

SPECIAL EDITION

# UPSTREAM GAZE

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF NIGERIAN UPSTREAM  
PETROLEUM REGULATORY COMMISSION

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NUPRC @ 4 PILOTING REGULATORY REFORMS WITH INTEGRITY

IT'S TIME TO PUSH FOR REVIEW  
OF NIGERIA'S OPEC QUOTA

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STRONGER REGULATIONS WILL  
BOOST GAS-DRIVEN ECONOMY

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NUPRC HAS IMPROVED  
TRANSPARENCY, REGULATORY  
CERTAINTY - ENGR. OJULARI

## MILESTONES IN MOTION: A CHRONICLE OF NUPRC'S TRANSFORMATIVE ACHIEVEMENTS

+ EXCLUSIVE  
INTERVIEWS





## OUR VALUED STATEMENTS

### VISION

Be Africa's Leading  
Regulator



### MISSION

Promoting Sustainable  
Value Creation From  
Nigeria's Petroleum  
Resources For Shared  
Prosperity

### VALUES

- Professionalism
- Responsiveness
- Ownership
- Integrity



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**UPSTREAM  
GAZE**

# PUBLISHER'S NOTE

In Nigeria's evolving energy landscape, few institutions show the clarity of purpose, strategic foresight and transformative impact of the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC). Since inception, the Commission has redefined regulation, taking bold strides where hesitation lingered, building bridges where silos stood and infusing the upstream sector with direction, transparency and national pride.

This Special Edition of Upstream Gaze is more than a publication; it is a chronicle of progress and a reflection of NUPRC's commitment to excellence. From reforms that recalibrated regulatory frameworks to digital tools that power transparency and investor confidence, the Commission proves that regulation can be both firm and facilitative, with governance anchored in vision and integrity as a catalyst for growth.

We spotlight achievements once seen as aspirations: implementing the Petroleum Industry Act, launching the Nigeria Upstream Cost Optimisation Programme, digitising asset monitoring and engaging global stakeholders. These milestones mark a new era, one where the upstream sector is competitive, indigenous participation is strategic and environmental stewardship aligns with energy security. Beyond policies lies a deeper story of renewed hope: for innovation, for inclusive development, for investors who now see opportunity and for a nation that views energy as empowerment.

As you journey through this edition, you'll meet voices of leadership, field insights and visions for the future. You will see how NUPRC not only regulates but inspires, not only enforces but enables, not only manages resources but nurtures possibilities. This is the gospel of progress—the upstream story told with clarity and conviction and the Commission's promise to keep pushing boundaries, elevating standards and delivering value for Nigeria and the world. Welcome to the Special Edition. Welcome to renewed hope. Welcome to Upstream Gaze.

Together, we are writing the next chapter.

Happy reading!



Engr. Gbenga Komolafe, OFR, FNSE



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# Setting Standards

NUPRC ensures sustainable development of Nigeria's Upstream Petroleum Resources through effective regulatory practices, while entrenching world-class professionalism, accountability, and transparency.

We guarantee international best practices in regulating the Upstream Oil and Gas Sector in Nigeria.



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*"With Renewed Hope, we embark on a journey of transformation, where every step forward is a testament to our collective strength and unyielding spirit."*



FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

# THE big picture



■ The AKK project transports gas from Ajaokuta to Kano as part of the Trans Nigeria Gas Pipeline.

# CRUDE AWAKENING: GROWTH AND PROSPERITY IN NIGERIA'S PETROLEUM INDUSTRY UNDER TINUBU'S RENEWED HOPE

- Lekan Fatodu -

**W**hen Bola Ahmed Tinubu assumed Nigeria's presidency in May 2023, the nation stood at a critical juncture. For decades, the petroleum industry had been both the backbone of the economy and the source of its deepest vulnerabilities. Oil revenues financed governments, powered cities and earned Nigeria a place in global energy politics, yet the same industry also fostered inefficiency, dependency and social inequality. The paradox of immense hydrocarbon wealth coexisting with poverty and underdevelopment became the story of modern Nigeria. Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda promised to alter that narrative, seeking to transform petroleum from a source of frustration into an engine of growth and prosperity.

The earliest signs of this ambition were bold. On the very day of his inauguration, Tinubu declared the end of Nigeria's long-standing fuel subsidy regime. For decades, subsidies had kept pump prices artificially low while draining billions of dollars from public finances, distorting the energy market and encouraging smuggling across borders. Their removal caused immediate hardship as fuel prices rose sharply and inflation surged, but the decision marked the beginning of a long-awaited



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IT SIGNALLED THE GOVERNMENT'S WILLINGNESS TO EMBRACE MARKET REALITIES AND REDIRECT SCARCE RESOURCES INTO INFRASTRUCTURE, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES



reform. It signaled the government's willingness to embrace market realities and redirect scarce resources into infrastructure, education and social services. It also opened the downstream petroleum sector to private capital, reshaping incentives and setting the stage for efficiency and growth.

This determination to restructure went hand in hand with renewed attention to domestic refining. Nigeria's inability to refine its own crude oil has long been one of the country's greatest contradictions, forcing it to spend billions annually importing petrol and diesel while its state-owned refineries remained idle. The commissioning of the Dangote Refinery, with a capacity of 650,000 barrels per day, offered a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reverse this

increasingly the bridge to the future. Nigeria's 200 trillion cubic feet of proven reserves position it as a gas superpower, yet for decades this resource was flared, wasted or underutilised. Under the Renewed Hope Agenda, gas has been placed at the center of the energy transition strategy. Investments in critical infrastructure such as the Ajaokuta-Kaduna-Kano pipeline advanced, while domestic gas utilisation expanded into power generation, fertilizer production and transportation. Policies encouraging compressed natural gas as an alternative to petrol began to reshape the transportation sector, offering relief to citizens grappling with high fuel prices. On the export front, Nigeria LNG's Train 7 project pushed forward, promising to strengthen the country's share in global liquefied natural gas markets.

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**THIS MULTIPRONGED APPROACH BEGAN TO YIELD RESULTS AS DAILY PRODUCTION CLIMBED TOWARD 1.7 MILLION BARRELS, RESTORING NIGERIA'S CREDIBILITY WITHIN OPEC AND BOOSTING REVENUES AT A TIME WHEN GLOBAL PRICES REMAINED VOLATILE**

trend. The administration acted swiftly to integrate the refinery into national supply chains, providing policy support and regulatory clarity. Alongside this, it committed to reviving the Port Harcourt, Warri and Kaduna refineries through public-private partnerships. While challenges remain, Nigeria is closer than ever to achieving self-sufficiency in refined products, a milestone that would save foreign exchange, create jobs and stabilise domestic fuel supply.

Growth in the petroleum sector also required securing crude oil production, which in recent years had been ravaged by theft, vandalism and insecurity in the Niger Delta. At the height of the crisis, Nigeria was losing over 100,000 barrels of crude daily to theft, bleeding government revenues and eroding investor confidence. Tinubu's government responded with an aggressive strategy that combined the deployment of advanced surveillance technologies, partnerships with private contractors and collaboration with community stakeholders. This multipronged approach began to yield results as daily production climbed toward 1.7 million barrels, restoring Nigeria's credibility within OPEC and boosting revenues at a time when global prices remained volatile.

If crude oil remains the backbone, natural gas is

Gas is no longer treated as a byproduct of oil but as a strategic resource in its own right, central to Nigeria's industrialisation and long-term energy security.

A critical aspect of these reforms has been the transformation of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited. For decades, the NNPC was the face of inefficiency and opacity in the industry, often described as a "state within a state." The Petroleum Industry Act of 2021 provided the legal foundation for its conversion into a commercial entity, but Tinubu's government ensured that this transformation became meaningful. By encouraging transparency, publishing audited accounts and streamlining operations, the company began to rebuild investor confidence. A more accountable NNPC means more efficient management of joint ventures, clearer financial flows to the treasury and a stronger ability to attract global partners.

The international dimension of these reforms cannot be ignored. Nigeria's petroleum industry operates in a global market where competition is fierce, geopolitics are volatile and the pressure to decarbonise is mounting. By restoring stability in production and embracing gas development, Nigeria has positioned



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**BY REMOVING SUBSIDIES, REVIVING  
REFINING, COMBATING THEFT, EXPANDING  
GAS AND INSISTING ON TRANSPARENCY,  
HIS ADMINISTRATION IS LAYING THE  
GROUNDWORK FOR AN INDUSTRY THAT  
CAN SUSTAIN LONG-TERM PROSPERITY**

itself as a reliable supplier and a leader in Africa's energy sector. Partnerships with foreign investors from Europe, Asia and the Middle East are once again gaining traction, while regional projects such as cross-border pipelines and electricity integration schemes are strengthening Nigeria's role as a continental energy hub. Tinubu's diplomacy in OPEC has also emphasised Nigeria's right to balance production quotas with the developmental needs of its citizens, reinforcing the country's voice in global energy discussions.

The true measure of growth and prosperity, however, lies not only in barrels and revenues but in people. Oil wealth has too often bypassed ordinary Nigerians, enriching a few while leaving millions trapped in poverty. The Renewed Hope Agenda places emphasis on converting petroleum revenues into tangible social development. Subsidy savings are being redirected into mass transit projects, healthcare investments and education initiatives. Local communities in oil-producing areas are being integrated into formal economic activities through

employment opportunities and development programs. Small businesses are beginning to benefit from credit schemes financed by petroleum revenues. The vision is that petroleum wealth should build schools, power industries and create jobs rather than disappear into the pockets of a privileged elite.

The challenges on this path are undeniable. Inflation remains stubborn, driven partly by fuel price adjustments. Infrastructure bottlenecks, from pipelines to power grids, still limit the full potential of reform. Global energy markets are unpredictable, and the long-term shift toward renewables raises questions about the sustainability of hydrocarbon-led growth. Corruption, though diminished, remains a threat that could undermine progress if not continually addressed. Yet, despite these hurdles, the direction of travel is unmistakable. For the first time in decades, Nigeria is charting a petroleum policy grounded in realism, reform and responsibility.

What is emerging under Tinubu is a crude awakening. By removing subsidies, reviving refining, combating theft, expanding gas and insisting on transparency, his administration is laying the groundwork for an industry that can sustain long-term prosperity. The progress is still unfolding, but the gains are visible in rising production figures, growing investor confidence, improved fiscal space and early signs of industrial rejuvenation. Most importantly, there is a palpable sense that oil wealth can finally be harnessed to benefit the many rather than the few.

The story of Nigeria's petroleum industry has always been one of paradox, abundance coexisting with deprivation, promise undermined by mismanagement. Under the Renewed Hope Agenda, that story is being rewritten into one of possibility. If the momentum is sustained, the industry could indeed become the foundation for a more prosperous and equitable Nigeria. Growth is no longer an aspiration but a process underway, prosperity no longer a dream but a prospect within reach. The stakes remain high, but so too does the promise of a nation that has at last found the courage to awaken to the full potential of its black gold. ■



## Interview

# IT'S TIME TO PUSH FOR REVIEW OF NIGERIA'S OPEC QUOTA - LOKPOBIRI

- Philip Ukpe -

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In this interview with the Upstream Gaze the Honourable Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Oil), Senator Heineken Lokpobiri, provides a detailed appraisal of Nigeria's upstream oil sector, four years after the enactment of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) and the establishment of the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC).



He highlights the progress made in restoring investor confidence, stabilising the regulatory environment and ramping up crude oil production from historic lows. The Minister also discusses Nigeria's push to secure a higher OPEC production quota and the emergence of the African Petroleum Regulatory Forum (AFRIPERF) led by the Gbenga Komolafe-led NUPRC, as a strategic step toward unifying Africa's voice in global energy discourse and advocating for equitable investment and access.

**Four years since its establishment, how would you assess the journey of the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) in driving reforms and stabilising Nigeria's upstream sector?**

Well, the PIA itself brought stability to the regulatory framework in the oil and gas sector, particularly as it relates to the upstream sector. And before then, we had no investment for close to 10 years, because there was no stable regulatory framework. But since the PIA was passed, with the establishment of the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC), there seems to be stability in the sector. Investors all over the world now know that we have this stable regulatory institution that is doing the job that it is meant to do, in line with global best practices. The NUPRC has been doing an excellent job to the best of its ability, I would say. It played host to several countries coming to learn how our own NUPRC regulates the upstream sector. If you want to assess the performance of the upstream, you have to set some parameters. I recall that even when I became minister, the rig count in the country was just about 14, but today we are approaching 50 and it's projected that it will surpass 50 by the end of the year. That shows significant progress being made in the upstream sector. And you can't overemphasise the role played by the NUPRC in providing the stability that we needed to attract and sustain these investments.

We also have leadership at the NUPRC that is experienced. The CCE, Engr. Komolafe, rose through the ranks of the NNPC up to the top. The only thing he didn't get was Group Managing Director (GMD) in those days. He was apparently like the number two in the NNPC structure before he retired a few years ago. And that was why he was identified and then brought back to play this peculiar role he is playing today. If you bring this experience to bear, we believe that the upstream sector is better for it. We will continue to leverage his expertise, his wisdom and his experience to be able to grow this sector to the level that we want it to be. I want this vision

where, you know, in the next few years, this NUPRC would be one of the best, you know, in the world. We are already about the best in Africa. But I want this one to be the best or one of the best in the world. NUPRC is doing well, in my opinion.

**Back in 2022, Nigeria lost its crown as the largest oil producer in Africa to Angola when in August of that year, production dropped below 1mbpd. But today, the story has changed as Nigeria's crude oil production has risen and is now pumping an average of 1.7 million barrels daily. What is behind these successes?**

One of the reasons we are doing 1.7 million barrels today is because, as a government, we've been able to put certain measures in place to curb pipeline vandalism and crude oil theft. Before we came, there was a big issue



**WE BELIEVE THAT THE DIVESTMENT WASN'T A PROBLEM AT ALL. IT'S ACTUALLY A BLESSING. IT HAS COME WITH A CHALLENGE FOR LOCAL COMPANIES TO PLAY ON A BIGGER SCALE**

as to the integrity of our pipelines. So, even companies that could produce more were scared of producing up to the capacity that they could because the fear was that if you produce the crude into the pipeline, at the termination point, less than 10% got there, because there were too many infractions along the way. That is no longer the case. I'm sure you must have heard the NNPC management team always saying that if you put crude now, you get 100% at the terminal. That wasn't the case, you know, a few years ago. That was one of the reasons why we were not doing higher volumes at that time. Nigeria's capacity is not just about these 1.7 million barrels. We can comfortably do 2.5 million barrels per day or more, even without any significant new investment, we can do that comfortably. One of the reasons why, even as I said today, we're doing only about 1.7 million barrels is because when Shell was divesting and Renaissance was buying over, some of the wells were shut. So, there were so many, almost 500 wells, that were shut down. Today, they are doing the programme of re-entering those wells. Renaissance, since they took over a few months ago, is

already doing over 60,000 barrels a day. Seplat also took over assets. And even within the Seplat assets, we have almost 500 wells that are shut down. Now they also have a programme of re-entering those wells. So, I believe that going forward, the numbers will be increasing. Although there will be routine maintenance where they have to shut down some pipelines for maintenance; that could happen.

But the reason why you see some of this is because so much work has been done to secure pipelines. NNPC is also giving a contract now to change some of the pipelines so that we could have solid pipelines to be able to transport our crude. Before now, part of the problem was that the pipelines had already expired. Most of the pipelines have been there for 60–70 years, their lifespan is gone, but we're managing them. Since we were confronted with the issue of pipeline vandalism, there's a bold step now to change some of those pipelines with a view to restoring the integrity of those pipelines. So, the reason why you see this is, one: there's a lot more investment, because for you to increase production, you must continue to invest. If you have a house and you don't maintain it, the house will be dilapidated before you know it. So, you must maintain and maintenance costs money, that is exactly what is going on. So, I believe that the 1.7–1.8 million barrels we're doing today is not where we should be, but it's certainly better than where we came from.

When I became minister, I remember we were doing about one million barrels, but today we're doing about 1.7 million barrels, 1.8 million barrels. There's also a significant opportunity for us to grow these numbers with the number of rigs that have been deployed now, with the new investments that are taking place in the industry. You're also aware that, following the recent bid round, we're also expecting some deep-water exploration and that will also add a lot to our barrel account. So, 1.7 million is still below what we expect based on what we budgeted for in 2025, still below that but we believe that we are getting towards there.

**President Bola Tinubu projects that oil production should hit 2.06 million barrels per day by 2025. Yet the OPEC quota is 1.5 million barrels (excluding condensates). Do you think the time is right for Nigeria's quota to be reviewed upwards?**

The 1.7 million barrels we are producing today includes condensate. Condensate is not counted in OPEC. Condensate is actually a higher quality of crude that even sells for a higher price than the conventional crude. So, if we do 1.5 million barrels of crude and we even do a million barrels of condensate, we are not violating the

OPEC quota.

However, the OPEC quota will be subject to review from time to time. But I believe by November, when we go for our annual meeting, we'll certainly be making a case for a higher quota for Nigeria.

When I became minister, the OPEC quota then for Nigeria was 1.760 million barrels a day and the agreement

was that whatever quantity we produce as at the date of that OPEC meeting would form our quota.

We were doing less than 1.5 million barrels and so we had to fight to even get to 1.5 million barrels. Assuming we were doing 1.8 or 1.9 million barrels, then our quota would have been 1.9mbpd. When you belong to a reputable organisation, you have to keep to agreements.

So, we have to keep agreements and that is why our quota was pegged at 1.5mbpd. But it's subject to review from time to time and I believe that there's no better time

than now for us to make a strong case for Nigeria's quota to be reviewed to 2 million and above. And because we have the capacity, we're also going to show that we have capacity.

Right now, there is something going on to assess our capacity and that assessment is currently going on. And we believe that we will show the world that we have the capacity to produce more than 2 million barrels.

You also agree with me that we have a huge domestic obligation to supply crude to refineries locally and it's something that's provided for in the PIA. The PIA says that we have a domestic crude supply obligation, which we have to meet by only increasing the barrels. Most of these barrels you see are already committed. Before this government came, we had forward sales. So, these barrels you see are already committed.

So, it's when we increase our barrels per day that we will be able to meet both pre-existing obligations and then new obligations that are domestic or international. So, there's no problem at all.

**Last year, President Bola Tinubu signed executive orders to reduce the cost of oil production and drive investments into the country. How have these orders changed the game?**

Our cost of production is higher than the global average, but we're also bringing it down. Cost of production is bound to be high depending on the circumstances. But today, we have taken steps to ensure that the cost of production is made competitive and the executive orders have been very helpful in ensuring that we take certain steps that will reduce the cost of per-barrel production.

Saudi Arabia is doing about \$8 per barrel. I mean, some of the things that they do there are not available here.

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Circumstances here are different. But we definitely will get there. The global average is perhaps \$12, but ours is way above that. But that doesn't mean that we are not taking steps. So, having identified the problem, we are taking steps to ensure that we address that problem.

**Last year, there was a raft of divestment decisions by the oil majors including Shell and Mobil which saw them selling off their onshore assets to local players. How has the journey been so far? Are our indigenous producers living up to the billing?**

Yes, the indigenous producers have made Nigeria proud. Renaissance has already increased over 60,000 barrels a day to the level of production that Shell was at by the time they took over. Seplat, too, has added maybe about 40,000 barrels a day to the volumes that they took over from ExxonMobil.

Nigeria is not in short supply of human capacity. A lot of those people who were working for Shell and

ExxonMobil are Nigerians who also have the same knowledge that the expatriates had when they were here. And today, Renaissance and Seplat are companies that are employing expatriates as well. There are white people working for those companies. These are indigenous companies, but they have a better way of dealing with our local communities.

And so, we believe that the divestment wasn't a problem at all. It's actually a blessing. It has come with a challenge for local companies to play on a bigger scale and all over the world, people were thinking that the companies were leaving. None of those companies actually left Nigeria. Shell is still in Nigeria.

I'm sure you heard about the Bonga North \$5 billion investment. We have Bonga South that is also coming. We also have other investments that are coming from Shell. So, they are not leaving. ExxonMobil, too, didn't leave Nigeria. All of them just sold off their onshore assets and then they were moving to deep offshore. I know that





ExxonMobil, their assets were offshore, but I mean, they are moving deeper into the sea and that is where they are. So, none of them actually left Nigeria. But the local players who took over are doing a good job.

**NUPRC have overseen the signing of AFRIPERF charter which unites African regulators under one voice. Do you see this forum becoming a strong advocate for energy access and is AFRIPERF a step in the right direction for Africa's energy future?**

Yes, absolutely. In fact, I've always contended wherever I go that oil and gas will still be the dominant source of energy globally for the foreseeable future. I have the opportunity to go around the world and anywhere I go, including the recent OPEC seminar, where about 27 ministers from different countries attended, the consensus is that oil will still account for between 50 to 54% of the global energy mix.

So, we can't abandon oil and gas in a hurry. The African market alone is huge. If you look at the data available, what Africa even imported from the rest of the world, in terms of hydrocarbon imports, was over \$100 billion. And that was why, recently, I launched the West Africa Reference Market, where NMDPRA came together with S&P Global to come up with that framework so that we will be able to control the market within the West Africa sub-region and then expand to the entire continent.

Most of the energy consumed here in Africa is refined abroad. You export your raw crude, it's refined outside the continent and brought back to sell to you in Lome. That trans-shipment port in Lome is basically where products from other parts of the world are brought to Africa. If you can spend \$120 billion on importing hydrocarbons and we make Nigeria a refining hub for the Gulf of Guinea, it will supply the entire continent. And that's what we're targeting. We're only targeting part of that market. That's why efforts have been made to ensure

that we solve our refining problems as a country and I believe that Nigerians and the rest of Africa should speak in one voice about this issue of energy transition.

I've always contended that if we truly want to catch up with the rest of the world, we have to industrialise and you can't industrialise without electricity and without power. We contribute how many per cent to global warming? People are mistaking the Paris Agreement to be the abandonment of some sources of energy. The Paris Agreement was basically to reduce CO2 emissions and the whole of the African continent contributes only about three per cent. The UK contributes about 4.8%. But the campaign is targeted more at Africa. And I've always said that we're not against the energy transition. We're not against energy mix. But we have oil and gas, where significant investments have already been made. If you want to go into renewables, you need money to buy the solar panels.

We don't produce solar panels. We don't have factories that produce solar panels. At least we have oil companies producing crude. We have refineries that can refine the crude and produce not only the different types of oil, but also petrochemical products. So, we need the money to finance our governments, we need money to finance our critical infrastructure projects and so we are not all going to leave fossil fuel. Anywhere I go, I've told people that, look, energy transition may mean different things to different people, but for us, we must have energy first before you talk about transition.

Right now, we don't have it. Our first objective is to use the hydrocarbon resources we have in abundance in Africa, raise the funding we need and then finance the energy mix. We have abundant potential for solar, hydro, wind, we have all. But those technologies are all manufactured in Europe. They want you to abandon it. And like I said in Ghana, we can't borrow to finance our energy requirements. ■

# MILESTONES IN MOTION: A CHRONICLE OF NUPRC'S TRANSFORMATIVE ACHIEVEMENTS

- Lekan Fatodu -



In the dynamic theatre of Nigeria's oil and gas sector, few institutions have redefined the narrative of regulatory excellence as profoundly as the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC). Born from the crucible of reform and necessity, the Commission emerged in 2021 following the enactment of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA), a landmark legislation that sought to recalibrate the governance, fiscal and administrative architecture of Nigeria's petroleum industry. Since its inception, NUPRC has not merely occupied a regulatory space; it has orchestrated a symphony of transformation, innovation and strategic foresight that continues to reverberate across the upstream landscape.

At the heart of this metamorphosis stands Engr. Gbenga Komolafe, the Commission Chief Executive (CCE), whose leadership has been both visionary and unrelenting. Under his stewardship, NUPRC has evolved from a nascent regulator into a formidable institution, one that champions transparency, efficiency and investor confidence. The journey has been marked by bold reforms, decisive interventions and a relentless pursuit of excellence. This chronicle captures the milestones in motion, the transformative achievements that have redefined Nigeria's upstream petroleum sector and positioned NUPRC as a beacon of regulatory innovation.

One of the most compelling chapters in NUPRC's



story is its audacious campaign against crude oil theft, a scourge that had long undermined Nigeria's economic potential and global credibility. For years, the nation bled revenue as illicit siphoning of crude oil reached alarming levels, peaking at over 200,000 barrels per day. The implications were dire: dwindling production, eroded investor confidence and a tarnished reputation on the global energy stage. But NUPRC, under Komolafe's strategic direction, mounted a multi-pronged offensive that blended kinetic and non-kinetic strategies. Military operations were complemented by technological surveillance, policy reforms and community engagement. The result was nothing short of phenomenal. Oil theft plummeted to an all-time low of 5,000 barrels per day

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**AT THE HEART OF THIS METAMORPHOSIS STANDS ENGR. GBENGA KOMOLAFE, THE COMMISSION CHIEF EXECUTIVE (CCE), WHOSE LEADERSHIP HAS BEEN BOTH VISIONARY AND UNRELENTING**

and Nigeria's crude oil production rebounded from a dismal 1.1 million barrels per day in 2022 to an impressive 1.7 million barrels per day.

This turnaround was not merely a statistical triumph; it was a testament to NUPRC's capacity to galvanise stakeholders, deploy innovation and enforce accountability. The Commission's approach was holistic, recognising that sustainable reform required more than enforcement; it demanded trust, collaboration and systemic recalibration. By institutionalising reforms in hydrocarbon resource management and demonstrating fiscal discipline, NUPRC restored investor confidence and laid the groundwork for long-term growth.

Another milestone that underscores NUPRC's transformative ethos is the launch of the Project

1 Million Barrels of Oil Per Day (1MMBOPD) initiative. Unveiled during the Commission's third anniversary celebration in October 2024, the initiative represents a bold ambition to ramp up production and meet the presidential target for energy security and economic resilience. The event, themed "NUPRC@3: Transformation, Innovation and Excellence," was more than a ceremonial gathering, it was a declaration of intent, a reaffirmation of the Commission's commitment to national development. President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, represented by the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Senator George Akume, lauded the initiative as critical to Nigeria's future. Ministers of Petroleum Resources (Oil and Gas), Senator Heineken Lokpobiri and Dr.

Ekperikpe Ekpo, echoed this sentiment, urging industry players to take ownership of the project and drive its actualisation.

The 1MMBOPD initiative is emblematic of NUPRC's strategic pivot towards production optimisation. It seeks to unlock alternative funding mechanisms, streamline regulatory processes and foster collaboration among



## THE FDPS SPAN DIVERSE TERRAINS AND OPERATIONAL CONTEXTS, SIGNALING A RENEWED CONFIDENCE IN NIGERIA'S REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCE POTENTIAL

stakeholders. But beyond its operational goals, the initiative reflects a deeper philosophy, one that views regulation not as a constraint but as a catalyst for innovation and growth. Komolafe's optimism, expressed during the launch, was grounded in the Commission's track record: the development of 25 priority regulations (17 of which have been gazetted), the strengthening of investor confidence and the expansion of Nigeria's oil and gas reserves to 37.5 billion barrels of oil and 209.26 trillion cubic feet of gas.

Indeed, NUPRC's regulatory reforms have been instrumental in attracting investment and catalysing field development. At the Africa Oil Week held in Accra, Ghana, Komolafe announced that the Commission's competitive reform agenda had delivered 28 Field Development Plans (FDPs) worth \$18.2 billion in investment commitments. This achievement is not merely quantitative; it reflects a qualitative shift in how Nigeria's upstream sector is perceived and engaged. The FDPs span diverse terrains and operational contexts, signaling a renewed confidence in Nigeria's regulatory environment and resource potential.

Central to this success is NUPRC's emphasis on data-driven decision-making and digital transformation. The Commission has invested in cutting-edge technologies to enhance surveillance, streamline licensing and improve operational transparency. From automated reporting systems to real-time monitoring platforms, NUPRC is leveraging digital tools to create a smarter, more responsive regulatory ecosystem. This digital pivot is not only enhancing efficiency but also democratising access to information, empowering stakeholders with the insights needed to make informed decisions.

Moreover, NUPRC's commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainability has been unwavering. Recognising the global shift towards energy

transition, the Commission has integrated environmental considerations into its regulatory framework. It has championed gas commercialisation, flaring reduction and carbon footprint minimisation. These efforts align with Nigeria's climate commitments and position the upstream sector as a responsible player in the global energy dialogue. By balancing economic imperatives with environmental responsibilities, NUPRC is charting a path towards sustainable development.

The Commission's stakeholder engagement strategy has also been pivotal. From host communities to international investors, NUPRC has cultivated relationships built on trust, transparency and mutual respect. It has facilitated dialogues, resolved disputes and fostered partnerships that transcend transactional interactions. This relational approach has not only enhanced compliance but also nurtured a culture of shared ownership and collective progress.

As NUPRC looks to the future, its trajectory is defined by ambition and adaptability. The challenges ahead, geopolitical uncertainties, market volatility and technological disruptions, are formidable. But the Commission's foundation is robust, its vision clear and its leadership resolute. Komolafe's stewardship continues to inspire confidence, galvanise action and drive innovation. His legacy is not merely institutional; it is transformational, a blueprint for regulatory excellence in a complex and evolving sector.

In reflecting on NUPRC's journey, one is struck by the interplay of vision, strategy and execution. The Commission has not only responded to challenges; it has anticipated them, shaped them and turned them into opportunities. Its milestones are not isolated events but interconnected chapters in a larger narrative of national renewal. From combating oil theft to launching ambitious production initiatives, from attracting investment to championing sustainability, NUPRC has demonstrated that regulation, when done right, can be a powerful engine of progress.

This chronicle is more than a retrospective; it is a celebration of possibility. It affirms that with the right leadership, the right policies and the right partnerships, transformation is not a distant dream but a present reality. NUPRC's achievements are a testament to what is possible when institutions are empowered, stakeholders are engaged and excellence is pursued with purpose.

As Nigeria navigates the complexities of the global energy landscape, the role of NUPRC will remain pivotal. Its milestones in motion are not just markers of past success but signposts for future innovation. The Commission's journey is far from over; it is a dynamic continuum of impact, resilience and reinvention. And in that journey, the story of Nigeria's upstream sector is being rewritten, one transformative achievement at a time.. ■

## Interview

# OUR MILESTONES, CHALLENGES SO FAR - ENGINEER KOMOLAFE

- Mahmud Yakubu and Philip Ukpe -

Four years ago, the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) set in motion one of the most ambitious reforms in Nigeria's energy sector. Out of it emerged the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC), tasked with reinventing the country's upstream oil and gas governance.



Gbenga Komolafe, an engineer and lawyer with 35 years of experience in the oil and gas sector, was appointed as the pioneer Commission Chief Executive, leading the transition from the defunct Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) to the NUPRC. Through Engineer Komolafe's transformative, pragmatic and visionary leadership, the NUPRC has overseen sweeping regulatory changes in just four short years which have increased oil production, reduced gas flare, curbed crude theft to historic lows and attracted fresh investments, repositioning Nigeria to the centre of global conversations once more.

In the Commission's journey, its milestones and the road ahead.

**As the NUPRC marks its fourth anniversary since its establishment under the PIA, how would you assess the Commission's journey so far? Could you share key milestones, the challenges encountered and how you effectively navigated the transition from the former DPR to becoming the dedicated upstream regulator?**

The journey has been both historic and transformative and I say that with deep conviction. When the Petroleum Industry Act was finally passed in 2021, after almost two decades of waiting, it was clear to us that we couldn't just change the name from DPR to NUPRC and carry on as before. It wasn't cosmetic; it meant rebuilding the regulator's DNA from the ground up to reflect the spirit and ambitions of the PIA. That called for new governance structures, new processes and most importantly, a new culture rooted in transparency, efficiency and accountability. Of course, the early days were challenging. Investor confidence had been badly shaken after years of policy uncertainty. There was scepticism about whether the new law could really change the game or not. And internally, we had to reorient our staff, moving from the old way of doing things to a modern, technology-driven regulatory model. We tackled those challenges in three deliberate ways. First, we engaged widely with stakeholders, international oil companies, indigenous players, host communities, even civil society, to build trust and secure buy-in. Second, we embraced digitalisation, deploying systems that drive transparency, efficiency and ease of doing business. And third, we invested in our people, building a culture of professionalism and accountability that matches global best practice.

It hasn't been an easy road, but the results speak loudly. In just four years, we've developed and gazetted 19 landmark regulations, providing clarity where there was once opacity and certainty where there was hesitation. With the support of other stakeholders, we cut crude oil losses drastically. We've run licensing rounds that many observers have described as the most transparent in Nigeria's history. And, importantly, we've elevated

Nigeria's voice in global energy transition debates, not as an outlier, but as a respected, pragmatic voice for a just transition.

Today, the NUPRC is not just a regulator in name. It is an institution that is trusted at home and respected abroad, seen as a reference point for investor confidence, regulatory clarity and forward-looking energy governance in Africa. But for us, this is only the foundation. The real task is to keep building, to ensure Nigeria's upstream sector remains strong, competitive and relevant in a rapidly changing global energy landscape.

**You stated that 19 new regulations have been gazetted in just four years. How have they boosted investor confidence and what impact are they having on transparency and revenue growth for the country?**

Regulations are the lifeblood of any modern oil and gas industry. But I must stress that for us at the NUPRC, it's not just about writing rules and publishing them in the Gazette. It's about creating frameworks that the industry trusts, understands and can actually work with. That's why every single one of the 19 regulations we've rolled out in the last four years was a product of wide consultation with stakeholders. We sat with all our stakeholders including civil society and of course host communities. That process of engagement was critical. It gave the industry confidence that their voices were being heard and their concerns reflected.

Now, let me give you some examples of impact. The Host Community Development Regulations provided the clarity operators had been waiting for on how the Host Community Development Trust Fund should be structured and managed. That has reduced tension between companies and host communities, created more harmony and helped secure assets on the ground. Then we introduced the Acreage Management Regulations, which finally set transparent rules around how oil blocks are allocated, worked and where necessary, relinquished. That has brought discipline into the system, reduced speculation and encouraged serious investors to step forward.

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Another big one is the Gas Flaring, Venting and Methane Emissions Reduction Regulations. With these, what was once wasted gas is now being turned into value; powering homes, industries and generating revenue. This is feeding directly into our Gas Flare Commercialisation Programme, targeted at converting flare sites into opportunities for electricity, LPG and mini-LNG. Beyond the economics, it also helps Nigeria present a cleaner footprint to the global community, which is increasingly important for market access.

On the fiscal side, the regulations we've issued under the PIA have been a game-changer. They give absolute lucidity on royalties and taxes, removing the grey areas that discouraged investors in the past. The proof is in the results: we've seen stronger investor participation in licensing rounds, renewed appetite from indigenous and international players and fresh capital coming into upstream projects. This is translating into better compliance, fewer leakages and stronger revenues for the Federation.

So, when you put it all together, the story is clear: the 19 regulations have improved transparency, built investor confidence, boosted production and strengthened revenues. And it all goes back to the way we developed them: through due consultation and with a clear vision for the sector's future.

Some IOCs have been migrating to deep offshore and divesting some of their assets to indigenous players. Have these indigenous players lived up to the billing?

You know, the story of Nigeria's indigenous players is really one of resilience and ambition. When the International Oil Companies (IOCs) began divesting, a lot of people saw it as a sign of decline. But in reality, it was simply portfolio rationalisation as the majors shifting focus to deepwater and other global assets. For Nigeria, that opened up an entirely new chapter. Our homegrown independents are now stepping into spaces once dominated by the majors and they're doing so with impressive results.

Take First E&P, for example. They've shown that Nigerian companies can successfully push offshore projects all the way to production. Or look at Seplat Energy: they've not only held their ground but are positioning themselves as a leading integrated energy company, growing both their oil and gas footprint. Waltersmith Petroman is another standout: from operating the Ibigwe field to investing in modular refining, they've turned local ambition into concrete achievements. Then you have ND Western and Shoreline Natural Resources, who've taken over assets from IOCs and kept production stable, while building strong relationships with host communities. What these examples tell us is that Nigerian independents aren't just keeping production alive on divested assets; in many cases, they're actually ramping it up. They're unlocking marginal fields once thought uneconomic, using innovative drilling, leaner project models and quick decision-making that larger players often can't match. It's a refreshing shift. It hasn't all been smooth sailing though.

