Introduction

Since the advent of modern nation states in 1648 after the signing of the treaty of Westphalia, control of sovereign territory and geographical spaces consisting of land, air and maritime domain remain the focus of governance. The most important of these geographical spaces in contemporary history is the maritime domain which remains crucial due to its strategic importance. In international relations, coastal states such as the United States, China and Russia assert enormous power and influence in the committee of nations largely due to their contiguous location to the sea and access to the economic resources that abound in their maritime environment. Against this backdrop, every coastal state governs its maritime domain through a complex system of agencies, legal and regulatory frameworks as well as administrative mechanisms designed to manage their maritime resources.

More than 80 percent of global and regional trade are conducted through the sea (World Bank Group, 2023). Since the dawn of globalization in the early 1990s, increased maritime traffic have exerted significant pressure on coastal ecosystem globally. Furthermore, pollution from atmospheric and land-based activities has taken a toll on the marine environment with consequential adverse effects such as illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, wasteful exploitation of marine resources. Proliferation of illicit trades such as transnational human and arms trafficking in coastal states that exhibit poor maritime domain governance due to inherent weak legal and regulatory frameworks also exacerbate the issues in the maritime environment globally.

To address the existential challenges of sustainable governance of the maritime domain, interagency collaboration has been identified as a cost-effective approach. This approach provides the leverage through which legal and regulatory frameworks could be aligned with the management of maritime resources to promote economic growth and development. In broad terms, the significance of interagency collaboration extends beyond national boundaries to regional and global levels. In recognition of this, global and regional institutions such as the United Nations and African Union have over the years placed premium on interagency collaboration as a convenient template towards enforcing regulatory frameworks for managing maritime resources. In this wise, the United Nations Convention on Laws of the Sea 1982 (UNCLOS, 1982) serves as the fundamental global legal and regulatory framework from which national and regional institutions design appropriate collaborative arrangement to suit their peculiar circumstances in managing maritime resources.

The Nigerian maritime domain presents a unique scenario that exhibits most of the issues inherent in the maritime environment. Over time, Nigeria has not adequately leveraged her strategic and contiguous location to the sea to manage the economic resources that abound in her maritime environment. The issue lies in the gap created between the front-end where the Nigerian Navy (NN) and the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) operate and the back-end where paramilitary agencies like the marine police, immigration, customs and other ancillary agencies operate.

A close observation shows that there is no integrated template that brings the front-end and back-end agencies together to operate collaboratively. Presently, there is a formal collaborative arrangement between the NN and NIMASA, however, there is no such framework that brings these front-end agencies to operate collaboratively with the back-end agencies. Besides, the Nigerian Institute for Marine and Oceanography Research (NIMOR) which is supposed to be a front-end agency in maritime resources management and research does not feature in any interagency collaboration arrangement in Nigeria. The key issues in managing maritime resources in Nigeria ensue partly from the inadequacies inherent in the existing legal and regulatory instruments. This is further accentuated by the void created by the absence of a formal framework integrating the front-end and back-end agencies towards operating collaboratively.

Against the foregoing backdrop, the purpose of this paper is to establish the need for Nigeria to create a resilient and adaptive maritime governance system that integrates all the maritimel agencies to operate collaboratively towards managing the country's maritime resources. To achieve this, the methodology employed was a qualitative documentary review and analysis of statutes, regulations, academic publications and international governance instruments. The paper is structured as follows: the first section clarifies key concepts. This is followed by a review of legal and regulatory frameworks for managing maritime resources at global, regional and Nigerian levels. Subsequently, the paper discusses the challenges that militate maritime governance in Nigeria and opportunities within the maritime sector for national development. The paper concludes with some recommendations.

Conceptual Clarifications

Interagency Collaboration

Interagency Collaboration is any joint activity between two or more statutory agencies of the state aimed at enhancing cooperation in order to coordinate their human, financial and other resources to promote synergy that would facilitate harmonization of their processes and procedures towards achieving a common objective that wouldn't have been possible if the agencies were working separately. Through communication and mutual support, Interagency collapses the organizational culture and orientation of the respective agencies into a streamlined set of procedures that align with the ultimate objective for which the collaborating agencies are tasked (Lawal, 2023).

