

1<sup>st</sup> Annual CEO Forum & Business Roundtable on  
Children's Rights & the Business Sector  
*Thursday May 30, 2013*

*Wheatbaker Hotel, Ikoyi, Lagos, NIGERIA*

**Keynote Address by His Excellency Babatunde Raji Fashola**  
Executive Governor of Lagos State

**Protocols observed**

Firstly I must commend the Children and Business Network Nigeria for organizing this forum which has brought together so many business CEOs and captains of industry from some of the top companies and brands in Nigeria, to support Children's Rights.

The United Nations adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1989, whilst the Organization of African Unity adopted the African Union Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (CRCW) in July 1990. Nigeria signed both instruments and ratified them in 1991 and 2000 respectively. In 2003, Nigeria domesticated the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child with the Child Rights Act (2003).

In 2007, Lagos State adopted the Child Rights Act 2003, and named it the Child Rights Law (2007). Lagos State even went a step further in conformity with one of the CRC's provisions that laws relating to children should be made accessible to them, by simplifying the Law and presenting it in several quick forms.

The law promotes the survival, development, protection and participation of children in human affairs and sees the children as human beings with their own rights. It protects every child less than 18 years of age in the area of social, economic and civil rights.

Under the Lagos State Law, children have the right to:

- Life, survival and balanced development;
- a name and registration at birth;
- dignity and respect;
- privacy,
- family life and parental care,

- protection and maintenance;
- free and compulsory primary education and encouragement of secondary and tertiary education;
- health and health services;
- leisure, recreation and cultural activities;
- freedom of association and peaceful assembly;
- freedom of religion with the necessary guidance of their parents; and freedom from discrimination.

Children are also protected from all manners of child abuse including:

- child marriage and betrothal;
- tattoos and skin marks;
- exploitative labour (except non-harmful labour within the family);
- sale, hire or use for the purpose of hawking,
- begging for alms or prostitution; and
- sexual abuse and exploitation.

The Lagos State Child Rights Law also outlines the responsibilities of children to their parents and vice-versa and the responsibility of government.

Children are to respect their parents and contribute positively to society. Parents and guardians, are on the other hand to provide care; maintenance; proper upbringing; education; guidance; and discipline for the child. The law also covers the law enforcement and justice system and penalties for offence.

The responsibility of the government, quoting from the simplified version of the Law, states that:

“the State Government has the duty to protect and provide good things for children in need in the State and also help their families to take good care of them as follows: provide a policy framework that will ensure the rights of the child; reduce infant and maternal mortality rates; provide medical and health care; provide adequate nutrition and safe drinking water, hygienic and sanitised environments; combat diseases and malnutrition; support and mobilise, through

local and community resources, and the development of primary healthcare for children...”

Though the Lagos Child Rights Law doesn't speak of the responsibility of the private sector or the business community it is clear that the implementation of various aspects of the child rights law will require a true partnership between the public sector, the private sector and the civil/social sector.

During my administration, the Lagos State government has received tremendous support from the business sector in the implementation of some aspects of the Child Rights Law, including education, health services, maternal health, leisure and cultural activities. We have heard reports and testimonies here today of the activities that Promasidor Nigeria, Addax Petroleum Development Nigeria (Limited); Nestle and Diamond Bank have been involved in to support Children's Rights. However, more needs to be done and more companies need to get involved so that the benefits of the law can be felt by the very persons it was designed to protect. No government on its own can provide all that is required by its citizens because there are and will always be competing demands for whatever funds are available, so we commend these companies for their vision and support.

This Forum here today, supported by Lagos State, and organized by the Children and Business Network Nigeria is an important wake -up call for businesses, to take stock of their responsibilities to support Children's Rights. It is in no-one's interests to do business in an environment where the potential workforce or potential consumers - CHILDREN - are threatened by factors as poverty, hunger, violence, abuse, lack of access to satisfactory health care and education. The Lagos State Ministry of Health has found that about 46,000 pupils in 74 schools suffered from ringworm and scabies. If your potential workforce and consumers have no future what is the future of your business?

We ask you to consider the areas you are supporting now and how that can be amplified; and if your company is not engaged in any projects to support the development and protection of children in this country, we ask that you start thinking of areas where you can render your support - be it projects and programmes aimed at re-orientating the youth and children towards positive values and entrepreneurship; or providing safe drinking water in the schools in

your host area; school feeding programs; talent generation programs in literacy and art; or even setting up a child abuse free hotline. The latter is something that the telecoms companies can do very easily. Or have a “sms” campaign that will educate the people on child abuse violations and the need to report them. The government cannot enforce the law if there are no reports of abuse. There must be a correlation between the report and the enforcement. In the absence of reports, nothing can be done.

So partner with us - partner with Lagos State and the Children and Business Network. Lagos State have in the past given awards of excellence in Corporate Social Responsibility. We will now look to reviving these awards and also include various categories for the recognition of companies who have actively supported the development and protection of children’s rights in Lagos State.

I will end my Address with a quote by Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary General from 1997 - 2006, who officially launched the Global Compact Initiative in 2006 and steer headed the advocacy of corporate social responsibility and the revolutionary role businesses can play in the development of their countries.

*“To look into some aspects of the future, we do not need projections by super computers. Much of the next millennium can be seen in how we care for our children today. Tomorrow’s world may be influenced by science and technology, but more than anything, it is already taking shape in the bodies and minds of our children”*

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*The Children and Business Network is now fully registered as a not for profit organization and operates under the name of the Foundation for Corporate Social Responsibility & Children’s Rights (“CSR Children”).*