



NIGER

June 2018

SECOND REVIEW UNDER THE EXTENDED CREDIT FACILITY ARRANGEMENT, AND REQUEST FOR MODIFICATION OF A PERFORMANCE CRITERION— PRESS RELEASE; STAFF REPORT; AND STATEMENT BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR NIGER

In the context of the Second Review Under the Extended Credit Facility Arrangement, and Request for Modification of a Performance Criterion, the following documents have been released and are included in this package:

- A **Press Release** including a statement by the Chair of the Executive Board.
- The **Staff Report** prepared by a staff team of the IMF for the Executive Board's consideration on June 1, 2018, following discussions that ended on April 10, 2018, with the officials of Niger on economic developments and policies underpinning the IMF arrangement under the Extended Credit Facility. Based on information available at the time of these discussions, the staff report was completed on May 16, 2018.
- A **Statement by the Executive Director** for Niger.

The documents listed below have been or will be separately released.

Letter of Intent sent to the IMF by the authorities of Niger*
Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies by the authorities of Niger*
Technical Memorandum of Understanding*
*Also included in Staff Report

The IMF's transparency policy allows for the deletion of market-sensitive information and premature disclosure of the authorities' policy intentions in published staff reports and other documents.

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Price: \$18.00 per printed copy

International Monetary Fund
Washington, D.C.



INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND



Press Release No. 18/211
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 1, 2018

International Monetary Fund
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Washington, D. C. 20431 USA

IMF Executive Board Completes Second Review of Extended Credit Facility Arrangement for Niger and Approves US\$20 Million Disbursement

The Executive Board of the IMF today completed the second review of Niger's economic and financial program supported under the Extended Credit Facility (ECF) Arrangement. The completion of the review enables the disbursement of SDR 14.1 million (about US\$20 million), bringing total disbursements under the arrangement to SDR 42.3 million (about US\$60 million).

In completing the second review, the Executive Board took note of the authorities' Social and Economic Development Plan (PDES) for 2017-21 that serves as Niger's Economic Development Document (EDD) describing the macroeconomic, structural, and social policies in support of growth and poverty reduction, as well as associated external financing needs and major sources of financing.

On January 23, 2017 the Executive Board of the IMF had approved a three-year arrangement under the ECF for Niger in the amount of SDR 98.7 million (about US\$134.04 million, or 75 percent of Niger's quota) in support of the authorities' national plan for economic development (see Press Release No. 17/18). It aims to enhance macroeconomic stability and foster high and equitable growth, boost incomes and create jobs, while strengthening the foundations for sustainable development.

Following the Executive Board discussion, Mr. Mitsuhiro Furusawa, Deputy Managing Director and Acting Chair, made the following statement:

“Program performance in 2017 was satisfactory, despite an underperformance of fiscal revenue mobilization. All performance criteria were met. All indicative targets were observed, except for the one on fiscal revenues, which fell well short of what was programmed for 2017. Implementation of the structural reform agenda is progressing, but slower than envisaged.

“The 2018 program is set in a realistic macroeconomic framework, with economic growth gradually picking up over the next few years thanks to economic reforms and significant donor support. Currently elevated inflation should recede quickly and fiscal consolidation is set to bring the deficit below the WAEMU threshold by 2021. The current account deficit will likely remain large but is fully financed by external support.

“Going forward, it will be important to step up revenue mobilization. Strong revenue collection in 2018 so far is encouraging, as are the budget measures adopted this year. These measures are supported by additional steps to boost revenues over the short term, and systematic efforts to build up administrations capacity. However, the accumulation of new domestic payment arrears during the first quarter should be addressed as soon as possible.

“Reforms to strengthen the private sector and to address demographic pressures and gender inequity remain essential for medium-term development prospects. Efforts to improve the business environment are welcome, with the program emphasizing steps to improve access to credit. Determined implementation is the key to making Niger’s commendable strengthening of its governance framework a tangible success. On the demographic front, despite recent efforts, a broader and faster push is called for if decisive inroads are to be made.

“Submission of the government’s new Economic Development Document that frames the ECF-supported program in a broader and longer-term context is welcome. The revised EDD ensures the national development strategy, the PDES, and the authorities’ overall reform plan are aligned with the stability and development objectives of the ECF-supported program.”

Niger: Selected Economic Indicators, 2016-18

Population (millions)	18.8		Per capita GDP: (\$)	438.4
Quota (current, millions SDR, % total)	131.6	(0.03%)	Literacy/poverty rate:	26.6/45.7
Main products and exports:	Uranium, livestock, petroleum products			
Key export markets:	France, Nigeria			

	2016	2017 (Est.)	2018 (Proj.)
Output			
Real GDP growth (%)	4.9	4.9	5.2
Prices			
Inflation - average (in %)	0.2	2.4	3.9
General government finances			
Revenue and Grants (% GDP)	20.5	21.4	22.7
Expenditure (% GDP)	26.6	26.5	28.6
Fiscal balance (% GDP)	-6.1	-5.0	-5.9
Basic balance (% GDP) ¹	-4.2	-4.9	-4.0
Public debt (% GDP)	45.1	46.1	46.2
Money and Credit			
Broad money (% change)	8.7	6.1	9.5
Credit to private sector (% change)	12.7	2.1	7.8
Balance of payments			
Current account (% GDP)	-15.7	-13.8	-16.7
FDI (% GDP)	3.5	3.7	5.6
Reserves (in months of imports of goods and services)	5.6	4.7	4.4
External debt (% GDP)	33.0	30.1	30.1
Exchange rate			
REER (% change)	0.04	1.53	...

Sources: Nigerien authorities and IMF staff estimates; *International Financial Statistics* database, *World Development Indicators* database.

^{1/} Revenue minus expenditure net of externally-financed capital expenditure.



NIGER

May 16, 2018

SECOND REVIEW UNDER THE EXTENDED CREDIT FACILITY ARRANGEMENT, AND REQUEST FOR MODIFICATION OF A PERFORMANCE CRITERION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Context. With one of the lowest scores in the Human Development Index, Niger is facing daunting development challenges, exacerbated by security concerns from terrorist incursions, low prices for key uranium exports, climate change, and excessive population growth. Nonetheless, GDP grew by a respectable 5 percent in the past two years and should gradually rise to 5¾ percent as reforms and substantial donor support bear fruit. The government is reform oriented and enjoys a comfortable parliamentary majority, but ongoing demonstrations signal a degree of social discontent.

Program performance. With all performance criteria met, implementation has been satisfactory, except for the large miss of the indicative target on fiscal revenue augmentation—an important concern, considering that it is instrumental for fiscal consolidation and fiscal space to address pressing social and infrastructure needs. The indicative target on domestic arrears clearance in the first quarter of 2018 was also missed, but by less than the overperformance in 2017. The structural reform agenda is advancing, though more slowly than envisaged.

The 2018 program. The focus stays on macroeconomic stability underpinned by prudent fiscal policies. 2018 foresees a fiscal effort based on revenue augmentation, which is on track in the first quarter and underpinned by the 2018 budget measures, steps for a short-term revenue boost, and a program for a systematic buildup of revenue administration capacity. The fiscal structural program also seeks improvements in spending efficiency and debt management. The private sector is to be supported by financial deepening, a better business environment, and upgraded governance.

Risks. Results could be undermined by implementation challenges, deteriorating security conditions, and inefficient use of donor funds to strengthen physical and human capital. In the longer run, development prospects would be clouded if Niger's explosive population growth is not reined expeditiously. On the upside, reform momentum and strong donor support could set off a stronger-than-expected virtuous cycle of private sector development.

Staff views. Staff supports the conclusion of the second review under the ECF, which will result in a disbursement of SDR 14.1 million.

Approved By
David Owen (AFR)
and Johannes
Wiegand (SPR)

Discussions were held in Niamey from March 28 to April 10, 2018. The mission comprised Messrs. Klingen (head), Cangul, Lessard, Lopes, Ms. Woldemichael, and Messrs. Ntamatungiro (Resident Representative) and Abdou (local economist) (all AFR). Mr. Owen (AFR) joined the mission during April 4 to 5. Mr. Francisco provided extensive research assistance and Ms. Canales Munoz administrative support at headquarters (both AFR).

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PROGRAM PERFORMANCE, AND OUTLOOK

1. The government enjoys a strong parliamentary majority and goodwill from donors, but ongoing demonstrations signal a degree of social discontent. The 2016 elections gave President Issoufou a strong five-year mandate. But demonstrations by students, the opposition, and CSOs have picked up, with the 2018 budget a lightning rod. Niger also faces external threats from terrorist incursions across its borders, a daunting development agenda, and challenges with the transit of Europe-bound migrants. Donors are accelerating their support, pledging US\$12.7 billion during the December 2017 donor round table, against US\$7 billion sought, in support of Niger's 5-year development plan (PDES 2017-21).

A. Recent Developments and Program Performance

2. Economic developments in 2017 have broadly evolved as envisaged, except for a spike in inflation. Real GDP expanded at a respectable 4.9 percent in 2017, after 5 percent in 2016, reflecting another decent crop season and a strengthening in the hydrocarbon and service sectors, despite continued security threats and low international prices for uranium exports. Private sector credit expanded by nearly 10 percent for most of the year. As a WAEMU member, Niger has recourse to the union's pooled reserves, which improved slightly to 4.2 months of imports at end-2017 and should have further benefitted from the euro bond issuance of Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal in early 2018. Preliminary data point to an improved goods trade balance, a reduction in the current account deficit to some 14 percent of GDP, and a positive overall balance of payments. While low for most of 2017, inflation picked up in the last quarter due to base effects from the bumper crop in 2016 and government purchases of cereal for the strategic food reserve. It rose further in early 2018, running at 5.4 percent in April, reflecting an estimated 1.5 ppt contribution from administrative price and tax hikes, as well as opportunistic price increases amid limited competition and uncertainty about the modalities of newly introduced taxes.

3. In 2017, fiscal effort and domestic budget financing were close to levels projected in the first review, but revenue performance fell well short. The basic balance came to -4.9 percent of GDP and domestic financing¹ to 2.4 percent of GDP. The overall balance—the WAEMU fiscal convergence anchor—improved substantially to -5.0 percent of GDP from -6.1 percent of GDP in 2016, thanks to a decline in foreign-financed investment and an uptick in grants. Fiscal revenues underperformed strongly and in fact declined as a percent of GDP, partly because of temporary factors, such as a strike by traders against stricter valuation of imports at customs and management problems in tax administration, as well as delays in the collection of tax arrears and in the sale of telecom licenses. Strict expenditure control by the Inter-Ministerial Budget Regulation Committee to offset the revenue underperformance protected the fiscal bottom line.

¹ Excluding 0.4 percent of GDP in financing from the Fund.

4. Program performance has been satisfactory, except for fiscal revenue mobilization. All performance criteria have been met, but the authorities missed the indicative target on revenues by a large margin. Implementation of the structural reform agenda is advancing more slowly than envisaged. Specifically,

- all performance criteria as set out for December 2017 at program approval were met. At 2.4 percent of GDP, domestic financing remained well below the program ceiling, primarily because of higher grants. The authorities also cleared considerably more domestic payment arrears than programmed, although some new ones emerged in early 2018 in breach of the end-March 2018 indicative target. The continuous limits on external debt accumulation and non-incurrence of external payment arrears were respected;
- four out of five indicative targets as set out for December 2017 at program approval were observed. Revenue mobilization disappointed across the board, falling 1.9 percent of GDP short of target and 0.2 percent of GDP below 2016 levels. The basic fiscal deficit was right on target. The basic fiscal balance including grants, poverty-related spending, and exceptional expenditure all stayed within program confines;
- compliance with applicable structural benchmarks between December 2017 and March 2018 was marked by delays. The update of the national policy on gender was delivered well ahead of schedule, but none of the other policies covered by benchmarks was fully in place on time. Performance plans for tax and customs administrations were put in place in the first half of May 2018 as a *prior action*; regarding the structural benchmark on treasury single account (TSA), a banking impact study has been completed, many accounts in commercial banks were transferred, a new subaccount structure was agreed, and only its implementation remains pending; new PPP legislation has not yet been submitted to parliament, but the *prior action* to send it to cabinet has been met; and regarding the bankification of fiscal payments, a first draft plan has been furnished, but cash payments at the large taxpayer office (DGE) are still possible; and
- recurrent structural benchmarks related to regular monitoring of budget execution, commitment and cash planning, were respected. The revised borrowing plan for 2018-21 was furnished in draft form with some delay.

B. Outlook and Risks

5. Economic growth should gradually pick up to 5¾ percent over the medium term. The reform program and considerable donor support should lift growth, but sustained success hinges on them strengthening the still small private sector. Growth will continue to face headwinds from security challenges and unfavorable uranium prices, while weather conditions inject volatility in an economy that still relies heavily on rain-fed crops. Growth is projected at 5.2 and 5.3 percent this year and next, respectively, spurred by donor-financed projects and the 2019 AU summit but held back by a maintenance halt at the refinery in 2018 and possible drag from agricultural production. Inflation could average around 4 percent this year, before declining rapidly in 2019 to well below the 3 percent convergence criterion as transitory factors wash out. Implementation of donor-financed projects is

likely to deteriorate the current account until crude-oil exports under the envisaged pipeline project would commence in 2022. But the inflow of donor funds should keep the overall external balance positive, with Niger expected to support regional reserve accumulation at the BCEAO.

6. With a determined implementation effort and tailwinds from higher nominal GDP growth, fiscal targets for 2018 remain within reach. Fiscal developments in the first quarter of 2018 are encouraging, especially the critical item of revenue collection, which came in better than programmed.

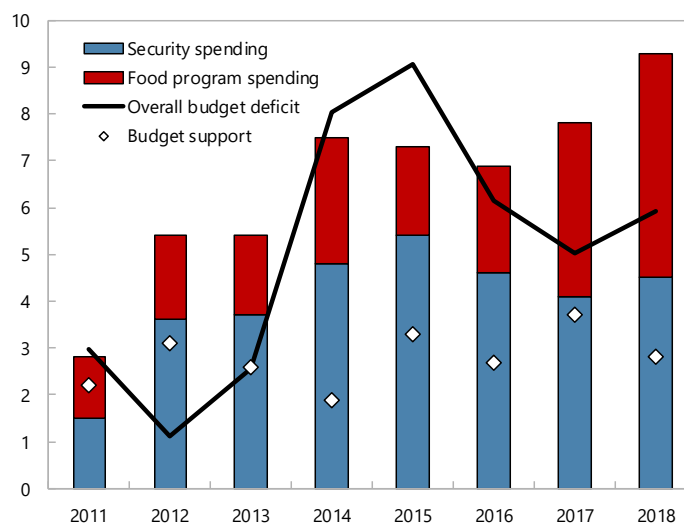
Text Table 1. Fiscal Revenue Performance, 2018Q1 actual vs. 2018 program
(In billions of CFAF, unless otherwise indicated)

	Q1 2017 Actual	Q1 2018 Prelim.	Change (percent)	2017 Actual	2018 Program	Change (percent)
Total revenue	158	189	20.0	681	803	17.9
Income taxes	37	37	0.3	171	194	13.5
International trade taxes	37	46	25.4	172	208	20.9
Goods and services taxes	61	82	33.2	234	279	19.2
Other taxes	14	16	14.8	55	60	9.1
Nontax revenue	9	9	-4.5	49	62	26.5

Sources: Nigerien authorities; and IMF staff estimates.

7. For the medium term, Niger targets reaching the WAEMU convergence criterion for the overall fiscal balance of -3 percent of GDP with a two-year delay in 2021. Public finances suffered a large setback when the security situation started to deteriorate and recurrent food shortages were forcefully addressed. Between 2011 and 2017, security spending rose by 2.6 percent of GDP and spending on the food program is 2.4 percent of GDP higher. With a hike of 1.5 percent of GDP, budget support provided only a partial offset. Going forward, there will be considerable fiscal effort, as reflected in the reduction of the basic fiscal deficit, but the spending of donor funds will slow the fiscal consolidation in terms of the overall balance.

Text Figure 1. Security and Food Program Spending, 2011-18
(In percent of GDP)



Sources: Nigerien authorities; and IMF staff calculations.

8. The authorities broadly agreed with this outlook and submitted a generally aligned updated Economic Development Document (EDD) in the context of this review. They were hopeful that reform and donor support could generate even higher growth despite the many challenges that Niger is facing, but agreed that working around a somewhat conservative baseline was prudent. They also thought that a good part of the price pressures experienced in late 2017 and early 2018 could unwind more quickly, as government advances the distribution of cereal from its strategic food reserve. The authorities' medium-term vision is enshrined in its PDES 2017-21 adopted in late 2017 and submitted as an update to the EDD of 2016. It focuses on economic growth, social development, and demographic transition, with the baseline scenario aligned to the IMF-supported program (Annex 1).

POLICY DISCUSSIONS

Discussions revolved around the key objectives of the program and a policy agenda for 2018 to support them: (i) preserving macroeconomic stability; (ii) broadening the revenue base; (iii) improving expenditure quality; and (iv) brightening development prospects, through financial sector development, better governance, and confronting the demographic challenge.

A. Preserving Macroeconomic Stability

9. The authorities are keenly aware that macroeconomic stability hinges above all on sound public finances, good debt management, and effective absorption of donor support. Niger's fiscal effort is best reflected in the evolution of the basic fiscal balance,² which is targeted to improve by 0.9 percent of GDP to 4 percent of GDP in 2018. Further progress is envisaged for next year, and will be implemented in the context of the 2019 budget. Revenue mobilization is to be the main avenue, but expenditure restraint remains an important second line of defense. The overall fiscal balance is set to remain elevated reflecting donor fund absorption. Public debt would stay on a sustainable trajectory and Niger's capacity to repay the Fund remains adequate.

10. The authorities welcomed new flexibility under the program in contracting external public debt, while pledging to remain prudent. Following the upgrading of Niger's debt management capacity to "sufficient" and in accordance with the Fund's public debt limits policy, program conditionality on external debt accumulation is proposed to be modified: the ceiling on the contracting and guaranteeing of non-concessional external public debt is to be replaced by a performance criterion limiting the present value of the contracting of public and publicly-guaranteed external debt from this review onward. The authorities agreed with staff to keep the focus on absorbing concessional donor funds, which should not be crowded out by taking on other debt. A ceiling of CFAF 225 billion (USD 420 million or 4.3 percent of GDP) in present-value terms was agreed for 2018. Assuming historical disbursement patterns and grant elements, this amount is

² The basic fiscal balance (4 percent of GDP in 2018) is defined as the overall fiscal balance (5.9 percent of GDP in 2018) excluding grants (7.3 percent of GDP in 2018) and foreign-financed investment (9.2 percent of GDP in 2018).

consistent with the fiscal consolidation path and it is designed to preserve Niger's status as a country with a "moderate" rating for external debt distress risk. (MEFP ¶17)

11. Niger is committed to further bolster its debt management policies. The Inter-Ministerial Debt Management Committee will be strictly guided by the 2015 decree, including holding regular meetings, fully staffing its technical support committee, and ensuring that all loan conventions require Finance Ministry co-signature to be valid. In addition, the committee will henceforth certify that proper procedures have been followed in the selection of the investment projects underlying the loan conventions. The holding of quarterly meetings and the reporting on the committee's decisions is a new *proposed recurrent structural benchmark*. The authorities will also start publishing debt management reports and debt statistics, as well as adopt debt management policy guidelines. The medium-term objective is to consolidate debt management in the Ministry of Finance, as required by WAEMU directives, and reorganize it into a front-middle-back office structure. (MEFP ¶17)

12. The authorities are reviving public-private partnership (PPP) arrangements as new legislation is being finalized. To lessen the trade-off between investment needs and control of public indebtedness, the authorities have started to resort to PPPs after an extended pause. In a welcome change from the past, these new arrangements are of the build-operate-transfer type and avoid taking on public debt or granting public guarantees. The new PPP law will establish a robust framework, including Ministry of Finance signature of all PPP contracts, integration in the budget cycle, and a PPP definition in line with best practices. The *structural benchmark* for its submission to parliament is proposed to be reset for end-June 2018. The mission urged the authorities to contain tax exemptions in PPP contracts until the limits set out in the new legislation come into effect. (MEFP ¶18)

B. Broadening the Revenue Base

13. Revenue generation remains a key plank of the program, with the two-pronged objective of fiscal consolidation and fiscal space for social spending and investment. Although acerbated by transitory factors, the setback in 2017 remains a critical concern. The authorities and the mission took comfort in the good revenue performance in the first quarter of 2018 as a sign that transitory factors are unwinding—trader strikes are over and key personnel in tax administration has been replaced—that past administrative improvements are paying off, and that the 2018 budget measures are effective. Nonetheless, in an effort to back the nominal revenue projections of the first review more reliably, the additional steps laid out below were agreed, implying an increase to 15.4 percent of GDP from 14.2 percent of GDP in 2017. For the medium-term, targeted revenue augmentation has been dialed back somewhat to acknowledge the uphill nature of the battle and the susceptibility to adverse shocks. Between 2018 and 2021 the revenue ratio is to rise by 2.3 percent of GDP, compared to 2.9 percent in the first review.

