

**PRESS RELEASE (FINAL COPY)**

**TAFIDA MEETS THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON  
PARAMETERS FOR WAGE FIXING IN THE FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE,  
LONDON, WEDNESDAY 26 MAY 2010.**

Dr. Dalhatu Sarki Tafida, OFR, High Commissioner of Nigeria to the United Kingdom, Wednesday 26 May 2010 received in audience a five-man team of the National Committee of Experts on Parameters for Wage Fixing in the Federal Public Service (NCEPWFFPS), led by Prof. V. P. Diejomaoh, the national Chairman. The Committee was on a study tour of the United Kingdom, having successfully concluded one in Geneva, Switzerland, where it met with ILO representatives on the same subject.

After a brief introduction of members of the team and conveyance of gratitude for the audience, the leader, Professor Diejomaoh, first, informed the High Commissioner and four senior members of his staff of the terms of reference of the Committee. Second, he stated that the current study tour would also take the team to the US, as well as the Headquarters of the International Civil Service Commission before returning to Nigeria. Third, he revealed that while in the UK, they would have meetings with the appropriate host Government authority, including trade unions and their representatives. Fourth, he stated that the courtesy call on the High Commissioner was in cognizance of the fact that the Nigeria High Commission London is Nigeria's premier and largest diplomatic Mission abroad, as well as being part of the larger system that the Committee was supposed to consult.

In his response, Dr. Tafida, first, welcomed the five-man team and followed quickly with the introduction of the four senior members of his staff present. Second, he conveyed appreciation of competing demands on the remit of the Committee. Third, he expressed gratitude to the Federal Government for setting up the Committee. Fourth, he submitted that officers here in the High Commission were part of the Federal Civil Servants affected by the current relative imbalance in paid wages and salaries, and that it was good that the Committee decided to call on the Mission to obtain their contributions. However, the Nigeria High Commissioner felt that since the Committee is Federal, steps could equally be taken to ensure that State and Local Governments are

not bound by its recommendations, considering their relative low financial resource base.

Dr. Tafida took special cognition of the profile of Prof. Diejomaoh and other respectable members of the national Committee and expressed the hope that a fruitful result would follow their commission. He recalled the difficulties that Government encountered in the implementation of the Udoji Award in the 1970s and hoped that the Committee would consider those challenges in preparing their final report. He also expressed the hope that the expected report would help stabilise the Federal and State Civil Services.

Responding to issues raised by Dr. Tafida, Prof. Diejomaoh, first thanked the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for facilitating their tour of the UK, including the Mission. He informed that the National Committee was supposed to visit all the States in the Federation because what happens at the centre invariably affect the States. So far, he informed, 14 of the 36 States had been visited. More importantly, he said, most of the States were ready to use the report of the national Committee as a benchmark in the determination of applicable parameters to them.

Continuing, Prof. Diejomaoh stated that fiscal federalism presupposes that State Governments pay according to their ability. He also noted that previous attempts to implement Federal reports had also brought with it new problems and challenges. In this respect, he said that he was however delighted by the reassurances given by the President at previous meetings regarding the willingness of his Administration to implement the Committee's recommendations, notwithstanding the odds. He acknowledged understanding of the other issues raised by Dr. Tafida and pledged to consider them in carrying out their assignment.

At that juncture, Dr. Tafida sought to know the difference between what the Committee intends to do and what the Revenue Mobilisation, Allocation and Fiscal Commission, a constitutionally recognised body is doing. Responding, Prof. Diejomaoh noted that the remit of his Committee was not to fix wages and salaries, but to look at what existed in determining new parameters for determining new wages and salaries for the Federal Public Service. He admitted as put by Dr. Tafida that a disconnect

obviously existed between wages and salaries of civil servants and political appointees and that they were already looking at that, even if it would lead to constitutional amendments. The national Committee Chairman again hinted that if they identified a big gap between the two parties, they would say so, so that the Constitution is reviewed.

Dr. Tafida re-stated that he was also concerned about the difficulties that are inherent in effecting constitutional reviews. He therefore advised the Committee to ensure that it consulted the National Assembly in order to agree on the approach that will make the Committee's recommendations easy to implement.

On the questions and issues raised by some senior staff of the High Commission, the Committee, first, assured that they would travel wide and compare models and systems before arriving at recommendations. In doing that, they assured that they would be guided by the need to avoid triggering inflationary pressures. Second, Government would be advised to avoid undue announcement of decisions taken on their report. Third, they would recommend models and parameters that will facilitate regular adjustments of wages and salaries in future. Fourth, Federal Government would not be bugged down by the anticipated resultant increases in the payment of gratuities and pensions because the National Pensions Act, 2004 had taken that potential burden off the Government.

The head of the visiting team, Prof. Diejomaoh, once again thanked the High Commissioner for hosting them and suggested to him a de-briefing session after they had visited the UK Government and trade unions. This was accepted.

On that note, the meeting ended with group photographs and further exchange of pleasantries.

Nigeria High Commission,  
London WC 2N 5BX,  
United Kingdom.  
26<sup>th</sup> May 2010.