

## The Future of Migration Governance in Nigeria

Climate, Security, Economy and Regional Cooperation



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- INEC Records Over 69,000 Online Voter Pre-Registrations in First Seven Hours
- NAPTIP Intercepts 25 Women from Saudi-Bound Trafficking Ring
- FG, UBEC and UNICEF Launch Enrolment Drive to Tackle Out-of-School Crisis
- FG to Disburse Cash to 2.2 Million Poor Households

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**Cover Image:** Nigerian returnees arriving at Lagos Airport  
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# Executive Summary

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Nigeria is a country of origin, transit, and destination. It faces complex migration pressures: from environmental degradation, including the near collapse of Lake Chad, to conflicts that displace millions, and to high poverty and youth unemployment driving irregular labour migration. These forces are deeply intertwined, and they demand holistic policy responses.

Despite a comprehensive 2015 National Migration Policy, institutional fragmentation, weak protections, and incomplete data hinder effective implementation. Nigeria's diaspora remits over \$20 billion annually, offering untapped economic potential that, if harnessed, could fuel sustainable development.

Addressing these challenges requires making migration governance a national priority. This involves establishing a statutory Inter-Ministerial Coordination Council with clear mandates, a lead agency for data and crisis response, and strong accountability measures such as transparent performance metrics and independent audits. Strengthening regional cooperation through ECOWAS, enforcing mobility rights, and enhancing diaspora engagement are vital.

Policy reforms must integrate climate adaptation, peacebuilding, urban planning, and labour market strategies. Only through coordinated, transparent, and politically committed action can Nigeria transform migration from vulnerability into a strategic asset driving inclusive growth and regional stability.

## Introduction: Migration as Nigeria's Defining Challenge

Globally, over 117 million individuals were forcibly displaced in 2023. This underscores migration as a defining challenge of the 21st century. Nigeria stands at a critical nexus, simultaneously serving as a country of origin, transit, and destination for migratory flows.

The nation's migration landscape is shaped by complex, interrelated forces. These include climate shocks such as desertification and flooding; persistent insecurity fueled by insurgencies and communal violence; and severe economic constraints marked by high poverty and youth unemployment. From farmers displaced by environmental degradation in the North to young Nigerians embarking on hazardous journeys abroad, these drivers are deeply intertwined and systemic.

While migration poses urgent humanitarian and governance challenges, it also presents economic opportunities. Remittances from Nigeria's diaspora inject billions into the domestic economy—often exceeding official development assistance and foreign direct investment combined. Effective governance that balances immediate humanitarian needs with long-term strategic planning is essential. This governance must be anchored in robust data systems, climate adaptation measures, and strengthened regional cooperation.

Ultimately, institutional accountability and political commitment will determine whether migration becomes a destabilising force or a strategic asset underpinning national development.