Access to capital is still a big challenge, financing costs are high and advanced technology can be a hurdle. But that's where we as a regulator have stepped in, through investment roadshows that connect these firms with financiers, through the flexible fiscal terms introduced by the PIA and through technical support that helps de-risk projects. Our job is to make sure indigenous companies have the confidence and tools to attract capital, while also holding them to the highest standards of safety, efficiency and environmental care. At the end of the day, their success isn't just about corporate wins. It's about building local capacity, strengthening Nigeria's energy security and ensuring that the wealth from our resources creates lasting national value. That's why I often say: the rise of our indigenous players is not just good for them; it's a strategic victory for Nigeria.

**When the NUPRC was established in 2021, Nigeria's daily crude oil losses stood at 102,000 bpd but today, the losses have been contained at 9,600 bpd. How was the success achieved and what is the ultimate target of the Commission with regard to crude losses?**

This is one of the achievements we're most proud of at the NUPRC. When we came on board, crude theft had almost been accepted as "business as usual." It was draining national revenue, shaking investor confidence and damaging Nigeria's reputation in the global energy market. We knew we couldn't allow that to continue; so, we tackled it head-on, using both kinetic and non-kinetic approaches. On the kinetic front, we worked much more closely with security agencies. That meant better-coordinated patrols, real-time intelligence sharing and even direct engagement with local communities in the Niger Delta. Together, we were able to identify illegal tapping points, dismantle makeshift refineries and stop stolen crude before it ever left Nigerian shores. Crucially, this wasn't just a security effort; it was backed up by strong regulatory oversight, ensuring operators and government forces worked side by side to keep vital infrastructure safe. On the non-kinetic side, we made deep structural changes. We approved 39 new alternative crude evacuation routes, which has been a real game-changer. For years, operators had no choice but to rely on a handful of pipelines that were constant targets for sabotage and theft. By diversifying into trucks and barges, floating storage and alternative pipelines, we reduced the industry's exposure, improved uptime for producers and gave investors confidence that their crude would actually reach the market. The results speak for themselves. Back in 2021, Nigeria was losing about 102,000 barrels per day to theft and losses. Today, we've brought that figure down to just 9,600 barrels per day. That's not just a statistic; it's a fundamental shift in how Nigeria protects and accounts for its resources.

Of course, we're not declaring victory yet. Our ultimate target is simple: zero tolerance. We want to get to a point where every barrel produced in Nigeria is fully

tracked, fully accounted for and delivering full value to the country and fairness to investors. That's the standard we're driving toward; and we won't rest until we get there. In this regard, we have launched a comprehensive metering audit programme and will be rolling out advanced metering systems across production facilities to close long-standing loopholes and to verify and upgrade measurement systems. That way, production data will no longer be just what's reported, but what can be independently verified. At the same time, we introduced the Advanced Cargo Declaration Regime; requiring every cargo to be declared, tracked and matched against production. That will eliminate room for under-declaration or diversion.

The last bid round was described as the most transparent in Nigeria's history. What plans do you have to make the next one even more transparent and effective?

Transparency is not a one-off achievement; it is a culture we are institutionalising. In the last bid round, we leveraged technology to ensure transparent disclosure of processes, criteria and results. For the next round, we intend to go even further: deploy technology systems for data integrity, expand access to upstream data for all bidders and create stronger feedback mechanisms for stakeholders. Our goal is simple: every participant, whether local or international, must walk away with absolute confidence that the process was fair, competitive and transparent.

### **How central is the NUPRC's launch of the Decarbonisation Framework and Gas Flare Commercialisation Programme to balancing Nigeria's energy transition with oil revenue needs?**

Both initiatives are really at the very centre of Nigeria's pragmatic energy transition. Let's be clear: we are not in denial about climate change; far from it. What we are doing is approaching the transition in a way that fits our realities as a developing, resource-rich country. That's why the Decarbonisation Framework is such a milestone. It tells the world and more importantly, the investment community, that Nigeria is serious about emissions reduction. We are embedding global best practices into our upstream sector, setting measurable targets and creating rules that are enforceable. But the difference is that we are doing it in a way that recognises our national circumstances. We cannot simply cut and paste models from Europe or North America, where the energy mix and economic base are very different. Instead, we are showing that we can align with global climate goals while still protecting jobs, revenue and energy security at home.

What is even more compelling are the opportunities unlocked by the upstream decarbonisation blueprint driven by the NUPRC, which positions service providers at the centre of value creation. This is not just about cutting emissions; it's about creating new lines of business and innovation. From greenhouse gas advisory and emissions inventory accounting to Methane Leak Detection and Repair (LDAR), carbon capture and storage solutions

and ICT-enabled Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) systems, the scope for participation is vast. Added to this are frameworks that facilitate access to global carbon markets, ensuring that investors are not only engaging in profitable ventures but also contributing directly to sustainability outcomes. For local and international players alike, this is a chance to be part of building an entirely new ecosystem around cleaner upstream operations.

Now, the Gas Flare Commercialisation Programme is where this philosophy comes alive in very practical terms. Gas flaring has been a stain on our industry for decades: not just environmentally, but also economically. Nigeria has one of the world's largest reserves of natural gas, yet we were literally burning billions of cubic feet into the sky. That was wasted value and frankly, an environmental liability. What we have done is flip that around. Under the Nigeria Gas Flare Commercialisation Programme, driven by NUPRC, over 100 flare sites have been opened up for commercialisation and 49 of the most impactful sites were awarded to third parties. The idea is simple: turn what was once pollution into productive use. So instead of wasting gas, the programme seeks to enable us to harness it to produce LPG for households, CNG for transport, mini-LNG for industry and electricity for homes and businesses. The global context is also important here. According to the World Bank, flaring reduction is one of the fastest ways to cut greenhouse gas emissions in the oil sector. Countries like Norway achieved near-zero flaring decades ago by turning their gas into a resource. Nigeria is now moving in that same direction, but in a way that also tackles our energy poverty challenge. Remember, millions of Nigerians still lack access to electricity. So, by commercialising flare gas, we are not only cutting emissions, we are also improving energy access, boosting industrial growth and creating jobs. When you put both initiatives side by side, the bigger message becomes clear: Nigeria can decarbonise without destabilising its economy. Oil and gas revenues will continue to fund our development, but the way we produce and use those hydrocarbons is becoming cleaner and smarter. That's what we mean when we talk about a just and pragmatic transition. It's not about abandoning hydrocarbons overnight; it's about producing them responsibly, reducing their carbon footprint and steadily preparing the country for a lower-carbon future.

### **In four years, Nigeria's output has moved closer to the 2 million barrels per day mark through 'Project One Million Barrels Per Day.' Yet OPEC quota remains a limiting factor. How can Nigeria increase its domestic crude supply within the OPEC limitation?**

That's a very important question, because there's often a misconception that OPEC quotas only apply to crude meant for export. In reality, the quota covers total crude production (whether the barrels are going abroad or being sent to domestic refineries). That means Nigeria can't simply pump more oil for local use without

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it counting toward the quota.

So, the real strategy has to be two-fold. First, we must continue engaging with OPEC in a constructive way. Our position has to be that as our domestic refining capacity grows, with facilities like Dangote and modular refineries coming onstream, the country needs room to balance domestic demand with its traditional export obligations. That requires proactive diplomacy, making the case that Nigeria's refining expansion is not aimed at flooding the export market, but at achieving energy security, reducing product imports and stabilising our economy.

Second, even within the quota, we can maximise value by focusing on efficiency and optimisation. This means increasing reliability of production, reducing downtime, cutting losses from theft and vandalism and ensuring that every barrel produced delivers maximum revenue. At the same time, we should channel more investment into gas and condensates, which do not fall under OPEC quotas, to diversify the hydrocarbon base and grow revenues without breaching limits.

Longer term, our best play is to align production growth targets with OPEC's periodic quota reviews. As we demonstrate consistent discipline, reduced losses and stronger domestic refining capacity, Nigeria will be in a stronger position to argue for a higher baseline quota allocation. And the NUPRC, as the technical regulator, will be central in providing the data and credibility to back up that argument.

Beyond OPEC restraints, the smart play is to focus on where we can still create value, even within that cap. One strategy is to keep pushing for more domestic refining. The Dangote Refinery, once fully up and running, is a game-changer in this respect. Add to that the modular refineries springing up across the country and you can see how Nigeria can turn more of its crude into finished products at home. The benefits are obvious: we save on costly imports, create jobs and capture more value from every barrel we produce. At the same time, we will continue to play our vital role in ensuring that local refineries actually get consistent, reliable feedstock. That stability will encourage further investment, both in large-scale projects and in smaller facilities that can quickly plug supply gaps. The more of our crude we process locally, the more wealth we keep within our borders and the more resilient our energy security becomes.

### Apart from Project 1 Million Barrels, what further steps are being taken to achieve and sustain the 3 million barrels per day production target?

Achieving 3 million barrels per day is indeed an ambitious target, but it is by no means a pipe dream: it is within our reach. Project One Million gave us a strong foundation, but we are not stopping there. Our strategy goes beyond incremental gains; it is about unlocking new frontiers, maximising existing assets and fast-tracking projects that can bring real barrels into the market.

First, we are pushing aggressively into the frontier basins with massive exploration and data acquisition.

Nigeria has enormous untapped potential in these areas and with advanced seismic data acquisition and carefully structured licensing opportunities, we are opening them up to both local and international investors. That means more exploration, more discoveries and ultimately, more production.

Second, we are making it attractive for operators to deploy improved oil recovery (IOR) technologies in mature fields, as well as vigorously pursuing field life extension projects. Many of our producing assets still have significant volumes locked underground. With the right incentives and the right technology, we can extend the productive life of these fields and extract barrels that would otherwise remain stranded. This is low-hanging fruit that we cannot afford to ignore.

Third, we are promoting aggressive deepwater development using nodal and cluster development strategy as well as fast-tracking gas development projects, including those with associated oil and high condensate yields. By aligning our gas monetisation drive with oil production, we are essentially hitting two birds with one stone, boosting domestic energy security while also raising our crude output.

At the same time, we recognise that speed is everything in this industry. That is why we have streamlined our regulatory processes, cut down approval times and tackled bottlenecks that used to delay projects for years. Our goal is to ensure that once discoveries are made, they move to first oil in record time.

When you put all of this together (frontier exploration, enhanced recovery, aggressive deepwater development, gas-linked oil projects and faster regulatory turnaround) you begin to see a clear path to 3 million barrels per day. It's not just a dream, it's a roadmap. And with the resilience of our industry and the confidence of investors, I am convinced Nigeria will get there.

### You recently emerged interim chairman of the African Petroleum Regulators Forum (AFeIPERF). How does this benefit Nigeria and Africa at large?

This is a proud moment for Nigeria and for Africa. As interim chairman of AFeIPERF, Nigeria is now in a position to shape continental regulatory standards, foster cross-border collaboration and champion Africa's collective interests on the global stage. For Nigeria, it means greater influence in policy conversations that directly affect our upstream sector. For Africa as a whole, it means speaking with a stronger, unified voice in global energy debates, especially around just transition, investment and market access. It is an opportunity to ensure that Africa's rich hydrocarbon resources are developed responsibly, competitively and in ways that uplift our economies and people. ■

## interview

# STRONGER REGULATIONS WILL BOOST GAS-DRIVEN ECONOMY - MINISTER EKPO

- Anna Mustapha -



Rt. Hon Ekperikpe Ekpo (PhD) is the Honourable Minister of State Petroleum Resources (Gas), a position he has held for over two years. In this interview with Upstream Gaze, he speaks about the challenges and successes recorded in the sector, so far.

**Hon. Minister, how would you assess the NUPRC's performance in driving transparency, accountability and efficiency in the upstream sector since its establishment under the PIA in 2021?**

Since the NUPRC was set up under the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) 2021, it has made impressive progress in enhancing transparency, accountability and efficiency in the upstream sector. The Commission has rolled out essential reforms that have not only simplified contracting processes but also tackled significant fiscal challenges. This has led to over \$16 billion in

investment commitments expected between 2023 and 2025. Moreover, the launch of the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Measurement Regulations in 2023 and the recently concluded metering audit of upstream facilities has played a key role in addressing issues like crude oil theft, ensuring fair and transparent transactions throughout the industry. These initiatives have contributed to a notable recovery in oil production, averaging 1.71 million barrels per day, showcasing the positive effects of NUPRC's regulatory framework.

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**NIGERIA GAS MASTER PLAN  
IS IN ACTION, LAYING OUT  
STRATEGIC PATHWAYS  
FOR DEVELOPING  
INFRASTRUCTURE AND  
INVESTING IN GAS-TO-  
POWER AND OTHER  
RELATED SECTORS**

**The PIA 2021 envisioned a more investor-friendly upstream environment. What would you highlight as the biggest achievements of NUPRC in attracting investments into oil and gas exploration and development since its inception?**

One of the significant achievements of the NUPRC has been the successful execution of the 2024 Licensing Round, which opened up 24 oil and gas assets to investors. This move has drawn in around \$16 billion in investments, positioning Nigeria as a competitive player in the market. Additionally, the commitment from industry giants like ExxonMobil, which is putting in about \$1.5 billion for deepwater exploration, underscores the growing investor confidence stemming from the regulatory reforms introduced under the PIA.

**Limited evacuation infrastructure remains a major bottleneck in the upstream gas sector. What concrete steps is the government taking to bridge the gas infrastructure gap?**

The Nigerian government is fully aware of the challenges it faces and has made infrastructure development a top priority. Some of the key initiatives underway include the Nigeria Gas Infrastructure Blueprint, which focuses on expanding and upgrading pipelines, compression facilities and LNG terminals. We're also promoting public-private



partnerships to speed up gas infrastructure projects. A notable example is the Ajaokuta-Kaduna-Kano (AKK) pipeline, which is set to transport an impressive 30 billion cubic meters of natural gas each year. This project aims to connect gas fields directly to domestic markets and export terminals, tackling logistical issues and unlocking the sector's true potential. By fostering partnerships and

exploring innovative financing solutions, we're working to close the infrastructure gap and ensure efficient gas transport to meet the country's rapidly growing domestic demand, which is expected to rise at a compound annual growth rate of 16.6% by 2030.

**With Nigeria's ambition to become a gas-powered economy through the 'Decade of Gas Initiative,' how is the government addressing regulatory and investment challenges facing the sector?**

In our quest to transform Nigeria into a gas-powered economy through the 'Decade of Gas Initiative,' the government is dedicated to creating an environment conducive to investments by reviewing and improving gas regulations. The Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) has introduced fiscal incentives such as tax holidays and exemptions to attract investors and financiers. To tackle regulatory hurdles, we're simplifying processes, setting up clear frameworks for gas pricing and commercialisation and enhancing transparency. Moreover, the Nigeria Gas Master Plan is in action, laying out strategic pathways for developing infrastructure and investing in gas-to-power and other related sectors.

**Hon. Minister, can you speak to the status of crucial projects like the AKK and Trans Saharan Gas Pipeline and how they will power the Decade of Gas?**

Certainly! We've seen some significant progress in key projects like the AKK pipeline, which is set to wrap up by the end of 2030. This project is crucial for improving Nigeria's gas supply system and driving our 'Decade of Gas' vision forward. It is designed to transport large volumes of gas, which will help power our homes and boost industrial growth across the country. Meanwhile, the Trans-Saharan Gas Pipeline, another significant regional project, is currently being evaluated, with feasibility studies in progress. These pipelines are essential

**however, infrastructural challenges remain. How is the government planning to speedily fill this gap?**

Recognising the shift towards cleaner fuel such as Compressed Natural Gas (CNG), the government is expediting efforts under the Presidential Compressed Natural Gas (Pi-CNG) project to enhance infrastructure and the decade of Gas for the availability of CNG. Plans are underway to increase the number of refuelling stations, thus supporting the transition of one million vehicles to CNG by 2027. This initiative is essential to meeting the growing demand for cleaner energy alternatives while solving existing infrastructural challenges.

**How would you assess the successes recorded by the NUPRC in the reduction of gas flares over the past four years?**

Over the last four years, the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) has made impressive progress in reducing gas flaring, primarily through the Nigerian Gas Flare Commercialisation Programme (NGFCP) and the zero routine flaring policy. As of July 2025, the gas flaring rate has dropped to 7.16%, down from 7.55% in 2024, showcasing effective management alongside a boost in gas production. The NGFCP has been quite successful, with contracts awarded to 42 companies and agreements made with 20 Frontline Awardees, paving the way for the commercialisation of flared gas. Additionally, the NUPRC has introduced strong regulatory measures aimed at tackling gas flaring, venting and methane emissions, promoting a structured approach to compliance. By fostering solid collaboration with stakeholders and rigorously enforcing these initiatives, the NUPRC is determined to achieve the national flare elimination target before 2030, highlighting the importance of environmental sustainability and the efficient use of gas resources in Nigeria.

**In what areas do you think the NUPRC needs to improve to bring in more investments?**

The NUPRC is making good progress while staying on course. However, to keep attracting investment, they need to improve regulatory clarity and operational efficiency. By simplifying the processes for permits and licenses, the NUPRC can boost investor confidence and encourage new capital inflows. Additionally, focusing on infrastructure development and tackling any potential

bottlenecks in the gas supply chain will be crucial for making the upstream sector more attractive to investors. These are the priorities of the present administration as encapsulated in the Renewed Hope Agenda framework for the Oil and Gas Industry.. ■

**THE NUPRC HAS INTRODUCED STRONG REGULATORY MEASURES AIMED AT TACKLING GAS FLARING, VENTING AND METHANE EMISSIONS, PROMOTING A STRUCTURED APPROACH TO COMPLIANCE**

to the Decade of Gas initiative; they will allow Nigeria to better capitalise on its gas resources, support local industries and tap into export markets, ultimately positioning Nigeria as a key player in the regional gas landscape.

**The government has made progress in adopting cleaner fuels like Compressed Natural Gas (CNG);**

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## Interview

# YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN HOST COMMUNITIES HAS REDUCED OIL THEFT - EC, HSEC

- Mahmud Yakubu and Philip Ukpe -

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Captain John Tonlagha is the Executive Commissioner, Health, Safety, Environment and Community (HSEC), one of the most critical departments in the NUPRC. He tells The Upstream Gaze how improved relations between communities and oil companies are affecting the upstream sector

**Four years into the establishment of the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC), how would you describe the evolution of its Health, Safety, Environment and Community (HSEC) oversight under the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA)? In what ways does this new regulatory framework differ from the approaches of the preceding era?**

Under the PIA, NUPRC's HSEC oversight has become more upstream-focused, comprehensive, structured and enforceable. Unlike the pre-PIA era of fragmented mandates, the Act gives the NUPRC a clear statutory authority to regulate, monitor and enforce HSE and Host Community obligations. The Commission has launched modern Upstream Safety and Environmental Regulations (yet to be gazetted), introduced digital data-driven oversight systems such as HostComply and strengthened enforcement powers. This shift has created a transparent, proactive and accountable regulatory culture compared to the more ad-hoc frameworks of the past.



## CUMULATIVE REMITTANCES BY SETTLORS STAND AT ₦122 BILLION AND \$169 MILLION, REPRESENTING THE STATUTORY 3% OPEX CONTRIBUTIONS

**What key strategies has the HSEC Department put in place to enforce safety standards and risk mitigation in upstream operations?**

The Department enforces a Safety Case/ALARP regime, requiring operators to prove that potential risks in their operations are reduced to As Low as Reasonably Practicable (ALARP). Key strategies include mandatory approvals (Safety Cases, HAZOP/HAZID/Bow-tie workshops, Pre-Startup Safety Reviews, decommissioning plans), strict incident reporting and audits of safety-critical equipment. Introducing the Offshore Safety Permits (OSP) for personnel accountability offshore, Radiation Safety Permits and accreditation of safety training centers further enhances compliance with both local and international safety regulations, codes, guidelines and standards. These strategies ensure risks are systematically identified, controlled and monitored across the lifecycle of upstream facilities.

**How does your department ensure quality assurance and control (QA/QC) in upstream activities, particularly in lab accreditation, environmental compliance monitoring and regulating oilfield chemicals?**

The Commission maintains an updated database of

accredited laboratories to ensure reliable testing and analysis. Operators are mandated to obtain permits for environmental waste discharges from their operations, monitor and record gaseous/fugitive emissions, register effluent/gaseous emission point sources and submit Environmental Compliance Monitoring (ECM) reports. For oilfield chemicals, the NUPRC requires certification after rigorous toxicity and microbial screening, with prohibitions or restrictions applied where constituent concentrations that can pose environmental risk is high. This integrated QA/QC framework assures credible data, safe chemical use and regulatory compliance.

**The PIA introduced Host Community Development Trusts (HCDTs). How many Trusts have been established and what remittances have been realised from Settlers so far?**

As of August 2025, over 207 applications had been received, and 151 had been incorporated with the Corporate Affairs Commission. Cumulative remittances by settlers stand at ₦122 billion and \$169 million, representing the statutory 3% OPEX contributions. This marks a landmark improvement in ensuring host communities benefit directly from upstream operations.

**What tangible impact has the HCDTs made on host communities through development projects?**

By August of 2025, Host Community Trusts had commenced 536 development projects across education, health, water supply, skills acquisition and other infrastructure. 32 fund managers have appointed to oversee 20% reserve fund, which generates income for the Trusts. These projects are already improving social services and creating economic opportunities within host communities. The host communities have also experienced relative peace and tranquility, as a significant number of their youth are gaining reasonable employment due to the exponential increase in the number of projects being established by these trusts. Furthermore, the employment of youths in these communities due to increasing number of projects deployed by the HCDT has unequivocally led to the significant reduction of crude oil theft, vandalism of infrastructures observed in recent times. This will ultimately lead to a more sustainable, eco-friendly environment for our host communities that will be devoid of contaminations.

**What measures have your department put in place to ensure transparency and accountability in HostCom project execution compared to the pre-PIA framework?**

The PIA requires clear governance structures for each Trust, including Boards of Trustees (BOT) and Management Committees and an Advisory Committee. The NUPRC enforces compliance through approval and monitoring of incorporations, pre-qualification of fund managers and periodic audits. Additionally, the introduction of the Annual HCDT Implementation clearance



permit has remained a tracking tool, mandating settlors to fulfill their HCDT obligations. The recently launched digital HostComply Portal is an additional tool which complements the HCDT Implementation clearance permit by monitoring remittances, project approvals, dispute resolutions and penalties. Together, these mechanisms ensure full traceability of funds and accountability in implementation, representing a far more structured and reliable system than what existed under the pre-PIA arrangements.

**What are the department's key achievements in embedding environmental and sustainability best practices across the upstream value chain?**

Major achievements include the enactment of Environmental Regulations (2022), Guideline for management of fugitive/methane and Greenhouse Gases in the Upstream Oil and Gas Operations in Nigeria, Petroleum Safety Regulations (2024) and Environmental Remediation Regulations (2024), which embed zero-discharge policies, waste controls and Environmental Remediation funds (ERF). In 2024 alone, the Commission accredited 83 labs, certified 134 oilfield chemicals, issued 183 effluent/discharge permits and approved multiple EIAs and ecosystem surveys. A dedicated Environmental Sustainability Goal & Carbon

Capture Utilisation & Storage unit (ESG CCSU) now drives greenhouse gas management, leak detection programmes and prepares the Upstream sector for a net-zero transition.

**Can you highlight the Environmental Remediation Unit's milestones in pollution control, including OSCP review/activation, spill documentation, cleanup and stakeholder engagement?**

The unit has institutionalised annual review and activation of Oil Spill Contingency Plans (OSCPs). Spills must be reported within 24 hours, Joint Investigation Visits initiated within 24 hours and Post-Impact Assessments completed within three months. All remediation methods require Commission approval to ensure global best practices. A dedicated Environmental Remediation Fund (ERF) now supports the cleanup of "mystery spills," where liability is unclear. Through these frameworks, coupled with regular stakeholder engagement, spill response and cleanup processes are more transparent and effective.

In summary: Under the PIA, the NUPRC has transitioned from fragmented oversight to a holistic, enforceable HSEC regime, delivering safer operations, stronger environmental safeguards and meaningful host community benefits. ■

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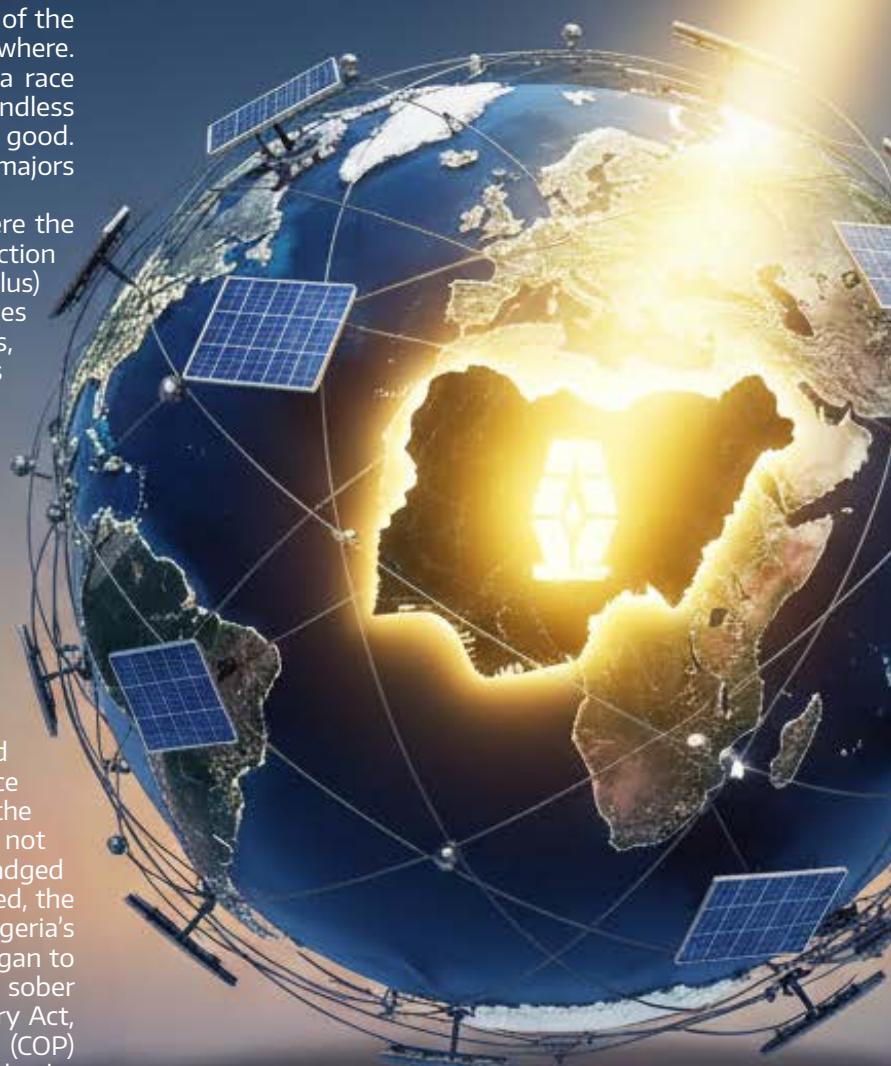
# FROM WASHINGTON TO BRUSSELS TO ABUJA: WHY NIGERIA CAN NO LONGER BE A FOOTNOTE IN THE ENERGY TRANSITION

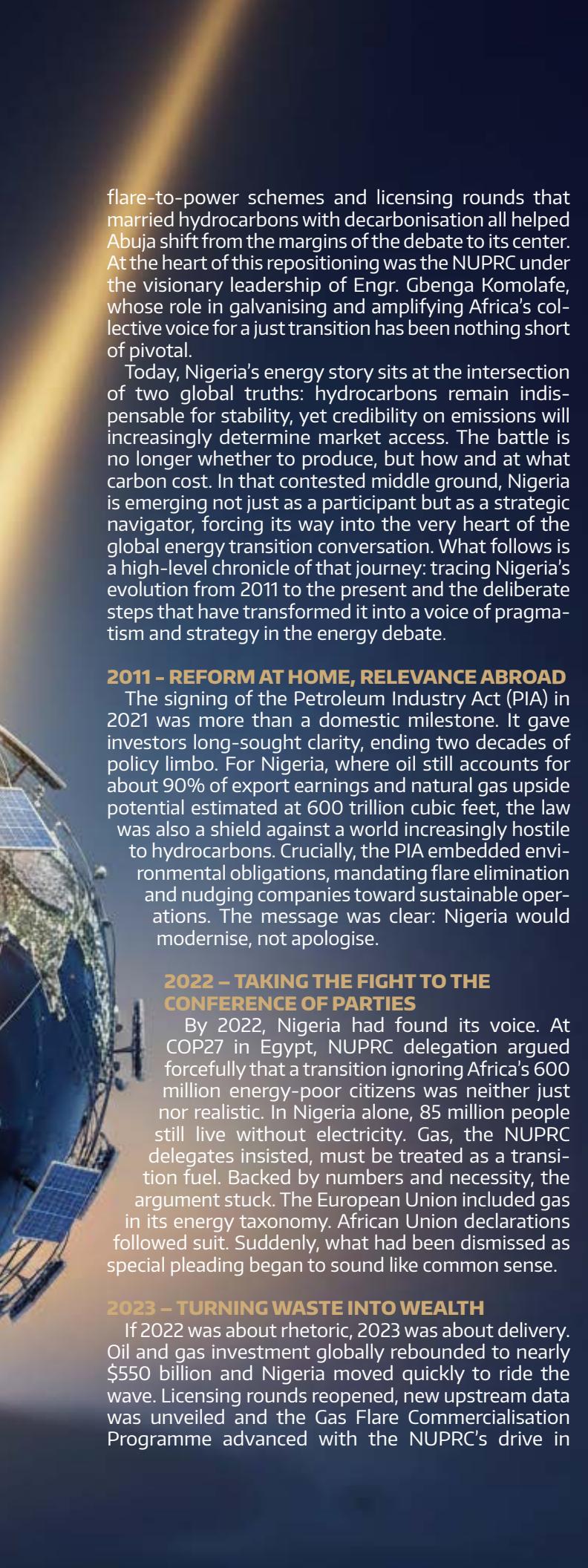
- Onwunyili Christian Chime, PhD -

**F**or much of the past decade, the story of the global energy transition was written elsewhere. The story was sold as a clean break: a race toward solar skylines, wind farms on endless plains and oil and gas projects shuttered for good. Investors poured into renewables and the oil majors were told to prepare for their funeral.

The headlines came from Washington, where the Biden White House passed the Inflation Reduction Act (a once-in-a-generation clean-energy stimulus) only for a Trump resurgence to roll back subsidies and re-assert fossil fuel primacy. In Brussels, European lawmakers fought over methane rules that would reshape the LNG trade, demanding producers from Texas to Qatar to Africa disclose every leak. Analysts at the IEA, OPEC, US EIA, Wood Mackenzie and Goldman Sachs sparred over when oil demand might peak or if it ever truly would. Nigeria, meanwhile, was often cast as an afterthought: a fossil-fuel giant struggling with decline, policy inertia and waning investor patience. But the world has a way of circling back.

It was against this shifting backdrop that Nigeria, long caricatured as an oil giant in decline, began to recast its story. What looked like defensive rhetoric a few years ago has since become part of mainstream global thinking: that the transition must be just, not punitive; pragmatic, not utopian. As energy crises flared, gas was re-badged as a “transition fuel.” As climate politics matured, the phrase “just transition” gained traction and Nigeria’s long-stated position on JUST TRANSITION began to sound less like special pleading and more like sober realism. The signing of the Petroleum Industry Act, aggressive pitches at Conference of Parties (COP) summits, upstream regulatory reforms anchored by the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission,





flare-to-power schemes and licensing rounds that married hydrocarbons with decarbonisation all helped Abuja shift from the margins of the debate to its center. At the heart of this repositioning was the NUPRC under the visionary leadership of Engr. Gbenga Komolafe, whose role in galvanising and amplifying Africa's collective voice for a just transition has been nothing short of pivotal.

Today, Nigeria's energy story sits at the intersection of two global truths: hydrocarbons remain indispensable for stability, yet credibility on emissions will increasingly determine market access. The battle is no longer whether to produce, but how and at what carbon cost. In that contested middle ground, Nigeria is emerging not just as a participant but as a strategic navigator, forcing its way into the very heart of the global energy transition conversation. What follows is a high-level chronicle of that journey: tracing Nigeria's evolution from 2011 to the present and the deliberate steps that have transformed it into a voice of pragmatism and strategy in the energy debate.

### 2011 - REFORM AT HOME, RELEVANCE ABROAD

The signing of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) in 2021 was more than a domestic milestone. It gave investors long-sought clarity, ending two decades of policy limbo. For Nigeria, where oil still accounts for about 90% of export earnings and natural gas upside potential estimated at 600 trillion cubic feet, the law

was also a shield against a world increasingly hostile to hydrocarbons. Crucially, the PIA embedded environmental obligations, mandating flare elimination and nudging companies toward sustainable operations. The message was clear: Nigeria would modernise, not apologise.

### 2022 – TAKING THE FIGHT TO THE CONFERENCE OF PARTIES

By 2022, Nigeria had found its voice. At COP27 in Egypt, NUPRC delegation argued forcefully that a transition ignoring Africa's 600 million energy-poor citizens was neither just nor realistic. In Nigeria alone, 85 million people still live without electricity. Gas, the NUPRC delegates insisted, must be treated as a transition fuel. Backed by numbers and necessity, the argument stuck. The European Union included gas in its energy taxonomy. African Union declarations followed suit. Suddenly, what had been dismissed as special pleading began to sound like common sense.

### 2023 – TURNING WASTE INTO WEALTH

If 2022 was about rhetoric, 2023 was about delivery. Oil and gas investment globally rebounded to nearly \$550 billion and Nigeria moved quickly to ride the wave. Licensing rounds reopened, new upstream data was unveiled and the Gas Flare Commercialisation Programme advanced with the NUPRC's drive in

converting over 100 flare sites into opportunities for electricity, LPG, CNG, mini-LNG and industrial use. That effort culminated in the award of 49 high-impact flare sites to third-party investors for gas valorisation, marking a decisive step toward turning waste into wealth. Nigeria also sharpened its pitch abroad: don't cut off finance to hydrocarbons, fund cleaner ways of producing them. Carbon capture, methane abatement and electrified oilfields became the talking points. For once, Nigeria was not just following the global debate but reshaping it.

### 2024 – WINNING THE SEMANTICS OF TRANSITION

At COP28 in Dubai, the battle shifted to language. NUPRC delegation led by Engr. Gbenga Komolafe, alongside other Nigerian and African participants, pushed successfully to soften the UN's wording: from a call to "phase out" fossil fuels to "phase down." To climate activists, it looked like backsliding. To countries like Nigeria, it was survival and half-victory. The Tinubu administration, under its "Renewed Hope" agenda, doubled down at home. The 2024 Licensing Round conducted by the NUPRC attracted serious interest, a sign that Nigeria's new frameworks and insistence on pragmatism were landing with investors.

