THE SENATE
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA
NOTICE PAPER
Tuesday, 4th August, 2015

Wednesday, 5th August, 2015

1. Need to regulate Visa Charges by the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria for lesser Hajj Pilgrims
   Sen. Umaru Ibrahim Kurfi (Katsina Central)

   Notes that the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHICON) was established to among others
   license, regulate, oversee and undertake supervision functions over agencies and other bodies that
   facilitate the conduct of Hajj and Umra in Nigeria;

   Further notes that the same Commission was empowered by section 4 (1)(b) of its enabling legal regime
   to liaise and co-ordinate with the appropriate government authorities or organs of the Federal republic
   of Nigeria and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the rules and regulations governing entry into and
   staying in Saudi Arabia for the purposes of Hajj and Umra including all appropriate immigration,
   passport and related consular services;

   Aware that the Commission in exercising its powers of liaising with relevant bodies engage registered
   travel agencies to facilitate issuance of visa and provision of international transport services;

   Worried that the commission has over the years abandoned its primary responsibility of discharging
   apex regulatory role in provision of diligent supervision and effective co-ordination of particularly
   issuance of Umra visa;

   Disturbed that the Commission whether deliberately or negligently has subjected Nigerian Lesser Hajj
   (Umra) pilgrims to exploitation, unfair treatment and in some cases fraud by the numerous travel
   agencies who facilitate the issuance of visas form the Saudi consular office in Nigeria;

   Further disturbed that arising from deliberate failure, omission, negligence or possible connivance with
   the travel agencies, the commission continues to allow the travel agencies to charge exorbitant fees
   unjustifiably ranging from N400,000 to N700,000 or even more as visa fees despite the fact that the
   issuance of visa for both Hajj and Umra pilgrims by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is free as clearly
   stated in the visa;

   Regrets that if urgent action is not taken to compel the commission to discharge its statutory functions
   in both conduct of Hajj and Umra and particularly in ensuring appropriateness in the issuance of visa
   for Umra, the rights of Umra pilgrims will be perpetually abused through numerous fraudulent
   conduct of the travel agencies thereby defeating the objectives of establishing this vital commission;

   Resolves to:

   Urge the Senate to set up an ad-Hoc Committee to investigate;

   i. The manner in which the last Ramadan Umra exercise was co-ordinate by the Commission;
ii. The rampant complaints against high visa charges, and other undoings by the travel agencies;

iii. Recommend appropriate measures to restore normalcy in the conducts of stakeholders in the Hajj and Umra exercise; and

iv. Report to the Senate for further necessary action within one month.

2. Urgent need for a new Revenue Allocation formula for the Federation
Sen. Chukwuoka Utazi (Enugu North)

The Senate,

Aware that the Revenue Allocation Formula being the prescriptive platform for the allocation of funds to the three tiers of government from the Federation Account currently in force was enacted in 1982 and amended by Decree (now Act) 106 of 1992;

Concerned that the law pre-dates the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and is therefore ripe for a review to reflect contemporary realities.

Observe that some provisions of the Constitution need an updated revenue allocation formula to have full effects as their current application are, at best, a rule of the thumb which necessitates further action by the National Assembly on the specificity of revenue allocation formula.

Observe that the provision in the 1992 Act specifying various percentage deductions of an aggregate 7.5% channelled to what is collectively described as “Special Funds” have been pronounced on by the Supreme Court as unconstitutional.

Aware that Section 162 (2) of the Constitution requires the President, on the advice of the Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission, RMAFC, to submit to the National Assembly proposals for revenue allocation from the Federation Account for enactment into law.

Note that various Presidents had, since the year 2000, repeatedly submitted Revenue Allocation Formula Bills to the National Assembly only to almost immediately withdraw them without cogent reasons.

Notes that review of the revenue formula being a Constitutional prescription that must begin from the executive, the National Assembly cannot, on its own, commence the process of review of the revenue formula without a proposal being first tabled by the President of the Country.

Concerned that the failure to enact a workable and contemporary Revenue Allocation Formula has wrought hardship in fiscal relations between and among the three tiers of government and creating loopholes for uncertainty in our federal structure.

Concerned that recent difficulties in meeting fiscal obligations by the different tiers of government, especially at the state level, have revealed the need for an updated revenue allocation formula for the country.

Determined to play its role to make laws for the peace, order and good government of Nigeria by ensuring that undue tension is not allowed in the relationship between and among the tiers of government in Nigeria.

Resolves to:

Request the President of the Federal Republic, to, as a matter of utmost national urgency, submit to the National Assembly, proposals for revenue allocation for further legislative action.
3. The State of the Economy: Naira Depreciation and its Implications
Sen. Nazif Suleiman (Bauchi North)

The Senate,

Notes with serious concern the state of Nigerian economy as it affects the growing rate of the depreciation of the Naira;

Worried that Naira has depreciated in the last few months at a much faster rate than it had appreciated over the last two years;

Aware that the cause of this depreciation is the consequence of the negative cash flow as a result of the downward trend of oil price, which is further worsened by speculations in the Foreign Exchange Market;

Observes that the foreign exchange needs of the various sectors of the economy are now not being made available;

Further observes that our commitments in the global economy are not being made available;

Notes that the banking industry may be currently defaulting in the global economy and that is sending a bad signal and bad image about the Nigerian economy;

Notes that this resultant speculation is resulting to a huge capital flight with its attendant inflationary consequence which will affect an average Nigerian on the street;

Notes also that illicit fund flows and money laundering going through Nigerian financial system contributes in weakening the value of the naira, which has led to the recent decisions of the CBN to increase its vigilance to ensure that Nigerian banks are not used as conduit for illicit funds flow and money laundering in foreign currencies;

Notes further that the procedure for processing demand and supply of foreign exchange by the Central Bank of Nigeria be reviewed and various additional options considered to stem the precipitous depreciation of the naira and thereby discouraging speculators.

Accordingly resolves to;

i. Invite the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria to brief the Senate on this matter to be further enlightened as to what the situation really is.

ii. Urge the Federal Government to step up efforts in diversifying the national economy from the oil export into an economy that depends on taxation, agriculture, manufacturing, international tourism and solid minerals prospecting.

iii. Urge the Federal Government to stop the leakages in the national economy.

iv. Urge the Federal Government to give marching orders to CBN to bring to book anyone who is found wanting of the money laundering and other related offences.