

October 4th, 2018

Speech delivered by Mrs. Folashade Ambrose-Medebem, EBO Founding President , on the occasion of the launch of the European Business Organisation (EBO) Nigeria, during the 2018, 7TH edition, of the European Union/Nigeria Business Forum (EUNBF)

Eko Hotel & Towers, Victoria Island, Lagos.

Protocol

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is with great sense of humility and honour that I welcome you today. We are deeply appreciative for your honouring our invitation

Introduction

This event is an important milestone in our effort towards achieving closer collaboration between the private and the public sectors of the economy. We began this journey back in February. I am proud to report that the idea we conceived months ago and the processes we set in motion have led us to this day.

EBO Nigeria

As you already know well too, industry coalitions, chambers of commerce and bilateral associations have over the years driven private sector/government think-tanks and contributed to policy development conversations. These have helped to open up the business space and often stimulate policies taking into into account some contributions from the private sector.

We aim to take Public/Private sector collaboration even higher.

Having emerged from a recession, today there is some measure of economic stability when compared to three years ago in terms of macro-economic indicators. This is mostly driven by international confidence that Nigeria is genuinely determined to set the economy on a path for sustainable growth. However, at the micro level, there is still a lot of work to be done.

The Nigerian economy is evolving. The political space, business opportunities and challenges continue to transform as new policies and measures emerge. For example, the adoption of the new code of corporate governance; Non-oil export policy; The post-recession implementation of the Economic Recovery and Growth plan (ERGP); The Presidential executive order on local content; Control of dimension, weights and axle loads of heavy duty goods transport vehicles regulations 2018, to the purported increase of customs duty on alcoholic beverages and tobacco as well as the anxiety triggered by the non-signing of African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) by Africa's two biggest economies have all but contributed to an atmosphere of uncertainty.

In the same vein, one of such advocacy we would have to champion is for the President to sign into law the bill for the establishment of the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission which seeks, among other things, to erase/avoid monopoly and abuse of dominant market position as well as facilitate access to safe products by all citizens and secure the protection of consumer rights in Nigeria.

You would agree, therefore, in an economic climate like ours, contributing to dialogues is one leg of the hurdle. As the primary economic development partners for Nigeria, industry, through the EBO, has an even more crucial role to play by attracting and facilitating international collaborations that will bring on-board world class expertise, resources and competencies to local socio-economic discourse, policy formulation and implementation.

The European Business Organisation (EBO), therefore, subscribes to the expansion of private sector/government collaboration by leveraging the connections of its members within the international trade and business community. Ours is about inviting and injecting fresh ideas to deepen the conversation stimulate investment and the institutionalisation of first world regulatory and policy frameworks within Nigeria. These constitute the crux of our objectives.

Broadly speaking, the EBO aims to:

1. Facilitate business networking for small, medium and large enterprises including multi-national companies through local national chambers, bilateral chambers and recognized national business groups and the EU Delegation.
2. Advocate European quality standards, best business practices and corporate social responsibility.

3. Collect and analyse information and statistics for the purpose of offering perspective and context to the members in cooperation with local national chambers, bilateral chambers and recognized national business groups and the EU Delegation.
4. Provide monitoring of trade and investment agreements and identify problems hindering dynamic development of trade between the EU and Nigeria.
5. Advocate the removal of trade and investment barriers for European companies operating in Nigeria and provide assistance to Nigerian businesses to take advantage of the benefits of entering EU markets.
6. Actively assist Nigeria in the development of a common ECOWAS market and to actively assist European and Nigerian business to take advantage of such common market.
7. Create and sustain a positive image of Europe, the European Union and European businesses in Nigeria.
8. Report and create awareness about the importance of intellectual property rights and patents.
9. Undertake EU funded projects with due diligence in support of EBO-Nigeria's mission, vision and objectives.
10. To help further increase the ease of doing business in Nigeria by providing new European entrants into our market with a support network for their Foreign Direct investment

The EBO is all about taking the conversation further to bring understanding and actionable ideas closer.

Distinguished Guests, at this juncture, I would like to congratulate the founding member companies and the elected directors for rising to the occasion; for daring to dream; for believing in the promise of Nigeria and subsequently developing the framework upon which the operations of the EBO will be based.

The Founding Member Companies of EBO Nigeria are:

1. Air France – KLM
2. ALSTOM Transport Nigeria;
3. Arla Foods
4. Asseco Software Nigeria Limited
5. BASF
6. Bureau Veritas Nigeria Limited
7. CFAO
8. Deutsche Bank Representative Office, Nigeria
9. GreenElec Integrated Power Solutions Limited

10. Greenville Nigeria Ltd;
11. Lafarge Africa Plc
12. Presco Nigeria Plc
13. Ringardas Nigeria Ltd
14. Schneider Electric
15. Siemens Limited
16. Sunray Ventures
17. Thales International
18. Total Plc.
19. Weststar Associates

Founding Directors

I am of the firm belief that our enthusiasm and commitment will propel us to the many achievements we all envisage into the future.

Our gratitude goes to the European Union Delegation to Nigeria and ECOWAS. Its unwavering confidence in the potential of the Nigerian economy informs the base upon which the foundation of this great organization, the EBO, was laid. We also extend our warm appreciation to our lawyers, Udo Udoma and Bello-Osagie (UUBO), for their work regarding the corporate registration process.

Indeed, ours is about collaboration among peers - diverse private sector operators propelled by a commitment to contribute to continuous improvement and national success. It is about recognising and playing our role to, among other things, accelerate government's objectives of curbing corruption, improving security and infrastructure and rebuilding the real sectors of the economy for the common good.

To this end, the Board of EBO Nigeria comprises of (8) Directors from different backgrounds and fields of expertise.

Namely:

1. Folashade Ambrose-Medebem (President) - Lafarge Africa Plc
2. Andreas Voss (Vice President) - Deutsche Bank Representative Office, Nigeria
3. Ohioze Unuigbe - Bureau Veritas Nigeria Limited
4. Mary Ojulari - Weststar Associates
5. Simon Melchior -Asseco Software Nigeria Limited
6. Christian Wessels - Sunray Ventures
7. Steen Hadsjerb - Arla Foods

8. Filippo Amato - Head of the trade and economic section of the EU Delegation to Nigeria and ECOWAS, representing the EU Ambassador, who is honorary member of the Board of EBO-Nigeria.

The Future

Finally, my sincere appreciation goes to all the founding members for the confidence your esteemed selves have reposed on myself and Andreas by electing us President and Vice President, to steer this ship at its formative stage.

With your collective support we are confident on delivering our mandate successfully by ensuring that the EBO lives up to the ideals upon which it was founded.

I am optimistic that the ambition which led to the birth of the EBO will be best served through continued consultation and consensus building that leverages each other's expertise.

Indeed, consistency and clarity of purpose will define the trajectory of our engagement, networking, advocacy and partnership strategies towards achieving the laudable objectives that we share.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, I present to you the **European Business Organisation (EBO), Nigeria!**

*Mrs. Folashade Ambrose-Medebem
President, Business Organisation (EBO), Nigeria
Lagos, October 4th, 2018*