

**COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE REGULATORY CONVERSATION 6.0, HELD AT THE GRAND BANQUET HALL, CIVIC CENTRE OZUMBA MBADIWE ROAD, VICTORIA ISLAND, LAGOS.**

**INTRODUCTION**

The Convention on Business Integrity, CBI, as part of its commitment to public policy engagement and driving the advocacy on building integrity in the business environment, hosted the 6th edition of its Regulatory Conversations on 5<sup>th</sup> March, 2020 at Grand Banquet Hall of the Civic Centre, Victoria Island, Lagos.

The Conversation with the theme "National Identity Number: Matters Arising & Implications for Nation Building" attracted participants from Civil society organisations, the Private sector and agencies of Government and the media including the FRSC Corps Marshal Dr. Boboye Olayemi Oyeyemi represented by CC Hyginus Omeje; Comptroller General of the Nigerian Immigrations Service (NIS) CG Mohammed Babandede represented by Assistant Comptroller Amos Okpu Special Assistant to the Comptroller – General on Standards & Compliance; the Executive Vice Chairman of the Nigeria Communications Commission (NCC) Prof. Umar Dambatta represented by Dr. Ike Adinde; Mr. Olufemi Awoyemi Founder and Chairman, Proshare Nigeria Limited; Mrs. Ene Obi Group Country Director Action Aid, Mrs. Toki Mabogunje President Lagos Chambers of Commerce and Industries (LCCI); Mr. Idris Akinbajo Managing Editor, Premium Times Nigeria; Comrade Yusuf Nurudeen Omomewa Lagos State Coordinator, Education Rights Campaign (ERC); Ms. Francesca Kanayo – Chiedu Executive Director, Citizens ConnectNG.

The following organisations and Government Agencies also had representatives in attendance - the Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria (CIBN); Institute of Directors (IOD); Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN); the Bureau of Public Sector Reform (BPSR); National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA); the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC); the National Population Commission (NPC); the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC).

Mr. Soji Apampa, the Chief Executive Officer of the CBI in his opening remarks, said the essence of the Regulatory Conversations 6.0 was to address the framework around the issuance of a national identity number to all Nigerians, which is perhaps one of the most essential and crucial initiatives managed by the federal government of Nigeria. The Regulatory Conversations 6.0 he added, provided the opportunity to consider the philosophy behind the implementation of the national identity number regulation, to ensure it does preserve the public interest not only as a laudable objective but also in the public policy choices being made to implement it.

The forum examined key sectoral issues in the context of the following viewpoints:

1. The regulatory framework and the national identity number system
2. The implementation of regulation on the Mandatory Use of the national identification number and the implications for the activities and business transactions carried out by individuals and corporate entities in Nigeria
3. Means of achieving the NIN with the support of the citizens

## **DELIBERATIONS**

A panel discussion moderated by Mr. Olufemi Awoyemi, the Founder and Chairman of ProShare discussed the key sectoral issues around the National Identity Number. The panel comprised of a broad spectrum of participants from the Government, Civil Society, Media to ensure a multi-perspective discourse and recommendations.

Ms. Francesca Kanayo- Chiedu, Executive Director, Citizens ConnectNG called for an automated system that registers and gives Nigerians their unique National identity number from birth.

On his part, Mr. Idris Akinbajo, Managing Editor Premium Times, highlighted the current challenge students were facing in the Joint Admission Matriculations Board, JAMB exams, which now requires the National Identification Number, NIN.

He urged the government to put the necessary measures in place for seamless NIN registration to avoid a low JAMB registration rate, which could affect Nigeria's human capital development.

Dr. Ike Adinde, Deputy Director at the Nigerian Communication Commission, said the whole management data registration process would require review to drive efficiency. He agreed that Nigeria needs a centralized database tied to the NIN. The current silo arrangement of data management between agencies like the Nigeria Immigration Services (NIS), National Population Commission (NPC), National Identity Management Commission (NIMC), Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC), amongst others needs to be reviewed. He further suggested that Nigeria's data management strategy may need to be looked into again.

