

## AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

### Nigeria Monthly Briefing June 2021

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#### Nigeria Summary 22 June 2021

*Democracy Day sees a nationwide protest of a ban on United States (US)-based social media platform Twitter by President Muhammadu Buhari (2015-present). Twitter removed a Tweet by Buhari on 2 June for violating its abusive behaviour policy. The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) devalues the Naira by 7.6% against the US dollar. The CBN's Monetary Policy Committee holds the Monetary Policy Rate at 11.5% and predicts positive medium-term recovery for the Nigerian economy. The National Bureau of Statistics CPI and Inflation report notes a decline in the rate of year-on-year inflation between April and May. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) concludes a virtual visit to Nigeria, expressing concern that the government may reintroduce a fuel subsidy. Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau is killed in clashes with rival extremist group Islamic State in the West African Province. Denmark's parliament agrees to send a warship to the Gulf of Guinea to discourage acts of piracy in the region. The federal government appeals to the US ambassador to Nigeria for access to US-based vaccine manufacturers to procure Covid-19 vaccines and establish a manufacturing hub in Nigeria. Finance minister Zainab Ahmed obtains parliamentary approval for a supplementary budget, \$203.35m of which will be used to obtain 30 million doses of the Johnson & Johnson Covid-19 vaccine.*

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#### Buhari's Democracy Day speech meets with protest...

**Democracy Day** was marked by protest in several locations across **Nigeria**, with police deploying tear gas against protestors in the **Gudu** area of **Abuja (FCT State)** and **Ojota** area of **Lagos (Lagos State)**.<sup>1</sup> Demonstrators had gathered to protest bad governance and nationwide insecurity (see *ARC Briefing Nigeria May 2021*), and a ban on **United States (US)**-based social media platform **Twitter** implemented by the federal government on 4 June (see below).<sup>2</sup> President **Muhammadu Buhari** (2015-present) delivered a nationwide broadcast on 12 June for Democracy Day, nominated as a nationwide holiday by interior minister **Rauf Aregbesola** on 10 June.<sup>3,4</sup> Democracy Day commemorates the first democratic election between two parties, the **Social Democratic Party (SDP)** and the **National Republican Convention (NRC)**, on 12 June 1993, declared by international and local observers to be Nigeria's freest and fairest election, but later cancelled by then military head of state, **Ibrahim Babangida**.<sup>5</sup> Buhari's address highlighted the importance of cohesion:

*"Our Democracy Day ...is a celebration of freedom and a victory for one people, one country and one Nigeria."*<sup>6</sup>

Buhari's narrative of 'togetherness' was viewed as a response to a speech delivered by former president **Olesegun Obasanjo** (1999-2007) on 9 June at his investiture as a fellow of the **Nigerian Institution of Surveyors (NIS)** in which he stated:

*"I am a strong believer of one Nigeria, but not one Nigeria at any cost, but one Nigeria where every Nigerian can feel proud that he or she has a stake in this country."*<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [Al Jazeera](#), 12 Jun 2021

<sup>2</sup> [New York Times](#), 5 Jun 2021

<sup>3</sup> [Business Post](#), 10 Jun 2021

<sup>4</sup> [Vanguard](#), 12 Jun 2021

<sup>5</sup> [BBC](#), 11 Jun 2021

<sup>6</sup> [Guardian](#), 12 Jun 2021

<sup>7</sup> [Premium Times](#), 9 Jun 2021

The former president has been critical of the Buhari administration's policy inertia and expressed sympathy for separatist sentiments.<sup>8</sup> Division between Obasanjo and Buhari escalated in May when the **Buhari Media Organisation (BMO)** made unsubstantiated claims that "a former president" was plotting to overthrow President Buhari.<sup>9</sup> Obasanjo's public criticism of Buhari's response to Nigeria's growing insecurity crisis (see *ARC Briefing Nigeria May 2021*) is sensitive, as both Obasanjo and Buhari served in the Nigerian army during the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970). Obasanjo delivered a virtual interview with historian **Toyin Falola** on 1 February stating:

*"If you are the commander-in-chief and banditry is taking place in your backyard, then you have to wake up."*<sup>10</sup>

Buhari's administration has been heavily criticised for allowing protracted conflict, driven by extremist group **Boko Haram** in the north to run throughout his tenure as president (see below). Buhari's Democracy Day speech addressed national security concerns and highlighted his link to the armed forces as a former general in the army:

*"The day I joined the Nigerian Army I was prepared to lay down my life for Nigeria [...] I have, throughout my tenure, provided the security agencies with all they require relative to available resources and will be providing more as the dynamics unfold to put an end to our security problems."*<sup>11</sup>

Events leading up to the Twitter ban have highlighted rejection of the president's constitutional responsibilities and a refusal or inability to implement meaningful reform in anticipation of the energy transition.

