

**MINUTES OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR CONSULTATION MEETING ON THE STATES
ACTIONS ON BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT REFORMS PROGRAMME 2024 HELD
ON DECEMBER 12, 2023, AT SHUKURA HOTEL SOKOTO.**

TIME: 4.30 PM

PRESENT

See Appendix 1

APOLOGIES

HC (Budget & Economic Planning) - Away on official assignment

OPENING PRAYER

The meeting commenced at 4:30 PM with an opening prayer led by Alh. Dahiru Umar from Sokoto Leather Works.

OPENING REMARKS

The Chairman, His Excellency the Deputy Governor of Sokoto State, Alh. Idris Muhammad Gobir, represented by the Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Alh. Muhammad Bello Sifawa expressed gratitude to His Excellency Dr Ahmad Aliyu, FCNA for constituting such a high-profile committee to spearhead the State Council for Ease of Doing Business (EODB), and State Action on Business Enabling Reforms (SABER) Programme. He emphasized the council's mandate to advise and design a blueprint to address barriers that hinder smooth business operations in the state and facilitate information access for local and international investors.

He urged a harmonious synergy between the private sector and the state's economic drivers, stressing the indispensable need for collaboration with the Sokoto State Ministry of Commerce, Trade, and Industry. This collective effort, he highlighted, is pivotal in propelling the state's economic trajectory forward, advocating for an ecosystem where innovation, commerce, and industry combine to drive exponential growth.

PRESENTATION OF THE SABER ACTION PLANS AND FOCAL POINTS IN ENGLISH AND HAUSA LANGUAGES.

Following the Chairman's remarks, the SABER programme manager and Ease of Doing Business consultant delivered a presentation outlining the aims and objectives of the stakeholders' consultation meeting and its importance in



shaping the 2024 Sokoto State Business Enabling Reforms Action Plan and its implementation.

Main Points:

- The Sokoto State Business Enabling Reforms Action Plan (BERAP) 2024 contains the State Government's ongoing and planned reform initiatives, projects and programmes in 18 MDAs that their implementation will have a positive impact on the ease of doing business in the State. He enjoined the participants to understand the planned initiatives carefully and to comment and contribute to the shaping of the plans.
- He explained that the reform initiatives are centred around key themes, such as Transparency, accountability and efficiency in governments' responsiveness and service delivery. Others include the digitization of processes, procedures and payments; understanding and resolving the impediments to trade and commerce; strategic promotion and exports of the states' products; and a more efficient justice system.
- He further highlighted that the implementation of these initiatives and projects is in four categories and measured along eight indicators for the intended impact.

The four areas were highlighted as:

- Improved Land Administration and Land Investment Process
 - Increased fibre optic network deployment and access to broadband
 - Increased Sustainable Large-Scale Investments
 - Quick determination of commercial disputes
- He itemized the government's main goals along the eight indicator areas:
 1. Improved transparency and sustainability of the property registration process (including construction development) where the government aims to operationalise the SOGIS and digitalise processes of CofOs and Permits.
 2. Increased fibre optic network deployment and broadband access to increase the total kilometres of deployed fibre optic cable across the State.
 3. The development of an effective PPP framework for States to increase new PPP projects.
 4. Improved legal and policy environment for investments to improve investment promotion coordination and aftercare services for existing investments and businesses.
 5. Increased transparency of official fees, procedures, service level agreements and institution of grievance resolution mechanisms to improve service delivery.

6. Reduced bottlenecks to trade and increase the level of interstate and export trade activities.
7. Harmonized and more transparent taxes to improve tax collection and administration.
8. Monitoring the small claims courts for efficiency to ensure a quick determination of commercial disputes.

The presentation was repeated in Hausa language for the non-English speaking participants, ensuring full comprehension by all stakeholders. A session of questions and answers ensued, allowing private sector actors to express their views and seek clarifications.

CONTRIBUTIONS AND COMMENTS

Various stakeholders made robust contributions, particularly concerning the Governance Resolution Mechanism to help resolve the incessant challenges that confront traders and the need to promote the State's exports. The participants also expressed optimism towards the objectives of increased broadband penetration to enhance communications and transactions.

Notably, the Chairman of the National Association of Onion Producers and Marketers Association of Nigeria (OPMAN), emphasized the many challenges hindering onion and garlic trade activities. He pointed out that though onions and garlic are important export products of the state, the growth of the industry is hindered by challenges in cross-border trade within the West African trade corridor. He also identified the lack of processing equipment for onions, as well as transportation and logistics challenges to Ghanaian and other West African markets as major impediments to the growth of their business, and urged the State government to assist in that regard and seeks to contribute to the development of the State's export strategy.

