COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF A ONE-DAY WORKSHOP ON IMPROVING EXTERNAL OVERSIGHT AND INFORMATION DISCLOSURE OF THE DEFENCE AND SECURITY SECTOR ORGANIZED BY CIVIL SOCIETY LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY CENTRE (CISLAC)/TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL IN NIGERIA (TI-NIGERIA) IN COLLABORATION WITH TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL – DEFENCE AND SECURITY PROGRAM HELD AT AL-VARI HOTEL, KEFFI NASARAWA STATE ON 15TH NOVEMBER 2023.

PREAMBLE:

CISLAC/TI-Nigeria in collaboration with Transparency International – Defence and Security Program with support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands held a One-day Capacity Workshop themed “Improving External Oversight and Information Disclosure of the Defense and Security Sector”. The Workshop aimed at revisiting the impact of corruption in procurement, finance, and personnel management on the overall efficiency of the Defence and Security sector, while proffering holistic recommendations for improved operations and services. There was an Opening Remark from the Executive Director of CISLAC, Auwal Ibrahim Musa (Rafsanjani). The session had as some technical sessions with papers titled “Enhancing External Oversight and Promoting Disclosure of Information in the Defence and Security Sector: A Trend Analysis” by Dr. Sunday Adejoh; and “Defense Procurement, Finance and Personnel Management- Importance of Effective Oversight” by Prof. Sharkdam Wapmuk. The Dialogue was attended by Relevant Committees in the National Assembly, Ministries, Departments, Agencies, Media Practitioners and Civil Society. After brainstorming exhaustively on various thematic sessions, the following observations and recommendations were made:

OBSERVATIONS:

1. While the state is product of social contract between the government and electorate, adequate protection of lives and property remains sacrosanct in Nigeria.

2. As key elements in oversight comprise control, surveillance, supervision, and observation.

3. Information disclosure in Defence and Security sector constitutes a major threat compromising security plans and operations.
4. Adequate oversight into the Defence and Security sector is hampered by deliberate blockage of information leveraging secluded terminologies and inherent complexity of procurement system.

5. External oversight in Defence and Security sector is necessitated by the need to checkmate misconduct and indiscipline, misappropriation and mismanagement, corruption; maintain standards and professionalism; and sustain democratic principles of Civil Military Relations.

6. Efficient oversight role in the Defence and Security sector is a collective responsibility of the Executive, Legislature, Anti-graft institutions, Human Right institutions, Civil Society groups, Judicial institutions, Media, and internal mechanisms.

7. Lack of clear publicly available mechanisms on information guiding disclosure in the Defence and Security sector coupled with contradictory legal provisions (as observed in Freedom of Information Act, Criminal Code Act, and Public Procurement Act) are major hurdles to information disclosure.

8. Personal interest and self-serving mindset promote corruption tendencies that further impede appropriate oversight of the Defence and Security activities.

9. The complexity of Defence landscape coupled with regional and global dynamics has necessitated continuous increase in Defence and Security budget, making procurement, finance, and personnel management essential for oversight activities in the sector.

10. The Defence procurement is bedevilled by some identified challenges classified under budget constraints/economic factors, and lack of transparency and accountability.

11. Corruption in Defence procurement is enabled by high values contracts, secrecy, political connections, and expertise.
RECOMMENDATIONS:

We, the participants recommended as follows:

1. Promoting security sector accountability and responsibility through appropriate information disclosure that enhances oversight activities.

2. Strengthening oversight capacity across relevant institutions on procurement, finance, and personnel management to enhance accountability and responsibility in the Defence and Security sector.

3. Promoting Defence and Security sector reforms on information disclosure for maximum transparency and accountability to the taxpayers.

4. Adequate clarification of issues, subjects, and categories of classified/restricted information to remove artificially created bottlenecks and barriers to public disclosure.

5. Appropriate amendments to relevant provisions in the Freedom of Information Act, Criminal Code Act, and Public Procurement Act to review, realign and harmonise contradictory lines.

6. Maintaining standard in Defence procurement through thorough attention to a wide range of activities including Defence Needs Assessment, budget allocation, suppliers’ selection, contract negotiation, ultimate delivery, and maintenance.

7. Enhanced support for legislative oversight, audits and investigations, civil society and the media activities in the Defence and Security sector to ensure transparency and accountability.

8. Embracing holistic mechanisms in Defence and Security procurement like robust auditing and accountability practices, legislative oversight, budget scrutiny and public transparency initiatives.

9. Emphasising public merit-based personnel management, regular audit and reviews, institutional strengthening, public awareness and involvement in the Defence and Security procurement oversight to restore systemic transparency, accountability as well as public trust.
10. Depoliticization of personnel management and promotion of inclusivity, fairness, equity and diversity in the defence and security sector.

INNOVATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Strengthening the relationship between the National Assembly and other Agencies with power to sanction and prosecute erring public officials to discourage corruption.

2. Massive public enlightenment on the operationalisation of governance to prevent misinformation and create well-informed citizens through collaboration between NOA and CSOs.

3. Increase resource allocation to oversight institutions to enhance their operational efficiency and effectiveness.

4. Embracing proper value system through public enlightenment by the National Orientation Agency

5. Capacity building for Members of relevant National Assembly Committees to ensure active participation and efficient oversight of MDAs, supported by Technical Experts or Professionals.

6. Retaining previous Members of Committees in the National Assembly to cascade technical known-how capacity and share experience.
Signed

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