Legal and Regulatory Frameworks

Assay (2023) defined legal framework as the application of laws including rules and regulations within a country's jurisdiction. In the context of the maritime affairs, legal frameworks are meant to guide the activities and conducts of agencies or states and their associated institutions towards realizing desired objectives in the maritime space. Khaskheli (2023) defined regulatory frameworks in the context of maritime space as the balance achieved through environmental protection, shipping safety and geopolitical cooperation resulting from the interface of international conventions and technological governance. Put together, maritime legal and regulatory frameworks mean the combination of laws and regulations encompassing international agreements and treaties for administrative and governance purposes in a defined maritime jurisdiction.

Maritime Resources Management

Maritime Resources Management is defined as the planned and controlled process employed for minimizing disruptive exploitation of the marine ecosystem to safeguard living resources like fisheries in the process of meeting socio-economic goals (FAO, 1992). The concept of blue economy which has become a key feature of the economy of most coastal states is basically anchored on this definition. Maritime Resources Management promotes sustainable use and harvest of resources in the marine environment in a manner that would preserve biodiversity for use by future generations.

Maritime Domain

Directly related to Maritime Resources Management is the concept of Maritime domain. Kovacic et al. (2022) defined maritime domain in broad terms as the maritime space covering coastal waters, seabed and subsoil in which coastal states enjoy legal rights to exploit economic resources and enforcement of security measures in order to protect the environment. Maritime Domain provides the environment where agencies of the state interface collaboratively to execute their respective legal and regulatory functions as part of their input to economic growth and development. In this regard, the NN and NIMASA are the lead agencies charged with providing security and safety administration respectively in Nigeria's Maritime Domain.

Legal and Regulatory Frameworks in Maritime Resources Management at Global and Regional Levels

Management of maritime resources is not limited to national jurisdictions, rather it is a universal undertaking that requires legal and regulatory frameworks at global and regional levels for sustainable use of maritime resources. For the purpose of this article, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea represents the global legal and regulatory framework for Maritime Resources Management while the Yaoundé Architecture suffices as the regional legal and regulatory framework for regional Maritime Resources Management in the West and Central African regions.

a. United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)

The UNCLOS was adopted in 1982 and came into force in 1994. UNCLOS outlines a universal regime of guidelines for safeguarding the marine environment and management of the oceans and their resources. The Division for Ocean Affairs of the Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations is the Secretariat of the UNCLOS.

The UNCLOS divides a coastal state's maritime zones into three main maritime boundaries: Territorial Waters which is 12 nautical miles from the baseline from which the coast is measured, Contiguous Zone which is 24 nautical miles and the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) which extends 200 nautical seawards from the baseline. UNCLOS also provides for coastal states to prolong their land territory seaward along the seabed subject to a maximum limit of 350 nautical miles which is about 650 km (ScienceDirect, 2020).

Under the authority of UNCLOS, coastal states have the rights to manage, harvest mineral and non-living material in the subsoil of their continental shelf. Within its EEZ, a coastal state has sovereign rights and jurisdiction over living and non-living resources for the purpose of exploring, exploiting, conserving and managing those resources for its economic growth and development (US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, n.d).

b. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The SDGs are the 17 global developmental aspirations enunciated by the United Nations to address poverty and associated issues in order to promote the prospect for a sustainable world by 2030 (MOFA Japan, 2016). The SDGs are integrated to enhance global socioeconomic development and environmental sustainability. In line with this, SDG 14 specifically regulates maritime resources management for sustainable development as well as to contain the adverse effects of climate change, overfishing and marine pollution.

c. Yaoundé Architecture (Yaoundé Code of Conduct)

The Gulf of Guinea became a zone of interest at global level in the early 2000s on account of abundance of vast maritime resources, such as oil and gas, fisheries as well as other living and non-living natural resources most of which are poorly managed by governments of countries in the region. As part of global and regional efforts to remedy this defect, the Yaoundé Architecture, which is the Integrated Strategic Security framework for Gulf of Guinea, was developed by the West Africa and Central Africa regions with technical support from the International Maritime Organization. The Code is not a treaty rather, it is regulatory framework to enhance maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea aimed at managing and reducing the impacts of piracy and allied maritime crimes such as Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing (International Maritime Organization, 2021).