### ... as critics pan Twitter ban ...

Buhari's Democracy Day speech highlighting the celebration of freedom and cohesion contrasted starkly with the government's suspension on 4 June of Twitter's activities in Nigeria, and showcases the generational divide between the 78-year-old president and Nigeria's youthful electorate. The government's ban on Twitter's activities has evoked protest and defiance, underlining the government's tendency to treat the symptoms of public unrest, rather than the underlying causes. Buhari published his now infamous (and subsequently removed) Tweet in response to a rising number of attacks on government buildings and police stations in the **South East** region (see *ARC Briefing Nigeria May 2021*).<sup>12</sup> Twitter removed the Tweet on 2 June, saying it contravened the social media platform's "abusive behaviour" policy on 2 June.<sup>13</sup> The Tweet stated:

*"Many of those misbehaving today are too young to be aware of the destruction and loss of lives that occurred during the Nigerian Civil War. Those of us in the fields for 30 months, who went through that war, will treat them in the language they understand."*<sup>14</sup>

Buhari's words, referring to the **Biafra War** (Nigerian civil war 1967-1970), have been interpreted as a threat to punish regional secessionists in the South East region,<sup>15</sup> with Nigeria-based newspaper **Peoples Gazette** claiming the president's language expressed hints of genocide.<sup>16</sup> Buhari's turn away from the South East also marks a distancing from the constitutional requirement of the president to be representative of all of Nigeria. The constitution states that a presidential candidate, to secure the

<sup>8</sup> [Premium Times](#), 9 Jun 2021

<sup>9</sup> [International Centre for Investigative Reporting](#), 30 May 2021

<sup>10</sup> [Premium Times](#), 1 Feb 2021

<sup>11</sup> [Vanguard](#), 12 Jun 2021

<sup>12</sup> [Vanguard](#), 2 Jun 2021

<sup>13</sup> [New York Times](#), 5 Jun 2021

<sup>14</sup> [Reuters](#), 5 Jun 2021

<sup>15</sup> [New York Times](#), 5 Jun 2021

<sup>16</sup> [Peoples Gazette](#), 1 Jun 2021

presidency, must secure the most votes and 25% of the popular vote in two-thirds of Nigeria's 36 states and the **Federal Capital Territory (FCT)**.<sup>17</sup>

Buhari's rhetoric is outdated, wedded to the secessionist threat of the 1960's and language of fierce suppression. His Tweet further demonstrates insensitivity to the global energy transition and its potential impact on Nigeria's cohesion. In a post-oil world, the **Niger Delta** will have less economic importance to the nation and federal government revenue.

The information ministry has criticised the use of Twitter as a medium to organise anti-government and anti-security forces protests, such as the **#EndSARS** protests in October 2020 and the Democracy Day protests, calling for greater regulation to prevent the spread of "fake news".<sup>18</sup> However, the government's decision to ban Twitter contradicts the successful social media campaign that swept Buhari to power in 2015. Comedian and #EndSARS activist **Debbo Adebayo** (popularly known as **Mr. Macaroni**) highlighted the hypocrisy of the ban:

*"General Buhari and [the ruling **All Progressives Congress**] APC used this same Twitter to criticize past administrations and campaign for elections. Now that the citizens are holding them accountable with the same platform, heat is catching them. They want to take away the people's freedom to speak. Dictatorship 101."*<sup>19</sup>

US-based **Human Rights Watch** described the ban as part of a "pattern of repression"<sup>20</sup> while **United Kingdom**-based non-governmental organisation (NGO) **Amnesty International's** country director for Nigeria, **Osai Ojigho**, condemned the ban as a "dangerous precedent":

*"Suspending Twitter in Nigeria is just one more way of stating that people's rights do not matter."*<sup>21</sup>

However, it appears not all members of the administration were informed about the Twitter ban. Minister of state for the environment **Sharon Ikeazor** mistakenly posted a Tweet about a plastic solutions event on 3 June, drawing critical responses including<sup>22</sup>

