

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA**

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA (2015 – 2019)

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Introduction

The 8th House of Representatives (2015 – 2019) takes off against a background of huge expectations from Nigerians about the way government business is conducted. To address these expectations, the House of Representatives will implement a Legislative Agenda that will position the House to deliver legislation in aid of development and reforms aimed at improving conditions of living in Nigeria. This Agenda outlines steps and prioritises legislative actions required to achieve set goals and objectives.

This Legislative Agenda takes lessons from the experiences of the 7th Assembly and seeks to consolidate the gains and achievements thereof. The House recognises that there remains widespread citizens distrust of public institutions and government generally. It is also recognized that there is a lot of public misconception and misperception about the function and contributions of the legislature to Nigeria's overall socioeconomic and political development. Yet, our contributions to Nigeria's democracy remain critical and important. The 8th House of Representatives will assert its role in providing leadership in the areas of accountable and transparent government, citizens engagement, as well as constituency representation.

The House of Representatives will collaborate with the different arms of government and particularly its counterpart in the Senate to legislate for the common good of the Nigerian people. Our legislative activities will cover critical spheres of life in Nigeria. The House will legislate to achieve reforms in Nigeria's national economy and development, tackle poverty, unemployment, confront the scourge of corruption, terrorism and security challenges in the country. The House will also give priority to green legislations to address environmental

challenges such as desertification, erosion and pollution. The 8th House of Representatives will also work assiduously to improve the governance process in Nigeria by legislating to cut the cost of running government, reduce wastages and tackle National Revenue leakages.

The House commits to playing its part in rescuing Nigeria from the clutches of hunger, poverty, disease, social, economic, political and infrastructural quagmire. Our legislative intention is to build public confidence and trust. We shall be responsive to citizens' questions regarding the conduct of legislative business.

The House as the peoples' parliament will take legislative action that enhances citizens' trust in our ability to stand up for their good. The House will work as the institution that defends the rights of the people to a proper accountable and transparent government in Nigeria.

The House's relationship with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) will be that of partnership and collaboration to deliver on citizens' expectations of the legislature. The 8th House of Representatives will be sensitive to public demands for transparency and accountability not just by the House of Representatives but also by government at all levels.

General Principles

- i. Build a House of Representatives with integrity and capacity to effectively and efficiently deliver on its constitutional and legislative mandate.
- ii. Operate a House of Representatives that responds to citizens' demands for greater transparency and accountability in the way legislative business is conducted.
- iii. Develop and implement an effective communication system for the House of Representatives in both its internal and external communications.
- iv. Establish an e-parliament that emphasizes use of IT and digitization in legislative business.
- v. Identify priority legislation for the country and ensure passage within a defined time frame.
- vi. Introduce necessary legislative interventions to promote equality and inclusiveness, and entrench the rights of women, youths and persons living with disability.
- vii. Establish necessary legislative interventions that respond to national economic challenges, address poverty and rebuild infrastructure.
- viii. Respond to Nigeria's demand for Constitutional and Electoral Reform including the passage of already agreed alterations to the Constitution and the Electoral Act.
- ix. Promote regular and collaborative engagement with all arms of government especially the Executive in order to enhance effective legislation for citizens.
- x. Give priority to work and collaboration with constituents, civic groups, professional bodies, international development partners and various stakeholders.

THE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

1. Legislative Needs Assessment

The House shall determine and document the resources the National Assembly needs to run its legislative activities. The House will commission an audit of existing resources including equipment, manpower and existing processes and mechanisms for legislative business. The audit will be part of the Legislative Needs Assessment to help the legislature better deliver on its role of representation, lawmaking and oversight.

A needs assessment of the House of Representatives will have to determine the equipment required, the required need for institutional and capacity building, the supporting Staff component required, the physical and other infrastructure necessary for lawmaking. It should also ascertain the cost of taking the lawmaking process down to the grassroots. In general, it should judiciously find out the proper cost of running the legislative arm of government to enable it play its constitutionally assigned responsibilities.