14. Despite ongoing protests against the 2018 budget law, the authorities are determined to stand firm and fully implement the measures therein. A large part of revenue gains should come from the roll-out of valuation of imports at transaction prices for customs purposes—an effort

that is supported by IMF technical assistance. A number of previously VAT-exempt products have been subjected to the reduced rate and new presumptive taxes aim at bringing smaller-scale economic activity into the tax net. Net of the full-year effect of last June's telecommunication tax cut, these measures should boost revenues by 0.6 percent of GDP.

	2018 Proj.
Shift to transactional valuation of imports	29.5
VAT taxation at 5% of previously exempted products	6.3
Removal of investment code exemptions	2.0
Housing tax	2.0
Other tax measures ¹	10.0
Tax admin measures ²	5.0
Cuts in telecom taxes	-24.0
Total	30.8
<i>in percent of GDP</i>	<i>0.6</i>

Sources: Nigerien authorities; and IMF staff calculations.
¹ Minimum taxes, real estate taxes, fees, etc.
² TIN requirements, computerization, recruitment of auditors, etc.

15. Further steps aiming for a short-term revenue boost provide additional assurance.

They comprise completing the delayed sale of telecommunication licenses for at least 0.2 percent of GDP and a drive to collect at least 0.3 percent of GDP in tax arrears—CFAF 64 billion (1.3 percent of GDP) of recoverable arrears have already been identified in the large taxpayer unit alone. In addition, staff pressed for an aggressive drive to tackle rampant smuggling of petroleum products, which has led to a steady decline in official domestic petroleum sales in past years. The authorities are in talks with providers of molecular markings of petroleum products, but implementation should be accelerated and flanked by other measures, such as stiffer sanctions for large-scale smugglers.

16. To systematically build up revenue generation capacity over time, a steady hand in reforming tax and customs administrations is needed. Numerous measures have been taken in recent years, often building on IMF technical assistance recommendations, including establishing a large taxpayer unit with full functional responsibilities, the adoption of ASYCUDA world in customs, the rolling out of the SISIC software in tax administration, a single window for car imports, and interconnections with the custom offices in Togo and Benin, which have been technically ready since this April. However, significant improvements in collections have yet to materialized, reflecting in part deficits in seeing reforms through to the operational level. Against this background, the authorities have put in place as a *prior action* for this review strong performance plans for revenue administrations. (MEFP ¶16, bullet 2)

17. Containing discretionary tax and customs exemptions is equally critical for protecting the revenue base and building revenue potential. A start has been made last year with limits on the renewal of exemptions under the investment code, but much remains to be done in streamlining

exemptions and consolidating them into the customs and tax codes. The authorities cautioned that a large part of exemptions was related to foreign aid, security cooperation, and diplomatic privileges. They were also concerned about beggar-thy-neighbor policies in granting tax exemptions to foreign investors, which would take a regional approach to address. Nonetheless, they remain committed to move forward toward the end-September 2018 structural benchmark of submitting to parliament tax exemption reform legislation. As an interim step, the authorities agreed to furnish a white paper by end-June 2018 as a *new proposed structural benchmark*. A commission has already produced a first draft and the authorities have requested IMF technical assistance (MEFP ¶20, bullet 2).

C. Improving Spending Quality

18. With strict limits on the overall expenditure envelope, the onus is on public financial management to make the most of available funds and avoid spending overruns. The Inter-ministerial Budget Regulation Committee established in mid-2016 has proven effective in scaling back non-priority spending when funds fell short, while safeguarding poverty-reduction spending.

19. The authorities are committed to increasingly harness the benefits of program budgeting to raise spending efficiency. The 2018 budget was the first to be prepared on a program basis. Progress toward program targets will be assessed in mid-year to inform the updating of medium-term expenditure plans and the preparation of the 2019 budget. The authorities also envisage to refine program targets going forward and move to the double commitment system AE/CP. (MEFP ¶21, bullet 1)

20. The authorities and the mission agreed on the next implementation steps for the TSA. This reform is aimed at improving the government's liquidity management to reduce interest expenses and at strengthening spending discipline of public entities. Implementation is supported by an IMF resident advisor. With the BCEAO impact study confirming that the bank system has sufficient liquidity to withstand the tightening of funding resulting from TSA implementation, the authorities will move ahead with implementing the new TSA account structure and establishing, and sharing with Fund staff, a timetable for transferring 90 percent of accounts still in commercial banks by end-2018 (*proposed structural benchmark for end-June 2018*). Effecting this transfer is a *proposed structural benchmark for end-December 2018*, together with completing the digitalization of the banking services provided by the Treasury Department. The authorities assured the mission that the Treasury Department has sufficient capacity to handle the additional workload throughout. (MEFP ¶21, bullet 3)

21. The authorities are keen to improve the efficiency of public investment. To this end, they undertake to closely stick to their public investment programs. The new requirement for the debt management committee to verify that proper project selection criteria have been followed before approving the signature of the associated loan conventions will help. Finally, the authorities have requested IMF technical assistance under the Public Investment Management Assessment (PIMA) program.

22. Reform of public enterprises and entities (DEEs) remains on the agenda. It serves the dual purpose of protecting public finances and raising the efficiency and reliability of service delivery to the private sector. The authorities have selected six large public entities for audit, secured funding from the World Bank, and launched tenders. Progress has been made with compiling a list of some 150 DEEs. The goal remains to finalize this list and publish it, together with audit reports of the largest DEEs as available. (MEFP ¶23, bullet 1)

D. Financial Sector Development, Governance, and Demographics

23. Niger's development and poverty reduction prospects hinge on its success in building a strong, job-creating private sector and addressing unsustainable population growth. Donor financing will support the economy in the near term, but to achieve self-sustained, lasting improvements, these resources need to foster private sector development, together with a better business environment and greater access to credit. With lower population growth, investment would go a longer way in raising physical and human capital per capita and thus lifting living standards.

24. High priority is attached to improving the business environment, with monthly monitoring meetings at the highest levels of government. The President and the Prime Minister hold monthly meetings on progress in each area covered by the World Bank's "Doing Business" indicators. Niger now ranks above sub-Saharan and WAEMU averages. Recent progress includes streamlined procedures at the Commercial Court, lower fees for mediation and construction permits, faster transfer of real estate, and simplified access to public and chartered accountants. The authorities agreed with the mission that pertinent issues identified in surveys of the business community should be tackled as a matter of priority, such as frequent power outages, competition from the informal sector, complicated customs procedures, as well as a generally insufficient infrastructure and human capital. The government will also work on establishing a proper VAT refund mechanism and is determined to clear all its remaining domestic payment arrears by end-2018. The mission urged the authorities to make rapid progress so as not to violate the end-June 2018 performance criterion.

25. Achieving financial deepening and better access to credit remain the key challenge in the financial sector. Standard indicators point to financial sector soundness, although the recent rise in the non-performing loan ratio to almost 20 percent needs watching and the recapitalization of the Agricultural Bank should be accelerated. The authorities have not yet completed an updated financial sector assessment based on the Basel II and III methodology, which was introduced this January, but they do not expect major changes. The bigger challenge is making credit more widely available for the private sector to grow. To this end, the authorities

- have strengthened the **credit bureau** through March 2018 legislation that obliges utilities to provide information about the payment discipline of their clients;
- plan to make the new **leasing law** operational by issuing clarifying regulation for its implementation and prepare a law on warrantage;

- adopted legislation allowing financial institutions to lend according to the principles of **Islamic finance**;
- intend to revive implementation of their National Strategy for Financial Inclusion, which had been hampered by the lack of financing, and boost the **microfinance sector**. This includes a fund-raising event, efforts to further consolidate the sector following an assessment with World Bank support, creating a refinancing mechanism, and rolling out deposit insurance; and
- undertake to **dematerialize fiscal payments** and expand electronic payment capacity. Payments to the two largest customs offices in Niamey have been exclusively on a non-cash basis since January 2018. By end-June 2018, cash-payments to the large taxpayer office and the ten largest customs offices will be discontinued and the broader transition plan to electronic payments will be further developed in a white paper (*proposed structural benchmark*). Furthermore, by end-December 2018, cash-payments will no longer be accepted at the tax office for medium-sized enterprises and at the twenty largest customs offices (*proposed structural benchmark*). (MEFP 121, bullet 4)

26. The authorities are making a high-profile effort to promote good governance, but gaps remain and implementation is challenging (Annex 2). They reinforced the investigative powers of the anti-corruption body (HALCIA) in 2016, amended the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure, adopted a National Anti-Corruption Strategy in 2018, and opened an anti-corruption hotline at the Justice Ministry. However, effectiveness of the asset declaration regime is impeded by legislative shortcomings and weak implementation, funding at HALCIA and the Court of Accounts is tight, few cases have been referred to justice, and convictions are rare. Regarding AML/CFT, legislation has been aligned with WAEMU requirements, the financial intelligence unit has been strengthened, a national risk assessment is underway, and the mutual evaluation by GIABA is scheduled for 2020. The level of implementation of the AML/CFT regime by the private sector remains low with regulated entities reporting few suspicious transactions to the financial intelligence unit (CENTIF), especially non-banks. The authorities acknowledged a need to better sensitize non-banks to their obligation to report suspicious transactions. As to transparency in the extractive industry, Niger has initiated the process of rejoining the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI), following the termination of its membership last year. Finally, the authorities agreed to improve fiscal transparency, including publishing budget audit and performance reviews, making a citizen budget available, and granting free online access to the Government Gazette.

27. The government proceeds cautiously in tackling the pressing issues of unsustainable population growth and gender inequality. Despite a decline in fertility found in a recent survey, at 6 children per women on average, it remains far too high to be economically sustainable in the long run. It is likely related to three quarters of women getting married before they reach 18 years of age and low female education attainment levels. At the strategic level, these issues figure high on the government's agenda, but implementation is sensitive. A decree that focuses on girls' education was adopted in December 2017 in lieu of a planned broader law. It defines the duties and responsibilities of the state, communities, and parents in ensuring that girls remain in school until they turn 18. The government is now making a welcome strong effort to promulgate the decree.

PROGRAM MODALITIES

28. Program performance will continue to be assessed semiannually. The furnishing of strong performance plans for revenue administrations and the submission of the new PPP legislation to cabinet were prior actions for the completion of this second review. For the third review, performance will be assessed against end-June 2018 performance criteria and indicative targets, as well as continuous performance criteria, structural benchmarks, and proposed structural benchmarks. The latter are mainly reset structural benchmarks that were not observed in the second review. For the fourth review, performance will be assessed against end-December 2018 performance criteria and indicative targets, as well as continuous performance criteria, and proposed structural benchmarks. It is also proposed, to replace the performance criterion on “new non-concessional external debt contracted or guaranteed by the government with maturities of 1 year or more” and the performance criterion on “new external debt contracted or guaranteed by the government with maturities of less than 1 year” by a performance criterion on the “present value of new public and publicly-guaranteed external debt contracted” as of the date of completion of the second review.

29. Niger’s capacity to repay the Fund remains adequate, but subject to risk, which program measures seek to mitigate. Niger should have sufficient capacity to repay the Fund, including when repayments rise to 1.3 percent during 2021-24, considering the strength of the program, and implementation so far (Table 7). Key risks are security developments, climatic shocks, and implementation capacity.

30. Safeguard assessments are conducted at the level of the regional central bank (BCEAO). The most recent assessment was completed in April 2018 and found a continuing strong control environment.³

STAFF APPRAISAL

31. The authorities continue to implement their ECF-supported program in an overall satisfactory manner, except for fiscal revenue mobilization. All performance criteria and all indicative targets, except for the one on fiscal revenues at end-December 2017 and the one on domestic arrears clearance at end-March 2018, have been met. The sizable revenue underperformance in 2017 is an important concern as the program counts on revenue mobilization for fiscal consolidation and for generating fiscal space to address pressing social and infrastructure needs. Implementation of the structural reform agenda is progressing, but slower than envisaged.

32. The program is set in a realistic macroeconomic framework. Economic growth at around 5 percent in the past two years has been respectable, considering the many challenges Niger is facing. A gradual pickup to 5¾ percent is well within reach as reforms and large-scale donor

³ SM/18/56, paragraph 26 provides a fuller discussion.

support are beginning to bear fruit. Somewhat elevated inflation should quickly recede and the sizable current account deficit is financed thanks to external support. Fiscal consolidation efforts are set to continue, although the WAEMU convergence criterion for the overall fiscal balance will be met only with a two-year delay in 2021, reflecting donor-fund absorption.

33. The fiscal program for 2018 seems on track. Revenues in the first quarter were slightly ahead of program targets, supporting the government's view that last year's shortfalls reflected to a considerable degree one-off factors. Projections are further backed by the 2018 budget measures, steps for a short-term revenue boost, and a systematic buildup of revenue administrations' capacity enshrined in performance plans, which were a prior action for this review. Their determined implementation will be key.

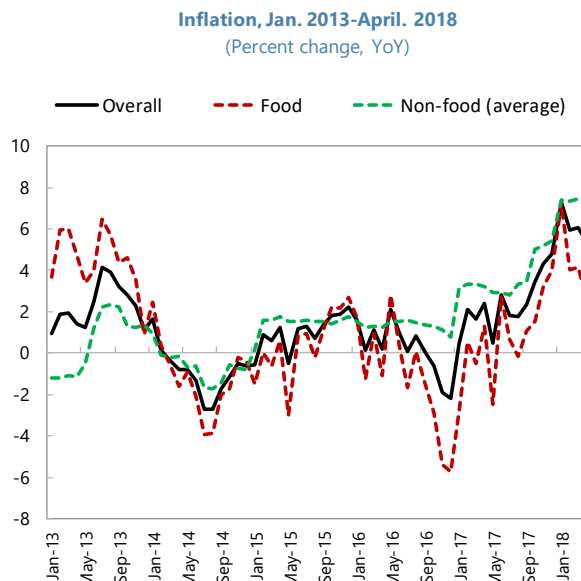
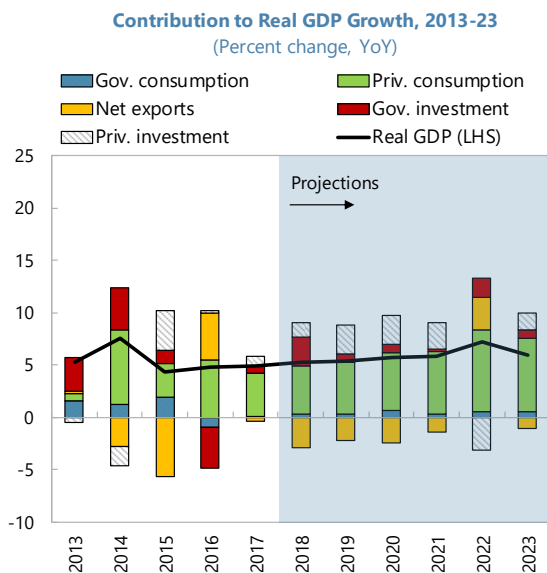
34. An extensive fiscal structural reform agenda is in place. In addition to the ongoing efforts to strengthen revenue administration and streamlining exemptions, it comprises numerous steps to improve the quality of spending. With more flexibility for external public borrowing under the requested modified program conditionality, the strengthening of institutional arrangements and project selection is critical.

35. Reforms to strengthen the private sector and to reduce population growth and gender bias remain essential for medium-term development prospects. Efforts to improve the business environment are welcome and should be complemented by determined implementation of the envisaged multi-pronged agenda for better access to credit. The focus on improving governance is appropriate, but implementation bottlenecks need more attention. The 2017 decree promoting school attendance by underage girls is a step in the right direction. A faster and broader push is however called for if decisive inroads on the demographic and gender fronts are to be made.

36. Submission of the new Economic Development Document that frames the ECF-supported program in a broader and longer-term context is welcome. The revised EDD ensures the national development strategy, the PDES, and the authorities' overall reform plan are aligned with the stability and development objectives of the ECF-supported program.

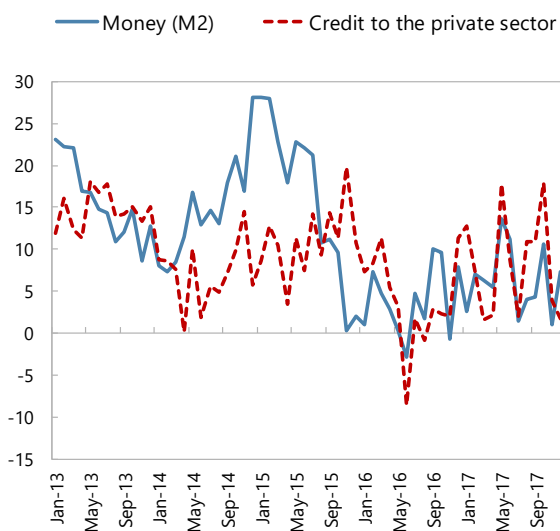
37. Staff supports the authorities' request for the conclusion of the second ECF review and disbursement of the third tranche thereunder in an amount of SDR 14.1 million, as well as for the modification of program conditionality on external public debt. The attached Letter of Intent (LOI) and Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies (MEFP) set out appropriate policies to achieve the 2018 program objectives.

