

Goodwill Message Director General, GIABA

Goodwill Message by Director General, GIABA, At The National Summit of Stakeholders on The Implementation of The Nigerian Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act, Held in Abuja, Nigeria On 28-29 March 2007

Protocols:

I first of all want to express the regrets of Dr. Shehu for not being able to attend this very important meeting, as a result of competing GIABA programme with regard to the inauguration of the Mutual Evaluation Working Group in Dakar, Senegal.

As you are aware, Mutual Evaluation is one of the very critical components of the work of GIABA and other FATF-Style Regional Bodies, FSRB.

It is my pleasure to be with you at this moment as you celebrate the third year of the enactment of the Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act, 2004. It is indeed a very important moment in the history and the enforcement of Money Laundering control measures in Nigeria. The past four years have seen dramatic changes in money laundering enforcement in Nigeria, as a result of the dynamic leadership of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

2. The recent convictions in the Nigerian courts, and the indictment of corrupt officials for money laundering would not have been possible without a strong enforcement mechanism. It is in this regard that the history of money laundering control in Nigeria cannot be complete without mentioning the name of Mr. Nuhu Ribadu, the amiable, courageous and indefatigable Chairman of the EFCC, who has championed the fight against corruption, economic and financial crimes in Nigeria in the past few years.

3. Having been associated with enactment of this piece of legislation since 1993, it is a home-coming for me to reflect on immense contributions of all the stakeholders in implementing this law. I am therefore delighted to be associated with this epoch-making event, which is taking place at a critical moment that the Nigerian AML/CFT implementation is being observed by the international community. As an active member of GIABA, the placement of Nigeria on the FATF list of Non-Cooperative Countries and Territories (NCCTs), was a source for serious concern to us in the region, particularly because of the influential role that Nigeria plays in deepening our regional integration process. Fortunately, in June last year, Nigeria was removed from the list after a thorough but objective assessment of the AML/CFT regime in Nigeria. The removal of Nigeria from this list was a major success for Nigeria and for us at the regional level. It is an indication of the confidence restored in Nigeria by the international community. I commend all the key officials of the Government of Nigeria, who worked hard to achieve this result. But we must look beyond the removal from the list to really address the issues from an inward perspective to ensure consistency, promote synergy and sustainability in the reform programme going on in this important country. To my mind, this Summit is one important opportunity to do all these.

4. The objectives of this Summit as I understand: to bring together stakeholders to appraise the national efforts in the implementation of the Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act, assess benefits and challenges encountered and determine strategies for robust implementation, are indeed commendable. Seeking to shed retrospection on the implementation of Nigeria's Anti-Money Laundering and Counter Terrorist Financing Strategies will not only help Nigeria assess progress made so far, but also take steps to plan ahead for the future.

5. This occasion also provides me an opportunity to reflect on some of the things that are happening at the regional level with regard to the battle against money laundering and terrorist financing, and in particular, the promotion and implementation of acceptable international standards and best practices.

6. The establishment of the Intergovernmental Action Group Against Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing in West Africa (GIABA) is one of the major responses to the threat of money laundering. It is a practical demonstration of the strong commitment of Member States to combat money laundering and terrorist financing, and to cooperate with other concerned nations and international organizations to achieve this goal.

7. The Authority of the Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS established GIABA in 2000 with the specific mandate to inter alia:

i) Ensure the adoption of standards against money laundering and financing of terrorism in accordance with acceptable international standards and practices, including the FATF 40+9 Recommendations;

ii) Facilitate the adoption and implementation by Member States of measures against money laundering and financing of terrorism, taking into account specific regional peculiarities and conditions;

iii) Function as a forum where Members can discuss matters of regional interest and share experiences;

iv) Organize self-evaluations and mutual evaluations to determine the efficacy of measures adopted, including their conformity to acceptable international standards;

v) Coordinate and provide support to Member States to establish and implement AML/CFT regimes, including the implementation of laws against the proceeds of crime through mutual legal assistance, and also in the establishment and maintenance of Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs)

vi) Subsequently and in response to the growing menace of terrorist financing, the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government in January 2006, amended the Statutes of GIABA, thus including the combat of Terrorist Financing as a major component and mandate of GIABA.

8. In June 2006, GIABA was recognized as a FATF –Style Regional Body (FSRB). This recognition provides GIABA the platform to network with other inter-governmental and non-governmental bodies to prevent and combat against money laundering and terrorist financing.

9. We have been working closely with our partners, particularly the AML/CFT Implementation Committee in Nigeria to ensure that Nigeria is in compliance with all international obligations related to AML/CFT. This occasion is indeed another opportunity to reiterate the need to address the challenges ahead.

10. First, is the need for the passage of the Bill on Terrorism, which is currently before the National Assembly, in to law before the end of the current Administration. Secondly, the effective implementation of money laundering control measures by the Designated Businesses and Non Financial Institutions (DNBFI) cannot be overemphasized because they constitute more than 50% of the actors in the financial system in any country. Thirdly, the informal sector economy in Nigeria, which is huge compared with the formal sector, needs to be mainstreamed and accounted for within the existing AML/CFT National Strategy in order to ensure that the largely cash dependent economy is reduced significantly.

11. I call upon all the actors within the AML/CFT implementing strategy to address the above mentioned concerns in order to build on the existing success stories that have been recorded in Nigeria these past three years.

These challenges can only be addressed when there is a comprehensive and multi-faceted road map that takes into cognizance the role that each actor is expected to play in the implementation of the money laundering control measures.

12. At GIABA, we see Nigeria as a model and a country to reckon with, it is therefore in our interest to ensure that the implementation frameworks can stand the test of time. The GIABA Secretariat is willing to provide technical assistance and moral support when needed, to strengthen capacity for a robust AML/CFT implementation in Nigeria and in all other Member States.

13. I sincerely thank the organizers of this forum, particularly the EFCC, NFIU, and DataPro Consultants for putting up this programme and for inviting me to give this goodwill message. I look forward to closer cooperation with you in furtherance to our efforts to deal with our common problems. I thank you and wish you fruitful deliberations.

GIABA Secretariat

Sacre Coeur 3 VDN

X Pyrotechnie Villa 101,

BP. 32400, Dakar, Ponty, Senegal

E-Mail: secretariat@giaba-westafrica.orgThis email address is being protected from spam bots, you need Javascript enabled to view it

Website: <http://www.giaba-westafrica.org>