



63rd ANNUAL CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT

26 - 30 September 2022

Venue: Kano, Kano State, Nigeria

Conference Theme: Fiscal Sustainability and Policy Response for Economic Recovery in Nigeria

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

Background

Over the years, the Nigerian economy has exhibited fragile growth and sluggish economic transformation characterised by abysmal macroeconomic performance such as rising unemployment and inflation, low productivity, a weak domestic currency, sustained budget deficits, and a crippling debt burden. For instance, throughout the past three decades, beginning from 1990, Nigeria's fiscal position was in the deficit, except for the years 1995 and 1996. Historically, Nigeria's first descent into a fiscal deficit of N455.10 million (US\$324.94 million) was in 1970, precisely 10 years after independence. Since then, it has been a sustained spiral into an excruciating debt burden that is primarily perceived as unsustainable, worsened by volatile oil prices and the associated dwindling revenues. With limited fiscal space from the revenue side, the government's capacity to meet its mounting debt obligations became more precarious.

In recent years, basic macroeconomic indicators, specifically Nigeria's fiscal and debt profile, have not shown improvement. According to the World Bank (WB), Nigeria ranks fifth on the list of 10 countries with the highest debt exposure. As of December 31, 2021, Nigeria's public external debt stock stood at N15.86 trillion (US\$38.39 billion), with over 54 percent owed to multilateral institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This is followed by commercial and bilateral debts of 33 percent and 12.7 percent, respectively. Domestic debt stock stood at N23.7 trillion (US\$57.39 billion). The fiscal position of subnational government (State Governments) has equally been edgy and unnerving, a situation which led to the intervention of the Federal Government (FG) granting bailout funds to states who could not meet their basic statutory obligations of salary payments.

The country's fiscal situation has been compounded in recent times by two global shocks. First was the global oil price shock of 2015 that resulted in the economic recession of 2016-2017. An effort at wriggling out of the recession and laying a foundation for sustainable growth and development led to the launch of the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) 2017 – 2020. The ERGP partly achieved its objective with the economy attaining mild positive real GDP growth of 2.3 percent in 2019. However, the growth was cut short by the twin global shocks of 2020-oil price and the Covid-19 pandemic. This resulted in a 1.92 percent contraction of economic activities in 2020. Although the economy has been able to recover

from the 2020 contraction with positive real GDP growth of 3.4 percent in 2021, the recovery is still considered fragile following the constrained fiscal position and prolonged global uncertainty.

The bulging debt profile and widening deficits have continued to raise concerns from various stakeholders, thus, questioning the country's fiscal sustainability, particularly given the ever-expanding developmental needs and dwindling revenue figures. While the government continued to maintain that the country's indebtedness is still within the acceptable debt-to-GDP threshold, stakeholders argue that with the high debt service-to-revenue ratio hovering above 60 percent, the current fiscal sustainability position becomes highly susceptible. For example, Nigeria's debt-to-GDP ratio currently stands at 22.47 percent. According to the Debt Management Office (DMO), this is still below the country's obligated 40 percent limit and the World Bank/IMF 55 percent limit.

Consequent upon the above, the government has embarked on several policy initiatives and responses to the above. Notable among the different policy responses are various measures to increase revenues through the Strategic Revenue Growth Initiative and the introduction of the Finance Acts since 2019. The question is the ability of these policy responses to generate enough revenue to stimulate countercyclical fiscal responses to engender economic recovery. This becomes germane since Nigeria has one of the lowest revenue-to-GDP ratios of 6.0 percent, compared to the average for sub-Saharan African countries of roughly 20 percent and 30 percent for oil exporters. Further complicating is the dwindling external financial flows (loans, aids, and grants). Thus, the issue of Fiscal Sustainability and Policy Response for Economic Recovery becomes very imperative.

