe, is intended to ensure that the right development is located at the right place at the right time for a designated purpose. It is expected to minimise conflict between landuses, enhance harmony and facilitate compatibility, promote liveability, ensure safety and accentuate environmental quality of the campus.

3. To achieve these laudable objectives, the need to hire the right professional from among the built environment professions cannot be overemphasized. The professionals in the built environment industry consists of town planners, architects, civil/services engineers, estate surveyors, land surveyors and quantity surveyors. Each of these professionals has his own role in the development of facility. In a development of a facility as expansive as your university, town planners (generic title for professionals trained and certified to undertake physical planning activities at various levels) are responsible for the conception of the overall structure of the community (masterplan) to include the landuse distribution (academic, residential, recreational, etc), the structure of the campus (location of communication routes, roads, infrastructure and the linkages between activities of the campus), other utilities and services. The land surveyors generate details about the configuration of the land and the boundary of the area allocated for the use of the facility. The architect designs individual components of the site (buildings) for various uses in line with provisions of the

masterplan. The engineers design the structural components and services of each building and provide construction details for infrastructure and other facilities. The builders take care of construction in line with the specifications of architects and engineers. The quantity surveyors handle cost control to ensure that costs are affordable and not overpaid. Estate surveyors take care of maintenance to ensure that all facilities are working well at any point in time.

4. The essence of the foregoing is to clearly emphasize that though the professionals all work together to produce a good environment, each person in the team has a distinguishable part to play; and if by design or default an inappropriate professional is placed in a position other than his field of training and expertise, the short- or long-term result on the functionality of the campus can be economically costly, physically inefficient and environmentally unsustainable. A 21st century university of your type cannot, but enjoy the best of professional input to its physical development. By training the Town Planner prepares, interprets and implements the physical development plan (master plan) of a community as well as coordinate the activities of other professionals in the human settlement space. A reputable University like yours requires the right professional to man the office of the Director of Physical Planning whose primary responsibility is to provide leadership in the planning and implementation of the plan of the University as well as implementing related council decisions with regards to the physical development of the campus.

5. Beyond the foregoing, the Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law Cap 138 LFN of 2004 states clearly that the job of physical planning belongs to the town planner and any other professional who carries out such a job is termed a “quack” and an illegal interloper in professional practice which is ethically wrong.

6. We therefore, wish to request that you use your good office to ensure that the right professional, who should be a Town Planner, is appointed to the position of the Director of Physical Planning and Development in line with the provision of the Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law Cap 138 LFN of 2004. This is not only to comply with the extant law but to ensure that the University derives the full benefit of appointing the right professional in terms of competence and productivity.

7. While we anticipate your good response and action to this effect, kindly accept the assurances of our esteemed regards.

Tpl. Nathaniel M. Atebije, FNITP

National President.