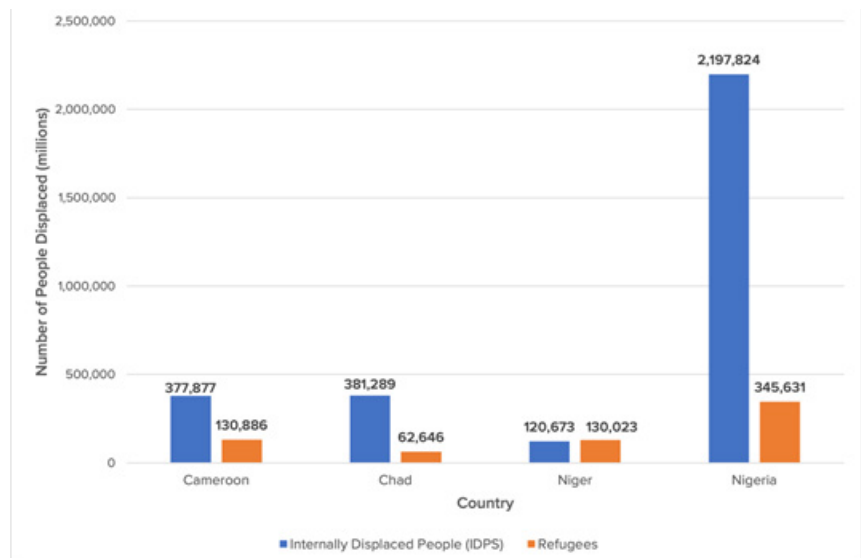
## The Drivers of Migration in Nigeria

### Climate Change and Environmental Degradation

Lake Chad's surface area has shrunk by nearly 90% over recent decades, a decline verified through independent satellite data. This devastation has ruined the livelihoods of millions, forcing mass displacement and intensifying competition over scarce resources. Climate change accelerates this process. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) projects that forced displacement in Nigeria could reach 9.4 million by 2050 without substantial investment in resilience and adaptation.

These environmental shifts interact with political economy dynamics—such as resource control disputes and weak governance—that demand holistic solutions.

**Figure 1: Displacement in the Lake Chad Basin Crisis**



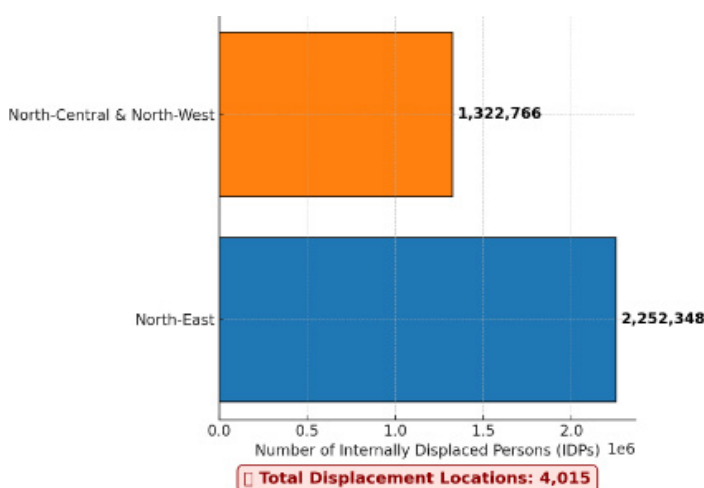
Source: Refugee International 2023.

### Conflict and Insecurity

Protracted violence caused by Boko Haram/ISWAP insurgency, armed banditry, farmer-herder clashes, and secessionist unrest has displaced over 6.1 million Nigerians internally. As of 2024, Nigeria hosts approximately 3.3 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), predominantly women and children, who face heightened risks of exploitation.

Breaking this cycle demands integrated peacebuilding, community-based mediation, and legal reforms that uphold mobility rights and protect vulnerable populations.

**Figure 2: 2024 Displacement in Northern Nigeria**



*Source: IOM Report 2024*

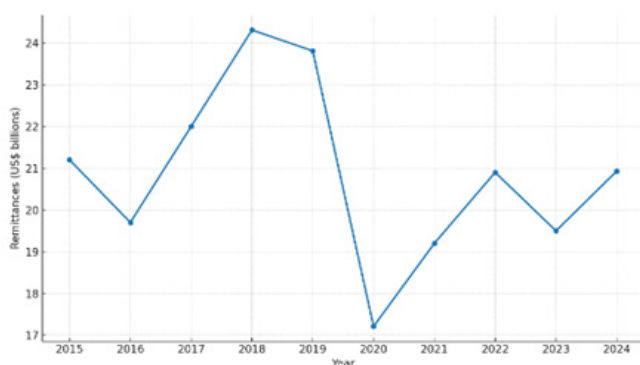
Over 2.25 million people remain internally displaced in the North-East, with an additional 1.32 million spread across 16 states in the North-Central and North-West. In total, 4,015 displacement locations were recorded, underscoring the scale of the humanitarian crisis.

### Economic Pressures and Labour Migration

High poverty levels (63%) and youth unemployment rates exceeding 40% compel millions to migrate voluntarily, often through irregular and perilous channels. In 2022–2023 alone, over 3.6 million Nigerians emigrated.

Despite substantial diaspora remittances, brain drain remains a significant concern, undermining Nigeria's economic potential. A comprehensive labour migration framework, aligned with international labour standards, alongside investment in education and job creation, is crucial to redirect migration towards sustainable development.

