

Ambassadorial Forum: Diplomatic and Economic Relations between Italy and Nigeria

The Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA) hosted the Consul General of Italy, Lagos, HE Ugo B'oni, on Thursday, February 27, 2025, as part of its Ambassadorial Forum. The event centered on the topic "Diplomatic and Economic Relations between Italy and Nigeria," providing a platform for the Italian mission to share insights on bilateral ties with Nigeria.

In his opening remarks, the Director General of the NIIA, Prof. Eghosa Osaghae, highlighted the longstanding relationship between Nigeria and Italy, which has endured since Nigeria's early years of independence. He emphasized the shared interests between both countries, particularly in the maritime sector, arts, culture, architectural design, and other areas of mutual benefit. Prof. Osaghae also underscored the importance of strengthening these ties to foster further collaboration and economic growth. The event was chaired by Dr. Cyprian



Heen, former High Commissioner of Nigeria to the United Kingdom. In his address, Dr. Heen stressed the relevance of forums like these in advancing Nigeria's foreign policy objectives. He remarked that as Nigeria undergoes economic reforms and seeks to diversify its economy, partnerships with nations like Italy play a crucial role in driving growth, prosperity, and broader

continental progress.

HE Ugo B'oni, who began his diplomatic career in 2003 and assumed the position of Consul General of Italy in Lagos on August 23, 2022, provided key insights into the current state and future prospects of Nigeria-Italy relations. He noted that there are significant complementarities between the two countries, especially in industrial development. According to him, "One of Nigeria's top priorities is to expand its industrial production base, and Italy, as one of the largest producers of industrial machinery, is well-positioned to partner with Nigeria in achieving this goal."

Addressing ongoing initiatives, Consul General B'oni highlighted the Mattei Plan for Africa, a comprehensive strategy introduced by the Italian government to strengthen bilateral relations with African states. He emphasized that Nigeria, being a major African economy, is a key focus of this plan. The Mattei Plan aims to foster equal partnerships and deepen cooperation in areas such as agriculture, agro-food processing, and information technology.

He further elaborated on the trade dynamics between the two nations, stating that the current trade volume stands at approximately \$3 billion annually, evenly shared between both countries. B'oni stressed the need for Nigeria to diversify its exports to Italy, as there is substantial potential for growth in various sectors. He also mentioned that in 2024, the Italian government opened an Italian Trade Agency office in Lagos to promote bilateral trade and facilitate participation in trade fairs for Nigerian entrepreneurs.



The forum concluded by identifying promising areas for future collaboration, including the fintech sector and human capital development, where Nigeria is emerging as a key player. The discussions reaffirmed that Nigeria-Italy diplomatic relations are rooted in shared democratic values and economic partnerships. Moving forward, these ties are expected to yield tangible benefits and foster a stronger bilateral relationship that capitalizes on the comparative advantages of both nations.

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