Figure 1. Niger: Recent Economic Developments and Outlook, 2013-23



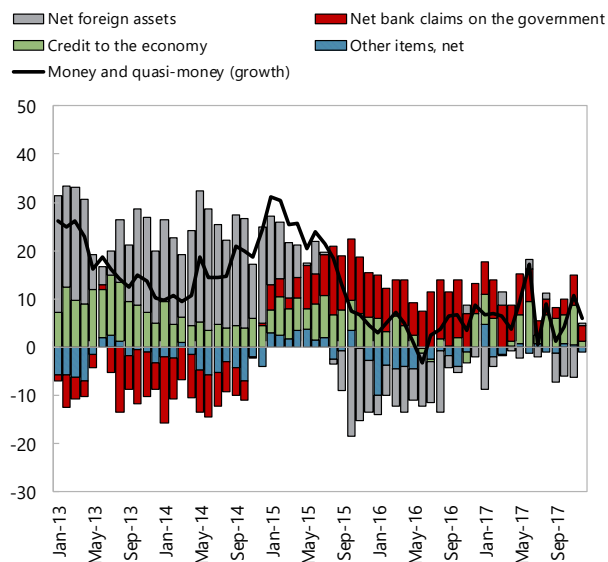
Credit and Money Growth Jan. 2013-Dec. 2017

(Percent change, YoY)



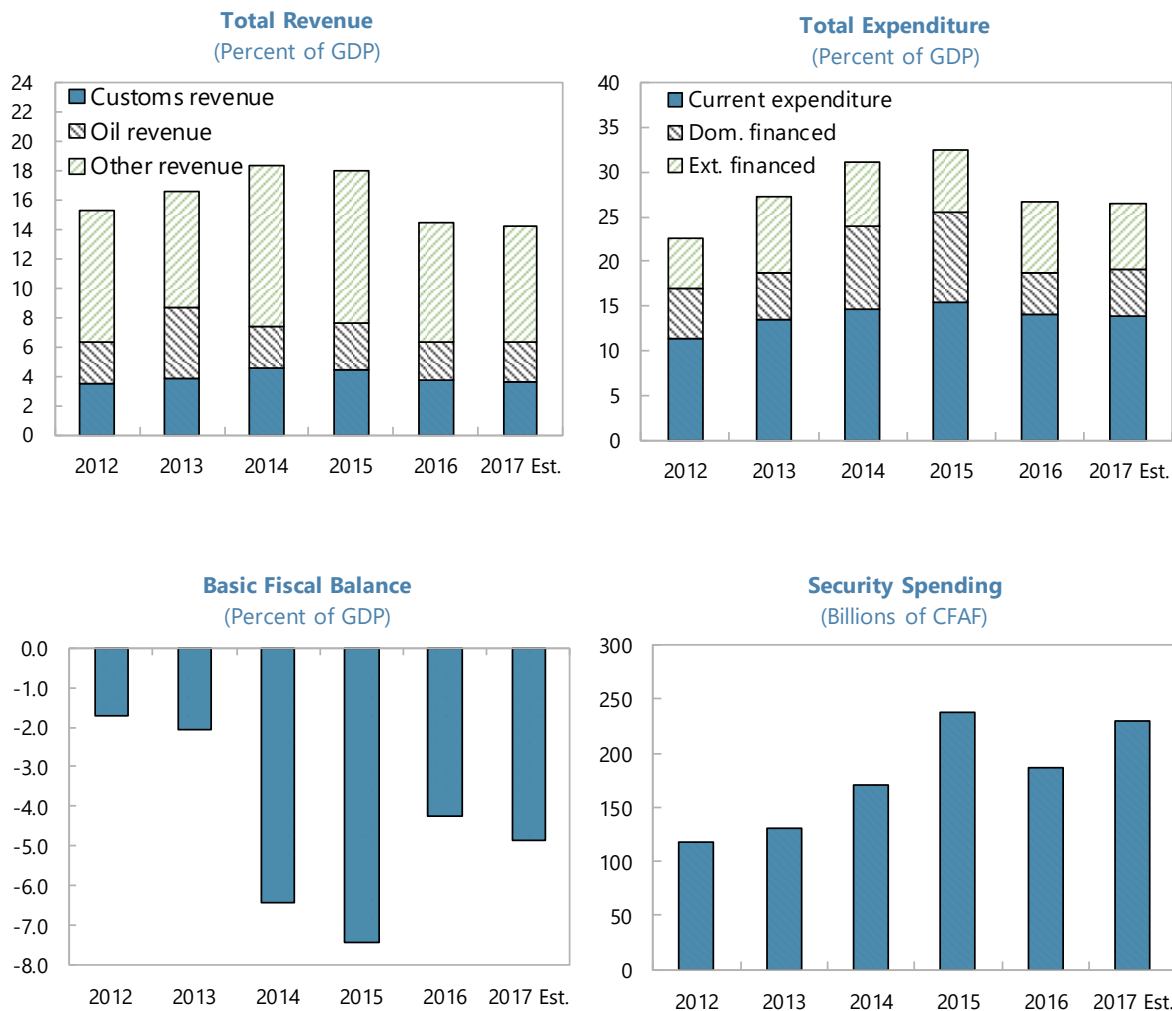
Contribution to Broad Money Growth Jan. 2013-Dec. 2017

(Percent)



Sources: Nigerien authorities; and IMF staff calculations.

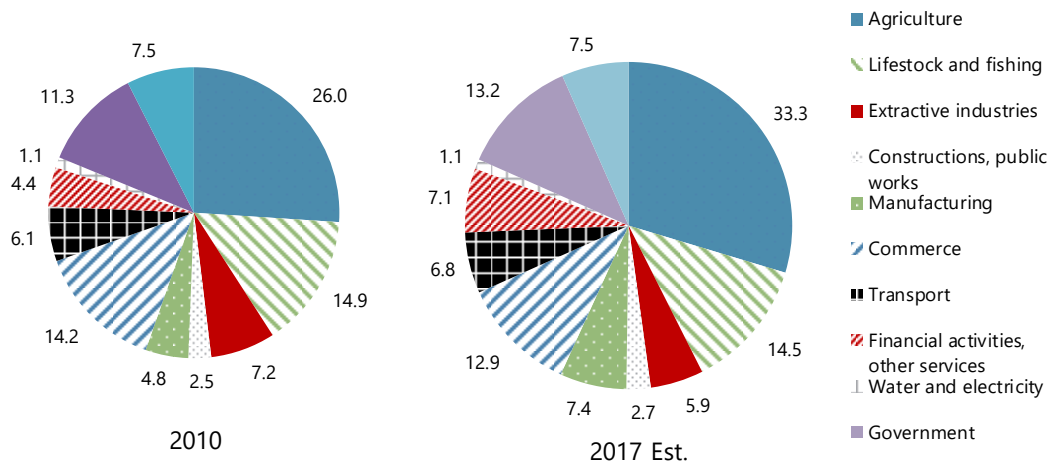
Figure 2. Niger: Fiscal Developments 2012–17



Sources: Nigerien authorities; and IMF staff calculations.

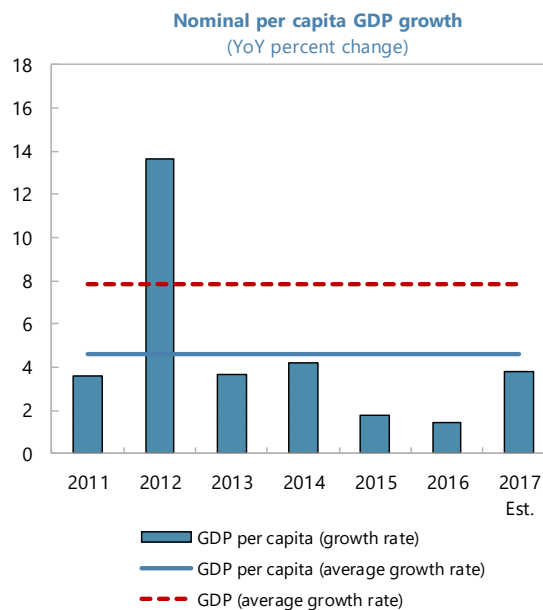
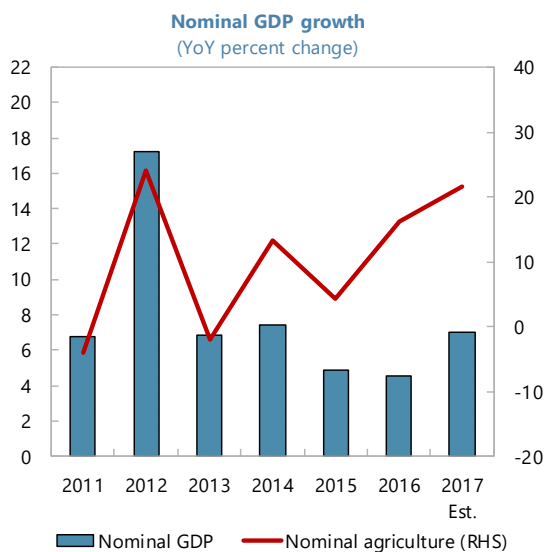
Figure 3. Niger: GDP Composition and Output Volatility

The share of the extractive industries to GDP remains low and has further declined in response to the lower international prices. The share of agriculture and livestock continues to dominate.



As a consequence, GDP growth is highly volatile and it is driven by the impact of climatic shocks

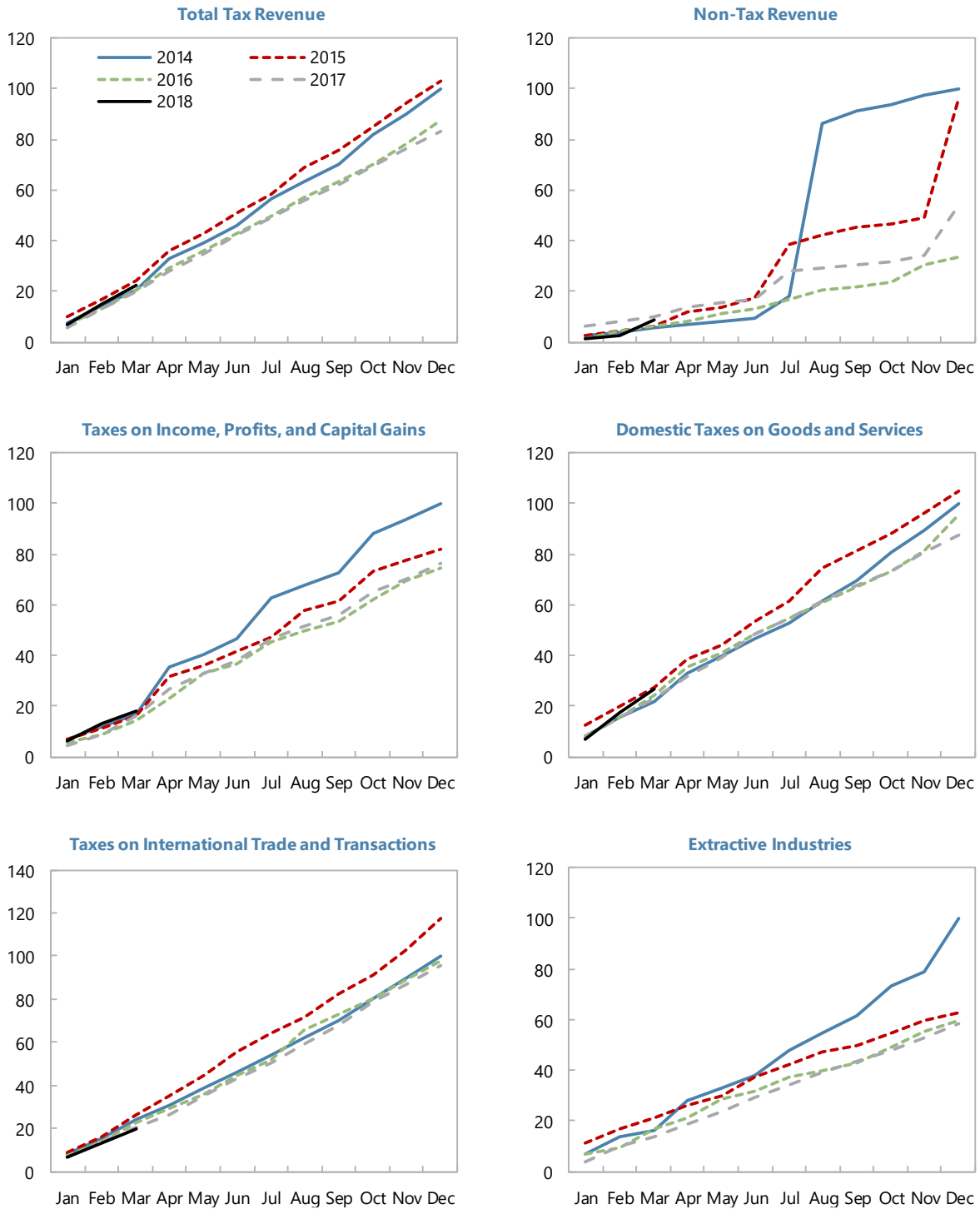
Per capita GDP growth is also highly volatile and, due to high population growth, it is on average very low.



Sources: Nigerien authorities; and IMF staff calculations.

Figure 4. Niger: Tax Performance, 2014-18¹

(Cumulative values, December 2014 = 100, Nominal GDP discounted)



Sources: Nigerien authorities; and IMF staff calculations.

¹ Data on 2018's first quarter is preliminary and subject to change. No data for extractive industries is available.

Table 1. Niger: Selected Economic and Financial Indicators, 2016-23

	2016	2017			2018		2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
		Prog.	First Review	Est.	First Review	Proj.	Projections				
(Annual percentage change, unless otherwise indicated)											
National income and prices											
GDP at constant prices	4.9	5.2	5.2	4.9	5.2	5.2	5.3	5.7	5.8	7.2	6.0
Non-resources GDP at constant prices	4.9	5.0	4.8	4.5	5.1	5.3	5.4	6.0	6.1	4.7	5.7
Oil production (thousand barrels per day)	17	18	18	18	19	18	20	20	20	40	50
GDP deflator	-0.3	2.4	1.8	2.0	2.3	3.8	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.7	2.0
Consumer price index											
Annual average	0.2	2.0	2.0	2.4	2.5	3.9	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
End-of-period	-2.2	2.2	3.0	4.8	2.0	2.4	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
External sector											
Exports, f.o.b. (CFA francs)	-4.9	13.7	9.7	9.9	8.2	9.2	11.0	10.4	6.1	26.0	12.5
Of which: non-uranium exports	7.9	10.3	12.6	20.0	14.2	17.1	12.2	10.3	7.4	28.1	21.2
Imports, f.o.b. (CFA francs)	-13.0	19.5	5.4	7.0	14.3	16.7	13.2	12.9	7.5	2.7	10.6
Export volume	-2.7	6.6	12.5	14.3	9.3	6.5	10.8	11.0	5.1	31.1	15.2
Import volume	-14.1	17.1	2.3	3.5	12.3	13.9	11.0	10.2	7.7	-3.8	7.4
Terms of trade (deterioration -)	-3.8	0.1	-7.4	-6.9	-5.6	-2.3	-1.9	-3.1	-1.8	-6.7	-5.0
Government finances											
Total revenue	-16.2	13.9	13.2	5.7	10.2	18.0	10.2	14.8	13.4	13.4	10.0
Total expenditure and net lending	-14.4	14.1	15.2	6.4	8.3	18.0	6.8	7.1	3.7	10.5	7.4
Of which: current expenditure	-4.5	9.2	7.9	5.1	6.1	10.4	5.5	7.0	3.4	6.5	7.5
Of which: capital expenditure	-23.4	19.9	23.4	7.8	10.5	26.4	8.1	7.2	4.0	14.3	7.4
(Annual change, in percent of beginning-of-period broad money, unless otherwise indicated)											
Money and credit											
Domestic credit	10.6	11.5	10.4	6.8	7.6	7.4	5.1	4.3	4.4	4.8	4.9
Credit to the government (net)	6.3	6.4	6.9	3.3	2.5	2.1	0.2	-0.3	-1.3	-2.0	-2.0
Credit to the economy	4.3	5.1	3.5	3.5	5.1	5.3	4.9	4.6	5.7	6.8	6.9
Net domestic assets	10.7	11.9	9.7	5.7	9.8	7.4	5.1	4.3	4.4	4.8	4.9
Broad money (percent)	8.7	11.1	12.4	6.1	10.8	9.5	7.9	8.3	7.0	9.9	8.7
Velocity of broad money (ratio)	0.0	3.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
(Percent of GDP, unless otherwise indicated)											
Government finances											
Total revenue	14.4	16.1	15.3	14.2	16.8	15.4	15.8	16.9	17.7	18.4	18.8
Total expenditure and net lending	26.6	28.1	28.6	26.5	31.0	28.6	28.4	28.3	27.2	27.6	27.4
Current expenditure	14.1	14.6	14.3	13.9	15.1	14.0	13.8	13.7	13.1	12.8	12.8
Capital expenditure	12.5	13.5	14.4	12.6	15.9	14.5	14.6	14.6	14.1	14.7	14.6
Basic balance (excluding grants) ¹	-4.2	-4.9	-4.6	-4.9	-4.2	-4.0	-2.7	-1.0	-0.7	-0.7	-0.6
Overall balance (commitment basis, including grants) ²	-6.1	-7.4	-6.1	-5.0	-6.2	-5.9	-4.5	-3.7	-3.0	-3.0	-2.9
Gross investment	37.0	42.0	36.0	36.9	40.9	39.0	40.4	41.5	41.9	37.8	37.9
Of which: non-government investment	24.6	28.4	21.6	24.4	25.0	24.4	25.7	27.0	27.9	23.1	23.3
government	12.5	13.5	14.4	12.6	15.9	14.5	14.6	14.6	14.1	14.7	14.6
Gross national savings	21.4	24.0	22.6	23.1	23.8	22.3	22.5	22.0	22.1	22.1	22.2
Of which: non-government	19.2	20.9	18.5	19.4	19.8	18.5	18.0	16.8	15.5	14.6	14.3
Domestic savings	19.8	19.8	19.7	20.2	21.7	20.3	20.5	20.5	20.7	20.9	21.0
External current account balance											
Excluding official grants	-17.5	-19.5	-16.5	-17.2	-19.5	-19.2	-20.4	-21.6	-21.8	-17.6	-17.7
External current account balance (including grants)	-15.7	-18.0	-13.4	-13.8	-17.1	-16.7	-17.9	-19.5	-19.8	-15.7	-15.8
Debt-service ratio as percent of:											
Exports of goods and services	7.6	7.7	8.9	5.3	8.5	8.9	6.4	5.8	6.8	6.7	6.9
Government revenue	8.6	8.4	9.6	6.2	9.0	9.5	6.8	5.9	6.5	6.9	7.3
Total public and publicly guaranteed debt	46.7	51.1	49.7	43.9	51.9	44.7	46.1	46.5	46.5	46.0	45.8
Public and publicly guaranteed external debt	33.0	35.8	35.2	30.1	37.0	30.1	31.7	33.9	35.2	36.0	37.2
NPV of external debt	25.5	25.4	22.4	22.6	23.4	21.9	22.4	23.5	24.1	24.3	24.8
Public Domestic debt	13.7	15.3	14.6	13.8	14.8	14.6	14.4	12.7	11.3	10.0	8.6
Foreign aid	10.6	8.9	12.2	11.0	11.8	12.0	12.8	13.0	11.2	10.7	10.4
(Billions of CFA francs)											
GDP at current market prices	4,464	4,773	4,778	4,777	5,143	5,217	5,601	6,032	6,504	7,091	7,663
GDP at current prices (annual percent change)	4.6	7.7	7.0	7.0	7.6	9.2	7.4	7.7	7.8	9.0	8.1

Sources: Nigerien authorities; and IMF staff estimates and projections.

¹ Revenue excluding grants minus expenditure excluding foreign-financed capital expenditure.² Revenue including grants minus expenditure; WAEMU anchor.

