



## **MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ABUJA**

### **PRESS RELEASE**

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#### **NIGERIA REAFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO HUMAN RIGHTS, PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE, AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP DURING MEETING WITH FIRST STEP FORUM DELEGATION**

The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador. Dunoma Umar Ahmed, PhD, on behalf of the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Yusuf Maitama Tuggar, OON, received in audience Mr Marc Jost, Executive Director of the First Step Forum (FSF), alongside members of his delegation, on Tuesday 24 March 2026 at the Ministry's Headquarters, Abuja.

The Permanent Secretary conveyed the Honourable Minister's apologies for his inability to personally receive the delegation due to the exigencies of official engagements, while extending warm regards and appreciation for their visit.

In his remarks, Mr Marc Jost expressed gratitude for the audience granted to the delegation. He highlighted the role of the First Step Forum as a global network of parliamentarians, former leaders, diplomats, and civil society actors committed to promoting religious freedom, human rights, peace, and peaceful coexistence. He noted that the delegation's visit to Nigeria, at the invitation of the Christian Legislators Fellowship, provided an opportunity to engage with key stakeholders, including faith leaders, civil society organisations, and government representatives, with a view to fostering dialogue, mutual understanding, and partnership.

During the meeting, members of the delegation underscored the importance of strengthening cooperation between Nigeria and Europe, particularly in the areas of security, human rights, and economic development. They also expressed interest in gaining deeper insight into Nigeria's governance structure, foreign policy orientation, and efforts to enhance the environment for foreign investment, while reiterating their commitment to partnership based on mutual respect and shared values.

In his response, the Permanent Secretary reaffirmed Nigeria's status as a peaceful, multicultural, and multi-religious nation governed by the rule of law and constitutional principles. He acknowledged that, like many countries, Nigeria faces certain security and developmental challenges, but emphasized that the Government remains fully committed to addressing these challenges while ensuring the protection of lives, property, and fundamental human rights of all citizens and residents.

He further highlighted Nigeria's foreign policy framework anchored on the "4-Ds" doctrine—Democracy, Development, Demography, and Diaspora—which continues to guide the country's international engagements. The Permanent Secretary also buttressed Nigeria's leadership role within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) in promoting regional peace, security, and democratic governance.

On economic diplomacy, the Permanent Secretary reiterated Nigeria's commitment to attracting foreign direct investment, strengthening bilateral trade relations, and leveraging opportunities under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). He encouraged continued collaboration with international partners, including the First Step Forum, particularly in areas of legislative cooperation, capacity-building, and institutional strengthening.

The Permanent Secretary also proposed the exploration of a structured framework for cooperation between the First Step Forum and the Nigerian National Assembly, including the possibility of a Memorandum of Understanding to facilitate joint programmes, exchanges, and advocacy initiatives.

He therefore assured the delegation of Nigeria's commitment to ensuring a safe and conducive environment for both citizens and foreign nationals, while expressing optimism that the engagement would further strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

Mr. Marc Jost, on behalf of the delegation, expressed appreciation for the constructive engagement and reaffirmed the Forum's readiness to deepen collaboration with Nigeria. He also indicated the delegation's intention to undertake future visits to broaden engagement across different parts of the country.

**Signed:**

**Kimiebi Imomotimi Ebiefa, anipr  
Spokesperson  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Abuja**

**Wednesday 25th March 2026**