

**MARITIME PORTS DEVELOPMENT: CHALLENGES OF CORRUPTION AND
UNLOCKING THE POTENTIALS
OF NIGERIA SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY**

BY

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ABSTRACT

The maritime sector is significant for the economic and sustainable development of Nigeria. This paper seeks to provide comprehensive analysis of the nexus between marine blue economy, ports development and sustainable maritime growth in Nigeria. The paper examines further, the impact of pervasive corruption in Nigeria maritime domain. The paper further explores the effectiveness of the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) code on ports, insecurity in Nigeria and identifying key threats such as smuggling, human trafficking, stowaways and port criminality. The findings and recommendations presented will advance and contribute to the realisation of efficient port operations, sustainable maritime development and sustainable maritime blue economic growth.

Key Words: Sustainable development, ISPS Code, Maritime, Ports, Insecurity, Corruption.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Maritime domains are the vast ocean areas under a nation's control, including coastal waters, ports and Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs). These regions are vital for various activities such as shipping, fishing, tourism and offshore energy exploration. For Nigeria, located along the strategic Gulf of Guinea, maritime domains are particularly crucial. These areas contribute significantly to the country's economy, society, and environment. Beyond geographical boundaries, maritime domains encompass interconnected systems, regulations, and policies that govern the sustainable use of marine resources. Effective understanding and management of these domains are essential for ensuring national security, economic prosperity, and environmental sustainability.

The importance of security in maritime domains cannot be overstated, as it is a multifaceted challenge involving the protection of territorial waters and the prevention of a range of unlawful activities. Maritime security involves safeguarding maritime infrastructure, protecting sea lines of communication, and ensuring the safe and lawful use of maritime resources. Threats to maritime security are diverse and include traditional concerns such as piracy, armed robbery, smuggling and human trafficking as well as emerging threats like cyber-attacks on maritime infrastructure and illegal, unreported, and unregulated.

For Nigeria, the Gulf of Guinea is particularly prone to such threats, being one of the world's most piracy-prone areas¹. The impact of these security challenges on Nigeria is profound,

¹C. E. Ogbuagu and O. C. Uche, "Policy Frameworks and Stakeholder Engagement in Nigeria's Maritime Sector: Towards a Sustainable Future". *Journal of Maritime Law and Policy* 14, no 2 (2020)89.

affecting not only the safety of navigation and trade but also the broader economic stability and development prospects of the nation². Therefore, enhancing maritime security is crucial for protecting national interests, maintaining the rule of law at sea, and fostering a stable environment conducive to economic growth³.

Parallel to the need for maritime security is the imperative for sustainable development within maritime domains. Sustainable development in this context refers to the balanced and responsible use of marine resources to meet current economic needs without compromising the health of ocean ecosystems or the ability of future generations to meet their own needs⁴. This involves adopting practices that prevent overfishing, reduce pollution, and protect marine biodiversity, thereby ensuring the long-term viability of ocean-based industries⁵. In Nigeria, sustainable development in the maritime sector is crucial given the country's reliance on the ocean for food, employment, and revenue from oil and gas. Furthermore, the concept of the Blue Economy has gained prominence as a framework for promoting sustainable development in maritime sectors⁶. The Blue Economy emphasises the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and jobs, while simultaneously preserving the health of ocean ecosystems. For Nigeria, embracing the Blue

². Ibid.

³. Ibid.

⁴. Ibid.

⁵. J. N. Anene and E. Okoro, 'Piracy, Maritime Crime, and Sustainable Development in the Gulf of Guinea: Implications for Nigeria'. *Journal of African Law* 66, no. 1 (2020)102.

⁶. Ibid.

Economy could lead to significant economic and social benefits, provided that the challenges of environmental degradation and resource depletion are effectively managed.

1.1 WHAT IS DEVELOPMENT?

According to Adebayo Ninalowo⁷, the notion of development may be understood to be the state or process of emancipation of a given populace from deprivation of the basic needs and political subjugation or oppression. He conceptualised development and opined that “development may be properly conceived of as movement of popular empowerment. For development, it implies freedom from hindrance to actualisation of the very essence of humanity. That is freedom from penury, ignorance, political powerlessness, cultural marginalisation, poor health.

At the eleventh World Conference of the Society for International Development in 1969 at New Delhi, India Dudley Seers⁸, captures the new thinking about development. According to him:

“The questions to ask about a country’s development are therefore: what has been happening to poverty” what has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have declined from high levels, then beyond doubt, this has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse,

⁷. “On the crisis of development”. *Prime Publication*. Lagos (2007) p. 6.

⁸:“The Meaning of Development”. Paper presented at the Eleventh World Conference of the Society for International Development, New Delhi: India, 1969.

especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result “*development*” even if per capital income doubled”.

In his own analysis, a former Director of the World Development Institute, Paul P. Streeten, opines that:

“Development must be redefined as an attack on the chief evils of the world today: malnutrition, disease, illiteracy, slums, unemployment and inequality. Measured in terms of aggregate growth rates, development has been a great success. But measured in terms of jobs, justice and the elimination of poverty, it has been a failure or only a partial success”⁹.

1.2 CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable development is a multifaceted and dynamic concept that seeks to harmonise economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection to ensure that current and future generations can fulfill their needs without undermining the ability of future generations to meet their own¹⁰. The term gained prominent with the publication of the 1987 Brundtland Report, “Our Common Future”, by the World Commission on Environment and Development¹¹. The report defined sustainable development as development that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. The core of sustainable development lies in creating a balance between fostering economic advancement, achieving social equity, and preserving the natural

⁹“Strategies for Human Development: Global Poverty and Underdevelopment”. Copenhagen: HandelshojsKotan Forlag. In *State and Economy Ed.* Obi Emeka Anthony et al. Bookpoint Ltd. Abbot Communications Ltd. Onitsha at p. 31.

¹⁰“State and Economy” ed. Obi Emeka Anthony et al Bookpoint Ltd. Abbot Communications Ltd. Onitsha p. 135.

¹¹G.H. Brundtland, “Our Common Future” Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development. Geneva, UN-Dokument A/42/427 (1987), Oxford University Press, 8.

environment, recognising that these dimensions are deeply interconnected and must be addressed collectively to achieve long-term sustainability¹².

Economically, sustainable development focuses on fostering long-term growth that is inclusive, equitable, and resilient. It aims to create a robust economic system that supports job creation, poverty reduction, and equitable distribution of wealth and resources¹³. This dimension of sustainable development stresses the importance of adopting innovative practices, enhancing productivity, and ensuring that economic activities do not deplete resources or cause environmental harm. The concept also advocates for a shift towards a circular economy, where the traditional linear model of ‘take, make, dispose’ is replaced by one that prioritises recycling reuse, and sustainable resource management. Such an approach seeks to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation, ensuring that economic progress is achieved in a way that does not compromise ecological health¹⁴.