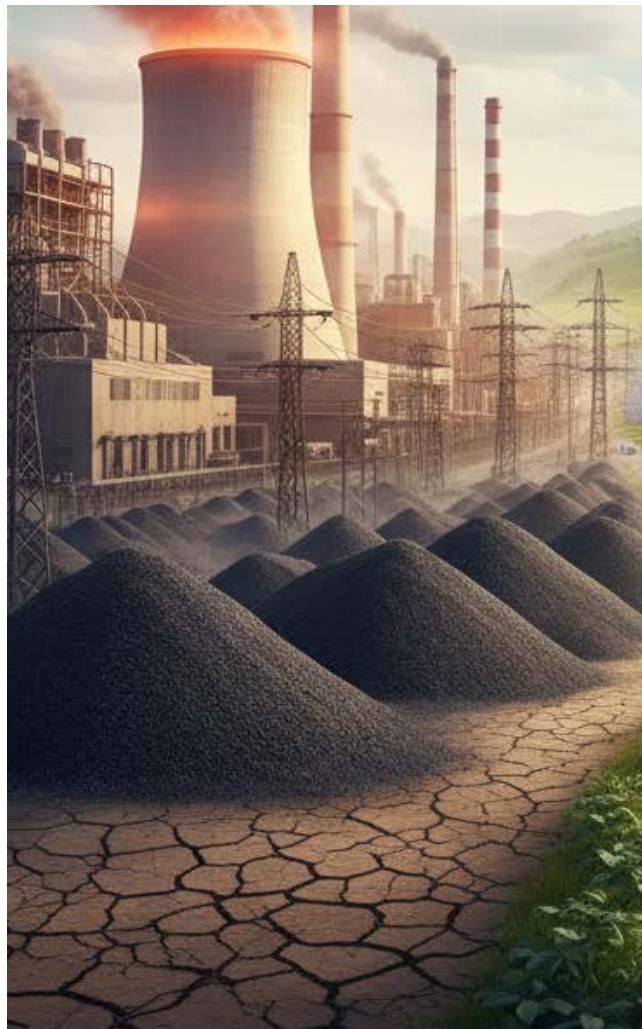
### 2024 TO 2025 – PRAGMATISM BECOMES THE GLOBAL MOOD

Today, Nigeria's message no longer comes across as special pleading. Even the International Energy Agency now concedes that hydrocarbons remain indispensable for global stability. Renewables are expanding rapidly, but oil and gas still form the backbone of energy supply. The global mood has shifted: less binary, more balanced. From late 2024 through 2025, world leaders in multiple high-profile fora began repeatedly affirming that any credible energy transition must respect the diverse realities of each country. At the G20 Summit in Rio de Janeiro (November 18, 2024), the G20 Declaration explicitly committed to "inclusive energy transitions ... leaving no one behind ... taking into account different national circumstances." Shortly afterward, during COP29 in Azerbaijan (11-22 November 2024), Parties agreed that transitioning away from fossil fuels should proceed "in a nationally determined manner" and be calibrated to countries' differing needs, capabilities and contexts. More recently, at the United Nations General Assembly in New York (September 2025), a joint letter signed by multiple heads of state reiterated the principle, tying a "just and equitable energy transition" directly to "national circumstances." These statements signal a global shift: one where the discourse is no longer simply about clean energy targets, but about fairness, differentiation and the recognition that the path to transition is not one-size-fits-all. In this evolving landscape, Nigeria has positioned itself as a champion of the middle ground, with the NUPRC at the forefront. The Commission is

driving reforms to attract global capital into oil and gas development across all terrains and basins, while simultaneously advancing upstream decarbonisation and building frameworks to monetise gas. It is also laying the groundwork for Nigeria's participation in emerging global carbon markets. In short: it is now decarbonisation, the Nigerian way.

### THE BIGGER PICTURE

What began as a defensive push for survival has evolved into a broader narrative of fairness. The term "just transition", once peripheral, is now entrenched in global communiqués. Gas is recognised as a bridge fuel. Climate finance debates are no longer about punishing resource-rich states, but about how to support them in cleaning up their act while still growing. Nigeria and indeed the NUPRC, helped bend that arc. Its persistence turned what was once an African grievance into a global consensus. For a country that has so often been seen as reactive in energy markets, this is a striking reversal. In the world's jagged path to net zero, Nigeria is not just along for the ride, it has become one of the navigators.. ■





## INTERVIEW

# NUPRC HAS IMPROVED TRANSPARENCY, REGULATORY CERTAINTY- NNPC GCEO

- Philip Ukpe -

The number of active oil rigs in a country goes beyond technical metric. It is a barometer of economic ambition, investor confidence and operational capacity. For Nigeria, where oil still forms the backbone of national revenue and foreign exchange, the current rig count has fallen short of potential. As of early 2025, Nigeria operates about 39 active rigs.

Engineer Bayo Bashir Ojulari is a colossus in Nigeria's vibrant oil and gas sector where he has amassed over

35 years of experience. He began his career in 1989 as a field and process engineer at Elf Petroleum Nigeria before moving to Shell in 1991 as an associate production technologist.

In 2015, he rose to the position of Managing Director at Shell Nigeria Exploration and Production Company (SNEPCo), exiting in 2021.

In January 2024, Engineer Ojulari joined Renaissance African Energy Company as Executive Vice-President and Chief Operating Officer and led a consortium of

local energy companies in a \$2.4 billion Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria (SPDC) acquisition deal.

On April 2, 2025, President Bola Tinubu appointed Engineer Ojulari as Group Chief Executive Officer (GCEO) of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC).

In this rare interview with the Upstream Gaze, he discusses the journey so far and the role that the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) has played in the success of the national oil company.

**As one of the most experienced individuals in Nigeria's oil and gas space today, how would you rate the performance of the upstream petroleum regulator since the passage of the Petroleum Industry Act?**

The creation of the NUPRC was one of the most transformative outcomes of the PIA. Since inception, the Commission has stabilised regulatory oversight, improved transparency in licensing and created clearer frameworks for host community engagement and fiscal regimes. While there is still work to do, particularly around accelerating approvals and aligning with investment timelines, I would rate their performance as promising and steadily improving. They have provided much-needed regulatory certainty to a sector that had long been hampered by uncertainty.

**From the perspective of NNPC as a key industry player, what concrete achievements of the NUPRC in the last four years stand out to you as having the biggest impact on Nigeria's upstream oil and gas operations and what areas would you advise the Commission to focus on going forward?**

Achievements include: Digitalisation of licensing and regulatory processes; improved crude oil measurement and metering systems to curb losses; successfully conducted bid rounds that attracted new entrants and the vigorous push on gas flare commercialisation and new domestic gas supply obligations. Going forward, I would urge the Commission to continue to prioritise investment facilitation, especially around deep water



**SINCE INCEPTION, THE COMMISSION HAS STABILISED REGULATORY OVERSIGHT, IMPROVED TRANSPARENCY IN LICENSING AND CREATED CLEARER FRAMEWORKS FOR HOST COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND FISCAL REGIMES**

projects and to create even more efficient regulatory approval cycles. The global competition for capital is fierce and Nigeria must remain attractive to investments

**What are the NNPC's investment priorities under your leadership?**

One of our key investment priorities is to make gas a transition fuel. This will be achieved by unlocking Nigeria's 200+ TCF of proven reserves to drive power, industry and exports.

Another key priority is production growth. Our plan is to ensure that the Presidential Mandate to grow national production to 3mmbopd of oil and 12bscf/d of gas by 2030 is



achieved.

The support of NUPRC is pivotal to the achievement of this mandate as NNPC and its partners currently contribute over 95% to national production. Our production growth aspiration will be achieved by brownfield and greenfield investments in onshore/shallow water, facilitating big-ticket FIDs in the deep water and accelerating exploration in the frontier basins.

Energy security and value addition is another major priority. We plan to accelerate domestic refining capacity, grow capacity, improve pipeline availability and invest in

energy infrastructure to ensure domestic energy sufficiency while preparing for global energy transition opportunities.

We are also encouraging investments and working with partners to promote investment in the oil and gas sector, in alignment with the Presidential Mandate of attracting US\$60 billion in new investments by 2030.

**Nigeria's oil and gas production has been on a steady increase in recent months. What do you think is responsible for this development?**

The improvements are the result of deliberate efforts, reflecting three major initiatives: the NNPC Production War-Room (NPWR), the Industry-Wide Security Architecture (IWSA) and periodic leadership engagements among oil and gas companies coordinated by NNPC.

The NNPC Production War Room, launched in mid-2024, remains a success story that has significantly

theft.

There is also the Periodic Industry Leadership Engagements. Regular meetings between leaders of oil and gas companies, coordinated by NNPC, have contributed to increased collaboration and cooperation, facilitating ongoing production growth in a more cost-effective manner.

Simply put, the combined role of the three initiatives has contributed to an increase in the annual average national crude oil and condensate output to over 1.7 mmboped, the highest annual average since 2020 and has led to renewed stakeholder confidence.

**When you were appointed into office in April, the President charged the new NNPC management to "elevate NNPC's share of crude oil refining output to 200,000 barrels by 2027 and reach 500,000 by 2030". How is the NNPC working to achieve this?**

We are finalising the rehabilitation of our refineries and



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CYCLES**



helped reduce production bottlenecks in the petroleum industry. By uniting cross-functional teams, it streamlined processes and accelerated key projects, helping sustain base production and realising incremental output.

With regards to the IWSA, production growth also depends on resolving evacuation challenges. The NNPC-led IWSA has fostered cooperation among private security contractors, regulators, security agencies and host communities, resulting in improved crude oil pipeline availability, terminal recovery and reduced crude

pursuing long-term strategic partnerships in refinery operations to promote sustainable value creation and enhance commercial viability.

Secondly, we are supporting private sector partners like Dangote and modular refineries and exploring opportunities for increased participation.

NNPC is also securing long-term crude supply for domestic refineries and building logistics infrastructure (pipelines, depots) to support stable operations.

Lastly, the goal is not just numbers, it's about energy security, jobs and creating a vibrant downstream sector. ■

## Interview

# 2024 LICENSING ROUNDS CAN ADD 500 MILLION TO 1.5 BILLION BARRELS IN 5-10 YEARS – EXECUTIVE COMMISSIONER E & AM

- Halima Sada -



**Exploration and Acreage Management (E&AM)** is one of the key departments of the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC). It is responsible for monitoring and regulating exploration activities and managing concession acreages in accordance with the extant laws and relevant regulations, guidelines and best practices in Nigeria. Additionally, the Department ensures the sustainable exploration and development of Nigeria's oil and gas resources to grow its reserves and increase production.

**Mr. Bashir Indabawa, the Executive Commissioner who ably superintends over the affairs of exploration and acreage management, has nearly four decades of experience as a regulator. In this interview with The Upstream Gaze, he speaks about the activities of the department in the last four years.**



**Over the past four years, what standout achievements would you attribute to the Exploration and Acreage Management Department in advancing the assessment of hydrocarbon potential across Nigeria's sedimentary basins?**

Looking back over the last four years, the Exploration & Acreage Management (E&AM) Department has recorded several significant milestones in assessing the hydrocarbon potential of Nigeria's sedimentary basins. We have built the regulatory foundation for the implementation of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) 2021 through the development of regulations and guidelines to operationalise the PIA provision relevant to E&AM mandates. We expanded Geoscience Data Coverage by facilitating the acquisition, processing and reprocessing of large volumes of 2D and 3D seismic data across both the onshore and offshore basins and advancing Nigeria's multi-client projects, in partnership with local and international geophysical companies, to de-risk exploration and attract investments. We drive the Federal Government's initiative to explore frontier basins (e.g., Benue Trough, Chad Basin, Bida Basin), leading to renewed drilling and seismic efforts. We implemented the Drill or Drop provisions of the PIA to reduce the number of inactive or underperforming licenses through monitoring and enforcement. About 400 fields were identified as fallow or inactive. We

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**“WE IMPLEMENTED THE DRILL OR DROP PROVISIONS OF THE PIA TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF INACTIVE OR UNDERPERFORMING LICENSES THROUGH MONITORING AND ENFORCEMENT. ABOUT 400 FIELDS WERE IDENTIFIED AS FALLOW OR INACTIVE”**

concluded the 2020 marginal fields bid round and conducted the 2023 and 2024 licensing rounds, which successfully allocated dormant assets to new entrants, unlocking additional hydrocarbon resources.

**One of the functions of the commission by virtue of the PIA is to attract investments in frontier basins. How has your department thrived in this regard? Why does it seem the big players in the sector have not yet fully keyed into the frontier basins?**

The E and AM Department has laid the foundation through data expansion, fiscal incentives and targeted promotions to attract investments into Nigeria's frontier basins. While big players remain cautious due to geological risk, security and energy transition dynamics, the Commission's strategy has encouraged indigenous operators to take the lead, setting the stage for broader participation once more discoveries and infrastructure are established. The NUPRC, in partnership with NNPC-Enserv is currently de-risking the areas of interest, identifying leads and prospects in a bid to confirm their hydrocarbon potential.

**One of your core responsibilities is the regulatory monitoring of oil and gas exploration activities. In 2023 the Commission said that the country's oil reserves are declining due to low exploration**

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**activities. Have things now picked up? If yes, how was the commission able to achieve this?**

Yes, exploration activity has picked up since the 2023 decline. The NUPRC achieved this by enforcing acreage work obligations, fast-tracking Field Development Plans (FDPs), launching bid rounds, improving data access and deploying the Frontier Exploration Fund. The result is a number of seismic surveys, exploration wells and approved projects, which are expected to stabilise and grow Nigeria's oil and gas reserves in the medium term.

**The Frontier Basins Exploration Administration Regulations, 2023, marked a key step in unlocking untapped potential. Can you share any early successes or insights from the implementation of this regulation?**

The 2023 Regulations have brought structure, funding and transparency to frontier exploration. Early wins include stronger data coverage, improved industry participation (especially indigenous) and proof-of-concept developments like Kolmani. However, sustained success will depend on addressing security, infrastructure and energy transition dynamics to fully unlock Nigeria's frontier hydrocarbon potential. The passage of the regulation has brought about a resurgence of exploration activities by the NNPC- Enserv to acquire geological, geochemical and geophysical data in the frontier basins. This is a key element of de-risking these basins to enable hydrocarbon discovery and exploitation. Kolmani exploration phase has been concluded and is now in FDP phase. Re-entering the Chad basin through Wadi wells drilling campaign and the ongoing drilling effort in the lower Benue trough via the drilling of Ebenyi-01 well in Obi LGA of Nasarawa State are testimonies of renewed exploration activities brought about by the passage of the regulation.

**How has your Department leveraged partnerships with Multi-Client Data Companies to promote data-driven exploration and attract investment into Nigeria's upstream sector?**

The Commission's partnerships with Multi-Client data companies have allowed Nigeria to promote data-driven exploration, reduce investor risk, enhance transparency and facilitate licensing rounds with quality data. This helps position Nigeria's upstream sector as a more competitive and attractive destination for global oil and gas investment.

**Given the renewed focus on marginal fields and open blocks, what impact have the recent bid rounds had on Nigeria's oil and gas reserves and how does the NUPRC measure success in this area?**

The recent bid rounds have helped unlock reserves from dormant marginal fields and open blocks by reallocating them to new operators with technical and financial capacity. This has a positive impact on Nigeria in growing reserves and increasing production. We measure success



**"FOUR COMPANIES FROM THE 2020 MARGINAL FIELD LICENSING ROUNDS HAVE APPLIED FOR CONVERSION TO PML AND ADDED ABOUT 80MMBBL OF OIL RESERVE. IN TOTAL WE ARE EXPECTING THE RECENTLY CONCLUDED 2024 LICENSING ROUNDS TO ADD BETWEEN 500 MILLION TO 1.5 BILLION BARRELS OF OIL WITHIN THE NEXT 5 – 10 YEARS"**

by reserve additions, FDP approvals, production, transparency and rigs count. Four companies from the 2020 Marginal Field Licensing Rounds have applied for conversion to PML and added about 80MMbbl of oil reserve. In total we are expecting the recently concluded 2024 Licensing Rounds to add between 500 million to 1.5 billion barrels of oil within the next 5 – 10 years.

**What mechanism has the Acreage Management Department of the NUPRC put in place to ensure the effective tracking and evaluation of block performance, especially in light of recent regulatory frameworks like the Acreage Management and Petroleum Drilling and Production Regulations 2024?**

The mechanism we adopt is that we conduct regular Acreage Performance Reviews (APRs) against agreed KPIs such as seismic acquisition, well re-entry, well drilling, FDP execution and production. We also use templates for tracking work programme milestones, concession rentals payment and other regulatory obligations. This will ensure that oil blocks are effectively tracked, evaluated and managed in line with the Acreage Management Regulations, 2024 and the Petroleum Drilling and Production Regulations, 2024. With these regulations, every block is now subject to continuous evaluation against clear performance benchmarks, ensuring Nigeria maximises value from its hydrocarbon resources.

**Looking ahead, what are the strategic priorities for the Exploration & Acreage Management Department of the Commission, especially in terms of expanding Nigeria's reserves base and enhancing upstream investment?**

The Department's strategy is to grow reserves by unlocking frontier and underexplored basins, enforce efficient acreage utilisation, conduct transparent bid rounds, fast-track field development, expand data availability and create a stable, investment-friendly regulatory environment. ■

# KOMOLAFE'S DATA DOCTRINE OF TRANSPARENCY, TRUST AND TRANSFORMATION

- Nze David Ugorji -



In the high-stakes world of petroleum regulation, where numbers shape narratives and data drives decisions, the emergence of a doctrine rooted in transparency, trust, and transformation is nothing short of revolutionary. At the heart of this paradigm shift stands Engr. Gbenga Komolafe, the Commission Chief Executive of the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC), whose stewardship has redefined the role of data in governance and repositioned Nigeria's upstream sector as a model of institutional credibility and strategic foresight. The Komolafe Data Doctrine is not merely a technical framework, it is a philosophy, a leadership ethos and a national imperative that has elevated Nigeria's regulatory architecture to global standards while delivering tangible impact across communities, markets and ministries.

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ministries.

When the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) was signed into law in 2021, it marked the beginning of a new era in Nigeria's oil and gas sector. The creation of NUPRC was a cornerstone of that reform, tasked with regulating upstream operations with clarity, efficiency, and accountability. But the real transformation began when Komolafe took the reins and infused the Commission with a data-centric vision that prioritised openness, accuracy and stakeholder engagement. He understood that in a sector long plagued by opacity and mistrust, data was not just a tool, it was the bridge to legitimacy, the currency of confidence and the engine of reform.

From the outset, Komolafe made it clear that transparency would be non-negotiable. He instituted a regime of real-time data reporting, ensuring that production volumes, royalty collections and licensing activities were not only tracked but publicly disclosed. This was a radical departure from the past, where figures were often shrouded in ambiguity and manipulated to suit political or commercial interests. Under the Komolafe Doctrine, data became a public good, accessible, verifiable and actionable. The Commission's website was transformed into a digital dashboard of national performance, offering stakeholders, from investors to civil society, an unfiltered view of Nigeria's upstream realities.

This commitment to transparency quickly translated into trust. Investors, who had long viewed Nigeria as a high-risk jurisdiction, began to recalibrate their perceptions. Rig counts surged from eight in 2021 to over forty by mid-2025, a clear signal of renewed confidence in the regulatory environment. Licensing rounds, once marred by controversy, were now conducted with live broadcasts and open bid evaluations. The 2024 round saw unprecedented participation, with 27 out of 31 blocks successfully taken up and record-breaking signature bonuses paid. These outcomes were not just the result of policy, they were the dividends of data integrity, institutional discipline and strategic communication.

But Komolafe's data doctrine was not confined to investor relations. It permeated every facet of the Commission's operations, from fiscal management to community engagement. In 2024, NUPRC surpassed its revenue target by 184.26 percent, generating over N12.2 trillion in oil and gas receipts. This was not a fluke, it was the outcome of meticulous data tracking, automated royalty systems and rigorous compliance enforcement. Leakages were plugged, discrepancies were resolved and fiscal flows were optimised. The Ministry of Finance, the Central Bank and the Budget Office all acknowledged the Commission's role in stabilising national revenues and enhancing macroeconomic planning.

At the community level, the doctrine took on a more human dimension. Through the Host Communities Development Trust (HCDT), NUPRC facilitated the remittance of over N261 billion to oil-producing

communities. These funds were tracked, audited and reported with precision, ensuring that beneficiaries could see and verify the impact of upstream activities in their localities. This transparency reduced tensions, fostered inclusion and created a new social contract between extractive companies and host communities. For the first time in decades, data was not just a regulatory instrument, it was a tool of empowerment, reconciliation and development.



## THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE, THE CENTRAL BANK AND THE BUDGET OFFICE ALL ACKNOWLEDGED THE COMMISSION'S ROLE IN STABILISING NATIONAL REVENUES AND ENHANCING MACROECONOMIC PLANNING

Komolafe's doctrine also embraced the global energy transition, recognising that Nigeria's future depended on its ability to align with climate imperatives while leveraging its hydrocarbon wealth. He championed gas commercialisation as both an economic and environmental strategy, deploying data to identify flaring hotspots, quantify emissions and monetise previously wasted resources. The Nigeria Gas Flare Commercialisation Programme (NGFCP) was revitalised, and the Carbon Credits Earning Framework was introduced to integrate Nigeria into the global carbon market. These initiatives were underpinned by robust data analytics, enabling Nigeria to participate meaningfully in climate finance and green investment flows.

Internationally, the doctrine earned accolades and emulation. The West Africa Oil and Gas Reporters Network (WAOGRAN) named Nigeria the continent's new investment hub, citing NUPRC's data reforms as the catalyst. The Public Space Tracker, a regional governance watchdog, ranked NUPRC as the most transparent government agency in Nigeria, highlighting its consistent publication of industry statistics and its open engagement with stakeholders. Komolafe was invited to speak at global forums, where he articulated a compelling vision of data-driven regulation that balanced national interests with global responsibilities. His message was clear: in the energy transition era, credibility is currency and data is the foundation of credibility.

Yet, the doctrine was not without its challenges. Oil theft, infrastructure deficits and geopolitical uncertainties continued to test the Commission's resolve. But Komolafe responded with pragmatism and innovation.



He deployed non-kinetic strategies to combat theft, leveraging satellite surveillance, community intelligence and inter-agency coordination. Production losses dropped to an all-time low of 5,000 barrels per day and output rebounded to 1.7 million barrels per day. These gains were meticulously documented and shared, reinforcing the narrative of progress and accountability.

Internally, the doctrine transformed the Commission's culture. Staff were trained in data management, analytics and digital tools. Performance metrics were introduced and departments were held accountable for their outputs. The result was a more agile, responsive and professional institution, one that could anticipate challenges, adapt to change and deliver results. Komolafe's leadership style was inclusive yet demanding, fostering a sense of ownership and pride among his team. He understood that data was not just about numbers, it was about people, processes and purpose.

As NIUPRC enters its fifth year, the Komolafe Data Doctrine stands as a beacon of what is possible when leadership meets integrity and when regulation is

anchored in evidence rather than expedience. It has redefined the role of data in governance, proving that transparency breeds trust and trust enables transformation. It has positioned Nigeria as a credible player in the global energy space, capable of attracting investment, managing resources and navigating the complexities of the energy transition.

But perhaps the most enduring legacy of the doctrine is its impact on public consciousness. Nigerians now expect more from their institutions. They demand data, they scrutinise performance, and they hold leaders accountable. This cultural shift, though



## KOMOLAFE'S LEADERSHIP STYLE WAS INCLUSIVE YET DEMANDING, FOSTERING A SENSE OF OWNERSHIP AND PRIDE AMONG HIS TEAM

subtle, is profound. It signals a new era of civic engagement, where citizens are not passive recipients but active participants in governance. Komolafe's doctrine has not only transformed a Commission, it has transformed a country's expectations.

In the years to come, the doctrine will face new tests. The global energy landscape is evolving, with new technologies, new markets and new risks. Nigeria must continue to innovate, adapt and lead. But with the Komolafe Doctrine as its compass, the path is clear. Data will remain the foundation of policy, the language of trust and the engine of transformation. And NIUPRC, under strategic stewardship, will continue to chart a course that is bold, credible and inclusive.

In the final analysis, the Komolafe Data Doctrine is more than a regulatory framework, it is a national asset. It is a testament to what is possible when vision meets execution and when leadership is anchored in values. It is a reminder that in the age of information, data is not just power, it is purpose. And in Nigeria's upstream sector, that purpose is being fulfilled, one data point at a time. ■

# FOUR YEARS OF NUPRC: TAKING UP THE GAUNTLET TO INCREASE OIL PRODUCTION

- Akpandem James, fnge -

**A**t an event hosted in commemoration of the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission's third anniversary in Abuja in October last year (2024), the Commission Chief Executive (CCE), Engr. Gbenga Komolafe threw down what many considered a bold gauntlet: increase the country's crude oil output by a whopping one million barrels per day within 12 to 24 months.

It was a gathering of industry stakeholders who converged at the Congress Hall of the Transcorp Hilton to felicitate the foremost upstream petroleum and gas regulator. The feeling in the hall was mixed when the CCE made the pronouncement.

For some industry players in Nigeria's oil and gas corridors, it sounded like one more lofty target in a long line of government promises – strong in aspiration, but likely to fade into the archives of unfulfilled ambitions. It was like "we've heard it all before. What was on their minds was "the numbers are great, but the roadblocks, from bureaucracy to security issues, are massive." This was not an unfounded pessimism; it was borne out of past experiences.

Yet, others saw the potential differently. They knew Nigeria's underground wealth was not the issue; unlocking it was. For them, the challenge was not geological but regulatory and operational. With the right push, like removal of entry barriers, accelerated bid rounds and strict enforcement of the "Drill or Drop" policy, the one-million-barrel target looked less like a dream and more like a possibility

waiting to be seized. Petroleum Resources Minister (crude oil), Heineken Lokpobiri, even said there was nothing ambitious about the target, as Nigeria has both the potential and capacity. What was lacking was the right strategy and push. The slightest push, he said, could cause the oil to overflow massively.

However, the timing of Engr. Komolafe's proclamation





was not accidental. Nigeria had just wrapped up its first licensing round under the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) of 2021, hailed as the most successful in history. It was a landmark that gave the Commission both confidence and a platform. That licensing round, the 2024 edition, was not just about numbers; it signaled a new era in which regulatory clarity and investor confidence could finally converge. And it did in subsequent months.

PIA was the joker; it changed the game. NUPRC was the team lead; it played with focus, deploying strategic moves in the card game. For the first time in decades, Nigeria had a framework that gave investors predictability, while also tightening accountability on operators. It laid the foundation for the reforms that are emerging and unveiling.

Reforms came thick and fast. Government issued a series of presidential executive orders cutting through red tape, lowering barriers and smoothing entry for new players. Contracting processes were streamlined, fiscal incentives improved and the "Drill or Drop" principle was reinforced. Dormant wells and idle assets were suddenly back in play and with enhanced security arrangements, the field began to buzz with renewed activity. The 2025 numbers show a sustainable increase in oil flows. Daily crude oil losses had dropped to 9,600 barrels per day from 102,900 in 2021, the year the PIA came into effect. The figure, released by the Commission on September 11, 2025, was the lowest since 2009. That's approximately a 90 percent drop.

Again, going by the latest figures released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Nigeria's economy grew by 4.23 percent largely following increased oil output alongside two other sectors, a glaring evidence of the sustainable progress made by the industry to



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contain the spectre of crude oil theft.

Evidence of improved momentum in the sector became commonplace. Fast forward to mid-2025, and the signs are glaring. In offices across Lagos and Abuja, investment contracts were being signed at a pace unseen in years. In the oilfields, rigs were multiplying, 46 active as of July 2025, compared to just eight in 2021. On the terminals, crude flows averaged around 1.78 million barrels per day. For a country that had struggled to keep production steady at 1.2 to 1.3 million barrels just a few years back, this was a resurgence. This surge in rig activity isn't cosmetic; it shows that companies are putting money where their hopes are. It is obvious there is confidence in the system once again!

The bigger ambition is clear: push production from the 2024 daily average of 1.6 million barrels to 2.6 million barrels by 2026. It is a collaborative mission involving producers, service companies, rig operators, financiers and even off-takers. It was so designed and there is ample evidence that it was well thought out. The strategies range from reactivating dormant fields and fast-tracking approvals to deploying enhanced recovery technologies and adopting cluster development strategies that allow multiple operators to share infrastructure, cutting costs and reducing risks.

By mid-2025, these collective efforts had already added roughly 390,000 barrels per day to Nigeria's output. The Drill or Drop policy, once seen as an idle threat, was beginning to bite. Operators understood the message: develop your fields or lose them. And in the lucrative fields, no one wants to forfeit a license. What seems like a threat has become an elixir; it's pushing everyone to act faster; the

sector, the economy and even the stakeholders are the better for it.

On the first day of September 2025, another milestone was reached. NUPRC formally signed a landmark Production Sharing Contract (PSC) for Petroleum Prospecting Licences (PPLs) 2000 and 2001. That deal, earlier executed on August 28, involved NNPC Limited as concessionaire, with TotalEnergies EP Nigeria Limited and South Atlantic Petroleum (SAPETRO) as contractors. It was the first deep offshore PSC awarded since the 2024 bid round and the first to holistically address both crude oil and natural gas, with new gas monetisation terms that many analysts described as "forward-looking." It was groundbreaking in all ramifications.

The contract was developed in strict compliance with Section 85(3) of the PIA(2021) and Regulation 23(1) of the Petroleum Licensing Round Regulation, 2022, fulfilling a crucial condition in the license award process as determined by the Minister of Petroleum Resources.

That PSC is notable for being the first deep offshore contract issued following the successful 2024 licensing bid round. It is pioneering in its comprehensive scope, covering both crude oil and natural gas and it features robust gas provisions, including a profit gas split mechanism, that incentivise the monetisation of non-associated gas.

Structurally detailed, the contract includes 32 clauses and 13 appendices, carefully framed to reflect the nuances of the PIA, the multifaceted governance role of the NUPRC, oversight responsibilities of the Concessionaire and the Contractor's obligations to conduct upstream petroleum operations responsibly, aiming to guarantee significant financial value to the Federation.

The fiscal terms embedded in the PSC are notably strong and designed to optimise the Federation's benefits while ensuring attractive returns to the Contractor. They include a \$10 million signature bonus; production bonuses payable at production milestones of 2 million barrels and 4 million barrels or their cash equivalents upon reaching cumulative production of 35 million and 100 million barrels respectively; crude profit oil split based on cumulative production; a gas profit split calculated on cumulative associated gas sales; and a cost oil limit set at 70%. Further terms elaborate on production bonuses, applicable royalty rates and clear distinctions between recoverable and non-recoverable costs.

The PSC represents a major milestone, addressing

historical gaps with a document that not only mirrors the Petroleum Industry Act's provisions but also manifests resilience and completeness. It underscores the regulator's commitment to effective PIA implementation and is expected to significantly advance NNPC Limited toward achieving the ambitious national production targets of 2 million barrels of oil per day and 10 billion cubic feet of gas per day by 2027.

The contract, therefore, embodies a foundational step for Nigeria's deep offshore oil and gas sector, reinforcing the country's energy security and economic growth potential. "This is not just another contract," Engr. Komolafe explained at the signing. "It's a blueprint for the future, one that reflects Nigeria's seriousness about reform, transparency and investment."

The CCE, whose tenure has become the hurricane sweeping away indolence and inertia from the Nigeria upstream petroleum sector, explained that the deal marked a fresh chapter in Nigeria's oil and gas journey, one made possible by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's 2024 Executive Orders: Number 40 on fiscal incentives, Number 41 on local content and Number 42 on cost efficiency and contract timelines. These policy measures, he noted, had already begun catalysing massive investment inflows into the sector, paving the way for shared prosperity. The awardees of PPL 2000 and PPL 2001 stand as direct beneficiaries of these sweeping reforms, he pointed out.

While celebrating the moment, the CCE was also quick to stress the regulatory framework that underpins such progress. "Every award has very clear terms about its tenure," he reminded, pointing to the PIA as the guiding instrument. Under its provisions, unexplored acreages must be relinquished in line with the law, ensuring that development remains active and that no potential is left dormant.

Reiterating that the Licensing Round had been conducted with fairness, transparency and competitiveness, as prescribed in Section 73 of the PIA, Engr. Komolafe commended President Tinubu for removing barriers that had long

discouraged entry into the industry, opening the doors to greater participation.

Turning to the practical side of the PSC, Komolafe acknowledged the pivotal role of NNPC and the Consortium. Their engagement signaled the beginning of a committed work programme, one that would unlock Nigeria's untapped geological potential, expand reserves, boost production and ultimately strengthen national energy security, he noted.

He detailed the framework of the PSC: signature



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bonus payments as required in the licensing round, production bonuses tied to commercial milestones and strict adherence to obligations concerning decommissioning, abandonment and environmental remediation. He also pointed to the defined minimum work programme, backed by performance guarantees, as a safeguard to ensure delivery.

As is often done to remind stakeholders of the Commission's steadfastness, Engr. Komolafe pledged the NUPRC's unwavering commitment to maintaining a level playing field across the sector, promising that it would continue to reduce uncertainty, foster ease of doing business and provide the regulatory clarity needed to sustain investor confidence in Nigeria's upstream oil and gas industry.

For TotalEnergies and SAPETRO, the stakes are equally high. The two blocks in the West Delta Basin span 2,000 square kilometers of promising deep-water acreage. TotalEnergies holds 80% and SAPETRO 20%. For Nigeria, it marks the first time in a decade that such an international oil company joint venture has been awarded exploration rights through an open licensing process. It is about unlocking deep-water potential; about building reserves, boosting production and ensuring energy security for Nigeria and beyond.

Altogether, the journey so far paints a picture of a sector intentionally reinventing itself. Good thinking, it is often said, results in good products. What began as a pronouncement many dismissed as aspirational has, through deliberate reforms and collaborative effort, evolved into tangible results. The low-hanging fruit is already looking edible and there are ample indications that hitting the two-million-barrel+ target by 2026 is just a matter of time. It is a positive sentiment expressed by all stakeholders in the deal and in the field.

NNPC Limited's Group Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Bashir Bayo Ojulari, weighed in on the potential of non-associated gas when he spoke at the PSC signing event. He emphasised that tapping non-associated gas in deep water under the PIA is a crucial frontier for the industry. He hailed the PSC as a significant milestone, reflecting the regulator's commitment to implementing the PIA's

provisions. He expressed confidence that the partnership would bring NNPC closer to achieving its goal of three million barrels per day and attracting \$60 billion in additional investments by 2030. NNPC intends to leverage future bid rounds to demonstrate its capabilities and explore deep-water opportunities, while promising to market bid outcomes and PSC agreements in forthcoming rounds.

Matthieu Bouyer, Country Chair and Managing Director of TotalEnergies EP Nigeria Limited, was excited that the acquisition aligns with the company's



## THE MASTERSTROKE INITIATIVE BY THE ENGR. KOMOLAFE-LED TEAM, OF GETTING ALL THE CHORISTERS IN THE OIL FIELDS TO SING IN ONE ACCORD FROM THE SAME HYMNAL, HAS PRODUCED THE STRING OF MELODIOUS SYMPHONY IN THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC CORRIDOR



strategy to expand its exploration portfolio with drill-ready and high-impact prospects, offering low-cost and low-emission development opportunities. He praised the NUPRC's transparent and robust 2024 bidding process while reaffirming TotalEnergies' long-term commitment to Nigeria, where it has operated for



over 60 years, employing more than 1,800 people and producing approximately 209,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day in 2024.

Bouyer described the PSC signing as the beginning of new exploration and a renewed partnership to maximise Nigeria's oil potential. He reiterated TotalEnergies' dedication to local content development, job creation, capacity building, socio-economic development and the energy transition within Nigeria. TotalEnergies' indicated plans for the commencement of drilling as soon as possible, underscoring a commitment to responsible and timely project execution. SAPETRO Managing Director, Mr. Chukwuemeke Anagbogu, commended NUPRC for its exemplary leadership throughout the process, describing it as "very transparent and completely free."

In the ever-evolving landscape of Nigeria's oil industry, a significant transformation is taking place, driven by strategic divestments from major players such as Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) and Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited (MPNU). These strategic exits have paved the way for indigenous companies such as Renaissance Africa Energy and Seplat Energy to step into the spotlight, marking a new era in the nation's quest to enhance crude oil production.

Renaissance Africa Energy's acquisition of SPDC's assets has proven to be nothing short of revolutionary. Within just a month of taking over, the company overwhelmed its initial production targets by an impressive 40%, injecting a fresh wave of vitality into Nigeria's oil output. This expansion signifies more than

just increased numbers; it symbolises the empowerment of local operators, who are now at the forefront of driving operational efficiency and tapping into the unrealised potential of onshore and shallow-water fields.

Meanwhile, Seplat Energy's strategic takeover of MPNU in December 2024 has dramatically broadened its horizon, increasing its asset base to an impressive 11 oil blocks and 48 fields. The results have been mind-blowing, as production surged from 50,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day to over 130,000, with a target of 140,000 by year-end. This growth is enhanced by substantial investments in drilling and asset revitalisation, as well as ambitious gas projects such as the Assa North-Ohaji South (ANOH) Gas Plant, which are set to accelerate gas output and strengthen Nigeria's overall production capacity.

At the heart of this revitalisation effort are Nigeria's strategic reforms, exemplified by the pioneering PSC and a renewed commitment to regulatory clarity. These initiatives have created a robust framework, instilling confidence among investors and enhancing operational efficiency across the board. With a clear roadmap for unlocking deep-water resources and tapping into non-associated gas, the Nigerian oil sector is on a transformative path, poised to reach ambitious production targets while solidifying its position as a leading energy producer.

