

UK to send millions of pounds recovered from corrupt officials back to Nigeria

The UK and Nigerian governments have signed an agreement today (Tuesday 9 March) to send £4.2 million (2.2 billion Naira) of stolen funds recovered by UK agencies back to Nigeria, where it will be spent on key infrastructure and building works for the Nigerian people.

This is the first time that money recovered from criminals will be returned to Nigeria since an agreement was signed in 2016 to recover and return the proceeds of bribery or corruption in a responsible and transparent way.

The money – stolen by the former Governor of Nigeria’s Delta State, James Ibori, and his associates – was retrieved through operations led by UK law enforcement agencies, who worked to identify assets bought in the UK with illicit funds and recover them. In February 2012, Mr Ibori pleaded guilty in a UK court to money laundering, conspiracy to defraud, and forgery, and was sentenced to a total of 13 years in prison.

UK Minister for Africa, James Duddridge said:

When money is stolen from public funds it hits the poorest communities the hardest and means money can’t be spent where it’s most needed.

The UK’s work on this case to recover millions of pounds will support vital infrastructure and building works. The UK and Nigeria will continue to work together to tackle crime and corruption across our nations.

The Nigerian government has pledged to use the returned funds for projects that will benefit and improve the country. This includes boosting support to substantial building work for the Lagos to Ibadan Expressway, the Abuja to Kano road and the second Niger Bridge.

Home Office Minister, Baroness Williams said:

This is a significant moment in our fight against illicit finance wherever it is found.

Recovering the proceeds of crime is a critical part of our fight against serious crime and this sends a clear message to criminals that we will relentlessly pursue them, their assets and their money.

Under the agreement, worked up with UK officials, a detailed budget plan, including a work and expenditure schedule has been made for each project and agreed by representatives from the Government of Nigeria. They have committed to using the funds with the utmost transparency, and information about its management will be made available to the Nigerian public, as well as accountability reports which will be published annually.

The UK continues to be a driving force in bringing countries together to tackle serious and organised crime. Between 2019/2020 the UK recovered just under £208m from the proceeds of crime, an increase of almost 10% compared with 2014/15. Of this, £139m was collected through confiscation orders.

Chief Crown Prosecutor for CPS Proceeds of Crime, Adrian Foster said:

Corruption anywhere is corrosive and has a drastic impact on the lives of the people where money is embezzled from. Where there is international corruption carried out from England and Wales, we will robustly prosecute and deprive individuals of their ill-gotten gains.

Thanks to diligent and complex work of our prosecutors, £4.2 million is being returned to the people of Nigeria and will go towards projects which will massively benefit the country.

This forms part of the CPS's ongoing asset recovery work.

Notes to Editors:

- The money was retrieved through operations led by the Metropolitan Police Service, National Crime Agency (NCA), Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), and supported by the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and Home Office.
- The agreement to return the recovered funds will be signed in Nigeria by the British High Commissioner, Catriona Laing and Nigerian Minister for Justice Mr. Abubakar Malami.
- The projects on which the funds will be spent will be administered by the Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority and independently audited. The Federal Republic of Nigeria has established a Monitoring Team to oversee the implementation of the projects and to report regularly on progress.
- The Nigerian government has also engaged The Cleen Foundation, which has expertise in substantial infrastructure projects, civil engineering, anti-corruption compliance, anti-human trafficking compliance, and procurement to provide additional monitoring and oversight.
- Today's agreement also builds on a 2016 UK-Nigeria Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), that reinforces the two countries' commitments to return the seized proceeds of bribery or corruption in a responsible and transparent way. This is the first time that money has been returned to Nigeria from the UK under this MoU.

- The MoU signed between the UK and Nigerian governments provides the framework for returning stolen assets to Nigeria. It also makes provision for transparency and monitoring in the return of any assets to Nigeria. More details on the MoU [here](#).