

COLLABORATING FOR CHANGE

By Nsima U. Ekere, KJW

I am immensely delighted to welcome you all to the official signing ceremony of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Niger Delta Development Commission and FOSTER.

Today's event is a culmination of the conversations we started with FOSTER in the last quarter of 2016. FOSTER epitomizes transparency and accountability in service delivery. Our preference for collaborating with FOSTER is deliberate. It illustrates our determination and readiness for openness in our operations. It could not have been otherwise, since transparency and accountability are the fundamental parameters of the Muhammadu Buhari administration.

Although we started conversations with FOSTER over seven months ago, in response to the urgency of the need for this collaboration, we chose the path of deliberate, professional and thorough engagement. It was—and still remains—our conviction that it is better, in the spirit of inclusiveness and shared leadership, for the Management to understand and ratify the proposition for collaboration, as well as its derivatives. That has always been the vision of the new Governing Board and Management. I am delighted to inform you that the Governing Board and Management, at its last meeting, ratified our collaboration with FOSTER.

The significance of that unanimous ratification and buy-in is that the product of our relationship with FOSTER shall be embraced, co-owned and institutionalised for the sustainable benefit of the Commission and the larger interest of the Niger Delta region. It would outlive the lifespan of the current management. This was the guiding philosophy in our measured progress with FOSTER and other development partners.

The core mandate of the Commission is to facilitate rapid and sustainable development of the Niger Delta region to one that is economically prosperous, socially stable, ecologically regenerative and politically peaceful. The task of

delivering on this important change is enormous, in terms of resource and capacity. We can hardly do it alone without external support and collaboration. That was why, upon assumption of office, we extended invitation to development partners and other stakeholders to collaborate with us to deliver shared value to the people of the Niger Delta region. We commend FOSTER for their prompt response to our invitation and welcome them to this historic occasion with immense pleasure.

The key objectives and advantages of our collaboration with FOSTER are highlighted in these four areas:

1. Improvement to Reporting—FOSTER will support production of the Commission's Quarterly Report, ensuring salient information is captured and presented in a readable and understandable manner.
2. Support improvements to prioritization of projects and budgeting. Strengthen transparency, disciplined spending, and generally, engender overhaul of the Commission's internal systems, processes and procedures, with particular emphasis on budgeting, contract administration and program implementation.
3. Provide support for project monitoring and evaluation—through development of a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework that tracks projects/programs from award, implementation to impact assessment.
4. Communications/Stakeholder Engagement—provide technical support to facilitate development of a communication strategy to ensure the Commission constantly engages with stakeholders in the region.

Surely, these needs-based propositions resonate with our vision, and their diligent implementation would doubtless enhance our organisational effectiveness and delivery.

It is indeed an important step taken in our committed march towards ensuring that we establish, for the Commission and the Niger Delta region, enduring instruments and institutions vital to fulfilling both our mandate and the expectations of the people.

Let me restate our determination, as Board and Management, to restoring our core mandate, restructuring our balance sheet and reaffirming our commitment to doing what is right and proper, at all times, for the benefit of the people of this great region. It is, therefore, incumbent upon us all, at this time, to pledge total adherence to the letters and vision of this partnership, as well as the integrity and spirit of its binding MOU to which we append, today, our signatures and intent.

On behalf of the Governing Board and Management of the Commission, I welcome you once more and thank you for your attention.

REMARKS BY THE MANAGING DIRECTOR, NIGER DELTA DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (NDDC) AT THE SIGNING CEREMONY OF THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) BETWEEN THE NDDC AND FACILITY FOR OIL SECTOR TRANSPARENCY AND REFORM IN NIGERIA (FOSTER) AT NDDC CORPORATE OFFICE, 167, ABA ROAD, PORT HARCOURT, RIVERS STATE ON MAY 15, 2017.