**Figure 3: Nigeria's Diaspora Remittances, 2015–2024**



*Source: World Bank reports*

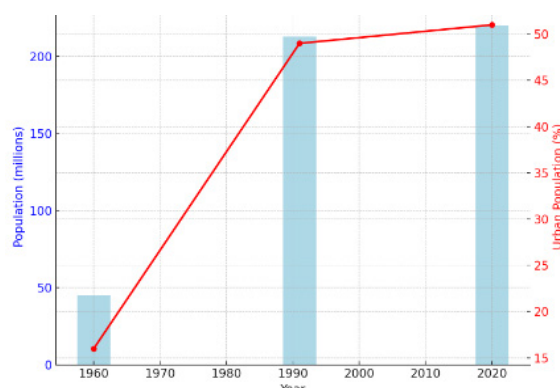
Nigeria's diaspora remittances remained a critical source of foreign exchange between 2015 and 2024, ranging from \$17bn to \$24bn. Inflows peaked in 2018–2019 before declining sharply in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A gradual recovery has since been recorded, with remittances reaching \$20.93bn in 2024. The trend highlights the resilience of diaspora contributions while underscoring the need for policies that channel remittance inflows into sustainable national development.

### Urban Migration and Internal Displacement

Rapid urbanisation and burgeoning internal displacement exert intense pressure on Nigerian cities. Urban centres absorb displaced populations fleeing conflict and environmental crises, frequently into informal settlements lacking adequate infrastructure, healthcare, education, and security services.

This influx risks social tension and exclusion if not managed with targeted urban planning and service delivery reforms. Strengthened coordination among federal, state, and local authorities, coupled with enhanced migration data systems, will support responsive governance and preparedness.

**Figure 4: Urban Migration in Nigeria: Population Growth and Rising Urbanisation, 1960–2020**



*Source: IOM Nigeria*

This chart illustrates Nigeria's dramatic demographic shifts over six decades. The blue bars show total population growth—from 44.9 million in 1960 to over 220 million in 2020—while the red line traces the proportion of urban dwellers, rising from 16% to beyond 50%. The trend reflects the accelerating pull of cities as centres of opportunity, even as it underscores mounting pressures on housing, infrastructure, and social services.

## Structural Governance Challenges to National Migration Policy

Nigeria's 2015 [National Migration Policy](#) offers a comprehensive vision encompassing border management, diaspora engagement, and labour migration, among others. Yet three systemic weaknesses hinder progress:

- **Fragmented Institutional Landscape:** Agencies such as the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI), and the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) operate in silos. This fragmentation stems from deeper political-economy factors. These include inter-agency competition, limited incentives for cooperation, and resource constraints. Together, they ultimately undermine cohesive service delivery.
- **Weak Protection Frameworks:** Legal protections for asylum seekers, returnees, and trafficking victims remain inconsistent and underfunded. Reintegration supports are inadequate. Irregular migrants often face stigma and exclusion upon return, which exacerbates their vulnerabilities.
- **Data Deficits:** reliable migration data remain elusive. Despite partnerships with IOM and other bodies, data collection is fragmented and incomplete. This is especially true for internal displacement, cross-border flows, and diaspora contributions. These gaps limit evidence-based policy formulation.

Table 1: Risks and Mitigation in Migration Policy Implementation

| Risks                                                                                                                                       | Mitigation Strategies                                                                             |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Political Will and Institutional Resistance:</b> Entrenched interests and shifting political priorities could stall coordination reforms | Secure high-level political commitment through cross-party advocacy and public accountability.    |
| <b>Funding Constraints:</b> Limited budgets and competing priorities may delay or dilute implementation                                     | Mobilise diversified funding, including international donors and diaspora investments             |
| <b>Corruption and Accountability Deficits:</b> Border and agency corruption threaten enforcement and protections                            | Institutionalise transparent performance indicators linked to budgets and leadership evaluations. |
| <b>Security Concerns:</b> Instability disrupts programming and regional cooperation.                                                        | Embed conflict-sensitive approaches to ensure resilience amid insecurity.                         |

## Institutional Reform and Governance Coordination: Building a Cohesive Migration Architecture

To overcome governance fragmentation, migration must be elevated to a national strategic priority with formal accountability and coordination mechanisms.

