**REPORT OF A ONE DAY INAUGURAL SEMINAR SERIES ON “NEW DIRECTIONS FOR PUBLIC SERVICE REFORMS” ORGANIZED BY THE BUREAU OF PUBLIC SERVICE REFORMS (BPSR) IN PARTNERSHIP WITH DFID, WORLD BANK AND FEPAR, HELD AT THE AUDITORIUM OF MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ON THURSDAY, 26TH JUNE, 2014**

1. **Preamble**

1.1 The inaugural Reform Seminar Series titled: “New Directions for Public Service Reforms” was organized by the Bureau of Public Service Reforms (BPSR) in collaboration with the World Bank, DFID and FEPAR on Thursday, 26th June, 2014. The purpose of the retreat was to reposition the Public Service into a world class institution for delivery of efficient and effective service to the Nigerian citizenry. Nigeria has recently been designated as the largest economy in Africa and there is the need to reform the Public Service to sustain the emerging economy.

2.0 **Opening Ceremony**

2.1 The event commenced at 10.20 a.m. with the rendition of the National Anthem. The dignitaries present were the Vice-President ably represented by the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation and the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, represented by the Special Assistant to the President on Research and Development respectively; Country Director of World Bank; Head of Office for Nigeria, Department for International Development (DFID); Program Manager for DFID-Federal Public Service Administration Reform Programme (FEPAR); Heads of State Civil Service; Permanent Secretaries at both Federal and State level; Directors of Reform Co-ordination in the MDAs and host of other invited guests. Two renowned and world acclaimed Guest Speakers were also present at the occasion: Dr. David Booth, a Research Fellow at the Overseas Development Institute and Dr. Willy McCourt, a Senior Public Sector Specialist at the World Bank in Washington D.C.

3.0 **Welcome Address by the Director-General (BPSR)**

 3.1 Dr. Joe Abah, Director-General of the Bureau started his welcome address by reminding the participants of the dastardly killing of innocent Nigerians in the bomb attack at Emab Plaza in Abuja. It would be recalled that the bomb blast took place in Abuja, the previous day being Wednesday, 25th June, 2014 where a number of Nigerians lost their lives. He expressed his displeasure by saying those who sought to dislocate and destroy the economic, social and political life of Nigeria would never succeed. In honour of the departed souls, he called on the participants to observe a minute silence which was done. He told the participants that the Vice-President and the Secretary to the Federal Government would not be present at the Seminar because they were visiting the various hospitals to commiserate with the victims of the blast.

 He, however, expressed his great pleasure to welcome the Special Guest of Honour, Arch. Mohammed Namadi Sambo, GCON, Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Senator Anyim Pius Anyim, GCON and the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Alhaji Bukar Goni Aji who stood in for the Vice President at the occasion. The participants were taken through the history of the establishment of the Bureau of Public Service Reforms (BPSR) which was meant to serve as a Lead Reform Agency in Nigeria. He disclosed that the Bureau was established to fulfil the following purposes:

1. the need to create a clearing house, a one-stop-shop of a sort where information could be obtained on all reform programmes of the Federal Government;
2. the strong conviction that the reforms objectives would not be realized through an ad-hoc committee or task force in the long term; and
3. the need to have an engine room that was empowered with the required capability and resources to leverage on local and international knowledge networks and communities of public administration best practices, to support policy, institutional and governance reform processes with the required expertise, and good practices on an on-going basis. It was in attempt to leverage on local and international knowledge networks and communities of public administration practice that the Seminar was organized.

 The objectives of the Seminar according to the Director-General were as follows:

1. to create a forum for active exchange of innovative ideas, knowledge in public administration and governance in Nigeria and internationally.
2. to address topical issues and share experiences about what had worked and what had not worked well both within the Nigerian Public Service and in other countries.
3. to build a framework and a network of collaboration for the improvement of innovation in Nigeria public administration and governance. He was confident that the Seminar would stimulate innovative thinking and actions in Nigeria Public Administration and governance. It would also enrich the debate about the future of the Nigerian Public Service and its role in the delivery of the Transformation Agenda.

