



THE NATION BUSINESS

TRANSPORTATION

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Jonathan pledges to link 36 states by rail

PRESIDENT Goodluck Jonathan has promised to link the 36 states by rail.

Speaking at the 17th Honorary International Investment Council (HIIC) meeting in London, Jonathan said the rail network would boost the economy and reduce the pressure on roads and highways.

He acknowledged that no meaningful development can take place without addressing the challenges in the rail sector.

According to him, with adequate rail coverage, the roads and highways will be better maintained.

He said: "If we do not link state capitals by rail, our roads will not last."

On upgrade and expansion of the roads, Jonathan said: "We cannot mould the economy without good roads.

"Quite a number of companies still construct roads to their sites. This is not supposed to be so. We are committed to addressing this, we have been working hard and we have improved our road networks significantly."

He assured that all federal roads will be resurfaced within the next three years.

"We intend to construct new ones that we consider as very critical, especially one that would link Port Harcourt and Bonny, the major gas exporting terminal of our country," Jonathan said.

He restated the government's commitment to securing the air space and improving airport terminal buildings.

Jonathan assured that the government was determined to end the security challenges facing the country.

The HIIC Coordinator, Baroness Lynda Chalker, said the

organisation, since inception, has focused on various sectors of the economy.

"This 17th meeting will focus on rail transportation given its critical role to the economy," she said.

She said positive news about Nigeria was over-shadowed by what is happening now. "We must work together to project Nigeria's positive news and achievements because it is not in anybody's interest to run Nigeria down," she said.

The *News Agency of Nigeria* (NAN) listed other topics discussed at the forum to in-

clude opportunities and reforms in the power and construction sectors.

The Ministers of Transportation, Power, Works, Aviation, Finance, National Planning, Trade and Investment and Defence also made presentations.

The HIIC, comprising prominent investors around the world, advises governments on economic development.

The areas of the HIIC's partnership with Nigeria include reduction of corruption, attracting foreign direct investment and promoting private sector driven economy.