Table 2. Niger: Financial Operations of the Central Government, 2016-23

(In billions of CFA francs)

	2016	2017		2018		2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
		Prog	First Review	Est.	First Review	Proj.	Projections				
Total revenue	643.8	770.8	729.0	680.7	803.3	803.3	885.2	1,016.4	1,152.3	1,307.1	1,438.2
Tax revenue	606.9	721.3	653.8	619.8	728.2	728.2	795.1	906.9	1,014.1	1,158.3	1,286.3
International trade	164.7	205.9	170.8	172.2	208.4	208.4	231.5	254.9	279.2	304.4	329.0
Goods and services	239.0	269.8	264.5	233.8	279.5	279.5	297.4	318.2	330.0	372.8	399.7
Income	156.2	170.2	176.4	170.8	194.0	194.0	213.7	271.2	304.9	372.0	416.9
Other	47.0	75.4	42.1	43.1	46.3	46.3	52.5	62.6	100.0	109.0	140.8
Nontax revenue	27.9	37.7	63.5	48.6	61.8	61.8	74.5	92.7	113.6	122.0	122.8
Special accounts revenue	8.9	11.8	11.8	12.3	13.3	13.3	15.6	16.8	24.6	26.8	29.0
Total expenditure and net lending	1,187.9	1,341.4	1,368.2	1,263.7	1,481.6	1,491.3	1,592.8	1,706.4	1,769.2	1,955.0	2,100.6
Of which: domestically financed	832.7	1,006.7	949.4	913.1	1,003.6	1,013.3	1,035.9	1,077.2	1,200.1	1,359.1	1,483.7
Total current expenditure	631.3	696.0	681.4	663.5	722.9	732.6	772.9	827.2	855.1	910.6	979.2
Budgetary expenditure	609.5	671.1	656.5	639.3	699.1	708.8	747.3	799.7	825.4	878.2	944.1
Wages and salaries	265.1	273.0	271.0	269.7	276.4	276.4	284.7	309.7	325.4	346.9	373.3
Materials and supplies	107.1	131.6	131.7	112.0	136.0	136.0	146.0	154.9	160.4	168.2	176.5
Other current expenditure	197.6	216.5	207.3	215.3	232.4	232.4	249.5	265.8	271.4	292.3	320.7
Interest	41.9	50.0	46.5	49.9	54.2	63.9	67.1	69.3	68.2	70.9	73.7
Of which: external debt	18.4	20.6	19.8	16.4	23.4	23.4	19.3	19.8	21.1	26.0	30.4
Adjustments and fiscal expenditure	-2.4	0.0	0.0	-7.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Special accounts expenditure ¹	21.8	24.9	24.9	24.2	23.9	23.9	25.6	27.6	29.7	32.4	35.0
Capital expenditure and net lending	556.6	645.4	686.8	600.2	758.7	758.7	819.9	879.2	914.1	1,044.4	1,121.4
Capital expenditure	556.6	645.4	686.8	600.2	758.7	758.7	819.9	879.2	914.1	1,044.4	1,121.4
Domestically financed	201.4	310.7	268.0	249.6	280.7	280.7	263.0	250.0	345.0	448.5	504.6
Externally financed	355.2	334.7	418.8	350.6	478.0	478.0	556.9	629.2	569.1	595.9	616.8
Of which: grants	204.0	164.2	220.5	201.0	269.9	269.9	333.7	360.1	309.0	322.9	313.2
loans	151.2	170.5	198.3	149.6	208.1	208.1	223.2	269.1	260.1	273.0	303.6
Net lending	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Overall balance (commitment including grants, WAEMU anchor)	-273.9	-351.8	-289.7	-240.8	-317.1	-308.4	-254.1	-221.3	-195.9	-209.3	-222.8
Basic balance ²	-188.9	-235.9	-220.4	-232.4	-200.3	-210.0	-150.7	-60.8	-47.8	-52.1	-45.6
Change in payments arrears and float	19.0	-43.4	-43.4	-53.7	-65.4	-29.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Of which: change in payment arrears	19.0	-43.4	-43.4	-78.9	-65.4	-29.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Overall balance (cash)	-525.1	-614.0	-682.6	-636.7	-743.7	-717.2	-707.6	-690.0	-616.9	-648.0	-662.4
Financing	525.1	614.0	682.6	636.6	743.7	717.2	707.6	690.0	616.9	648.0	662.4
External financing	441.2	387.2	536.7	503.5	559.3	576.1	681.5	746.6	680.4	705.1	731.8
Grants	270.3	218.9	349.5	342.2	361.2	379.6	453.6	468.8	421.0	438.7	439.5
Of which: budget financing	66.2	54.6	129.0	141.1	91.4	109.8	119.9	108.7	112.1	115.8	126.3
Loans	203.4	208.3	233.2	182.9	246.8	245.2	263.7	312.6	306.9	323.5	358.6
Of which: budget financing	52.2	37.8	34.9	33.3	38.7	37.1	40.5	43.5	46.8	50.5	55.1
Amortization	-32.5	-39.9	-46.0	-21.5	-48.7	-48.7	-35.8	-34.7	-47.6	-57.2	-66.4
Debt relief (incl. debt under discussion)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Domestic financing	84.0	226.8	145.9	133.1	184.4	141.1	26.1	-56.6	-63.5	-57.1	-69.4
Banking sector	11.6	77.3	79.4	66.6	28.2	27.0	2.5	-4.8	-21.8	-34.8	-38.6
IMF	6.6	19.7	19.7	19.2	18.5	17.3	15.4	1.7	-14.6	-23.0	-26.9
Statutory advances (including other advances)	-8.2	-8.4	-8.4	-8.4	-8.7	-8.7	-7.6	-3.6	-1.0	0.0	0.0
Deposits with BCEAO	31.0	2.7	9.6	-37.9	4.1	4.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	-5.0	-10.0
Government securities net and others	-17.8	63.3	58.4	93.7	14.3	14.3	-5.4	-2.9	-6.1	-6.8	-1.7
Nonbanking sector	72.4	149.4	66.5	66.5	156.2	114.1	23.6	-51.8	-41.7	-22.3	-30.9
Financing gap (+)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Sources: Nigerien authorities; and IMF staff estimates and projections.

¹ The special accounts include the financing on the National Retirement Fund, Priority Investments Fund, and Fund for Continuous Professional Development.² Revenues minus expenditure net of externally-financed capital expenditure.

Table 3. Niger: Financial Operations of the Central Government, 2016-23
(In percent of GDP)

	2016	2017			2018		2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
		Prog.	First Review	Est.	First Review	Proj.	Projections				
Total revenue	14.4	16.1	15.3	14.2	15.6	15.4	15.8	16.9	17.7	18.4	18.8
Tax revenue	13.6	15.1	13.7	13.0	14.2	14.0	14.2	15.0	15.6	16.3	16.8
International trade	3.7	4.3	3.6	3.6	4.1	4.0	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.3	4.3
Goods and services	5.4	5.7	5.5	4.9	5.4	5.4	5.3	5.3	5.1	5.3	5.2
Income	3.5	3.6	3.7	3.6	3.8	3.7	3.8	4.5	4.7	5.2	5.4
Other	1.1	1.6	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.5	1.5	1.8
Nontax revenue	0.6	0.8	1.3	1.0	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.5	1.7	1.7	1.6
Special accounts revenue	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4
Total expenditure and net lending	26.6	28.1	28.6	26.5	28.8	28.6	28.4	28.3	27.2	27.6	27.4
Of which: domestically financed	18.7	21.1	19.9	19.1	19.5	19.4	18.5	17.9	18.5	19.2	19.4
Total current expenditure	14.1	14.6	14.3	13.9	14.1	14.0	13.8	13.7	13.1	12.8	12.8
Budgetary expenditure	13.7	14.1	13.7	13.4	13.6	13.6	13.3	13.3	12.7	12.4	12.3
Wages and salaries	5.9	5.7	5.7	5.6	5.4	5.3	5.1	5.1	5.0	4.9	4.9
Materials and supplies	2.4	2.8	2.8	2.3	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.5	2.4	2.3
Other current expenditure	4.4	4.5	4.3	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.4	4.2	4.1	4.2
Interest	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.0
Of which: external debt	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4
Adjustments and fiscal expenditure	-0.1	0.0	0.0	-0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Special accounts expenditure ¹	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Capital expenditure and net lending	12.5	13.5	14.4	12.6	14.8	14.5	14.6	14.6	14.1	14.7	14.6
Capital expenditure	12.5	13.5	14.4	12.6	14.8	14.5	14.6	14.6	14.1	14.7	14.6
Domestically financed	4.5	6.5	5.6	5.2	5.5	5.4	4.7	4.1	5.3	6.3	6.6
Externally financed	8.0	7.0	8.8	7.3	9.3	9.2	9.9	10.4	8.7	8.4	8.0
Of which: grants	4.6	3.4	4.6	4.2	5.2	5.2	6.0	6.0	4.8	4.6	4.1
loans	3.4	3.6	4.2	3.1	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.5	4.0	3.9	4.0
Net lending	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Overall balance (commitment including grants, WAEMU anchor)	-6.1	-7.4	-6.1	-5.0	-6.2	-5.9	-4.5	-3.7	-3.0	-3.0	-2.9
Basic balance ²	-4.2	-4.9	-4.6	-4.9	-3.9	-4.0	-2.7	-1.0	-0.7	-0.7	-0.6
Change in payments arrears and float	0.4	-0.9	-0.9	-1.1	-1.3	-0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Of which: change in payment arrears	0.4	-0.9	-0.9	-1.7	-1.3	-0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Overall balance (cash)	-11.8	-12.9	-14.3	-13.3	-14.5	-13.7	-12.6	-11.4	-9.5	-9.1	-8.6
Financing	11.8	12.9	14.3	13.3	14.5	13.7	12.6	11.4	9.5	9.1	8.6
External financing	9.9	8.1	11.2	10.5	10.9	11.0	12.2	12.4	10.5	9.9	9.6
Grants	6.1	4.6	7.3	7.2	7.0	7.3	8.1	7.8	6.5	6.2	5.7
Of which: budget financing	1.5	1.1	2.7	3.0	1.8	2.1	2.1	1.8	1.7	1.6	1.6
Loans	4.6	4.4	4.9	3.8	4.8	4.7	4.7	5.2	4.7	4.6	4.7
Of which: budget financing	1.2	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7
Amortization	-0.7	-0.8	-1.0	-0.5	-0.9	-0.9	-0.6	-0.6	-0.7	-0.8	-0.9
Debt relief (incl. debt under discussion)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Domestic financing	1.9	4.8	3.1	2.8	3.6	2.7	0.5	-0.9	-1.0	-0.8	-0.9
Banking sector	0.3	1.6	1.7	1.4	0.5	0.5	0.0	-0.1	-0.3	-0.5	-0.5
IMF	0.1	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.0	-0.2	-0.3	-0.4
Statutory advances (including other advances)	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	-0.1	-0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Deposits with BCEAO	0.7	0.1	0.2	-0.8	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	-0.1	-0.1
Government securities net and others	-0.4	1.3	1.2	2.0	0.3	0.3	-0.1	0.0	-0.1	-0.1	0.0
Nonbanking sector	1.6	3.1	1.4	1.4	3.0	2.2	0.4	-0.9	-0.6	-0.3	-0.4
Financing gap (+)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Sources: Nigerien authorities; and IMF staff estimates and projections.

¹ The special accounts include the financing on the National Retirement Fund, Priority Investments Fund, and Fund for Continuous Professional Development.

² Revenues minus expenditure net of externally-financed capital expenditure.

Table 4. Niger: Monetary Survey, 2016-23

	2016	2017		2018		2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
		Prog.	First Review	Est.	First Review	Proj.	Projections				
(Billions of CFA francs)											
Net foreign assets	569.8	609.3	601.8	575.0	614.8	601.0	641.0	701.0	743.0	833.0	905.0
BCEAO	458.4	505.1	524.4	490.9	539.4	505.9	543.9	603.9	670.9	760.9	862.9
Commercial banks	111.4	104.2	77.5	84.1	75.5	95.1	97.1	97.1	72.1	72.1	42.1
Net domestic assets	640.9	814.9	758.9	709.3	892.8	804.8	876.3	941.8	1,014.2	1,098.3	1,193.6
Domestic credit	819.9	960.4	945.5	902.0	1,049.5	997.5	1,069.0	1,134.6	1,207.0	1,291.0	1,386.3
Net bank claims on government	82.2	169.7	165.5	121.8	199.6	148.8	151.3	146.5	124.7	89.9	51.3
BCEAO	58.1	92.6	84.7	4.7	104.4	17.4	25.3	23.4	7.7	-20.3	-57.2
Claims	119.9	142.9	136.8	130.6	152.4	139.2	147.1	145.2	129.5	106.5	79.6
Of which: statutory advances	12.5	10.7	9.7	9.7	6.8	6.8	3.8	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0
Deposits	-61.7	-50.3	-52.1	-125.9	-48.0	-121.8	-121.8	-121.8	-121.8	-126.8	-136.8
Commercial banks	24.1	77.1	80.8	117.0	95.2	131.4	126.0	123.1	117.0	110.2	108.5
Claims	168.6	219.8	227.1	261.2	241.4	275.6	270.2	267.3	261.2	254.4	252.7
Deposits	-144.5	-142.8	-146.2	-144.2	-146.2	-144.2	-144.2	-144.2	-144.2	-144.2	-144.2
Credit to other sectors	737.7	790.8	780.0	780.3	849.9	848.8	917.8	988.1	1,082.3	1,201.2	1,335.0
Of which: credit to the private sector	670.0	790.8	722.2	684.4	809.2	738.0	806.9	889.7	996.2	1,122.3	1,269.8
Other items, net	-179.1	-145.5	-186.7	-192.8	-156.7	-192.8	-192.8	-192.8	-192.8	-192.8	-192.8
Money and quasi-money	1,210.7	1,424.2	1,360.7	1,284.3	1,507.6	1,405.8	1,517.3	1,642.8	1,757.2	1,931.3	2,098.6
Currency outside banks	598.7	605.3	672.9	623.3	745.5	682.2	736.4	797.3	852.8	937.3	1,018.5
Deposits with banks	612.0	818.9	687.8	661.0	762.1	723.6	781.0	845.6	904.4	994.0	1,080.2
(Annual change, in percent of beginning-of-period broad money, unless otherwise indicated)											
Net foreign assets	-1.9	-0.7	2.6	0.4	1.0	2.0	2.8	4.0	2.6	5.1	3.7
BCEAO	-2.2	-0.8	5.4	2.7	1.1	1.2	2.7	4.0	4.1	5.1	5.3
Commercial banks	0.3	0.1	-2.8	-2.3	-0.1	0.9	0.1	0.0	-1.5	0.0	-1.6
Net domestic assets	10.7	11.9	9.7	5.7	9.8	7.4	5.1	4.3	4.4	4.8	4.9
Domestic credit	10.6	11.5	10.4	6.8	7.6	7.4	5.1	4.3	4.4	4.8	4.9
Net bank claims on the government	6.3	6.4	6.9	3.3	2.5	2.1	0.2	-0.3	-1.3	-2.0	-2.0
BCEAO	2.6	2.2	2.2	-4.4	1.4	1.0	0.6	-0.1	-1.0	-1.6	-1.9
Of which: statutory advances	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Commercial banks	3.8	4.2	4.7	7.7	1.1	1.1	-0.4	-0.2	-0.4	-0.4	-0.1
Claims	4.5	4.9	4.8	7.6	1.1	1.1	-0.4	-0.2	-0.4	-0.4	-0.1
Deposits	-0.8	0.8	-0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Credit to other sectors	4.3	5.1	3.5	3.5	5.1	5.3	4.9	4.6	5.7	6.8	6.9
Of which: credit to the private sector	6.8	5.1	4.3	1.2	6.4	4.2	4.9	5.5	6.5	7.2	7.6
Other items, net	0.1	0.4	-0.6	-1.1	2.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Broad money	8.7	11.1	12.4	6.1	10.8	9.5	7.9	8.3	7.0	9.9	8.7
<i>Memorandum items:</i>											
Velocity of broad money (Ratio)	3.7	3.4	3.5	3.7	3.4	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7
Credit to the private sector											
(Change, in percent)	12.8	9.1	7.9	2.2	12.1	7.9	9.4	10.3	12.0	12.7	13.2
(Percent of GDP)	15.0	16.6	16.3	14.3	16.5	14.1	14.4	14.8	15.3	15.8	16.6
(Percent of non-agricultural GDP)	18.5	20.0	20.0	17.5	20.1	17.2	17.4	17.8	18.4	18.9	19.7
GDP at current prices (annual percent change)	4.6	7.7	7.0	7.0	7.6	9.2	7.4	7.7	7.8	9.0	8.1

Sources: BCEAO; and IMF staff estimates and projections.

Table 5. Niger: Balance of Payments, 2016-23
(In billions of CFA francs, unless otherwise indicated)

	2016	2017		2018		2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
		Prog.	First Review	Est.	First Review	Proj.	Projections				
Current account balance	-700.4	-857.9	-638.9	-658.4	-818.1	-870.2	-1,003.3	-1,177.0	-1,289.5	-1,111.6	-1,207.9
Balance on goods, services, and income	-865.3	-1,048.7	-872.8	-904.7	-1,017.6	-1,088.8	-1,235.0	-1,400.7	-1,520.1	-1,350.1	-1,460.6
Balance on goods	-405.4	-579.2	-401.2	-415.6	-498.8	-535.6	-622.8	-723.4	-790.6	-589.3	-629.0
Exports, f.o.b	611.8	653.3	670.9	672.6	726.2	734.6	815.4	899.8	954.5	1,202.8	1,353.5
Uranium	177.7	247.5	182.1	151.6	167.9	124.5	130.8	144.8	143.8	164.0	94.9
Oil	91.3	93.1	96.1	151.4	101.9	205.4	228.5	259.3	265.1	447.1	548.0
Other products	342.8	312.6	392.7	369.7	456.5	404.7	456.1	495.6	545.6	591.6	710.6
Imports, f.o.b	1,017.2	1,232.5	1,072.1	1,088.2	1,225.0	1,270.2	1,438.2	1,623.2	1,745.0	1,792.0	1,982.5
Food products	208.0	219.5	218.9	230.1	239.4	254.4	307.6	376.3	460.5	569.9	699.0
Petroleum products	57.9	31.9	60.8	61.9	63.9	65.0	68.2	71.6	75.2	79.0	82.9
Capital goods	280.5	409.3	310.9	295.0	418.6	421.8	482.5	542.7	591.5	457.9	477.2
Other products	472.7	571.7	481.5	501.3	503.1	529.1	579.8	632.6	667.8	685.2	723.3
Services and income (net)	-459.8	-469.5	-471.6	-489.1	-518.8	-553.2	-612.2	-677.3	-729.5	-760.8	-831.6
Services (net)	-363.0	-479.0	-378.0	-385.5	-418.0	-440.0	-490.7	-546.6	-588.4	-607.0	-665.5
Income (net)	-96.8	9.5	-93.6	-103.6	-100.8	-113.1	-121.4	-130.8	-141.0	-153.7	-166.2
<i>Of which</i> : interest on external public debt	-18.4	-20.6	-19.8	-16.4	-23.4	-23.4	-19.3	-19.8	-21.1	-26.0	-30.4
Unrequited current transfers (net)	164.9	190.8	233.9	246.3	199.5	218.6	231.7	223.8	230.6	238.4	252.7
Private (net)	82.1	116.2	85.0	85.0	88.2	88.9	92.1	95.7	99.4	103.9	108.1
Public (net)	82.8	74.6	148.9	161.3	111.3	129.7	139.5	128.1	131.1	134.5	144.6
<i>Of which</i> : grants for budgetary assistance	66.2	54.6	129.0	141.1	91.4	109.8	119.9	108.7	112.1	115.8	126.3
Capital and financial account	681.7	847.9	704.9	690.9	833.1	885.2	1,041.3	1,237.0	1,356.5	1,201.6	1,309.9
Capital account	229.6	193.4	248.4	234.4	300.5	306.8	373.9	403.7	399.0	377.5	391.3
Private capital transfers	25.9	24.2	28.2	33.4	30.9	36.9	40.2	43.7	50.1	54.6	63.0
Project grants	204.0	164.2	220.5	201.0	269.9	269.9	333.7	360.1	349.0	322.9	328.2
Food Aid	0.0	5.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Nonproduced, nonfinancial assets	-0.3	0.0	-0.3	0.0	-0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Debt cancellation	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Financial account	452.0	654.4	456.4	456.5	532.6	578.4	667.4	833.3	957.5	824.2	918.7
Direct investment ¹	155.7	432.4	160.5	175.5	233.5	291.5	330.1	439.7	541.4	414.2	441.2
Portfolio investment	99.1	24.0	44.6	22.8	48.0	24.9	26.7	24.5	33.4	36.4	39.3
Other investment	197.2	198.0	251.3	258.2	251.1	262.0	310.7	369.1	382.7	373.6	438.1
Public sector (net)	170.9	168.4	187.2	161.4	198.1	196.5	228.0	277.9	259.3	266.4	292.3
Disbursements	203.4	208.3	233.2	182.9	246.8	245.2	263.7	312.6	306.9	323.5	358.6
Loans for budgetary assistance	52.2	37.8	34.9	33.3	38.7	37.1	40.5	43.5	46.8	50.5	55.1
Project loans	151.2	170.5	198.3	149.6	208.1	208.1	223.2	269.1	260.1	273.0	303.6
Amortization	32.5	39.9	46.0	21.5	48.7	48.7	35.8	34.7	47.6	57.2	66.4
Other (net)	26.3	29.6	64.1	96.9	53.0	65.5	82.7	91.2	123.3	107.2	145.9
Errors and omissions	-6.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Overall balance	-24.9	-10.0	65.9	32.5	15.0	15.0	38.0	60.0	67.0	90.0	102.0
Financing	24.9	10.0	-65.9	-32.5	-15.0	-15.0	-38.0	-60.0	-67.0	-90.0	-102.0
Net foreign assets (BCEAO)	24.9	10.0	-65.9	-32.5	-15.0	-15.0	-38.0	-60.0	-67.0	-90.0	-102.0
<i>Of which</i> : net use of Fund resources	6.6	19.7	19.7	19.2	18.5	17.3	15.4	1.7	-14.6	-23.0	-26.9
Rescheduling obtained	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Financing gap	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<i>Memorandum items:</i>											
Current account (in percent of GDP)	-15.7	-18.0	-13.4	-13.8	-15.9	-16.7	-17.9	-19.5	-19.8	-15.7	-15.8
Current account (excluding grants; in percent of GDP)	-17.5	-19.5	-16.5	-17.2	-18.1	-19.2	-20.4	-21.6	-21.8	-17.6	-17.7
Trade balance (in percent of GDP)	-9.1	-12.1	-8.4	-8.7	-9.7	-10.3	-11.1	-12.0	-12.2	-8.3	-8.2
Overall balance (in percent of GDP)	-0.6	-0.2	1.4	0.7	0.3	0.3	0.7	1.0	1.0	1.3	1.3
Pooled gross international reserves, WAEMU (in USD billions)	10.4	...	...	12.4	...	14.1	15.6	16.9	18.7	20.5	...
Pooled gross international reserves, WAEMU (in CFA francs billions)	6,466	...	...	7,184	...	7,629	8,376	9,094	10,035	11,053	...
In months of next year's imports of goods and services	4.0	...	...	4.2	...	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.5	4.6	...
In percent of broad money	35.0	...	...	35.3	...	33.4	32.9	32.4	32.4	32.4	...
GDP at current prices	4,464	4,773	4,778	4,777	5,143	5,217	5,601	6,032	6,504	7,091	7,663

Sources: Nigerien authorities; and IMF staff estimates and projections.