The pervasiveness of weak maritime resources management in the Gulf of Guinea region is attributed to limited legal frameworks. Inadequate management of marine resources manifests mainly in illegal fishing. In cases where some states make legislation to manage maritime resources, weak enforcement of laws and inadequate implementation of regulations make the Gulf of Guinea a choice destination for illegal fishing by foreign fishing vessels as well as proliferation of crimes like piracy (Alifo, 2023).

d. Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) Constitutive Act

The Gulf of Guinea Commission was created through a Treaty on 3rd June 2001 in Gabon. The Constitutive Act of the GGC serves as a regulatory framework for sustainable use of the maritime environment and resources under the jurisdiction of the Gulf of Guinea states. This fosters maritime security as well as to address matters affecting the interests of multinational corporations (Oduntan,2008).

The global and regional levels, legal and regulatory frameworks provide the template from which country level legal and regulatory frameworks are prepared. These frameworks encourage coastal states to employ collaborating agencies to enforce the domesticated versions of all international laws related to governance of the maritime domain. The Yaoundé Code of Conduct in particular mandates collaborative measures against the threats and challenges linked to maritime crimes to engender security in the maritime jurisdictions of member states. Weak enforcement remains a key feature of mechanisms put in place by the Gulf of Guinea countries most of which don't have integrated agencies working collaboratively to address maritime crimes.

Legal and Regulatory Frameworks in Maritime Resources Management in Nigeria.

Nigeria excels as the only country in the Gulf of Guinea region that has visible legal and regulatory frameworks for the management of resources in its maritime jurisdiction. Specifically, Nigeria has a variety of laws for managing natural resources in its maritime domain complemented by institutions that operate collaboratively to regulate and administer maritime activities. The key instruments for maritime resources management in Nigeria are fisheries laws, Petroleum Industry Act 2023 and policies by statutory agencies like the NN, Nigerian Institute of Oceanography and Marine Research and NIMASA.

i. Fishery Laws and Regulatory Instruments in Nigeria

In the management of maritime resources in Nigeria, regulation and control of fisheries is given premium on account of Nigeria aligning with the global shift to food as a crucial element of national security. Nigeria recognizes that its economic growth and developmental strides depend largely on resources harvested from the country's maritime environment, hence the use of legal instruments to govern fisheries management is given priority. Effective fisheries management and other related maritime resources in Nigeria is contingent upon twelve fisheries and related laws listed below:

Fisheries Act 1992 - This Act establishes the institutional framework for the regulation and management of fisheries in Nigeria

Exclusive Economic Zone Act 1978 - Provides detailed guidelines for the licensing and monitoring of fishing activities in Nigerian waters.

Nigerian Maritime Zones Act - Regulates the use and protection of Nigeria`s maritime zones, including its territorial waters, contiguous zone, and exclusive economic zone.

Environmental Impact Assessment Act - Requires the assessment of potential environmental impacts of fishery-related projects and activities

Endangered Species (Control of International Trade and Traffic) Act - Regulates the trade and exploitation of endangered aquatic species in Nigeria.

Marine Pollution (Prevention) Act - Addresses the prevention, reduction, and control of pollution from ships and other marine

Marine Oil Pollution (Emergency) Act - Provides for emergency measures to address oil pollution incidents in Nigerian waters

Coastal and Inland Shipping (Cabotage) Act - Regulates maritime activities within Nigeria`s coastal and inland waters, including fishing vessel operations

National Inland Waterways Authority Act - Establishes the National Inland Waterways Authority to oversee the development and regulation of inland waterways for fisheries and other purposes.

Nigerian Export Processing Zones Authority Act - Provides for the establishment and operation of export processing zones, which may include fishery-related activities

Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board Act - Promotes the participation of Nigerian companies and citizens in the fishery industry and other sectors of the economy

International Trade and Traffic Act - Regulates the trade and exploitation of endangered aquatic species in Nigeria.

ii. Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) 2021

The PIA was signed into law on 16th August 2021 with the aim of reforming Nigeria's oil and gas industry. Some of the areas covered by the reforms encompass governance, fiscal frameworks and host community issues. The oil and gas sector accounts for about 5.8 percent of Nigeria's GDP, 95 percent of the foreign earnings and 80 percent of the country's budgetary revenue (Nwuke, 2021). The foregoing highlights the pivotal importance of oil and gas to the Nigerian economy. The PIA therefore represents efforts by the government of Nigeria to remedy the observed defects in the previous legal and regulatory frameworks in the country's petroleum industry such as Hydrocarbons Oil Refineries Act No. 17 of 1965, Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation Act 1977, Petroleum Profits Tax Act Cap P13 LFN 2004 and a host of other laws and regulations related to petroleum and allied issues in Nigeria.