Key reform options include:

- **Establishment of an inter-ministerial migration coordination council** comprising representatives from the Ministries of Interior, Labour, Foreign Affairs, Environment, Women's Affairs, and agencies such as NCFRMI, NIS, and NAPTIP. This council should be endowed with statutory authority to harmonise policies, allocate resources, and oversee implementation. It must monitor policy outcomes, review agency performance, and publish annual public reports.
- **Designation of a lead agency** with a clear legal mandate and adequate funding to maintain centralised migration data systems, coordinate crisis responses, and ensure policy coherence.
- **Introduction of transparent performance management** with indicators linked to budget allocations and leadership evaluations to foster accountability.
- **Initiating a regular independent audits and stakeholder consultations** to prevent duplication, enhance compliance, and build public trust.
- **Development of a real-time migration data dashboard** to enable transparency and facilitate evidence-based decision-making.
- **Codification in law** of these governance structures to protect them against political interference and ensure longevity.

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## Regional and International Engagement: Leveraging Partnerships with Accountability

### ECOWAS Mobility Framework

The 1979 [ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol](#) grants visa-free entry, residence, and establishment rights across member states. This facilitates labour mobility and cross-border trade. However, enforcement gaps and documentation inconsistencies undermine its effectiveness.

Nigeria's regional leadership requires strengthened enforcement. This includes harmonised documentation, capacity building for border officials, and joint monitoring teams with transparent reporting. Bilateral oversight committees should regularly assess enforcement. These committees could follow best practices from the [East African Community](#) to prevent abuses and uphold mobility rights.

### Diaspora Engagement

Nigeria's diaspora numbers over 15 million individuals worldwide. It channels [remittances exceeding \\$20 billion annually](#)—surpassing combined foreign direct investment and official development assistance. The diaspora represents a critical economic and skills reservoir.

NiDCOM, as the central coordinating body, must implement structured performance tracking and transparent governance of diaspora incentives. Fiscal tools—including tax waivers and streamlined land acquisition—should be paired with accountability frameworks to ensure measurable impacts. Initiatives like the Diaspora Investment Summit offer valuable platforms to connect Nigerians abroad with domestic opportunities.

### International Partnerships

The International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and European Union (EU) provide vital technical support and reintegration programmes. However, alignment with Nigeria's national priorities is essential to avoid donor-driven fragmentation.

Addressing the root causes of migration—youth unemployment, insecurity, climate change, and governance deficits—requires sustained collaboration. This must extend beyond immediate humanitarian responses.

## Policy Recommendations

### Immediate (0–2 years)

1. Establish an interoperable Migration Data System, led by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), and the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI). This is a critical foundation for enabling evidence-based policymaking. (*High priority*)
2. Fund climate adaptation initiatives in displacement hotspots, with the Federal Ministry of Environment (FMEnv), ECOWAS, and donor agencies taking the lead. Priority should be given to Lake Chad and coastal zones to address root environmental drivers. (*High priority*)
3. Expand the operations of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAP-TIP) in collaboration with the Police. This requires increased budgetary support and stronger border security to protect vulnerable populations. (*Medium priority*)

### Medium-term (3–5 years)

4. Enforce the ECOWAS Mobility Protocol with harmonised documentation, led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), and ECOWAS. This includes training border officials, implementing joint patrols, and ensuring protection of mobility rights. (*High priority*)
5. Negotiate bilateral labour migration agreements, coordinated by the MFA and the Ministry of Labour and Employment (ML&E). These agreements should align with International Labour Organisation (ILO) standards to promote safe, circular migration and skills transfer. (*Medium priority*)
6. Offer incentives for diaspora investment and reintegration of skilled returnees, led by the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NiDCOM) and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN). Support should include grants, tax relief, and land access, all implemented with accountability measures to maximise impact. (*Medium priority*)