4.0 **Goodwill Messages**

4.1 The Development Partners and Donor Agencies present at the occasion delivered goodwill messages to show their commitment and support to the course of reforming Nigerian Public Service to a world class standard. These were their goodwill messages:

1. Goodwill Message from the Country Director of World Bank

Ms Marie Francoise Marie-Nelly, the Country Director of World Bank thanked the Vice President for his commitment to reform the Civil Service. She was happy with the high level representation of women present at the Seminar. She described the topic of the Seminar as apt and encouraged the sustainability of the Reform Seminar Series in the overall interest of ensuring efficient and effective Public Service system in Nigeria. She noted that functional and effective Civil Service would sustain poverty reduction, support economic growth, transparency and accountability. She said that public service was expected to provide enabling environment for the private sector participation in the economic development particularly when Nigeria had been identified as the largest destination for economic development in Africa. She advised that the reforms at both Federal and States level should be harmonized for the overall development of the country. She further advised that for any reform to be part of the citizenry, the following should be examined critically:

1. Leadership by example was very essential for others to follow;
2. All the MDAs should be carried along in the reform efforts and therefore, their representatives should be part of the exercise;
3. Culture of delivery of service must be cultivated. Reform must focus on result and delivery of service;
4. Legal framework must be put in place to drive the reforms;
5. Involvement of private sectors and civil society organizations in order to achieve a common goal of the reform;
6. Expenditure must be tied to specific programmes

The Country Director of World Bank recalled the positive result of previous collaboration with Government in the area of Government Integrated Financial Management Information System (GIFMIS). Having achieved success in that area, she said that it should be taken to the next level with the involvement of all MDAs and the States. She requested Government to identify sectoral reforms which would serve as models and there should be collation of data in order to measure the success or otherwise of the reform.

1. Head of Office for Nigeria, Department for International Development (DFID)

Mr. Ben Mellor, Head of Office for Nigeria, Department for International Development (DFID) who was not physically present sent in a recorded video message to the participants. He noted that the reform was very important and that in some developing countries, efforts made at ensuring public service reform was difficult and very disappointing. He therefore advised that there was the need to utilize the resources of the country wisely. He advised that appropriate incentives should be put in place in order to reduce corruption in the Public Service. He said that he was happy that the country was determined to reposition its Civil Service to sustain the economic growth of Nigeria. He further advised that all hands must be on deck in order to get to the nation’s desired destination. Concluding his message, he also advised that roadmap should be created on what to achieve in the next five years and doing that would help to refocus on what should be expected in the Public Service.

Consequently, he concluded his address by stating that Nigeria must decide what would work for it and what partnership was required.

1. Programme Manager for the DFID-Federal Public Service Administration Reform Programme (FEPAR)

The Program Manager in his own goodwill message disclosed that the Seminar would be an avenue for exchange of ideas and experiences with a view to moving the Public Service forward. He said that the only way to measure the success of any reform was in the delivery of service to the people. He therefore, assured that FEPAR would continue to partner with relevant agencies of Government to improve on the delivery of service.

He said that FEPAR was currently collaborating with the OSGF, BOF, NPC, NASC, OHSF and BPSR in the area of public policy, planning, monitoring and evaluation and civil service reforms. He, however, assured that FEPAR would continue to support BPSR in sustaining the Reform Seminar Series.