*"Madam, what on earth are you doing here?"*

*"Which [Virtual Private Network] VPN are you using ma?"* and;

*"You really can not shame the shameless".*

Nigeria remains innovative and resilient in the face of adversity with many Twitter users utilising VPN services to defy the ban and continuing to tweet, causing the hashtag **#thankgodforVPN** to trend.<sup>23</sup>

The government has lost a battle against its ban on Twitter use in Nigeria. A local NGO, the **Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP)** and 176 Nigerian individuals filed a case with the **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)** court of justice in **Abuja**, arguing that the suspension of Twitter is unlawful. ECOWAS released a statement on 22 June, confirming its jurisdiction to hear the case.<sup>24</sup> The court said it viewed interference with Twitter as interference with human rights and a violation of human rights:

*"The court also hereby orders that the application be heard expeditiously. The Nigerian government must take immediate steps to implement the order."*<sup>25</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Section 134 1(a,b), [Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999](#)

<sup>18</sup> [Reuters](#), 5 Jun 2021

<sup>19</sup> [Independent](#), 5 Jun 2021

<sup>20</sup> [Human Rights Watch](#), 7 Jun 2021

<sup>21</sup> [Twitter](#), 4 Jun 2021

<sup>22</sup> [Twitter](#), 3 Jun 2021

<sup>23</sup> [New York Times](#), 5 Jun 2021

<sup>24</sup> [Punch](#), 22 Jun 2021

<sup>25</sup> [Punch](#), 22 Jun 2021

Announcing the court ruling on 22 June, SERAP deputy director **Kolawole Oluwadare** said Nigerian citizens cannot be arrested or prosecuted for using Twitter:

*"[This] prevents the federal government from] unlawfully imposing sanctions or doing anything whatsoever to harass, intimidate, arrest or prosecute Twitter or any other social media service provider, media houses, radio, television broadcast stations, the plaintiffs and other Nigerians who are Twitter users, pending the hearing and determination of this suit."*<sup>26</sup>

The suit has been adjourned until a further hearing on 6 July.<sup>27</sup>

### Central Bank devalues naira...

Despite heavy criticism from protesters and former presidents over federal government policy inertia, there are some positive signs of change. The **Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN)** (central bank) published a change in the official naira rate on 24 May, devaluing Nigeria's currency by 7.6% against the US dollar.<sup>28</sup> The new rate of 410 Naira/\$1 is the first devaluation from the rate of 380 naira/\$1 set in July 2020.<sup>29</sup> The new rate followed record low trading for the naira on 14 May, at 419.75 against the US dollar, closing at 411.25/\$1.<sup>30</sup> The parallel market (informal market) also fell, trading at 495 naira to the US dollar on 24 May.<sup>31</sup>

The CBN has been under sustained pressure from international lending agencies, including the **World Bank** and **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**, to devalue the naira and unify the exchange rate system.<sup>32</sup> The multiple currency regime operated by the Central Bank is blamed for causing significant frustration to businesses operating in Nigeria and is considered a disincentive for foreign investment.<sup>33</sup>

Central bank governor **Godwin Emefiele** committed to unifying the exchange rates in June 2020, following the approval of a \$3.4 billion emergency financing loan from the IMF.<sup>34</sup> The central bank, finance minister **Zainab Ahmed** and vice president **Yemi Osinbajo** clashed in the media following conflicting statements regarding unification of the **Nigerian Autonomous Foreign Exchange Rate Fixing (NAFEX)** in March (see *ARC Briefing Nigeria March 2021*).<sup>35</sup>

The devaluation is a step towards a unified exchange rate, adoption of a flexible-rate policy and currency reform, one of the conditions of the \$1.5 billion World Bank loan approved in December, following protracted delays from August 2020.<sup>36, 37</sup> IMF mission chief for Nigeria **Jesmin Rahman** praised the devaluation on 17 June:

*"The recent removal of the official exchange rate from the CBN website and measures to enhance transparency in the setting of the NAFEX exchange rate are encouraging. The mission recommended maintaining the momentum toward fully unifying all exchange rate windows and establishing a market-clearing exchange rate."*<sup>38</sup>

Long-term commitment to unifying the exchange rate remains to be seen, but movement from the central bank and concessions from senior members of the 'cabal' thought to control President Buhari, may indicate a promising start.

