

[vanguardngr.com](https://www.vanguardngr.com)

e-NSITF: FG approves concessionaire for infrastructure upgrade for N15bn

Urowayino Jeremiah

6–7 minutes

–Okays amendment of obsolete Labour laws

By Johnbosco Agbakwuru, Abuja

The Federal Government on Wednesday approved the phase two of the electronic Nigeria Social Insurance Trust Fund, e-NSITF, which will enable concessionaire to upgrade the infrastructure for N15 billion.

Minister of Labour and Employment, Senator Chris Ngige, disclosed this while briefing State House correspondents at the end of the weekly Federal Executive Council, FEC, meeting, presided over by Vice President Yemi Osinbajo at the Council Chambers, Presidential Villa, Abuja.

Ngige also said the the Council granted approval for the amendment of obsolete laws in line with the International Labour Organisation, ILO, standard.

He said, “The second memo is the memo or what we call the electronic NSITF, Nigerian Social Insurance Trust Fund. Nigeria now operates the old workmen Compensation Act, which is now Employee Compensation Act 2010.

“Therefore, what we are trying to do is to align the contributions of NSITF to make it fraud-free. People should be able to make the contributions of workers with ease even from the comfort of their office and generate certificates.

“You know that the ECA makes it mandatory for all employers to insure through a token contribution of percent of emolument of their workers to the fund called social trust fund of the NSITF. And that is the fund with which if you have an accident or disease condition or debt or disability in the course of work, you can make claim, like an insurance claim.

“So, we now want to refine it, because there are cases of enforcement officers going to companies to tell the company ‘well, you have 1000 workers, but you can pay for only 100.’

“That is shortcutting the organization. There are losses of revenue from that. So, this e-NSITF has a phase one and the phase two. The phase two is what the council approved today, they had earlier approved phase one which is minimal infrastructure and cloud activity.

“Now is for a concessionaire to come and do infrastructure and upgrade in the neighbourhood of N15 billion and then after that, it will take some percentage on incremental revenue that accrued. It will make the form to be more liquid now and we’ll be able to do our functions appropriately.

“So the Council gave the go ahead today and approved it and directed ICRC who is the body that is authorized by law to enter into such concession to continue the process and go ahead and liaise with the Office of the Attorney-General of the Federation.”

Continuing, the Minister said, “The first memorandum was to seek

Council's approval for us to amend the labour laws of the country.

"The labour laws of the country, as presently being operated are really obsolete laws. And the ILO have pointed that out that we needed to bring our laws to be concurrent with international labour standards and conventions and principles at work.

"So, we had to do this. It is the long journey, we started in 2001 by a previous administration, and at a point, the bills were sent to the National Assembly for enactment into law in 2007/2008 only one came out after the five bills.

"Among the five bills then was labour standards bill will make for Labour Standard and replace the the Trade Union Act 2004.

"The second was what we call the collective labour relations bill which will encompass a portion of the trade union act, trade disputes act 2004, trade dispute essential services act and of course, the trade unions International affiliations act. So, the four were to be now melted into one law.

"We also had another bill for Occupational Safety and Health, which was supposed to replace the old Factories act with which Nigeria operates Operational Safety and Health System.

"We also have the fourth bill, which is called Labour Insitutional Bills. All the institutions under labor relations and activities, like industrial arbitration panel, which you know, is there now, but is not really there as a recognised agency and entity. It answers the name panel, so this new bill wants to make it a commission.

"And, really, the structure for that is there. They're operating with the Chairman, a registrar and arbitrators, who will now assume roles of commissioners.

“As you know, it is a quasi courts in industrial relations in the middle of the road, caught between the ministry and trade dispute department and the National Industrial court of Nigeria.

“So, the essence was to make it now a commission. Also the Registrar of Trade Unions, whose function is like the registrar of federal governmental institution. So that registrar of trade union were to be excised again, and made autonomous. So that it is a little bit independent of the ministry as an institution.

“Again, we have the National Labour Advisory Council, which is a body again that we set up on recommendation of ILO principles at work, we want it to be a council. So, these are what the bills were sending now want to do.

“We have been doing that. The ILO provided us technical assistance. And we did what we call social dialogue, and validation meeting. It was tripartite in nature, with the trade unions council, the Nigeria labour Congress, and the Employers Association, NECA and the rest of them all. So we agreed that this should be the final product.

“We looked at it again last June 2022, because there were so many gray areas. So we did that. And the final product is what we brought here now for Council to approve that we transmit via the Federal Ministry of Justice, who will look at it a second time, do what you call legal drafting on it.

“And we’ll now transmit to the National Assembly assembly, it will go through the hog of public hearing, where members of the public and all interested parties will come and listen to what I have to say about the contents and then sent to Mr. President after the validation there at the national assembly.

“So that’s the bill we sent to council to continue the process, so that we can align properly with international conventions and statutes on labour matters.”