5.0 **Opening Remarks by the Representative of SGF**

5.1 Ferdinand Agwu, MFR, Special Adviser to the President on Research and Development was at the Seminar to represent Senator Anyim Pius Anyim, GCON, Secretary to the Government of the Federation. He noted that the emphasis of Government had always been on service delivery. He recalled the efforts which had been made by the present Administration in repositioning Public Service, one of which was setting up of a Committee to assess all reforms carried out by the previous Administration which was popularly called Fika Committee in November, 2011. He disclosed that Government also set up another Presidential Committee on Rationalization and Restructuring of Federal Parastatals otherwise known as Orosanye Committee to examine the structure of the Federal Parastatals which made some recommendations in line with the Transformation Agenda. The Committee had since submitted its report and a High Level Implementation Committee had just been set up on the decisions of Government. The Special Adviser commended BPSR for initiating the Reform Seminar Series and that the SGF as the chairman of the Steering Committee on Reforms, would provide the required leadership for the overall success of reforms programme.

5.2 Concluding his remarks, he also mentioned that the National Strategy on Public Service Reforms (NSPSR) had been refreshed. He noted that very soon the approval of the Federal Executive Council would be obtained for its implementation. He thereafter requested participants to contribute positively in the course of the Seminar for the collective effort to reform the Public Service for service delivery.

6.0 **Goodwill Message by the Head of the Civil Service of the**  **Federation**

6.1 Alhaji Bukar Goni Aji, Head of the Civil Service of the Federation thanked the Director-General and entire staff of BPSR on behalf of the Public Service for their commitment to duty of reforms in the Public Service. He disclosed that frantic effort was made in reforming the Office of the Head of the Civil Service by reducing the offices from six to three and the departments from twenty five (25) to twelve (12). He said that it was a deliberate effort to reduce the powers of Head of Service. The Head of Service mentioned the contribution of the pioneer Director-General of BPSR, Dr. Goke Adegoroye whom he noted that during his tenure, the Bureau was vibrant. He also stated that the present effort of appointing a Director-General was to take the Bureau to the good old days of its pioneer.

6.2 He disclosed that the National Records Centre in Karu had been digitalized. Alhaji Goni Aji further disclosed that the Federal Civil Service Commission was persuaded to create more vacancies for the Directors in the Public Service last year and assured that more vacancies would be created as well this year. He told the participants that the journey to a world class Public Service had started with the timely delivery of services by some Agencies of Government like National Pension Commission (PenCom), Debt Management Office (DMO), Highway Department in the Federal Ministry of Works, Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) etc. He noted that the Public Private Partnership was yielding positive result and therefore, placed a lot of responsibility on the Public Servants. Having delivered the above goodwill message on behalf of the Public Servants, he therefore made some remarks on behalf of the Vice President, Arch. Mohammed Namadi Sambo, GCON.

7.0 **Remarks by the Vice President Arch. M. N. Sambo, GCON**

7.1 Alhaji Bukar Goni Aji, OON who represented the Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Arch. Mohammed Namadi Sambo, GCON urged Nigerians not to be deterred but rather should be forward looking in the face of present circumstances we found ourselves.

7.2 The Vice President said that it was in the realization of the Public Service Reforms that the NSPSR was updated and the Bureau was equally revamped to deliver on its mandate. He recalled that quite a number of reforms were embarked upon in 1999 but were not properly articulated to affect the Nigeria general public which meant there was insincerity of purpose in the reforms.

7.3 However, the Jonathan Administration realizing the gaps between the citizens not feeling the impact of the reforms had begun to address the issues as farmers now obtained fertilizers without problem, railway system had been revamped, airports refurbished, and introduction of indigenous automobile policy which had led to the manufacturing of vehicles and cars in Nigeria by Nissan, Toyota, and Innoson Motors. He also mentioned that few of the reforms of the Federal Government that had yielded positive results were Cashless Policy, Procurement Act, Freedom of Information Bill etc. All these efforts according to the Vice President were to achieve Vision 20:2020.

7.4 Concluding his address, he stated that Government expected the Reform Seminar Series to throw up new ideas to guide the present Administration in her effort to reform the public sector. He advised the participants to feel free to contribute to the debate which the Seminar would later generate. He thereafter declared the Seminar Open at 11.45 a.m.