Mr. Hyginus U. Omeje Corps Sector Commander, FRSC, Lagos State, in his intervention, lauded the NIN initiative stating that it will be linked to driver's licence captured by the Road Safety Commission. He attested to the integrity of the NIN data and called for private sector involvement in the process.

Also speaking Mr. Amos Okpu, Special Assistant to the Comptroller-General on Standards & Compliance, Nigeria Immigration Service made a strong case for the harmonization and securitization of data through the NIN. He also made allusion to the challenges with Nigerians giving conflicting personal information for different data capturing purposes.

Comrade Yusuf Nurudeen Omomewa, the Lagos State Coordinator Education Rights Campaign (ERC) on the issues around enlightenment, believed there was a need for proper orientation from NIMC. He stressed the need for adequate information dissemination to Nigerians on the process and timing for the NIN registration.

## **OBSERVATIONS**

In the course of the feedback from members of the audience following the panel discussions, participants noted that-

1. Regulation/regulatory action is in the public interest-
  - When it produces an outcome that not only a small section in the society with particular interests can receive the benefit.
  - When it produces an outcome that enables the benefit to be available to all including the private sector.
  - Where it is communicated through transparent and honest media or where it is accountable to the public interest by permitting public scrutiny and demonstrating the willingness to justify actions to all stakeholders
  - It is flexible enough for effects to keep pace with the trends and developments in industry
  - It maximizes the wellbeing of society as a whole by limiting undesirable outcomes such as crime, insecurity, increasing corruption levels, drug abuse, and so on.
2. So far, only one-third of Nigerians appear to have been registered by the National Identity Management Commission (NIMC). This has major implications for the wellbeing of society as a whole in terms of planning for the provision of social services etc.
3. The whole management of data registration process requires review to drive further efficiency given that It has now become a requirement

to provide a national identity number before one can access certain government services such as obtaining a passport, renewing the driver's licence, registering for some national examinations, and so on.

4. Nigeria needs a centralized database tied to the NIN that will bring together information in the current silo arrangement of data management between agencies like the Nigeria Immigration Services (NIS), National Population Commission (NPC), National Identity Management Commission (NIMC), Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC), amongst others.

5. That the resources for registering are not sufficiently available especially in the rural Areas (due poor electricity and internet access). Comments from participants suggest that NIMC staff in some registration centers attest to the acute underfunding of the agency.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

At the end of the panel discussion, it was unanimously recommended by participants that platforms such as the RC6.0 should be held regularly (and at grassroots level) to promote dialogue between the government and the citizens in order to improve the regulatory environment in the country in general. The following were recommended for action:

- Data management strategy has some challenges; Government should pay attention to Data Managements Strategy from the beginning and should get the expertise and ensure that cost of such expertise is covered as part of the funding for the NIN.
- There are a lot of unintended consequences arising from regulatory actions requiring immediate use of the NIN by citizens for accessing services. Solutions should be sought for the unintended consequences arising from the process of regulation and Government should endeavor to remedy them.
- Government should put in place the necessary measures for stress-free, continuous, seamless and gradual approach to NIN registration to avoid the stampede that accompanies the issuance of deadlines for registration as was experienced during the JAMB/NECO registration process.
- There is need for an automated system that registers and gives Nigerians their unique National identity number from birth.
- There is a big need for proper orientation and adequate information dissemination to Nigerians on the process (to ensure quality data is provided) and timing (to eliminate bottlenecks) for the NIN registration by NIMC.

- The need for the management of NIMC to enhance the accountability and transparency in its operations and also to provide clarity to the public in terms of its service delivery to citizens.
- NIMC should set clear rules with requisite checks and balances on its engagement of the private sector as part of its delivery mechanism of the National Identity project

### **NEXT STEPS**

- The outcome of the conversation should be shared with NIMC to avail NIMC of the thoughts of Nigerians on operations and activities surrounding the NIN.
- That in order to ensure probity, CSOs should be involved in monitoring the utilisation of the funds to be released by the World Bank in support of the National Identity project for enhanced accountability. In this regards, Integrity/CBi will work with other CSOs to engage Government Agencies on the need for proper Service delivery.
- CSOs must also do a root cause analysis of the problems associated with regulation with the aim to proffer lasting solutions to challenges of efficient regulation by regulatory agencies.



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