<sup>26</sup> [Punch](#), 22 Jun 2021

<sup>27</sup> [Punch](#), 22 Jun 2021

<sup>28</sup> [Al Jazeera](#), 25 May 2021

<sup>29</sup> [Reuters](#), 25 May 2021

<sup>30</sup> [Reuters](#), 14 May 2021

<sup>31</sup> [Bloomberg](#), 27 May 2021

<sup>32</sup> [Reuters](#), 14 May 2021

<sup>33</sup> [FT](#), 8 Jul 2020

<sup>34</sup> [IMF](#), 28 Apr 2020

<sup>35</sup> [Bloomberg](#), 22 Mar 2021

<sup>36</sup> [Nairametrics](#), 15 Dec 2020

<sup>37</sup> [Reuters](#), 17 Aug 2020

<sup>38</sup> [IMF](#), 17 Jun 2021

### ... and holds policy rate at 11.5%

The CBN **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** unanimously voted at its meeting on 24-25 May to retain the monetary policy rate (MPR) at 11.5%,

*“... in order to allow previous monetary policy measures [to] continue to permeate the economy whilst observing global and domestic developments”.*<sup>39</sup>

The decision marks the fourth MPC meeting to maintain the MPR since reducing the rate from 12.5% to 11.5% on 22 September 2020.<sup>40</sup> The MPC also voted to retain the asymmetric corridor of +100/-700 basis points around the MPR and to maintain the cash reserve ratio at 27.5%, last increased by 5% in January 2020.<sup>41</sup> The MPC maintained the liquidity ratio (LR) at 30%, despite the LR remaining above its formal limit at 38.9%, according to CBN data.<sup>42</sup> The MPC also reported an improvement in non-performing loans, which reduced from 6.6% in April 2020, to 5.89% in April 2021, indicating fewer defaults on loans.

The CBN reported a decline in Nigeria’s external reserves from \$34.29 billion in April to \$34.17 billion in May, due to “sales to the foreign exchange market and third-party payments”.<sup>43</sup> The MPC report published on 25 May described an optimistic outlook for medium-term macroeconomic recovery, and potential for “monetary policy normalisation by the fourth quarter of 2021”.<sup>44</sup> The central bank highlighted uneven recovery, skewed in favour of countries with high vaccination rates against the **Covid-19** virus, noting the health ministry has struggled to acquire new doses of the Covid-19 vaccine to sustain the countrywide vaccination drive (see below).<sup>45</sup>

### National Bureau of Statistics reports a fall in inflation...

The **National Bureau of Statistics (NBS)** released its **Consumer Price Index (CPI)** and inflation report on 15 June, confirming a deceleration in year-on-year CPI inflation from April (18.12%) to May (17.93%).<sup>46</sup> Urban inflation continued to increase 18.51% year-on-year (y/y) in May, a slight reduction from the previous month (April), which recorded urban inflation at 18.68%.<sup>47</sup> The rural inflation rate also reduced slightly, to 17.36% in May, down from 17.57% in April 2021.<sup>48</sup>

The NBS noted that y/y food inflation in May was highest in **Kogi State (North Central region/Middle Belt)** (32.82%), **Kwara State (North Central region/Middle Belt)** (26.02%) and **Enugu State (South East region)** (25.43%). **Akwa Ibom State (South South region)** (20.06%), **Bauchi State (North East region)** (18.65%) and **Abuja (Federal Capital Territory) (FCT)** (North Central region) (16.91%) recorded the slowest rise in year on year inflation. However, month-on-month, May 2021 food inflation was highest in **Kogi State** (3.11%), **Ogun State (South West region)** (2.89%) and **Anambra State (South East region)** (2.37%), while **Edo State (South South region)**, **Sokoto State (North West region)** and **Ekiti State (South West region)** recorded price deflation or negative inflation (general decrease in the general price level of food or a negative food inflation rate).<sup>49</sup>

The composite food index also saw a reduction in the rate of inflation, measured at 22.28% in May, compared to 22.72% in April.<sup>50</sup> The NBS lists the key drivers of rise in food price inflation as

