

# COMMUNIQUÉ DELIVERED AT THE END OF THE 2-DAY GLOBAL AFRICAN DIASPORA SYMPOSIUM (GADS) HELD IN ABUJA, NIGERIA FROM 27<sup>TH</sup> – 28<sup>TH</sup> APRIL, 2023

## 1.0 PREAMBLE

1.1 Over 30 million Africans, plus 55 million Afro Brazilians and 45 million African Americans, live outside the continent of Africa, and represent a vast network of potential partners for development. Through their resources in remittances and pension fund investments, they play a crucial role in Africa in investments, sustaining livelihoods and social services, as well as contributing to development initiatives through their expertise, networks, and social capital. Desiring to overcome the numerous challenges it faces such as poverty and conflict, Africa's engagement with the Diaspora communities in development initiatives is therefore necessary to help bridge critical development gaps. In order to ensure the success of these engagements, several strategies need to be implemented, which include building trust and partnerships (including African governmental assurances of Diaspora investments), and investing in capacity building and knowledge sharing, as well as creating an enabling policy environment that recognizes the role of the Diaspora in Africa's sustainable development.

1.2 It is against this background that the **Global African Diaspora Symposium (GADS) Abuja 2023** was convened by the **Africa Diaspora Alliance (AfDA)** with the **Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS)** in conjunction with the **Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NiDCOM)** and the **Directorate of Technical Cooperation in Africa (DTCA)**, both of the **Nigerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, and the **Federal Government of Nigeria**, at the **State House Conference Centre, Abuja, Nigeria**, as well as virtually, on 27<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> April, 2023 with the theme: *"Building Stronger Connections between Africa and the Global Diaspora"*.

1.3 The **Overall Goal** of the Symposium was to offer a platform to facilitate a consultative, immersive interaction between African Diaspora and other stakeholders where workable solutions to Africa's most pressing issues would be discussed and concrete strategies proffered for necessary partnerships between key Diaspora leaders

in business and professions with leaders on the African continent to achieve pertinent results.

1.4 The **Objectives** of the Symposium were therefore to:

- i. Create an interface for networking among African and other Diaspora across the world.
- ii. Promote the implementation and institutionalizing of Pan-Africanism at the UN through the celebration of the **International Decade for People of African Descent**.
- iii. Build bridges between Africa and the Diaspora by deepening relations between the African Union (**AU**) and Caribbean Community (**CARICOM**), Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (**OACPS**), among others in realizing the Diaspora as the 6<sup>th</sup> region of the **AU**.
- iv. Explore and engage the contributions of Diaspora skills, particularly in scientific knowledge and technology transfer.
- v. Mobilize Diaspora savings and Diaspora philanthropic contributions and harness migration, remittances, and Diaspora investment contributions for sustainable development.
- vi. Enhance participation of the Diaspora in Africa's development process to support the development of the roadmap for the Diaspora as the 6<sup>th</sup> Region of Africa towards the attainment of **Africa Union's Agenda 2063**.
- vii. Advocate for policy and practice changes conducive to more effective integration of Diaspora-led actions in the national development plans of countries of origin through organizations such as the **OACPS**.

1.5 The Symposium had over three hundred (300) participants in physical attendance and over two hundred (200) persons online via Zoom, YouTube, Twitter and other streaming platforms from over sixty-four (64) countries; International Organizations including high-level participants from the Economic Community of West African States (**ECOWAS**), International Organization for Migration (**IOM**), African Development Bank (**AfDB**); Institutions and Academia; Diplomats; Diaspora Groups; Politicians and Policy makers; Government officials; the Business Community; different Business representations from the African, African American community and the historical African Diaspora; as well as other relevant stakeholders.

1.6 The Symposium featured insightful presentations from three (3) Keynote Presentations, two (2) Panel Discussions and Nine (9) Sectoral Discussion Sessions on the following sectors: Science and Technology; Agriculture; Trade, Industry and Manufacturing; Energy and Infrastructure Development; Tourism and Culture; Health; Information and Communication Technology; and Education and Youth Development.

1.7 The highlight of the Opening Ceremony was the **Keynote Address** delivered by the representative of **His Excellency Muhammadu Buhari** GCFR, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, to declare the Symposium open, in which he highlighted the potential of the Symposium in facilitating and building stronger and lasting connections between Africa and its Global Diaspora.

