

# Interview with new Nigerian ambassador to Germany

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**Nigeria's new ambassador to Germany, Hon. Yusuf Maitama Tuggar, discusses taking up the post in Berlin, which has been vacant for three years, and how the growing relationship between the two countries can be strengthened further. Ambassador Tuggar also talks about his aim to encourage more German investment in Africa in the exclusive interview with the German international broadcaster Deutsche Welle (DW).**

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**DW: You say that you are not a career diplomat, but you are taking up this position at a time when Nigeria has not had an ambassador in Berlin for nearly three years. What is the reason for this?**

Yusuf Tuggar: Well, you have to bear in mind that even though I am not a career diplomat per se, I am a student of international relations and diplomacy. Nigeria's main focus at the moment, of course, is foreign direct investment – it's trying to attract more German businesses into Nigeria and is also trying to ameliorate the situation so that Nigerian exports will find a market in Germany.

**How prepared are you to take on such a task?**

Very prepared, even though we haven't had a substantive ambassador for a long time – but it's better late than never. It comes at an auspicious time when the interest in Africa is quite high on the German side, and likewise on the African side there's a strong drive towards attracting foreign direct investment. We are doing quite a bit already to 'clean up the embassy', but these are just administrative changes and other little things which will turn us into a comfortable and confident face for Nigeria.

**We know that Germany is looking forward to investing in mid-sized enterprises in Africa and Nigeria is certainly one of its target countries. What strategies have you prepared in order to foster not just the diplomatic relationship, but also investment?**

We are targeting burgeoning mid-sized enterprises in Germany. It is our intention to attract them as much as possible to invest in Nigeria. On the Nigerian side, if you read our economic recovery and growth plan and what it entails, including the Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council (PEBEC) and a delivery unit which looks towards unleashing the potential of value chains, you will see that we have prepared amply.



Hon.

Yusuf Tuggar, Nigerian ambassador to Germany during the interview with the Deutsche Welle / Photo: DW

**Germany will be hosting a German-Nigerian business forum later this month. What does this event mean for you as the new face of Nigeria in Germany?**

It means a lot. It gives me the right platform to discuss the issue of how Germany can help Nigeria work towards mitigating business risk. This is one of the concerns that a lot of businesses in Germany have, vis-à-vis investing in Nigeria and Africa as a whole. So, if we strengthen the multilateral and regional agencies that we have which are meant to be addressing the issue of financial risk, such as the African Development Bank (AfDB), we could do a lot towards encouraging German businesses to invest in Nigeria and Africa at large.

**You're taking office just as Germany is about to hold a general election. What does this mean for you as a new ambassador?**

Well, these are very interesting times. I'm happy to see that almost all the parties are saying positive things about Africa. Because when you look at the Christian Democratic Union of Germany's (CDU) manifesto, they talk about private sector investment in Africa. And when you look at opposition parties like the Free Democratic Party (FDP) they are saying more or less the same thing. The Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) is saying to not only invest in Africa, but also to examine the agreements that already exist between Europe and Africa. The Left Party goes even further and says we should renegotiate those agreements. Surprisingly, even the Alternative for Germany (AfD) is saying German markets should open up to African investments. So all we have to do is wait for the election to be held, and we are confident that whichever permutation of the government emerges, it is going to be good for Africa and allow us to do business with them.

**Nigeria is often looked upon as a giant of Africa. Are you prepared to take on the challenge to change the terms of trade and negotiation with Europe for Africa?**

I think the two continents have no choice but to work with one another in a very positive and mutually beneficial manner. The issue of migration, for example, is something which is of great concern to Germany and to Europe. Employment is also something which is of great concern to us and we're looking to ensure that we perform well economically and industrialize. So we could do with a lot of German technology and investment. We're not going to allow the little pond between us to get in the way.

*The interview was conducted by Jane Ayeko-Kümmeth*