<sup>39</sup> [Central Bank of Nigeria](#), 25 May 2021

<sup>40</sup> [Central Bank of Nigeria](#), 22 Sep 2020

<sup>41</sup> [Nairametrics](#), 27 Jan 2020

<sup>42</sup> [Central Bank of Nigeria](#), 25 May 2021

<sup>43</sup> [Central Bank of Nigeria](#), 25 May 2021

<sup>44</sup> [Central Bank of Nigeria](#), 25 May 2021

<sup>45</sup> [Central Bank of Nigeria](#), 25 May 2021

<sup>46</sup> [National Bureau of Statistics](#), 15 Jun 2021

<sup>47</sup> [National Bureau of Statistics](#), 15 Jun 2021

<sup>48</sup> [National Bureau of Statistics](#), 15 Jun 2021

<sup>49</sup> [National Bureau of Statistics](#), 15 Jun 2021

<sup>50</sup> [National Bureau of Statistics](#), 15 Jun 2021

*“Bread, Cereals, Milk, Cheese, Eggs, Fish, Soft drinks, Coffee, Tea and Cocoa, Fruits, Meat, Oils and fats and Vegetables.”<sup>51</sup>*

The federal government placed restrictions on access to foreign exchange (FX) for sugar and wheat importers on 16 April, in a bid to encourage local production (see *ARC Briefing Nigeria April 2021*).<sup>52</sup> Although the government’s FX restriction list intended for food importers to generate greater food security, disruptions caused by the lockdown response to the Covid-19 pandemic interrupted the planting season for cereals.<sup>53</sup> **Abiodun Olorundenro**, a manager at Nigeria-based farm **Aquashoots Ltd**, confirmed:

*“Last year lockdown obstructed farming activities and we couldn’t grow enough grains for this year. This is why there is scarcity and prices are surging.”<sup>54</sup>*

Food production has also been disrupted by insecurity in the north (**Boko Haram**) as well as the Middle Belt region, which has been blamed on **Fulani** herders.<sup>55</sup> Federal government response has overwhelmingly relied upon state security forces, which have made little headway in solving resource-based conflict.<sup>56</sup> Nigeria’s food security is unlikely to improve while unemployment and poverty remain high, driving instability and disruption to farming activities (see below).

Nigerians are increasingly exposed to the financial ‘pinch’ as government removes subsidies and implements new taxes to balance the books. On 4 June, the federal government instructed the **National Broadcasting Commission (NBC)** to begin the process of licensing all ‘over-the-top’ content (OTT) media services and social media operations in Nigeria, a cost few Nigerians can afford.<sup>57</sup>

### IMF concludes virtual visit and criticises potential return to fuel subsidies...

The IMF concluded a ‘virtual visit’ to Nigeria on 17 June, noting a recovery in real GDP and voicing concern at elevated levels of unemployment and inflation.<sup>58</sup> The report praised the exchange rate measures undertaken by the CBN in May but encouraged the central bank to make further reform to “achieve a fully unified and market-clearing exchange rate”. The report, delivered by IMF mission chief for Nigeria Jesmin Rahman, voiced concern at the return of fuel subsidies in the context of low revenue mobilisation:

*“The [IMF] mission ... reiterated the importance of introducing market-based fuel pricing mechanism and the need to deploy well-targeted social support to cushion any impact on the poor. The mission recommended stepping up efforts to strengthen tax administration to mobilize additional revenues and help address priority spending pressures.”<sup>59</sup>*

The federal government indicated its intention to suspend fuel subsidies in March 2020, when the **Petroleum Products Pricing Regulatory Agency (PPPRA)** began to implement increases to the gasoline pump price cap.<sup>60</sup> A busy holiday season saw gasoline subsidies reintroduced to encourage consumption in December, despite President Buhari citing the “unsustainable” nature of fuel subsidies, which were not catered for in the 2020 budget.<sup>61,62, 63</sup> Analysts critical of the federal

<sup>51</sup> [National Bureau of Statistics](#), 15 Jun 2021

<sup>52</sup> [Nairametrics](#), 16 Apr 2021

<sup>53</sup> [Business Day](#), 1 Mar 2021

<sup>54</sup> [Business Day](#), 1 Mar 2021

<sup>55</sup> [Guardian](#), 14 Mar 2021

<sup>56</sup> [The Africa Report](#), 9 Jun 2021

<sup>57</sup> [Politics Nigeria](#), 4 Jun 2021

<sup>58</sup> [IMF](#), 17 Jun 2021

<sup>59</sup> [IMF](#), 17 Jun 2021

<sup>60</sup> [S&P Global](#), 5 Jun 2020

<sup>61</sup> Reuters, 22 Mar 2021

<sup>62</sup> [Pulse](#), 7 Sep 2020

<sup>63</sup> [Nairametrics](#), 8 Sep 2020

government's motivations to cut subsidies insist that fuel subsidies have nothing to do with changing philosophy:

*"It isn't that the federal government no longer thinks that paying a fuel subsidy is 'pro-poor'; it's simply that they cannot afford it anymore."*<sup>64</sup>

The IMF warning coincides with a rise in international crude oil prices, which reached their highest since May 2019 (pre-Covid-19 pandemic) on 11 June.<sup>65</sup> A rise in international crude prices could mark a positive trend for Nigeria's federal government, which remains heavily dependent upon oil revenues.<sup>66</sup> State-owned **Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC)** group managing director **Mallam Mele Kyari** cautioned on 18 June that an increase in crude oil prices will place further pressure on Nigerian consumers, as Nigeria remains heavily dependent on fuel imports due to a shortage of domestic refineries.<sup>67</sup> Speaking at the virtual **Citizens Energy Congress** hosted by UK-based press relations company **DMG Events** on 17 June, Kyari noted that oil prices had begun to exit the threshold (\$70-\$80) established by the NNPC.<sup>68</sup> The federal government finds itself locked into a situation where fuel subsidies are unaffordable, and the Nigerian public, 'pinched' by rising food prices, additional taxes and low real GDP growth, will now face further hardship purchasing fuel.

Buhari claimed in his 12 June Democracy Day speech that his administration had lifted 10.5 million out of poverty in the last two years. However, a World Bank economic update for Nigeria, published on 15 June, challenges this assertion, claiming that 7 million Nigerians fell below the poverty line in 2020 as a result of inflationary pressure.<sup>69</sup> The report praised the critical and timely government interventions that have alleviated the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic but warned that any slippages in economic reforms could "*threaten the pace of recovery and limit the government's ability to address gaps in human and physical capital*".<sup>70</sup>

### Denmark responds to piracy amid growing insecurity ...

The World Bank has linked a rise in inflation and the financial squeeze felt by Nigerian citizens to increasing insecurity and criminality across the country, as Nigerians struggle to make ends meet and Buhari pursues a securitised response to domestic threats.<sup>71</sup> The federal government's efficacy in dealing with threats to domestic and international security has been underwhelming.

Nigerian media announced the death of Boko Haram leader **Abubakar Shekau** on 20 May, pending investigation by the Nigerian military.<sup>72</sup> Shekau was not killed in conflict with the Nigerian military, but by members of the **Islamic State in West African Province**, another violent group operating across the **Sahel** region, which recently claimed **Burkina Faso's** deadliest attack within a 24-hour period on 7 June.<sup>73</sup> **Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi**, the new leader of the **Islamic State**, allegedly commissioned Shekau's death personally for overstepping the boundaries of acceptable violence.<sup>74</sup> The failure of the Nigerian military to succeed where a rival terror group has done so is considered an embarrassment to former military general and incumbent president Buhari.

Nigeria is soon to receive military assistance from **Denmark** to secure the waters of the **Gulf of Guinea**, where piracy has remained a significant concern since January (see *ARC Briefing Nigeria January 2021*). The Danish parliament on 25 May approved plans to dispatch a naval warship to the

<sup>64</sup> Source, Africa Economist & Nigeria Expert

<sup>65</sup> [Reuters](#), 11 Jun 2021

<sup>66</sup> [Reuters](#), 11 Jun 2021

<sup>67</sup> [This Day](#), 18 Jun 2021

<sup>68</sup> [This Day](#), 18 Jun 2021

<sup>69</sup> [This Day](#), 16 June 2021

<sup>70</sup> [World Bank](#), 15 Jun 2021

<sup>71</sup> [Guardian](#), 16 Jun 2021

<sup>72</sup> [Al Jazeera](#), 21 May 2021

<sup>73</sup> [Twitter](#), 7 Jun 2021

<sup>74</sup> [Guardian](#), 7 Jun 2021

Gulf of Guinea, to curb piracy and its impact on the 30-40 Danish-operated ships that traverse the area daily.<sup>75</sup>

Nigerian restrictions on foreign naval vessels in its territorial waters have been criticised as protracting the piracy crisis in the Gulf of Guinea and offering shelter to those perpetrating illegal acts. Denmark-based **Baltic and International Maritime Council (BIMCO)** head of maritime safety and security **Jakob P. Larsen** said his organisation hoped that Danish ambassador **Jens-Otto Horslund** would garner Nigeria's support for an anti-piracy operation as mandated by the **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)**,

*"... i.e. in international waters just outside Nigeria's 12 nautical mile limit".<sup>76</sup>*

Denmark will deploy a 137.6 meter Absalon-class frigate, **HDMS Esbern Snare** (F342), to the international waters of the Gulf of Guinea from November 2021 to March 2022 to act as a deterrent and escort for Danish and international merchant ships.<sup>77</sup> The vessel will be manned by 175 Danish armed forces personnel and a SEAHAWK helicopter.<sup>78</sup>

President Buhari's traditional methods of managing national security, and reluctance to collaborate with foreign partners on matters of security, remain a challenge to business operations in south-east Nigeria.