The major aspect of the PIA related to this paper is the upstream sector of the Nigerian maritime environment where most of the country's petroleum resources are domiciled. The PIA created the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission which is charged with implementing policies and applicable laws and regulates upstream sector of the Nigerian petroleum industry. This forms part of Nigeria's efforts aimed at efficient maritime resources management to promote growth and development of the country's economy.

iii. The Nigerian Navy Regulatory Frameworks

The Nigerian Navy is the lead maritime security agency in Nigeria. Its statutory functions are spelt out in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (As Amended) and the Armed Forces of Nigeria Act (Cap A20 LFN 2004). The NN derives its maritime security regulatory functions from these national laws and international conventions and treaties to which Nigeria is a signatory to.

iv. The Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency Regulatory Frameworks

The main statutory instruments where the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency derives its regulatory functions are the NIMASA Act (2007), Merchant Shipping Act 2007, Cabotage Act 2003, Nigerian Oil and Development Act 2010 and Suppression of Piracy and other Offences Act 2019. These instruments saddle NIMASA with maritime safety and administration as well as maritime security in collaboration with the Nigerian Navy. NIMASA's regulatory functions are further amplified by international conventions and treaties that Nigeria is a signatory to.

v. Harmonized Standard Operating Procedures (HSOP) for Maritime Law Enforcement

This document represents part of the efforts made by the Nigerian government to consolidate the operations of relevant agencies whose operations relate to the maritime domain. A critical assessment of the document reveals some inadequacies such as the exclusion of an important agency like the Nigerian Institute of Oceanography and Marine Research. Furthermore, there is no agency designated as the lead agency to ensure efficient command and control as well as coordination. Since the document came into force, there has not been real or simulation exercises for concerned agencies to familiarize themselves with the roles expected of them during real time operations.

In broad terms, the legal and regulatory frameworks applicable in Nigeria's maritime domain appear to be adequate. However, the enforcement of the laws and implementation of the regulatory frameworks falter due to absence of explicit provisions for interagency collaboration among agencies operating in Nigeria's maritime domain. On a closer look, there are two instruments that support interagency collaboration among agencies whose operations and functions relate to Nigeria's maritime domain. The first among these documents is the existing collaborative Memorandum of Understanding signed between the NN and NIMASA in 2007. The major shortcoming with this document is that it restricts collaboration to only the NN and NIMASA without leaving window to accommodate other equally important agencies that could fit into any collaborative arrangement in managing maritime resources in Nigeria.

The HSOP for Maritime Law Enforcement is the other regulatory instrument designed to foster interagency collaboration in law enforcement among agencies operating in Nigeria's maritime domain. The document captures many agencies like the NN, NIMASA, customs, the police and other agencies that operate in Nigeria's maritime domain. The major flaw observed in the HSOP is that it did not capture an important front-end agency like the NIOMR. The NIOMR's role in any collaborative arrangement for managing maritime resources is crucial. An interagency collaborative system in Nigeria's maritime domain without a component that conducts research in the maritime environment cannot function optimally.

Maritime Regulatory Agencies in Nigeria

Nigeria's maritime resources are mainly in the areas of fisheries, oil and gas. In this regard, maritime resources management in Nigeria covers a range of activities encompassing security, safety administration and regulatory activities performed by statutory agencies whose mandates relate to the country's maritime domain. In terms of law enforcement and safety regulation and administration, the NN and NIMASA act as the front-end agencies while other agencies enforce fisheries, oil and gas laws and regulations that relate to their mandate.

Nigerian Navy:

Section 217 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 as amended established the Nigerian Navy. Amplifying the Constitutional provision that established the NN is Part 1 Subsection 4(a) of the Armed Forces Act (2004). As a key agency that secures and police Nigeria's maritime domain and the resources therein from being compromised, the Act states clearly the NN's roles in the management of Nigeria's maritime resources. In this regard, the Act provides among others that the Navy shall, in particular, be charged with: Enforcing and assisting in co-coordinating the enforcement of national and international maritime laws ascribed or acceded to by Nigeria and promoting, co-coordinating and enforcing safety regulations in the territorial waters and the Exclusive Economic Zone of Nigeria.

Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency

NIMASA's establishment Act is the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency Act, 2007. The Act authorized NIMASA in pursuance of its statutory functions, contained in Part IV Section 22 Subsection (1) (a)-(q), to collaborate with relevant government agencies to promote security in Nigeria's Maritime Zones. Part X Section 44 Subsection (1), of the NIMASA Act authorizes the Agency to make regulations on pollution control in Nigerian waters. The combined effects of the various parts and sections 2007 NIMASA Act places the agency in a pivotal position 'in maritime resources management of maritime resources in Nigeria.

Nigerian Institute for Oceanography and Marine Research

NIMOR was established in 1975 to conduct researches into the resources in Nigerian territorial waters, Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and the high seas and also to train manpower for the fishing industry. The institute formulated its objectives to meet the National needs for research and technical development. The mandates include:

Knowledge of fish stock size and the amount to be exploited on a sustained commercial basis in the Nigerian brackish and coastal waters at least up to 200 nautical miles (320km)

Knowledge of the geology and geophysics of sea floor of Nigeria and her sediments with a view to controlling beach erosion, determining sea floor topography, types of sediments and possibilities of economic exploitation.

Determination of the presence of petroleum gas pockets in the sediment and concentrations of heavy minerals and gravel exploits.

Socio-economic evaluation of problems arising from the exploitation of resources of the sea and brackish water fishing as well as fish distribution methods

Overseeing the African Regional Aquatic Centre (ARAC) Port Harcourt (Omoniyi et al. n.d).

Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC)

The NUPRC is one of the major outcomes of the Petroleum Industry Act 2021. The PIA was a major development in Nigeria's quest to address most of the rampant issues in the management of the country's offshore petroleum resources. One of the key statutory responsibilities of the NUPRC is to ensure adherence to petroleum laws and regulatory frameworks allied to upstream oil and gas which constitute the major value element of the Nigerian economy (NUPRC, 2025).

An assessment of the legal and regulatory frameworks that guide the operations of the stakeholder agencies in the management of Nigeria's maritime resources appear adequate. This notwithstanding, it is however apparent that managing Nigeria's maritime resources has not been efficient. The major reason for this is largely attributable to the absence of an integrated mechanism which accommodates the front-end and back-end agencies in a collaborative format. In particular, the exclusion of NIOMR and NUPRC which are key agencies leaves a big void in the management of Nigeria's maritime resources. Incorporating these key agencies as a complement to the existing interagency collaborative arrangement between the NN and NIMASA is considered as the most viable option if Nigeria is to manage her maritime resources efficiently. By default, any interagency arrangement set up for managing maritime resources should be broad enough to capture the front-end and back-end agencies.

Challenges of Maritime Resources Management in Nigeria

Challenges in the context of managing maritime resources are those constraints that prevent optimal performance by agencies operating under an interagency collaboration arrangement. In this regard, the key challenges that bedevil maritime resources management are overlapping statutory responsibilities of agencies operating in the maritime environment, multiple stakeholders, boundary issues, threat from climate change and threat from local communities demanding to control national resources domiciled in their communities.

Overlapping Statutory Responsibilities of Agencies operating in the maritime environment - Interagency Collaboration becomes efficient only when there is synergy between the collaborating agencies through cooperation and coordination. However, practical experience has shown that legal and regulatory documents that guide how collaborating agencies operate, especially in complex areas like the maritime environment, in many cases contain provisions that are duplicated resulting in the challenge of overlapping responsibilities. For example, Part 1 Subsection 4(a) of the Armed Forces Act (2004), states that the NN shall - enforce safety regulations in the territorial waters and the Exclusive Economic Zone of Nigeria. The 2007 NIMASA Act authorizes the Agency in Part IV Section 22 Subsection (1) (a)-(q), to promote security in Nigeria's Maritime Zones. These provisions cause overlaps in the responsibilities assigned to the NN and NIMASA.

Multiple Stakeholders - Business in the maritime environment is multifaceted because of the complex nature of the maritime industry. The maritime industry provides employment for people from diverse backgrounds. This gives rise to challenges related to enforcement and implementation of legal and regulatory frameworks meant to facilitate the administration of the activities of the diverse stakeholders involved in the management of maritime resources.

Boundary Issues - Every coastal state places premium on its maritime resources. Consequently, most boundary challenges arise due to struggle between contending states to command a majority share of the maritime resources that exist in overlapping maritime boundaries. Nigeria and Sao Tome and Principe had boundary issue some decades back due to overlapping EEZs leading to the establishment of a Joint Development Zone which is a mechanism created to manage the resources in the common maritime boundary for the mutual benefit of the two states.

