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DEVELOPMENT

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The Journal of Sustainable Development Law and Policy is a peer-reviewed interdisciplinary journal published by the Institute for Oil, Gas, Energy, Environment and Sustainable Development, Afe Babalola University, Ado Ekiti, Nigeria. It is published in June and October by the Afe Babalola University Press, Nigeria.

The Journal promotes the dissemination of research results and scholarly papers by teaching and research scholars in Africa and across the world in broad areas of sustainable development law and policy. The thematic focus of the journal spans across broad areas of sustainable development law and policy ranging from the economic, social, and environmental dimensions. As such papers that explore broad themes of sustainable development such environment, natural resources, green economy, international trade, banking, taxation, public policy, public private partnerships, alternative dispute resolution, human rights, peace, and conflict studies are normally given top consideration.

The Editorial Board of the Journal comprises international development scholars and experts from Italy, United Kingdom, Indonesia, Nigeria, Canada and the United States that provide leadership and lend their expertise to promote and enhance the scholarly relevance of the journal internationally.

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Selected articles would be published in hard copy and prominently displayed on the institutional website as a resource for scholars and practitioners worldwide.

Papers must be based on original research, conform to the usual standard of academic publishing, be fully referenced, and presented in the standard format employed by the series. Papers will be evaluated based on their contemporary relevance, contribution to their selected fields of research, structure and analytical vigor. Please refer to the submission guide below.

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# SPECIAL ISSUE: STEERING AFRICA TOWARDS 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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## EDITORIAL COMMENTS

**Professor Victor Ojakorotu**

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### *Guest Editor of the Special Issue*

In the 21st century, the drive and desire for sustainable development underlie the hallmarks of progressive continents in the global system. However, the extent to which 21st-century Africa has achieved the much-expected sustainable development remains largely unclear, considering the ramifications of contemporary challenges within the continent. In a bid to steer Africa off these challenges and towards the path of sustainable development, leaders and governments on the continent, like their counterparts on other continents, collectively embraced the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It was envisaged that all countries in the world will be sustainably developed if all 17 goals are rigorously pursued.

Evidence continues to highlight the reason why Africa is one of the continents put into consideration when proponents of sustainable development goals are drawing up specific life-changing goals that can transform the global system. This is because Africa is one of the least developed continents, dogged with different challenges ranging from governance and leadership deficits to corruption, abuse of human rights, breakdown of law and order, poverty, inequalities, gender violence and discrimination, spoiled electoral systems, and ethnic identities, among others. While other continents have devised lawful means and strategies for mitigating these challenges on their path to sustainable development, their African counterpart has remained largely fragile and incapable of navigating her path towards the attainment of sustainable development. Although many African governments and states have sought viable means and strategies that can enhance the sustainable development of the continent, evidence shows that the majority of these strategies are hardly enforced within the confines of the law, and they tend to promote the private benefits of political elites over their citizens. This has partly remained one of the reasons why Africa still struggles with the attainment of the SDGs. Development, which is the process of expanding choices made by people in order to live a life that they value and enhancing their conditions to live life to the fullest, is hard to find in Africa. Indeed, contemporary Africa is expected to be on the path to sustainable development, considering its endowment of natural resources and young population. However, the reality in most African states shows negative developmental outcomes in almost all the indicators of sustainable development. Today, Africa still suffers from poverty, the inability to feed its populations, abuse of laws and human rights, inequalities, climate change, and a precarious healthcare system, among other contemporary challenges. With effective application of law, respect for fundamental human rights, equality before the law, an independent judiciary, and functional and transparent democratic institutions, Africa is expected to have been more transformed beyond its current condition, occasioned by myriad challenges.

To address challenges obstructing Africa's move toward sustainable development, measures have been put into place by African governments, states, and foreign partners, yet Africa has largely remained underdeveloped compared to other continents. This has negative implications for the attainment of the SDGs by 2030. The SDGs are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all, including Africa. They have the potential to stimulate Africa towards sustainable development. However, because of the degree of lawlessness, authoritative administration, flagrant disobedience to court decisions, and lack of political will in some African states, this expectation seems largely unattainable. This evidently shows that for Africa's development to be sustainable, African states and governments must embrace the practice of the rule of law. Development must be complemented by a system that monitors the journey towards the goals so that proper action may be taken when necessary. The effective application of law to stimulate good and desirable conduct or behavior, especially those that can compel African leaders to lead and live an exemplary life, will certainly aid the prompt attainment of sustainable development on the continent. For long, African countries have been administered by leaders with little or no commitment to the developmental plight of their citizens. This has been possible, partly due to the absence of rules of law and policy action that can check the excesses of political leaders at the helm of affairs on the continent. Africa needs to re-strategize its strategies towards sustainable development, following legal processes, respecting human rights, strengthening democratic institutions, and enhancing the independence of the judiciary. This will not only promote public trust but also attract foreign investors to invest in Africa's economy, which may contribute to the continent's drive for sustainable development in the long run. More importantly, Africa's quest for sustainable development depends largely on well-articulated problem-solving research findings or solutions that can expand the frontier of knowledge on how Africa can be on the pathway to sustainable development.

*The Journal of Sustainable Development Law and Policy* remains a credible research platform where African problems and other related issues concerning sustainable development, law, and policy can be discussed and disseminated with the aim of expanding knowledge on Africa's contemporary developmental issues. This current special issue is a compendium of cutting-edge research and insightful perspectives that exemplify the forefront of academic inquiry. The multi-disciplinary nature of the *Journal of Sustainable Development Law and Policy* is replicated in the subjects covered in this special issue. It is a collection of articles that bring unique arguments and methods to bear on Africa's sustainable development challenges and opportunities that span dimensions of law, policy, and justice studies. Whether exploring the frontiers of sustainable development, grappling with issues in education, poverty reduction, diaspora philanthropy, and rural infrastructure, connecting COVID-19 and sustainability of peace, exploring policies and acts on the mainstreaming of gender in higher institutions of learning, sustainability development and environment, equitable just society, local economic development, and land crises and implications for societal development This special issue is also a combination of thought-provoking analyses and discussions on the current state of Africa's quest for sustainable development, which highlight promising paths and directions for future exploration. It is hoped that findings from this special issue of the journal will furnish the understanding of African leaders and states on how to achieve sustainable development through effective enforcement of law and policy.

Conclusively, the combined efforts of scholars and academics from different

academic disciplines embodied in this special issue serve to promote the boundaries of knowledge, stimulate practice, and ultimately critique and define how the African continent navigates to attain sustainable development capable of positively transforming the continent.

**Professor Victor Ojatorotu**