Undoubtedly, a thorough study and review of the needs of the legislature in a democracy such as ours, is very important. A legislature that should serve Nigerians should be well equipped and appropriately funded to meet the goals set out for it in the Constitution.

The Needs Assessment shall be carried out by an independent committee comprising Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), professional bodies and international development partners that work with the

National Assembly. The purpose of the Committee will be to analyse, review and recommend measures that adequately capture and provide for the needs of the House and as well provide information that will be made available to the public by the House on its finances, expenditure and activities.

A proper needs assessment should conduct a comparative study of the cost of running legislatures in other jurisdictions. Furthermore, it should address the following questions:

- > What does it cost the House of Representatives to air live its public hearings?
- > What does it cost the National Assembly to conduct proper oversight on the Executive?
- > What does it cost the National Assembly to maintain Constituency Relations?
- > What does it cost to equip the offices of members both in their Constituencies and at Abuja?
- > What does it cost to maintain the four Agencies of the National Assembly such as National Institute for Legislative Studies, National Assembly Service Commission, the National Assembly Bureaucracy, Public Complaints Commission etc
- > What does it cost to pay the Legislative Aides of members?

- > What does it cost to hire other technocrats and consultants to assist members, the House and the Bureaucracy?
- > What does it cost to transport members from one point to the other for official activities, locally and internationally?
- > What does it cost to continue to build the capacity of members, locally and internationally?
- > What does it cost to service the Standing Committees, Special Committees and Ad-Hoc Committees of the National Assembly?

2. Internal Operations/Processes

The 8th House of Representatives will work to improve its internal operations and processes with the aim of enhancing legislative business.

a. Committees of the House:

Improvements to the internal operations and processes of the House will seek to position House Committees to be efficient, effective, and result oriented. The House will re-engineer and put Committees of the House in a position of strength and make them truly the engine rooms of legislative business and activity.

The 8th House commits to proper funding, improved staffing and more efficient running of Committees. The appointment of the leadership and membership of the Committees will as much as possible reflect the experiences and capacity of members in different fields. **We shall place round pegs in round holes.**

Time limits for delivery of Reports referred to Committees shall be strictly enforced. Where necessary, a Committee that fails to deliver its Report on time would be divested of jurisdiction on the matter.

The House is committed to implementing the use of templates, manuals, and standardised formats for Committee activities in the area of Reporting, Oversight activities, Minutes of meetings, Public Hearings and Quarterly/Annual Reports. The House shall ensure regular supervision of Committee activities with a goal to ensuring optimum performance and delivery of decisions of the House.

The House leadership will conduct regular meetings with Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen of all Special, Standing or Ad-Hoc Committees to set Legislative Targets, Review performance in the attainment of Targets and ensure that the priority legislative activities of the Committees are consistent with the Legislative Agenda of the House.

To strengthen Committees, the House will ensure the training of staff to enhance their skills and capacity to better carry out the responsibilities of reporting and oversight. The House will take coordinated action to achieve oversight of the executive arm of government avoiding the current practice of overlap on coordination and conflict, which results in Committees working at cross-purposes. This would also extend to the relationship between Committees of both chambers of the National Assembly.

Specifically, the House in consultation with the Senate will implement joint oversight hearings on programmes and agencies and streamline activities of Committees to avoid duplication and conflict.

3. E-Parliament: E-Voting, Digitization and Archiving

The 8th House commits to the use of ICT in the daily conduct of legislative activities of the House. E-parliament and e-voting platforms will be made a regular feature of the House. E-voting will be used regularly during voting to properly reflect voting records and pattern of the House. The House shall collaborate with relevant stakeholders to achieve the goal of an e-parliament.

The e-parliament initiative will operate on the platform of modern, up to date digital technology. Internet and intranet access supported by computerized legislative information management system will be put in place.

Further, we commit to establishing and equipping a Parliamentary Information Centre where information and documents of the National Assembly will be made available.