The collaboration among government, industry stakeholders and international partners is crucial, as it not only aims to boost crude oil output but also diversifies the country's energy resources. The masterstroke initiative by the Engr. Komolafe-led team, of getting all the choristers in the oil fields to sing in one accord from the same hymnal, has produced the string of melodious symphony in the country's economic corridor. This united effort is strengthening Nigeria's economic resilience and energy security, laying a solid foundation for sustainable growth and development in the decades to come.

As Nigeria navigates through this pivotal phase, the prospects look promising. With increased local participation and a shared vision for the future, the nation is setting the stage for a thriving energy sector that could redefine its economic landscape for generations ahead. ■

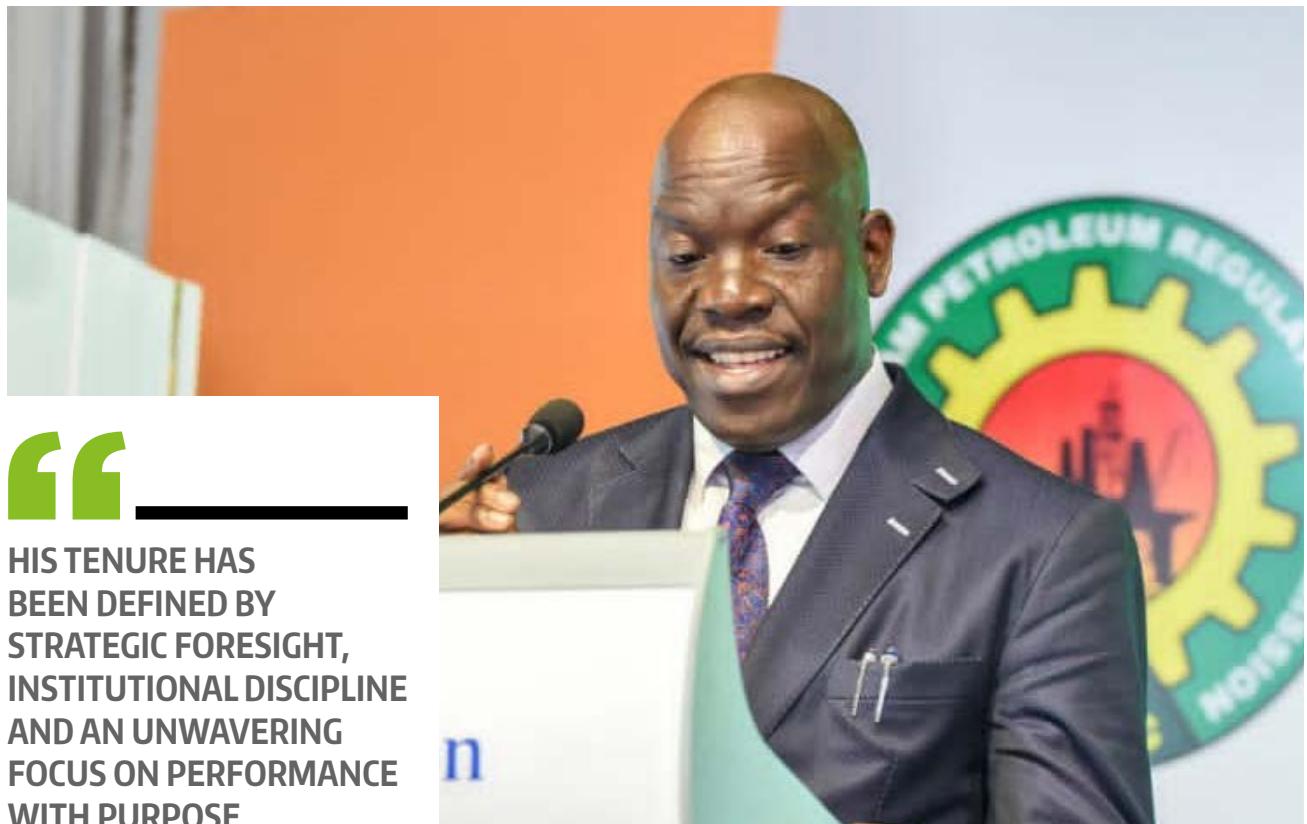
# PERFORMANCE WITH PURPOSE: NUPRC'S SCORECARD SINCE INCEPTION

- Nze David Ugorji -

In the annals of Nigeria's petroleum sector, the establishment of the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) in 2021 marked a pivotal moment, a regulatory renaissance born from the long-awaited Petroleum Industry Act (PIA). Tasked with the oversight of upstream oil and gas operations, NUPRC was not merely a bureaucratic rebranding but a strategic recalibration of Nigeria's energy governance. Four years on, the Commission's performance has transcended expectations, delivering a scorecard that reflects not only operational excellence but a deeper commitment to national prosperity, investor confidence and sustainable development.

From its inception, NUPRC was saddled with a complex mandate: to regulate upstream petroleum activities, grow reserves and production, determine and collect royalties and implement the Host Communities Development Trust (HCDT) provisions of the PIA. These responsibilities, though daunting, were embraced with clarity and purpose by the Commission's leadership under Engr. Gbenga Komolafe, the pioneer Commission Chief Executive (CCE). His tenure has been defined by strategic foresight, institutional discipline and an unwavering focus on performance with purpose.

One of the most striking indicators of NUPRC's impact is its revenue performance. In 2024, the Commission



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shattered expectations by surpassing its revenue target by an unprecedented 184.26 percent, the highest ever recorded. This achievement was not a stroke of luck but the result of deliberate reforms, enhanced compliance mechanisms and a robust fiscal strategy. By plugging financial leakages, streamlining royalty collection and enforcing transparent reporting, NUPRC transformed its revenue architecture into a model of efficiency and accountability. The ripple effect of this fiscal discipline has been felt across government coffers, enabling increased funding for infrastructure, social services and national development priorities.

Beyond revenue, NUPRC's regulatory footprint has expanded with remarkable agility. Since 2021, the Commission has issued 24 regulations, 17 of which have been gazetted, while seven await finalisation. These regulations span critical domains such as licensing, environmental compliance, production optimisation and fiscal administration. They reflect a nuanced understanding of the sector's complexities and a proactive approach to emerging challenges. The Commission's Regulatory Action Plan (RAP), aligned with the PIA, has become a blueprint for operational excellence, reducing bureaucratic inertia, enhancing investor confidence and fostering a culture of compliance.

The Commission's performance in managing asset divestments is another testament to its strategic maturity. Historically, divestment transactions in Nigeria's upstream sector were mired in regulatory bottlenecks, leading to delays, disputes and investor frustration. NUPRC has reversed this trend by honoring the principle of "Free Entry; Free Exit," ensuring that divestments are processed transparently, efficiently and in accordance with the law. In 2024 alone, the Commission successfully processed and secured ministerial consent for five major divestment transactions, including Equinor's Project Odinmim, MPNU/Seplat, TotalEnergies/Telema Energies, NAOC/Oando and the landmark SPDC-Renaissance Africa Energy deal. These approvals have not only unlocked new investment flows but also signaled a regulatory environment that is responsive, predictable and investor-friendly.

Perhaps one of the most transformative aspects of NUPRC's scorecard is its role in unlocking Nigeria's hydrocarbon reserves. In 2025, the Commission approved 28 Field Development Plans (FDPs), representing \$18.2 billion in capital expenditure commitments. These plans are projected to unlock 1.4 billion barrels of oil and 5.4 trillion cubic feet of gas, adding an estimated 591,000 barrels of oil per day and 2.1 billion standard cubic feet of gas per day to Nigeria's production capacity.

This expansion is not merely a technical achievement, it is a strategic breakthrough that strengthens Nigeria's fiscal resilience, enhances foreign exchange earnings and positions the country as a competitive player in the global energy market.

The Commission's commitment to host community development has also yielded tangible dividends. Through the implementation of the Host Communities Development Trust (HCDT), NUPRC has facilitated the remittance of N261 billion to oil-producing communities. This initiative, enshrined in Section 234(2) of the PIA, reflects a paradigm shift in resource governance, one that prioritises inclusivity, equity and shared prosperity. By empowering host communities and fostering local development, NUPRC is not only mitigating conflict but also nurturing a more sustainable and harmonious operating environment.

In the realm of production optimisation, NUPRC has demonstrated strategic dexterity. The launch of the One Million Barrels Per Day (1MMBOPD) Production Initiative in 2024 was a bold declaration of intent. Designed to ramp up Nigeria's crude oil output and meet presidential targets, the initiative embodies the Commission's proactive approach to energy security and economic resilience. It seeks to unlock alternative funding mechanisms, streamline regulatory processes and foster collaboration among stakeholders. The initiative has already begun to yield results, with production volumes rebounding from a low of 1.1 million barrels per day in 2022 to 1.7 million barrels per day in 2024.

The Commission's digital transformation agenda has further enhanced its operational efficiency. By deploying automated reporting systems, real-time monitoring platforms and data analytics tools, NUPRC is modernising its regulatory processes and democratising access to information. This digital pivot is not only reducing manual errors and enhancing transparency but also empowering operators, investors and citizens with the insights needed to make informed decisions. It reflects a forward-looking approach that embraces technology as a catalyst for innovation and accountability.

Environmental stewardship has also been a cornerstone of NUPRC's performance. Recognising the global shift towards energy transition, the Commission has integrated environmental considerations into its regulatory framework. It has championed gas commercialisation, flaring reduction and carbon footprint minimisation. These efforts align with Nigeria's climate commitments and position the upstream sector as a responsible player in the global energy dialogue. By balancing economic imperatives with environmental responsibilities, NUPRC



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is charting a path towards sustainable development.

Stakeholder engagement has been another area of strategic focus. From host communities to international investors, NUPRC has cultivated relationships built on trust, transparency and mutual respect. It has facilitated dialogues, resolved disputes and promoted inclusive governance. This relational approach has enhanced compliance, reduced friction and nurtured a shared commitment to sectoral progress. It reflects a regulatory philosophy that views stakeholders not as subjects but as partners in development.

As NUPRC enters its fifth year, its scorecard is both a reflection of past achievements and a projection of future possibilities. The Commission's trajectory is defined by ambition, adaptability and strategic foresight. It is navigating the complexities of geopolitics, market dynamics and technological disruption with clarity and confidence. Komolafe's leadership continues to inspire innovation, galvanise action and drive impact.

The NUPRC effect is not confined to metrics, it is a paradigm shift. It is a reimaging of what regulation can achieve when anchored in vision, executed with precision and driven by purpose. It is a demonstration that institutions, when empowered and accountable, can be engines of transformation. The unlocking of reserves, the surge in revenues and the restoration of confidence are not isolated outcomes, they are interconnected

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**THE UNLOCKING OF RESERVES, THE SURGE IN REVENUES AND THE RESTORATION OF CONFIDENCE ARE NOT ISOLATED OUTCOMES, THEY ARE INTERCONNECTED MANIFESTATIONS OF A REGULATORY RENAISSANCE**

manifestations of a regulatory renaissance.

In the broader context of Nigeria's development, NUPRC's achievements are catalytic. They contribute to macroeconomic stability, energy security and national competitiveness. They support job creation, infrastructure development and poverty reduction. They enhance Nigeria's standing in the global energy community and position the country as a destination of choice for upstream investment.

Yet, the journey is far from over. The challenges ahead, ranging from climate imperatives to geopolitical shifts require continued innovation, resilience and strategic alignment. NUPRC must deepen its reforms, expand its digital capabilities and strengthen its institutional capacity. It must remain agile, responsive and forward-thinking. But if the past

four years are any indication, the Commission is more than equipped to meet these challenges and seize the opportunities they present.

In reflecting on NUPRC's scorecard, one is reminded that performance with purpose is not a slogan, it is a philosophy. It is a commitment to excellence, equity and impact. It is a belief that regulation, when done right, can be a force for good. And in that belief, the story of Nigeria's upstream sector is being rewritten; one regulation, one investment, one community at a time. ■

# STILL THE BACKBONE: HOW OIL AND GAS FIT INTO THE FAST-MOVING ENERGY TRANSITION

- Onwunyili Christian Chime, PhD -



The global energy story once seemed straightforward: solar farms rising in months, battery costs tumbling and investors racing to retool portfolios for a green future. Headlines rang with record renewable additions and sweeping net-zero pledges, while the applause for clean energy grew louder by the day. Yet beneath this chorus, oil and gas remained the quiet backbone, sustaining industries, powering transport and underpinning modern life.

That was the narrative, at least before the world was jolted by new realities. The geopolitical shockwaves of the Russia–Ukraine conflict, the supply chain disruptions that rippled across continents and the shifting policy

signals from Washington under the Trump presidency reminded us that the transition is not a straight path. Energy security, affordability and geopolitics are once again colliding with the ambitions of decarbonisation, reshaping the context in which every forecast, investment and policy must now be judged.

This is not nostalgia. It is a cold-hard accounting of supply, demand, finance and human need. Three simple numbers explain why oil and gas will remain central for decades: the share of fossil fuels in the global energy mix, the scale of renewables growth and the number of people still waiting for reliable electricity.

## THE DUAL REALITIES OF RISING RENEWABLES AND PERSISTENT FOSSIL DEPENDENCE

Fossil fuels still account for the overwhelming share of the world's primary energy and most official scenarios show that share only slowly eroding. According to IEA's World Energy Outlook 2024, fossil fuels met about 80% of global energy demand in 2023. Even under scenarios that assume strong policy actions in favour of renewables, fossil fuels continue to supply much of global energy well into the 2030s.

In the electricity sector, the IEA's Global Energy Review 2025 notes that although clean sources (renewables + nuclear) accounted for over 80% of the growth in electricity generation in 2024, fossil fuels still made up nearly 60% of total electricity generation that year. Renewables (wind, solar, hydro, etc.) had reached roughly one-third of total electricity generation, but the momentum is gradual, not instantaneous.

These numbers underscore the inertia built into the global energy system. Even as renewables expand rapidly and investment shifts, oil and gas remain deeply embedded: not only in how we generate power today, but in policy, infrastructure, demand and markets, making the journey to displacement a long, incremental one rather than a sudden switch.

IEA reckons that clean power is expanding at a breathtaking pace, with renewables adding 507 GW in 2023 and shattering records again in 2024. But it also warns that, despite this surge, hydrocarbons will remain indispensable in transport, heavy industry, shipping, aviation and petrochemicals for years to come. Renewables are breaking records, but hydrocarbons still power the world's engines

And then there is access: more than 600–666 million people worldwide still lacked electricity in recent years, concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa and parts of South Asia. Industrialisation, urbanisation and the push to lift living standards mean energy demand will keep rising in many regions. The World Bank notes that, at least in the near term, much of this demand will be met not only by renewables but also by gas and oil, underscoring the dual challenge of expanding access while navigating the transition.

## THE SUPPLY SIDE: INVESTMENT, PROJECTS AND THE FINANCIAL REALITY

Money follows demand expectations and the numbers tell the story. In 2023, upstream oil and gas investment hovered near the half-trillion-dollar mark: roughly \$550 billion by BP's industry accounting and echoed in other market reviews. Far from retreating, this scale of spending shows the industry's determination to keep



hydrocarbons flowing, even as it edges into low-carbon ventures. Those billions are not chasing short-term bets; they are poured into long-lived assets such as wells, pipelines, LNG trains, refineries and other major oil and gas infrastructure for developing, producing and transporting hydrocarbons well into the coming decades.

Consultancies and data houses echo this picture. Rystad, Wood Mackenzie and S&P's studies point to substantial near-term upstream opportunity sets and M&A activity, reflecting both the commercial economics of oil and gas and strategic moves by nations and companies. Markets are signalling that a rapid, disorderly withdrawal of capital from hydrocarbons risks supply shortfalls and price shocks: outcomes that no policymaker wants while millions still need reliable power and affordable fuels.

## DEMAND: PLATEAUS, PEAKS AND PERSISTENT USES

Debate over "peak oil" continues, but the range of credible forecasts is wide and several leading forecasters now push peak demand further into the future. BP's recent outlook revised its expected oil-demand peak out to around 2030 under current-policy paths, while OPEC's long-range view projects robust oil demand through 2045 and beyond in some scenarios. What matters is not a single year of peak demand but the reality that large, energy-intensive sectors including aviation, shipping, petrochemicals, heavy industry will continue to rely on hydrocarbons unless and until economically competitive alternatives scale massively.

Natural gas, too, is rewriting parts of the transition story. LNG supplies rushed toward Europe after the Ukraine crisis; global gas use has a flexibility role to play as grids incorporate intermittent wind and solar. Several outlooks show gas demand holding steady or growing in regions where electrification and industrial growth accelerate. In short: oil and gas volumes may change shape (more gas, more LNG, different product mixes), but their role in balancing systems and fuelling industrialisation persists.

## THE GEOPOLITICS: SECURITY, DIVERSITY AND THE COST OF SURPRISE

The shocks of recent years (pandemics, commodity

swings and geopolitical conflict) have re-emphasised energy security. When supplies are tight, prices spike and consumers suffer. OPEC, OPEC+ and major producer states make no secret of their view: underinvestment in upstream capacity risks price volatility and economic pain. That argument may seem political, but it is also pragmatic – governments must balance climate goals with price stability and domestic industry resilience.

Recent policy shifts underline the complexity of that balance. In the United States, the Trump administration's rollback of renewable incentives and regulatory supports has slowed parts of the clean-energy momentum, while voices like Chris Wright, the US Energy Secretary, have gone further in calling for recognition of a "national energy emergency," urging Washington to safeguard oil and gas development as a strategic necessity. At the same time, the International Energy Agency (IEA), once strongly cautioning against new oil and gas investment, has recently softened its stance, acknowledging that continued upstream spending is required to prevent shortages and volatility during the transition.

For importers, building diversified sources of gas and oil (pipelines, LNG terminals, strategic stocks) is now a policy priority. For exporters, leveraging energy resources to fund development remains a core objective. The result is not a straight race to renewables; it is a complicated choreography in which hydrocarbons play an active, long-running part.

### INDUSTRY RESPONSE: ADAPTATION, NOT ABDICATION

Big oil is changing shape. The majors (ExxonMobil, Chevron, Shell, TotalEnergies, BP, Equinor, ADNOC, Saudi Aramco) are quietly reallocating capital: continuing to fund commercial oil and gas where returns justify it, while investing in carbon capture and storage (CCS), blue and green hydrogen and low-carbon power. This is not hypocrisy; it is risk management. Companies must satisfy shareholder returns, manage regulatory risk and ensure future relevance. Their balance sheets show both continuing hydrocarbons investments and growing allocations to transition technologies.

At the same time, emergent business models, including gas-to-power projects, gas commercialisation in Africa, petrochemical feedstock investments, are bridging development, revenue and climate objectives. Gas monetisation projects, for example, convert waste flared gas into electricity, fertilizer feedstock, CNG, LPG or LNG, delivering both climate and growth wins.

### THE PLAUSIBLE FUTURE: A DUAL-TRACK SYSTEM

Put these threads together and a pragmatic picture emerges: the world is moving to a dual-track energy system. On one track, electricity generation in many countries will become increasingly dominated by renewables, powered by falling costs, policy support and rapid technological progress. On the other track, fossil fuels will

remain deeply embedded; reengineered to be cleaner, more efficient and more tightly regulated, especially in sectors that are hard to electrify or where low-carbon alternatives remain expensive.

Across scenarios from leading analytics firms, the details vary but the structural contours are remarkably consistent. Renewables will continue their dramatic rise in power generation. Oil demand may peak much later than predicted by IEA, depending on policy ambition and technological breakthroughs and significant consumption will persist well into the 2050s. And despite the transition narrative, investment in upstream oil and gas still runs into the hundreds of billions of dollars each year, reflecting the scale, longevity and continued centrality of these projects to the global energy system. Despite the powerful transition narrative, BP Energy Outlook shows that billions still flow into oil and gas each year, with upstream investment alone running into the hundreds of billions. It is a striking reminder that, for all the talk of transition, oil and gas projects remain the backbone of the global energy system; vast in scale, built for decades and impossible to switch off overnight.

### What this means for regulators and policy (Regulate for Order, Not Chaos)

For regulators and policymakers, the message is blunt: steer the transition with discipline or risk chaos. That means exercising responsible stewardship of fossil assets and charting clear sustainability mandates; using gas as a pragmatic bridge fuel but locking down methane leaks and flaring; gradually demanding decarbonisation add-ons like CCUS, hydrogen readiness and electrified operations as the price of new approvals; safeguarding energy security through more oil and gas developments, diversified supply and more resilient grids. Above all, it calls for fiscal clarity and credible transition pathways that keep markets stable and capital flowing, without sparking stranded-asset panic.

### FINAL WORD: PRAGMATISM TRUMPS POLARITY

The energy debate is too often framed as a binary battle between "fossil" and "future." Reality sits in the middle. The world is building more solar and wind than ever (a transformative and necessary shift) while also investing hundreds of billions into oil and gas projects that underpin transport, industry and development. That duality is not failure; it is the practical management of risk, welfare and technology in a complex world.

If regulators, companies and governments pursue smart, evidence-based policies, combining rapid renewable deployment with stricter emissions controls, responsible hydrocarbon stewardship and expansion of energy access, the next few decades can deliver both stability and progress. Oil and gas will remain part of the energy story for decades to come; cleaner than before, better managed than before and still an indispensable pillar of the global. ■

# FROM LOCAL MANDATE TO GLOBAL MOMENTUM: NUPRC'S STRATEGIC LEAP

- Kelechi Onyekachi Ofoegbu, PhD -

In the ever-evolving landscape of global energy, few institutions have undergone a transformation as profound, deliberate and visionary as the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC). Born from the crucible of reform and charged with the responsibility of regulating Nigeria's upstream petroleum sector, the Commission has, in just a few years, transitioned from a national mandate to a continental benchmark and now, a global reference point. This is not a tale of incremental progress. It is a story of strategic leap. A story of how a regulator, once confined to domestic oversight, has become a catalyst for international dialogue, innovation and investment.

The establishment of NUPRC under the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) marked a watershed moment in Nigeria's energy governance. For decades, the upstream sector had operated under fragmented regulatory frameworks, often burdened by opacity, inefficiency and investor uncertainty. The PIA was not merely a legislative instrument, it was a declaration of intent. It signaled Nigeria's readiness to embrace global best practices, to streamline its regulatory architecture and to reposition its upstream assets as globally competitive.



**NUPRC INVESTED HEAVILY IN CAPACITY BUILDING, ENSURING THAT ITS PERSONNEL, FROM FIELD INSPECTORS TO POLICY ANALYSTS, WERE EQUIPPED WITH THE SKILLS, TOOLS AND MINDSET REQUIRED FOR MODERN REGULATION**

NUPRC emerged as the institutional embodiment of that intent, tasked with ensuring that Nigeria's vast hydrocarbon resources are managed with transparency, efficiency and strategic foresight.

From its earliest days, the Commission understood that credibility would be its currency. It was not enough to regulate, it had to inspire confidence. It had to demonstrate that Nigeria was not just a resource-rich nation, but a responsible steward of those resources. To that end, NUPRC embarked on a comprehensive modernisation agenda. Legacy systems were overhauled. Digital platforms were deployed. Data transparency became a cornerstone. The National Production Monitoring System (NPMS) was enhanced to provide real-time visibility into production volumes. The Upstream Measurement Management System (UMMS) was introduced to ensure accuracy and accountability in metering. These were not cosmetic upgrades, they were structural reforms designed to align Nigeria's upstream sector with global standards.

But technology alone does not build trust. People do. Processes do. Culture does. NUPRC invested heavily in capacity building, ensuring that its personnel, from



field inspectors to policy analysts, were equipped with the skills, tools and mindset required for modern regulation. International partnerships were forged with institutions in Norway, Canada and the United Kingdom, facilitating knowledge exchange and benchmarking. The Commission's internal culture shifted from reactive enforcement to proactive engagement.

Operators were no longer adversaries, they were stakeholders. Communities were no longer peripheral, they were partners. The regulator had become a facilitator.

This shift in posture was most evident in the Commission's approach to investor relations. Historically, Nigeria's upstream sector had been viewed with cautious optimism by international investors, attractive in geology, but challenging in governance. NUPRC sought to change that narrative. Through targeted roadshows, policy briefings and bilateral engagements, the Commission began to tell a new story. A story of reform. A story of opportunity. A story of stability. The response was swift and encouraging. Licensing rounds began to attract more diverse participation. Marginal field development gained momentum. Strategic investments in gas infrastructure and deepwater exploration were revived. Nigeria was back on the radar, not as a risk, but as a rising star.

Yet, the Commission's ambitions were never limited

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## MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONS ARE CITING NUPRC'S REFORMS IN THEIR COUNTRY REPORTS. THE GLOBAL OIL AND GAS COMMUNITY IS TAKING NOTE

to national borders. It recognised that Africa's energy future would be shaped not by isolated efforts, but by regional collaboration. NUPRC became an active participant in the African Petroleum Producers Organisation (APPO), contributing to policy harmonisation, capacity development and cross-border investment facilitation. It hosted delegations from Ghana, Angola, Senegal and Mozambique, sharing insights on regulatory reform, digital transformation and stakeholder engagement. It positioned Nigeria not just as a producer, but as a thought leader. The continent began to look to NUPRC not just for guidance, but for inspiration.

This continental momentum reached a new peak at the Africa Oil Week (AOW) conference in Accra, Ghana, in September 2025. For the first time, the event was held outside South Africa, signaling a shift in Africa's energy geography. NUPRC's presence was commanding. Its delegation led panels on cost optimisation, ESG compliance and regulatory innovation. Its Commissioner for

Corporate Services delivered a keynote on the role of data in upstream governance, drawing applause and interest from global stakeholders. Bilateral meetings with Ghana's Petroleum Commission, Senegal's COS-PETROGAZ and Angola's ANPG laid the groundwork for joint initiatives. The Commission was no longer just participating, it was shaping the agenda.

But global relevance requires more than presence, it demands performance. NUPRC's strategic leap has been anchored in measurable impact. Production volumes are being tracked with greater accuracy. Revenue leakages are being plugged. Environmental compliance is being enforced with rigor. Community development agreements are being monitored for delivery. The Commission's dashboard is not just a repository of data, it is a reflection of accountability. And that accountability is being recognised. International rating agencies have begun to factor regulatory stability into their assessments of Nigeria's upstream sector. Multilateral institutions are citing NUPRC's reforms in their country reports. The global oil and gas community is taking note.

Perhaps the most profound aspect of NUPRC's evolution is its embrace of the energy transition. While Nigeria remains committed to maximising its hydrocarbon value, the Commission understands that the future is multi-dimensional. It has launched initiatives to promote gas as a transition fuel, to incentivise carbon capture technologies and to support flare reduction. It is engaging with climate finance institutions, exploring green bonds and integrating ESG metrics into its regulatory framework. It is not resisting the transition, it is navigating it. And it is doing so with a clear understanding of Nigeria's developmental needs and global responsibilities.

Internally, the Commission has also undergone a cultural renaissance. The Corporate Services Directorate, in particular, has played a pivotal role in shaping NUPRC's brand, voice and institutional identity. Through strategic communications, stakeholder engagement and organisational development, the Directorate has ensured that the Commission's reforms are not just implemented, but understood. It has built bridges between policy and perception, between regulation and reputation. It has positioned NUPRC not just as a regulator, but as a trusted institution.

As the global energy landscape continues to evolve, NUPRC's journey offers valuable lessons. It shows that reform is possible, even in complex environments. It demonstrates that credibility can be built, even after years of skepticism. It proves that local mandates, when executed with vision and integrity, can generate global



## INTERNATIONAL RATING AGENCIES HAVE BEGUN TO FACTOR REGULATORY STABILITY INTO THEIR ASSESSMENTS OF NIGERIA'S UPSTREAM SECTOR.



momentum. And it reminds us that institutions matter, that behind every barrel of oil, every cubic foot of gas and every megawatt of power, there must be governance that is transparent, accountable and strategic.

Looking ahead, the Commission is not resting on its laurels. It is expanding its digital footprint, enhancing its regulatory sandbox, and deepening its stakeholder engagement. It is exploring blockchain applications for asset tracking, AI tools for predictive analytics, and satellite technologies for environmental monitoring. It is building the future, not just regulating the present. And it is doing so with a sense of purpose that is both national and global.

In conclusion, the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission has made a strategic leap, from local mandate to global momentum. It has redefined what it means to regulate. It has shown that Africa can lead in energy governance. And it has positioned Nigeria as a beacon of reform, resilience and relevance. For the global oil and gas community, NUPRC is not just a case study, it is a partner. A partner in progress. A partner in innovation. A partner in shaping the energy future we all share. ■

## Interview

# NUPRC READY FOR NEW TAX REGIME, SAYS EXECUTIVE COMMISSIONER, F & A

- Ruth Tonjing -

**Mr. Muhammad Sabo Lamido is the Executive Commissioner, Finance and Accounts (F&A), at the NUPRC. In this interview with The Upstream Gaze, the EC discusses the department's role in driving financial transparency, regulatory compliance and operational efficiency.**

**He also shares insights on the Commission's strategic objective to become Africa's leading oil and gas regulator, the smooth transition from the defunct Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR), internal reforms boosting revenue performance and efforts to align with evolving tax laws and financial reporting standards.**



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## **Establishing the NUPRC as Africa's premier upstream petroleum regulator remains a central strategic goal. How is your department actively driving this vision forward and contributing to its realisation?**

The Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) was established through an Act of Parliament by the National Assembly, replacing the defunct Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR). The Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) serves as the enabling legal framework that brought the NUPRC into existence. The Commission was created with a specific mandate and is guided by a strategic vision and mission aimed at implementing the provisions of the PIA effectively.

Here in the Finance and Accounts (F and A) Department of the NUPRC, our task is clear and well-defined. We work in close collaboration with other departments, strictly adhering to the rules and regulations outlined in the PIA, as well as other relevant federal government guidelines. These include the Financial Regulations, Budget Rules, Stores Regulations and the standards of the Financial Reporting Council, among others. However, our primary focus remains on compliance with the PIA in all financial duties and responsibilities.

By engaging with other Strategic Business Units (SBUs), we execute the accounting functions of the Commission and ensure that all necessary documentation and record-keeping requirements are met in line with accounting standards and regulations. Additionally, we fulfil periodic financial reporting obligations to agencies such as the Office of the Accountant General, the Federal Ministry of Finance, the National Assembly and the Public Accounts Committee, among others. Through these measures, we ensure that our roles are effectively discharged within the required parameters, all contributing to our overarching objective of becoming Africa's top regulatory agency.

### **How is the department working to entrench transparency in the operations of the Commission?**

It's straightforward, by strictly adhering to the established rules that govern accounting operations, as prescribed by the PIA. The Federal Ministry of Finance has specific documents that guide these operations, including the Financial Regulations and the Stores Regulations. Most importantly, we uphold principles of budget discipline and transparency. Reporting requirements are central to our activities and we ensure strict compliance with them.

### **Your department is the money house of the**

## **Commission; how does the department comply with financial reporting standards and the Fiscal Responsibility Act and partner with the Nigerian Reporting Council?**

To begin with, Section 185 (3–4) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides the legal basis for entities involved in public accounting operations. The Financial Regulations and Stores Regulations further outline the proper conduct and standards. The Financial Reporting Council (FRC), also established by an Act of Parliament, is responsible for enforcing standardisation across all government agencies. It has provided a set of standards that every agency must adhere to in presenting their financial stewardship.

At the F and A Department, we ensure full compliance with these standards. This includes strict adherence to timeliness in financial reporting, ensuring the comprehensiveness of submitted documentation and aligning our practices with oversight expectations.

We comply with all regulations and standards issued by public accountability agencies, ensuring full transparency and accuracy. Personally, having served as an Auditor General of a state and having risen through the ranks from a clerical assistant, financial reporting is second nature to me. When I joined the NUPRC, I was determined to crown my career with excellence.

## **How are you getting the NUPRC ready for the new tax laws coming into effect in January?**

Tax matters are of significant concern, not just to the NUPRC, but to all Nigerians. We have closely followed the development of the new tax reform acts from their proposal to passage by the National Assembly and ultimately, to the President for assent.

As the primary agency responsible for generating foreign exchange for the nation, the NUPRC's interest in these new developments is paramount. I'm pleased to inform you that our department, with the full support of the Commission Chief Executive, Engr. Gbenga Komolafe, recently conducted a comprehensive three-day training on the contents, challenges, implications and expectations of the new tax laws. This training enhanced our understanding significantly. Furthermore, we plan to organise additional in-house sessions to

ensure that all staff and indeed every taxpayer in Nigeria is well-informed and prepared ahead of the January 2026 implementation date. The changes introduced by these laws are extensive and must be thoroughly understood for effective compliance. I can confidently say that the F and A Department is ready.



**FINANCIAL REPORTING  
IS SECOND NATURE TO  
ME. WHEN I JOINED  
THE NUPRC, I WAS  
DETERMINED TO CROWN  
MY CAREER WITH  
EXCELLENCE**

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### **How were you able to manage the transition from DPR to NUPRC in a seamless manner?**

You will agree that the drafters of the PIA had a clear vision. A team of experts, well-verses in DPR operations, was assembled to create the PIA. Therefore, the NUPRC is essentially an evolution of the former DPR.

Public service is a continuum. When you examine the structure of the NUPRC, apart from the legal framework provided by the PIA, about 90% of its staff were formerly with the DPR. The difference lies in leadership, new commissioners were appointed to head the organisation. Many of these commissioners, however, are also from the defunct DPR, which facilitated a smooth transition. Our current leadership, led by Engr. Gbenga Komolafe is composed of seasoned professionals with deep knowledge of Nigeria's oil and gas sector. Engr. Komolafe has previously served with the Petroleum Products Pricing Regulatory Agency (PPPRA) and understands the industry's dynamics thoroughly.

His appointment was indeed a wise decision by the presidency. Under his leadership and with commissioners who are familiar with DPR practices, the transition to the NUPRC has been seamless. The achievements recorded so far are commendable and we are constantly strategising to meet and exceed the expectations of the Federal Government.

### **Could you explain how the Finance and Accounts department has contributed to improving fiscal clarity and confidence that have enabled investment flows?**

As the Department responsible for internal financial administration within the NUPRC, F and A plays a critical role in supporting the Commission's day-to-day operations. We ensure the prompt accounting of revenue and timely fulfilment of obligations, such as staff salaries, transport allowances and travel claims. By energising the operational machinery of the NUPRC, we empower staff across various units, including zonal and field offices to function effectively. We treat all financial matters with urgency, particularly those relating to national obligations. This seamless internal support enhances our overall service delivery, builds confidence and contributes to the positive investment climate within the oil and gas sector.

### **What specific financial reforms or accounting practices introduced under the Act have had the most impact?**

Before the enactment of the PIA, the DPR operated under the appropriation system, preparing annual budgets like all other MDAs, which were then submitted to the National Assembly for approval.



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### **OUR CURRENT LEADERSHIP, LED BY ENGR. GBENGA KOMOLAFE IS COMPOSED OF SEASONED PROFESSIONALS WITH DEEP KNOWLEDGE OF NIGERIA'S OIL AND GAS SECTOR**

However, the PIA introduced a more performance-based approach. Under the new framework, the NUPRC receives its funding from a 4% Cost of Collection allocation. This was a strategic move by the architects of the PIA to enhance efficiency and accountability. This approach challenges the Commission to boost national revenue performance. The more revenue we generate, particularly through royalties. The more funds become available for internal operations. It's a performance driven model. Since the transition from DPR, the NUPRC has recorded higher revenue generation, directly resulting in increased internal funding. This

motivates staff to work harder, knowing that improved performance translates into better operational support. This reform has driven a new culture of accountability and efficiency across the Commission.

### **A delegation from the Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria met with the Commission recently, for both parties to work closely to enforce top-tier financial reporting and corporate governance. How has your department implemented this type of collaboration?**

We welcome every opportunity for improvement and always appreciate feedback from regulatory bodies. In May, a delegation from our department visited the FRC in Lagos for a special seminar. Additionally, about ten of us participated in another FRC seminar held in Kano. These seminars were initiatives of the FRC, aimed at fostering deeper collaboration and enhancing reporting standards.