### Structural (5+ years)

7. Integrate climate migration into national development frameworks under the leadership of the National Planning Commission and the FMEnv. This will link migration policy with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the African Union's Agenda 2063 to ensure systemic coherence. *(Long-term priority)*

8. Institutionalise youth employment in key sectors such as agriculture, ICT, and manufacturing, with the Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development (FMYSO) and the Bank of Industry (BOI) as lead actors. This seeks to address the economic drivers of irregular migration by creating sustainable job markets. *(Long-term priority)*

## Conclusion: Migration as a Governance Test and Strategic National Asset

Nigeria's migration challenge is a systemic governance test, not a transient crisis. The intertwined forces of climate change, insecurity, and economic desperation will intensify unless met with coordinated, forward-looking action. This action must be underpinned by transparency, political will, and institutional accountability.

If Nigeria prioritises climate resilience, secures regional mobility rights, and creates economic opportunities at home, migration can shift from vulnerability to strength. It can become a strategic national and regional asset. The decisions taken today will echo for decades, shaping both development and stability.

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## ACRONYMS

|                 |                                                                             |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>BOI</b>      | Bank of Industry                                                            |
| <b>ECOWAS</b>   | Economic Community of West African States                                   |
| <b>FMEnv</b>    | Federal Ministry of Environment                                             |
| <b>FMYSO</b>    | Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development                            |
| <b>IOM</b>      | International Organization for Migration                                    |
| <b>MFA</b>      | Ministry of Foreign Affairs                                                 |
| <b>ML&amp;E</b> | Ministry of Labour and Employment                                           |
| <b>NAPTIP</b>   | National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons               |
| <b>NBS</b>      | National Bureau of Statistics                                               |
| <b>NCFRMI</b>   | National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons |
| <b>NiDCOM</b>   | Nigerians in Diaspora Commission                                            |
| <b>NIS</b>      | Nigeria Immigration Service                                                 |
| <b>SMEDAN</b>   | Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria                  |



## INEC Records Over 69,000 Online Voter Pre-Registrations in First Seven Hours

Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) announced that 69,376 citizens pre-registered online within the first seven hours of the Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) portal going live on Monday, 18 August 2025.

The portal, which became operational at 8:30 am, had attracted this number of pre-registrants by 3:30 pm the same day.

A demographic breakdown showed a near-even gender split, with 48.7 per cent male (33,803 individuals) and 51.3 per cent female (35,573). Young Nigerians aged 18–34 accounted for the majority, representing 69.2 per cent (48,033 people).

INEC explained that the online portal will remain accessible 24 hours a day, ahead of the commencement of in-person registration on Monday, 25 August 2025, at its 811 state and local government offices nationwide. Physical registration will be conducted on weekdays from 9 am to 3 pm.

<https://www.thisdaylive.com/2025/08/19/inec-69376-nigerians-pre-registered-online-in-seven-hours-as-cvr-hits-it-off/>

## FG to Disburse Cash to 2.2 Million Poor Households

The Federal Government will disburse cash transfers to 2.2 million underprivileged households by the end of August 2025, the Minister of State for Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Reduction, Tanko

Sununu, announced on August 18 during Channels Television's Sunrise Daily.

According to Sununu, beneficiaries will be identified through the National Social Safety-Net Coordinating Office (NASSCO) using the national social register, with priority given to the poorest households.

He added that under the broader Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programme, the government has so far disbursed N419 billion to five million Nigerians—71 per cent of them in the North and 21 per cent in the South.

<https://www.channelstv.com/2025/08/18/video-2-2million-poor-households-to-receive-fgs-cash-transfer-says-minister/>

## NAPTIP Intercepts 25 Women from Saudi-Bound Trafficking Ring

The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) has rescued 25 women, aged between 17 and 43, from a suspected trafficking syndicate in Abuja. The operation took place on August 18, 2025.

The women were intercepted outside a popular hotel in the Wuse II district, where they had gathered while awaiting their trafficker.

According to NAPTIP spokesperson Vincent Adekoye, the victims had been recruited from rural communities in Kano, Jigawa and Katsina under the false promise of lucrative domestic jobs in Saudi Arabia. None of them had been issued passports or visas.