4. National Assembly Communication

The House of Representatives commits to improving its internal and external communications. Identified communication targets include internal house communications, communication with the Senate, communication with the Executive arm of government and communications with the public. Improved communication will change the negative perception of the

House by the public, a lot of which arises from a poor understanding of the workings of the National Assembly.

- a. **Internal House Communication:** Effort will be made to improve communication among members and between Committees to ensure that information is well shared and that actions are coordinated.
- b. **Communication with the Senate:** The House will liaise with the Senate to create a special mechanism for sharing information and ensuring speedy passage of Bills and carrying out of joint legislative activities such as oversight, public hearings and where necessary, investigative hearings. Communications with the Senate will aim to promote coordinated action and synergy.
- c. **Communication with the Executive:** An effective system of communication will also be put in place to ensure regular communication with the executive that aims to reduce friction but also ensures effective legislative delivery.
- d. **Communication with the Public:** Our communication with the public will aim to address lingering perception challenges and open up processes and information to public scrutiny. Questions related to House expenses and emoluments of members of the National Assembly will be addressed and information put out in the public domain.
We shall ensure that the Hansard is regularly produced so that members and the public would be better exposed to the work of the legislature.
- e. **Establishment of Radio and Television Stations:** The House will facilitate the establishment of a

dedicated radio and television station to cover the activities of the National Assembly.

5. Review of the National Budgetary Process

The Budgetary process has remained one of the major challenges of our democracy since 1999. Legislative measures will be introduced to support and implement a proper budgetary process and creation of a strong and robust National Economy.

The budgetary process will emphasize the following:

- Prioritisation of budget expenditure that reflects approved budget lines
- Implementation of capital projects approved in budgets
- Adoption of an effective Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF). The House will promote an inclusive budgetary process and seek cooperation with the Executive and in this respect pre-budget interface will be pursued.
- Effective monitoring of spending and of outcomes achieved – value for money.
- Compliance with the provisions of the Fiscal Responsibility Act (FRA) 2007.

The Appropriation Bill is often submitted very late in the fiscal year, thereby leaving very little time for the National Assembly to do thorough work. The House would revisit the Constitution Amendment passed in the 7th Assembly mandating the President to submit his Budget proposals at least 3 months before the end of a fiscal year, instead of “at any time” before the end of a fiscal year currently in the Constitution. This is critical in passing annual appropriations on time.

The House will ensure proper functioning and operation of the Fiscal Responsibility Act, including a possible review of the Act, to streamline budgetary processes and achieve strict adherence to timelines for budget presentation and passage.

The House commits to giving the National Assembly powers to limit the time a programme would run except it is re-approved by the National Assembly. This will enable the MDAs to be careful and accountable, as they may have to come before the National Assembly periodically for renewal of implementation mandate. We shall further commit to amending Section 82 of the Constitution to reduce the period of 6 months that the President is allowed to spend without appropriation as this provision severely distorts the Appropriation process.

The Report of Committees over-sight must be a *sine qua non* for the passage of their budgets. The Committees are significant focal points of legislative oversight and must assert the "Power of the Purse".

The 8th House of Representatives will take legislative measures to ensure that the executive does not choose which aspects of the Appropriation Act it implements and will enforce a Needs Based Budgeting System rather than an 'envelop' Based Budgeting System. The 8th House will also ensure the coming into being of an independent effective, nonpartisan Budget Office (NABRO) by law to aid in economic and budgetary information and planning

Integrity of project selection process

Our commitment to Reform of the Budget Process should consider the integrity of the project selection process in

the Annual Budget estimates submitted to the National Assembly by the President. A mechanism should be found that would make the process more transparent and accountable and needs based. The budget process should include basis and justification for project selection.

6. National Economy and Development

The 8th House of Representatives will put in place legislative measures to promote rapid economic growth and development.

a. Non-Remittance of Internally Generated Revenue and Leakages

Several Departments and Agencies of Government generating revenues from their activities and functions fail to remit these to the Federation Account and often spend without appropriation.