¹ Projections of FDI for 2017-19 in the program are based on the construction of a pipeline expected to come on stream in 2020.

Table 6. Niger: Indicators of Financial Soundness, 2012-17

(In percent)

	Dec-12	Dec-13	Dec-14	Dec-15	Dec-16	Mar-17	Jun-17	Sep-17	Dec-17
Solvency Ratios									
Regulatory Capital/ Risk-Weighted Assets	17.5	16.2	16.2	13.5	13.9	11.1	12.5	14.8	16.8
Core Capital (Tier 1)/ Risk-Weighted Assets	17.5	15.7	14.4	7.7	13.5	10.7	12.2	14.4	16.4
Provisions/ Risk-Weighted Assets	10.4	12.1	13.0	12.6	12.1	13.1	14.1	13.2	14.0
Capital/ Total Assets	10.5	9.6	9.0	7.6	8.9	7.3	7.4	10.5	9.4
Asset Quality									
Total Loans/ Total Assets	60.0	57.5	54.2	57.0	58.1	56.3	54.8	57.7	55.4
Concentration: Credit to the 5 Biggest Borrowers/ Regulatory Capital	130.8	126.1	108.8	170.9	144.5	207.3	123.9	94.7	98.8
Credit Past Due/ Total Credit	17.1	16.4	17.6	15.5	17.7	19.2	19.0	20.8	18.8
Provisioning Rate	54.6	67.4	66.8	71.4	66.5	69.1	69.7	67.1	66.1
(Credit Past Due - Provisions for Credit Past Due)/ Total Loans	8.6	6.0	6.6	5.0	6.7	6.9	6.6	8.0	7.3
(Credit Past Due - Provisions for Credit Past Due)/ Core Capital	49.2	36.1	39.9	37.5	43.7	53.2	48.9	43.7	42.8
Distribution of Credit by Sector of Activity									
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	0.7	0.7	0.9	0.4	0.2	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.6
Extractive Industries	7.5	5.2	4.3	3.0	0.9	1.2	0.6	3.2	1.7
Manufacturing Industries	4.8	5.0	5.3	5.5	5.1	5.8	2.4	5.6	5.2
Electricity, water, gas	3.1	3.8	5.7	5.3	4.9	5.2	6.3	4.7	5.2
Buildings, public works	9.1	8.9	10.6	10.7	15.4	11.5	12.4	10.5	9.6
Commerce, restaurants, hotels	37.5	33.2	32.3	32.6	8.4	33.3	39.9	33.9	30.6
Transport, Warehouses and Communications	18.3	21.1	18.9	16.9	6.8	15.0	16.2	12.9	12.5
Insurance, real estate, business services	3.6	4.1	4.9	4.9	9.0	4.9	6.9	5.4	5.1
Miscellaneous services	15.6	18.0	17.1	20.7	49.3	22.5	14.9	23.3	29.6
Earnings and Profitability									
Average Cost of Borrowed Funds	2.2	2.0	2.0	1.3	2.2	...	...	...	2.2
Average Interest Rate on Loans	10.5	10.1	9.7	6.1	8.8	...	...	...	8.4
Average Interest Rate (after taxes on financial operations)	8.3	8.1	7.7	4.8	6.6	...	...	...	6.3
Return on Assets (ROA), After-Tax Return	0.8	1.4	1.8	2.5	1.8	...	...	...	1.6
Return on Equity (ROE), After-Tax Return	7.4	12.6	20.5	26.0	19.5	...	...	...	15.4
Non-Interest Expenses/ Net Banking Income	54.5	51.5	49.8	51.8	56.5	...	...	...	59.3
Salaries and Wages/ Net Banking Income	23.3	23.5	22.2	23.6	25.9	...	...	...	25.5
Liquidity									
Liquid Assets/ Total Assets	32.5	30.3	29.2	31.4	30.0	27.0	27.6	29.2	29.2
Liquid Assets/ Total Deposits	51.4	49.7	46.0	50.9	51.1	45.1	47.9	53.3	53.4
Total Credit/ Total Deposits	104.7	105.8	96.7	104.0	112.3	108.3	109.4	122.3	116.0
Total Deposits/ Total Liabilities	63.2	61.0	63.5	61.7	58.7	59.9	57.7	54.8	54.6
Sight Deposits/ Total Liabilities	42.0	40.1	41.1	37.9	36.6	36.8	36.8	34.2	35.3
Term Deposits/ Total Liabilities	21.2	21.0	22.4	23.8	22.0	23.2	20.8	20.6	19.3

Source: BCEAO.

Table 7. Niger: Indicators of Capacity to Repay the Fund, 2018-28

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Fund obligations based on existing credit											
Principal	4.3	7.8	11.6	19.1	21.8	23.8	20.4	15.9	8.1	4.2	0.0
Charges and interest	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Fund obligations based on existing and prospective credit											
Principal	4.3	7.8	11.6	19.1	21.8	25.2	27.5	28.6	22.2	18.3	12.7
Charges and interest	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total obligations based on existing and prospective credit											
SDR millions	4.3	7.8	11.6	19.1	21.8	25.2	27.5	28.6	22.2	18.3	12.7
CFAF billions	3.3	5.9	8.8	14.5	16.5	19.0	20.7	21.6	16.8	13.8	9.6
Percent of exports of goods and services	0.4	0.6	0.9	1.3	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.2	0.8	0.6	0.4
Percent of debt service ¹	3.2	3.9	6.6	10.1	8.6	8.5	8.5	8.2	6.1	4.9	3.2
Percent of GDP	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1
Percent of tax revenue	0.5	0.7	1.0	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.0	0.8	0.5
Percent of quota	3.3	5.9	8.8	14.5	16.6	19.2	20.9	21.7	16.9	13.9	9.6
Outstanding IMF credit based on existing prospective drawings											
SDR millions	161.0	181.4	183.9	164.8	143.0	117.8	90.3	61.7	39.5	21.2	8.5
CFAF billions	123.9	138.9	139.9	124.9	108.1	88.9	68.2	46.6	29.8	16.0	6.4
Percent of exports of goods and services	14.4	14.7	13.5	11.4	8.0	5.9	4.2	2.5	1.4	0.7	0.2
Percent of debt service ¹	118.6	91.3	104.6	87.1	56.5	39.6	28.0	17.7	10.9	5.6	2.1
Percent of GDP	2.4	2.5	2.3	1.9	1.5	1.2	0.8	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.1
Percent of tax revenue	17.0	17.5	15.4	12.4	9.4	6.9	4.8	3.1	1.7	0.9	0.3
Percent of quota	122.3	137.8	139.7	125.2	108.6	89.5	68.6	46.9	30.0	16.1	6.4
Net use of IMF credit (SDR millions)	22.4	20.4	2.5	-19.1	-21.8	-25.2	-27.5	-28.6	-22.2	-18.3	-12.7
Disbursements	26.7	28.2	14.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Repayments and repurchases	4.3	7.8	11.6	19.1	21.8	25.2	27.5	28.6	22.2	18.3	12.7
<i>Memorandum items:</i>											
Exports of goods and services (CFAF billions)	859.4	944.5	1033.5	1099.6	1356.3	1513.3	1612.2	1874.2	2146.1	2342.0	2566.1
External debt service (CFAF billions) ¹	104.4	152.0	133.8	143.4	191.5	224.7	243.5	263.8	273.1	283.8	300.3
Nominal GDP (CFAF billions)	5217.4	5601.0	6031.5	6504.2	7090.6	7662.9	8222.8	8932.9	9636.7	10373.3	11110.4
Tax revenue (CFAF billions)	728.2	795.1	906.9	1010.8	1154.7	1282.5	1428.8	1522.8	1716.3	1830.8	1957.2
Quota (SDR millions)	131.6	131.6	131.6	131.6	131.6	131.6	131.6	131.6	131.6	131.6	131.6

Source: IMF staff estimates and projections.

¹Total external debt service includes IMF repurchases and repayments.

Annex I. Social and Economic Development Plan 2017-21 (PDES 2017-21)

1. The Nigerien government approved an ambitious five-year social and economic development plan (PDES 2017-21) in September 2017. The plan aims at tackling longstanding barriers to development (Figure 1), by structurally transforming the Nigerien economy to achieve strong, sustainable, resilient, and inclusive growth that will increase living standards. The PDES is based on five strategic axes: (i) promoting a cultural renaissance; (ii) social development and demographic transition; (iii) acceleration of economic growth; (iv) improvement to governance, peace, and security; and (v) sustainable management of the environment.

2. The plan aims at reaching several key objectives by 2021, including:

- reducing the poverty rate from 39.8 percent in 2016 to 31.3 percent;
- reducing the percentage of the people below the national poverty line from 45.1 percent in 2014 to 31.1 percent;
- pursuing structural reforms to increase the growth rate of the economy to 7 percent in the optimistic scenario;
- continuing with domestic revenue mobilization to raise the revenue-to-GDP ratio to 20 percent, in line with the WAEMU convergence criterion; and
- decrease the rate of population growth from 3.9 percent in 2015 to 3.06 percent.

3. Implementation of the PDES will occur in a complicated environment where the authorities will need to navigate a delicate political balance, respond to security threats, overcome physical and human capital deficiencies, and adapt to climatic change. Recognizing the headwinds coming from these various factors, the authorities exercised prudence in developing the baseline scenario that anchors the PDES with cautious GDP growth rates (5.9 percent) consistent with the IMF-supported program, average tax burden (16.5 percent of GDP), and fiscal deficit path consistent with the WAEMU convergence criteria (3 percent of GDP).

4. The authorities estimate the financial requirements of the PDES over its five-year horizon to be CFAF15,018 billion (about USD 28.3 billion or 336 percent of 2016 GDP, Table 1). The PDES assumes an important role for foreign private investors, including through the use of PPPs for transformative projects and where roughly 40 percent of the total cost of the development plan is to be financed. The rest of the PDES will be financed publicly through a combination of external support from development partners, domestic revenue mobilization to increase fiscal space for investment, and domestic borrowing. In December 2017, the authorities held a two-day event in Paris consisting of a donor roundtable and a private-sector investors forum, which was widely considered to be a success. The authorities received strong support and pledges from its development partners and there was significant investor interest, particularly in the energy, commodity, and telecommunication sector. For

the PDES to succeed, it is crucial that the authorities continue to follow up on the pledges made during the Paris conference.

5. The authorities have also developed a priority spending list (PAP). It represents approximately one-third of the spending under the baseline PDES and places a strong emphasis on Axes 3, which brings together activities in support of higher economic growth (Table 2).

Table 1. Financing of the PDES*

Finance Source	Amount (CFAF billions)	Amount (USD billions)	Amount (% of GDP)	Paris Donor Conference Pledges (USD billion)
Private sector	5,713	10.9	128%	10.3
Public Sector	9,306	17.7	208%	
of which:				
External	3,782	7.2	85%	12.7
Internal	5,524	10.5	124%	n/a
Total PDES cost	15,018	28.5	336%	23

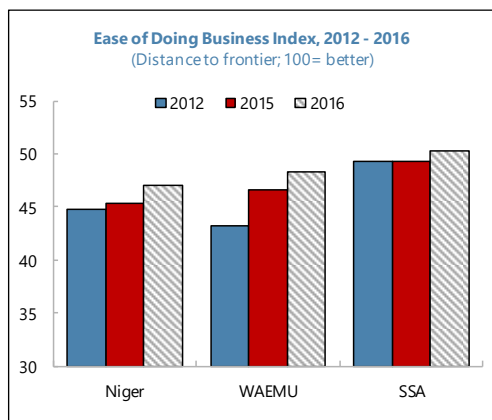
*Optimistic Scenario of the PDES

Table 2. Spending under the PAP

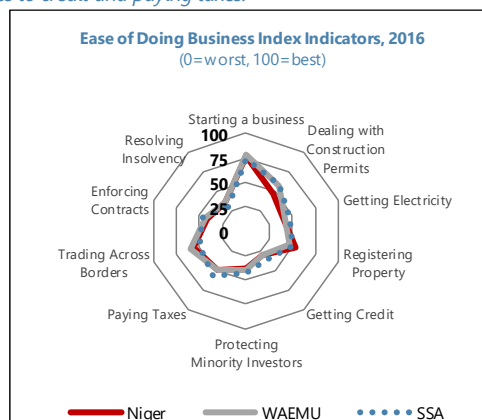
Axes of the PDES	Amount (CFA billions)	Amount (% of total PAP)
<i>1) Promoting a Cultural Renaissance</i>	21	0.5%
<i>2) Social Development and Demographic Change</i>	1,328	30.6%
<i>3) Acceleration of Economic Growth</i>	2,280	52.6%
<i>4) Improvement to Governance, Peace, and Security</i>	502	11.6%
<i>5) Sustainable Management of the Environment</i>	203	4.7%
Total	4,333	100.0%

Figure 1. Niger: Business Environment, Governance and Infrastructure

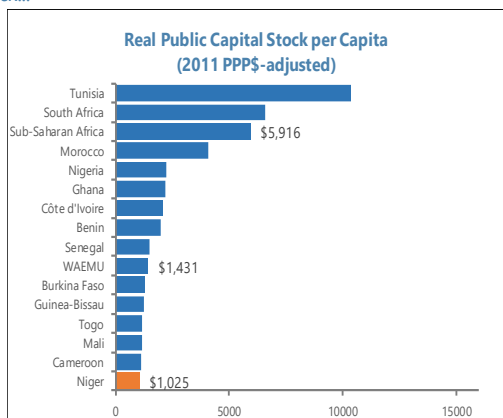
The business environment has made limited progress...



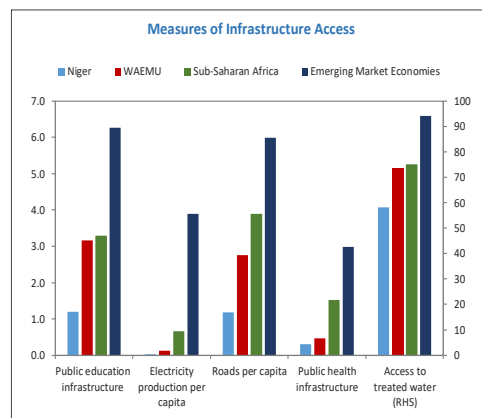
...but important weaknesses remain, in particular getting electricity, access to credit and paying taxes.



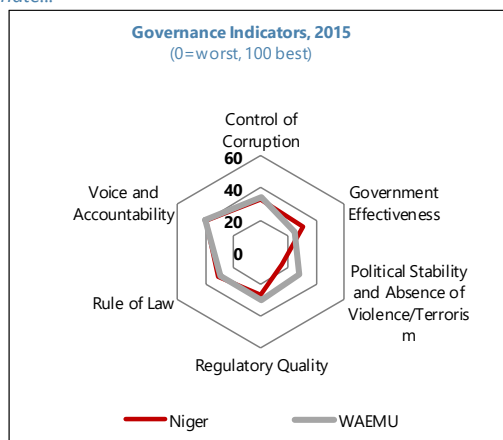
High population growth rates have resulted in very low capital stock...



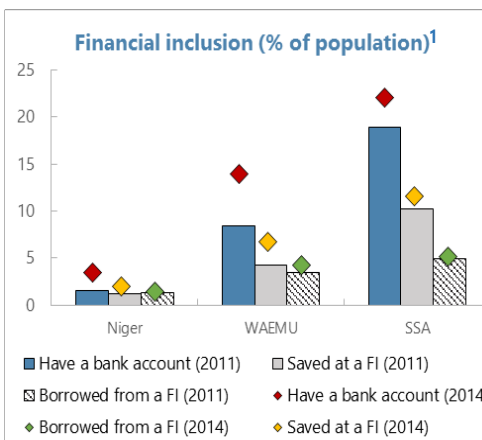
...and access to infrastructure is low compared to its peers.



A challenging security environment weight on the business climate...



...and access to credit remains far below the regional averages.



Sources: World Bank Doing Business Reports; World Development Indicators; and IMF staff estimates.

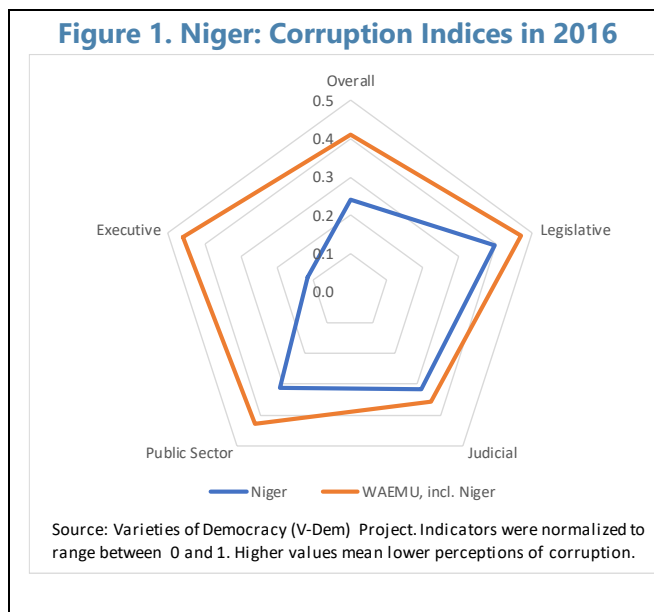
¹ Units vary to fit scale. Left hand axis: Public education infrastructure is measured as secondary teachers per 1,000 persons; Electricity production per capita as thousands of kWh per person; Roads per capita as km per 1,000 persons; and Public health infrastructure as hospital beds per 1,000 persons. Right hand axis: Access to treated water is measured as percent of population.