Environmentally, sustainable development is concerned with maintaining the health and functionality of natural ecosystems while supporting human activities. This involves managing natural resources in a way that conserves their availability and quality for future use. Key environmental goals include reducing pollution, mitigating climate change, and

¹². Ibid.

¹³.United Nations General Assembly. "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development." Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, (2015), 4, A/RES/70/1. https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_70_1_E.pdf.

¹⁴.Note, the concept of “needs”, in particular the essential needs of the world’s poor, to which overriding priority should be given and the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organisation on the environment’s ability to meet present and future needs”.

protecting biodiversity. It also involves safeguarding natural habitats and ensuring that development activities do not lead to long-term environmental degradation. By promoting environmental stewardship and responsible resource use, sustainable development seeks to preserve the planet's natural systems and ensure that they continue to provide essential services and benefits¹⁵.

The framework of sustainable development is guided by various international agreements and initiatives that provide a roadmap for global efforts toward achieving sustainability. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in 2015, represent a comprehensive and universal agenda for addressing a wide range of global challenges. The SDGs consist of 17 goals and 169 targets that cover issues such as poverty alleviation, gender equality, clean water, and climate action. These goals are designed to be interconnected, recognising that progress in one area often depends on advancements in others. The SDGs provide a clear framework for countries, organisations and individuals to align their efforts with global sustainability objectives and track progress over time¹⁶.

Sustainable development also incorporates an intergenerational perspective, which emphasises the need to consider the long-term impacts of current actions and decisions. This perspective ensures that the benefits of development are preserved for future generations and that their ability to meet their needs is not compromised by present-day activities. It involves adopting the precautionary principle, which advocates for taking preventive measures to

¹⁵.A. Akinola, "Sustainable Development in Nigeria's maritime Sector: Challenges and Opportunities". *Journal of Maritime Studies and Development* 8, no. 1 (2021)30.

¹⁶. Ibid.

avoid potential harm to the environment and human health. By focusing on the long-term consequences of decisions and practices, sustainable development aims to promote a legacy of responsible stewardship and equitable progress¹⁷.

1.3 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN MARITIME DOMAINS

Sustainable development in maritime domain is an essential approach that seeks to balance economic growth, environmental stewardship, and social equity within ocean and coastal areas. This multifaceted concept involves managing marine resources responsibly and ensuring that development activities do not compromise the ability of future generations to benefit from these resources. Sustainable maritime development is not merely about maintaining current resource levels but also about enhancing the health and resilience of marine ecosystems, promoting social wellbeing and driving economic prosperity through innovative and sustainable practices. The goal is to create a harmonious relationship between human activities and the marine environment, ensuring long-term sustainability and resilience.

Environmental protection is a cornerstone of sustainable development in maritime contexts. Marine environments, including oceans, seas, and coastal areas, provide crucial ecological services such as climate regulation, nutrient cycling, and habitat for a vast array of marine species. These ecosystems are under threat from various anthropogenic activities, including pollution, overfishing and habitat destruction. Effective environmental protection involves implementing strategies to mitigate these threats, such as reducing marine pollution through

¹⁷. Ibid.

improved waste management practices, controlling emissions from shipping and industrial activities, and enforcing regulations to prevent habitat destruction.

Resource management is another critical component of sustainable maritime development. This involves the judicious use of marine resources, including fisheries, minerals and energy sources, to ensure their sustainability for future generations. Sustainable resource management requires adopting practices that prevent overexploitation and degradation of resources. For fisheries, this means setting and enforcing catch limits, protecting spawning grounds, and monitoring fish stocks to avoid depletion. In the case of offshore oil and gas extraction, it involves implementing stringent safety measures to prevent spills and minimise environmental impacts.

1.4 MERGING SECURITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN MARITIME DOMAINS

The integration of security measures with sustainable development goals in maritime domains often encounters significant challenges. One major issue arises from the inherent conflicts between stringent security measures and the pursuit of developmental objectives. Maritime security measures such as increased naval patrols, surveillance, and restrictions on certain maritime activities are essential for safeguarding national interests and ensuring the safety of maritime operations. However, these security protocols can sometimes impede economic activities and developmental projects, creating tension between security and growth. For example, heightened security measures might restrict access to certain maritime areas, affecting industries such as shipping, fishing and offshore energy exploration. These

restrictions can lead to reduced economic opportunities and financial losses for stakeholders dependent on maritime resources¹⁸.

Furthermore, security measures often involve substantial financial investments in technology, infrastructure and personnel which can divert resources away from development initiatives. Governments may prioritise funding for security over other critical areas such as education, health, and infrastructure development. This reallocation of resources can hinder the progress of sustainable development projects that are vital for long-term economic growth and social well-being. The challenge lies in finding a balance where security measures effectively protect maritime domains without stifling economic opportunities or diverting funds from developmental needs¹⁹.

Balancing Economic Interests with Environmental Concerns

Balancing economic interests with environmental concerns is another significant challenge in merging security and sustainable development in maritime domains. Maritime domains are rich in natural resources that are crucial for economic activities such as fishing, oil and gas extraction, and tourism. These economic activities contribute substantially to national economies and provide essential livelihoods for many communities. However, the exploitation of these resources often poses risks to the marine environment, including overfishing, habitat destruction, and pollution. The challenge lies in managing these

¹⁸.A. O. Akinsanya and A. U. Etch, “Governance and Management of Nigeria’s Maritime Domain: Challenges and Prospects”. *Nigerians Journal of Maritime Law* 10, no. 1 (2021)45.

¹⁹. Ibid.

economic interests in a way that does not compromise the health and sustainability of marine ecosystems²⁰.

For example, the expansion of offshore oil and gas exploration can bring substantial economic benefits but also risks significant environmental damage. Oil spills, gas leaks, and other forms of pollution can have devastating effects on marine life, disrupt ecosystems, and harm coastal communities. The economic incentives for exploiting maritime resources must be carefully weighed against the potential environmental costs, and robust measures must be in place to mitigate and manage these risks. This balancing act requires comprehensive environmental impact assessments, stringent regulatory frameworks, and effective enforcement mechanisms to ensure that economic activities do not lead to long-term ecological damage²¹.

2.0 THE BLUE ECONOMY'S ORIGINS AND CONCEPTUALISATION

The blue economy concept has recently acquired support in a variety of settings, indicating its use as an income diversification framework for sustainable growth that acknowledges nations' reliance on the marines. Also, it describes the real notion that further development is feasible while adhering to sustainability and social justice values, particularly intergenerational parity. Professor Gunter Pauli coined the term "Blue Economy" as an economic ideology in 1994, when the United Nations asked him to consider future business

²⁰. Ibid.