The House shall take legislative measures to enforce the Constitutional provision on revenue generation and remittance by carrying out a holistic review of enabling laws and coming up with relevant amendments.

To this end, all funds generated by departments and agencies shall be remitted to the Federation Account and the expenditure of these agencies of government will follow due appropriation process.

b. Management of External Reserves

The House shall take legislative measures to better oversight the management of Nigeria's external reserves to achieve better accountability and transparency and full capture of all resources. In this

connection, the House shall conduct a review of the CBN Act, the Sovereign Wealth Fund Act and all other Acts pertaining to the management of the nation's external reserves.

c. Donor Funding

The House shall track the use of donor funds, grants and loans for development projects. The current practice of duplication of funding from government and donor sources implementing the same projects creates room for malfeasance and abuse. The House will strengthen the established mechanism to track the application of funds and moneys given by donors to MDAs to ensure accountability and transparent use of resources.

d. Infrastructure Development

The House will legislate to support rapid infrastructure development in the country. Legislative action will be taken to support infrastructure development and rebuilding in Nigeria covering areas such as public transportation, electricity, fast rail system, federal highways, modern airports, housing and general infrastructure.

e. Legislative Initiative on New Cities and Regional Hubs of Development

The House will seek to mobilise legislative action and work in concert with the executive to institute a process of establishing regional hubs of development in each of the six geo-political zones of the country. Under this concept, legislative action and support will be given to identify and create at least one large and expansive area provided with 21st century infrastructure that creates a modern city equipped

with fast rail, mono-rail, communications, ICT, etc. In this direction, private sector participation will be encouraged.

f. Legislative Initiative on North-East and Niger-Delta

The House will take legislative action that supports the delivery of special economic development measures that address the root causes of problems specific to the North East geo-political zone of the country and Niger Delta area. Specifically, the challenges of security and terrorism in the North-East and environmental pollution in the Niger-Delta must be addressed through appropriate government intervention.

g. Legislative Initiative on Employment and Job Creation

The House will seek to tackle current high unemployment rate in the country by legislative action and through appropriate budgetary interventions that seeks to create employment. In addition, the House will hold regular dialogue sessions with critical stakeholders to articulate appropriate legislative intervention that will address this problem.

h. Legislative Initiative on Housing, Urban Development, Mortgages

The House will seek to tackle housing challenges in the country by legislative action and through appropriate budgetary interventions that seeks to create mass housing and provide access to mortgage. In addition, the House will hold regular

dialogue sessions with critical stakeholders to articulate appropriate legislative intervention that will address this problem.

i. Legislative Initiative on Power

The House shall take legislative action to tackle Nigeria's energy crisis that has led to a general collapse of industries and businesses and inflicted hardship on citizens. Legislative measures to support improved generation and distribution of electricity to homes and businesses will be encouraged.

j. Legislative Initiative on Security

The House will provide legislative backing to measures aimed at addressing National Security challenges including terrorism and insurgency in the North-East of the country, kidnapping, and crime generally. The legal framework to support the security services in tackling crime, terrorism and other National Security concerns would be given full support.

k. Legislative Initiative on Economic Diversification

The House will take legislative initiative that supports diversification of Nigeria's economy to foster its development from a mono-product economy to a multi-product economy. Obstacles to businesses and private sector involvement in identified sectors of the economy will be removed.

7. Priority Legislation

The 8th House of Representatives will give legislative priority to promote better living conditions for citizens. Legislation focused on reducing poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education and strengthening regulatory agencies in charge of education standards, promoting gender equality and empowerment of women, youth empowerment, and access to good health care services will be promoted.

Legislative measures will be taken to tackle the issues of endemic unemployment; insecurity of lives and property; poverty alleviation; health and education; water access and sanitation; culture and tourism; protection of intellectual property; endemic corruption; electricity and energy crises; and general infrastructure decay.