Annex II. Governance and the Fight Against Corruption

1. Corruption is widespread in Niger.

A recent government survey found that an overwhelming majority (86 percent) of respondents recognized widespread corrupt practices. It is hard to say whether governance issues are more or less prevalent in Niger than in the WAEMU on average—Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index and the Worldwide Governance Indicator for control of corruption suggest about the same prevalence, the Afrobarometer readings imply relatively good governance in Niger, and the Varieties of Democracy Project sees Niger falling short. As to the areas that are seen as needing most attention, the

government study identifies customs and tax administrations, the police, and public procurement. The Varieties of Democracy Project points to executive corruption as a particular area for improvement (Figure 1).¹



2. The authorities have expressed commitment to fight corruption and have taken steps to strengthen the anti-corruption framework. Niger is a party to the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combatting Corruption (AUCPCC), and the ECOWAS Protocol on the Fight Against Corruption. At the national level, combatting corruption is mandatory under the 2010 Constitution. The Criminal Code penalizes, inter alia, graft, trading in influence, and misappropriation of public funds. In 2011, the government adopted a decree that created HALCIA, the High Authority to Combat Corruption and Related Infractions. The decree was replaced by an organic law in 2016 that strengthened the anti-corruption agency. It bolstered its investigative powers, allowing it to directly refer corruption cases to the Public Prosecutor and initiate investigations on its own, and put in place a protective mechanism for witnesses, informers, and experts. An anti-corruption hotline (“Ligne Verte”) was also opened within the Ministry of Justice. In January 2018, the government adopted a National Anti-Corruption Strategy—a three-year action plan focused on reinforcing prevention, repression, and coordination in the fight against corruption.

¹ The Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project is a worldwide collaboration co-hosted by the University of Gothenburg in Sweden and the University of Notre Dame in the U.S., aimed at collecting a wide range of democracy-related data, currently covering 177 countries from 1900 to 2016. Funding comes from research foundations and donor countries. The database includes original indicators compiled from expert surveys and covering the perception of both petty and large-scale corruption in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. They measure the extent to which public sector employees (public sector corruption) and members of the executive (executive corruption) engage in bribery, embezzlement and theft, as well as abuse of position by members of the legislature for financial gains (legislative corruption), and bribes extended by businesses to influence law making in their favor (judicial corruption).

3. Despite significant headway in strengthening the anti-corruption framework, legal and institutional gaps remain. Niger is not fully compliant with UNCAC requirements, with the 2016 implementation review report of UNCAC's Chapter III (Criminalization and Law Enforcement) and IV (International Cooperation) identifying pending deficiencies in the legal framework. While enjoying additional prerogatives, HALCIA remains attached to the Office of the President of the Republic, lacks financial autonomy, and faces constraints in terms of financial and human resources, which constrain its activities. Despite receiving a sizable number of cases, it only refers a handful of them to the Public Prosecutor, of which only three led to convictions to date, partly reflecting institutional shortcomings in the judiciary. In the same vein, "Ligne Verte" is underfunded and none of the complaints it recorded so far had legal consequences.

4. Niger's anti-corruption framework would also benefit from the strengthening and effective implementation of the asset declaration regime. The Constitution requires the publication of the asset declarations of the President of the Republic, the members of the government, and other high-ranking public officials at the beginning and at the end of their tenures, with annual updates. However, the legislative framework falls short of international best practices, namely in terms of deficiencies in the scope of the individuals covered by the asset declaration obligation, the lack of clarity of the declaration process and assets to be declared, and the absence of sanctions for failure to comply with the declaration obligation. Compliance with the requirement to publish asset declarations is uneven, with only the President of the Republic's asset declarations up-to-date and accessible on the Constitutional Court's website.

5. Niger's AML/CFT regime should be further mobilized to support anti-corruption efforts. In 2016, Niger transposed the WAEMU 2015 uniform law into its national legislation with a view to updating and aligning its AML/CFT framework with prevailing international Financial Action Task Force (FATF) standards. Compliance with the 2012 FATF standards will be assessed in 2020 by the Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA). Meanwhile, the authorities are finalizing the national ML/TF risk assessment. Niger increased fourfold the budget of the financial intelligence unit (CENTIF) in 2012 and recruitments and staff training have been stepped up. Nonetheless, effective implementation of the AML/CFT regime is hampered by spotty reporting of suspicious transactions (STRs) and could be improved through strengthened supervision. Out of the 27 cases referred to the Public Prosecutor since CENTIF's inception, only one led to a conviction.

6. Finally, Niger's oil and mineral wealth calls for a transparent management of the natural resources sector to reduce opportunities for bribery and corruption. The Constitution provides for greater transparency in government reporting of revenues from the extractive industries, while mandating the disclosure of contracts pertaining to the exploration and exploitation of natural resources. Despite some progress in improving the governance of the sector in earlier years, public disclosure of licenses, contracts, and revenues related to extractive industries is not systematic, while the publication of annual audit reports of the government's natural resource revenue collection has been delayed. Niger also quit the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) in 2017 when suspension was looming, but has since undertaken steps to rejoin.

Appendix I. Letter of Intent

Niamey, May 15, 2018

Madame Christine Lagarde
Managing Director
International Monetary Fund
Washington DC, 20431

Madame Managing Director,

1. Niger continues to make progress under its program supported by the Extended Credit Facility (ECF) arrangement, despite security challenges and weak commodity prices.

Despite a less-favorable-than expected 2017/18 crop season, real GDP growth reached an estimated 4.9 percent in 2017 and inflation has remained contained, a transitory uptake in late 2017 and early 2018 notwithstanding. Growth performance would have been stronger had it not been for the vagaries of rain, a tense security situation, which affected trade with Nigeria and absorbed scarce fiscal resources, and low commodity prices, especially for our key uranium exports.

2. Program implementation is broadly on track, except for revenue mobilization. All performance criteria for end-December 2017 were met, as well as most indicative targets. The revenue target was missed by a large margin, reflecting adverse transitory shocks in 2017. In the first quarter of 2018 revenue were robust though, exceeding the first review target. We see domestic revenue mobilization more as a priority than ever. Important progress has been made on the structural reform agenda, but some projects fell behind schedule due to capacity constraints.

3. The Government of Niger remains fully committed to the objectives of its program.

Expanding the revenue base, improving public financial management, and fiscal consolidation are key tenets. Structural reforms to diversify the economy, strengthen the private sector, and steps to tackle high population growth and gender inequality are equally important. These goals are also enshrined in our Social and Economic Development Plan 2017-21 (PDES 2017-21) that attracted large financial support at the donor round table in December 2017. With determined implementation efforts and the continued technical and financial support from our partners, we are confident to achieve the goal of progressively lifting economic growth and meaningfully reducing poverty.

4. The Government of Niger’s program for 2018 and the remainder of the ECF period is detailed in the attached Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies (MEFP). We believe that the measures and policies set forth therein will serve to achieve the established objectives. We stand ready to take any additional measures that may prove necessary. We will consult with the IMF on the adoption of such measures and before making changes to the policies set out in the MEFP in accordance with the Fund’s policies on consultations. We will provide timely information needed to monitor the economic situation and implementation of policies relevant to the program, as agreed under the accompanying Technical Memorandum of Understanding (TMU), or at the Fund’s request.

5. Following the upgrading in the assessment of the Niger’s debt management capacity, the government requests a modification of program conditionality on external debt. In particular, we ask for public and publicly-guaranteed external debt to henceforth be monitored through a performance-criterion ceiling on the present value of the contracting of such debt.

6. Considering the progress achieved, the fulfillment of the prior actions on performance plans for revenue administrations and submission of new public private partnership legislation to cabinet, the measures put forward, and our resolve to implement the program, the Government of Niger requests (i) the completion of the second review, and (ii) the disbursement of the third tranche of SDR 14.1 million under the ECF arrangement. Performance criteria, indicative targets, and structural benchmarks for 2018 are included in Tables 2, 4, and 7 of the MEFP.

7. In keeping with our longstanding commitment to transparency, we agree to the publication of the staff report, this letter of intent, the MEFP, and the TMU on the IMF’s website.

Sincerely yours,

/s/

Massoudou Hassoumi
Minister of Finance

Attachments: I. Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies.
II. Technical Memorandum of Understanding.

Attachment I. Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies of the Government of Niger

INTRODUCTION

1. This memorandum of economic and financial policies (MEFP) supplements and updates the MEFPs signed on December 21, 2016 and November 30, 2017. It describes recent economic developments, the macroeconomic outlook, progress with program implementation, and policies for the remainder of 2018. The program supported by the Extended Credit Facility (ECF) arrangement is in line with the government's Economic and Social Development Plan 2017-21 (PDES 2017-21) adopted in September 2017 and presented at the donor round-table of December 13-14, 2017. Program priorities remain focused on: (i) maintaining macroeconomic stability; (ii) improving public financial management (iii) expanding fiscal space by increasing tax revenue, including broadening the base and strengthening tax administration, better controlling public expenditures, and strengthening cash management; (iv) improving debt management; (v) increasing transparency in the management of the mining and oil sectors; and (vi) supporting the development of the private and financial sectors, with a view to diversifying the economy and overcoming demographic challenges.

RECENT ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

2. Recent economic trends have been broadly as expected, except for a temporary uptick in inflation. Due to an early stop of rains at a critical stage of the crop cycle, agricultural output rose only moderately. Real GDP growth reached 4.9 percent, driven by buoyant oil production, robust construction activities, and a strong telecommunication sector. Annual average inflation rose to 2.4 percent, from 0.2 percent in 2016, reflecting both the base effects of the previous year and increased direct purchases from cereal producers in the final quarter of 2017 for the government's food security programs. Private sector credit grew at almost 10 percent for most of the year. The current account deficit narrowed significantly to some 14 percent of GDP, thanks to the completion of several import-intensive investment projects, donor financing, and reduced needs for food imports. Available indicators for 2018 point to activity continuing to expand apace, temporarily higher inflation partly due to tax and administrative price hikes in January 2018, and opportunistic price increases related to the 2018 budget, and reasonably strong credit and money growth.

3. The targets for the overall fiscal deficit, domestic budget financing, and domestic arrears reduction were achieved, but government revenue disappointed. At 14.2 percent of GDP in 2017, revenue collection remained 0.2 percent of GDP below that in 2016 and 1.9 percent of GDP short of target. A strike of importers throughout the second half of 2017, the cut of a telecommunication tax, difficulties in tax administration, and delays in selling telecommunication licenses were chiefly responsible. The revenue shortfall was however offset, protecting the fiscal bottom line. Higher-than-expected external budget support allowed us to clear substantially more

domestic arrears than envisaged, staying comfortably below the program ceiling for domestic budget financing, and reducing the overall budget deficit to 5 percent of GDP from 6.1 percent of GDP in 2016.

PERFORMANCE UNDER THE ECF-SUPPORTED PROGRAM

4. All performance criteria for end-December 2017 were met. In addition to net domestic government financing and domestic arrears reduction, the continuous performance criteria on the avoidance of external payments arrears and the contracting of short-term and long-term non-concessional external debt were observed.

5. All indicative targets for end-December 2017 were respected, except for the ones related to government revenue. Targets for spending on poverty reduction and on the ratio of exceptional expenditure to total spending were also met. However, government revenue underperformed by 1.9 percent of GDP. We also overran the indicative end-March 2018 target for the reduction of domestic payment arrears, but by less than the overperformance in 2017.

6. Good progress was made toward a number of structural benchmarks planned for the period under review:

- **The updated National Gender Policy was adopted in August 2017**, well ahead of the end-December 2017 target date.
- **The goal to have performance plans for revenue collection agencies fully in place by end-January 2018 was partially met**, with the one for tax administration (DGI) still in the process of being further strengthened and the one for customs administration (DGD) still under development at the time. However, strong plans were put in place and communicated to DGI and DGD in the first half of May 2018 as a *prior action*. Each plan targets more than five operational indicators covering the administrations' key functions, sets ambitious numerical quarterly targets for each, assigns responsibility for achieving them at the functional level within the administrations, and applies from the beginning of July 2018.
- **Important steps envisaged for end-March 2018 to advance the Treasury Single Account (TSA) project have been taken.** The interface between the IT systems of the BCEAO and the treasury department (DGTCP) is much improved; the BCEAO's financial impact study has been finalized; and the account structure of the TSA at the BCEAO has been clarified. A number of active public-entity accounts have already been transferred. However, not all dormant accounts might have been closed and the implementation of the new TSA account structure is delayed.
- **As a *prior action* for the completion of this review, new legislation on PPPs has been submitted to the Council of Ministers.** It is consistent with the 2014 investment code and the 2012 budget law, incorporating key recommendations of IMF-provided technical assistance. Most importantly, PPPs are now defined in line with international standards, they are fully integrated into the budget cycle, their adoption requires the consent of the Ministry of Finance,

unsolicited PPP offers are subject to the same scrutiny as government-initiated offers, and scope for tax exemptions is limited.

- **Key steps of our project to bankify government payments were taken by end-March 2018.** We have drafted a masterplan for comprehensive bankification. Payments to and from several key customs offices are also already on a non-cash basis and so are most tax payments to the Large Taxpayer Unit (DGE).

7. All but one recurrent structural benchmarks were observed on time. As committed, we released quarterly spending allocations within the first month, based on the decisions of the Inter-Ministerial Regulation Committee and have prepared quarterly commitment plans with corresponding cash plans to improve budget and cash flow management. Quarterly debt management reports were also prepared, validated by the National Public Debt Management Committee, and furnished on time. A revised borrowing plan for 2018-21, which also reflects the financing pledged at the donor round-table in December 2017, was communicated to IMF staff in draft form with a delay in mid-April.

8. More generally, we are holding firm and steadily advancing on our broad-based reform agenda. The 2018 budget measures, as well as the new electricity tariffs, went into effect in January 2018. In customs administration, we continue to roll out transaction price valuation of imports for tax and customs duty purposes. The interconnections with custom administrations in Benin and Togo are technically ready for operation. Tax administration continues to provide various training sessions to its staff on management, leadership, ethics, communication, transfer prices, accounting, IT, and risk management. At DGE, we have recently strengthened arrears collection capacities by triaging the arrears stock, establishing procedures for collecting them, and putting in place a dedicated oversight committee. DGE is also successfully piloting the Computerized Tax and Taxpayer Monitoring System (SISIC).

9. Improving Niger's business climate remains a key priority and is flanked by efforts to strengthen governance and to promote access to credit. The push for a better business environment is overseen by the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister through monthly meetings to monitor progress. Most recently, we have strengthened the credit bureau and streamlined procedures at the Commercial Court.

10. The government has been strengthening the legal framework on governance and corruption. Combatting corruption is mandatory under the 2010 constitution. Graft, trading in influence, and misappropriation of public funds are criminalized. The High Authority to Combat Corruption and Related Infractions (HALCIA), first established in 2011, was substantially strengthened in 2016, anchoring it in organic law, increasing its investigative powers, allowing it to directly refer cases to the courts, and putting in place a protective mechanism for witnesses, informers, and experts. In January 2018, the government renewed its pledge to tackle corruption and adopted the National Anti-Corruption Strategy, with a three-year action plan focused on reinforcing prevention, repression, and coordination in the fight against corruption. Niger is also equipped with regulations that promote transparency in public procurement and a financial

intelligence unit (CENTIF) to combatting money laundering and the financing of terrorism. The legal framework for AML/CFT was aligned with the WAEMU uniform law.

11. Steps are being taken to promote financial inclusion. In January 2018, the government adopted legislation allowing microfinance institutions in Niger to conduct activities in line with the principles of Islamic finance, thereby broadening the class of financial products and services offered by microfinance institutions, in line with the National Strategy for Financial Inclusion. In March 2018, we adopted a decree that simplifies access to regulated professions under the law on the National Order of Certified Public Accountants and Chartered Accountants, which should also help boost the provision of services to small and middle-sized enterprises and their access to bank credit. We are also revising and updating our national financial inclusion strategy.

12. Finally, we have put in place policies to help tackle high population growth and gender inequality. These challenges feature prominently in our PDES 2017-21. Following adoption of the updated National Gender Policy, stakeholders have been developing a five-year action plan expected to be finalized before end-June 2018. In December 2017, we adopted a decree aimed at keeping girls in school longer with a view to delaying marriage and child bearing. A forceful campaign for its implementation is underway. The implementation of the Sahel Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend (SWEDD) project is also moving ahead.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK AND POLICIES FOR THE REMAINDER OF 2018

13. The economic outlook remains satisfactory. Our reform agenda, which includes efforts to raise agricultural productivity and food security under our home-grown Nigeriens Nourish Nigeriens Initiative (I3N), and the utilization of pledged donor funds augur well for 2018. We expect GDP growth to rise to 5.2 percent as construction and the services sectors gather steam, which should more than offset headwinds resulting from the maintenance shutdown of the oil refinery and unfavorable prices for our uranium exports. Reflecting price developments in late 2017 and in early 2018, annual average inflation will likely be initially elevated this year, but recede rapidly thereafter, mostly thanks to food security measures by the government. Credit to the private sector and broad money should continue to expand by around 10 percent. We foresee a deterioration in the current account as donor-financed projects are scaled up, but the overall external balance would remain positive thanks to the associated donor financing.

14. In the medium run, growth is projected to rise to close to 6 percent thanks to economic reforms, strong donor support and the expected boost to oil production. Inflation will quickly fall, complying with WAEMU's convergence criterion of 3 percent, thanks to the exchange rate peg and prudent fiscal policy. We will step up our fiscal effort, achieving near basic fiscal balance in 2021, compared to a deficit of 4.9 percent of GDP in 2017. However, to allow Niger to absorb the increase in external financial support that has come from the donor roundtable, the overall balance will comply with the 3 percent of GDP overall deficit anchor of the WAEMU member countries with a two-year delay in 2021. Public debt would stabilize at under 50 percent of GDP. Donor-fund absorption will also keep the current account deficit high, until oil exports surge from

2022. The fragile regional security situation, global commodity price developments, possible delays in the construction of the pipeline for oil exports, and weather conditions remain notable risks to this outlook.

FISCAL POLICY FOR THE REMAINDER OF 2018

15. We remain committed to deliver on the fiscal parameters projected at the time of the first program review, which reflect our consolidation efforts and increased donor support.

Specifically, we target a basic deficit of CFAF 210 billion (4 percent of GDP), an overall deficit including grants of CFAF 308 billion (5.9 percent of GDP), and domestic financing of CFAF 141 billion (2.7 percent of GDP), including from the IMF. Nominal targets projected at the time of the first program review would largely remain, though ratios to GDP are now lower because of the upward revision to nominal GDP. These targets remain within reach, despite the 2017 revenue shortfall because of reinforced revenue measures, the washing out of the transitory adverse shocks of 2017, and tailwinds for tax collections from higher nominal GDP growth.

16. Revenue collections in the first quarter of 2018 already attest to our efforts, with the end-March indicative target met.

In keeping with the thrust of the program, the improvement of public finances will be primarily revenue driven. Fiscal revenues will benefit from strict implementation of the measures included in the 2018 budget (0.6 percent of GDP), the sale of telecom licenses (0.2 percent of GDP), a tax-arrears collection drive (0.3 percent of GDP), and a crackdown on petroleum smuggling. We stick to our ambitious goal to strongly boost foreign-financed investment by nearly 2 percent of GDP to 9.2 percent of GDP. Efforts to tighten public debt management and improve the quality of public spending will continue. The government stands ready to review fiscal developments in mid-year and include any revisions into a supplementary budget agreed with IMF staff.

17. The government reaffirms current debt management practices and is committed to make further strides going forward.

The Inter-Ministerial Debt Management Committee (CISPENAB) will operate as set out in Decree No. 2015-311/CAB/PM. It will resume regular meetings, its technical support committee will be fully staffed, and all loan conventions and government guarantees will be approved by the Minister of Finance to be valid. It will also certify that proper procedures for project selection will have been followed. The holding of quarterly meetings and reporting of decisions taken in quarterly debt management reports will be a *recurrent structural benchmark* starting end-June 2018. Later this year, we will put delegation of responsibilities to the technical committee on a sound legal basis, start publishing debt management reports and debt statistics, and adopt debt management policy guidelines. For the more medium term, we are committed to overcome the current institutional fragmentation of debt management and centralize it under the Ministry of Finance, as required by WAEMU directives, and reorganize it into a front-middle-back-office structure.

