

The Executive Secretary's Talking Points for the SWAN Courtesy Visit and Award Presentation. NEITI House Abuja. 22nd March, 2024.

Protocols!

1. I will like to welcome the Sports Writers Association of Nigeria Abuja Branch to NEITI House. SWAN is well known to me as a bonafide member of Nigeria Media Profession. I am also fully aware of the strategic importance of SWAN to sports development in our country.
2. I therefore convey my apologies to you all that I was not physically present when your last event for which I was invited was held.
3. Your visit is coming at a time when NEITI is repositioning its operations to incorporate more segments of our society including our sports and youth development as to expand our information and outreach. Ordinarily, many will be in doubt what is the relationship between the work we do in NEITI and development of sports. For those who may be in doubt, sports affects all know human development including extractive industries where the bulk of the money fund sports activities are derived from in Nigeria,
4. NEITI seeks to work with all segments of the society to draw national and international attention on the need to ensure that oil, gas and mining resources revenues are transparently deployed to improve citizens' standard of living through investments in critical and social infrastructure such as roads, power, healthcare, educational infrastructure, security of lives and property and recreational facilities which are essential in Nigeria as a leading sporting nation. At the top of recreational facilities is the development of sports especially football that unites our nation more than any other.
5. For instance, if the revenues that we earn from oil, gas and mining are transparently managed, security of lives and property in Nigeria will be stable and efficient which we require for sports activities to thrive.
6. As you are all aware, no nation that is going through security challenges, communal clashes, kidnapping and other social vices which Nigeria is battling with at the moment will be in a position to bid for and successfully major international competitions. And so our country's inability to host major

competitions that can help to boost our economy are directly or indirectly linked to the need for all Nigerians to work together to restore security in our land, prudently manage our oil, gas and mining revenues to rebuild and expand our sports facilities.

7. For now, the fact that our country can only boast of less than six functional standard stadia/stadium calls for concerns.
8. The challenges in managing our local leagues which is the base for talent hunt requires capacity, transparency, fairness and accountability to restore investors and public confidence. A situation where the results of local matches are already known before the match as being speculated is strange and unknown to fair competition. We can and we need to emulate the English Premier League which we all watch from our homes. We have the ability to replicate this if we embrace transparency and accountability as a culture.
9. So, your visit is important. It will enable us open relationship that help establish a strong link between transparency and accountability in managing oil and gas revenues and the development of sport facilities nationwide.
10. Again, the whole essence of NEITI's intervention is to ensure that these revenues and natural resources are properly managed to help our country address huge infrastructural deficits and, build a socially harmonious society through poverty reduction.
11. Against this background, there is a lot NEITI and SWAN can do together to bring these issues to public awareness, public debate and discussion.
12. Beyond this, we want to use this opportunity to congratulate our national team for the excellent performance we all witnessed at the just concluded AFCON. The performance was a great relief and huge improvement on their abysmal failures in previous competitions.
13. After the competition, NEITI has been following with keen interest, the public debates ongoing on whether a foreign or a local coach is needed to build on the successes that we recorded in the AFCON competition in Ivory Coast.
14. While NEITI appreciates the contributions of foreign coaches to our sports development, we believe that hiring foreign coaches is a major source of capital flight and avoidable drain on Nigeria's foreign exchange.

15. We in NEITI also believe that the mentality and dependence on foreign is same mentality that led Nigeria oil dependency and also same mentality to depend and our appetite for foreign goods.
16. If we compute how much we have spent on hiring foreign coaches over these years, the impact on our economy and sports development, it will be clear that the investment has not worth it.
17. I therefore join the call for NFF to use the current window now open to give our local coaches a chance to show what they can offer. Allow them to make mistakes, learn from those mistakes and grow. As a prominent sporting nation, we should set example by giving the right of first refusal to the local coaches that emerges through international competitive bid. And when they have a chance to lead our national teams, they need support, encouragements through exposure to high level trainings.
18. Our recommendation is based on the fact that local coaches are familiar with our culture, exposed to our local leagues and familiar with where to find raw talents into our national teams as you are aware, most players that have done Nigeria proud are all products of our local teams.
19. These issues are of concern to NEITI because sports have become an important element of state policy, huge investment gold mines, source of employment to our talented youths, revenue generation for low and middle level families, poverty reduction and a beacon of hope for our national unity.
20. NEITI therefore appeals to our sports authorities to put deliberate measures in place to lessen Nigeria's dependence on so called foreign experts when we can source this manpower locally.
21. NEITI is ready and willing to work with SWAN to commence this campaign as an important national debate.
22. On your visit, we are willing and ready to explore areas of mutual cooperation through the dissemination of NEITI reports using sports development platforms.
23. I therefore thank you for this visit which has enabled us to interact with you.

24. On the award bestowed on me, I as a matter of policy, I do not accept awards and have declined all that have been offered to me since my appointment as Executive Secretary. But as one of the leaders in the media and communication industry in Nigeria, a product of the media, I will accept yours as an exception on behalf of NEITI management and staff.
25. Thank you very much for the award. God bless.