

Survey Coordination Act: OSGoF Collaborates with Military, Para-Military Agencies for Implementation, Enforcement



Warns against illegal surveying, mapping activities

Security, Economy and Anti-Corruption (SEA) are the major areas of focus of the President Muhammadu Buhari Administration. The SEA is a schema with multifaceted areas of attention aimed at engendering appropriate actions against Nigeria's security, environmental and socio-economic challenges. Although, the federal government is putting much towards the uplift of our national enterprises to achieve sustainable development of the various sectors of the economy so as to guarantee good living conditions for the people, synergy among various services and establishments are substantially required for success.

The concerted efforts of Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), other establishments and sectors of the economy are required for the SEA agenda to be achieved considering the seriousness the federal government attached to the subject-matters and issues of the agenda.

On its part, the Office of the Surveyor General of the Federation (OSGoF), an extra-ministerial office charged with the responsibility of providing requisite geospatial inputs that will inform good decision, effective planning and implementation of the various projects and programmes designed for attainment of ideals of the agenda.

Hence the provisions of the Survey Coordination Act of 1962 are central to OSGoF's mandates which remain essential to the achievement of SEA, its 2021 Collaboration Meeting with the Nigerian Armed Forces and Para-Military Agencies held recently in Abuja concentrated on the review of implementation of

the act. Interestingly, the two distinguished members of the Federal Executive Council (FEC), Abubakar Malami, Attorney General and Minister of Justice and Babatunde Raji Fashola, Minister of Works and Housing understood the import of the conference because of their legal background. Malami and Fashola who served at the occasion as the Special Guest of Honour and Chief Host as supervising Minister of OSGoF were represented by Yusuf Abdullahi Abdulkadir, Deputy Director for Public Prosecution of the Federation and Surv. Akerele Oluwatoyin Omolara, Director Cadastral respectively and their thoughts conveyed.

Malami commended OSGoF for the collaboration meeting which according to him highlighted the critical role of seamless synergy between various arms of the federal government, and especially security agencies in the protection of our sovereign territory and space. He pointed out that the geography of any nation was the first prime target of enemies in sphere espionage and military strategy. "When your enemies know your geography than you, they have the advantage and leverage over you in the event of aggression", he said.

Since our national security is also threatened from within, the minister maintained that the collaboration of OSGoF with the military and all other security agencies to project and coordinate cyber-smart survey interface which would at a glance provide necessary advantage for our security and defence agencies to locate and displace the criminals through technological efficiency has become indispensable.

He says, "We are aware that to survive and thrive in this new world of technology, we cannot fail to consider the need to utilize emerging technologies such as drones and robotics, although within the ambits of extant law. When the law appears to be behind, it is our collective responsibility to begin to initiate legislation, and approach the National Assembly with same for their consideration." He then urged the stakeholders to uphold the provisions of the Survey Coordination Act to bring the bear efforts of the federal government to continue to secure lives and property of the citizenry and our territorial integrity.

Fashola, in his keynote address noted that there was the need for strict application of the provisions and enforcement of the act to ensure best practices in the surveying and geo-informatics profession in the country. He said the enforcement would impact positively on all sectors towards a thriving and sustainable economy which would eventually guarantee improved governance, security and general prosperity.

According to Fashola, "Surveying and mapping with adequate security is the bedrock of any meaningful development. To achieve this development, there must be strict adherence to the rules and regulations that govern the surveying and mapping activities in the country. It is evident that surveying and mapping practice in Nigeria and the world in general is rapidly changing as the skill required in the past is giving way to new technological innovations. It will also interest you to know that new opportunities for the provision of added value services are beginning to mount pressure on survey rules and regulations which makes the implementation of the Survey Coordination Act not only important but also necessary".

He expressed the fact that the federal government attached much seriousness to the vital issues of surveying and mapping, and he thus urged for robust discussions that would ensure effective implementation and enforcement of the Survey Coordination Act.

The Surveyor General of the Federation (SGoF), Surv. Abuduganiyu Adeyemi Adebomehin in his address of welcome said OSGoF's unique activities which remain fundamental in every aspect of the country encouraged collaboration with various sectors and stakeholders of the economy on diverse platforms for several purposes for the provision of geospatial data and services germane to decision-making, planning and implementation of public policies, projects and programmes of action.

In his explanation, the Survey Coordination Act of 1962 which empowered OSGoF was crucial to matters of surveying and mapping with far-reaching effects on governance, national security, socioeconomic activities and sustainable development. He said collaboration with the Military and Para-Military Agencies was absolutely necessary to achieve effective implementation and enforcement of the act.

OSGoF, he said has strong belief that the effective implementation and enforcement of the act would garner orderly ways of engagement and a healthy system for the country, observing that groups and individuals cut-corners to surcharge the federal government and members of the public for personal gains to the detriment of the security and economy of the country. While calling for urgent and decisive actions against the illegal surveying and mapping activities undermining national security and our socioeconomic development efforts, he said the collaboration meeting was part of the efforts being made to tackle the ugly trend headlong.

Surv. Adebomehin noted that ignorance was not an excuse before the law however pledged to ensure robust advocacy and publicity to appropriately sensitize the public on the offences against the provisions of the act.

Dr. Joseph Ochogwu, Head of Research and Policy Analysis of the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR), an agency under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was the Guest Speaker. He delivered the paper, "Reforming and Implementing the Survey Coordination Act: Issues, Challenges and the Need for Collaboration" setting the tone for the various discussions and brainstorming that ensued.

Dr. Ochogwu stated that act provided for the monitoring of all surveying and geo-information activities, and that the benefits of the collaboration meeting was to facilitate effective monitoring and compliance with the provisions of the act so as to build and thriving sustainable economy; improve governance and security for all; fight corruption and illegal survey works, foster good business growth, expansion, entrepreneurship and industrialization, and to also check silo mentality among stakeholders.

He said his research revealed that surveying and mapping also remain "an essential peace and security tool for conflict prevention, management and resolution in the society as well as critical for development and governance".

Signed:

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