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Nigeria Office

# Nigeria Press Review

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

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

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### **Electricity Distribution Companies Await Approval on Tariff Increase, Nigeria's Total Debt Rises to NGN 49.85 Trillion, World Bank Approves Fresh USD 500 Million Loan for Nigeria, Businesses Dependent on Smuggled Petrol Crash as Nigeria Scraps Subsidy, Nigeria Forms Energy Security Dialogue with the United States, UN Declare Hunger Affects 4.3 Million People in Nigeria**

Electricity distribution companies (DisCos) backtracked on their earlier announcement of a tariff hike projected to take effect from July 2023, as they stated that the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) had yet to approve the increase. Following the announcement of the hike by Abuja Electricity Distribution Company (AEDC), it also issued an appeal to customers to disregard the planned tariff increase as approval for such an increment had not yet been received. As of now, NERC dismissed an imminent increase in tariffs. Okechukwu Nnodim and Opeoluwani Akintayo, [The Punch News \(June 27<sup>th</sup>\)](#) report.

The Debt Management Office (DMO) has disclosed that Nigeria's total foreign debt for the period ending March 2023, has risen to NGN 49.85 trillion from NGN 46.25 trillion as of December 2022. This contains the external and domestic debts of the federal government (FG), the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), however does not include the Ways and Means loans of NGN 22.719 trillion of the Central Bank of Nigeria whose securitization was approved by the National Assembly in May 2023. The amount will be included in the FG's domestic debt stock from June 2023. Damilola Olufemi, [The Punch News \(June 23<sup>rd</sup>\)](#) reports.

The World Bank (WB) has approved a loan of USD 500 million to help the government improve the livelihood of women in Nigeria, the so-called Nigeria for Women Program Scale Up (NFWP-SU). The WB stated that the mechanism "will help to ensure better economic opportunities for women which is essential for addressing gender inequality, guaranteeing better education, health and nutrition outcomes for families and building women's and communities' resilience to climate change". Task team leader for the project Michael Ilesanmi said "the program aims to mobilize poor and vulnerable women into different institutions and using these institutional platforms, link them to markets as well as financial and non-financial services". So far, the NFWP-SU has been implemented in six

states and provides support to over 427,887 Women Affinity Groups members through the formation and strengthening of 20,506 of these groups. Donatus Anichukwueze, [Channels Television News \(June 27<sup>th</sup>\)](#) reports.

Since Nigeria scrapped its fuel subsidy on May 31, black market fuel vendors and commercial drivers in Cameroon, Benin and Togo who were heavily reliant on petrol smuggled from Nigeria, have seen their businesses collapse. At official petrol stations in Cameroon, fuel is now priced competitively - minimum is CFA 600 (USD 1.00), compared to about CFA 300 black market price before. The knock-on effects on motorcycle-taxis, include conflict between riders who often live hand-to-mouth and customers who demand cheap fares no matter what. In Benin and Togo contraband fuel vendors have lost both supplies and customers while formerly sleepy official petrol stations are suddenly busy. Desire Danga Essigie, [The Reuters News \(June 26<sup>th</sup>\)](#) reports.

Following a visit to Nigeria last week by assistant secretary for energy resources Geoffrey R. Pyatt, the United States (US) Department of State has announced the formation of an energy security dialogue with Nigeria to advance collaboration on the shared energy and climate goals of both countries. In a statement, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken emphasized that "this dialogue will bring together the combined resources of the US government to engage with our Nigerian counterparts on issues including energy access, energy security, decarbonization, clean energy supply chains and methane emissions reduction". He further stated that the US was committed to Nigeria's success in achieving its energy and climate goals. The federal ministry of petroleum resources expressed the willingness to cooperate with the US to ensure the project's success. Tope Templer Olaiya, [The Guardian News \(June 26<sup>th</sup>\)](#) reports.

The United Nations (UN) humanitarian resident coordinator in Nigeria, Matthias Schmale, said the number of children under five at risk of life-threatening severe acute malnutrition had doubled in one year to reach 700,000 in 2023. He argued that severe hunger affected 4.3 million people in the country's north-east states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe. Schmale added that out of the USD 1.3 billion in humanitarian funding needed for the region, only 25% had been secured. [Ripples Nigeria \(June 29<sup>th</sup>\)](#) reports.