8.0 **Presentation of Seminar Papers by the Two Speakers**

(a) **Dr. David Booth** whose paper was titled “Public Services and Economic Transformation: What History Teaches and its Possible Relevance to Nigeria”. The author apprised the audience that the lessons from history show that the so called best practice which was being advocated by the World Bank would never achieve desired result but rather African countries should devise solutions that suit their peculiar circumstances and needs in the efforts to transform their Public Service. He noted that in an attempt to achieve economic growth, it would be necessary to reform the Public Service for service delivery. The comprehensive reform of the Public Service would never achieve successful economic transformation but rather the culture of embarking on specific reform should be cultivated.

 David Booth further advocated a problem-solving approach which involves trial and error over a period of time in order to arrive at appropriate solution. He noted that many countries had adopted the approach to solve their public service problems. Identification of a few problems that many people including the powerful people would want to be solved, would prepare enabling environment for the reform to be accepted. There should be ample time to learn from trial and error whereby experimentation should be made within a few Agencies of Government. Political support is also required for the success of any reform and therefore, appropriate communication must be embarked upon among the populace before introducing a new reform.

(b) **Dr. Willy McCourt** whose paper was titled “Models of Public Service Reform: A Problem-Solving Approach” identified six models of Public Service Reform as follows:

1. Administration
2. Decentralization
3. Pay and employment
4. Public Service Reforms
5. New Public Management
6. Integrity and anti-corruption reforms
7. Bottom-up reforms.

He told the participants that the problem-solving approach had been employed in some countries to reform their Public Service. The moment a problem is identified; appropriate solution should be put in place to address the problem. The author further told participants that a number of reforms can be employed to address a particular problem which means there should be a variety of tools to use to address a problem.

Dr. Willy emphasised on capacity building of Public Servants in order to discharge effective and efficient service to the people. He said that there was no substitute to training as a way of enhancing the capacity of Public Servants, and therefore, staff must be taken out of their tight schedule to attend a training course. He noted that new public management approach called for formulation and measurement of performance indicators. He said that when such measure is put in place, it would indicate whether or not the reform is working.

Concluding the delivery of his paper, he advised that the quality of pieces of advice provided to the politicians by the Public Servants should be such that would disclose its merits and demerits.

9.0 **Director-General of Bureau Requested the Participants to Identify Major Problems Confronting Nigeria Which the Average Nigeria** **Would Want to be Solved**

9.1 Shortly after David Booth delivered his paper, the Director-General of Bureau requested the participants to identify major problems confronting Nigeria which the average Nigerians would want to be solved. Participants were requested to write their answers on a piece of paper and submit to the ushers for submission to the high table for further analysis. Immediately after the submission, the DG announced the result of the analysis as follows:

1. 58 problem areas were identified;
2. The frequency of 5 were picked;
3. Corruption came first with 40 votes;
4. Security came second with 20 votes;
5. Power and electricity came third;
6. Nepotism came fourth; and
7. Quality of Public Service was the fifth identified problem

9.2 He requested the participants to proffer solutions to the above mentioned problems and their answers should be sent to his e-mail addresses which were projected for them to copy. The e-mail addresses were as follows: joeabah@icloud.com (ii) joeabah@bpsr.gov.ng

10.0 **The Guest Papers’ Reviewers**

10.1 The Inaugural Seminar Series provided for four reviewers and these were their submissions:

1. Dr. Goke Adegoroye, former Director-General of BPSR

On his own part, Dr. Goke Adegoroye, the pioneering Director-General of BPSR, expressed his profound concern on AGE FALSIFICATION by Civil Servants and the need to uphold personal integrity and also the need for Institutional Reforms.

He had wished to see the deployment of Permanent Secretaries and Directors in the service by the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation free from powers that be, traditional Rulers, Religious leaders, etc

That during his time as the Director-General of the Bureau, his focus was on reforms which brought about Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS), which started in 6 pilot Ministries in April, 2007;

That over 5,000 Civil Servants were severed, and most of them collected their terminal benefits, but some have found themselves back in the service.