Emerging threats from Climate Change - Climate change constitutes a major global challenge manifesting most especially in the maritime environment. Ocean acidification has resulted in depletion of fish population, biodiversity losses and pollution (World Bank Group, 2024). in some parts of the world. This portends a challenge to human security due to deficiency of protein derived from fish consumed by majority of people globally.

Threat from local communities demanding to control national resources domiciled in their communities - Threat from local communities is a universal feature of the maritime environment. In Nigeria, for over two decades, control of maritime resources particularly oil and gas has been in the front burner of the struggle by Niger Delta militants who hitherto have used of oil pipelines and ancillary infrastructure to vent their grievance on the Nigerian state. The consequences from the activities of the Niger Delta militants have been the massive environmental degradation coupled with occasional oil spill from the operation of oil companies all of which combine to make environmental remediation highly challenging.

Maritime Resources Opportunities for National Development

Opportunities within the context of maritime resources signify those advantages that accrue to coastal countries that harness and exploit the immense resources in their maritime domain to drive national development. Presently, blue economy represents the global reference point from which most of the opportunities in the maritime environment emerge. In addition to blue economy, other opportunities that abound in the maritime environment include but not limited to fisheries, renewable energy, tourism, ocean transport and trade among others.

Blue Economy: Blue Economy is the economic concept adopted globally by coastal states to drive national development through a holistic sustainable management of maritime resources, protection of the maritime environment and mitigation of adverse effects of climate change. According to Seificar (2023), blue economy represents diversifying a country's economy beyond land based economic activities into the coast to achieve sustainable development. In specific terms, blue economy has the potential to launch Nigeria's economy into a 1 trillion dollar economy within a decade. This is however contingent to setting up a multilayered collaborative arrangement to manage the country's maritime resources. An efficient interagency collaborative mechanism opens Nigeria's maritime space to numerous opportunities in the areas of job creation, employment opportunities, and enhanced food security through sustainable fisheries. The establishment of Ministry of Marine and Blue Economy by the Nigerian government is a step in the right direction but efficient management of maritime resources would require a collaborative field arm that would harness inputs from all stakeholders operating in the country's maritime domain.

Fisheries: Fish is regarded as one of the most crucial maritime resource that drive economic activities in the global maritime industry on account of fish being a major factor in human security as well as food security. Nigeria has a continental shelf area of about 43,514 km^2 and a continental coastline of about 853 km (Odioko & Becer, 2022). Nigeria is said not be utilizing the immense potential in this vast maritime area as the fishery sector contributed a paltry 1.09 % to the country's GDP in 2020 (NBS, 2022). Further to this, more than 74.09% of fisheries harvested from Nigeria's maritime environment are done by artisanal small-scale fishermen which translates to the fact that fisheries resources are not being optimized as opportunities for national development.

Tourism: Tourism is described as the act of travelling out of the usual place of abode to a temporary destination usually for adventure, leisure or recreation while making use of commercial services provided by hospitality entities such as hotels, resorts and allied entities. Globally, tourism is one of the complex economic endeavors where collaboration and regulatory framework converge on account of its effects as a critical factor of national development. Tourism is considered as part of maritime resources where facilities like beach resorts exist side by side with supporting infrastructure like good access roads and efficient transport system as well as effective services by travel agencies, tour guides and shopping outlets. According to Global Tourism Research Report (2024), the global tourism industry is estimated at about $2 Trillion in 2024 with an estimated growth rate of five percent in the five years period covering 2024 to 2029. This represents a vast opportunity which a country like Nigeria can plug into to accelerate economic growth and national development.

Renewable Energy: According to the United Nations, renewable energy 'is energy derived from natural sources that are replenished at a rate than they are consumed' (UN Climate Action, 2025). The maritime environment is the space where the various sources of renewable energy such as solar, waves, ocean currents, offshore winds among others converge. Renewable energy from the maritime environment represents a cost-effective method of accelerating national development on account of the numerous benefits such as economic growth, energy security, environmental sustainability and social welfare that accrue to a nation. Globally climate change has become a major factor in national development however, harnessing renewable energy from the maritime environment have in recent years become opportunity to promote diversified energy mix to reduce reliance on fossil fuels towards mitigating the adverse effects of climate change.