## 2.0 OBSERVATIONS:

Following the presentations and intensive interactive sessions, participants made the following observations:

- i) As long as Africa does not develop as it should, the world will continue to undermine and denigrate the continent, thus the need to emulate other races by harnessing the expertise and other resources of African Diaspora by African governments, institutions and policymakers at all levels, irrespective of where they may be found, noting particularly the unique role women and youth have to play in this engagement process with African Diaspora;
- ii) Opportunities abound on the continent for the African Diaspora to structure and jointly execute projects and programmes with African Governments and the Private sector in Public Private People's Partnership (PPPP) arrangements, such as are being fully exploited by others like the Chinese, Indians, Lebanese and Americans;
- iii) There are numerous investment opportunities within the Regional Economic Blocs, as well as country investment programs, to engage with the Diaspora for impact in African countries as the African Diaspora, acting in concert, have the intellectual and financial capital to undertake program-specific financing of projects and programmes of the **AU**;
- iv) Diaspora intellectual capital and individual influence could be used to develop value chains in multi-million-dollar industries in Science & Technology, Agriculture, Trade & Manufacturing, Energy & Infrastructure Development, Tourism & Culture, among others;

- v) The Diaspora can, by virtue of their skills, expertise, economic power, diplomacy, business networks, market access and global exposure, lead in the promotion of quality primary health services delivery through developing synergies between several structures of governments at all levels, and a broad array of non-state actors including professionals, trade associations, trade unions, NGOs, other CSOs and community-based formations;
- vi) The Diaspora however face challenges such as unfavourable disposition by some Governments, lack of access to funding, deficient business asset acquisition, unfavourable policies for the Diaspora desiring to open accounts in their home countries as well as vulnerability to fraud and mismanagement arising from their unfamiliarity with the contemporary host terrain, with concerns about the safety of Diaspora investments and remittances, as major issues hindering a massive return of financial investments to the continent;
- vii) The absence of appropriate structural continental policies to ease entry and movement for the Diaspora into and within Africa has also hindered effective harnessing and utilization of Diaspora skills for the development of the continent, bringing to fore the need to re-visit the protocols and extant laws on movement into and within Africa, particularly of the African Diaspora and especially as it relates to asset accumulation;
- viii) The need for greater collaboration between Diaspora, government institutions, policy makers and multilateral organizations to enable smooth assimilation of the Diaspora into Africa's development process;
- ix) The total absence of a clearly defined continental strategy for engaging and integrating African Diaspora in Africa's developmental process was noted, with the historical Diaspora, especially African-Americans, not being fully factored into this engagement process, thus the importance of actualizing the aspirations, goals and priorities of the Africa Agenda 2063 through greater engagement with the Diaspora was stressed;
- x) The Symposium was hailed as a veritable platform for the promotion of the African Diaspora as the main resource for positively projecting and developing Africa; and
- xi) The effort of the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in accepting to finance and host the Diaspora Centre of Excellence in Abuja, Nigeria was hailed.

### 3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS:

In the light of the observations made by participants, a host of valuable policy ideas, recommendations and follow-up activities for an effective implementation of the laudable objectives, set out to be achieved by the Symposium, were put forward as follows:

- i) African Diaspora should engage with African Parliaments to ensure Diaspora matters and areas of interest are entrenched and appropriately anchored in individual African country's National Policies, with gender mainstreaming and inclusiveness as a priority.
- ii) African countries should explore and harness their comparative advantage rather than engaging in unproductive competition that hinders the continent's development.
- iii) The **Continental Policy for the Diaspora** developed by the African Diaspora Policy Centre (**ADPC**) should be mainstreamed to promote Africa to be the center of innovation utilizing research and innovation, to reduce cost of learning and harnessing innovative mediums with cutting edge technology and promoting a mind shift from funding of education to educational investment.
- iv) African Diaspora experts are enjoined to work with Ministries of Health in individual African countries to deepen affordable healthcare and encourage communication with all health sector stakeholders in preventive and promoting measures for good public health, utilizing technology and skills transfer to plug into developing a robust ecosystem with ICT. Provision for community role in Universal Health Coverage to promote ownership and input by the Diaspora to healthcare is encouraged.
- v) The Diaspora are invited to work with all stakeholders to change African mindset on agriculture as 'subsistence farming', to its being practiced as veritable means of wealth creation and mobilization of human labour to boost food security, agribusiness and agro-processing, through the deliberate and methodological examination of the entire value chain and the utilization of opportunities offered under schemes such as the African Growth and Opportunities Act (**AGOA**).
- vi) Engagement with the Diaspora, while leveraging investors locally, to support the Green and Blue Economy, Creative Industry, Environmental Management, IT-enabled Services and other industries for trade and development, should be vigorously pursued.