Conference Objectives

Concerns about the revenue side should naturally prop up questions of appropriate policy responses. Are there legitimate concerns about Nigeria's rising debt profile – domestic and external, especially in the last seven years? How can government stem the tide of continuous rise in borrowing to fund annual budgets? Is Nigeria's current fiscal stance sustainable? Amongst the various threshold measures of fiscal sustainability, namely: debt-to-GDP, debt service-to-revenue, debt to-exports, debt service-to-exports, deficit-to-GDP, and deficit-to-revenue – which should policy focus more on to achieve the desired sustainability? How consistent is Nigeria's borrowing plan with the extant legal provisions, especially the Fiscal Sustainability Act? What should be the appropriate policy response to exogenous shocks fiscal constraints? Are there economic and policy implications of Nigeria's rising debt on other sectors of the economy, especially the real sector – agriculture, mining, manufacturing, industry, etc.? Are better options or alternatives fiscal space available to finance the country's debt portfolio? How effective have government policies been in addressing the challenge of fiscal sustainability? What role can the private sector play in ensuring that Nigeria's debt is fiscally sustainable? How sustainable is Nigeria's debt against the background of worsening macroeconomic indicators in recent times? Are there growth, productivity, and development implications for Nigeria's rising debt? These questions require rigorous and empirical analyses to inform and guide policy formulation.

The preceding is the context underlying the choice of the theme of the 2022 NES Annual Conference- Fiscal Sustainability and Policy Response for Economic Recovery in Nigeria. Consequently, the conference aims to provide a holistic analysis of issues relating to fiscal sustainability, especially within economic recovery. The conference will focus on theoretical issues and empirical evidence on best practices in successful policy responses. Institutional and policy environment, as well as the role of various stakeholders, will be discussed.

Generally, the conference is expected to bring together participants across the different spheres of life, including academia, industry, finance, accountants, public auditors, government policy think-tanks, development partners, and other stakeholders within and across the shores of Nigeria.

Conference Theme

This year's conference's theme is "**Fiscal Sustainability and Policy Response for Economic Recovery in Nigeria.**" The theme is chosen to reflect Nigeria's current macroeconomic and fiscal challenges. It seeks to address cross-cutting and specific issues on government policy responses to the fiscal sustainability challenge.

Sub-Themes

Given the focus objectives and theme of the conference, the sub-themes are as follows:

- Theoretical issues on fiscal sustainability
- Financing economic development in the face of Fiscal constraints
- Fiscal and supply constraints in Nigeria: policy interventions for recovery and diversification
- Financing sustainable growth, the Fiscal Act, 2021, inclusiveness, and development.
- Economic implications of fiscal options: poverty; (un)employment; health and education; and other sectoral issues.

Format of the Conference

The conference is designed to feature many activities. There will be keynote paper and plenary sessions with lead paper presentations, discussions, and specialised concurrent paper presentation sessions. Stakeholders, including the Office of the Accountant General of the Federation, National Assembly, the Central Bank of Nigeria, NDIC, Development Bank of Nigeria, NNPC, captains in the OPS, development partners, etc., will engage in policy round table discussions on different aspects of Nigeria's fiscal sustainability.

Submission Guidelines

We invite authors to submit Abstracts on any of the sub-themes listed above. The Abstract should be in standard MS Word or Adobe Acrobat PDF format and not be more than 700 words in length, in Times New Roman, font 12, double line spacing. The submission should include the following in the order of listing: title of the research paper, the names of author(s) and affiliations, JEL classification codes, overview, research objectives, and research hypothesis (if any), method of study (if any), data sources, expected results, and references. Other required information is the corresponding author's e-mail address and phone number (for jointly authored papers). Please, note that any submission that does not adhere STRICTLY to these submission guidelines will not be considered.

Important Deadlines

Deadline for submission of Abstracts May 31, 2022

Notification of acceptance of papers June 30, 2022

Deadline for submission of full papers August 15, 2022

The Abstract should be **submitted electronically to:** nes.conferences@gmail.com; **copy:** afolawewo2001@yahoo.com; and lioneleffiom@gmail.com. For further information on the conference, please, visit the Society's website: www.nigerianeconomicsociety.org.

Conference Fees

NES Members

₦40,000 for early Registration, before July 31, 2022

₦45,000 for late Registration, after July 31, 2020

Non-NES Members

₦ 50,000 for early Registration, before July 31, 2022

₦ 55,000 for late Registration, after July 31, 2022

Students

₦10,000 for Students Registration

₦5,000 for **NESA Delegates Registration**

NES Bank Account Number:

The conference fee covers coffee break, group lunch, and some selected publications of the NES

Please, visit www.nigerianeconomicsociety.org for more information on the Nigerian Economic Society.

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