²¹. Ibid.

models in advance of the COP3 meeting in Japan, where the Kyoto Protocol was passed²². The international group organising the programme for the 2012 urban center summit, known as “Rio+20”, advocated the idea of a “blue economy”²³.

The key grounds for backing the blue economy notion at the Rio+20 summit were human eudemonia and social fairness, as well as less environmental degradation and financial resource usage. Due to the obvious newly introduced platform of marine development and marine governance, the blue economy recognises the marine domain²⁴. The concept reflects the teetering edge that exists between socioeconomic development and irresponsible environmental damage. The phrase “blue economy” has been used in a variety of contexts. Nevertheless, it is thought to be made up of a number of economic sectors and policies that work together to determine whether or not the use of marine resources is property²⁵.

The blue economy idea strives to market economic processes, social inclusion, and hence the maintenance or enhancement of livelihoods while also safeguarding the ecology of the marines and coastal areas. It entails detaching socioeconomic activity and development from environmental degradation, as well as maximising the benefits received from marine resources²⁶. The blue economy according to the World Bank is the appropriate use of coastal

²².G. Pauli, “The Blue Economy—10 Years, 100 Innovations, 100 Million Jobs,” Report to the Club of Rome, Paradigm Publications, Taos, (2010) 7.

²³. Ibid.

²⁴. Ibid.

²⁵. Ibid.

²⁶ “Kenya’s Agenda in Developing the Blue Economy”, E. Wairimu and D. Khainga, (2017) Accessed 16 July 2024, <<http://kippra.or.ke/kenyas-agenda-in-developing-the-blue-economy/>>.

resources for productivity expansion, livelihood opportunities, and jobs while also maintaining the marine system's health²⁷. The "blue economy" as defined by the European Commission, includes all economic activity including marines, seas, and coasts. It covers a wide range of interconnected, established, and emerging industries²⁸. The Commonwealth of Nations sees it as an evolving concept aimed at improving the situation for our ocean or "blue" resources²⁹.

²⁷. "Blue economy development framework – Growing the Blue Economy to combat poverty and accelerate prosperity", World Bank, (2016) Accessed 16 July 2024, <<http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/446441473349079069/AMCOECC->>.

²⁸. Jacob (n 4) 30.

²⁹. Ibid.

According to Conservation International's Bertazzo, the blue economy has economic benefits that are not widely publicised, such as carbon storage, coastal conservation, cultural values and variety³⁰. Also, the term “blue economy” is now widely used around the world with three distinct but related meanings, according to the Center for the Blue Economy: the ocean's overall contribution to economies, the need to address the ocean's environmental and ecological properties, and, as a result, the ocean economy has a growth opportunity for both developed and developing countries.

2.1 PORT DEVELOPMENT

Port can be defined as a geographic and economic entity, having a specific name, located on the seaside, a river or lakeside, serving ships, and where transfer of goods and passengers takes place from water to land transport and where facilities could be found on land and water to render complementary services required by ships, goods and or developing international trade, industry and more generally the economy of the countries under the zone of influence of port. In many ways, ports can be seen as a window to a nation, reflecting the demands of the country and the products of its hinterland, also showing the wealth and power which a country and its populace can exert.

Nigeria's ports serve as the economic backbone of West Africa, handling approximately 70% of the region's container traffic and processing over \$200 billion in annual trade

³⁰.“What on Earth is the blue economy? Human Nature – Conservation”, S. Bertazzo, Conservation International Blog, (2018), Accessed 16 July 2024, <https://www.conservation.org/news/what-on-earth-is-the-blue-economy>. See also, Garner, B. A., Black's Law Dictionary (USA: Thomson West Publishing Co, 2004), 8th Edition, 215.

through critical hubs like Apapa and Tin Can Island³¹. This maritime infrastructure connects Nigeria to global supply chains, enabling the export of hydrocarbons, agricultural products, and minerals while importing essential manufactured goods³². The National Bureau of Statistics conforms that maritime trade contributes 4.5% to Nigeria's GDP, underscoring its irreplaceable role in national development³³. However, this strategic advantage is imperilled by systemic security vulnerabilities that facilitate transactional criminal enterprises. The Gulf of Guinea, where Nigeria's ports are situated, has emerged as a global epicentre for maritime crime convergence, with incidents increasing by 22% between 2020-2024 despite regional security initiatives³⁴.

Likewise, Nigeria's port has been recognised as one of the most dangerous in the world, with frequent incidents of runaways, drug trafficking, piracy and armed robbery against ships, corruption, arms importation and port congestion.

2.2 FUNCTIONS OF THE NIGERIAN PORT AUTHORITY

Nigeria has about 9 major ports which are for navigational and administrative purposes divided into 5 Navigational Districts namely: Port Harcourt, Warri, Lagos, Calabar and One

³¹. "Annual Traffic Report 2023", Nigerian Ports Authority (2024), Accessed 16 July 2024 <https://nigerianports.gov.ng/reports/>.

³². "Review of Maritime Transport 2024", United Nations Conference on Trade and Development(2024), Accessed 16 July 2024, <https://unctad.org/publication/review-maritime-transport-2024>.

³³. "Nigerian Gross Domestic Product Report Q4 2024", National Bureau of Statistics,(2025), Accessed 16 July 2025, <https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/gdp2024q4>.

³⁴. "Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships Report 2024", International Maritime Bureau(2025), Accessed 16 July 2025, <https://icc-ccs.org/piracy-report>.

navigational districts. The Nigeria Port Authority was set up to regulate and control safety of activities in the port. The functions of the Authority are as stated in Section 7 of the Nigerian Ports Authority Act 2004³⁵. The section provides:

The functions of the Authority shall be to –

- a. provide and operate, in the ports, such facilities as appear to it best calculated to serve the interest of Nigeria;
- b. maintain, improve and regulate the use of the ports;
- c. ensure the efficient management of port operations, optimal allocation and use of resources, diversification of sources of revenue and guaranteeing adequate returns on its investments, in order to contribute effectively to the wellbeing of the Nigerian society;
- d. provide, for the approaches to all ports and the territorial waters of Nigeria, such pilotage services and lights, marks and other navigational services and aids, including cleaning, deepening and improving of all waterways;
- e. provide facilities for:
 - i. berthing, towing, mooring, moving or dry-docking of ships, in entering or leaving a port or its approaches;
 - ii. the loading and unloading of goods or embarking or disembarking of passengers in or from a ship;
 - iii. the lighterage or the sorting, weighing, warehousing and handling of goods;
and
 - iv. for the carriage of passengers or goods;

³⁵. Section 7, Nigerian Ports Authority Act, Cap N126, Laws of Federation of Nigeria 2004.