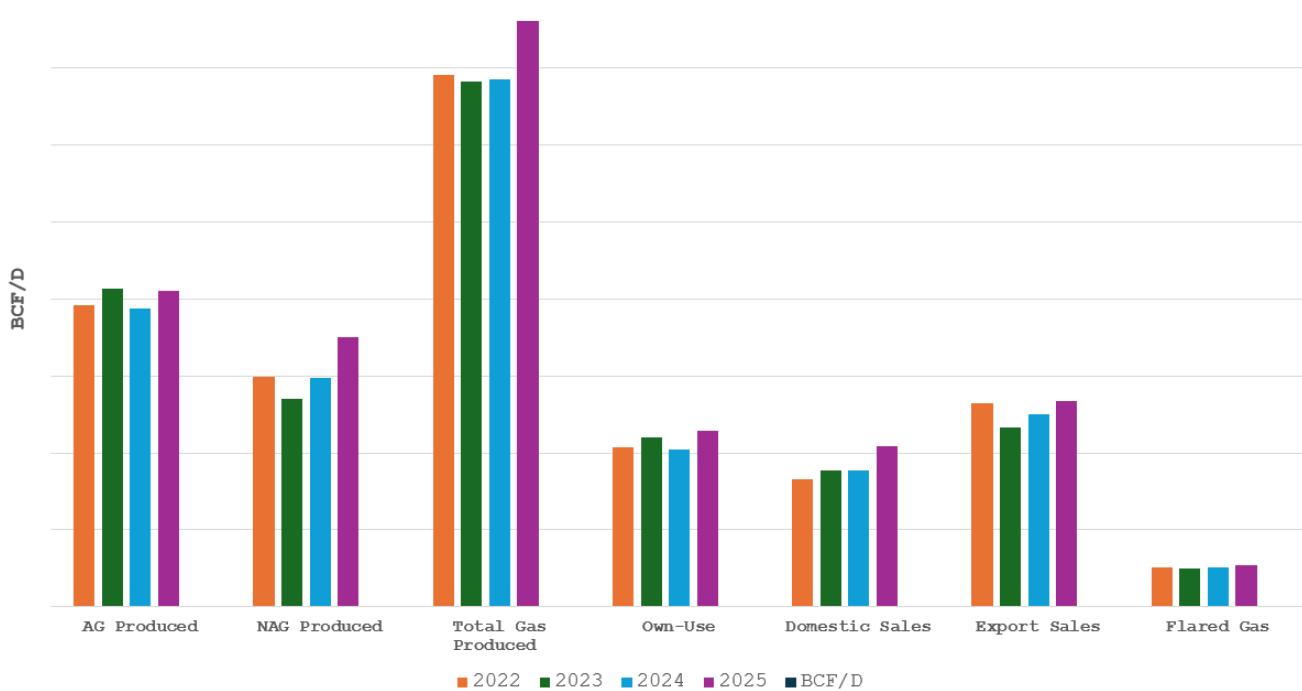
The FRC expressed interest in expanding the scope of our financial reporting to better capture the performance of over 40 companies regulated by the Commission. While we anticipate some resistance from these companies, particularly regarding the submission of financial statements. Collaboration with the FRC will help us develop practical solutions.

Importantly, this does not suggest that our reports to the FRC have been substandard; rather, the FRC seeks innovation and expanded dimensions in reporting. We fully support this initiative and are committed to giving them our full cooperation. ■

2022 - 2025,  
4 - YEAR ANNIVERSARY AS  
PRODUCTION AND UTILISATION  
IN NUMBERS

- Engr. J.C. Anyanwu & Pius .E. E -

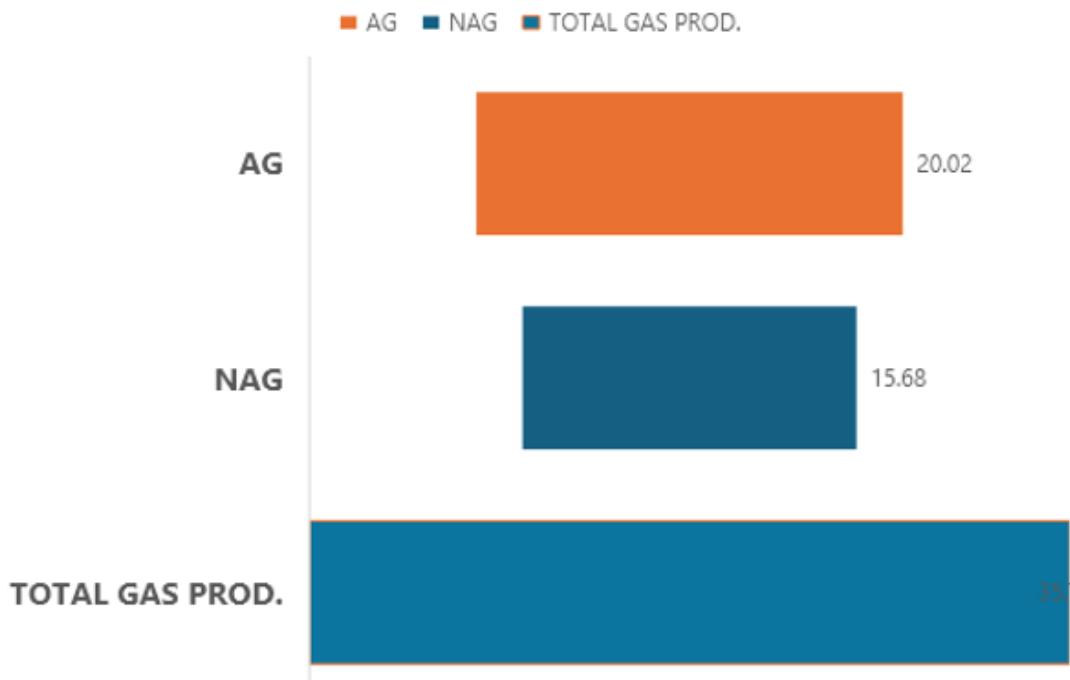
ANNUAL GAS PRODUCTION,  
UTILISATION AND FLARE 2022 TO AUGUST 2025 (BCF/D)



## ANNUAL GAS PRODUCTION, UTILISATION AND FLARE 2022 TO AUGUST 2025 (BCF/D)

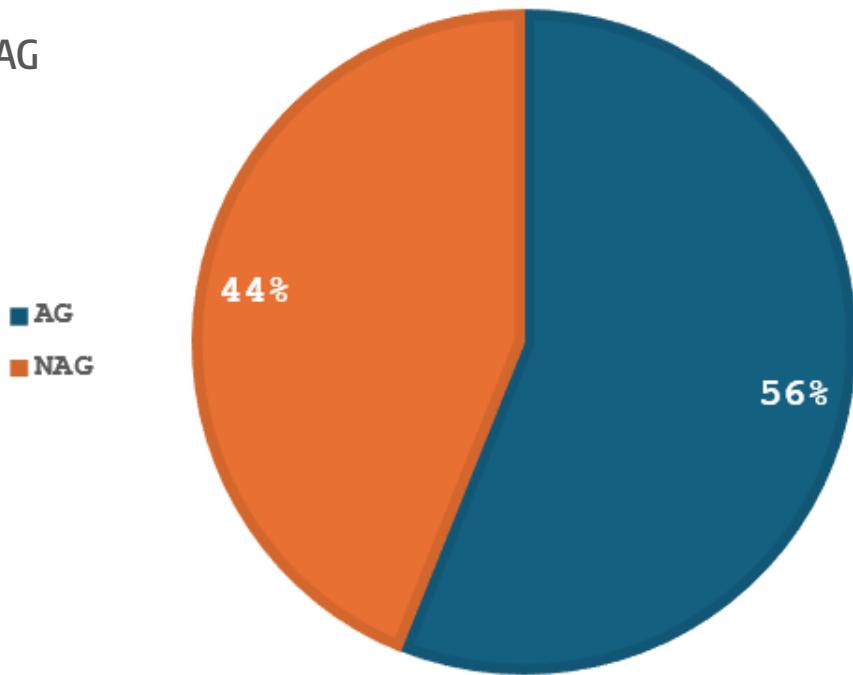


## GAS PRODUCTION SPLIT 2022 - 2025 YTD AUGUST BSCFD



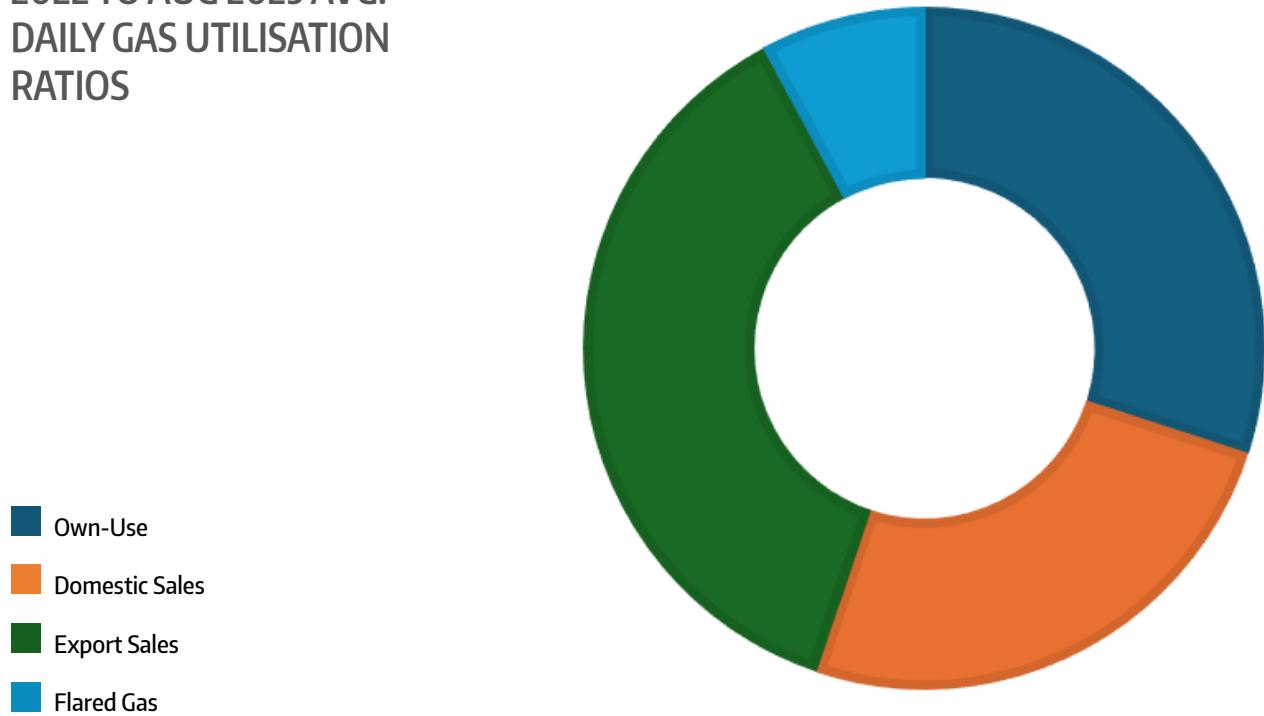
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GAS PRODUCTION SPLIT  
RATIO BETWEEN AG & NAG  
DURING 2022-2025 YTD  
AUGUST

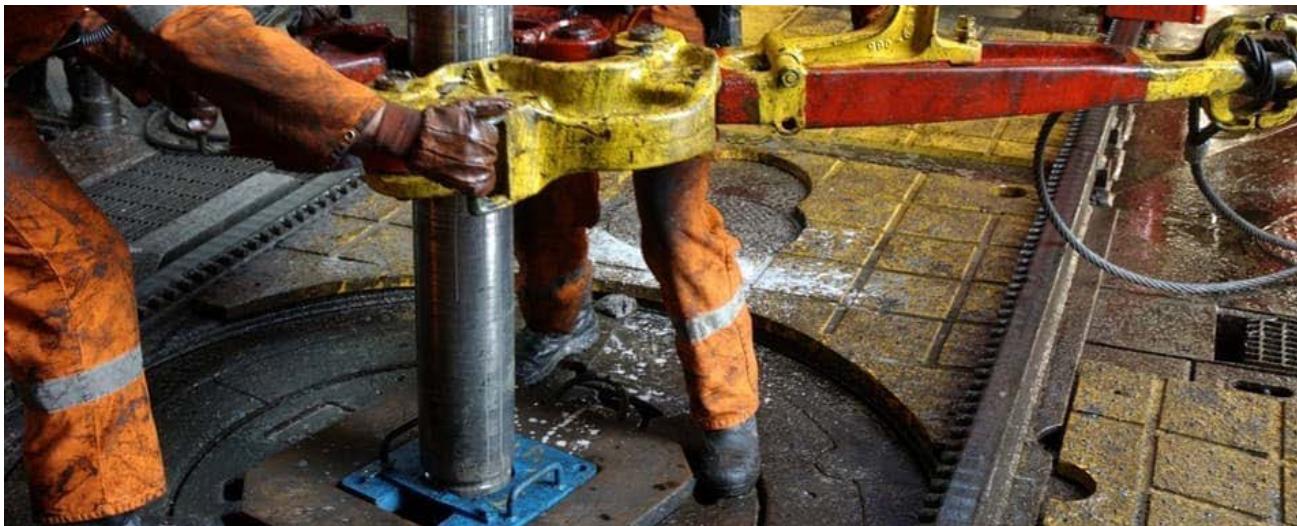


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2022 TO AUG 2025 AVG.  
DAILY GAS UTILISATION  
RATIOS



## INSIGHTS FROM THE GAS NUMBERS



Over the past five years, Gas operations have demonstrated remarkable resilience and steady growth despite industry-wide challenges. Following a temporary dip in output between 2022 and 2024, gas production rebounded in 2025 to a daily average of 7.61 Billion Cubic Feet per day in response to the many initiative of the Government towards production ramp up.

This recovery has been matched by the commitment to the domestic market, with gas deliveries rising consistently from 1.65 BCF/D in 2022 to 2.08 BCF/D in 2025, ensuring more Nigerian homes and industries benefit from clean and reliable energy. Export performance also strengthened, recovering from 2.33 BCF/D in 2023 to 2.67/D BCF in 2025, reinforcing our position as a dependable supplier to international markets.

Equally important is the progress in environmental stewardship. Gas flaring has been reduced from a daily average of 0.69 Billion cubic feet per day in 2021 to around 0.55 Billion cubic feet per day in 2025, even as production increased, underscoring our drive towards zero routine flaring by 2030.

The above further supports the fact that the Commission remains committed to driving policies and regulatory oversight that promote gas development, enhance energy security and support Nigeria's transition towards a cleaner and more sustainable energy future

## KEY GAS FACTS FOR 2025 YTD

| SN | DESCRIPTION      | 2022        | 2023        | 2024       | 2025       |
|----|------------------|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|
| 1  | Total Production | 6.91 BSCF/D | 6.83 BSCF/D | 6.84BSCF/D | 7.61BSCF/D |
| 2  | Export Sales     | 38.3%       | 34.2%       | 36.6%      | 35.2%      |
| 3  | Domestic Sales   | 23.9%       | 26.0%       | 25.9%      | 27.4%      |
| 4  | Field/Own Use    | 29.9%       | 32.3%       | 29.8%      | 30.1%      |
| 5  | Flaring          | 7.5%        | 7.4%        | 7.6%       | 7.2%       |



## Interview

# \$1BN INVESTMENT IN USAN DEEPWATER CAN UNLOCK 40,000BPD - EXXONMOBIL NIGERIA CEO

- Olajumoke Kila -

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**Mr. Jagir Baxi has worked in ExxonMobil since 1999, holding various leadership positions in the oil major. In July 2025, he was appointed Chairman and Managing Director, ExxonMobil subsidiaries in Nigeria which include Esso Exploration and Production Nigeria Limited and Esso Exploration and Production Nigeria (Offshore East) Limited.**

**In this interview with The Upstream Gaze, he discusses the company's operations in Nigeria and the NUPRC's role in its growth.**



**As an operator with a long history in Nigeria, how would you compare the regulatory environment before the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) and after its passage?**

The Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) has introduced much-needed structure and clarity to Nigeria's oil and gas regulatory landscape. Previously, the sector was governed by outdated legislation, the Petroleum Act of 1969 and fragmented oversight from multiple agencies. This led to factors such as regulatory opacity, overlapping mandates and a dated approach to regulatory matters which created an uncompetitive environment and subsequently discouraged investment.

The PIA addresses a majority of these issues, especially streamlining regulation, enhancing fiscal transparency and promoting responsible operations. It allows more of the unique strengths and competitive advantages of an IOC like ExxonMobil (via its affiliate companies like Esso Exploration and Production Nigeria Limited (Esso) to be applied in Nigeria for mutual benefit to investors and the country alike.

However, opportunities to improve the regulatory environment remain, which is only natural when implementing such a complex regulatory reform. Areas that can continue to improve include overlapping roles of regulators and further adjustments that can create more globally consistent investment competitiveness. Under the leadership of the Commission Chief Executive (CCE), the NUPRC has shown commendable resolve in tackling some of these hurdles.

**From ExxonMobil's standpoint, how well has the NUPRC managed to balance regulatory reforms with investor confidence in the post-PIA era?**

The NUPRC has demonstrated leadership in trying to balance regulatory reforms with investor confidence. Esso has appreciated the collaborative spirit and willingness to engage Nigerian operators along this journey. The NUPRC continues to take a stakeholder-driven approach to developing regulations which is commendable,

reflecting a willingness to listen, learn and adapt throughout the implementation of PIA reforms.

A notable example is how the NUPRC provided valuable leadership through recent IOC divestments, facilitating the successful conclusion of those transactions, while ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements.

**What is ExxonMobil's take on the Commission's role in facilitating the divestment of Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited's (MPNU) assets to Seplat Energy, particularly in ensuring a transparent and well-regulated process?**

The NUPRC established a clear and transparent divestment framework to guide the approval of the share sale of Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited (or MPNU) to Seplat Energy. This framework set the criteria for evaluating a variety of important technical and financial requirements for both Buyer and Seller, while ensuring MPNU's compliance with regulatory requirements. The process was a clear example of the collaboration between the NUPRC and

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**UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE COMMISSION CHIEF EXECUTIVE (CCE), THE NUPRC HAS SHOWN COMMENDABLE RESOLVE IN TACKLING SOME OF THESE HURDLES**



stakeholders, while ensuring regulatory compliance and objective, transparent oversight. Approval was granted once all conditions were met by the transaction parties.

**What are your thoughts on safeguards the Commission put in place to guarantee that obligations tied to the MPNU-Seplat deal are fully met, especially with respect to environmental and community responsibilities?**

The MPNU share sale to Seplat Energy was completed after obtaining all necessary regulatory approvals from NUPRC following its due diligence process. This provided regulatory clarity on divestment, environmental and host community obligations. Esso remains committed to full compliance with applicable environmental laws and to conducting our operations in a way that supports both the environmental and economic well-being of the communities in which we operate

**As NUPRC marks four years, what are the biggest opportunities you see for Nigeria's upstream sector under its watch and what areas would you like to see improved to sustain investor interest?**

The biggest opportunities for Nigeria's upstream sector are in successfully navigating the next phase of growth projects especially in the deepwater and to unlock offshore and deepwater gas resources. Deepwater oil and gas investments are amongst the

most expensive endeavours in this industry. Investors like Esso seek to balance the inherent geologic potential of offshore Nigeria with a variety of risks and opportunities in areas such as regulatory and fiscal certainty, project and drilling execution, global market uncertainties and needs of many stakeholders, while generating



**THE BIGGEST OPPORTUNITIES FOR NIGERIA'S UPSTREAM SECTOR ARE IN SUCCESSFULLY NAVIGATING THE NEXT PHASE OF GROWTH PROJECTS ESPECIALLY IN THE DEEPWATER AND TO UNLOCK OFFSHORE AND DEEPWATER GAS RESOURCES**

a return on their investments that can compete for massive capital requirements in a global deepwater portfolio of project opportunities. Enhancing oversight to be cost effective, efficient and investment-friendly, without eroding value or competitiveness is essential

to sustaining investor confidence, as envisioned under Section 25 of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA).

**In May, ExxonMobil pledged to inject over \$1 billion into the development of its deepwater operations in Nigeria, specifically the Usan deepwater oilfield, located on the key offshore block OML 138. How many barrels do you envisage this could add to the current production capacity?**

Esso is rapidly progressing this investment in the form of an infill drilling programme in the OML 138 (Usan) block with its partners. This investment will occur from this year until 2027. This investment is once again an example of where the NUPRC and Esso have collaborated towards an update to the Field Development Plan which is nearing approval. Esso anticipates that this investment will unlock around 30 – 40 thousand barrels of oil per day (30-40 KBD) through multiple new drilling targets in the Usan field. ■





## FOUR YEARS OF REFORMS: HOW NUPRC IS RESHAPING NIGERIA'S UPSTREAM SECTOR

- Akpandem James, frnge -

The Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) has proudly celebrated four monumental years of groundbreaking growth and reform, revolutionising Nigeria's upstream oil and gas sector with visionary regulation, ground-breaking innovation and unwavering transparency.

A creation of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) of 2021, the Commission has rapidly risen to become a

pivotal force, pioneering a new era of stability, accountability and ingenuity in a sector that has remained the heartbeat of Nigeria's economy. With each step, the NUPRC has reshaped the landscape, turning challenges into opportunities and reaffirming its indispensable role in fueling the nation's progress.

From reserves expansion and production optimisation to gas development, fiscal governance and host community engagement, the NUPRC has repositioned



Nigeria for sustainable and globally competitive energy development. The achievements over this period are not merely institutional milestones; they reflect a broader narrative of how regulation can unlock national potential when backed by clear laws, modern tools and determined leadership.

#### **Reserves Growth and Acreage Management**

Nigeria's energy future depends critically on the size and certainty of its oil and gas reserves. Over the past four years, the NUPRC has initiated efforts to increase reserves, improve acreage management and intensify exploration activities, marking a transition from survival to renewal in the oil sector under the PIA.

Key achievements include the issuance of Nigeria's first Petroleum Exploration Licence (PEL) under the PIA, covering a geophysical survey of nearly 56,000sqm offshore. This generated new seismic data and demonstrated the NUPRC's commitment to modernising exploration with efficiency and transparency.

The Commission successfully concluded the 2020

Marginal Field Bid Round, awarding 47 Petroleum Prospecting Licences (PPLs). Additionally, 22 marginal fields awarded before the PIA were converted into production-ready licences, ensuring regulatory alignment and continuity. Voluntary licence conversions also played a crucial role: 29 Oil Mining Leases (OMLs) were transformed into Petroleum Mining Leases (PMLs), clarifying fiscal terms and boosting investment certainty.

Exploration was invigorated with 33 appraisal wells drilled and supervised, leading to discoveries such as TotalEnergies' Ntokon field, Elcrest/Seplat JV's Sibiri field and NEPL's Isoko field. Meanwhile, efforts to maximise existing fields focus on enhanced recovery techniques and reactivating dormant wells, targeting over 500 million barrels of recoverable oil. This had the capacity to boost production by up to 700,000 barrels per day, supporting Nigeria's compliance with OPEC quotas.

Rig activity rose dramatically from eight to around 46 by July 2025, reflecting renewed investor confidence, while partnerships with firms like Brazil's Petrobras aim to revitalise deep-water exploration. The government's plans to auction undeveloped oil and gas blocks create additional opportunities for credible investors to bring



**THE NUPRC HAS RESHAPED THE LANDSCAPE, TURNING CHALLENGES INTO OPPORTUNITIES AND REAFFIRMING ITS INDISPENSABLE ROLE IN FUELING THE NATION'S PROGRESS**

capital and technology.

The monumentally successful 2024 Oil Bid Round introduced a diverse array of opportunities, featuring a combination of onshore, shallow-water and deep-offshore blocks. Notably, some deep offshore blocks from the previous 2022 mini-bid round were incorporated into the licensing process.

To encourage greater participation, the entry fees or signature bonuses were significantly reduced. In one instance, the fees dropped from approximately \$200 million to around \$10 million, making it more accessible for investors. The newly structured fiscal terms and contracting arrangements were designed to be more favorable, with an emphasis on local content and simplified procedures.

The bidding process was conducted digitally through online platforms, promoting transparency and accessibility. Public hearings and stakeholder engagement played a crucial role, ensuring that the process remained open, competitive and inclusive, with involvement from regulatory bodies, civil society and media representatives.



Bidders were required to demonstrate their financial capacity, technical expertise and adherence to environmental and ESG standards, while also fulfilling work programme obligations, exploration commitments and minimum guarantees outlined in the licensing model.

Ultimately, the evaluation process resulted in 25 companies being awarded contracts, attracting a mix of international oil firms and local players, which highlights the round's appeal across the industry.

Currently, Nigeria's official reserves stand at about 37.28 billion barrels of oil and 210.54 trillion cubic feet (TCF) of gas, ranking it as Africa's hydrocarbon giant. Despite challenges in unlocking reserves and attracting investment amidst the global energy transition, Nigeria balances ambition with pragmatism by emphasising steady growth and sustainability.

As the Commission enters its fourth year, these coordinated efforts in reserves growth and acreage management position Nigeria to cautiously shape its energy future, reinforcing its critical role in the African energy landscape.

#### Production and Facility Optimisation

For Nigeria, reserves without production translate into lost opportunities. The NUPRC has therefore prioritised the unlocking of stalled assets and optimisation of

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**CURRENTLY, NIGERIA'S  
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CUBIC FEET (TCF) OF GAS,  
RANKING IT AS AFRICA'S  
HYDROCARBON GIANT**

existing production infrastructure.

An industry-wide review of shut-in wells identified latent potential of about 700,000 barrels of oil per day (bopd). Following the NUPRC's approval of re-entry and intervention programmes, operators are expected to recover over 6 million barrels of oil and 5 TCF of gas from these previously idle assets.

Key milestones include first oil from the Ikike field, targeting 50,000 bopd, alongside significant progress in the Utapate and Madu fields. To address chronic evacuation challenges caused by vandalism and insecurity, the Commission oversaw the commissioning of Alternative Crude Oil Evacuation Routes (ACOERS) with a combined throughput capacity of 250,000 bopd. These new routes reduce reliance on compromised pipelines and restore investor confidence.

The NUPRC has also encouraged innovation in small-scale and early production schemes. Facilities such as the Aiteo barge-mounted 120,000 bopd system, Tenoil's 10,000 bopd setup and Halkin's 5,000 bopd Atala project highlight the Commission's pragmatic approach: enabling incremental production through flexible solutions while larger projects mature.

The result is a sector regaining momentum, with declining downtime and a more diversified evacuation system to secure output.

#### Gas Development, Utilisation and Energy Transition

If crude oil built Nigeria's economy, gas promises to secure its future. The NUPRC has been a central driver of the federal government's Decade of Gas initiative, ensuring that the country's 209 TCF gas endowment is effectively harnessed for domestic growth and global relevance.

At the core of this strategy is the Domestic Gas Delivery Obligation (DGDO), which compels producers to allocate volumes to the domestic market. Complementing this is the Domestic Crude Oil Supply Obligation (DCSO), which ensures reliable feedstock for Nigeria's expanding refining capacity.

The Commission has worked with operators to monetise approximately 57 TCF of uncommitted gas, creating new opportunities for power generation,

fertilizer plants and industrial use. A strong regulatory push has also come through the Gas Flaring, Venting and Methane Emissions (Prevention of Waste and Pollution) Regulations 2023. By enforcing compliance, the NUPRC superintended a 60% reduction in fugitive methane emissions, making a measurable contribution to Nigeria's climate commitments under the Paris Agreement.

The Nigerian Gas Flare Commercialisation Programme (NGFCP) has been another game-changer. Forty-nine flare sites have been awarded to investors, effectively monetising about half of the currently flared gas. This not only reduces environmental harm but also generates new revenue streams and jobs.

Recognising the global shift toward decarbonisation, the NUPRC set up an Energy Transition and Carbon Monetisation Unit. It has a responsibility of designing frameworks for carbon credit earnings and facilitating early work on carbon capture, utilisation and storage (CCUS). These moves position Nigeria to participate actively in global carbon markets while advancing a just energy transition.

### **Revenue Assurance and Fiscal Administration**

One of the most critical aspects of regulatory performance is how much value is captured for the nation. Since its inception, the NUPRC has overhauled fiscal governance and revenue assurance in the upstream sector. By transitioning the administration of Fiscal Oil Prices (FOP) from the NNPC Ltd to itself, the Commission now ensures transparent and market-reflective pricing. These differentials are published online, enhancing trust among operators and government alike.

To safeguard industry sustainability, the NUPRC introduced financial viability assessments of upstream operators, ensuring that only fiscally sound entities are entrusted with valuable acreage. Its enhanced monitoring and reconciliation systems have not only improved accountability but also consistently delivered results.

Between 2021 and 2024, the Commission contributed approximately ₦26 trillion to the Federation, exceeding set revenue targets. Aggressive debt recovery, tighter cost benchmarking and new royalty models have all improved government's take while keeping investment attractive. For the full year 2024, the Commission generated ₦12.87 trillion. Between January and August 2025, the Commission transferred about ₦7.7 trillion to the Federation Account.

The Commission surpassed its revenue-generating targets for 2024 and is poised for a repeat in 2025, going by emerging numbers. Between 2021 and 2025, the Commission has contributed ₦33.6 trillion to the Federation Account as part of its mandates on

oil royalties, fees and other revenues from upstream operations.

In a sector long dogged by opacity, these strides in fiscal transparency stand out as a benchmark for other regulators in Africa.

### **Transparency, Regulation and Industry Governance**

The Petroleum Industry Act empowered the NUPRC to craft a new regulatory order. In four years, the Commission has developed 25 priority regulations, of which 19 have been gazetted and issued, laying the foundation for long-term stability. These cover issues such as royalty administration, host community development, gas utilisation and environmental standards.

To manage investments more effectively, the NUPRC developed model licences and leases, as well as an Upstream Divestment and Exit Framework to guide asset transfers. The creation of a National Grid System for acreage management has improved data coherence, while a comprehensive review of crude handling agreements has lowered costs and curtailed opportunities for leakages.

Perhaps most significant has been the NUPRC's audit



## **NIGERIA'S UPSTREAM IS NO LONGER A BLACK BOX BUT A SECTOR INCREASINGLY DEFINED BY TRANSPARENCY AND RULE-BASED GOVERNANCE**

of crude oil theft, a chronic challenge that undermines national revenue. By deploying advanced upstream measurement systems and a cargo declaration regime, the Commission has introduced new layers of accountability. Complementing these is a public register of beneficial ownership, which shines a light on the real actors behind corporate entities.

Together, these measures signal a shift: Nigeria's upstream is no longer a black box but a sector increasingly defined by transparency and rule-based governance.

### **Host Communities and Social Performance**

The PIA broke new ground by mandating direct benefits for host communities and the NUPRC has been pivotal in implementing this vision.

The Commission launched the Host Community Development Regulations and facilitated the incorporation of 151 Host Community Development Trusts (HCDTs) with the Corporate Affairs Commission. These trusts now serve as vehicles for direct funding of community projects, ensuring that oil and gas host areas share equitably in the value created.

To monitor and guarantee transparency, the NUPRC developed the HostComply digital platform, where HCDTs can file reports and stakeholders can track compliance. As of 2025, remittances into these trusts had exceeded ₦119.7 billion and \$164.1 million, providing unprecedented resources for social infrastructure and livelihoods. At least 536 community projects are at various stages of completion.

By assigning littoral states to deepwater operators and promoting consistent engagement, the Commission has helped reduce community disruptions, a chronic risk factor in Nigeria's oil and gas sector. The improved social licence to operate is, in itself, a major achievement for stability.

### **Business Process Automation and Institutional Development**

Modern regulators thrive on data and the NUPRC has embraced digitisation as a core tool for reform. In just four years, it has rolled out several bespoke platforms:

- The Model Licence Portal simplifies access and administration for marginal field owners.
- The Revenue Ledger Information System (RLIS) enables real-time monitoring of payments and revenue flows.
- The HostComply platform provides transparency in community trust fund administration.
- End-to-end automation of upstream work processes is nearly complete, promising greater efficiency, less bureaucracy and more investor confidence. The Commission also revamped its corporate systems -migrating to Microsoft 365, rebranding its website and introducing transparency dashboards.

These steps may sound administrative, but they are foundational: in a global industry where information moves in real time, regulators must match pace.

### **Frontier Exploration**

Beyond the traditional Niger Delta, Nigeria's energy future lies in its frontier basins. The PIA recognised this by creating the Frontier Exploration Fund, into which 30% of NNPC Ltd's profit from oil and gas is paid.

The NUPRC operationalised this fund and facilitated the drilling of three frontier wells within four years. Though early-stage, these activities represent a bold step toward diversifying Nigeria's hydrocarbon geography and unlocking reserves in regions like the

Chad Basin and Middle Benue Trough.

If successful, frontier exploration could alter the national map of oil and gas production, creating new economic hubs and opportunities.

### **Conclusion**

In just four years, the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission has executed comprehensive reforms across exploration, production, gas monetisation, fiscal oversight, governance and host community engagement.

The Commission's achievements are not abstract, they are tangible changes: reserves have grown, production is being restored, gas is being commercialised, revenues



are stronger, host communities are empowered and transparency has deepened.

As Nigeria navigates the twin challenges of energy security and energy transition, the NUPRC's performance underscores an important truth: regulation, when credible and innovative, can be a driver of growth rather than a bottleneck.

The next phase will test how these reforms translate into long-term sustainability and global competitiveness. But for now, the NUPRC stands as one of Nigeria's most impactful institutions, reshaping the upstream sector with a vision that balances national interest, investor confidence and environmental responsibility. ■

# MOTIVATED WORKFORCE IS KEY TO NUPRC'S SUCCESS, SAYS EXECUTIVE COMMISSIONER, CS&A

- Nkechi Blessing Nnanna -



**D**r Kelechi Ofoegbu has over 22 years of experience in Nigeria's oil and gas industry. As Executive Commissioner in charge of Corporate Services and Administration, he steers the internal workings of the Commission. In this interview with the Upstream Gaze, he discusses how he runs his department.

**With the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) positioning itself as Africa's foremost regulator, how have you, in your role as Executive Commissioner of Corporate Services and Administration, advanced human capital development, staff welfare and performance management to cultivate a high-performing workforce aligned**

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IT HAS GIVEN US THE MANDATE AND FRAMEWORK TO EMBED GOVERNANCE STANDARDS IN EVERYTHING WE DO, FROM LICENSING TO COMPLIANCE AND FROM INVESTOR RELATIONS TO STAFF ACCOUNTABILITY

**with the vision of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA)?**

At the inception of this management, we recognised that regulations are only as strong as the people behind them. To enable the Commission to deliver on the mandate of the Petroleum Industry Act, we needed a workforce that is skilled, motivated and adaptable to the changing realities of our industry. We deliberately invested in our human capital, spanning from structured capacity development programmes to welfare systems that reassure staff, to performance management that rewards merit. We created and optimised new pathways for growth, for instance, the peer group learning where staff exchange knowledge from various departments and the knowledge sharing sessions where older staff share from their wealth

of experience.

The two recruitment exercises, one of which was concluded recently, are considered major milestones designed to close manpower gaps, inject fresh expertise



## ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE CORPORATE SERVICES & ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT HAS BEEN ENSURING THAT THE NUPRC HAS THE PEOPLE, SYSTEMS AND ENVIRONMENT TO DELIVER ON ITS MANDATE

and secure the Commission's talent pipeline for the future. This generational renewal not only strengthens our capacity but also builds continuity for long-term sustainability. Today, I see an NUPRC workforce that is more agile, motivated and future-ready, fully aligned with the vision of the African leading regulator.

### How has the PIA influenced corporate governance, transparency and regulatory efficiency within the Commission and what has been the ripple effect on investor confidence?

The PIA has been a game-changer in how we operate as a regulator. It has strengthened transparency, accountability and efficiency across the Commission. It has given us the mandate and framework to embed governance standards in everything we do, from licensing to compliance and from investor relations to staff accountability. By institutionalising these principles, the PIA has empowered the NUPRC to serve with integrity and credibility. The result is a regulator that stakeholders can trust, one that is fair, transparent and driven by national interest. One of the clearest demonstrations of this drive for credibility and efficiency was the recently concluded licensing bid round, which was hailed across the industry as open, transparent and professionally managed using technology. For us, it was not just a successful exercise but proof that when systems are built on integrity, investor confidence naturally follows.