- vii) African Diaspora formations are to work with relevant Chambers of Commerce across the world to create bridges for investments and facilitate access to the available investment funds for Africa's development with the Diaspora encouraged to invest in more viable projects that have greater impacts on the African Continent. In this regard, the Diaspora are encouraged to engage with the **AfDB** to serve as consultants on programmes and projects across Africa in line with the Bank's procedures for recruitment of consultants.
- viii) Working with investment experts, African governments and the Africa Diaspora should develop investment vehicles through which the Diaspora can invest in the opportunities existing in African Countries in specific sectors of the economy. African countries should therefore provide assurances for Diaspora investments through securitization of remittances, by use of security documents such as Diaspora specific Bonds, which will serve as cheap source of financing for development, as well as through handholding to encourage business development and growth.
- ix) African Governments should put in place institutions and systems that will protect Diaspora businesses in their home countries and recovery mechanisms that will aid them in recovering their funds quickly and efficiently in the event of fraud.
- x) The Diaspora should support ICT development including digitization of jobs, connections with investors, business-to-business (B2B) mediation, e-learning, e-commerce, exchange visits, and partnering in SME development using digital platforms across sectors and industries in Africa.
- xi) African Governments should do more to develop policies that support Diaspora engagement which include the creation of Diaspora-focused institutions and support for Diaspora-led organizations and networks such as the Africa Diaspora Alliance (**AfDA**).
- xii) The African Union should implement a framework within existing multilateral organizations in the Continent to facilitate ease of entry and movement for Africans in the Diaspora, bearing in mind that the Diaspora is the sixth region of the African Union.
- xiii) African governments should go beyond advocacy and admonishing of Diasporans, to investing in incentives that will stimulate and increase the interest of more Diaspora in Africa's development process.

- xiv) Stakeholders should build on the outcomes of the Global Diaspora Summit held in Dublin in 2022, which calls for the institutionalization of Diaspora participation in policies and programmes, and for support of the Global Diaspora Policy Alliance.
- xv) Government institutions such as **NIDCOM**, policy makers and multilateral institutions, including the **AU**, **CARICOM**, **IOM** and **OACPS**, should collaborate with credible Diaspora formations, such as **AfDA**, to enable the smooth assimilation of the Diaspora into Africa's development process.
- xvi) A cooperation framework of all interested participating institutions should be evolved in collaboration with **AfDA**, **DTCA**, **NIDCOM**, **IOM** and **OACPS** within the next one year, preparatory to the next Symposium in 2025.
- xvii) The Global African Diaspora Symposium should be adopted by the African Union and institutionalized as Biennial Diaspora Summit to develop mechanism for the actualization of the aspirations, goals and priorities of the Africa Agenda 2063.
- xviii) The establishment of the Diaspora Centre of Excellence in Abuja, Nigeria should be encouraged and supported by all stakeholders in order to ensure it takes off on solid footing.

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

4.1 Throughout, it was evident to participants that the Symposium generated the impetus for the ongoing process of fostering effective engagement between the Diaspora and local actors in Africa. This has been initiated through ongoing dialogue, building personal relationships, and prioritizing transparency and accountability in development initiatives by emphasizing a shared culture of collaboration, mutual respect, and responsibility for sustainable development efforts.

4.2 There was also renewed motivation towards enabling the African Diaspora to have a central role in shaping sustainable development initiatives in Africa by ensuring that Diaspora-led organizations and networks are supported to lead and implement development projects in partnership with local actors, rather than being relegated to a secondary role. This approach can help to ensure that the perspectives, experiences, and expertise of the Diaspora are fully harnessed and used to drive sustainable development efforts in Africa.

4.3 The Symposium secured a commitment by African countries to create enabling policy environment that recognizes the role of the African Diaspora in sustainable development across the continent, and to do more to develop policies that support Diaspora engagement, including the creation of Diaspora-focused initiatives, streamlined investment procedures, and support for Diaspora-led organizations and networks. The Symposium produced valuable policy recommendations and follow-up activities for effective implementation towards achieving the laudable objectives set out *ab initio*.

4.4 The Symposium agreed to reconvene next year, 2024, in Kampala, Uganda for a mid-term review of the progress so far on the conclusions of the Symposium, while the next Global African Diaspora Symposium (GADS) 2025 is proposed to hold in Kingston, Jamaica.

Made and adopted this 28<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2023



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