- f. manage, supervise and control or take part in the management, supervision or control of any company or undertaking in which the Authority is interested, by reason of shareholding or otherwise and for that purport appoint and remunerate directors, accountants, other experts and agents;
- g. provide and use appliances for the towage or protection, or salvage of life and property or for the prevention of fire within Nigeria and on vessels on the high seas;
- h. supply water to shipping vessels;
- i. control pollution arising from oil or any other substance from ships using the port limits or their approaches;
- j. provide and operate such other services as the Minister may, from time to time, require; and
- k. carry out such other activities which are connected with or incidental to its other functions under this Act.

2.3 PORT OPERATIONS

Port operations can be defined as all policies, reforms and regulations that influence the infrastructure and operations of port facilities including shipping services. Port operations also include all activities for ensuring the movement of cargo (including the processing of cargo documentation) from the arrival of a vessel at the port, discharging of the goods and internal mobility, to the eventual movement of the same cargo out of the port by a known mode of transport, to its final destination³⁶.

³⁶O. B. C. Ndikom, *The Fundamentals of Freight Forwarding Management and Practice in Nigeria* (University of Ibadan Press, 2011), 8.

The duties of a port operator (port authority and terminal operator) include managing the movement of cargo to and from ships and from ships to rail or road on lorries or train, berth allocation.

Most of the ports normally offer some of the following services:

1. Handling, which previously were being done by porters and stevedores and nowadays they are being done mostly by cranes and forklift trucks.
2. Storing and warehousing, which are done for goods that are not immediately needed or for some companies, who do not own enough space to store their received cargoes.
3. Value adding, which mostly are done by distribution centres. They can be categorised as stuffing and stripping, assembling, packaging, labelling, testing, consolidation and deconsolidation.
4. Hinterland transportation (inter-modal), which is done by pipelines, trucks, trains, or even vessels for short sea distances.
5. Maritime services like pilots, tugboats, boatmen, vessel traffic control.
6. Other services like foodstuff preparation, power supplying, ship repairing, recycling and oil refinery.

Also typical port operations from the perspective of imports and export transaction activities take the form of the movement of cargo between ships and the gate of terminal deport or wharf; the movement of cargo between the customer (consignee/shipper) and the gate of terminal, deport or wharf³⁷. The following cycles are observed:

- a. Reporting the ship (ship's arrival)
- b. Berthing the ships
- c. Stevedoring the ship (loading and unloading of cargo)

³⁷P. A. Osaretin, "Efficient Port Operations and Benefits of Actors (A case study of Tin Can Island Port), Nigeria"(M.Sc. Dissertation, Goteborg University, 2006), 8.

- d. Clearing the ship (ship's departure)
- e. Clearing the cargo: importers, customs agent
- f. Clearing the cargo: ships agent, NVOCC (container)
- g. Consigning the cargo
- h. Road transport³⁸.

3.0 NIGERIAN PORTS TRANSFORMATION AND ROLES IN SUSTAINABLE MARITIME DEVELOPMENT

A defining milestone moment for the transformation of Nigerian ports was Nigeria's first National Blue Economy policy, approved by the Federal Executive Council in 2024. This policy established a unified framework for *sustainably harnessing ocean resources* across shipping, fisheries, aquaculture, coastal tourism and ocean-based renewable energy. The Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organisation, *Kitack Lim*, hailed it as a “*sustainable, forward-looking*” blueprint aligning with global maritime priorities³⁹.

The Minister for Marine and Blue Economy, Adegboyega Oyetola, framed the marine and blue economy as Nigeria's next frontier of prosperity, emphasising its capacity to drive sustainable growth and job creation. The marine and blue economy, according to Soji Oni, is a goldmine that can drive *sustainable economic growth, create millions of job, and position our nation as a global maritime hub*⁴⁰.

³⁸. Ibid.

³⁹. Soji Oni, “Nigerian Ports Transformation Into Profit Engines” *The Punch*, January 19, 2026, <https://punchng.com/nigerian-ports-transformation-into-profit-engines/>.

⁴⁰. Ibid.

Likewise, The National Assembly is working on a *Port Regulatory Agency Bill* to streamline overlapping mandates among port agencies and boost competitiveness. This legislation aims to harmonise the maritime governance framework and eliminate the institutional overloads that hindered ports efficiency⁴¹.

The *Maritime Organisation of West and Central Africa (MOWCA)* has emphasised that Africa is yet to fully capitalise on its marine resources and explore its *421 ports* for investment and job creation. MOWCA highlighted the importance of the *ports* as critical economic infrastructure for the successful implementation of the *African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)*⁴².

According to MOWCA Secretary-General, “components of port infrastructure, such as docks, piers, canals, harbours and quays, should receive greater attention to facilitate trade⁴³.”

The Managing Director of the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA), *Dr. Abubakar Dantsoho* reaffirmed the Nigerian Ports Authority’s commitment to transformed Nigerian Ports Authority’s into a regional hub. According to him, “there is need for port modernisation to

⁴¹. Supra at footnote 39.

⁴². Adaku Onyenucheya, “AfCFTA: Concerns Over Untapped Potential Of Africa’s 421 Ports”, *The Guardian*, October 16, 2024, <https://guardian.ng/business-services/maritime/afcfta-concerns-over-untapped-potential-of-africas-421-ports/#:~:text=Share%20barriers%20to%20intra%2DAfrican%20trade>.

⁴³. *Ibid.*

attract global shipping giants like *Mearsk Line* which currently delivers only 500,000 containers to Nigeria annually out of their seven million global containers”⁴⁴.

3.1 DIAGNOSTIC CHARACTERISTICS OF NIGERIAN PORTS: PRE CONCESSION ERA AND POST CONCESSION PERIOD

The Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) governs and operates all the ports of Nigeria. The Authority by virtue of the Nigerian Ports Authority Act 2004, CAP 126 LFN, ceded operating rights in Nigerian Ports to the *private sector* while the NPA still retains ownership of port land as well as keeping responsibility for licensing operators and regulating their activities. 25 terminal operators, all private companies, emerged from the concession exercise. The NPA is also allowed by its enabling law to engage private entities to carry out its statutory responsibilities of *pilotage, towage, security of the ports as well as maintenance dredging*⁴⁵.

3.1.1 Pre-Concession Period

Way back in 1999, the federal government under former *President Olusegun Obasanjo*, conceived the idea of *port reforms*⁴⁶. Over the years, users and operators at Nigeria’s ports have faced degree of lingering challenges namely:

- i. The grossly inefficient port system and its prohibitive charges as well as the ever-deteriorating port infrastructure.