### **Division over Minority Leadership Position in National Assembly, Federal Government Saves NGN 400 Billion on Subsidy, Approves Discontinuation of Budgetary Allocation to Professional Bodies and Councils, EU Election Observation Mission Highlight Key Priorities on Nigeria's General Elections**

Crisis appears to be brewing at the National Assembly over the choice of candidates for the minority leadership positions. Former governor of Rivers state, Nyesom Wike, and the presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Atiku Abubakar, have renewed their hostilities over the pending choice. While Atiku is working on ensuring his candidates are fielded for the position of minority leader, Wike is allegedly working with the APC-led federal government to produce "friendly" PDP members to be appointed into the body of principal officers from the minority caucus of the federal parliament. Sunday Aborisade, [This Day News \(June 26<sup>th</sup>\)](#) reports.

Oil marketers have revealed that the federal government (FG) has saved about NGN 400 billion due to the removal of subsidy on petrol. Furthermore, going by the recent floating of the NGN against the USD, there was a high possibility for the cost of petrol to rise in July. The national vice-president of the Trade Union Congress (TUC) and organized labor government liaison Tommy Etim said labor unions were constantly engaging the FG to ensure that favorable palliatives will be distributed to Nigerians. Meanwhile, organized labor has called on Nigerians to exercise patience while it continues to negotiate with the representatives of the FG following the removal of fuel subsidy which has continued to cause hardship to Nigerians. Okechukwu Nnodim and Deborah Tolu-Kolawole, [Punch News \(June 30<sup>th</sup>\)](#) report.

The director general of the Budget Office, Ben Akabueze, has disclosed the discontinuation of the funding of professional bodies and councils from 2026. According to Akabueze, the decision was in line with the decision of the Presidential Committee on Salaries (PCS) which requires that all professional bodies and councils be responsible for personnel, overhead and capital expenditures. The Debt Management Office (DMO) had expressed worries that the federal government's debt service to revenue ratio of 73.5% for 2023 exceeded the recommended threshold of 50%. The development comes amid the need for the government to cut the costs of governance. Ogaga Ariemu, [Daily Post \(June 28<sup>th</sup>\)](#) reports.

Chief observer Barry Andrews of the European Union (EU) Election Observation Mission (EU-EOM) presented the mission's final report on the 2023 Nigerian general elections. The EU-EOM carried out its work at the invitation of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Presenting the report that includes 25 recommendations, Andrews said they were particularly concerned about the need for reform in six areas which they identified as priority recommendations. These areas include removing ambiguities in the law, establishing a publicly accountable selection process for INEC members and ensuring real-time publication of and access to election results. Some of the recommendations made include providing more protection for media practitioners, addressing discrimination against women in political life and addressing impunity regarding electoral offences. Andrews added that shortcomings in the law and electoral administration hindered the conduct of well-run and inclusive elections and damaged trust in INEC. "Although the elections showed the commitment of Nigerians to democracy, it also exposed enduring systemic weaknesses and therefore signal a need for further legal and operational reforms to enhance transparency, inclusiveness, and accountability", Andrews argued. Chiamaka Okafor, [Premium Times News \(June 27<sup>th</sup>\)](#) reports.

### **Insecurity: Police to Deploy 40,000 Officers to Special Intervention Squad, Boko Haram Eliminates One of its Top Leaders for Attempt to Form Faction**

In a conference with commanders of the police mobile force (PMF), special protection unit (SPU) and other tactical units, the acting inspector-general of Police (IGP), Olukayode Egbetokun, said 40,000 specially trained elite officers would be deployed to the newly created special intervention squad of the Nigerian police. He said that the squad would be deployed to areas plagued by unrest and turmoil in the country. Egbetokun further stated, the squad would consist of selected officers from the pool of existing PMF personnel and other tactical units. According to him, the officers will not perform routine police duties but will be housed and kept combat-ready at all times, only engaging in daily trainings in readiness for deployment. [Premium Times News \(June 26<sup>th</sup>\)](#) reports.

Members of the terrorist group Boko Haram have supposedly eliminated one of its leaders, Abou Hassana, over allegations of rebellion. Counter-insurgency expert Zagazola Makama explained that

Ali Ngulde, the second highest ranking Boko Haram leader, ordered the elimination after sentencing Hassana and other accused accomplices to death. According to sources, Hassana was trying

to raise an independent faction within Boko Haram to spearhead his own terror campaigns. Ndahi Marama, [The Vanguard News \(June 27<sup>th</sup>\)](#) reports.

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