There are many critical Bills that the 7th House could not conclude or were not assented to, some of which include: the Petroleum Industry Bill, which was passed by the House but not by the Senate; the Electoral Act (Amendment) Bill; the Disability Bill, NABRO Bill, Transport Bills, Bills to domesticate treaties, protocols and international conventions ratified by Nigeria. These Bills will be given priority in the 8th House of Representatives.

Sectoral Debates

The 8th House will introduce sectoral debates on various aspects of Nigerian economy as part of its legislative initiative to address national problems. These sectoral debates will lead to the crafting of new laws or amendment to existing ones or generate recommendations on how to address the specific problem in question.

The House will designate specific legislative sitting days or weeks in its calendar specifically for discussion on various problems facing the nation. Such identified themes, sectors, areas or problems include employment and job creation, Health, Education and Social Services; Women, Youths and Disability concerns; Power/Energy Sector, Oil and Gas, Science and Technology; Commerce and Industry; Transportation; Telecommunications; Agriculture; Mining; Manufacturing; Diversification of the Economy, Finance, Corruption, Security Matters, Infrastructure etc.

Modalities for carrying out the sectoral debates will be as approved by the House.

8. Review of the Laws of the Federation

The Laws of the Federation were published into volumes in 2004 but there has been no effort to update the laws and bring them into conformity with modern day reality. The House will pursue efforts to bring Nigeria's laws into contemporary times, repealing obnoxious and outdated portions of it and reenacting contemporary laws for the country which will be published and made accessible to the Nigerian public.

9. Anti-Corruption

The nation's anti-corruption laws will be reviewed by the 8th House of Representatives and harmonised to achieve greater effectiveness in tackling corruption in the country. The merger of existing anti-corruption bodies will be encouraged towards consolidation into a single and effective agency that would be equipped and empowered to deliver on its mandate.

10. Constitution Reform Process

The laudable efforts of the 7th National Assembly that led to far reaching alterations to the 1999 Constitution was not assented to by former President Jonathan. The House of Representatives will revisit the Constitution Reform achievements of the 7th Assembly with a view to achieving the passage and coming into effect of the alterations made and as well take on board any further proposals to amend the Constitution. The Constitution amendment process will be expedited and made to conclude within a given and early time frame

11. Harmonisation of National Identity Data Management System

The House of Representatives is concerned that there are multiple identity management bodies and systems in the country, which includes the National Population Commission (NPC), the National Identity Management Commission (NIMC), Driving License system, National Voters Card, etc. The House will review legislation creating these multiple bodies and systems with a view to consolidating and harmonizing them to achieve a single National Data Management System. The House's intervention will save costs and revenue for the country and create a much more effective and efficient National Identity Management System for Nigeria.

12. Reduction of Cost of Governance

There is National concern about cost of governance in Nigeria. The country has seen the rise in recurrent expenditure in the National Budget up to 75%. This is clearly unacceptable. Recommendations of Commissions have proposed merging and consolidation of government Ministries, Departments and Agencies to significantly reduce the cost of governance in the country. The House

of Representatives will take legislative measures to carry out prudent reduction of the cost of governance.

13. Executive-Legislative Relationship

The House while protecting its independence and autonomy will maintain a robust and cooperative relationship with the Executive. The House shall consider naming a Liaison Officer to the Executive Branch, to foster synergy and improve relations. The House shall also develop a system to coordinate Executive officials and other witnesses appearing before Committees of the House.

14. Implementation

The 8th House will establish modalities for the implementation of this Legislative Agenda. Partnership, collaboration and cooperation with CSOs, development partners and professional bodies to realize the effective implementation and monitoring of this Agenda will be adopted. Subject to approval of the Committee of the whole House, the Legislative Agenda Committee agrees to reconvene to draw up an implementation and action plan.

15. Conclusion

The House adopts this Legislative Agenda as a framework to guide the operations of the House from 2015 – 2019. The implementation of the Legislative Agenda of the House will require the cooperation of the Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Executive Arm of the Government of the Federation. A copy of the Agenda as adopted will be transmitted to both the Senate and the President for their information and necessary collaboration.