⁴⁴. *West Africa Businessnews*, Monday, December 2, 2024, p. 2.

⁴⁵. Hadiza Bala Usman, “No Politics in Nigerian Ports Operations”, *Financial Nigeria*. September 21 2018, <https://www.financialnigeria.com/no-politics-in-nigerian-ports-operations-interview-100.html#:~:text=HBU:%20The%20NPA%20is%20an,ensure%20NPA%20is%20run%20professionally>.

⁴⁶. *Business & Maritime West Africa*. Volume 5, No. 18, April-May, 2011, p. 29-31.

- ii. Ports characterised by an unusual degree of over-centralisation with the Nigerian Ports Authority virtually in charge of all the traditional port functions.
- iii. Nigerian ports also controlled virtually all the public and private tasks in the sector.
- iv. The ports were bugged down by long turnaround time for cargoes with ships.
- v. Insecurity of cargoes.
- vi. Unproductive labour force on both side of NPA and the dock labour.
- vii. *Corruption* and multiple government agencies each contributing to the bear garden that the nation's port system had become.
- viii. The dual role of a regulator and operator.

Based on this, and especially as inefficiency became the trademark of the nation's port system resulting in high cost of imported goods. Inability of Nigerian ports to compete with even the neighbouring ports as well as its exports becoming so uncompetitive in the world market. Consequently, Nigerian-bound cargoes were diverted to neighbouring ports with resultant loss of huge revenue to government⁴⁷.

Against this backdrop, the government embarked on reform of the ports in order to reverse the trend. After a careful study of the problem, the federal government appointed a consultant, *Royal Haskoning of Netherland* through the *World Bank* to undertake a diagnostic study of the ports.

The consultant came out with the following recommendations namely:

⁴⁷. *Ibid*, p. 30.

1. All cargo handling and marine services be handed over to the *private sector*.
2. NPA should become a mere landlord.
3. A new legal and regulatory framework should be developed.
4. NPA restructured into smaller autonomous port authorities.

The landlord port model, the consultant said, was the most efficient and workable model which had already been adopted by many developed and developing countries because of its advantages and that landlord port model as adopted by these countries encourages the system of independent landlord ports, autonomous port authorities with ownership of basic and operational infrastructure coordinating marine activities in their domains, decentralisation, cargo handling by private concerns and promotes the emergence of independent regulator.

These recommendations were accepted by government and this formed the basis for the port reforms of 2006. Consequently, the *Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE)* recommended a new port structure vis: Lagos Ports Authority to be made up of the Apapa, Tin Can Island and Kirikiri Ports, Delta Ports Authority comprising Warri, Sapele and Koko Ports and Port Harcourt Ports Authority to be made up of Port Harcourt, Onne and Calabar Ports.

According to Dr. Sekibo⁴⁸, the aims and objectives of the ports concession was meant to:

- increase the efficiency of the port system;
- improve service delivery;
- modernise the ports;
- reduce cost of shipping and clearing services at the ports;
- relieve government of the burden of financing the sector.

⁴⁸. *Business & Maritime West Africa*. Volume 5, No. 18 April – May 2011, p. 29-31.

At the end of the concession exercise, 13 terminals were handed over to *private operators* through competitive bidding while 12 others were concessioned through direct negotiations by the *Presidential Task Force on Port Concession and the BPE*.

The port reforms it must be noted suffered to achieve the desired results namely:

- i. The lack of regulatory framework meant the absence of a regulator that would have stemmed all the envisaged problems that have kept peace and efficiency at bay at the Ports.
- ii. The concession of the ports without first putting together the necessary legal and regulatory framework as strongly advised by its consultants.

By ignoring this important recommendation, the government threw all caution to the winds and deliberately created an environment of chaos and bitterness between the concessionaries and other stakeholders – *the exact situation obtainable at the terminal today*.

The big question now is what has actually changed at the ports? Have the nation's ports become more efficient? Have the complaints of port users reduced? Is the cost of doing business at the ports cheaper and does the average Nigeria feel the salutary impact of a restructured part system? How far has Nigeria realised the objectives of port reforms?

3.1.2 Post Concession Period

Foreign Ships Controls Nigeria's Ports and Maritime Trade

Global trade revolves around maritime trade and shipping with over 90 percent of goods transported by sea. This makes maritime shipping a major stimulant of global economic growth, which has surged by *76 percent* over the past four decades⁴⁹.

As a national with a coastline strategically located for maritime trade, Nigeria is missing out on a significant revenue stream due to its limited shipping industry. Till date, the nation does not own a vessel that flies the nation's flag⁵⁰ paradoxically, 65 years on, Nigeria still has no national carrier since the collapse of the *Nigerian National Shipping Line (NNSL) in 1965*, with the NNSL's 20 vessel fleet long gone and repeated revival attempts failing, most notably after Pacific International Lines (PIL) pulled out, *foreign vessels* have continued to dominate the nation's coastal waters.

"1960s – 2000s, Nigerian waters were ruled by foreign shipping lines. We paid billions in *freight*, yet owned almost nothing. Apapa and Tin Can Ports became symbols of inefficiency, choked with traffic, corruption and delays. Apapa Ports, once earmarked to be the *cargo hub of West Africa*, has lost that status to Ghana, which now received more cargo

⁴⁹. Steve Agbota, "How corruption, poor capacity robbed Nigeria prime spot in global sea trade", *The Sun*, April 3, 2024, <https://thesun.ng/how-corruption-poor-capacity-robbed-nigeria-prime-spot-in-global-sea-trade-trade/#:~:text=There%20are%20growing%20concerns%20over,the%20country's%20ocean%20economy%20negatively.>

⁵⁰. Steve Agbota, "Nigeria@65: Maritime Sector Crawls, Misses Oil Windfall", *The Sun*, October 8, 2025, [https://thesun.ng/nigeria65-maritime-sector-crawls-misses-oil-windfall/.](https://thesun.ng/nigeria65-maritime-sector-crawls-misses-oil-windfall/)

despite having fewer ports, with over 16 major containers and oil terminals, Ghana has overtaken Nigeria as the preferred hub⁵¹.

3.2 PORTS CRIMINALITY AND CHALLENGES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

A report by the United Nation’s office on Drugs and Crime (*UNODC*) revealed that an estimated *\$1.8 billion* cocaine shipment passed through *Nigerian Ports* annually. Specifically, it identified Tin Can Island, Lagos and Onne Ports as the transit points for drug smuggling from Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina and other Caribbean countries⁵².