### **Covid-19 vaccine rollout ...**

The federal government is also focusing on access to Covid-19 vaccines to enable Nigeria's economic recovery. Federal government secretary **Boss Mustapha**, in a meeting with the US ambassador to Nigeria, **Mary Beth Leonard**, on 10 June requested the cooperation of the US government to facilitate purchase of Covid-19 vaccines directly from manufacturers in the US:

*"So far, we have only been able to access vaccine from [World Health Organisation (WHO)]-led Covax facilities and donations from different offers. But so far, we have received 100,000 doses from the **Indian** company, in addition to the 3,924 million we received from the Covax facilities."<sup>79</sup>*

Mustapha encouraged the US vaccine manufacturers to establish a vaccine production plant in Nigeria, citing both market opportunity and a chance to provide equitable access to vaccines.<sup>80</sup> The call comes as the **African Union (AU) Coalition of Dialogue in Africa (CoDA)** task team on **Equitable, Universal Access to Essential Vaccines and Vaccinations in Africa** launched on 21 June.<sup>81</sup>

The Nigerian government is scheduled to receive a further 3.92 million doses of the **Oxford/AstraZeneca** Covid-19 vaccine from the COVAX facility by the end of July.<sup>82</sup> **National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA)** executive **Faisal Shuaib** confirmed in a press conference on 15 June that 1,978,808 first doses of the Covid-19 vaccine had been delivered, with a further 680,345 second doses successfully delivered.<sup>83</sup>

Shuaib also confirmed the re-opening of the vaccine drive to those who require a first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine. The government halted delivery of first doses of the Covid-19 vaccine on 24 May

<sup>75</sup> [Marinelink](#), 26 May 2021

<sup>76</sup> [Marinelink](#), 26 May 2021

<sup>77</sup> [Marinelink](#), 26 May 2021

<sup>78</sup> [Marinelink](#), 26 May 2021

<sup>79</sup> [Nairametrics](#), 11 Jun 2021

<sup>80</sup> [Nairametrics](#), 11 Jun 2021

<sup>81</sup> [VON](#), 19 Jun 2021

<sup>82</sup> [Premium Times](#), 15 Jun 2021

<sup>83</sup> [Premium Times](#), 15 Jun 2021

due to a shortage of vaccine and concern that those requiring a second dose would not receive one if vaccine deliveries were delayed.<sup>84</sup>

Nevertheless, the availability of vaccine doses and the funds to secure them remain a challenge. The IMF cautioned on 15 April that the economic recovery and growth of **sub-Saharan Africa** could be negatively impacted by poor access to Covid-19 vaccines.<sup>85</sup> Finance minister **Zainab Ahmed** confirmed parliamentary approval of a \$203.35m purchase order for 30 million **Johnson & Johnson** Covid-19 vaccines through the **Egypt-based African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank)**-led **African Vaccine Acquisition Trust**, as part of the \$2.17 billion supplementary budget on 9 June.<sup>86, 87</sup>

Nigeria's Covid-19 infection rate remains low, under 122 new cases per day in June.<sup>88</sup> Mitigating measures remain in place including a ban on gatherings exceeding 50 people. Bars and restaurants, unless operating as hotels, are also closed.<sup>89</sup> Current restrictions include mandatory mask wearing in all public spaces and access to government buildings remains limited. As of 21 June, Nigeria had recorded a total of 167,000 cases in its population of 211.4 million, with 164,000 recoveries and 2,117 Covid-19-related deaths.<sup>90</sup>

### Planner

6 July 2021 **Abuja (Nigeria) Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)** court of justice to hear the appeal of a ban on Twitter;

26-27 July 2021 **(Nigeria) Central Bank of Nigeria Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** meeting;

2023 **(Nigeria)** Presidential elections;

### Chronology

22 Jun 2021 **Abuja (Nigeria) iol**. Regional **Ecowas Court of Justice** landmark ruling restrains President **Muhammadu Buhari's** government from prosecuting people for using social media platform **Twitter**;