### Looking back over these four years, how have investments in office infrastructure, workplace safety and digital innovation translated into measurable gains in productivity and operational excellence?

We understood that if people are to give their best, the working environment and the processes must enable them. Over the past four years, the NUPRC has invested in

modern tools, improved workflows and stronger systems that make the organisation more efficient and staff friendly. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the challenges faced in some locations in recent times, but rest assured that management is actively working to resolve these in the shortest possible time to ensure a more conducive environment for our staff. Additionally, approval has been secured for the provision of laptops and rollout is currently underway. This will enable staff to work more efficiently, embrace flexible work practices and ultimately deliver better results for the Commission. Our commitment is clear: while challenges exist, we will continue to improve facilities and systems to make NUPRC a workplace of choice.

### One of the strengths of your department has been fostering harmonious relations between staff, management and the union. How has this approach contributed to building a sustainable and motivated workforce? What lessons can other agencies learn from the NUPRC model?

One of our greatest strengths has been building trust with staff and the two unions. Our approach has been simple: dialogue, inclusiveness and respect for staff welfare. Already this year, we have held three Joint Consultative Committee meetings where staff concerns were tabled and constructive resolutions reached. This model shows that real industrial peace, not from imposition, but from genuine engagement and the pursuit of common goals, should be emulated by other agencies that view their people as an asset for sustainability.

### NUPRC marks its fourth anniversary. What do you see as the most significant ways in which the Commission, through the CS&A department, has contributed to Nigeria's economic stability and energy security? And how do you envision the next phase of growth, particularly in aligning with national development goals?

In four years, one of the most significant contributions of the Corporate Services & Administration Department has been ensuring that the NUPRC has the people, systems and environment to deliver on its mandate. Through recruitment, training, a transparent performance management system and robust welfare, we have attracted the best in the industry, closed manpower gaps and maintained a motivated workforce capable of supporting regulatory effectiveness and by extension, safeguarding Nigeria's economic stability and energy security. Looking ahead, the next phase is about aligning our human capital strategy even more deliberately with Nigeria's national development goals. We will keep investing in people and workplace systems so that NUPRC not only regulates effectively today but will always innovate and stand resilient in supporting the nation's energy transition and sustainable economic growth." ■



## Interview

# PROJECT 1MMBOPD HAS ADDED 390,000 BARRELS PER DAY - EC AMADASU

- Eniola Akinkuotu -



**Engineer Enorense Amadasu** is a veteran in the oil and gas sector. Since commencing his career as a Petroleum Engineer II at the defunct Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) in January 1994, he has consistently contributed significantly to the sector's growth and evolution. As head of Development and Production (D&P), he oversees the core production activities. He tells *The Upstream Gaze* what his Department has been doing to ramp up production.

## **What key accomplishments would you highlight from your department's efforts to enhance the efficiency, resilience and strategic direction of Nigeria's upstream oil and gas operations?**

In the last four years since the passage of the PIA, the Commission has provided adequate regulatory oversight to promote operational efficiency which has resulted in significant achievements across the Nigerian oil and gas upstream industry. One of such achievements is increasing oil, condensate and gas reserves. The nation witnessed an increase in oil and condensate reserves of 0.63% and a corresponding increase of 1.92% in gas reserves between 2021 and 2025. Another key milestone is an increase in oil production. The average oil production increased by about 48% between 2022 and 2025, resulting in a current average oil and condensate production of 1.7 million barrels per day. In view of this performance, the Commission is focused on growing the nation's crude oil production to 4 million barrels per day in the year 2030 in line with government's aspiration. There has also been a rise in gas production. The average gas production increased by about 1.20% between 2022 and 2025, resulting in a current average gas production of 7.61 million barrels per day. It is important to note that gas production rebounded from the temporary dip between 2022 and 2024 due to government's drive towards a gas driven economy. Consequently, the Commission is focused on further optimisation of regulatory oversight to bolster efforts towards achieving government's aspiration of 12 BSCF/D in 2030.

Crude oil theft also dipped significantly. There has also been a decrease in gas flaring. The average daily gas flare decreased by about 20.29% between 2021 and 2025 underscoring our drive towards zero routine flaring by 2030.

The country also witnessed an increase in Domestic Gas Delivery Obligation (DGDO) performance of 26.06% between the year 2022 and 2025, resulting in a current average DGDO of 2.08 BCF. On the other hand, gas exports between 2023 and 2025 increased by about 14.59%, reinforcing the nation's position as a dependable supplier to international markets.

Furthermore, we have sustained compliance to OPEC quota. The Commission's numerous regulatory initiatives especially the Project one million-billion-barrel incremental initiative as well as kinetic interventions by other stakeholders has contributed significantly to achieving over 90% compliance to OPEC quota in the last few months. It is hoped that this achievement will enhance the nation's chance of an increase in OPEC quota. Expectedly, the various regulatory initiatives and engagements with relevant stakeholders

including rig owners, financiers and operators resulted in a current rig count of 60 up from 16 in 2021 which signifies an increase of about 275%.

## **What key initiatives helped propel these significant achievements?**

In a bid to enhance regulatory oversight and align our service delivery with international best practice and current energy realities, D and P department conceived about 16 initiatives that will be executed in-house and in collaboration with other stakeholders. Some of them include: The Engineering audit of upstream measurement equipment and facilities in the Nigerian oil and gas upstream sector project; Shallow water and deepwater cluster development; Maximum Efficiency Rate (MER) review and implementation project; Production of water handling and high water cut mitigation; Development of heavy oil in Nigeria project; Nigerian carbon sequestration opportunity mapping and monetisation framework.

There is also the automation of key work processes that cut across key deliverables like the improved rig availability, accessibility and uptime; field development plan, DCSO and DGDO monitoring system and drilling performance and cost benchmarking etc.

The D and P Department also ensured the fast Track approval of high impact technologies to optimise/ramp up production. The Technology Adaptation Unit in D and P has approved several high impact technologies for pilot test and subsequent deployment in Nigeria. The technologies have the capacity to resolve lingering subsurface and surface challenges hindering production ramp up in some assets.

The D and P Department monitored and recommended four terminals for the final approval of Mr President. The terminals include: (1) Utapate FSO terminal (2) NNPC 18 terminal and (3) Otakikpo Onshore Terminal (4) Okwok Terminal. These terminals will help to optimise evacuation options and cost for various Operators proximal to the facility. In view of current energy realities and the pivotal role decarbonisation will play in attracting investment for future oil and gas developments, the D and P Department secured the establishment of a new Unit: Energy Sustainability/Carbon Monetisation. This Unit is saddled with the responsibility of steering the nation's upstream industry to optimise crude oil production while ensuring that environmentally friendly technology solutions are sought to produce emission free crude oil more efficiently without jeopardising revenue.

Also, the Department has been providing significant support to the new PPL awardees by offering regulatory

**THE AVERAGE OIL PRODUCTION INCREASED BY ABOUT 48% BETWEEN 2022 AND 2025, RESULTING IN A CURRENT AVERAGE OIL AND CONDENSATE PRODUCTION OF 1.7 MILLION BARRELS PER DAY**

advice and engaging PPL awardees to achieve first oil as prescribed in their work programme obligation via issuance of EWT permits, industry-wide engagement and fast tracking of other permits and licences etc. Consequently, three PPL awardees have commenced production while 10 PPL companies have secured field development plan approvals. Besides these measures, the Commission has implemented a Pre-FDP Temporary Well Flow Approval Initiative to ensure the continued acquisition of critical subsurface data where Extended Well Test (EWT) objectives remain unmet after the completion of the two EWT cycles permitted under section 7(c) of the EWT guidelines.

The D and P Department initiated granting approvals for alternative crude evacuation options in operational areas prone to crude theft and pipeline rupture. Consequently, this initiative has provided an avenue for these operators to sustain production and their development plan despite the previous socio-economic threat of downtime.

**How has the Commission, through your department, enhanced resource optimisation?**

We have adopted a strategic and multi-faceted approach to enhance resource optimisation and ensure sustainable production levels, which are fundamental to guaranteeing Nigeria's energy security. This approach is built on several key pillars. These include: Project 1MMbopd Initiative which was borne out of a presidential directive and the strategic leadership of the Commission's chief Executive Engr. Gbenga Komolafe. Since the project launch, we have consistently engaged with stakeholders in the oil and gas industry and obtained commitment to support and achieve the project's mandate of increasing our national crude oil production by 1MMbopd by Q4 2026. So far, the project's effort has added over 390kbopd with a clear path to achieving its mandate. Also, the D and P Department has enforced stricter guidelines for Field Development Plans (FDPs) and Reservoir Management Plans, requiring operators

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**THIS INITIATIVE HAS BEEN A FLAGSHIP INSTRUMENT IN REDUCING ROUTINE FLARING, UNLOCKING NEW INVESTMENT STREAMS AND DIRECTLY SUPPORTING NIGERIA'S CLIMATE COMMITMENTS**



to employ advanced seismic imaging, reservoir simulation and Enhanced Oil Recovery (EOR) techniques. This ensures that the maximum recoverable volume is extracted from existing assets, optimising the value of the nation's hydrocarbon resources and extending the productive life of fields. Additionally, the Commission

conducts regular performance monitoring and benchmarking of production assets. By mandating robust maintenance schedules and implementing initiatives to reduce facility downtime, the D and P Department has worked to close the gap between Nigeria's installed production capacity and its actual daily production. This directly increases the efficiency and reliability of the production system. Recognising that investment is the lifeblood of production, the NUPRC has streamlined the approval process for FDPs, Well Drilling Proposals and Unitisation Agreements. This regulatory certainty and efficiency have been critical in unlocking Final Investment Decisions (FIDs) for key offshore and deepwater projects, which are essential to counter natural production decline and increase the national production base.

The D and P Department promotes an integrated approach that ties oil development to gas utilisation. By enforcing regulations against gas flaring and incentivising gas utilisation projects for domestic use (NLNG, power generation and gas-based industries), the Commission is not only reducing environmental impact but also creating a parallel revenue stream and bolstering the nation's energy security through a diversified energy mix. In addition, a specific focus has been placed on managing the nation's mature and marginal fields. The D and P Department provides technical support and tailored fiscal terms to make the re-development of these fields economically viable for new operators, leveraging smaller, more agile companies to extract value that may have been overlooked by major operators, thus optimising the national resource base. Our department has placed significant emphasis on reserves growth considering that it is the foundation on which the oil and gas industry rests. As a result, the nation needs to maintain a steady reserves portfolio not only to serve as feedstock to the mid and downstream sectors but also to guarantee strategic planning and revenue generation for the nation. Some reserves growth initiatives include: P3 to 2P reserves growth in producing and produced fields and hydrocarbon maturation studies etc. In a bid to guarantee national energy security, section 109 of the PIA established the Domestic Crude Oil Supply Obligation (DCSO), a regulatory framework requiring oil-producing companies to allocate a portion of their crude oil for domestic refining to support local refineries. The D and P Unit has commenced the full operationalisation of this mandate across the industry.

### **What specific role has D and P Department played in advancing gas commercialisation, reducing flaring and aligning with national energy transition goals**

The D and P Department led structured engagements with upstream companies to screen, evaluate and prioritise key gas supply projects. This exercise involved a rigorous review of projects against criteria such as reserves maturity, infrastructure availability, market access and FID readiness. Through this process, a portfolio of 20 Critical Gas Projects was identified

to bridge the supply gap of over 3bcfd of gas by year 2030 under the Decade of Gas agenda. The Department further facilitated a joint assessment of impediments; ranging from fiscal, commercial and regulatory hurdles to infrastructure bottlenecks and escalated these findings into actionable policy inputs. Insights generated from these strategic engagements became a core evidence base for the design of the Presidential Executive Orders on Non-Associated Gas (NAG), providing tax incentives for green fields. So, by systematically mapping project impediments and opportunities, D and P provided government with data to craft incentive-driven directives, enabling acceleration of investments in NAG development and commercialisation. Additionally, in order to operationalise these incentives, we further developed the measurement guidelines consolidated into a single document for use by the industry. The Presidential Orders and the related Implementation guidelines created the fiscal and contracting enablers that materially changed investment attractiveness of Nigeria's NAG assets. Within months of the new policy signal, several high-impact developments moved forward: the ANOH gas processing project progressed through mechanical completion towards commissioning activities; Iseni field gas development reached a final investment decision to supply significant volumes to domestic offtakers; Ubeta's field development secured a large FID committing several hundred million dollars of capex. These project-level FIDs and commissioning milestones are direct evidence that the D and P led Gas Business and Commercial engagement materially improved project bankability and of the screened projects and helped convert conditional investment interest into binding FIDs and project commitments.

To align with the country's energy transition agenda and reduce flaring, we have driven additional initiatives such as: Development and Implementation of the Framework for Flaring Thresholds and Administration and Gas Solution Mandates in Field Development Plans (FDPs). To ensure sustainable project planning, D and P integrated gas solution mandates into the FDP approval process. This compels operators to incorporate robust gas utilisation, monetisation or flare elimination strategies in their project designs, whether through reinjection, commercialisation or supply to midstream markets before approvals are granted. All of these drive increase gas monetisation while reducing our carbon footprint in line with the national energy transition pathway.

The Department continues to provide oversight and strategic guidance on the NGFCP framework, which enables third-party developers to harness flare gas for power generation, LPG production and other uses. This initiative has been a flagship instrument in reducing routine flaring, unlocking new investment streams and directly supporting Nigeria's climate commitments. ■

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# AFRICA'S AI MOMENT: WHY NIGERIA MUST LEAD THE CHARGE

- Oluwaseun Dania -

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The world is living through an era of rapid transformation. Artificial Intelligence is no longer an abstract concept confined to laboratories and research papers, it is shaping economies, redefining industries and rewriting the rules of human progress. From precision agriculture to smart healthcare, from financial inclusion to efficient governance, AI is

becoming the backbone of modern societies. The critical question now is not whether AI will reshape the world, but whether Africa and Nigeria in particular will be active participants or passive spectators in this unfolding revolution.

For too long, Africa has been left on the margins of great technological shifts. We missed the full benefits of the industrial revolution, struggled to keep pace during the digital boom and often remain dependent on imported systems and technologies. If this cycle is allowed to repeat itself in the age of AI, the cost to our people, our economies and our dignity will be devastating. But this time, things can and must be different.

Nigeria, as Africa's largest economy and most populous nation, has both the responsibility and the opportunity to lead the continent's charge into the AI era. President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda provides the framework to make this possible. His vision to reposition Nigeria as a global economic force is grounded in innovation, industrial

growth and youth empowerment. AI sits at the very heart of this transformation. Nowhere is this clearer than in sectors like energy and natural resources. The Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC), for example, is already embracing digitalization to strengthen transparency, optimise operations and attract investment. By embedding AI into regulatory processes,



the NUPRC can enhance data-driven decision making, ensure accountability and set new global benchmarks for efficiency. What this demonstrates is that AI is not a luxury; it is a necessity for Nigeria to meet the demands of the modern economy while safeguarding its resources for future generations.

But beyond governance and regulation, the youth must be at the center of this movement. With over 60 percent of our population under the age of 25, Nigeria holds a demographic advantage unmatched anywhere else in the world. These young men and women are not just tomorrow's workforce, they are today's innovators, entrepreneurs and creators. Empowering them with AI skills and opportunities is not only a matter of inclusion, but a matter of survival. If properly trained, they will not just consume AI-driven tools designed abroad; they will create solutions rooted in our realities, whether that means building AI-powered platforms for indigenous language translation, designing tools to predict agricultural cycles, or developing healthcare systems that serve rural communities. Government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) must also step into this transformation with urgency. AI can improve service delivery, streamline operations and reduce corruption by making processes more transparent and efficient. When our public institutions are strengthened by technology, citizens benefit, trust is rebuilt and Nigeria becomes more competitive on the global stage.

This vision extends far beyond national borders. If Nigeria succeeds, Africa succeeds. An inclusive AI revolution that reflects African data, voices and values will create systems that are fairer, more representative and more innovative. Conversely, a revolution that ignores Africa risks deepening inequality, embedding bias and leaving behind a fifth of humanity. The path ahead will not be easy. It demands heavy investment in education, infrastructure and research. It requires visionary policymaking

that encourages innovation while safeguarding ethics. It calls for public-private partnerships and international collaboration. But more than anything, it requires the will to act now, before the window of opportunity closes.

The AI revolution is not about machines; it is about people. It is about the farmer in Kaduna who needs tools to predict weather patterns; the doctor in Enugu who wants faster diagnostics for her patients; the regulator in Abuja striving for transparency; the entrepreneur in Lagos eager to build a global company and the millions of African youths hungry for a future that is dignified, fair and filled with promise.

If Nigeria, under the guidance of the Renewed Hope Agenda, can rise to this challenge, we will not only transform our nation but also ensure that Africa has a seat at the table of global progress. The AI era must not bypass us. Instead, it must become the era that defines us. This is Africa's AI moment and Nigeria must lead.

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

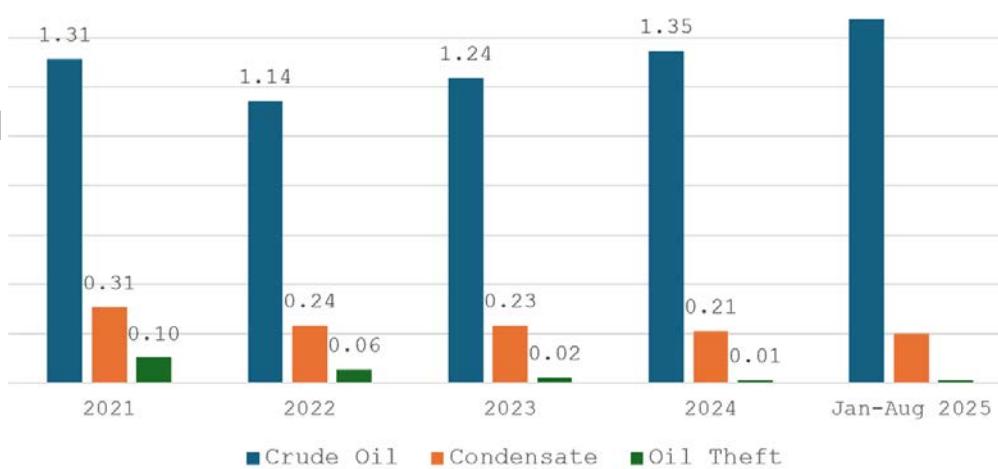
Oluwaseun Dania stands as one of Africa's most distinguished technology visionaries, an internationally acclaimed entrepreneur, UK Global Talent honoree and Forbes Business Council member. As the founder of Tradefada and Checkam, he pioneered Nigeria's digital currency exchange and SME identity verification landscape. In 2025, Dania made history at the United Nations General Assembly, passionately advocating for Africa's 1.4 billion citizens to be co-creators in the global AI revolution. His call for equitable access, ethical safeguards and resilient digital infrastructure reverberated across continents. Recognised among MIPAD's Top 50 Most Influential People of African Descent and inducted into Marquis Who's Who. Dania continues to shape a secure, inclusive and globally transformative digital future, placing Africa firmly at the forefront of innovation. ■

# NIGERIAN UPSTREAM PETROLEUM REGULATORY COMMISSION PRODUCTION AND LIFTING PERFORMANCE

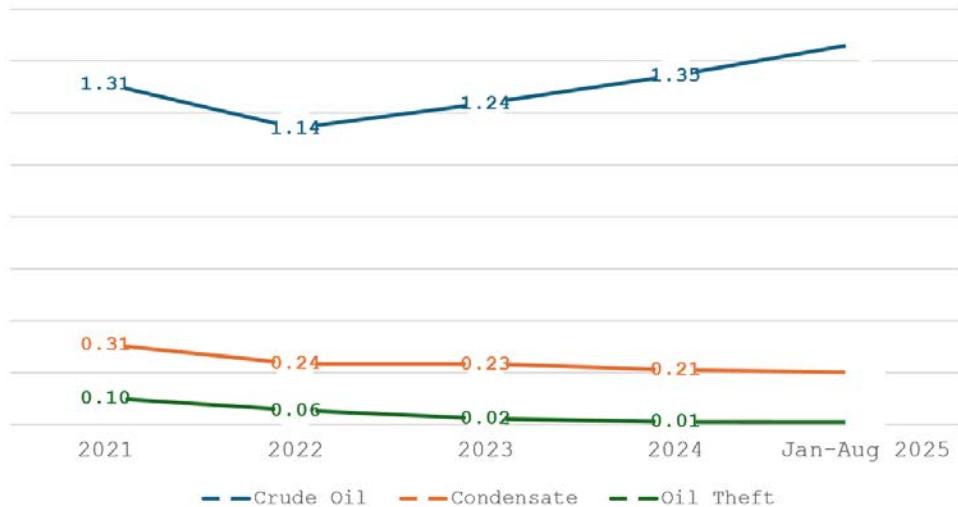
- Idris Abdulrahman and Bali Nanjul James -

## FOUR YEARS ANNIVERSARY OIL AND CONDENSATE PRODUCTION/LIFTING VOLUMES JANUARY 2021 TO DECEMBER 2024

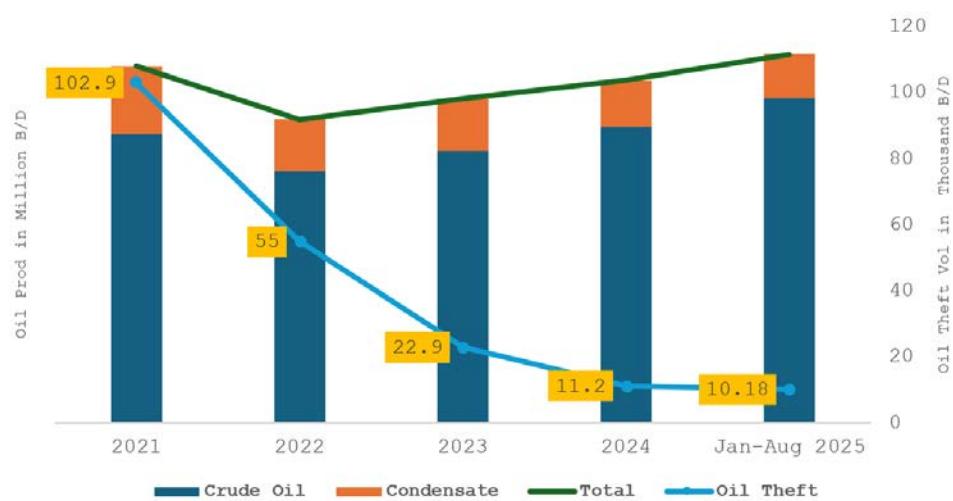
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PRODUCTION/  
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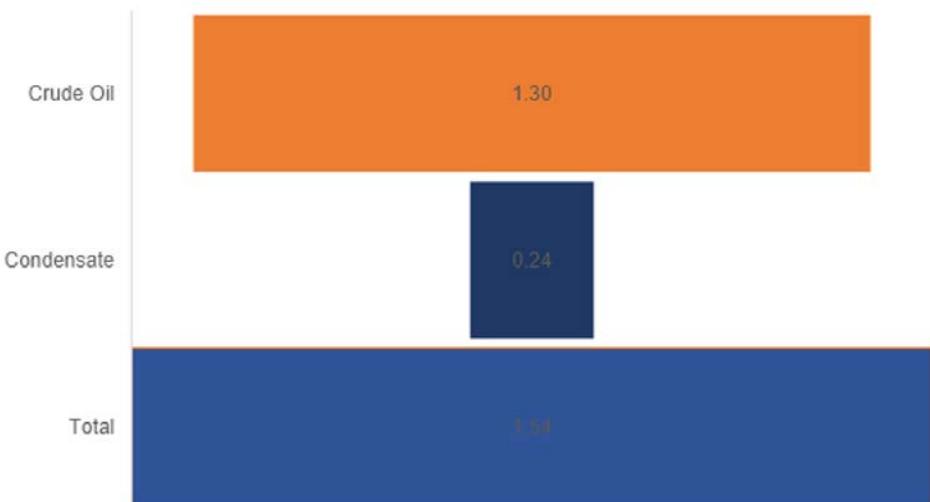
## ANNUAL PRODUCTION/ THEFT IN MILLION B/D



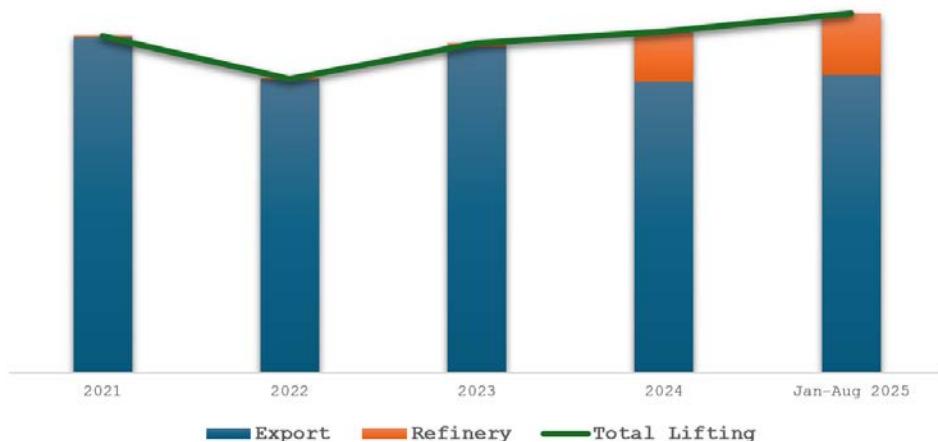
## AVERAGE DAILY OIL PRODUCTION & THEFT 2021-2024



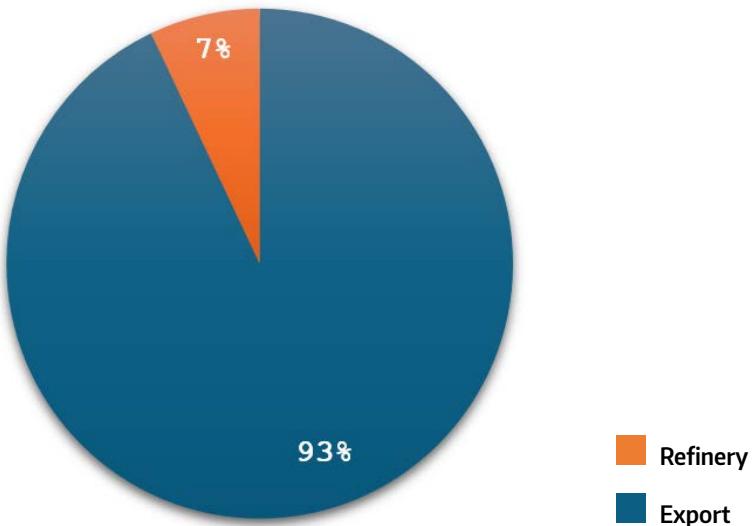
## OIL AND CONDENSATE PRODUCTION SPLIT



## AVERAGE DAILY EXPORT & REFINERY VOL 2021 - 2024 IN MILLION



## EXPORT VS REFINERY SUPPLY 2021 - 2024



### PRODUCTION TRENDS (FIGURE 1 – PRIMARY AXIS)

1. The chart indicates that crude oil production fell to 1.14 mbpd in 2022, largely due to increased oil theft. However, production recovered in 2023, 2024 and 2025 to 1.47 mbpd, 1.56 mbpd and 1.67 mbpd respectively.
2. Likewise, condensate production declined gradually from 0.30 mbpd in 2021 to 0.20 mbpd in 2025.
3. Total production dipped to 1.38 mbpd in 2022, reflecting the impact of oil theft. By the end of August 2025, it has risen to 1.67 mbpd, more than the 2021 levels. The substantial increase was sustained by efforts of the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) through its security agencies and the important role of the Commission in unlocking investment opportunities and investors confidence

in the industry.

### OIL THEFT (FIGURE 1 – SECONDARY AXIS)

1. Oil theft was high at 102,900 barrels per day in 2021, driven by incessant pipeline tapping.
2. Oil theft fell sharply year-on-year, hitting a low of 10,180 barrels per day in 2025

### EXPORTS AND REFINING VOLUME (FIGURE 2)

1. Export volumes falls was highest in 2021 with 1.51 mbpd and lowest in 2024 with 1.31 mbpd.
2. Crude supplied to domestic refineries was negligible in 2021 and 2022, but increased slightly in 2023 before rising sharply in 2025 to 0.28 mbpd, reflecting a shift to domestic refining with the commissioning of the Dangote Refinery.



3. Total lifting was lowest in 2022 at 1.32 mbpd, but climbed steadily thereafter, peaking in 2025 at 1.62 mbpd, surpassing 2021 levels.
4. Total lifting was lowest in 2022 at 1.32 mbpd, but climbed steadily thereafter, peaking in 2024 at 1.54 mbpd, surpassing 2021 levels.

#### **GENERALLY**

1. Oil theft peaked in 2022, which also recorded the lowest production and lifting levels.
2. 2023 marked resilient recovery, with production and exports improving while theft fell sharply, reflecting the joint efforts of the Commission and security agencies.

#### **2024 stands out because of**

1. Higher crude oil output of 1.35 mbpd
2. Lowest theft 11.2 mbpd
3. Significant refinery utilisation of 0.22 mbpd
4. Highest total lifting of 1.54 mbpd with lower exports.

Nigeria's oil sector has shifted from heavy export dominated in 2021 to a more balanced export - refinery structure by 2024 (driven by the arrival of the Dangote Refinery). This transition is marked by lower exports, increased domestic refining capacity and a sharp reduction in oil theft.

Looking ahead, the positive momentum seen in 2024 is already evident in 2025 and is expected to continue into 2026, supported by the Commission's commendable initiatives, including the Project One Million Barrels, Deep Offshore and Shallow Water Nodal/Cluster Development, the Engineering Audit of Oil and Gas Measurement Systems and the Advanced Cargo Declaration Regulation.

## Special Report

# EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES, ENRICHING FUTURES: THE OBAGI HOST COMMUNITIES DEVELOPMENT TRUST STORY

- Abdulqadir Mohammad Buba -



In Nigeria's oil-rich Niger Delta, the conversation around energy has always gone beyond barrels of crude and production figures. It is also about people, communities and the legacy of development. The commissioning of projects under the Obagi Host Communities Development Trust (HCDT) marks a new chapter in that narrative.

Launched with a vision to empower communities and enrich futures, the Obagi HCDT has set a new standard for how oil and gas host communities can directly benefit from energy operations in their region. Through health facilities, schools, industrial projects and agricultural ventures, the Trust is creating an ecosystem of opportunity that goes beyond corporate social responsibility, it is laying the foundation for long-term economic growth and social transformation.

This report takes an in-depth look at the commissioning ceremony, the completed projects and the wider implications for Nigeria's oil and gas sector, community relations and the country's push toward sustainable development.

### A HISTORIC FLAG-OFF CEREMONY

The commissioning ceremony was not merely a ribbon-cutting event, it was a symbolic milestone. Dignitaries from federal, state and local levels gathered alongside community leaders, traditional rulers and industry stakeholders.

The program was marked by cultural performances, goodwill messages and tours of facilities, reflecting both



the gravity of the initiative and its deep cultural roots. Key remarks were delivered by representatives of the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC), the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) Upstream Investment Management Services (NUIMS), members of the National Assembly and TotalEnergies EP Ltd., the operator in the area.

Their collective message was clear: the era of transactional engagement with host communities must give way to long-term, structured development partnerships.

### THE OBAGI HCDT: STRUCTURE AND MANDATE

The Obagi Host Communities Development Trust was created in line with Nigeria's Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) 2021, which mandates oil companies to establish trusts for their host communities. The Trust is governed by a Board of Trustees drawn from the communities themselves, ensuring representation, accountability and

alignment with local needs.

### Its mandate centers around three pillars:

- Health** – Delivering healthcare infrastructure and services.
- Education** – Providing quality learning facilities for young people.
- Industrialisation** – Creating industries and businesses that generate jobs and reduce dependence on imports.

This integrated approach reflects a deliberate effort to move beyond short-term handouts toward self-sustaining development.

### COMPLETED PROJECTS: A MULTI-SECTORAL TRANSFORMATION

The breadth of projects already delivered under the Obagi HCDT is remarkable. Spread across multiple communities in Ogbia/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area (ONELGA), Rivers State, the facilities respond directly to long-standing gaps in health, education and local industry.

#### 1. Education: Building Knowledge Foundations

Ogbogu Secondary School

A fully equipped secondary school in Ogbogu community now provides students with modern classrooms, fostering an environment conducive to learning and personal growth.

#### COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOLS NORTH AND SOUTH (AKABUKA)

By expanding access to basic education, these schools strengthen literacy, numeracy and the future employability of children in rural communities.

#### 2. Healthcare: From Access to Quality

Ogbogu Cottage Hospital and Idu Cottage Hospital These hospitals offer maternal care, emergency services and preventive medicine. Their establishment means residents no longer need to travel long distances for basic healthcare, reducing mortality rates and strengthening community well-being.

#### 3. Infrastructure and Civic Life

Ogbogu Community Civic Center

A hub for community meetings, cultural activities and social events, reinforcing civic engagement.

### OBOBORU INTERNAL ROAD PROJECTS

New and rehabilitated roads have improved accessibility, linking rural settlements to markets and services.

#### 4. Industrialisation and Employment

Perhaps the most striking achievements are the industrial facilities aimed at driving local enterprise and employment:





- **Obite Furniture Factory** – Producing durable furniture while training artisans and creating skilled jobs.
- **Ogbogu PVC Factory** – Supplying essential pipes for water, sanitation and construction.
- **Obagi Preform Factory** – Manufacturing PET preforms for bottles and plastics, reducing dependence on imports.
- **Amah Bottle Water Company** – Tapping into the growing beverage market.
- **Erema Cooking Gas Plant** – Providing clean energy alternatives and reducing reliance on kerosene or firewood.

## 5. Agriculture and Food Security

Obiyebe Integrated Farm – A diversified agricultural venture with fish farming, poultry, piggery and crop cultivation. This initiative promotes food security, modern farming practices and youth empowerment.

## 6. Logistics and Connectivity

Egi Express Logistics Company – An ultra-modern courier and freight service with hubs in Port Harcourt

and Akabuka, enhancing regional trade and market access.

## BEYOND PROJECTS: THE BIGGER PICTURE

What makes the Obagi HCDT noteworthy is not just the infrastructure, but the model of partnership it represents. By bringing together oil companies, government regulators and local communities, the Trust is creating a replicable framework for community-driven development in the Niger Delta.

Several themes emerge from this effort:

1. **Sustainability over Charity** Unlike traditional corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects, the HCDT initiatives are designed for long-term viability, with revenue-generating ventures like the PVC, furniture and preform factories ensuring continuity.
2. **Economic Diversification** The focus on industries and agriculture aligns with Nigeria's broader push to diversify its economy beyond oil exports.
3. **Local Empowerment** Jobs, skills transfer and





training ensure that development is not externally imposed but locally owned.

- 4. Trust and Stability** The Trust model reduces tensions between oil companies and host communities by giving communities a real stake in development decisions.

## CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS

While the commissioning represents a success story, the long-term impact of the Obagi HCDT will depend on several factors:

- 1. Governance and Transparency** Effective oversight is essential to ensure projects are maintained and funds are not mismanaged.
- 2. Capacity Building** Training local personnel to operate and manage industrial facilities is critical to sustainability.
- 3. Market Integration** Industrial ventures like the PVC and preform factories must be competitive in broader Nigerian and West African markets.







## COMMUNITY COHESION

With multiple communities involved, equitable distribution of projects and benefits must be carefully managed to prevent disputes.



## IMPLICATIONS FOR THE OIL AND GAS SECTOR

The Obagi HCDT demonstrates how energy companies can reframe their relationship with host communities. By linking oil operations to tangible, lasting development, companies not only meet regulatory requirements but also secure a social license to operate.

For Nigeria, this model has strategic implications:

1. It strengthens the case for the Petroleum Industry Act, showing that host community provisions can work.
2. It demonstrates how oil revenues can be channeled into industrialisation and food security, national priorities under Nigeria's economic diversification agenda.
3. It sets a benchmark for corporate-community relations, potentially reducing conflicts that have historically disrupted oil production.