The Nigerian ports had become the *major transshipment hub* to the expanding cocaine markets in Europe as most of the shipments of narcotics travel mostly in *shipping containers* from the port of Santos, Brazil to *Tin Can Island and Apapa Ports*⁵³.

Also, according to the Director, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (*NDLEA*), Mrs. Omolade Faboyede, stressed “no drug trafficking operation could be successful without the *seafarers or port workers*”⁵⁴.

⁵¹. *Ibid.* p. 24

Note: Nigeria controls about 70 percent of West and Central Africa’s cargo traffic. Yet, the country does not own international going container vessels to carry the cargo, which costs the country an estimated *\$9 billion yearly* in freight charges to foreign shipping lines. See *The Guardian Wednesday, December 31, 2025, page 22*.

⁵². Bayo Akomolafe, “Drug Smuggling: Ship-Owners Reel Under Severe Scrutiny”, *New Telegraph*, August 28, 2024, https://newtelegraphng.com/drug-smuggling-ship-owners-reel-under-severe-scrutiny/#google_vignette.

⁵³. *Ibid.* p. 22.

⁵⁴. *Ibid.* P. 22

Similarly, according to Suresh Prabhakar, Director of Operations at *Pacific Basin Shipping Limited, Hong Kong*, speaking on the theme “Drugs and Human Smuggling, Trafficking the Evolving Maritime Security Threats to Ships and Seafarers’ said, from February 2021 to July 2024, a troubling trend emerged in Nigeria, when four bulk carriers laden ... was found to have significant quantities, *cocaine* on board, ranging from 18 to 43 kilogrammes, leading to prolonged detentions by the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA)⁵⁵.

On the issue of *human trafficking*, records from Africa Risk Compliance (*ARC*) show a significant number of incidents where *stowaways* have been discovered on ships calling Nigerian ports⁵⁶.

According to Mr. Emmanuel Maiguwa, President of Maritime Security Providers Association of Nigeria (MASPAN) and Alumni of Maritime Academy of Nigeria (AMANO) said “while we may not present specific records linking stowaways to drug smuggling operations, it is of great concern that drug traffickers could potentially collaborate with stowaway networks. This partnership could lead to a coordinated effort to use stowaways as couriers, moving drugs from West Africa to Europe⁵⁷.

⁵⁵. *Ibid.*

⁵⁶. *Business Day, Wednesday, 28 August 2024, p. 21.*

⁵⁷. *Ibid, p. 21.*

The President of Sham Logistics concerned citizen, Mr. Bala Usman also called on the President, Tinubu to investigate intellectual theft and *corruption undermining initiatives to modernise operations at the ports*⁵⁸.

⁵⁸. Adaku Onyenuchya, “Group Wants FG To Investigate Intellectual Theft, Corruption At The Ports”, *The Guardian*, February 21, 2024, <https://guardian.ng/business-services/maritime/group-wants-fg-to-investigate-intellectual-theft-corruption-at-the-ports/#:~:text=President%20Bola%20Tinubu%20has%20been,land%2C%20and%20sea%20ports.%E2%80%9D>.

3.3 PORTS CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA ARE ALSO ITEMISED AS FOLLOWS

- i. Weak internal ethics infrastructure in port agencies (such as the lack of codes of conduct), weak enforcement practices and underdeveloped systems of investigating complaints of *demands for bribes or facilitation payments*, including no effective systems for handling grievances and protecting *whistle-blowers*.
- ii. Such challenges are compounded by multiple, often overlapping procedures ill-defined standard operating procedures, and a lack of coordination among the agencies. Agencies' broad discretionary powers result in an unpredictable operating environment for companies. For example, a practice that may be legal at one port may be unacceptable at the next. Further, port agency employees hold broad discretionary powers and sometimes delay the processing of documents, often without repercussions.
- iii. Also, Sea Empowerment and Research Centre (SERC) raised alarm that about 100,000 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) of *empty containers that are unseaworthy littered Nigerian ports*⁵⁹. The Head of Research at SERC, Eugene Nweke said further that "about 45 percent of the containers circulating in the Nigerian shipping space were rickety and fall under the classification of *unseaworthy containers*⁶⁰.
- iv. The introduction of *electronic call-up system* introduced to solve the problems of cargo evacuation from the ports also suffered issues of corruption and extortion as racketeers had hijacked *electronic call-up system*, making truckers call for the scraping of the

⁵⁹. *The Guardian*, Tuesday, June 10, 2025, p. 3.

⁶⁰. *The Punch*, Friday, November 22, 2024, p. 3

platform. The idea of bringing in call-up system was for the roads to the ports to be free. But when the roads are not free, then the idea is defeated⁶¹.

- v. Humongous amounts charged at the ports to clear goods due to *devaluation of Naira* is a serious problem. Particularly for those who import raw materials. The cost of production is determined by the value of the dollar and when they pay so much to clear imported raw materials, the ripple effect is on the final consume⁶².
- vi. The *customs officials use the clearing agents to bargain and increase the cost of clearing goods*⁶³. There is also the problem of custom official planting their men on the roads to extort money from importers moving their goods from the ports to the hinterland after all the duties have been duly paid.
- vii. Lack of infrastructure and coordination between stakeholders in the supply chain. The port terminals in Nigeria, especially, those in Lagos, were built decades ago and have not kept pace with the country's growing trade volume. Poor road networks, inadequate rail systems, and out-dated terminal handling equipment make it difficult to move containers in and out of ports efficiently⁶⁴.
- viii. Lack of implementation of the federal government's *National Single Window Initiative* to improve coordination among stakeholders within the trade ecosystem. The National Single Window (NSW) aimed at reducing the cost of doing business at the Nigerian

⁶¹. *The Punch*, Friday, January 10, 2020, p. 9.

⁶². Vincent Ujumadu Awka, "Challenges In Ports: Ezeibe Points Way Out For Customs", *Vanguard*, August 10, 2024, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2024/08/challenges-in-ports-ezeibe-points-way-out-for-customs/>.

⁶³. *Ibid*.

⁶⁴. Anozie Egoe, "Nigeria's Maritime Sector Faces Crisis Amid Empty Container Challenges", *Punch*, November 2, 2024, <https://punchng.com/nigerias-maritime-sector-faces-crisis-amid-empty-container-challenges/>.

Ports by streamlining operations, improving transparency, and minimising delays, the system not only drives cost savings but also strengthens overall trade facilitation⁶⁵.