18. Public debt accumulation will also be contained by implementing infrastructure projects through PPP arrangements. In this context, the focus will be on Build-Operate-Transfer projects that are free of government debt guarantees. We will submit the new PPP legislation to parliament no later than end-June 2018 to have a solid framework in place in due course (*structural benchmark reset to end-June 2018 from end-March 2018*).

19. We take note of the recent upgrading of Niger’s debt management capacity to “sufficient” by the IMF and the World Bank and welcome the associated change in conditionality on external public debt under the program. As of the date of the completion of the second review, it will be primarily monitored through a *performance criterion* on the present value of the contracting of new public and publicly-guaranteed external debt.

20. To decisively break with revenue underperformance, we intend to take strong underpinning actions. In particular:

- **2018 budget measures.** We will fully implement the budget measures, which should yield at least 0.6 percent of GDP. Tax measures include (i) applying the reduced VAT rate of 5 percent to previously exempted items in line with WAEMU standards; (ii) subjecting previously exempted industrial inputs and packaging under the investment code and transport services to the standard VAT rate of 19 percent; (iii) introducing a progressive housing tax; (iv) overhauling the property transfer tax; and (v) strengthening presumptive taxation of informal activities, such as higher proxy taxes for small merchants, a new minimum tax for capital gains in real estate transactions, and the introduction of cable network subscription taxes. Moreover, all individuals and legal entities with activities that give rise to fiscal liabilities are now strictly required to get tax identification numbers—a measure that DGD helps enforce for importers.
- **Tax exemptions.** We remain committed to overhauling and streamlining tax exemptions in new legislation to be submitted to Parliament by end-September as per the structural benchmark set in the first review. By end-June 2018, we will furnish a white paper for the rationalization of tax exemptions for discussion with IMF staff (*structural benchmark*). In the meantime, we will tightly manage new discretionary tax exemptions and keep Fund staff informed.
- **Short-term revenue boost.** To further secure the 2018 revenue targets, we will move ahead with aggressive collection of tax arrears—the stock of recoverable tax arrears at DGE amounts to CFAF 64 billion (1.3 percent of GDP). DGD and DGI will fully roll out their crackdown on petroleum smuggling, including molecular marking of fuels produced for the domestic market as soon as possible and stiffer sanctions for offenders. The sales of telecommunication licenses, originally scheduled for 2017, will also be accelerated. This should yield 0.5 percent of GDP in additional revenues at a minimum.
- **Revenue administration performance plans.** To ensure that our many reform efforts are seen through until the end, we have put in place ambitious and detailed plans for DGI and DGD ahead of the completion of this program review as a *prior action*. More generally, we expect past

reforms to increasingly translate into tangible revenue gains, including the single window for car imports (GUAN) and computerization of DGI with SISIC and the DGD with ASYCUDA world.

21. Regarding public expenditure, we will make every effort to make the most of Niger's limited resources. While the government remains committed to hold back expenditure should revenue performance fall behind program targets, the focus will be on lifting the quality of spending and efficiently absorbing donor financing, while keeping public debt in check. Efforts to strengthen public financial management will continue. Specifically,

- **Program budgeting.** With its introduction in the 2018 budget, the tools are in place to better monitor performance. We will assess outcomes in mid-year and use the findings to update line ministries' and overall medium-term expenditure plans (DPPD and DPBEP).
- **Efficient absorption of donor funds.** The financing pledged at the December 2017 donor round table in support of the PDES 2017-21 opens an important window of opportunity for Niger's economic development. A specific road map for implementing the plan has been adopted and coordination cells put in place. To protect the sustainability of Niger's external public debt in the coming years, highly concessional financing will be prioritized. The Ministry of Finance will oversee that PDES implementation steers clear of unsustainable public debt developments.
- **TSA implementation.** As a key element of public expenditure management reform, we have pinned down the next implementation steps. We will establish, and share with Fund staff, a timetable for account closures that reduces still-to-be-transferred balances of public administration and public entities to less than 10 percent of the level of CFAF 65 billion established in the BCEAO study, and implement the new TSA account structure at the BCEAO (*structural benchmark for end-June 2018*). By end-2018, we intend to reduce still-to-be-transferred balances to less than 10 percent of the level of CFAF 65 billion established in the BCEAO study, and digitalize Treasury's banking services for transferred accounts of public administration and public entities (*structural benchmark for end-December 2018*). To support this effort, we will separate banking and accounting functions in the Treasury in a timely manner and ensure operational continuity of banking services throughout.
- **Bankification.** In line with the government's plan to progressively phase out fiscal payments in cash, we will discontinue cash tax and customs-duty payments to the DGE and the ten largest customs offices by end-June 2018, along with providing a white paper for bankification (*structural benchmark for end-June 2018*). In a next step, we will discontinue cash tax and customs-duty payments to the Medium Taxpayer Unit (DME) and the twenty largest customs offices (*structural benchmark for end-December 2018*).
- **Computerization.** In addition to DGI and DGD, the objective remains to computerize public procurement with SIGMAP and debt management with CS-DRMF+. SIGIB is to interconnect DGTCP and the Directorate General of the Budget (DGB) and DGTCP to be linked to the payment systems SICA and STAR. The ultimate goal is a fully-integrated IT system for all financial agencies.

22. The fiscal framework for 2018 is fully financed and includes our firm commitment to clear all outstanding domestic payment arrears by end-2018. The basic budget deficit (CFAF 210 billion), the clearance of all domestic payment arrears remaining at end-2017 (CFAF 29 billion), and the amortization of external debt (CFAF 49 billion) will be financed through budget support (CFAF 147 billion) and net domestic financing (CFAF 141 billion), including financing from the Fund (CFAF 17 billion).

23. To further improve public finances and management beyond 2018, we are pushing ahead with the overhauling state-owned enterprises and public entities, while improving public administration. Specifically:

- Regarding, the reform of **state-owned enterprises and public entities**, we have initiated the audit of six large public entities and secured World Bank financing. Tenders have been opened. We will also finalize and transmit to the Fund a study on subsidies for state-owned enterprises, conduct and publish an inventory of all public entities and state-owned enterprises, and publish the key financial indicators, and make available audit reports of state-owned enterprises and public entities whenever they are audited by the Court of Audit.
- The **management of the civil service** is undergoing a complete overhaul. Improvements will be guided by World Bank recommendations on civil service reform initiated in 2017. In particular, we plan to conduct a comprehensive biometric census of civil servants and establish an integrated pay-civil service database.

STRUCTURAL REFORMS FOR PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOGRAPHIC ABATEMENT

24. For medium-term economic development of Niger and the envisaged reduction of poverty, it is essential to develop a strong private sector and address demographic challenges. Donor financing will support the economy in the nearer term, but it needs to translate into self-sustained improvements to be successful in the long run. To this end, we will continue to strengthen the business climate, improve access to credit, address governance issues, and implement our gender and population policies.

25. We have made progress in improving the business climate, but recognize that much remains to be done. Reforms of the business climate will also continue to benefit from the World Bank Project to Support Competitiveness and Growth (PRAAC). We will address the bottlenecks identified by the business community, such as frequent power outages, competition from the informal sector, overly complicated customs procedures, a weak judiciary, and generally insufficient infrastructure and human capital. Regarding VAT refunds, even though we have found solutions for the largest exporters, the goal remains to put in place a proper system, not least to ease pressures by foreign investors for exemptions. Finally, we remain committed to clear the remaining domestic government payment arrears no later than end-December 2018, which remains a performance criterion under the program. To encourage investment in the mining sector, we will continue our efforts to rejoin the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) this year.

26. Better access to credit remains a work in progress. While the bankification of fiscal payments should contribute to financial deepening, we need to push ahead with implementing our financial inclusion agenda. Every effort will be made to mobilize donor-funding for reforms in the area of microfinance, which include consolidation of the sector, furnishing training for providers, establishing a refinance mechanism, and setting up a deposit guarantee and resolution funds. Moreover, we will make sure that missing regulations that still stand in the way of getting leasing off the ground are put in place as soon as possible and that a legal framework for warrantage is developed.

27. Better governance helps not only safeguarding public resources, but is also key for a more conducive business environment. Niger has made a lot of headway in putting in place institutional and legal framework and the fight against corruption is high on the agenda of the current administration. However, gaps remain in the legal framework and implementation is a challenge. For example, the asset declaration legislation needs to be clarified and brought in line with best practices in order to facilitate its effective implementation and help address corruption. We are committed to strengthening the resources of the Court of Audit, HALCIA and Ligne Verte. In the area of AML/CFT, the financial intelligence unit has been strengthened, but cases referred to the judiciary have only led to one conviction so far, and reports of suspicious transactions referred to CENTIF remain rare, especially from non-banks. Niger is in the process of carrying out an ML/TF National Risk Assessment as required by the 2012 FATF standard.

28. Fiscal transparency will also be improved, with a view to furthering the business community's understanding of fiscal policy. This includes, publishing an end-year report and an audit report for the 2017 budget, a performance report for 2018, and a citizen budget for 2019. The government will also make an effort to better prepare the public for forthcoming fiscal changes and make the Government Gazette freely available online.

29. The government is committed to pushing ahead with reforms on gender equality and demographic containment. We will pursue the policies laid out in the updated National Gender Strategy, the recent decree on the education of girls, and the PDES 2017-21. As with our policies on governance, the challenge is to step up implementation to achieve tangible results. We will seek donor funds, supplemented by our own resources, to put in place and expand concrete programs, and continue our ongoing efforts to implement the decree.

PROGRAM MONITORING

30. In view of the progress made in implementing the ECF-supported program and the policies envisaged under the MEFP, the government requests the approval of the second review under the arrangement, and the disbursement of SDR 14.1 million.

31. Program monitoring will be based on performance criteria (Tables 2) and structural benchmarks (Tables 4 and 7). The authorities will provide IMF staff with the statistical data and information identified in the attached Technical Memorandum of Understanding, and any other information they deem necessary or that IMF staff may request for monitoring purposes.

32. In application of the IMF's debt limits policy, there will be a change to performance criteria on external public debt. As of the date of completion of the second review, 2018, a new performance criterion on the present value (PV) of the contracting of new public and publicly-guaranteed external debt will be applied, to replacing the current performance criteria on the contracting and guaranteeing of long-term non-concessional external public debt and short-term external public debt.

33. The program will be monitored through semiannual reviews. The third and fourth program reviews are expected to take place after end-October 2018 and end-April 2019, respectively.

Table 1. Niger: Quantitative Performance Criteria and Indicative Targets (Dec. 2016 – Dec. 2017)
(In billions of CFAF)

	End-December 2016		End-March 2017			End-June 2017			End-September 2017			End-December 2017		
	For information		IT			PC			IT			PC		
	Proj.	Act.	Prog.	Actual	Status	Prog.	Actual	Status	Prog.	Actual	Status	Prog.	Actual	Status
A. Quantitative performance criteria and indicative targets¹ (cumulative for each fiscal year)														
Net domestic financing of the government	113.8		62.0			120.3			186.6			207.0		
Adjustment for shortfall in budget support up to CFA 15 billion max	-4.1		0.0			-15.0			-15.0			-15.0		
Adjusted net domestic financing of the government ²	109.7	77.4	62.0	27.5	Met	105.3	66.2 ³	Met	171.6	147.9 ³	Met	192.0	113.9	Met
Change in domestic payment arrears of government obligations ⁴	-8.4	19.0	10.0	-40.0	Met	20.0	-44.9 ³	Met	10.0	-47.6 ³	Met	-43.4	-78.9	Met
Memorandum items:														
External budgetary assistance ⁵														
Budget support	114.3	118.4	0.0	0.0		0.0	43.8		0.0	50.4		92.4	174.5	
New external debt contracted or guaranteed by the government on concessional terms (ceiling) ⁸	800.0	490.1	350.0	60.8		350.0	88.8		350.0	...		350.0	...	
B. Continuous quantitative performance criteria														
Accumulation of external payments arrears	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	Met	0.0	0.0	Met	0.0	0.0	Met	0.0	0.0	Met
New external debt contracted or guaranteed by the government with maturities of less than 1 year ⁶	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	Met	0.0	0.0	Met	0.0	0.0	Met	0.0	0.0	Met
New non concessional external debt contracted or guaranteed by the government and public enterprises with maturities of 1 year or more ⁷	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	Met	0.0	0.0	Met	0.0	0.0	Met	0.0	0.0	Met
C. Indicative Targets														
Basic budget balance (commitment basis, excl. grants) ⁴	-194.3	-188.9	-71.2	2.5	Met	-130.7	-74.3 ³	Met	-186.6	-155.3 ³	Met	-235.9	-232.4	Met
Basic budget balance (commitment basis, incl. budget grants) ⁴	-130.7	-122.7	-71.2	2.5	Met	-130.7	-30.5 ³	Met	-186.6	-104.9 ³	Met	-181.3	-91.3	Met
Total revenue ⁴	676.6	643.8	160.7	157.7	Not Met	353.4	331.7	Not Met	554.5	496.4	Not Met	770.8	680.7	Not met
Spending on poverty reduction ⁴	356.8	447.2	103.8	104.1	Met	222.2	223.8	Met	348.4	351.4	Met	487.5	488.8	Met
Ratio of exceptional expenditures on authorized spending (percent) ⁹	5.0	1.8	5.0	3.4	Met	5.0	3.0	Met	5.0	2.7	Met	5.0	5.0	Met

Sources: Nigerien authorities; and IMF staff estimates and projections. Note: The terms in this table are defined in the TMU.

¹ Program indicators under A are performance criteria at end-December and end-June; indicative targets otherwise.

² The ceiling on domestic financing of the budget will be adjusted if the amount of disbursements of external budgetary assistance, as defined in footnote 4, falls short of or exceeds program forecasts. If disbursements are less (higher) than the programmed amounts, the ceiling will be raised (reduced) pro tanto, up to a maximum of CFAF 15 billion at the end of each quarter of 2017. From December 2017 onward, net domestic financing of the government will be also adjusted up (down) for any excess (shortfall) in domestic payment arrears clearance.

³ Slightly revised actuals, from those reported in the context of the first review (EBS 17/394), to reflect updated outcomes.

⁴ Minimum; for the PC/IT on the reduction in domestic payments arrears, negative sign means a reduction and positive sign means an accumulation.

⁵ External budgetary assistance (excluding net financing from the IMF).

⁶ Excluding ordinary credit for imports or debt relief.

⁷ Excluding debt relief obtained in the form of rescheduling or refinancing.

⁸ On a contracting basis in accordance with the IMF's debt limits policy: <http://www.imf.org/external/np/pp/eng/2014/111414.pdf>. Cumulative from the beginning of the year.

⁹ Maximum, exceptional expenditures refer to payment made by the treasury without prior authorisation, excluding debt service payments and expenditures linked to exemptions.

Table 2. Niger: Quantitative Performance Criteria and Indicative Targets (Mar. – Dec. 2018)
(In billions of CFAF)

	End-Mar. 2018		End-Jun. 2018	End-Sept. 2018	End-Dec. 2018
	Indicative Targets	Actual	Perf. Criteria	Indic. Targets	Perf. Criteria
	Prog.		Prog.	Prog.	Prog.
A. Quantitative performance criteria and indicative targets¹					
(cumulative for each fiscal year)					
Net domestic financing of the government	46.1		70.6	140.4	123.8
Adjustment for shortfall in budget support	0.0				
Adjustment for extra arrears clearance in 2018 up to a cap of FCFA 30 billion	30.0		30.0		
Adjusted net domestic financing criteria ²	76.1		100.6		
Change in domestic payment arrears of government obligations ³	-15.0		-30.0	-15.0	
Adjusted for FCFA 35.5 billion over-performance in 2017 up to a cap of zero net accumulation	0.0	23.7	0.0		-29.2
Memorandum items:					
External budget support ⁴	0.0	0.0	23.0	68.4	146.9
B. Continuous quantitative performance criteria					
Accumulation of external payments arrears	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
New external debt contracted or guaranteed					
by the government with maturities of less than 1 year ⁵	0.0		0.0	...	...
New non concessional external debt contracted or guaranteed					
by the government and public enterprises with maturities of 1 year or more ⁶	0.0		0.0	...	...
Present Value (PV) of new public and publicly-guaranteed external debt contracted from January 1, 2018	...		...	...	225.0
C. Indicative Targets					
(cumulative for each fiscal year)					
Basic budget balance (commitment basis, excl. grants) ³	-61.2		-123.5	-169.7	-210.0
Basic budget balance (commitment basis, incl. budget grants) ³	-61.2		-100.5	60.0	-100.3
Total revenue ³	172.7	189.2	369.5	567.0	803.3
Spending on poverty reduction ³	108.0		237.9	345.9	538.4
Ratio of exceptional expenditures on authorized spending (percent) ⁷	5.0		5.0	5.0	5.0

Sources: Nigerien authorities; and IMF staff estimates and projections. Note: The terms in this table are defined in the TMU.

1 Program indicators under A and B are performance criteria at end-June and end-December; indicative targets otherwise.

2 The ceiling on domestic financing of the budget will be adjusted if the amount of disbursements of external budgetary assistance, as defined in footnote 4, falls short of or exceeds program forecasts. If disbursements are less (higher) than the programmed amounts, the ceiling will be raised (reduced) pro tanto, up to a maximum of CFAF 30 billion at the end of each quarter of 2018. From the beginning of 2018, net domestic financing of the government will be also adjusted up (down) for any excess (shortfall) in domestic payment arrears clearance.

3 Minimum; for the PC/IT on the reduction in domestic payments arrears, negative sign means a reduction and positive sign means an accumulation. Targets will be adjusted for over- and underperformance in 2017, subject to a cap of zero.

4 External budgetary assistance (excluding net financing from the IMF).

5 Excluding ordinary credit for imports or debt relief.

6 Excluding debt relief obtained in the form of rescheduling or refinancing.

7 Maximum, exceptional expenditures refer to payment made by the treasury without prior authorisation, excluding debt service payments and expenditures linked to exemptions.

Table 3. Niger: Recurrent Structural Benchmarks for the Program, 2017

Measure	Timetable		Macroeconomic Rationale
Release the quarterly budget allocation in the first month of each quarter based on the proposal of the regulation committee.	Quarterly	Met for Q1, Q2, Q3, and Q4	Improve budget and cash flow management.
Prepare a quarterly commitment plan consistent with the corresponding cash plan.	Quarterly	Met for Q1, Q2, Q3, and Q4	Improve budget and cash flow management.
Prepare quarterly debt management report to be validated by the National Public Debt Management Committee.	Quarterly	Met for Q1 and Q3. Furnished with delay for Q2. Met for Q4	Improve debt management.
Produce a quarterly report on VAT credit reimbursement.	Quarterly	Not met	Improve efficiency of the VAT.
Prepare a revised borrowing plan.	Each year at end-June	Not met	Improve debt management.

Table 4. Niger: Recurrent Structural Benchmarks for the Program, 2018

Measure	Timetable	Progress	Macroeconomic Rationale
Release the quarterly budget allocation in the first month of each quarter based on the proposal of the regulation committee.	Quarterly	Met for Q1	Improve budget and cash flow management.
Prepare a quarterly commitment plan consistent with the corresponding cash plan.	Quarterly	Met for Q1	Improve budget and cash flow management.
Prepare quarterly debt management report to be validated by the National Public Debt Management Committee.	Quarterly	Met for Q1	Improve debt management.
Hold at least quarterly meetings of the Inter-Ministerial Debt Management Committee. Publish its decisions, a list of newly approved loans and grants, and the view taken by the Ministry of Finance in the quarterly debt management reports.	Quarterly from Q3 onward		Safeguard control over the contracting of new public debt.
Prepare a revised borrowing plan.	Each year at end-June, but end-March for 2018	Not met for Q1, draft plan furnished in mid-April	Improve debt management.

