



COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF THE NATIONAL LAND CONFERENCE JOINTLY ORGANISED BY THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR POLICY AND STRATEGIC STUDIES (NIPSS) AND JOHNBULL AMAYAEVBO FOUNDATION (JAF)



(NAF Conference Centre, Abuja: 26TH – 28TH March, 2025)

Preamble

The **National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS)** in collaboration with the **Johnbull Amayaevbo Foundation (JAF)**, organised a 3-day National Land Conference with the theme: Reforming Land Governance for Sustainable Development at Abuja: 26TH – 28TH March, 2025. The Conference aimed to address cross-cutting critical issues surrounding land policy and administration. It explored the systemic challenges that have emerged over the decades associated with the Land Use Act of 1978 and recommended strategies intended to key into the reform agenda in the land sector and administration as well as innovative solutions for sustainable development. The Conference brought together global experts, policymakers, and stakeholders seeking to generate consensus on strategies and action that will culminate in sustainable growth, promote equity, in pursuance of the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration.

2. Participants and Resource Persons

The Conference recorded some 342 participants who registered to attend physically and 288 virtually. These were drawn from stakeholders and experts in the lands and related sectors of the economy including government agencies and professional organizations across the country and abroad, as well as the academia and civil society organizations. Resource persons were drawn from a crop of seasoned, well-informed and highly experienced serving and top government functionaries and experts and the academia who shared their diverse and rich perspectives on subject matter and theme and sub-themes of the Conference.

3. Issues Raised

The conference presentations and interactive sessions raised and noted as follow:

- The Land Use Act 1978 (LUA) represents both the legal and policy frameworks for the lands sector of Nigeria and is now 47 years of experimentation. The LUA is due for a review.
- One of the major issues with the LUA is its intricate relationship with the 1999 Constitution of the FRN, which has made it cumbersome to amend;
- Sections of the LUA particularly those related to compensation regime (including the extent and quantum of compensation payable, who to pay, when to pay and circumstance of payment, for land acquired for overriding public purpose are in conflict with the Constitution and the preamble of the Act;
- The reform processes in the land sector which definitively started in 2009 by the Late Umaru Musa 'Yar-Aduwa regime has not consolidated, and as a result, the consequential sufferings and unfairness to which citizens are subjected to, as caused by the anomalies noted in land administration continue unabated;
- Land administration is still, for the most, carried out by analogue, hence susceptible to manipulation, fraud and corruption;
- More education and awareness is needed in the citizenry, for a better understanding of their land rights and the efforts being made to reform the sector.
- Land reform processes have been made an exclusive province of the government leaving out the other critical stakeholders including the private sector and the civil society organisations (CSOs);
- State Governors' powers including the prerogative of granting consent to transfer of rights in/over land under the Act are enormous. These powers are too often abused to the detriment of the objectives of the Act, and the economy;
- Land use sector has significant impact on climate change and can be utilized in the implementation of our international climate change commitments, especially under the Paris Agreement;
- Some customs still maintain the patrilineal system of land ownership that excludes women despite the provisions of the law and judicial pronouncements against those customs;
- Land governance professionals are observed to be performing below professional standards due to lack of understanding of the Land Use Act.

4. Key Recommendations

Following from the issues raised, the conference participants agreed and recommended the following action points for policy makers:

- The Land Use Act 1978, should be reviewed and a separate National Policy on Lands Administration and Management be formulated;
- The Government reform process in the land sector should focus more on making the Act implementable without bottlenecks and loopholes. In this regard, the reform process should take note of the following issues:
 - The conflict between the 1999 Constitution of the FRN and the LUA should be resolved by separating the Act from the Constitution and land matters placed under the Concurrent Legislative List. Government should consider building national consensus on the desirability or otherwise of taking this route;
 - State Governors' power under the Act should be capped and corresponding responsibilities placed to block the possibilities of abuse and enable attainment of the objectives of the Act, and the economy;
 - Local Government Authorities should be allowed to exercise their power of granting Customary Rights of Occupancy under the Act;

- Compensation regimes in the Constitution and the Act should be harmonized in favor of safeguarding the fundamental rights of citizens to own land and receive prompt and adequate compensation when their land is acquired for public purpose;
- Reform process should note that many of the issues posed in paragraph b) (i – iv) above are resolved by Supreme Court and other judicial pronouncements. However, these judicial positions bearing on land administration are yet to be implemented as part of land governance.
- NIPSS should utilise the National Council of State as avenue to call upon the State Governors to recognise and support the land reform processes for the benefits they promise to the entire economy;
- Government should modernize compensation frameworks to reflect market realities and dynamics and indeed the attendant socio-economic impacts;
- Land governance professionals in the public and private sectors should be collaborating more with the Legal Practitioners and other relevant professionals so as to maintain better understanding, professionalism and ethical conduct in their representations under the Act.
- NIPSS should facilitate the establishment of land governance collegial, which will serve as a permanent multi-stakeholder technical team in the built environment and land governance professionals, to drive the advocacy for a sustainable land governance in Nigeria;
- The stakeholders technical team to establish a baseline and premise by studying the current state of the land reform initiatives and recommendations including the works of the Presidential Technical Committee on Land Reform (PTCLR) and the Four Land Reform Task Teams (LRTTs);
- Stakeholder technical team to review the viability of the establishment of the National Land Commission and the implementation of the Systematic Land Titling and Registration (SLTR) vis-à-vis the review process and proposed amendment to the Act;
- To facilitate and provide a framework for the work of the said stakeholder technical team, NIPSS as a matter of urgency should work with the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) to review the over 50 judicial pronouncements (as noted) of the Supreme Court and other Superior Courts of Record in Nigeria related to land use and governance.
- As land reform is conceptually a long-term agenda, in the medium-term Government should issue out Regulations to address bottlenecks to land administration;
- The Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Marine & Blue Economy, National Inland Waterways Authority NIWA, National Environmental Standards Regulations Enforcement Agency NESREA and National Council on Climate Change as well as the Federal Ministry of Agriculture should play active roles in the land reform agenda so as to take the benefit of greenhouse gas emissions accruable from the land use and agricultural practices, towards performing the Nigeria's global climate change commitments;
- Land governance must legislate and leverage e-governance, as well as build capacities in ICT, AI and blockchain tools and GIS management system for efficiency and transparency. This process should include digitalization of the Federal Land Registry for harmonization of land record management;
- Land reform and governance should incorporate and leverage public-private partnership (PPP) as vehicle for effectiveness and sustainability;
- A good land governance involves the rule of law, effective use of public resources and effective accountable and transparent institutions
- For advocacy and enlightenment in the lands sector, there is a need for the establishment of a National Land Governance Resource Centre, which is to be driven by the private sector and CSOs.
- There is need for the amendment or complete repeal of obnoxious laws, customs or traditions that exclude certain individuals from land ownership in Nigeria – especially women, so that significant portion of the populace is not alienated.
- On education and capacity building of citizens in lands administration and the reform process, there is the need:
 - to train and develop adequate skill sets in modern land governance and management the reform dynamics; and
 - to educate and enlighten the citizens and especially rural community as to the right to access to justice including the availability of ADR system to handle land matters in a faster and less expensive manner;
- The current reform process should be fast-tracked so as to minimize the sufferings citizens are subjected to, as caused by the anomalies noted in land administration.
- Stakeholders are enjoined to ensure that this National Land Conference is held annually to drive and track progress in the reform agenda.

Signed

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