That can the government know exactly how much it has spent so far in the payment of severance benefits, and can it repeat this in future when the need arises?

That what happened was a cleaning process and not rightsizing;

That how will the Civil Service abide by Extant Circulars and implement them to the latter?

That surprisingly, Civil Servants are the Cooks, Stewards and Cleaners of corruption in the country today.

That he was presently reviewing/examining the 2014 recurrent expenditure with a view to bringing/identifying why it had always been high as a result of some loopholes which had not been blocked over the years;

That why buying computers every year in our budgets in MDAs and Agencies?

That the Reforms were beyond the Civil Servants alone, it required the buying-in of the political class to enable it succeed. Thus initiatives for the progress of the service should be respected.

In conclusion, he reiterated the fact that Permanent Secretaries being the custodians and Accounting Officers of MDAs should not be moved arbitrarily each time Honourable Ministers were appointed for minimal movement of Permanent Secretaries on any excuse of appointment of Honourable Ministers being the Custodians of MDAs and not an appendage of Ministers. He cautioned that Permanent Secretaries should stay in whenever their Ministers were out of Office.

1. Dr. Tunji Olaopa, Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Information

On his part, Dr. Tunji Olaopa, Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Information, hailed the problem solving approach to reform as propounded by Dr. Willy in his presentation.

That since the Colonial era to date cultural contradictions had made reforms a bit difficult in Nigeria and he endorsed the need to move from idealistic views to problem solving driven reforms.

He further observed that the pilot reforms which were introduced in the past almost became the reforms so far driven with some measures of success by Nigeria, because the methodological choice on design and scope of reforms had always been faulty. That was why the NSPSR was difficult to be implemented or be sold for implementation.

That relevant pocket of reforms should be identified for implementation and not an elephant one. That the Bureau should organize some change management series workshops and sit with some MDAs and Agencies that actually MUST need some changes to negotiate what they should do.

He called for the identification of those that can support reforms; know the perception of stakeholders regarding reforms. In other words, the policy makers and executioners’ perception must rhyme in order to make possible reforms and reforms initiatives possible.

He called for the strengthening of the Planning, Research and Statistics (PRS) Departments of the MDAs for effective performance and monitoring.

That we should be seen moving from bureaucratic model to entrepreneurial model to enable us manage the patronage dimension. That SERVICOM should move beyond theory to practical.

That Financial and Personnel Management should be decentralized; and that the Civil Service should be creative to enable it move the society forward, which should be the Civil Service we should be longing for.

1. Mr. Moses Airiphdion, Director of Reform Co-ordination, Federal Ministry of Science and Technology

In the review of the paper, Mr. Moses mentioned that the prescription of standards of Public Service Reforms by the World Bank and Donor Agencies had not been helpful because they were not based on the historical experiences of the developing countries. Therefore, countries should be left alone to devise solutions that achieve a good fit with their needs and possibilities.

Concluding, he said that the paper was succinct and apt and therefore warned against wholesale adoption of foreign sponsored solutions to Africa’s native problems of governance.

1. Mrs. E. A. Eneh, Director of Reform Co-ordination, Federal Ministry of Petroleum Resources

Mrs. Eneh described the six models advocated by the author as in exhaustive because there could be as many models as there are countries interested in reforming their Public Services. She said that every country is a veritable laboratory for the discovery of principles of Public Service Reforms. She noted that the problem-solving approach seems to be very weak in that it does not present any generally applicable theory of Public Service Reform.

She concluded that if the advice of the author is employed by taking one step at a time, it would go a long way to reform our Public Service in Nigeria.

11.0 Interactive Session (Questions and Answers Forum)

11.1 Shortly after the papers reviewers concluded their submissions; the Head of Service announced that participants could raise questions based on the Guest Speakers’ Papers. Alhaji Aji’s (HOS) question was based on the best practice and problem-solving approaches. He told the participants that the best and successful reforms had always been based on what the people want. In other words, reform should be demand driven. The cultural and social aspect of our environment should be considered in introducing any form of reform.

