

PRESS RELEASE

UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY PARTICIPATION: CSO, SOAI DESCRIBE PRESIDENT'S DIRECTIVE AS A BOOST FOR REDUCTION IN COST OF GOVERNANCE; ASK FG TO OPT FOR VIRTUAL PARTICIPATION OPTION GIVEN THE CURRENT ECONOMIC REALITY.

In what seem to be a significant move towards promoting cost-efficiency and adapting to the current economic challenges, President Tinubu has issued a directive to re-size the Nigerian Government's delegation attending the upcoming United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) slated for 19-26 September, 2023 in New York. Going by this, we ask the federal government to opt for **virtual participation** as more viable option given the humongous financial implication involved especially as Nigerians are not privy to the so-called protocol list.

While acknowledging the importance of physical presence at international gatherings such as this, SOAI urge the Federal Government under president Bola Ahmed Tinubu to consider and explore virtual participation options this period since it does not in any way reduce whatever gains Nigeria intend to benefit coupled with the fact that the nation has a permanent UN representative over there. This clamor for alternative approach not only aligns with the prevailing economic situation but also underscores the administration's total commitment and adaptability to reducing cost of governance in practical terms.

The virtual participation mode is in tune with international best practice and culture around the world even for developed stable economy nations. If anything, one gain from covid19 pandemic experience is the hosting and participation of meetings virtually with total shutdown on physical convergence. Also, the just concluded BRICS summit had president Vladimir Putin of Russia participated virtually without jeopardizing the country's chances in any way.

We understand this is Mr. president's first international outing for UN General Assembly, and may yield to consideration for physical attendance despite glaring necessity to shelve the plan,

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Nigerians then demand to know details of the size of the protocol list in the spirit of transparency, accountability and value for money. In the light of the foregoing, we make the following request:

- Release the protocol list including exact number of aides and Exter code for Nigeria's UN General Assembly delegation reflecting the prudence and sacrifice being made by well-meaning Nigerians across the nation at present.
- Present to Nigerians what the country stands to gain and benefits from attending the UN General Assembly via physical participation as against virtual.
- Furnish the citizens with detailed cost implications for the intending UN general assembly summit selected delegation.

While it is the view of many citizens that Nigeria maintains active participation on the global stage, the government must also showcase dedication to prudent financial management, especially during these challenging times by opting for a more streamlined representation at the UNGA if considering physical attendance.

It is therefore expedient that the need to optimize resources and allocate funds for developmental use must resonate in sync as a testament to the country's commitment to responsible governance and efficient resource utilization. Hence, the current administration must demonstrate its readiness to adapt and make informed choices that align with the current global economic landscape if we must come out of this quagmire.

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... pruning the cost of governance in Nigeria

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