## CONCLUSION

The commissioning of the Obagi HCDT projects is more than a local milestone, it is a national and international case study in community-driven development. By aligning health, education, industrialisation and agriculture under one coordinated framework, the Trust is showing what is possible when oil wealth is strategically invested. For the people of Obagi and surrounding communities, these projects mean jobs, healthcare, schools and opportunities. For Nigeria, it signals a maturing approach to managing oil wealth. For the global oil and gas industry, it provides a replicable model of how energy companies can foster shared prosperity in host regions.

The story of Obagi is one of transformation, not just in infrastructure, but in mindset, from dependency to empowerment, from conflict to collaboration and from short-term fixes to long-term growth.

As Nigeria and the wider world navigate the transition to sustainable energy, initiatives like the Obagi HCDT remind us that the future of oil and gas will not be measured only in barrels, but in the lives uplifted and communities strengthened. ■



# "THE VOYAGE OF STEADY HANDS"

*A Poetic Tribute to the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum  
Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) 2021–2025*

- Tony A. Ukpo -

**U**pon the tides of reform, a vessel was launched, her hull forged from the spirit of the Petroleum Industry Act, her compass set toward transparency, innovation and trust. At her helm stands a captain, Gbenga! steady as the northern star, guiding through tempests of uncertainty, charting new frontiers of hope.

Around him, six stalwart officers, each a pillar of purpose, holding the mast of governance firm: Licensing and leases, safety and host communities, finance, technical excellence, corporate management and exploration. Together, they steer Nigeria's energy ship through the restless seas.

Below deck, the crew, NUPRC's dedicated staff, over a thousand hands working in rhythm with the ocean's pulse. They mend the sails of policy, polish the decks of data and keep the great engine of national progress humming, silent heroes in the voyage of reform and

renewal.

Through the fog of challenges and ballast, the vessel pressed on, issuing the first Petroleum Exploration Licence like a flag raised at dawn, unlocking marginal fields long adrift in bureaucratic winds, bidding new explorers to the deep waters of Nigeria's promise. Each milestone a buoy marking progress, each regulation a lighthouse keeping faith with the nation.

Across the horizon, the seas turned calmer. Host communities, once storm-tossed by mistrust, now found peace beneath the sails of the Host Community Development Trust. From the creeks of Obagi to the fields of Erema, the sound of development became a new kind of tide, flowing with transparency, equity and shared destiny.

The ship, this ship now sails with the wind of transition, charting toward cleaner energy and lowering carbon's shadow, harnessing gas as the bridge between yesterday's crude and tomorrow's

promise of sustainability. In every course correction, the compass points to global best practice, far from vain this bangles cast, for this vessel now bears not only Nigeria's colours, but Africa's rising flag of regulatory excellence.

Within the ship itself, a quiet revolution blooms. Crew cabins brightened, training decks expanded, the welfare wind blowing stronger in every corridor; where once the voyage was toil, now it is purpose refined, human capital renewed and every officer empowered to read the stars of knowledge and steer innovation's helm.

Now the prow cuts through waters of recognition, continental respect, global partnerships and a steady course toward a production dream, 2.5 million barrels per day by 2027, not as fantasy, but as a destination visible on the horizon, gleaming like dawn over the Gulf of Guinea.

So the voyage continues through currents of change, through tempests of transition and the quiet calm of progress. The ship called NUPRC sails on, her captain resolute, her officers steadfast, her crew inspired. For in this ocean of reform and renewal, one truth resounds: Parley! To the truce we shall go! when vision is the compass and service the sail, what sea can hold back a ship bound for greatness? ■



# PIA-ENGENDERED UPSTREAM PETROLEUM MODEL CONTRACTS WILL SUSTAIN NIGERIA INTO THE NEXT CENTURY – CSLA

- Eniola Akinkuotu -

Alternative dispute resolution will reduce cost, save time

Barrister Olayemi Adeboyejo is the Commission Secretary and Legal Adviser (CSLA) of the NUPRC. In 2024 she served as Chairman of the Divestment Committee that developed the Upstream Asset Divestment and Exit Guidance Framework upon which oil and gas divestments were evaluated to ensure seamless divestments in the upstream sector. She talks to the Upstream Gaze about the role her department plays in the success of the Commission.



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## **Since the signing of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) four years ago, how has the Legal Department contributed to its effective rollout and the development of a robust regulatory framework for Nigeria's upstream sector?**

The legal department has played a key role in the successful implementation of the PIA and formulation of regulations. This includes the successful issuance of 19 key Regulations. In developing these regulations, the Commission strictly followed the prescriptions of the PIA, which involved first of its kind stakeholder consultations, as required under the PIA. The legal department also ensured the development of these regulations espoused the provision of a business enabling environment in the Nigerian Upstream sector and we continue to support the Commission in its efforts towards ensuring that regulations and key policies necessitated by the PIA are issued expeditiously to enable the prompt and successful implementation of the provisions of the PIA. In addition, the Commission through the department, has also developed guidelines and continues to develop guidelines to provide procedural framework for the effective implementation of the PIA and the Regulations.

## **How has the Commission been able to transit from the defunct Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) and how has your department addressed legacy litigation and disputes?**

The Commission has been able to transit successfully from the defunct DPR to the NUPRC, a world class regulator who is leading the terrain in Africa. This transition marked a pivotal shift in the governance and oversight of Nigeria's upstream petroleum sector. As with any institutional transformation of this scale, one of the immediate priorities for the Commission was to address the backlog of litigation and disputes inherited from the DPR. This was done by conducting an audit of the legacy litigation matters, to assess any financial, operational or reputational risks and ensure that they were managed in a way that would not impede the Commission's ability to discharge its new mandate under the PIA. We also aimed to reduce, as much as possible, the contingent liabilities associated with pending litigation, identifying and mitigating legal risks that could impact the Commission's regulatory functions and developing effective prosecution and defence strategies to improve the likelihood of favourable outcomes. Furthermore, we identified areas where corporate and administrative adjustments would help prevent the recurrence of issues that had led to disputes in the past. A key outcome of this exercise was the creation of a comprehensive database

of recommendations and strategies for each case file designed to inform ongoing litigation management and support strategic decision-making as cases evolve.

This deliberate and methodical approach has been central to how the Commission has navigated the transition from the DPR. By treating inherited disputes not merely as liabilities but as opportunities to strengthen internal processes and improve administrative decision-making, the Commission has positioned itself to prevent similar disputes from arising in the future.

## **The NUPRC is often joined as a nominal party in almost all upstream oil and gas disputes. How do you cope with the large volume of cases?**

Given the frequency with which the Commission is joined, the resulting caseload is significant. The Commission manages this high volume of cases by adopting a structured and efficient approach.

The first is that we have dedicated legal teams specifically specialised litigation units within the Legal Department that oversee upstream oil and gas disputes, supported by external counsel, where appropriate.

We also do screening and categorisation of cases. Processes served on the Commission are reviewed promptly to distinguish between cases where the Commission's role is merely formal nominal and those where substantive regulatory issues arise.

Lastly, where suitable, we promote the use of the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Centre. Parties are encouraged to explore mediation or regulatory conciliation, reducing the number of matters requiring lengthy court proceedings.

Through these measures, the Commission is able to discharge its statutory responsibility as regulator without being unduly burdened by litigation.

**WHERE SUITABLE, WE PROMOTE THE USE OF THE ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION (ADR) CENTRE**

## **Speaking of ADR. In 2024, the Commission inaugurated the Alternative Dispute Resolution Centre's Body of Neutrals. How has this helped in addressing litigation?**

The inauguration of the ADRC's Body of Neutrals has directly contributed to de-escalating litigation in many ways.

Firstly, is on the diversion of cases from courts. Post-inauguration, the ADRC has looked at multiple cases, some of which are currently ongoing. These include host community conflicts and contractual disputes that would otherwise burden the Federal High Court or appellate courts. The Centre aims to resolve conflicts brought to it within a quick turnaround time which, is better suited at preserving business continuity and unlocking potential investments within the sector.

The ADRC has also helped boost efficiency and reduce cost. The Body of Neutrals ensure expert-led

resolutions, emphasising speed and flexibility. This has lowered legal expenditure for stakeholders, with ADRC fees significantly less than litigation costs and minimised production downtime.

Lastly, the ADRC has helped promote industry trust. By integrating seasoned neutrals with upstream expertise, the Body of Neutrals has fostered confidence among International Oil Companies (IOCs) and indigenous operators. The Commission's initiatives, such as the March 2025 Refresher Training Workshop for the Body of Neutrals, also ensures that members of the Body of Neutrals are well equipped to perform the expected obligations when the need arises.

In summary, the inauguration of the ADRC's Body of Neutrals has significantly aided in addressing upstream oil and gas disputes by providing a neutral, expert-driven alternative that resolves disputes efficiently, reduces costs and minimises industry disruptions.

**Last year, the NUPRC superintended over a handful of divestments. How were you able to balance investor needs with national interest?**

The Commission's approach to last year's divestments was to ensure that every deal addressed the expectations of both the exiting and incoming investors, without compromising national interest.

While we recognised the need of the investors for a smooth exit, the divestments presented some inherent risks and liabilities, including legacy decommissioning and abandonment, environmental and host communities obligations. In order to transparently identify these

liabilities, the Commission developed the Upstream Asset Divestment and Exit Guidance Framework, which provided the seven pillars of technical capacity, financial viability, legal compliance, decommissioning and abandonment obligations, host community and environmental responsibilities, industrial relations and data repatriation.

Guided by these seven pillars, the Commission evaluated each transaction and ensured that all relevant liabilities and obligations were clearly identified and allocated to the party that is best able to bear them. Once identified, the Commission addressed these liabilities by providing robust safeguards such as letters of credit, escrow arrangements, parent-company guarantees and other financial assurances to secure decommissioning and host community obligations. These measures were designed to ensure that liabilities would not be abandoned or transferred to the government or communities, but instead properly assumed and managed by the exiting and incoming investors.

In this way, the Commission balanced the investor needs for a seamless exit with the national interest of ensuring that legacy obligations are identified and properly allocated to the parties that will bear them.

**What would you say has been your biggest achievement so far?**

The Legal Department has played a pivotal role in safeguarding the Commission's statutory mandate through timely legal opinions, robust contract reviews and proactive dispute management. A major highlight

**“OUR ROLE WILL BE TO PROVIDE CLEAR LEGAL INTERPRETATION OF THE NEW REGIME, ALIGN LICENCE CONDITIONS AND CONTRACTUAL FRAMEWORKS WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS AND ADVISE ON ENFORCEMENT MECHANISMS”**



has been strengthening the governance framework for Host Community Development Trusts under the PIA. By guiding the establishment of trust constitutions, clarifying governance procedures for boards and committees and ensuring operators' compliance with statutory obligations, we have enhanced transparency, reduced disputes and built greater confidence among host communities and industry operators alike.

Additionally, the Department successfully provided legal guidance to the Commission through the recent wave of upstream divestments. We developed an extensive divestment framework, which addresses all the key aspects that need to be interrogated to ensure sustainability in future upstream developments; in setting this framework, we believe future divestments in the upstream sector will be governed by transparent and consistent rules, thus creating an avenue for certainty and sustainable upstream development.

We created a register of security interest for the sector, in line with Section 95 (5) of the PIA. This allows lenders to register security created over upstream petroleum assets, this giving better protection for secured parties and creating a forum for easy enforcement. As financing is the backbone of upstream petroleum development, creating a register of security interests is fundamental to the ease of raising financing for development. Most significant of our contributions however has been the development of robust contractual framework for the grant of licences and leases. We developed international standard model contracts including concession contracts for petroleum prospecting licenses and petroleum mining leases, general terms and conditions of licenses and leases and production sharing contracts. These contracts are designed to reflect international best practice while accounting for Nigeria's unique circumstances. Not only do they provide a legally sound, transparent and investor-friendly framework, they are international standard and not only did they pivot the Nigerian upstream sector into the second quarter of the 21st century, they also addressed several lacunae in the legal framework of the upstream petroleum sector and afforded better protection for government, while creating more certainty for investors. We believe this contractual framework will be sustainable into the next



century.

#### **As Nigeria prepares for a new tax regime in January, what role will your department play in ensuring compliance?**

The Legal Department will serve as a bridge between evolving fiscal legislation and the Commission's regulatory mandate. Recently, we reviewed newly enacted tax laws alongside associated policy briefs to assess their implications for the upstream sector. Building on that foundation, our role will be to provide clear legal interpretation of the new regime, align licence conditions and contractual frameworks with statutory requirements and advise on enforcement mechanisms.

We will also work closely with operational departments to ensure internal compliance, support capacity building on the practical application of the new laws and engage with fiscal authorities where coordination is required. In doing so, the Department will help the Commission achieve a seamless transition, safeguard government revenues and provide the industry with regulatory clarity. ■

# NIGERIA: Ready for Business; Open to the World

Investing in Nigeria presents an opportunity to tap into the abundant returns of Africa's growing innovation hub, fueled by a young population, a dynamic tech environment and supportive government policies and incentives.

Explore investment prospects across various sectors including Oil & Gas, Agriculture, Real Estate, Financial Services, Communication Technology, Mining, Tourism, Manufacturing, Entertainment and Transportation.



FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

# NUPRC: REGULATORY DIVESTMENT FRAMEWORK

- 1. TECHNICAL CAPACITY** The successor entity must demonstrate proven and verifiable capacity to operate the asset vigorously and in a business-like manner. The entity must showcase competencies and capabilities comparable to or surpassing those of the divesting entity. In addition, all production allocation and cost issues related to unitisation in the case of straddled fields must be resolved.
- 2. FINANCIAL** The Commission shall assess the prospective successor entity's balance sheet and financial viability and verify readiness to undertake a defined work programme and fulfil required obligations on the assets. Due diligence shall be undertaken on potential buyers to assess suitability, alignment with state interests, reputation, investment objectives, and track record etc.
- 3. LEGAL** The acquiring entity must be 'fit and proper' persons in the eyes of the law and in line with the interest of the nation. Clear evidence of the resolutions of legacy debts and legal encumbrances must be established and appropriate mechanisms to manage residuals agreed.
- 4. DECOMMISSIONING AND ABANDONMENT (D&A)** Applicable D&A costs must be diligently assessed and ensure settlement of outstanding obligations. Commission to ensure that potential exposure of the Nigerian government to decommissioning liabilities is averted.
- 5. HOST COMMUNITY TRUST / ENVIRONMENTAL REMEDIATION FUND** The Commission shall assess the status of Host Community Trust Fund obligations and ensure robustness of successor entity's social inclusion programme in line with the provisions of the Petroleum Industry Act, 2021 (PIA). The Commission shall evaluate acquiring entity's adherence to decarbonisation plans and sound Environmental Social & Governance (ESG) principles.
- 6. INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND LABOUR ISSUES** The Commission shall implement a robust assessment mechanism to avert undesirable labour union issues and disharmony arising from the divestment process. Concerned parties shall endorse "Certificate of Settlement" to validate alignments reached on all labour issues (staff welfare, benefits, entitlements as well as disengagement, redundancies, retirement, etc.). The aim is to ensure the nation averts socio-economic disruptions arising from failure to resolve labour issues that might result as a consequence of post divestment.
- 7. DATA REPATRIATION** The Commission shall ensure that all data mined during the operating life of the asset are repatriated to the National Data Repository (NDR) in line with extant regulations.

# COMMISSION CALL

- Eniola Akinkuotu -

1

## NIGERIA CATALYSES CONTINENTAL REGULATORY ALIGNMENT WITH AFRIPERF CHARTER

...New Forum to Drive Investment, Harmonisation Across Africa's Petroleum Landscape



Ms. Harrison underscored the United Kingdom's readiness to collaborate on climate and energy priorities, with particular focus on reducing gas flaring, an essential pillar of Nigeria's decarbonisation strategy.

The engagement signals the UK's continued dedication to fostering sustainable energy practices and advancing climate-resilient development as a foundation for long-term economic progress.

In a decisive move to strengthen regional cooperation and regulatory coherence, Nigeria has led the charge in establishing the African

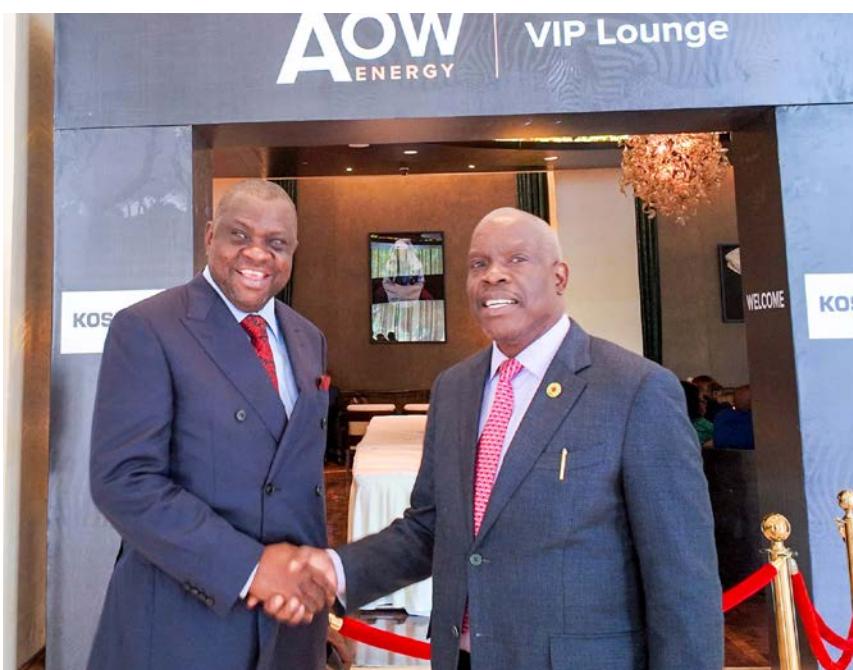
Petroleum Regulators Forum (AFRIPERF), a landmark initiative designed to harmonise upstream petroleum regulations and foster cross-border investment across Africa.

The formal signing of the AFRIPERF Charter took place on Thursday, September 18, 2025, during the 31st Africa Oil Week (AOW) in Accra, Ghana. The ceremony was chaired by Engr. Gbenga Komolafe, Commission Chief Executive of the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC), underscoring Nigeria's strategic leadership in shaping the continent's energy governance. Regulators from 16 African nations convened for the event, including Nigeria, Ghana, Somalia, Gambia, Madagascar, Sudan, Guinea, Togo, Kenya, Mauritania, Benin, Mozambique, Angola, Namibia, South Africa and Morocco. Senator Etang Williams, Chairman of Nigeria's Senate Committee on Upstream, also attended as an observer.

Eight countries, Nigeria, Ghana, Somalia, Gambia, Madagascar, Sudan, Guinea and Togo, formally signed the charter, while seven others expressed strong support and pledged to join following internal consultations.

The AFRIPERF Charter is poised to:

- Promote regulatory harmonisation across African upstream jurisdictions
- Enhance investor confidence through predictable and transparent frameworks
- Facilitate knowledge exchange and capacity building among member regulators
- Position Africa as a unified and competitive energy investment destination
- This development marks a significant milestone in Nigeria's ongoing efforts to champion regional integration and elevate Africa's global energy profile.







# 2

## NUPRC HOSTS BARCLAYS EXECUTIVES, REAFFIRMS NIGERIA'S INVESTMENT APPEAL

...Komolafe: IOCs Are Rebalancing, Not Exiting Nigeria

The Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) recently welcomed senior executives from Barclays Bank Plc to its corporate headquarters in Abuja, reinforcing Nigeria's position as a viable destination for upstream investment. During the high-level engagement, Engineer Gbenga Komolafe, Commission Chief Executive of NUPRC, addressed prevailing misconceptions surrounding International Oil Companies (IOCs) and their presence in Nigeria. He emphasised that recent divestments by some IOCs should not be interpreted as an exit from the Nigerian market, but rather as strategic portfolio rebalancing. "There's a public perception that IOCs are leaving Nigeria due to divestments. This is inaccurate," Komolafe stated. "IOCs actively participated in the last bid rounds and the recent signing of a Production Sharing Contract between



NNPC and TotalEnergies is further evidence that Nigeria remains a robust investment hub." The visit by Barclays Bank underscores growing international financial interest in Nigeria's energy sector. Karitkeya Rai, Director of Private Banking at Barclays, affirmed the bank's openness to financing oil and gas projects in Nigeria, signaling confidence in the sector's regulatory direction and long-term potential. The meeting forms part of NUPRC's broader strategy to engage global financial institutions and foster partnerships that support upstream development, regulatory transparency and sustainable investment.



# 3

## NUPRC CONCLUDES 2024 LICENSING ROUND WITH PSC EXECUTION FOR PPLS 2000 AND 2001

As part of its strategic mandate to expand Nigeria's crude oil production, the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) has successfully overseen the execution of a Production Sharing Contract (PSC) covering Petroleum Prospecting Licences (PPLs) 2000 and 2001. The agreement was signed between NNPC Limited, TotalEnergies and the SAPETRO Consortium, marking the formal conclusion of the 2024 Licensing Round. The licences were awarded to TotalEnergies and its partner, South Atlantic Petroleum (SAPETRO), following a competitive bid process. The signing ceremony, held in Abuja, signified a major step forward in Nigeria's upstream development strategy. According to the Commission Chief Executive, Engr. Gbenga Komolafe, the deal represents a new chapter in Nigeria's oil and gas industry. He noted that recent executive reforms, particularly the 2024 Executive Orders on fiscal incentives, local content enhancement, cost efficiency and contract timelines, have played a pivotal role in attracting substantial investment.



into the sector. The awardees of PPL 2000 and PPL 2001 are among the first beneficiaries of these reforms, which aim to foster shared prosperity and operational transparency. TotalEnergies, with over six decades of operations in Nigeria, holds an 80% contractor interest in the PSC, while SAPETRO, with three decades of experience in the sector, holds the remaining 20%. This development underscores Nigeria's commitment to regulatory clarity, investor confidence and sustainable growth in its upstream oil and gas landscape.

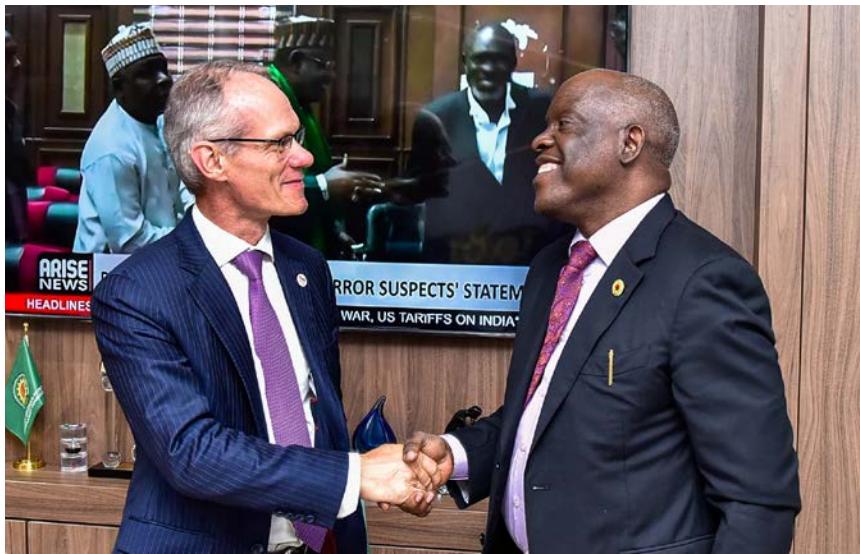


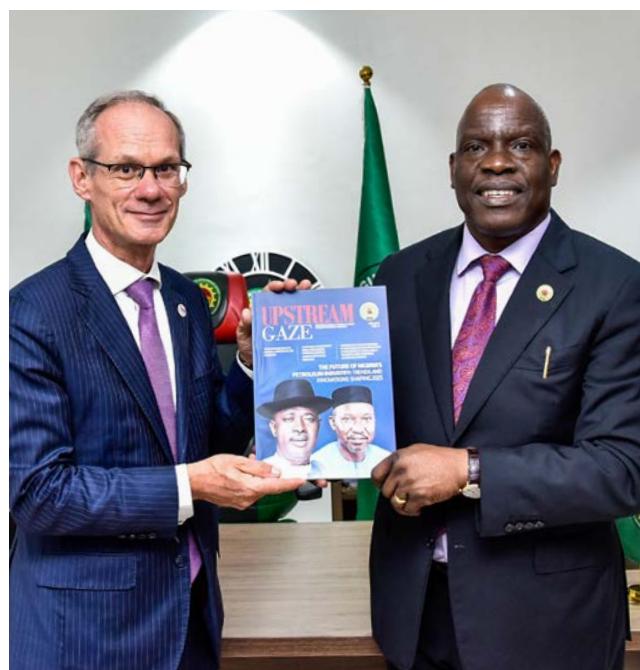
# 4

## NIGERIA SIGNALS INVESTMENT READINESS AMID RISING PRODUCTION

...TotalEnergies Executives Meet with NUPRC to Explore Expansion Opportunities

Nigeria's crude oil production has reached a six-month high, exceeding 1.7 million barrels per day. Yet, the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) remains focused on expanding the frontiers of energy production through strategic engagement and investor-friendly reforms. As part of this drive, the Commission Chief Executive, Engr. Gbenga Komolafe, recently hosted the President of Exploration and Production at TotalEnergies, Nicolas Terraz, along with his executive team, at the NUPRC headquarters in Abuja. The meeting underscored the Commission's commitment to creating an enabling environment that attracts new investments while encouraging existing operators to scale up their activities. Discussions centered on deepening collaboration, optimising asset development and leveraging Nigeria's regulatory reforms to unlock further value in the upstream sector. With production on the rise and investor confidence strengthening, the message from NUPRC is clear: Nigeria is open for business and ready to lead in energy transformation across the continent.





# 5

## NUPRC CHIEF HONOURED AT PENGASSAN ENERGY AND LABOUR SUMMIT

The Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) continued its strategic engagement with labour stakeholders as its Commission Chief Executive, Engineer Gbenga Komolafe, participated in the PENGASSAN Energy and Labour Summit held on Thursday, August 21, 2025.

The summit brought together key players from Nigeria's oil and gas sector, including the President of

the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN), Comrade Festus Osifo, alongside other industry stakeholders. Discussions focused on strengthening collaboration between regulators and labour unions to foster sustainable growth, workforce development and operational stability across the upstream value chain. In recognition of his leadership and commitment to regulatory excellence, Engineer Komolafe was presented with a special recognition award by PENGASSAN, underscoring the Commission's role in advancing industry reforms and promoting inclusive dialogue. The event highlighted the importance of aligning regulatory frameworks with labour priorities to ensure a resilient and forward-looking energy sector in Nigeria.





# 6

## NAICE 2025: NUPRC SHOWCASES REGULATORY INNOVATION AND SECTORAL REFORM

...Nigeria's Upstream Regulator Highlights Progress in Digitisation, Sustainability and Production Growth

At the 2025 edition of the Society of Petroleum Engineers (SPE) Nigeria Annual International Conference & Exhibition (NAICE), held in Lagos, the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) reaffirmed its leadership in driving regulatory excellence and strategic reform across Nigeria's upstream oil and gas sector. Through high-level engagements and technical presentations, NUPRC spotlighted its reform agenda, emphasising sustainability-driven regulation, digital transformation and investment-friendly policies designed to unlock the full potential of Nigeria's hydrocarbon resources. Since the enactment of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) in 2021, the Commission has gazetted 21 key upstream regulations. These span critical areas including measurement standards, operational safety, gas flaring reduction, decommissioning protocols, host-community development and domestic gas supply obligations, collectively establishing a transparent and investor-focused framework for long-term sectoral growth.

NUPRC is also advancing the digitisation of regulatory processes to improve turnaround times, enhance data integrity and elevate service delivery. This includes the deployment of innovative technologies for exploration, production optimisation, emissions tracking and decarbonisation. To accelerate deepwater and offshore development, the Commission introduced a cluster/nodal development model that promotes shared infrastructure, joint field strategies and optimised subsurface planning. The model also supports local content growth by encouraging technology domestication and indigenous manufacturing. Under its flagship Project One Million Barrels per Day Initiative, Nigeria's oil production peaked at 1.8 million barrels per day (Mbpd) in July 2025. In parallel, NUPRC continues to implement efficiency-enhancing measures aimed at sustaining output and improving asset performance across the upstream landscape.

NAICE 2025 served as a platform for NUPRC to reaffirm its commitment to regulatory modernisation, stakeholder collaboration and positioning Nigeria as a globally competitive energy investment destination.



## NUPRC'S CURRENT REFORMS WILL ATTRACT MORE INVESTMENT - SEPLAT ENERGY CEO

- Olisa Kizito -

**Mr. Roger Brown has for the last five years steered the affairs of Seplat Energy as CEO. Last year, Seplat Energy acquired the onshore assets of Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited in one of the biggest divestment deals of 2024.**

**Mr. Brown, a seasoned accountant and financial expert, reflects on the journey so far and the role the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) has played in Seplat Energy's success.**

**How would you compare Nigeria's upstream operating environment before the enactment of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) and after, especially in terms of regulatory clarity, fiscal terms and investor confidence?**

The PIA has boosted investor confidence in Nigeria's oil and gas sector by enhancing regulatory clarity through new, specialised bodies (NUPRC, NMDPRA) and a competitive fiscal framework. Requisite agencies are now more specialised and streamline regulatory functions across different segments of the oil and gas value chain. The PIA introduced a revised fiscal framework, replacing the old system with a combination of Hydrocarbon Tax and Companies Income Tax, which is considered more competitive and attractive to



investors (domestically and internationally).

### **As one of the country's biggest indigenous operators, how has Seplat leveraged the reforms under the PIA to expand its upstream portfolio and improve operational efficiency?**

Through regulatory engagement with the NUPRC, Seplat Energy has completed the technical aspects for transferring onshore assets to the PIA. This include collaboration on standardising boundary maps. Beyond the general benefits offered by the PIA are hopes for a successful transfer of the assets from the Petroleum Profits Tax (PPT) regime to the PIA framework.

### **What is your assessment of the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) since its establishment under the PIA, particularly in providing a transparent and predictable regulatory framework?**

The NUPRC has enhanced its regulatory efficiency under the PIA, through implementation of reforms like digitisation of upstream processes, transparent licensing systems and the enforcement of regulations on safety, gas flaring and host community development. The PIA has empowered the NUPRC with the authority to not only act as a regulator but more importantly as a business enabler, facilitating a predictable and effective regulatory environment crucial for boosting investor confidence and unlocking the sector's full potential.



### **NUPRC'S HANDLING OF THE DIVESTMENT APPROVAL WAS A THOROUGH AND TRANSPARENT PROCESS END-TO-END**

#### **Seplat's MPNU (Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited) asset divestment was one of the biggest deals of 2024. How would you evaluate the NUPRC's handling of divestment processes in balancing national interest with investor needs?**

NUPRC's handling of the divestment approval was a thorough and transparent process end-to-end. Determining Seplat's ability to operate OMLs 67, 68, 70, 104 and related infrastructure in terms of commercial, financial and technical capability was a key focus for the commission, resulting in the recommendation to the Minister of Petroleum Resources for consent.

Seplat Energy sincerely thanks His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu GCFR, for granting this approval and appreciates the support and diligence of

the NUPRC and other regulatory bodies for all the work on the transaction.

### **What key operational or regulatory challenges did you encounter in the MPNU transaction process and how were you able to overcome them?**

This was a critical transaction for Seplat, which has a broader impact on Nigeria's oil production capacity in the future. Understandably, the regulator took a robust approach to ensure a positive outcome for all stakeholders. We worked closely with the regulator to ensure the deal progressed as quickly as practicable without compromising on the high standards of oversight required for a transaction of this scale and complexity. Ultimately, Seplat's status and track record in the region ensured that the transaction was successful. We are committed to building a sustainable business that can deliver affordable, accessible and reliable energy for Nigeria alongside attractive returns to our shareholders and completion of the MPNU deal was a key enabler of this commitment.

### **How big has your production capacity in gas and crude grown since the divestment?**

Completion of the deal to acquire MPNU assets has been a tremendous leap for us (the JV) all the way. In our 6M 2025 results, our production averaged 134,492 boepd, above the midpoint of 2025 guidance (120 - 140 kboepd). Working interest oil production reached 100,327 bopd in 6M 2025.

We have recently set out our development plan to 2030 in a Capital Markets Day event which can be found on the Seplat Energy Plc website ([seplat.energy.com](http://seplat.energy.com)). We are targeting Working Interest production in excess of 200 kboepd (Joint Venture production of more than 500kboepd), drilling between 120-150 wells and developing related infrastructure which includes 3 new gas projects.

### **NUPRC has championed transparency as a cornerstone of its operations. From an operator's perspective, how has this improved industry confidence and stakeholder engagement?**

The commission has continued to drive strategic engagements aimed at strengthening collaboration with stakeholders in the petroleum industry. They have shown dedication to create an enabling business environment for operators via several key policies implemented since the enactment of the PIA. These include the automation of regulatory processes such as granting licenses and permits, which has significantly reduced bureaucratic delays and improved operational efficiency across the sector. The implementation of the "drill or drop" policy which requires operators to either begin production within a specified timeframe or relinquish their licenses, for instance, has helped to increase engagements between the NUPRC and operators whilst boosting investor confidence in the industry.



**Looking ahead, what opportunities do you see for Nigeria's upstream sector under NUPRC's current reforms, particularly in deep water and gas development?**

NUPRC's current reforms would obviously attract more investment through fiscal and regulatory transformations under the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA). Key areas for investment should include project development and financing, technical services and exploration. The reforms seek to reduce bottlenecks, enhance transparency, drive growth in oil and gas production, boost infrastructure, reduce gas flaring and enhance decarbonisation efforts and progress the digitalisation of activities and processes. All of this can contribute to improved productivity and efficiencies, creates a globally competitive and responsible investment destination and perhaps more importantly, increased domestic gas supply, which helps deliver affordable, cleaner energy access for all.

**Development can only happen in an atmosphere of peace and stability. How is Seplat aligning its corporate strategy with host community development?**

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**WE WORKED CLOSELY WITH THE REGULATOR TO ENSURE THE DEAL PROGRESSED AS QUICKLY AS PRACTICABLE WITHOUT COMPROMISING ON THE HIGH STANDARDS OF OVERSIGHT REQUIRED FOR A TRANSACTION OF THIS SCALE AND COMPLEXITY**

Our vision – transforming lives through energy – goes far beyond powering homes, transport and industry. We are deeply committed to creating social value that improves lives through education and healthcare and by fostering entrepreneurship in our communities. By embedding social development goals into our strategy, we not only contribute to improving Nigeria's energy landscape, but also help to drive progress in healthcare, education and personal empowerment.

We empower the education sector through our PEARLS Quiz Competition, Seplat Teachers Empowerment Programme (STEP) and the National Undergraduate scholarship programme. Our Youth

Entrepreneurial Program (YEP) serves to equip young people with hands-on training in renewable energy systems to prepare them for sustainable careers in the clean energy sector. Our Eye Can See initiative delivers critical healthcare services to vulnerable people, with free eye care, including vision tests, corrective glasses and cataract surgeries. Finally, through our Access to Energy programmes, we improve energy resilience for schools, hospitals and communities by giving them access to clean and sustainable solar power ■

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## Special Report

# OUR GOAL TO REDUCE OPERATING COSTS BELOW \$10/BOE IN MEDIUM TERM - EC FASINA

- Eniola Akinkuotu -

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Mr. Babajide Fasina is the Executive Commissioner, Economic Regulation and Strategic Planning (ER & SP) at the NUPRC. He manages the commercial aspects of Nigeria's upstream petroleum operations and coordinates strategic planning for the Commission. He tells The Upstream Gaze the role his department is playing in the NUPRC's success



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## **With Nigeria's commitment to achieving net-zero emissions by 2060, how is the Strategic Planning Department of the NUPRC driving this transition and aligning upstream regulatory strategies with the nation's decarbonisation goals?**

The NUPRC is central to this ambition, guiding the upstream petroleum sector with a strategy that balances economic growth and climate responsibility. Our strategic vision is that hydrocarbon will fund our transition. The vision is outlined as thus: gas is the bridge; carbon capture the lever and gas flare-out the proof.

There are also some flagship initiatives by the Commission to drive the transition.

The first is the Nigeria Gas Flare Commercialisation Programme (NGFCP). The objective of the NGFCP is to convert waste into economic value to achieve zero routine gas flaring by 2031 and monetise approximately 50% of total in-country gas flares.