11.2 The Head of Service further advised that we should embrace the best practice and innovation in order to move forward. He noted that there was always confrontation between the political class and the civil servants but caution that civil servants should listen with a view to understanding them.

11.3 He observed that monetization policy had created a little challenge because official quarters of certain category of workers were sold off without consideration to proximity to their place of work; a case of medical doctors was sighted. The analysis was carried out by the BPSR.

11.4 Another pertinent question was on the conscientious to have a world class civil service in Nigeria. The questioner said that for the country to achieve that feat there was the need to consider the issue of selectivity or entry point of our graduates. Thorough examination of what we wanted from so called best practice would be of tremendous advantage to devise appropriate reforms for our public service. There should be inter-governmental collaboration in our determination to achieve a world class public service. Training should be stepped up especially in the area of Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

11.5 The imbalance between the political class and the civil servants was an issue raised. Civil Servants should be well equipped both in knowledge and practice in discharging the responsibility placed on them by the political class. In the course of their duties, strict compliance with rules and regulations must be employed. It was noted that Civil Servants were enabled by Public Service Rules which in most cases were not utilized in executing their duties. Using the Public Service Rules would put the political class in check.

11.6 It was also observed that some of the institutions we were celebrating

today had been there without any action. It was when some change agents were appointed to head these Parastatals that they started to discharge their duties appropriately. The question was how do we ensure that the political jobbers were no longer appointed to head these Parastatals.

11.7 It was noted that Civil Servants lack attitude to carry out certain things. Public Service Rules had limited their resourcefulness to operate and act in the discharge of their duties.

11.8 International best practice was described as reforms process which is not static but continues to grow over time. Inasmuch as there were similar cultural pattern in most of the African countries, part of the so called best practice should be taken to reform the Public Service.

11.9 Another aspect of question raised was the issue of reform and environment. It was noted that for any reform to succeed, it should receive institutional support and should be sequential and systematic.

11.10 The challenge of managing the political class was also identified. They must see civil servants as partners in progress in the execution of Government business. There should be a way where the President would meet with the Head of Service and the Permanent Secretaries on quarterly basis where issues of conflict could be discussed.

11.11 Responding to the above questions and observations, David Booth revealed that cultural experiences in all reforms were the same. He noted that there was a world class civil service in the early 1960s, but the issue of corruption had affected it and it is the same in other African countries.

11.12 In his own response, Willy McCourt advised that continuous learning would help to achieve a world class civil service. He used the occasion to congratulate the BPSR for creating Human Resource cadre in the Federal Public Service.

12.0 **Vote of Thanks by the Director, Reform Co-ordination in the**  **Bureau**

12.1 Delivering the vote of thanks, Mr. Yamusa Bin, Director, Reform Co-ordination in the Bureau noted that the Director-General of BPSR had been the driving force behind the successful hosting of the Seminar. His vision, commitment, interest and hard work had culminated in the success story of the Seminar. He, however, thanked him for the efforts he had put in re-structuring and re-engineering the Bureau since his assumption of duty.

12.2 He also thanked the development partners such as the World Bank, DFID and FEPAR for committing their resources in organizing the Seminar. The Director, Reform Co-ordination expressed his appreciation to the Guest Speakers for their excellent papers which would provide a roadmap for us in our quest to reposition the Public Service.

12.3 The Director, Reform Co-ordination further expressed his deep appreciation to all the top management staff of both the Federal and State Public Service, and all distinguished guests for attending and taking active part in the Seminar.

12.4 The unalloyed support of the Head of the Civil Service was deeply recognised and appreciated especially for committing a whole day for the Seminar in spite of his busy schedule.

12.5 He thereafter wished the participants safe journey to their respective destinations especially those who came from the States Civil Service.