

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING CONSULTATIVE FORUM FOR BERAP

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTATIVE FORUM FOR BERAP, HELD AT THE ANSIPPA CONFERENCE HALL.

Date: 15<sup>th</sup> December 2023

Time: 9AM

#### **THEME: DEVELOPMENT OF THE 2024 STATE BERAP FOR SABER PROGRAM.**

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Commissioners for Industry, Budget and Planning, Lands, Information; MD AIRS, MD Physical Planning Board, MD Anambra Small Business Agency (ASBA) Civil Society Groups, Chamber of Commerce, MAN, NBA, SABER Reform Leaders of participating MDAs and others.

Meeting kicked off by 11am with opening remarks by MRS CHIAMAKA NNAKE, COMMISSIONER of B&P. She officially convened the meeting as Reform Champion of Anambra State, in the absence of MARK OKOYE; MD ANSIPPA who is the chairman of the SABER council. She highlighted the meeting was convened to present the proposed activities of Anambra State, as regards Ease of Doing Business Reforms, and to get the input of the private sector towards the document.

After an extensive introduction of all participants present, a formal presentation of BERAP activities was made to the meeting by the Reform Champion, Mrs. Chiamaka Nnake.

She also made a case for more active participation by members of the State SABER Council. She explained that the state through its concerted efforts was aiming to move from 7<sup>th</sup> position where it is currently to 1<sup>st</sup> position. All the eligibility criteria for 2023 have been met, however the eligibility indices for 2024 is the essence of today's meeting so that the state BERAP plan for 2024 will be submitted before 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2023. The intent of the program is not necessarily accessing the financial benefit but to ensure that the business reforms have a measurable impact in Anambra State.

The presentation ended by 11:50am

#### **COMMENTS FROM ATTENDEES**

**MRS IJEOMA EJEASIA (MAN REPRESENTATIVE)** requested for a review of the slide on "Harmonized Tax and Transparency of Fees". She said AIRS and its activities has a crucial role to whether the state will attract or keep investors.

She also observed that the ministry of industry was not included as responsible related fees MDA for review of tax trade she insists that AIRS must address the haulage fees and its method of collection of the fees. She also asked if rural development is part of the Ministry of Lands or Agriculture. She also advised that the Ministry of industry should be an integral part of the DLI for Harmonized Taxes and Transparency of Fees, as an interface between the Government agency and the Manufacturers.

**Mr. Commissioner for Industry; Mr. Christian Udechukwu** was in agreement with Mrs. iJEOMA that Ministry of Industry should be a part of responsible MDAs for the DLI and stated explicitly that AIRS has no authority to seize any vehicle for non-compliance and that Mr. Governor; Prof Charles Soludo had made specific statements to that effect at different FORUM, that includes an ANSEC directive that officials

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of AIRS has no right to also seal industry premises. He said that there is Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) set up to address such violations. He also insists that as agreed in the ANSEC meeting, that Ministry of Industry must be involved in all tax review, and that the private sector must be consulted and carried along. He also insisted that industries do not/should not make payments to third parties. He also said the Ministry of Industry in their GRM proposed a 21 days resolution window instead of 60 days proposed by ANSEC.

**Mrs. Nnake** also addressed the issue of taxation as raised by the MAN representative.

**Mr. Greg Ezeilo, MD of AIRS** addressed the issue of taxes and said they had already begun reforms and reviews. He confirmed that the agency will phase out all third party agents by next year and would embrace technology fully. He also informed the meeting that as the yuletide season approaches, the agents on the road have become more mischievous and aggressive, and that he has been tackling the highhandedness, by making refunds and arresting illegal collectors.

**Barr Chike Maduekwe, the MD of Physical Planning** also confirmed that the agency has consolidated all its fees and tagged it Planning Fees, rather than the old method of making split payments, using technology they have been able to reduce downtime for receiving plan approval from 90 days to 30 days. He confirmed that licensing of telecoms masts and Right of Way is under the agency, and assured the meeting that two broadband partners have been engaged and internet broadband will improve drastically in a few months.

**MR Egemba Chukwudi, President Awka Chamber of Commerce** talked about the DLI on infrastructure. He said he believed in planning, and talked about Anambra having a designated Trade Fair ground. He said even though such ventures are private sector driven, that government is also involved and should take the lead. He said a lot of economics goes into Trade Fair and that Anambra private sector are key participants and drivers of Trade Fair in other states, and therefore should be deliberate about developing a Trade Fair ground.

In response, **Commissioner for Budget and Planning, Chiamaka Nnake** said the Trade Fair was initially planned to be integrated in the Export Emporium project. Commissioner for Industry in response disagreed with integrating the trade fair complex into emporium saying that it will create some sort of redundancy.

A representative of **CSO, UGOCHI** made an observation that sensitization campaign should be included in the key activities of DLIs. She also advised that the harmonization of taxes should also be articulated at the Local Govt level. She suggested to Dr. Greg Ezeilo that an Executive Order or law on UHBET should be drafted and institutionalized to regulate the activities of UHBET. She also suggested that the structured markets, traders and communities be involved in the activities.

**Mr. CHRIS** of the (CSO) ANAMBRA STATE chairman, said they had been involved in SABER from the national level, saying that SABER is meant to promote limited governance, government doing less and private sector more. He said SABER framework is supposed to pass through legislation therefore House of Assembly should be involved in the process and that appropriation of funds is involved and are tied to projects. He also asked about the PPP framework, as it should be part of the program. It was noted that a member of the House of Assembly should be a member of SABER Council, as well as the chairman of ALGON (Local Govt chairmen).

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Also that the Ministry of Information should have a representative in all the MDAs running SABER, and a budget attached to it.

**The chairman of NBA Awka**, contributed on the issue of small claim court. He insists that very few lawyers are aware of the existence of small claims courts in the state. He again emphasizes on the need for sensitization, and if possible incorporating the NBA branch chairmen

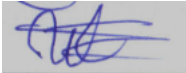
THE private sector asked for a stakeholder Engagement framework, which was acknowledged.

Barr Chike Maduekwe moved for adjournment, and was seconded by Greg Ezeilo.

A motion for the adoption of the BERAP plan 2024 was moved by Ijeoma Egeise and seconded by Mr. Chris.

The meeting came to a close at 3pm with a closing prayer by Mr. Chris Azor.

  
**Chuka Okeke**  
*Reform Leader Ministry of industry*

  
**Ugochi Ehiahunike**  
*CSO*

  
**Chiamaka Nnake**  
*Commissioner Ministry of Budget and Planning*