

Lead Debate Of The Executive Bill On National Water Resources –Hon Femi Gbajabiamila

Water is a gift of nature and man must protect our source of nature. The National Water Resources Bill is a wholesome law that intends to regulate the use and conservation of Nigeria’s Surface Water and Ground Water Resources affecting more than one (1) State pursuant to Item 64 of the Exclusive Legislative list in Part 1 of the Second Schedule to the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended, and vested in the Federal Government.

This Bill guarantees our right to use water but guide against private ownership of water and ensure that the water resources of the nation are protected and managed in a sustainable and equitable manner for the benefit of all persons.

This Bill takes cognizance of the provisions of the law that entrust the management and control of water resources within the boundaries of a state in the state government while the federal government manages the water resources channels across two or more states known as the “National Water Resources”.

This Bill when passed into law will trigger change that will see the Water Resources of this country

unbundled to encourage public-private-participation that will build a strong nexus between our national water resources and the value chain in the environment, agriculture, health, inland waterways, solid minerals, forestry, electricity generation, emergency management, meteorological and hydrological sectors.

This Bill also seeks to establish the National Council on Water Resources, the Nigeria Water Resources Regulatory Commission, River Basin Development Authorities, Nigeria Hydrological Services Agency, National Water Resources Institute.

The National Council on Water Resources will be established as the apex advisory body on the review of National Water-Related legislation, water resources master plan and policies. The Council shall be chaired by the Minister of water Resources with membership comprising of State Commissioners for Water resources or any other person responsible for water resources in the states; with participation of members of Water resources committee of the National Assembly and State Houses of Assemblies, representatives of relevant MDAs in the technical sessions of the council.

The Nigeria Water Resources Regulatory commission will also be established to provide economic and technical regulation of all aspects of National Water Resources provision, ensure safety

and quality of water resources development, promote competition in the water resources sector, protect developers and suppliers of public water resources services under the schedules to this Bills from unfair practices, and as provided in Section 99 of this National water resources Bill issue licenses to persons or corporate establishments that intend to undertake the following:

- 1. The abstraction of surface water and groundwater for diversion, pumping, storage or use on a commercial scale;**
- 2. Issue licenses for the construction of boreholes for commercial purposes;**
- 3. Construction and operation of hydraulic structures for rivers, dams, water intake barrages, groynes, bed and bank stabilization dykes, polders and wells**
- 4. Public and private irrigation and drainage systems**
- 5. Also issue licenses for diversion or impoundment of water for the purposes of mining and discharge of waste water from mining into any water course**
- 6. Discharging industrial or agricultural waste or wastewater into a water body through a pipe, canal, sewer, sea outfall or other conduit according to environmental standard**
- 7. Regulation of water which contains waste**

any industrial or power generation processes.

8. Sand dredging, rock blasting and rock removal in Rivers as related to water sources and channels listed in the First schedule to this Bill which contains water bodies affecting more than one state pursuant to item 64 of the Exclusive Legislative list in Part 1 of the Second Schedule to the 1999 constitution .

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 119 of this National Water Resources Bill, no person or corporate body shall commence or carry any kind of borehole drilling business in Nigeria without a Water Well Driller's License issued by the Nigeria Water Resources Regulatory Commission.

This Bill also seeks to re-invent the existing river basin development authorities and expand their scope for more viability. After this Bill becomes law we will have 12 stronger river basin development authorities namely;

1. Anambra-Imo River basin Development Authority comprising Abia, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo and Anambra states
2. Benin – Owena River basin Development

- Authority comprising of Edo and part of Ekiti states
3. Chad River basin Development Authority comprising Borno, Yobe and part of Adamawa states
 4. Cross River Basin Development Authority comprising Akwa Ibom, Cross River
 5. Hadejia-Jamare River basin Development Authority comprising of Kano, Jigawa and part of Bauchi states
 6. Lower Benue River Basin Development Authority comprising of Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau and part of Kogi states
 7. Lower Niger River Basin Development Authority comprising of Kwara and part of Kogi States
 8. Niger Delta River Basin Development Authority comprising of Bayelsa, Rivers and part of Delta states
 9. Ogun-Osun River Basin Development Authority comprising Lagos, Oyo, Ogun, Osun and part of Ekiti states
 10. Sokoto – Rima River Basin Development Authority comprising Kebbi, Sokoto, Katsina and Zamfara states
 11. Upper Benue River Basin Development Authority comprising of Adamawa, Gombe, Taraba and part of Bauchi States
 12. Upper Niger River Basin Development Authority comprising Niger, FCT and

Kaduna state

The Nigeria Hydrological Services Agency to be established by this Bill will prepare and project government policy in the field of hydrology, work with local and international meteorological services, agencies and institutions to issue forecasts for floods and other water related issues, carry out geo-physical investigations for sitting ground water development projects for dam foundation and saline water intrusion and many others.

The National Water Resources Institute to be established by this Bill will also be responsible for the promotion and development of training courses in water resources management and perform such ancillary services on planning of water resources management and river basin development and necessary courses in water resources engineering .

To this end, this Bill is all encompassing and contains the solutions to the problems affecting the Water Resources sector and will stir up competition in the Water Resources Sector for effective delivery of water services for our personal and industrial usage.

Similar to what the PIB is to the petroleum industry, if passed by the House, we would have succeeded into putting the Water Resources sector in a more

economically viable position to lead government's efforts to diversify the economy away from our concentration of oil.