

## **Communique NIDO BeLux on Global Diaspora Week, Peace & Unity Day October 2016**

The first ever global diaspora week to be marked in Europe commenced took place 7-10 October with a high level workshop hosted by both the African and European Union in Brussels. The theme of the workshop "Leveraging Remittances and Diaspora Contributions Towards Sustainable Development in Africa" was topical as Diaspora contribution to sustainable development is at the core of the Agenda 2030.

This inaugural global diaspora week workshop was initiated by the African Diaspora Network Europe ([ADNE](#)) and was also co-sponsored by the African Remittances Institute.

Keynote speakers were drawn from governmental agencies, development institutions and national government representatives including H.E Louis Michel, Minister of State, MEP, President of ACP-EU JPA and Former Commissioner for Development Cooperation, Mr. Peter Moors, Chief of Cabinet of the Belgian Ministry for Development Cooperation, H.E Teshome Toga, Ambassador of Ethiopia to the EU and Belgium; H.E CISSE Sékou dit Gaoussou, Ambassador of Mali to EU and Belgium; Mr. Ahmed El-Basheer, Head of African Union's Diaspora Division; Ambassador Jozef Smets, Director for Africa, Ministry of Foreign Affairs- Belgium; Mr. Amadou CISSE, Head of the AU African Institute for Remittances (AIR) and Madame Marie-Chantal Uwitonze, Founder & President of ADNE to name a few.

The president of Nigerians in Diaspora Belgium-Luxembourg ([NIDO BeLux](#)) chapter, Dr Chinedu Madichie, discussed the challenges associated with Diaspora remittances in ensuring that it is fully leveraged for sustainable development. He highlighted four key areas of challenge namely: 1. Cost of remittances; 2. Technical Challenges with Investment vehicles; 3. Banking Laws & Financial infrastructure across countries; and 4. Socio-cultural Factors.

Dr Madichie further stressed the need and importance of a coordinated diaspora umbrella organisation to ensure collective and systematic engagement of African diaspora with the host countries and development institutions ([see recent article published in the ECDPM magazine](#)). He further provided insights into the vision of the Nigerian Government in establishing NIDO with the aim to harness the vital human and strategic resource of the largely untapped Nigeria diaspora and ensuring that they remain connected to the nation in addition to acting as a reservoir of skilled external talent.

Another speaker & workshop participant Ms Uzo Madu, who is the founder of '[What's in it for Africa](#)', a communications organisation focused on political issues related to the EU-Africa relationship also presented on how her organisation disseminates social remittances and know-how through 'What's in it for Africa', specifically using an online platform to leverage these social remittances for the benefit of the home nations in Africa. Ms Madu, also a member of NIDO BeLux and a Nigerian diaspora professional is amongst the few who continue to brand the image of Nigeria as part of the strategic deliverables of NIDO.

The output from the workshop surmised that indeed Diaspora contribution has become an integral part of the tapestry of sustainable development in Africa with significant growth opportunities if a number of actions are taken by

both governments development institutions and other stakeholders to expedite the mobilization of diaspora contributions.

In continuation of the global diaspora week activities in Europe and celebration of the Nigerian 56<sup>th</sup> independence celebration, NIDO BeLux held its annual flagship event (Peace & Unity day) on the 8th of October at Aloft hotel Schuman Brussels. The peace & Unity day lecture focuses on an issue of national developmental importance for Nigeria. For 2016, we focused on "Diaspora contribution to sustainable development" in alignment with the global diaspora week theme. This subject is topical as it is embedded in the UN 2030 SDG and AU Agenda 2063.

NIDO BeLux, in recognition that Diaspora is the real 5<sup>th</sup> Estate of Africa (after place of Worship, Citizens, Government and The Press), with the money, the political sway, the mobility, and personal security that allows them to truly affect change in Africa sought then to ensure that diaspora is positioned to exercise this power. So in celebrating peace & unity day 2016 in the context of this recognition, NIDO BeLux opined that diaspora must contribute in a meaningful and impactful way. And one such way is by integrating the diverse Nigerian diaspora organisations to ensure a more targeted and effective collective action.

This resulted in the coming together of different Nigerian diaspora organisations to share the same platform and begin the journey and discussions on alignment to ensure coordination to achieving the collective action. In addition, this cooperation between NIDO BeLux and other Nigerian organisations in Brussels, would help set the tone for unity amongst other organisations and entities both at home and in the diaspora.

Our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the Charge d'Affairs and officials of the Embassy of Nigeria, Brussels, President of the Igbo Union Belgium (Hon Lucky Onyeador), Chairperson of the Association of Nigerians in Belgium & Luxembourg (Mr Christopher Oliha) to mention a few who pushed out all the stops to ensure a successful Peace & Unity Day.