17 Jun 2021 **Abuja (Nigeria) Business Day**. **International Monetary Fund** says it is concerned by **Nigeria's** move to renew fuel subsidies and urges the government to continue efforts to unify its exchange rates;

11 Jun 2021 **Lagos & Abuja (Nigeria) Pulse**. Police fire teargas and detain several demonstrators in **Lagos** and **Abuja** during protests over the worsening security situation;

11 Jun 2021 **Abuja (Nigeria) Nairametrics**. **Boss Mustapha**, secretary to the federal government (FG), announces that the FG is seeking **United States (US)** cooperation to purchase vaccines directly from US companies, following a meeting with US ambassador to Nigeria, **Mary Beth Leonard**, on 10 June;

11 Jun 2021 **Abuja (Nigeria) Defenceweb**. President **Muhammadu Buhari** launches **Nigeria's Integrated National Security and Waterways Protection Infrastructure** programme, also known as the **Deep Blue Project**, which aims to combat maritime insecurity in Nigerian waters and the **Gulf of Guinea**;

8 Jun 2021 **Abuja (Nigeria) Aljazeera**. Dozens of **Nigerians** and a local rights group file a

<sup>84</sup> [Premium Times](#), 15 Jun 2021

<sup>85</sup> [International Monetary Fund](#), 15 Apr 2021

<sup>86</sup> [Nairametrics](#), 10 Jun 2021

<sup>87</sup> [Naira Metrics](#), 7 May 2021

<sup>88</sup> Johns Hopkins University, accessed 21 May 2021

<sup>89</sup> [UK Gov](#), accessed: 21 Jun 2021

<sup>90</sup> Johns Hopkins University, accessed 21 Jun 2021

lawsuit at a regional **ECOWAS** court seeking to lift the government's ban on **Twitter**, describing the decision as an attempt to silence criticism of the government;

6 Jun 2021 **(Nigeria)** *BBC*. A government spokesperson says **Nigeria** will prosecute anyone found to have breached a new ban on using social media platform **Twitter**, after government suspends Twitter's operations for deleting a Tweet by President **Muhammadu Buhari** that breached the site's rules;

6 Jun 2021 **(Nigeria)** *Reuters*. Militant group **Islamic State West African Province** says rival **Nigerian** militant Islamist group **Boko Haram**'s leader, **Abubakar Shekau**, has died;

2 Jun 2021 **(Nigeria)** *Punch*. **Twitter** removes post by President **Muhammadu Buhari** threatening punishment for regional secessionists blamed for attacks on government buildings in south-eastern **Biafra** region;

1 Jun 2021 **Abuja (Nigeria)** *Punch*. The **Office of the President** says "a rude shock" awaits insurgents in south-east **Nigeria** "bent on destroying the country through promoting insurrection, and burning down critical national assets";

27 May 2021 **Abuja (Nigeria)** *EWN*. President **Muhammadu Buhari** appoints **Major General Farouk Yahaya** as new chief of army staff, after the previous top-ranking commander and 10 other officers died in a plane crash on 21 May;

25 May 2021 **Abuja (Nigeria)** *Punch*. **Central Bank of Nigeria** devalues the naira by 7.6% against the **United States** dollar as authorities migrate toward a single exchange-rate system for the local currency;

24 May 2021 **Abuja (Nigeria)** *Punch*. Hundreds of protesters partially block highway into capital **Abuja** after residents reported a spate of kidnappings in the area;

23 May 2021 **Abuja (Nigeria)** *Punch*. National statistics office says **Nigeria**'s economy grew 0.51% in Q1 2021 from a year earlier;

20 May 2021 **Abuja (Nigeria)** *Africanews*. Two intelligence sources say **Boko Haram** leader **Abubakar Shekau** has been seriously wounded after trying to kill himself to avoid capture during clashes with rival **Islamic State**-allied jihadists;

18 May 2021 **Abuja (Nigeria)** *Punch*. Police launch **Operation Restore Peace** in south-east **Nigeria** to address crimes such as banditry, kidnapping and armed robbery it blames on banned separatist group, the **Indigenous People of Biafra**;

18 May 2021 **Abuja (Nigeria)** *Reuters*. President **Muhammadu Buhari** petitions parliament to approve revised external borrowing of \$6.18 billion in 2021 to bridge Nigeria's budget deficit;

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