Some of the women, who were visiting the capital for the first time, said they had been left stranded and expressed deep anxiety about their predicament.

<https://www.channelstv.com/2025/08/18/naptip-rescues-25-saudi-bound-women-from-trafficking-ring/>



## FG, UBEC and UNICEF Launch Enrolment Drive to Tackle Out-of-School Crisis

The Federal Government, in partnership with the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) and UNICEF, launched a major school enrolment campaign aimed at reducing the growing number of out-of-school children across Nigeria.

The initiative was formally flagged off on August 19, 2025, in Kano, where UBEC's Executive Secretary, Aisha Garba—represented by Deputy Executive Secretary (Technical), Razaq Akinyemi—announced the start of a Northern zone enrolment drive developed in collaboration with UNICEF.

The drive builds on the recently unveiled Framework of Action on Out-of-School Children, which sets out innovative enrolment models, knowledge-sharing on best practices, and community-led campaigns aligned with national education objectives.

In a strong directive, Kano State Governor Abba Yusuf gave headteachers 30 days to enrol all school-age children, citing the urgency of the situation. Kano alone accounts for nearly 989,000 of Nigeria's estimated 10.2 million out-of-school children.

<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2025/08/were-leaving-no-stone-untuned-to-tackle-out-of-school-children-fg/>

## REGIONAL UPDATES



### Macron Admits France's Role in Colonial-Era Violence in Cameroon

French President Emmanuel Macron has acknowledged France's responsibility for "repressive violence" during Cameroon's struggle for independence.

In a letter to Cameroonian President Paul Biya, released by the Élysée on Tuesday, Macron admitted that France waged a "war" against independence movements marked by mass displacement, internment camps and the use of militias.

The admission follows a French government-commissioned report published in January, which detailed widespread atrocities in the 1950s and beyond.

"It is incumbent on me today to accept France's role and responsibility in these events," Macron wrote.

<https://www.france24.com/en/france/20250812-macron-admits-france-s-repressive-violence-in-cameroon-during-decolonisation>



### Boko Haram Leader Killed by Army in Niger Operation

Niger's army has announced the killing of Boko Haram leader Bakura during a "surgical operation" last week on an island in the Lake Chad basin, in the Diffa region bordering Nigeria, Chad and Cameroon.

Bakura commanded a splinter faction loyal to former Boko Haram chief Abubakar Shekau, resisting alignment with the rival Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). He had relocated with his fighters to islands on the Niger side of the lake.

Boko Haram launched its insurgency in northeast Nigeria in 2009 in a bid to establish an Islamic caliphate. The conflict has since claimed around 40,000 lives and displaced more than two million people.

<https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20250821-niger-army-boko-haram-leader>

### Benin Signs Cross-Border Cooperation With Nigeria

Nigeria and the Republic of Benin have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen grassroots cooperation along their shared border. The agreement was finalised on August 18, 2025.

Anchored in the African Union Convention on Cross-Border Cooperation, ECOWAS initiatives, and the existing Nigeria-Benin Cross-Border Agreement, the MoU formalises collaboration between Nigerian local government chairmen, Beninese mayors, and traditional rulers from both countries.

The pact seeks to improve border community resilience against crime, revive socio-cultural ties disrupted by colonial boundaries and foster peaceful coexistence. It also aims to accelerate boundary delimitation and promote stability through grassroots participation.

<https://www.westernpost.ng/nigeria-benin-republic-sign-pact-to-drive-trade-development-in-border-areas/>

### Chad Jails Former Prime Minister Succes Masra for 20 Years

A court in N'Djamena on Saturday sentenced former prime minister and opposition leader Succes Masra to 20 years in prison for hate speech, xenophobia and inciting a massacre.

Masra, a prominent critic of President Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno, was found guilty of encouraging inter-communal violence in Mandakao on May 14 that left 42 people dead, most of them women and children. Prosecutors had sought a 25-year sentence.

His lawyer, Francis Kadjilembaye, condemned the verdict as politically motivated, saying Masra had been convicted "on the basis of assumptions and in the absence of evidence."

<https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20250809-chadian-court-jail-opposition-leader-to-20-years>



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