Global Maritime Transport and Trade: More than 80% of global trade are conducted through the sea making maritime transport a critical factor in international trade and economy (UNCTAD, 2021). Oceans serve as vital trade routes hence they open opportunities for economic growth through establishment of logistics value chain and critical national infrastructure such as ports and ancillary facilities. All these constitute part of nation's maritime resources that could be harnessed to promote international trade and attraction of foreign direct investment geared toward national development.

In broad terms, Nigeria is in a good stead to optimize economic benefits from the opportunities that accrue from its maritime domain to drive national development. This becomes possible only if her maritime resources are managed efficiently. On account of the complex nature of the maritime environment, the approach to harnessing and managing Nigeria's immense maritime resources lies in a collaborative alignment of the activities of all relevant stakeholder agencies operating in the country's maritime domain. The cost-effective way to achieve this is to create an umbrella establishment perhaps under the Ministry of Marine and Blue Economy to accommodate all relevant agencies under a collaborative arrangement. This brings to fore the need to upgrade the office of the Hydrographer of the Nigerian Navy to office of the Hydrographer of the Federation to be headed by a naval admiral, serving or retired.

Establishing office of the Hydrographer of the Federation in the existing circumstance is a fast-track method towards efficient management of Nigeria's maritime resources. This method is pivotal towards enforcing Nigeria's municipal laws and international maritime laws to which Nigeria is a signatory, and also an effective option towards implementing regulatory frameworks allied to managing maritime resources in the country's maritime domain. In practical terms, the Hydrographer of the Federation will be in control of the front-end and back-end agencies with a mandate to integrate their operations in a collaborative format. This will eliminate the present practice where agencies in the maritime sector are working in silos without a central coordinating authority.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Maritime resources management is a complex undertaking that requires cooperation, support and coordination between agencies whose mandate relate to operations in the maritime environment. In functional terms, interagency collaboration has been identified as the most viable, cost-effective and result oriented arrangement in enforcing legal and regulatory frameworks as well as maritime resources management. Nigeria derives most of her legal and regulatory instruments employed in managing maritime resources based on global and regional treaties, conventions and protocols to which Nigeria is a signatory to.

A detailed assessment reveals that managing Nigeria's maritime resources through multi-sectorial collaborative arrangement has not been efficient. This is despite the existence of legal and regulatory frameworks that ordinarily seem adequate. The lack of a unified instrument which accommodates the front-end and back-end agencies in a collaborative format account for the inherent inefficiency in managing Nigeria's maritime resources. This reflects in specific terms in the collaborative framework existing between the NN and NIMASA and the Harmonized Standard Operating Procedures which excludes important front-end agencies like NIOMR and NUPRC. This gap in the operational structure has been a major hindrance in consolidating the activities of agencies whose operations relate to the management of the resources in Nigeria's maritime domain.

The inadequacies in the legal and regulatory instruments applicable in Nigeria's maritime domain impose some challenges that constrain the operations of the agencies managing the country's maritime resources. The key issues in this regard are overlapping responsibilities among the agencies and the multilayer nature of the seemingly weak collaborative structure which is not backed by a central coordinating authority. Adverse effects of climate change accentuate the challenge from demands for resource control by host communities and this also has direct effects on collaborative approach towards addressing boundary issues in the EEZ between Nigeria and Sao Tome and Principe.

Notwithstanding the existing challenges, Nigeria stands to optimize economic benefits from the opportunities that abound in its maritime domain. Nigeria's potential to diversify her economy through blue economy, renewable energy, marine transportation, fisheries and other ancillary opportunities in the country's maritime domain remains enormous. To drive national development through harnessing opportunities in the maritime domain is contingent upon establishing a cost-effective and unified interagency collaborative authority in Nigeria. This will stave off the present practice where agencies working in Nigeria's maritime domain operate in silos instead of operating collaboratively. Against this backdrop, this paper recommends upgrading of office of the Hydrographer of the Nigerian Navy to office of the Hydrographer of the Federation to be headed by a naval admiral, serving or retired.

With the establishment of the Ministry of Marine and Blue Economy, the office of the Hydrographer of the Federation if established under the ministry will serve as the clearing house for the operations and collaborative activities of all agencies in Nigeria's maritime domain. Enforcement of maritime laws applicable in Nigeria and implementation of regulatory frameworks will constitute the key mandate of the Hydrographer of the Federation while ensuring collaborative operations of the front-end and back-end agencies. The office will also serve as the field office of the Ministry of Marine and Blue Economy and also serve as a revenue generating agency by providing hydrographic services to local and regional.