- ix. Inability to promote digital transformation through the *National Single Window and Enterprise Content Management Systems*, fostering public-private partnerships and exploring *sustainability through green shipping practices*⁶⁶.
- x. Constraints of *legal gaps* remain a concern, as regulatory role requires stronger legislative backing through the proposed *Nigerian Port Economic Regulatory Agency Bill*.
- xi. *Inland dry ports* face challenges such as poor road infrastructure, insecurity and the absence of liability, frameworks. Shipping companies are hesitant to consign goods to these ports due to these issues⁶⁷. Some importers have remained recalcitrant in keeping away from *trade crimes* that lead to seizures of containers. Also, issues of importation of some *dangerous items, hard drugs*, non-compliance to trade regulations and under-declarations, concealment, under-valuation of their goods, or *smuggling through unapproved border route*⁶⁸.
- xii. Ports and terminal officials enjoy exercise of wide discretionary powers even when these are in conflict with the legal procedures and processes. These discretionary powers create opportunities for outright graft and extortion of port users.

⁶⁵. Editorial Board, Business Day, FG Aims 25% Cut In Port Costs Via Single Window, *West African BusinessNews*, January 30, 2025, <https://businessday.ng/news/article/fg-aims-25-cut-in-port-costs-via-single-window/>.

⁶⁶. *Daily Sun*, Wednesday, December 4, 2024, p. 24.

⁶⁷. *Daily Sun*, Wednesday, December 4, 2024, p. 24.

⁶⁸. *Nigerian Tribune*, Thursday, 4 April, 2024, p. 23.

- xiii. The perceived weak enforcement and poor investigative structures and ineffectiveness in the case of complaints/feedback mechanisms as they consider the mechanisms part of the problematic processes. There is also the belief that the mechanisms will always lead to backlashes⁶⁹.
- xv. Port problems is also not about relevant policies, frameworks or government order and pronouncement but *compliance*. Even when authorities put relevant policies in place, compliance and enforcement is poor. Port officers/officials appear too strategically and creatively powerful that they manipulate the system and port operations with unwavering exercise of discretions against the rules even when this makes doing business at the ports difficult⁷⁰.

3.4 NIGERIAN CUSTOMS AND PORTS INEFFICIENCY

Corruption is a widespread, deep-rooted issue that affects the maritime industry. Corruption occurs as a result of the interplay of a multitude of public and private sector stakeholders⁷¹.

Corruption in the port sector reduces economic growth, contribute to poverty, inequality cumbersome approval processes, overly broad discretionary powers, weak controls and poor⁷² governance.

⁶⁹. *Ibid.*

⁷⁰. *Ibid.*

⁷¹. *Corruption Risk Assessment in the Port Sector MACN Executive Summary*. Maritime Anti-corruption Network. March 2014, p. 1. www.bsr.org/en/our-work/working-groups/maritime-anti-corruption-network.

⁷². The Nigerian Ports Sector includes the following organisations: Nigerian Ports Authority, Nigerian Customs Service, National Environment Standards and Regulation Agency (Establishment Act or *NESREA Act*), Nigerian Drug Law Enforcement Agency (*NDLEA*), Nigeria Immigration Services, State Security Service, Port Health Services, the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (*NIMASA*), Standard Organisation of Nigeria (*SON*), and National Agency for Food, Drug, Administration and Control (*NAFDAC*), as well as Private Sector Stakeholders, Terminal Operators (*Concessioners*) and

Nigeria is considered *as* one of the most corrupt counties to do business, due to systemic corruption. Corruption and excise of discretionary powers by the *Nigerian Customs Service (NCS)* and *Port Officials* has had a huge implications for ease of doing business in *Nigerian seaports and terminals*, leading to revenue loss of as much as about ₦2.5 trillion corporate revenue in the ports industry annually⁷³. The negative operational elements have pushed many customers to now use ports and terminals of neighbouring countries thereby leading to loss of foreign exchange earnings for Nigeria.

Likewise, in Nigeria Customs, officials have enormous *discretionary power* and this can easily be exploited for pecuniary gains including *gratifications and bribes*⁷⁴. Customs officials and port officers have influence on ports operations by law and function in the bureaucracy, which they can manipulate as either enablers or disablers depending on interests per time. For custom officials, the fact that they have full information on shipments, shippers and have the powers of assessments and valuation make them able to manipulate ports processes if they so desire.

3.5 RISK ASSESSMENT OF NIGERIAN PORTS

Some of the risk assessment finding of ports system in Nigeria were categorised as follows:

a. environment

other port users..

⁷³.As *FG Moves to Battle Corruption at Ports*. THISDAYLIVE. <http://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2021/06/18>.

⁷⁴. *Ibid.*

- i. Limited numbers of operational port facilities make port services a scarce resource, providing incentives for *corrupt behaviour*.
- ii. Corruption is widely accepted tool to promote business interests; most foreign companies comply with local rules, traditions, and expectations in order to sustain business.
- iii. Some laws are out-dated with sanctions that are no longer a deterrent; effective enforcement of existing provisions and sanctions remains weak.

b. Organisational

- i. There seems to be no formal channels or complaint mechanisms for *whistle-blowing*.
- ii. There seems to be limited levels of compliance to policies and decisions to strengthen ongoing reforms within the ports.
- iii. Bureaucratic red tape exists in port operations. For instance, *142, signatures are reported as required to prove a cargo in Lagos ports*.
- .iv. There seems to be limited predictability and clarity of decision-making process.

c. Personnel

- i. Broad discretionary powers and limited accountability.
- ii. Organisational culture in port agencies does not emphasise *integrity*.
- iii. *Corruption* is expected and widely rationalised as a part of the system.
- iv. No established training routine exists to strengthen ethics and competence.\
- v. Pressure from higher ranks to comply with established corrupt practices seems to be frequent.

4.0 REFORMING THE MARITIME PORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The maritime sector is important to Nigeria's economic survival. That notwithstanding, challenges to ports administration have created circumstances of excessive delays to import/export processes, red tape, corruption, human and vehicular congestion in and around the ports, and illegal charges on ship-masters and shipping agents leading to high costs of business operations.

Given the economic costs of these challenges and the losses that come with the attendant inefficiencies, estimated a shopping \$7 billion annually, the *Nigerian government* through the Nigeria Shippers' Council (NSC), the Technical Unit on Government and Anti-corruption Reforms (TUGAR) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), in collaboration with the *Maritime Anti-Corruption Network (MACN)* and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has since 2012, embarked on a process of reforms to address the challenges in the maritime sector⁷⁵.

The collaboration led to the establishment of the Port Service Support Portal (PSSP) housed by the NSC and the Project Steering Committee (PSC). The PSC and PSSP have been at the forefront on the reforms in the Nigerian maritime sector for improved efficiency⁷⁶, better service delivery and better business environment. The efforts of the PSC have resulted in the publication of *Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)* for ports agencies and publication of the Nigerian Port Process Manual (*NPPM*). The NSC is officially charged with the

⁷⁵. *Improving Port Efficiency: Emerging Good Practice from Nigeria*. Premium Times 6/30/2022 <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/business/503230>.