Another key initiative is the Upstream Petroleum Decarbonisation Template (UPDT) which was launched in January 2025. The UPDT is a mandatory framework requiring upstream operators to embed decarbonisation into Field Development Plans, Well Drilling and Facility Operations.

### **What concrete steps are being taken to grow oil and gas reserves in today's evolving energy landscape?**

The first step is the Frontier Exploration which comprises the Frontier Exploration Fund (FEF). Activated under the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA), the FEF is financing exploration in under-explored basins like the Chad, Benue Trough, Anambra and Sokoto.

The second step is the Seismic Survey. A massive 56,000 sq. km offshore Niger Delta survey has identified 55 leads, 204 prospects and an estimated potential of over 9 billion barrels of oil and 10 TCF of gas.

The Commission has also been able to grow its reserves through transparent licensing and bid rounds. These periodic bid rounds were conducted under PIA guidelines to ensure transparency and competitiveness. The awarded open blocks will develop the untapped reserves and reveal offside potential. These rounds are already unlocking Final Investment Decisions (FIDs) by offering commercially viable terms.

Furthermore, we are increasing reserves through some regulatory reforms like the reactivation of shut-in wells. About 700,000 barrels/day of potential production will

be unlocked by reactivating previously shut-in wells, boosting short-term output and reserves recovery.

Executive Orders 40, 41 and 42 are aimed at fast-tracking approvals, reducing regulatory bottlenecks, promoting investments in marginal and deepwater fields. The Deepwater and Non-Associated Gas (NAG) Tax Credits are being operationalised to incentivise investment in challenging terrains.

There is also the implementation of Drill or Drop" policy which will ensure the optimal use of oil assets and prevent dormant fields from tying up potential reserves. The PIA being the instrument that guides regulatory activities in Nigeria provides that unexplored acreages are expected to be relinquished. While an incentive-based framework to encourage deeper hydrocarbon exploration effort has been introduced.

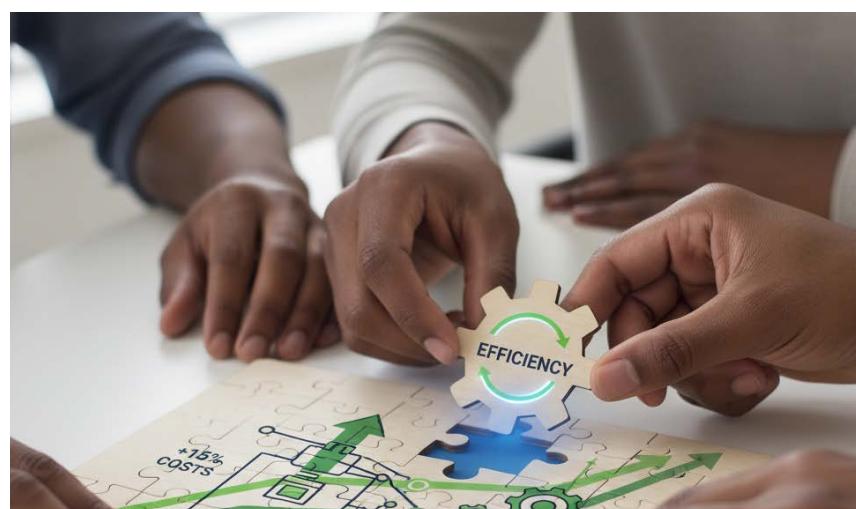
These efforts are designed to grow the nation's Oil Reserve to 40 billion barrels while production target is 3 million barrels/day long-term.

### **How is the NUPRC balancing the drive for foreign investment with the demand for stronger local content participation?**



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## **EXECUTIVE ORDERS 40, 41 AND 42 ARE AIMED AT FAST-TRACKING APPROVALS, REDUCING REGULATORY BOTTLENECKS, PROMOTING INVESTMENTS IN MARGINAL AND DEEPWATER FIELDS**



While the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) leads local content policy, the NUPRC complements these efforts by enforcing upstream compliance with equity participation requirements, skills and technology transfer, supplier

development mandate and local empowerment.

The NUPRC's regulatory reforms have restored investor confidence, evidenced by a resurgence in Final Investment Decisions (FIDs) by International Oil Companies (IOCs). At the same time, the Commission is lowering barriers for indigenous players through: reduced signature bonuses by making license acquisition more accessible to local firms; Domestic Crude Supply Obligation (DCSO) and enforcing supply to local refineries under the PIA (2021) as well as penalties such as export permit suspension for non-compliance.

The Commission has also been awarding prospecting licenses to local firms and encouraging indigenous exploration and production capacity.

### **Crude theft and pipeline vandalism remain a big challenge. What measures are being introduced to curb losses and boost production efficiency?**

Since the implementation of the Petroleum Industry Act in 2021, Nigeria has recorded steady progress in reducing crude oil losses, dropping from a staggering 102,900 bopd in 2021 – when the Commission was established – to the current 9,600 bopd representing over 90% reduction in losses. The downward trend is due to the Commission's relentless drive to eliminate all forms of crude losses across Nigeria's oilfields and pipelines. The Commission has adopted a balanced mix of kinetic and non-kinetic strategies in tackling oil losses.

On the kinetic front, the Commission has continued to collaborate closely with security agencies, operators and communities to enhance surveillance, deter and respond to vandalism and theft.

On the non-kinetic front, the NUPRC has implemented strategic regulatory measures to close systemic loopholes. One key initiative is the metering audit across upstream facilities to ensure accurate measurement of production and exports. As a fall out, the existing National Production Monitoring System (NPMS) was complemented with the launch of the Advance Cargo Declaration (ACD) system to secure cargo declaration and reconcile every export barrel from wellhead to terminal.

To further strengthen control, the NUPRC under the leadership of Engineer Gbenga Komolafe approved 37 new crude oil evacuation routes to combat oil theft.

### **Gas is at the center of Nigeria's Decade of Gas, how is your department addressing pricing, commercialisation and infrastructure gaps?**

Gas is Nigeria's growth story and the Domestic Gas Delivery Obligation (DGDO) is central to unlocking its potential. To strengthen commitments to supply gas to the domestic market, Gas producers are required to

dedicate reliable supply volumes to domestic markets based on a 3-tier supply source. Every Field Development Plan (FDP) must now include firm gas delivery obligations before approval.

The Commission is enabling fair play in commercial gas value chain agreements by collaborating to ensure financing models that will address sectoral liquidity and financing challenges by ensuring pricing frameworks that strike a balance between affordability for power, industry and bankability for investors.

The diligent implementation of the presidential directive on fiscal incentives, including NAG production tax credits, have also unlocked stranded gas projects.

With transition to cost-reflective pricing, NUPRC is working to ensure gas prices across the value chain reflect actual costs, encouraging investment and sustainability. Commercialisation of gas is further enhanced by embedding sustainability to upstream operations, promoting Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage (CCUS) and carbon credit strategies while the Nigeria Gas Flare Commercialisation Programme, for example, has helped to reduce in-country gas flare. To address infrastructure gap, deep-water cluster development was introduced to promote shared infrastructure in deep-water regions to reduce costs and unlock offshore gas potential. NUPRC is also collaborating to ensure the full implementation of the Nigeria Transport Network Code to optimise infrastructure use thereby expanding gas transport networks.

### **Revenue assurance is critical. What safeguards have your office put in place to ensure transparency and accuracy?**

Revenue assurance begins with project screening through commercial regulation ensuring FDPs are designed for durable returns. Digitally, our Hydrocarbon Accounting System reconciles production, royalties and exports in real time, while the ACD system secures cargo declarations.

To maximise domestic value, we are implementing the Domestic Crude Supply Obligation (DCSO), guaranteeing feedstock for local refineries. These measures, backed by EI TI alignment, ensure transparency and investor confidence.

The Commission in line with its mandate in the PIA 2021 has the enabling instrument for effective and timely revenue collection. We have emplaced proven systems for tracking, reconciling and ensuring timely and effective remittance of revenues. Payment is based on self-assessment by operators while periodic reconciliation is conducted to determine final amount due. Companies pay directly to designated accounts with the CBN, through JP Morgan Chase Bank New York and the Treasury Single



## **THE NUPRC UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF ENGINEER GBENGA KOMOLAFE APPROVED 37 NEW CRUDE OIL EVACUATION ROUTES TO COMBAT OIL THEFT**

Account (TSA) Gateway, while the Office of the Accountant General of the Federation has the direct oversight on the creation and management of the accounts with the CBN.

The actual collection is reported and reconciled monthly with the Federation Account Allocation Committee (FAAC), Presidential Revenue Monitoring and Reconciliation Committee (PRMRC) and annually by the Nigeria Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (NEITI) and the Auditor General of the Federation. The existing framework ensures streamlined and optimal revenue collection in the upstream oil and gas sector.



### How is technology and data analytics transforming the way NUPRC regulates and makes strategic decisions?

Technology has complimented NUPRC's predictive regulatory approach. The NPMS delivers real-time operator data. Our Enterprise solutions incorporated with AI analytics flag anomalies before they become losses and our integrated data hub consolidates seismic, reservoir and fiscal information. The outcome is faster approvals, proactive oversight and lower uncertainty for investors. Regulation is now digital, predictive and investor friendly. The Commission is leveraging data analytics to make strategic decisions. It has signed agreements with international oil and gas data providers (Rystad) to optimise access to key data points for its analysis. The Commission has also leveraged its internal access to industry data to make informed and strategic decisions in achieving its regulatory objectives: For example, the Commission has launched HostComply an online portal that helps track the operator's compliance payment of Host Community Development Trust fund. This portal operates without interference and payments by the operators and activities of the communities can be monitored real time.

### What are your top strategic priorities to keep Nigeria competitive in the global energy market?

Our near-term focus to keep Nigeria competitive involves a regulatory approach that ensures optimal

value for all stakeholders given the reality of global energy transition campaign.

The Commission's Regulatory Action Plan (RAP) 2024-2026 encapsulates the key objectives which includes: enhancing regulatory predictability and transparency; streamlining licensing rounds and reducing entry barriers; optimising unit cost of production through automation and process improvements; promoting investment retention and ease of entry for new players; aligning with the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) and global climate goals.

These objectives are being actualised through the issuance Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) anchored on measurable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) derived from PIA to ensure measurable performance and annual evaluations.

To streamline licensing rounds and ease entry for new players in accordance with Sections 73 of the PIA, we are preparing for another licensing round. This process will target proven and fallow oil and gas assets with the objectives of accelerating the maturation of petroleum reserves, increasing reserve volumes, deepening indigenous participation, promoting wealth creation and enhancing resource valorisation for national economic benefit. In the last bid round, signature bonus was lowered to reduce entry costs for small operators and free cash to accelerate development.

To optimise cost, the Commission is implementing an Open Access regime for upstream pipeline infrastructure and ancillary facilities. Our goal is to reduce the average unit operating cost per boe below \$10 in the medium term. This will be supported by a standardised tariff model and strategic industry collaborations to embed cost-benchmarking and improve operational efficiency across the board. We will drive frameworks to attract third-party investments through innovative asset financing models. Special emphasis will be placed on shared facilities and joint development initiatives to enable operators with limited capital to execute field development plans efficiently.

To align the implementation of the PIA to global climate goals, Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage (CCUS) is being integrated into upstream field development to reduce emissions and carbon credit strategies are being adopted to ensure Nigeria projects passed the rigours of sustainability thereby enhancing their bankability.

We are also championing the Africa Energy Bank to increase African participation in the energy investment landscape and encouraging sustainable exploration and enshrining the beneficial participation of the Host Communities in the dividends of Crude oil through mechanisms like the Host Community Development Trust.

This is our proactive and strategic approach to position Nigeria's upstream sector for competitiveness, sustainability and investor confidence amid global energy transition. ■

# GAZEPUZZLE

## Oil and Gas Word Search

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
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### WORDS TO FIND

NUPRC  
KOMOLAFE  
OML  
PPL  
ROYALTY  
HOSTCOMMUNITY  
DECOMMISSIONING  
ABUJA  
FLARING  
VENTING  
METHANE  
MEASUREMENT  
FRONTIER  
LICENCING  
ASSIGNMENT,  
REMEDIATION  
SUMMIT  
CURTAILMENT  
CRUDEOIL



25.09.2025

## CELEBRATION

**President Tinubu Congratulates  
Engineer Gbenga Komolafe On  
His Birthday**





## BUILDING LOCAL EXPERTISE

At Petroleum Technology Development Fund, Our goal is to develop local talent and promote the transfer of technology in the oil and gas industry. We aim to make Nigeria a leading center for skilled human resources in West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea.

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# GAZE KNOWLEDGE

- Nze David Ugorji -



This quiz reflects the evolving regulatory landscape of Nigeria's upstream petroleum sector under the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) 2021. It is designed to promote awareness, compliance and strategic insight among global stakeholders.

## INSTRUCTIONS

Test your knowledge of Nigeria's upstream oil and gas sector. Each question has one correct answer. Answers are provided at the end of the sheet.

1. Which Act established the NUPRC?
  - A. Petroleum Act 1969
  - B. Petroleum Industry Act 2021
  - C. NNPC Act
  - D. Deep Offshore Act
2. What license is required for exploration activities in Nigeria?
  - A. Oil Mining Lease (OML)
  - B. Petroleum Prospecting License (PPL)
  - C. Gas Utilisation Permit
  - D. Production Sharing Contract
3. Which Nigerian minister currently oversees petroleum resources?
  - A. Timipre Sylva
  - B. Heineken Lokpobiri
  - C. Gbenga Komolafe
  - D. Mele Kyari
4. Which license allows for commercial production of oil?
  - A. Petroleum Prospecting License (PPL)
  - B. Oil Mining Lease (OML)
  - C. Gas Utilisation Permit
  - D. Exploration License
5. Which Nigerian city hosts the Nigeria International Energy Summit (NIES)?
  - A. Lagos
  - B. Port Harcourt
  - C. Abuja
  - D. Warri

6. What do the Frontier Basins Exploration Administration Regulations promote?
  - A. Gas flaring
  - B. Deep offshore drilling
  - C. Exploration in underexplored regions
  - D. Host community development
7. Which regulation governs the declaration of cargo in upstream operations?
  - A. Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Advance Cargo Declaration Regulations
  - B. Petroleum Royalty Regulations
  - C. Domestic Gas Delivery Regulations
  - D. Petroleum Profits Tax Act
8. Which regulation governs fees and rents in upstream operations?
  - A. Upstream Petroleum Fees and Rents Temporary Regulations
  - B. Petroleum Licensing Round Regulations
  - C. Domestic Gas Delivery Regulations
  - D. Petroleum Profits Tax Act
9. Which regulation governs licensing rounds in Nigeria?
  - A. Petroleum Licensing Round Regulations
  - B. Domestic Gas Delivery Regulations
  - C. Petroleum Royalty Regulations
  - D. Environmental Remediation Regulation
10. Which regulation governs royalty payments in upstream operations?
  - A. Petroleum Royalty Regulation
  - B. Petroleum Profits Tax Act
  - C. Domestic Gas Delivery Regulations
  - D. Host Communities Development Regulations

**ANSWERS**

# GAZE LIFESTYLE

## HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

- Nze David Ugorji -

# The Power of Pause: Micro-Retreats for Government Professionals

In the landscape of modern governance, where the demands of public service often seem relentless and the pace of work grows ever faster, the value of stillness can appear unfathomably elusive. Government Professionals, Ministers, Civil Servants, Administrators, Policy Advisors and Diplomatic figures, find themselves constantly immersed in responsibilities that stretch far beyond regular office hours. The expectation of constant availability, the unending nature of crises both domestic and global and the pressures of decision-making within shrinking windows of time create a professional life that is as stressful as it is impactful. Yet hidden within this never-ending bustle lies an untapped reservoir of strength waiting to be discovered: the Power of Pause. More specifically, micro-retreats, brief intentional breaks designed to create breathing space for reflection and restoration hold transformative potential for the effectiveness, health and humanity of those serving in governmental roles.

The need for micro-retreats becomes evident when we consider the reality of modern public service. Across Africa and the wider world, governments are tasked with tackling deeply entrenched challenges: economic transformation, climate adaptation, food security, conflict resolution, digital governance, public health and youth employment, to name a few. Professionals responsible for navigating these issues are often operating in high-pressure contexts where their decisions have profound implications for millions. Unlike the corporate world, where success can be measured in profits or market shares, governance is deeply human, where results are intertwined with lives, communities and futures. The psychological weight of such responsibility,

compounded by institutional overloads, can drain energy reserves to critical levels. Sustainable leadership, therefore, relies not only on intellectual resilience but also on emotional renewal, a reality that micro-retreats directly address.

A micro-retreat is not the same as a vacation. Vacations, though valuable, are often infrequent, long-awaited and heavily structured around family, tourism or travel commitments. A micro-retreat differs in its intentional brevity and focus. It could last a few hours, a single day or a weekend and it is centered not on distraction but on restoration. At its heart, a micro-retreat is about pausing in the middle of ongoing commitments, stepping back ever so briefly to create space for renewal before returning to the rigor of responsibilities. The elegance of this idea is its accessibility; even the busiest government professional can carve out two hours, half a day or one afternoon to embrace the pause without needing elaborate planning or travel. For those who are constantly under pressure, it is the small, regular acts of restoration that add up to a reservoir of resilience.

The African continent itself offers a natural environment for micro-retreats. The abundance of outdoor spaces, from the shoreline of Nigeria to the highlands of Ethiopia, from the parks of Abuja to the botanical gardens of Cape Town, provides an invitation to connect with nature, slow down and recover. At the same time, the urban landscape carries its own opportunities. Even a quiet office corner, a cultural center or a meditative space in a government complex can be transformed

into a micro-retreat environment. What matters most is not the luxury of location but the depth of pause. For government professionals who rarely step away from their phones, emails and meetings, a deliberate digital disconnection, even if for only a few hours, can feel revolutionary.

The psychological benefits of micro-retreats have been widely studied across disciplines such as psychology, neuroscience and organisational behavior. Stress, when sustained without relief, causes elevated cortisol levels that erode cognitive clarity, dampen empathy and impair decision-making. For government professionals who need clarity of thought to balance competing demands, such erosion is costly not only to themselves but also to the public they serve. By carving out intentional moments of silence or slow reflection, the mind recalibrates. Studies suggest that periods of rest and disengagement allow the brain to enter states of creativity and associative thinking, often offering innovative solutions that cannot emerge under the noise of perpetual activity. A micro-retreat thus nurtures sharper judgment and fresh perspective, qualities indispensable to effective governance.

Beyond self-care, micro-retreats also carry profound implications for leadership and teams. A minister, director or senior administrator who models the practice of pause communicates to colleagues an essential truth: constant busyness is not a badge of honour but a path toward



burnout. Leaders who demonstrate self-renewal inspire their teams to embrace healthier rhythms, thereby scaling resilience across entire institutions. This cultural shift is particularly important in government settings, where overwork is normalised and self-neglect often perceived as sacrifice for the nation. Yet nations do not thrive on the fatigue of their leaders, they flourish on their clarity, groundedness and vision. By integrating micro-retreats into the routine of governance, leaders set the tone for balanced excellence rather than frantic exhaustion.

The cultural perspective deepens the argument for micro-retreats within an African context. Historically, African societies have valued community pauses, storytelling circles under the trees, moments of reflection at riversides and rituals of silence before great decisions. The wisdom of the elders often came not from hurried judgment but from considered thought in spaces of stillness. Modern governance can draw upon this heritage. In a 21st-century framework, the ancient practice of withdrawing for reflection translates seamlessly into micro-retreats within modern institutions. What appears to be innovative in organisational psychology is often a rediscovery of deeply rooted traditions of pause that African societies practiced naturally before the dominance of constant digital connection.

Practical application of micro-retreats for government professionals can be simple and adaptive. A morning micro-retreat might involve spending sixty minutes journaling, meditating or walking in a garden before the avalanche of meetings begins. A midday pause might be structured during lunchtime, where instead of more networking or hurried working meals, the professional intentionally retreats into a reflective zone free from screens and interruptions. Weekends could offer slightly longer retreats: a day at a nature reserve, a silent reading session at home or a structured reflection with a mentor or coach. For those in leadership circles, group micro-retreats are especially powerful, gathering teams away from the formal environment to reflect not on short-term deadlines but on long-term visioning, teamwork and values. These collective pauses help reset organisational dynamics, repair strained relationships and renew shared purpose.

There will always be skeptics who view micro-retreats as indulgent or unnecessary luxuries for professionals with pressing public responsibilities. But this skepticism overlooks the tangible cost of exhaustion. A fatigued policymaker risks missing critical details in legislation. A burned-out administrator may unintentionally mishandle a citizen's concern. A mentally strained diplomat could misinterpret nuance during negotiations. These small lapses ripple outward with consequences far beyond the individual. The notion that rest compromises productivity is a myth. In fact, it is relentless activity without pause that creates weakness. Micro-retreats are not escapes from responsibility; rather, they are investments into the clarity and strength needed to carry responsibility well.

Government institutions across Africa and beyond can embed micro-retreats systemically by reimagining professional development programs. Just as workshops and technical trainings are essential, so too could partial days of structured silence, guided reflection or mindfulness exercises be considered core training for leaders. Partnerships with wellness practitioners, cultural institutions and local communities could create spaces tailored for short retreats. Policies could encourage government departments to normalise these pauses, much the way corporate organisations have normalised sabbaticals, flexible hours or wellness programs. In the long run, governments that invest in their professionals' well-being will harvest dividends in policy quality, citizen trust and institutional resilience.

The rhythm of public life is unlikely to slow down in the coming decades. Global interconnectedness, climate emergencies, technological disruptions and demographic shifts guarantee that governance will only become more complex. It is precisely because of these accelerating challenges that micro-retreats are vital. They provide the breathing spaces needed to adapt, recalibrate and think creatively. They humanise governance by reminding leaders of their own humanity in the face of relentless demands. And they reconnect those in positions of power with the timeless rhythm of pause that has always been a cradle of wisdom across cultures.

At the heart of it all, micro-retreats remind us that silence is not absence but presence. It is the presence of clarity amid noise, of strength amid fatigue, of perspective amid urgency. For government professionals in Africa and across the world, embracing the power of pause through micro-retreats may be the very key to sustainable leadership in an age of constant acceleration. Nations need leaders who can think with depth rather than just react with speed. Citizens need policymakers who can balance urgency with wisdom. And institutions need professionals whose resilience is not fleeting but renewable. All of this begins with a recognition that even the smallest pause has the power to reshape not just individual well-being but collective futures.

When the history of governance in the coming decades is written, perhaps it will not only recall the policies enacted and crises overcome, but also the new culture of leadership that dared to humanise power by reclaiming the pause. Micro-retreats, in their simplicity and accessibility, may prove to be one of the quiet revolutions shaping the leaders of tomorrow. They embody the truth that the strength of a government professional is not simply measured by hours worked or tasks completed, but by the wisdom and vision carried into service. And sustaining both wisdom and vision requires something profoundly ordinary yet easily overlooked: The Pause. ■

# GAZEDIASPORA

- Nze David Ugorji -

In the dynamic world of global culture, where stories shape perception and platforms define legacy, one man stands out in projecting Nigerian excellence: Abass Abayomi Tijani, known as DJ Abass. Charismatic, visionary, and deeply committed to his heritage, he has spent over two decades crafting a narrative that celebrates Nigeria's vibrancy while captivating global audiences. His work transcends

## DJ ABASS

promotion—it is transformational. Through music, film, food, sports, and enterprise, DJ Abass bridges continents with the rhythm and resilience of the Nigerian spirit.

From Afrobeat's underground rise in London to its global dominance, DJ Abass has been both pioneer and powerhouse. His events electrified the UK nightlife, introducing Lagos beats and Nigerian artists long before they became global icons. He built platforms where talent meets opportunity, where the diaspora reconnects with its roots, and where the world learns to dance to a Nigerian rhythm.

Equally significant is his impact on Nollywood. DJ Abass has championed Nigerian cinema with unwavering dedication, organising premieres,

hosting panels, and advocating for international recognition. He has helped redefine perceptions of African storytelling—showing that Nigerian filmmakers are not imitators, but innovators. Beyond entertainment, he promotes Nigerian businesses—from fashion and food to tech and wellness—using his influence to amplify their reach and impact.

His brilliance shines through My Tasty Naija, his acclaimed YouTube show that celebrates identity, heritage, and humanity. Each episode explores Nigerian life through flavours, faces, and stories, connecting diaspora pride with global curiosity. Bold, beautiful, and authentic, it has become a cultural touchstone for those seeking to experience Nigeria beyond the headlines.

DJ Abass is more than a promoter of culture; he is a protector of legacy and a pioneer whose work inspires generations. His story reflects the power of passion, heritage, and purpose—reminding the world that Nigeria is not just a country, but a force. ■



# GAZETAINMENT

- Dare Olaniyan -

## THE FUTURE IS NIGERIAN: CREATIVE POWER ROOTED IN GENIUS, ELEVATED BY THE WORLD



Nigeria stands at a thrilling crossroads in its cultural evolution. The world is shifting, and so is the rhythm of creativity. From the bustling streets of Lagos to the digital corridors of Abuja, a new wave of artistic expression is rising, one that draws from global innovation while remaining deeply rooted in indigenous brilliance. This is not merely a moment of transition; it is a renaissance. Nigeria's creative future is being reimaged, not by imitation, but by a bold fusion of global influence and local genius.

Across the globe, entertainment and creative industries are being reshaped by technology, audience agency and the hunger for authenticity. Artificial intelligence is now a co-creator, helping artists compose music,

generate visuals and even write scripts. In South Korea, AI is composing K-pop hits. In Hollywood, it's powering virtual production. Nigeria, with its vibrant storytelling tradition and tech-savvy youth, is poised to harness this wave, not to dilute its voice, but to amplify it. Imagine Nollywood filmmakers using AI to render village scenes with cinematic precision or musicians blending traditional rhythms with algorithmic harmonies. The tools are here. The talent is abundant. What remains is the will to integrate and innovate.

The global appetite for short-form content has exploded. TikTok, Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts have become stages where fifteen seconds can birth a movement. Nigerian creators already dominate these

spaces with humor, dance and commentary. But the next frontier lies in strategic storytelling, using these platforms not just for visibility, but for cultural export. A skit in pidgin English can become a global meme. A dance rooted in Igbo tradition can trend in Tokyo. The world is watching and Nigeria's creative pulse is impossible to ignore.

Immersive entertainment is redefining audience engagement. Virtual reality concerts, augmented reality exhibitions and interactive films are blurring the lines between creator and consumer. Nigeria's festivals, fashion and folklore are ripe for this kind of reimaging. Picture a virtual Durbar procession, a 3D reconstruction of ancient Benin or an AR-enhanced Eyo Festival experience. These are not distant dreams, they are achievable realities. With the right investment and vision, Nigeria can offer the world immersive cultural journeys that



educate, entertain and inspire.

Audio storytelling is also having a global moment. Podcasts and voice-first content are drawing millions into intimate, immersive worlds. Nigeria's oral traditions, rich with proverbs, parables and performance are perfectly suited for this medium. Whether it's folklore retellings, diaspora dialogues or regional language series, the potential is vast. Audio content transcends literacy, geography and bandwidth, making it one of the most democratic forms of cultural expression. It is time for Nigeria to own this space, not just as a participant, but as a pioneer.

Live entertainment is evolving into visual spectacle. Concerts are now cinematic experiences, with projection

mapping, thematic choreography and narrative arcs. Nigerian music shows, fashion events and theatre productions can elevate their staging to match global standards, creating moments that are not just memorable but monumental. These are the kinds of experiences that go viral, attract tourism and build cultural capital. The world is hungry for African excellence and Nigeria is ready to serve.

Gaming is no longer a niche, it is a global cultural force. Cloud gaming and social play have lowered barriers to entry, allowing users to engage with high-quality games on mobile devices. Nigeria's youth, tech-savvy and creatively inclined, could lead a wave of indigenous game development. Games that reflect local stories, languages and humor could become cultural ambassadors, turning folklore into playable worlds and history into interactive quests. This is not just entertainment, it is education, diplomacy and identity.

Social media has evolved from a promotional tool into a full-fledged entertainment ecosystem. Platforms like TikTok, X and Instagram are now homes for serialised content, influencer collaborations and direct-to-fan monetisation. Nigerian entertainers can build entire franchises on these platforms, bypassing traditional gatekeepers and engaging audiences in real time. The key is consistency, authenticity and strategic storytelling. The audience is global. The stage is digital. The moment is now.

Globally, successful entertainment franchises now span film, music, games, merchandise and even theme parks. Nigeria can develop its own cross-media intellectual properties; imagine a Nollywood blockbuster spawning a comic series, a mobile game and a fashion line. This kind of ecosystem thinking unlocks new revenue streams and global relevance. It's not just about creating content, it's about creating worlds. And Nigeria has the mythologies, the characters and the creative fire to do it.

Self-publishing and creator-led platforms are empowering artists to take control of their narratives. Platforms like Patreon, Substack and Kindle Direct Publishing allow creators to monetise niche content, build loyal communities and bypass traditional gatekeepers. Nigerian authors, musicians and filmmakers can leverage these tools to reach diaspora audiences, test new formats and build sustainable careers. The future is decentralised and Nigeria's creative voices deserve to be heard without filters.

This is not a moment to imitate, it is a moment to innovate. To look inward, draw strength from tradition and project outward with confidence. The world is watching. The platforms are ready. The tools are available. What remains is the will to dream boldly, act strategically and tell our stories with the brilliance they deserve.

Nigeria's creative future is not a distant horizon, it is a rising sun. And with the right vision, it will shine far beyond our borders.. ■

# GAZESPORTS

- Adewale Osoneye -

## THE PULSE OF A NATION: LAGOS STATE SPORTS COMMISSION REIGNITES NIGERIA'S SPORTING FLAME

In a nation where football chants echo through dusty streets and Olympic dreams flicker in the hearts of young athletes, the story of Nigerian sports has long been one of passion eclipsed by neglect. For decades, the country's immense talent pool, raw, vibrant and diverse, has struggled to find the infrastructure, investment and institutional support needed to thrive. Yet, in the midst of this inertia, a quiet revolution has been unfolding in Lagos. It is a revival not just of sport, but of spirit. It is a resurgence powered by vision, strategy and the transformative strides of the Lagos State Sports Commission.

Lagos, Nigeria's commercial nerve centre, has always been a crucible of energy and ambition. But under the stewardship of the Lagos State Sports Commission, the city has become something more, a blueprint for national sporting excellence. The Commission's approach is not merely administrative; it is philosophical. It sees sport not as recreation, but as a tool for youth empowerment, social cohesion and economic growth. In Lagos, sport is no longer an afterthought, it is a priority.

The resurgence began with a simple but radical idea: that every child, regardless of background, deserves access to structured, competitive and developmental sport. This idea birthed a wave of grassroots initiatives that have swept through schools, communities and local government areas. From

inter-school athletics to community football leagues, the Commission has reengineered the sporting pipeline, ensuring that talent is identified early, nurtured consistently and celebrated publicly. The days of waiting for



talent to stumble into the spotlight are over. Lagos is now actively cultivating its champions.

But the revival is not just about participation, it is about excellence. The Commission has invested heavily in infrastructure, breathing new life into stadiums, courts and training facilities. The Teslim Balogun Stadium, once a relic of faded glory, now pulses with activity, hosting national tournaments and international scouts. The Rowe Park Sports Centre, the Mobolaji Johnson Arena and the Agege Stadium have all undergone upgrades, transforming into hubs of elite performance and community engagement. These spaces are no longer monuments to what was, they are platforms for what can be.

Equally transformative has been the Commission's embrace of technology and data. Athlete performance is now tracked with precision, coaching is informed by analytics, and talent development is guided by measurable outcomes. Lagos is not just producing athletes, it is producing professionals. Young sprinters, swimmers and basketball players are being exposed to global standards, preparing them not just for national glory but

for international careers. The Commission's partnerships with private academies, international federations and corporate sponsors have created a dynamic ecosystem where sport is both passion and profession.

Perhaps most inspiring is the Commission's commitment to inclusion. In Lagos, sport is not reserved for the privileged, it is a right for all. The Special Sports Unit has empowered athletes with disabilities, providing them with tailored training, competitive opportunities and public recognition. Women's sports, long sidelined in Nigeria, are now receiving the attention they deserve. Female footballers, boxers and track stars are being celebrated not just for their talent but for their tenacity. The message is clear: in Lagos, sport belongs to everyone.

This revival has not gone unnoticed. At national tournaments, Lagos athletes dominate the podium. At international meets, they carry the flag with pride and purpose. The city's performance at the National Sports Festival has become a benchmark, inspiring other states to rethink their approach to sport. But beyond medals and trophies, the true victory lies in the lives transformed. Young boys who once roamed the streets now train with discipline. Girls who were told sport was not for them now dream of Olympic gold. Communities once fractured by poverty and violence now unite around shared victories and collective pride.

The Lagos State Sports Commission has shown that sport is not just about competition, it is about character. It teaches resilience, teamwork and leadership. It offers a pathway out of poverty, a platform for expression and a mirror for national identity. In a country often divided by politics and plagued by economic uncertainty, sport offers something rare: unity, hope and joy.

Yet, the journey is far from over. The Commission continues to push boundaries, exploring new disciplines, expanding access and deepening impact. Plans are underway to introduce sports entrepreneurship programs, linking athletes with business mentors and financial literacy training. E-sports, a growing global phenomenon, is being explored as a new frontier for youth engagement. Lagos is not just keeping pace with the world, it is setting the pace.

The Nigerian sports revival, powered by Lagos, is a testament to what is possible when vision meets action. It is a reminder that institutions matter, that leadership counts and that transformation begins at the grassroots. The Lagos State Sports Commission has not only redefined sport in Nigeria, it has redefined what it means to believe in a nation's potential.

As the sun sets over the bustling streets of Surulere and the floodlights flicker on at Agege Stadium, one thing is clear: the spirit of Nigerian sport is alive, rising and ready. And at the heart of this resurgence is a city that dared to dream, a Commission that chose to act and a generation that refuses to be left behind.

This is not just a revival. It is a renaissance. And it is only just beginning. ■



# GAZETOURISM

- Folakemi Famoroti -

## JOLLOF GOSPEL, NIGERIA'S SPICY SERMON TO THE WORLD

There are few dishes carry the pride, passion, and pulse of a nation like Nigerian jollof rice. It's not just food it's a message. A spicy sermon preached from smoky pots and bustling kitchens, calling the world to taste, feel and understand. This is the Jollof Gospel and Nigeria is its loudest evangelist.

To witness jollof in its element is to witness joy itself. It begins with sizzling onions, the dance of tomatoes and peppers, the swirl of thyme and bay leaves. Then comes the rice bold, long-grain and ready to soak in flavour. The pot becomes a pulpit, the cook a preacher and when the lid lifts, the aroma alone can convert any skeptic.

But jollof rice is more than a recipe. It is history, resistance and celebration. Born in the Senegambian region

and perfected across West Africa, it found its most devoted believers in Nigeria. Here, jollof is sacred the soul of weddings, birthdays and Sunday afternoons. It unites tribes, sparks debates and fuels friendly rivalries with Ghana.

Nigerian jollof is unapologetically bold smoky, spicy and rich with depth. The rice cooks in the sauce, not beside it, absorbing every drop of essence. The golden crust at the bottom, "party rice," is treasured a delicacy born of firewood and patience. This complexity makes it a global contender food as performance.

Today, jollof rice has gone global. It graces diplomatic tables, dominates food festivals and trends on social media. It has inspired cook-offs in London, fusion dishes in New York and endless praise from chefs worldwide. Yet it remains rooted in its essence community, creativity and cultural pride.

For Nigerians everywhere, jollof is nostalgia on a plate the scent of home, the laughter of family, a taste of belonging. It connects generations and carries memories across oceans. It evolves with time basmati, coconut, grilled meats but never loses its soul.

The Jollof Gospel is more than flavor; it's identity. It tells the story of a people who turn simplicity into art, challenge into creativity and food into national pride. When Nigeria serves jollof, it doesn't just feed it inspires. And in that fiery, fragrant gospel lies truth, beauty and home. ■



A large, dark metal drum with a visible handle and a metal pipe being inserted into its top opening. The background is dark and moody.

# CRUDE OIL THEFT

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