Importantly, the Sokoto State Chairman of the Blacksmith Association also emphasized the challenges of the Association, particularly with transportation and logistics on interstate and cross-border trade.

Other comments sought to see improvements in the transparency and efficiency of government processes, including court resolutions and adjudication.

In response, the SSG directed the OPMAN chairman to collaborate with the Ministry of Commerce and Industries to identify all areas requiring government intervention and pledged the State government's willingness to support. The

Commissioner for Commerce, Industry and Trade also re-emphasized the Ministry's commitment to resolving all trade problems with the launch of the new Grievance Resolution Mechanism which would allow the Traders to report their grievances and they would be recorded and monitored for resolution.

VOTE OF THANKS

The President of the Sokoto State Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines, and Agriculture (SOCCIMA) delivered the vote of thanks, expressing gratitude to the present administration for supporting the program. He highlighted the standing committee on the Export of Non-Oil Products within the Sokoto State Government and encouraged those facing export difficulties to engage with the committee housed in the Ministry of Commerce.

CLOSING REMARKS

The Honorable Commissioner of the Ministry of Commerce thanked the Executive Governor of Sokoto State for inaugurating the State Action on Business Enabling Reforms (SABER) Programme. He commended the technical teams, respective MDAs, stakeholders, and media for their efforts in educating the public about the committee's activities. He urged exporters to channel their challenges to the Ministry of Commerce Sokoto for necessary actions.

CONCLUSION

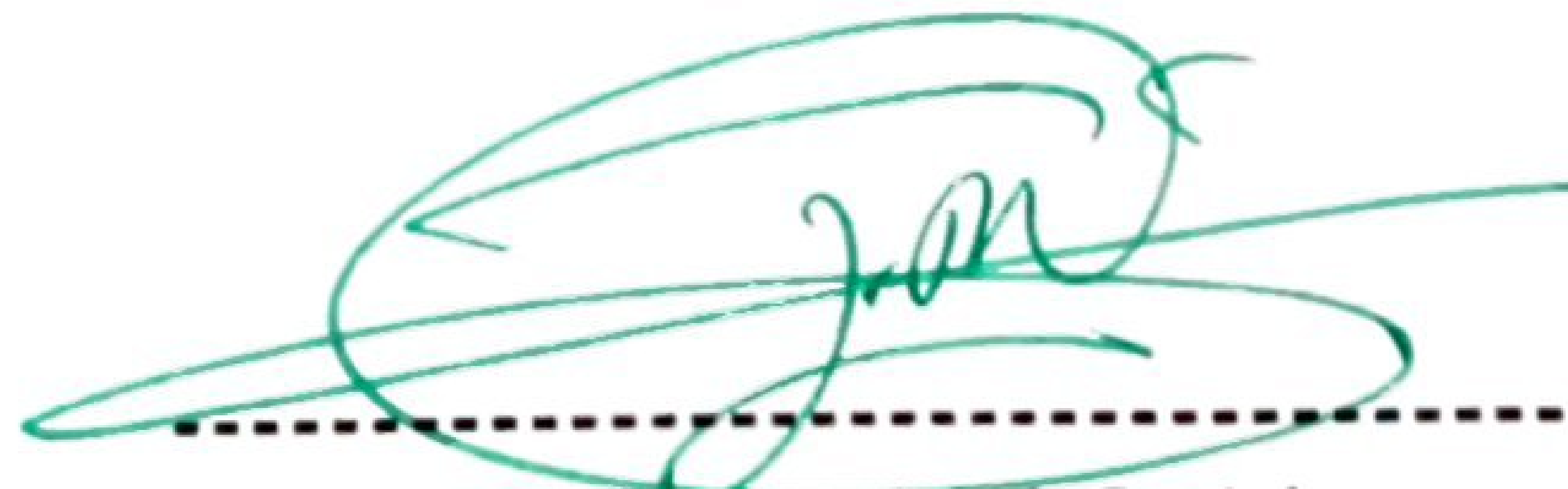
The meeting came to an end by 6:20 pm with a closing prayer led by Sani Hamidu.



Muhammad Bello Sifawa
Secretary to the Council
Secretary to the State Government



Haruna Abbas Bashar
State Reforms Champion
Hon. Comm. (Commerce & Industries)



HE. Idris Moh'd Gobir
Deputy Governor, Sokoto State
Chairman (State Council on Ease of Doing Business)

12/12/23.