⁷⁶. *Ibid.*

responsibility of leading its implementation and enforcement. The SOPs were intended to improve transparency and accountability in Nigerian ports, while the NPPM is focused on reducing bureaucratic roadblocks and improving operational efficiency in the sector⁷⁷.

Experts have also called on the federal government to draft new regulations to improve specific areas. Specifically, according to Maritime Lawyer, Mr. Godwin Omose⁷⁸, “the new regulations must limit the inspector’s discretion by having more precise definitions and objective criteria for holds or tanks rejection introduce inspectors’ rotation in ports and terminals to hinder collusion and development of proper arrangements in certain ports and client interactions. Increase the time frame allowed for remedying holds deficiencies strengthen control mechanism by creating a new Technical Appeals Tribunal, develops a risk matrix on the basis of which inspections will be supervised establishes a trustworthy *whistle blowing hotline*.”.

The paper proffers the following recommendations for the efficiency of Nigerian ports:

1. Blue economy justice entails mainstreaming “recognitional, procedural, and distributional concerns through rigorous conversations around the ocean economy with fairness, inclusivity and justice as the end point for the coastal communities⁷⁹. Blue economy must be climate change resilient. There must be clear-cut policies for ocean

⁷⁷. *Ibid.*

⁷⁸.As FG moves to Battle Corruption at Ports *THISDAYLIVE*. JUNE 18, 2021. <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2021/06/18>

⁷⁹. *Daily Sun*. Tuesday December 3, 2024 p. 16.

resources conservation and replenishment. The rights of small scale fishers and *livelihoods of indigenous people of coastal communities should be protected*⁸⁰.

2. Nigerian ports face challenges such as inefficiencies and connectivity issues that hinder trade. To address these problems, solutions like implementing 24-hour port operations, utilising advanced scanning technology for faster cargo handling, investing in port infrastructure, and enhancing transport networks (*roads and railways*) can improve cargo movement. The *success of Mombasa Port in Kenya*⁸¹ serves as an example of how strategic investments in improving *port operations and connectivity* can boost efficiency and trade volumes.
3. Capacity-building programmes to strengthen *transparency and accountability*.
4. Establishment of a complaints mechanism for potential or actual acts of *corruption*.
5. Information Technology components to reduce human contact and increase transparency and accountability.
6. *Anti-Corruption training*, signed policy documents to signal commitments from the uppermost levels of management.
7. Facilitating effective and efficient process for *cargo and vessels clearance*,
8. The introduction of the Nigerian Port Process Manual (NPPM) which depicts the specific steps to be taken to complete each port process⁸². This approach was taken

⁸⁰. *Ibid.* p. 16.

⁸¹. *BUSINESSDAY*, Wednesday 26, Jun 2024, p. 19

⁸². In December 2020, at the *World Anti-Corruption Day*, the Nigerian Presidency introduced the Nigerian Port Process Manual (NPPM) was introduced to monitor and enforce compliance by all government agencies and private stakeholders with the aim of removal of opaqueness in port operations in line with

because Nigeria is seeking an effective, successful, systemic intervention in port sector which would rapidly change the narrative, the perception and the ranking of Nigeria in the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) by Transparency International.

9. Promoting investment and innovation. Investing in *maritime infrastructure* and *innovation* is crucial for enhancing Nigerian ports capacity and efficiency. Key areas include: attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) by creating a favourable investment climate and encouraging maritime businesses to adopt strong *corporate governance practices*. The *Lekki Deep Sea Port* is an example of how significant investment can modernise infrastructure, increase capacity and attract economic activities⁸³.
10. Development of *Inland Dry Ports*. Developing inland dry ports can help in decongesting seaports and improving the efficiency of cargo distribution and delivery to and from hinterland areas.
11. Security and Technological Enhancements.
Security concerns, including *piracy and maritime crime*, remain a significant challenge. Also, the need to curb security breaches at the anchorage.
12. There should also be security tracking. This will reduce loss of man-hour and assist in exposing non-declaration or under declaration at the nation's ports.

international best practices. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news>. Accessed on 6/30/2022.

⁸³. *BUSINESSDAY*, Wednesday 26 June, 2024 p. 19.

13. The harmonisation of the implementation of port and flag state administration to minimise human direct contact onboard vessels, calling at the nation's ports in line with provisions in the Nigerian Port Process Manual (NPPM)⁸⁴.
14. The laws establishing magistrate courts at our ports should be given more specific powers to deal decisively with cases of *corruption and graft committed in the port*, especially by the so-called wharf rats. This will reduce the operations of wharf rats at our ports and also increase the safety of port users and consignments⁸⁵.
15. There is also the need to review all penalties for crimes committed at the port so that they are high enough to serve as deterrence to other criminals.
16. A policy should be formulated to ensure the development of a *multi-modal transport* network at the ports⁸⁶.
17. Government's pervasive presence in the administration and regulation of port activities and services should be considerably reduced, for better performance.
18. Government should also embark on total redesigning and reconstruction programmes of its ports, especially the Apapa Port.

4.1 CONCLUSION

Maritime industry represents a goldmine for Nigeria in terms of trade and mineral resources.

With an economy that is largely import dependent, the seaports, which are means of moving

⁸⁴.Nimasa, *Shippers' Council move to curb delay, corruption at ports.* into@nimasa.gov.ng <https://gov.ng/nimasa-shippers-council-move-to-curb-delay>. Accessed 6/30/2022.

⁸⁵. Obed B. Ndikom, *The Essentials of Port Reforms*. University of Ibadan Press Plc, 2010. P. 178.

⁸⁶. *Ibid.* p. 178. See *BSINESSDAY*, Thursday 11, December 2025, p. 6.

cargo across the globe, undoubtedly play an important role in the socio-economic development of coastal nations like Nigeria. Likewise, Nigeria's marine blue economy is a crucial artery of the economy, positioned to drive growth, create employment and connect our nation to the global market. life, ships, crew cargo and ports are great value that have to be carefully protected.

Corruption erodes public trust, hampering sustainable development of marine blue economy and goals 2030. Therefore, there is a need for collective action approach to the fight against maritime corruption and promote integrity in Nigeria's maritime ports⁸⁷.

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51. Obed B. Ndikom, The Essentials of Port Reforms. University of Ibadan Press Plc, 2010. P. 178.
52. See BUSINESSDAY, Thursday 11, December 2025, p. 6.
53. The Guardian, 29 September 2021. <https://guardian.ng/business-services/maritime/corruption-regulation>. Accessed on 6/20/2022.