Table 5. Niger: Structural Benchmarks, 2017

Measure	Timetable	Progress	Comment
Fiscal Policy and Revenue Administration			
Broaden the jurisdiction of the large enterprises Directorate (DGE) of the DGI by transferring to the DGE the control of the identified 120 large companies previously under the competency of regional tax offices outside Niamey.	End-January	Met	
Estimate the stock of VAT credits arrears and launch the VAT reimbursement mechanism using a share of the VAT collected by the DGE.	End-March	Not met	As a stop-gap measure, mining companies were allowed to offset VAT refund claims against VAT withheld from supplies.
Finalize the interconnection of the ASYCUDA world central server with all the main customs offices and the interconnection of the Niger customs office with those of Benin and Togo.	End-July	Not met	All domestic offices are connected to the central server. The connection to the Benin and Togo office is not yet operational, as the contract with UNCTAD for the second phase of migration to ASYCUDA was signed only in September 2017.
Public Financial Management			
Launch the process of establishing the 2018 budget under the program format by finalizing the required documents (DPBEP and DPPD).	End-June	Met	The DPBEP helped underpin the medium-term fiscal framework discussions held at the by the National Assembly in June 2017.
Finalize the framework of the TSA by signing the agreements with the BCEAO and the Commercial Bank on the management of the TSA, and close all the outstanding public accounts covered by the TSA.	End-June	Not met	Agreement with the BCEAO has been signed, but the impact study on the banking system was not conducted. Only a few dormant accounts have been closed.

Table 5. Niger: Structural Benchmarks, 2017 (concluded)

Other Structural Reforms			
Elaborate and submit to staff an action plan for the audit of the major public enterprises.	End-July	Met	Action plan has been sent and TORs for auditors drafted.
Send to The National Assembly a new law on public private partnership (PPP) consistent with the investment code and the 2012 budget law.	End-December	Not met	Technical assistance has been provided. Submission of legislation is proposed to be reset to March 2018.
Submit to staff the update of the 2008 national policy on gender.	End-December	Met	Completed ahead of schedule.

Table 6. Niger: Prior Actions and Structural Benchmarks, January – May 2018

Measure	Timetable	Progress	Macroeconomic Rationale
Prior Actions			
Adopt high-quality plans for tax administration and customs administration, each with at least five indicators covering all the administrations' key functions, ambitious numerical quarterly targets for the indicators, assign responsibility within the administrations at the functional level, and apply from the beginning of July 2018.	Prior Action	Met	Improve tax collection and the expand the tax base.
Submit new legislation on public private partnerships (PPP) to cabinet.	Prior Action	Met	Align with existing laws.
Fiscal Policy and Revenue Administrations			
Formulate and share with Fund staff performance plans for revenue collection agencies to be cascaded through directorates. These plans will set revenue targets and benchmarks for operational indicators, such as the number of filers with the DGE, the number of zero-liability VAT filers, and the number of TINs).	End-January	Not met	Improve tax collection and the expand the tax base.
Public Financial Management			
Regarding TSA implementation, complete and share with Fund staff a study on the impact on the banking system with the help of the BCEAO, make operational an interface between the IT systems of the BCEAO and the DGTCP, establish a clear account and subaccount structure of the TSA, and close all dormant accounts covered by the TSA and transfer their balances).	End- March	Not met	Improve liquidity management and expenditure control.
Other Structural Reforms			
Send to The National Assembly a new law on public private partnership (PPP) consistent with the investment code and the 2012 budget law, and in line with good international standards as laid out in the 2017 IMF TA report.	End-March	Not met	Align with existing laws.
Put in place legal requirements that all payments to and from the Large Taxpayer Unit (DGE) are made through the financial system. An action plan for the bankification of fiscal payments will be finalized and shared with Fund staff).	End-March	Not met	Improve governance in public administration and promote financial deepening.

Table 7. Niger: Structural Benchmarks, June – December 2018

Measure	Timetable	Progress	Macroeconomic Rationale
Fiscal Policy and Revenue Administration			
New SB: Provide Fund staff with white paper on the streamlining of tax exemption for discussion. In the meantime, provide Fund staff with monthly data on newly-granted discretionary tax exemptions.	End-June		Support revenue generation and simplify tax and customs administration.
Send legislation overhauling tax and customs exemptions to the National Assembly.	End-September		Support revenue generation and simplify tax and customs administration.
Public Financial Management			
New SB: Regarding TSA implementation, establish, and share with Fund staff, a timetable for account closures of public administration and public entities that reduces still-to-be-transferred balances to less than 10 percent of the level established in the BCEAO study; implement new TSA account structure at the BCEAO.	End-June		Improve liquidity management and expenditure control.
New SB: Regarding TSA implementation, reduce still-to-be-transferred balances of public administration and public entities to less than 10 percent of the level established in the BCEAO study; digitalize Treasury's banking services.	End-December		Improve liquidity management and expenditure control.
Other Structural Reforms			
Reset SB: Send to The National Assembly a new law on public private partnership (PPP) consistent with the investment code and the 2012 budget law, and in line with good international standards as laid out in the 2017 IMF TA report.	End-June		Align with existing laws.
New SB: Discontinue tax and customs duty payments to the DGE and the ten largest customs offices in cash by issuing a circular; transform bankification plan into a white paper.	End-June		Improve governance in public administration and promote financial deepening.
New SB: Discontinue tax and customs duty payments to the DME and the twenty largest customs offices in cash by issuing a circular.	End-December		Improve governance in public administration and promote financial deepening.

Table 8. Niger: Proposed Disbursements Scheduled Under the New ECF Arrangement, 2017–20

Amount (Millions)	Conditions Necessary for Disbursement	Date Available
SDR 14.1	Executive Board Approval of the ECF Arrangement	January 23, 2017
SDR 14.1	Observance of continuous and June 30, 2017 performance criteria, and completion of the first review under the arrangement	December 15, 2017
SDR 14.1	Observance of continuous and December 31, 2017 performance criteria, and completion of the second review under the arrangement	April 30, 2018
SDR 14.1	Observance of continuous and June 30, 2018 performance criteria, and completion of the third review under the arrangement	October 31, 2018
SDR 14.1	Observance of continuous and December 31, 2018 performance criteria, and completion of the fourth review under the arrangement	April 30, 2019
SDR 14.1	Observance of continuous and June 30, 2019 performance criteria, and completion of the fifth review under the arrangement	October 31, 2019
SDR 14.1	Observance of continuous and September 30, 2019 performance criteria, and completion of the sixth and last review under the arrangement	January 8, 2020
SDR 98.7	Total	

Source: International Monetary Fund.

Attachment II. Technical Memorandum of Understanding

Niamey, May 15, 2018

1. This technical memorandum of understanding defines the performance criteria and indicative targets of Niger’s program under the Extended Credit Facility (ECF) arrangement for the period Q1-2017 to Q1-2020. The performance criteria and indicative targets for 2017 and the first half of 2018 are set out in Tables 1 and 2 of the Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies (MEFP) attached to the Letter of Intent of November 30, 2017. Structural benchmarks appear in Tables 3 to 6. This technical memorandum of understanding also sets out data-reporting requirements for program monitoring.

DEFINITIONS

2. For the purposes of this technical memorandum, the following definitions of “government,” “debt,” “payments arrears,” and “government obligations” will be used:

- a) **Government** refers to the central government of the Republic of Niger; it does not include any political subdivision, public entity, or central bank with separate legal personality.
- b) As specified in paragraph 8 of the Guidelines on Public Debt Conditionality in Fund Arrangements, adopted by the Decision No. 15688-(14/107) of the Executive Board of the IMF of December 5, 2014, **debt** will be understood to mean a current, i.e., not contingent, liability, created under a contractual arrangement through the provision of value in the form of assets (including currency) or services, and which requires the obligor to make one or more payments in the form of assets (including currency) or services, according to a specific schedule; these payments will discharge the obligor of the principal and/or interest liabilities incurred under the contract. Debts can take a number of forms, the primary ones being as follows: (i) loans, i.e., advances of money to the obligor by the lender made on the basis of an undertaking that the obligor will repay the funds in the future (including deposits, bonds, debentures, commercial loans, and buyers’ credits) and temporary exchanges of assets, that are equivalent to fully collateralized loans, under which the obligor is required to repay the funds, and usually pay interest, by repurchasing the collateral from the buyer in the future (such as repurchase agreements and official swap arrangements); (ii) suppliers’ credits, i.e., contracts where the supplier permits the obligor to defer payments until sometime after the date on which the goods are delivered or services are provided; and (iii) leases, i.e., arrangements under which property is provided that the lessee has the right to use for one or more specified period(s) of time that are usually shorter than the total expected service life of the property, while the lessor retains the title to the property. For the purpose of this guideline, the debt is the present value (at the inception of the lease) of all lease payments expected to be made during the period of the agreement, excluding those payments necessary for the operation, repair, or maintenance of the property. Under the definition of

debt set out above, arrears, penalties, and judicially awarded damages arising from the failure to make payment under a contractual obligation that constitutes debt are debt. Failure to make payment on an obligation that is not considered debt under this definition (e.g., payment on delivery) will not give rise to debt.

- c) Present value (PV) of new public and publicly-guaranteed external debt contracted discounts at a five percent annual rate the future payment stream, except for loans with a negative grant element, in which case the PV is set equal to the value of the loan. The calculation of the PV is based on the loan amount contracted in a given year, independent on when disbursements take place.
- d) **Domestic payments arrears** are domestic payments owed by the government but not paid. They include committed and authorized fiscal year expenditures that are not paid within 90 days. **External payments arrears** are payments due but not paid.
- e) Government **obligation** is any financial obligation of the government accepted as such by the government (including any government debt).

A. Quantitative Performance Criteria

Net Domestic Financing of the Government

Definition

3. **Net domestic financing of the government** is defined as the sum of (i) **net bank credit to the government**; (ii) **net nonbank domestic financing of the government**, including government securities issued in CFAF on the WAEMU regional financial market and not held by resident commercial banks, proceeds from the sale of government assets, and privatization receipts.

4. **Net bank credit to the government is equal to the balance of government claims and debts vis-à-vis national banking institutions.** Government claims include cash holdings of the Nigerien Treasury, secured obligations, deposits with the central bank, and deposits of the Treasury (including regional offices) with commercial banks. Government deposits with commercial banks are excluded from government claims insofar as they are used solely to finance externally financed capital expenditure.

5. **Government debt to the banking system includes assistance from the central bank (excluding net IMF financing under the ECF),** the CFAF counterpart of the 2009 General SDR Allocation, assistance from commercial banks (including government securities held by the central bank and commercial banks) and deposits with the CCP (postal checking system).

6. **The scope of net bank credit to the government, as defined by the BCEAO, includes all central government administrations.** Net bank credit to the government and the amount of

Treasury bills and bonds issued in CFAF on the WAEMU regional financial market are calculated by the BCEAO.

7. Net nonbank domestic financing includes: (i) the change in the stock of government securities (Treasury bills and bonds) issued in CFAF on the WAEMU regional financial market and not held by resident commercial banks; (ii) the change in the balance of Treasury correspondents' deposit accounts; (iii) the change in the balance of various deposit accounts at the Treasury; and (iv) the change in the stock of claims on the government forgiven by the private sector. Net nonbank financing of the government is calculated by the Nigerien Treasury.

8. The 2017 quarterly targets are based on the change between the end-December 2016 level and the date selected for the performance criterion or indicative target.

Adjustment

9. The ceiling on net domestic financing of the government will be subject to adjustment if disbursements of external budgetary support net of external debt service and external arrears payments, including disbursements under the ECF, fall short of program projections.

10. If, at the end of each quarter of 2017, disbursements of external budgetary support fall short of the projected amounts at the end of each quarter, the corresponding quarterly ceilings will be raised pro tanto, up to a maximum of CFAF 15 billion in 2017 and CFAF 30 from 2018 onward.

11. From 2018 onward, the ceiling on net domestic financing will also be adjusted for deviations from programmed domestic payment arrears clearance. Specifically, the ceiling on domestic financing will be adjusted up (down) one-for-one for arrears clearance in excess (in deficit) of programmed levels.

Reporting Requirement

12. Detailed data on domestic financing of the government will be provided monthly, within six weeks after the end of each month.

Reduction of Domestic Payments Arrears

Definition

13. The reduction of domestic payments arrears is equal to the difference between the stock of arrears at end-2016 and the stock of arrears on the reference date.

14. The Centre d'amortissement de la dette intérieure de l'Etat (CAADIE) and the Treasury are responsible for calculating the stock of domestic payments arrears on government obligations and recording their repayment.

15. Data on the stock, accumulation (including the change in Treasury balances outstanding), and repayment of domestic arrears on government obligations will be provided monthly, within six weeks after the end of each month.

Adjustment

16. Programmed arrears clearance in 2018 will be adjusted up (down) one-for-one for any shortfall (excess) relative to programmed arrears clearance programmed for end-2017.

17. Arrears clearance shall not be negative.

External Payments Arrears

Definition

18. Government debt is outstanding debt owed or guaranteed by the government. For the program, the government undertakes not to accumulate external payments arrears on its debt (including Treasury bills and bonds issued in CFAF on the WAEMU regional financial market), with the exception of external payments arrears arising from debt being renegotiated with external creditors, including Paris Club creditors.

Reporting Requirement

19. Data on the stock, accumulation, and repayment of external payments arrears will be provided monthly, within six weeks after the end of each month.

External Non-Concessional Loans Contracted or Guaranteed by the Government

Definition

20. The government and the public enterprises listed in paragraph 21 undertake not to contract or guarantee external debt with an original maturity of one year or more, and having a grant element of less than 35 percent. For program purposes, a debt is concessional if it includes a grant element of at least 35 percent, calculated as follows: the grant element (the difference between the present value (PV) of debt and its nominal value) expressed as a percentage of the nominal value of the debt. The PV of debt at the time of its contracting is calculated by discounting the future stream of payments of debt service due on this debt. The discount rate used for that purpose is 5 percent.¹

21. This performance criterion applies not only to debt, as defined in paragraph 8 of the Guidelines on Public Debt Conditionality in Fund Arrangements, adopted by the Decision No. 15688-(14/107) of the Executive Board of the IMF of December 5, 2014, but also to any

¹ On October 11, 2013, the Executive Boards of the IMF and of the World Bank adopted a new methodology setting a single, unified rate to calculate the grant element of individual loans. The new unified rate is set at 5 percent (see <http://www.imf.org/external/np/pdr/conc/calculator/gecalcf.aspx>).

obligation contracted or guaranteed for which no value has been received. However, this performance criterion does not apply to financing provided by the IMF and to debt rescheduling in the form of new loans.

22. For the purposes of the relevant performance criteria, the guarantee of a debt arises from any explicit legal obligation of the government to service a debt in the event of nonpayment by the debtor (involving payments in cash or kind).

23. For the purposes of the relevant performance criterion, external debt is defined as debt denominated, or requiring repayment, in a currency other than the CFA franc. This definition also applies to debt contracted among WAEMU member countries and with WAEMU financial institutions.

24. For the purposes of this performance criterion, the public sector includes the government, as defined in paragraph 2 above, and the following public enterprises: (i) *Société Nigérienne d'Electricité (Nigelec)*; (ii) *Société de Construction et de Gestion des Marchés (Socogem)*; (iii) *Société Nigérienne des Produits Pétroliers (Sonidep)*; (iv) *Société Nigérienne des Télécommunications (Sonitel)*; (v) *Société de Patrimoine des Mines du Niger (Sopamin)*; and (vi) *Société propriétaire et exploitante de l'Hotel Gaweye (SPEG)*.

Reporting Requirement

25. Details on all external public sector debt will be provided monthly, within six weeks after the end of each month. The same requirement applies to guarantees granted by the central government. The Ministry of Finance will regularly forward to Fund staff a list of loans in process of negotiation. It will also prepare semiannual reports on any external debt contracted or in process of negotiation and the terms thereof, as well as on the borrowing program for the next six months including the terms thereof, and will forward them to Fund staff.

Short-Term External Debt of the Central Government

Definition

26. The government will not accumulate or guarantee new external debt with an original maturity of less than one year. This performance criterion applies not only to debt as defined in paragraph 8 of the Guidelines Public Debt Conditionality in Fund Arrangements, adopted by the Decision No. 15688-(14/107) of the Executive Board of the IMF of December 5, 2014, but also to any obligation contracted or guaranteed for which no value has been received. Short-term loans related to imports are excluded from this performance criterion, as are short-term securities issued in CFAF on the regional financial market.

Reporting Requirement

27. Details on all external government debt will be provided monthly, within six weeks after the end of each month. The same requirement applies to guarantees granted by the government.

Present Value of Public and Publicly-Guaranteed External Debt

Definition

28. For program purposes, the definition of debt is set out in paragraph 8(a) of the Guidelines on Public Debt Conditionality in Fund Arrangements attached to IMF Executive Board Decision No. 15688-(14/107), adopted on December 5, 2014.

<http://www.imf.org/external/pp/longres.aspx?id=4927>

- (a) For the purpose of these guidelines, the term “debt” will be understood to mean a current, i.e., not contingent, liability, created under a contractual arrangement through the provision of value in the form of assets (including currency) or services, and which requires the obligor to make one or more payments in the form of assets (including currency) or services, at some future point(s) in time; these payments will discharge the principal and/or interest liabilities incurred under the contract. Debts can take a number of forms, the primary ones being as follows:
- (i) loans, i.e., advances of money to the obligor by the lender made on the basis of an undertaking that the obligor will repay the funds in the future (including deposits, bonds, debentures, commercial loans and buyers’ credits) and temporary exchanges of assets that are equivalent to fully collateralized loans under which the obligor is required to repay the funds, and usually pay interest, by repurchasing the collateral from the buyer in the future (such as repurchase agreements and official swap arrangements);
 - (ii) suppliers’ credits, i.e., contracts where the supplier permits the obligor to defer payments until sometime after the date on which the goods are delivered or services are provided; and
 - (iii) leases, i.e., arrangements under which property is provided which the lessee has the right to use for one or more specified period(s) of time that are usually shorter than the total expected service life of the property, while the lessor retains the title to the property. For the purpose of these guidelines, the debt is the present value (at the inception of the lease) of all lease payments expected to be made during the period of the agreement excluding those payments that cover the operation, repair, or maintenance of the property.
- (b) Under the definition of debt set out in this paragraph, arrears, penalties, and judicially awarded damages arising from the failure to make payment under a contractual obligation that constitutes debt are debt. Failure to make payment on an obligation that is not considered debt under this definition (e.g., payment on delivery) will not give rise to debt.

29. External debt is defined as debt contracted or serviced in a currency other than the franc of the Financial Community of Africa (CFAF).

30. The performance criterion (PC) is a ceiling and applies to the present value (PV) of all new external debt (concessional and non-concessional) contracted or guaranteed by the central government, including commitments contracted or guaranteed for which no value has been received. This performance criterion does not apply to:

- (a) short-term supplier or trade-related credit with a maturity of up to three months;
- (b) rescheduling agreements; and
- (c) IMF disbursements.

31. Applicable contractual date. For program monitoring purposes, external debt is deemed to be contracted or guaranteed at the date of effectiveness of the contract, including its approval, where required, by the member(s) of the government of Niger with authority to do so.

32. Currency Denomination. For program purposes, the value in CFAF of new external debt of 2018 is calculated using the average exchange rate for January 2018 in the IMF's International Financial Statistics (IFS) database.

33. PV Calculation. Present Value of new external debt is calculated by discounting all projected disbursements and debt service payments (principal and interest) on the basis of a program discount rate of 5 percent and taking account of all loan conditions, including projected disbursements, the maturity, grace period, payment schedule, front-end fees and management fees. The PV is calculated using the IMF "DSA template," which is based on the amount of the loan and the above parameters. In the case of loans for which the grant element is zero or less than zero, the PV is set at an amount equal to the face value.

Reporting Requirement

34. The authorities will inform IMF staff of any planned external borrowing and the conditions on such borrowing before the loans are either contracted or guaranteed by the government.

B. Quantitative Targets

Definitions

35. Total revenue is an indicative target for the program. It includes tax, nontax, and special accounts revenue, but excludes proceeds from the settlement of reciprocal debts between the government and enterprises.

36. The basic fiscal deficit is defined as the difference between (i) total tax revenue, as defined in paragraph 25; and (ii) total fiscal expenditure excluding externally financed investment expenditure but including HIPC-financed expenditure.

37. According to the WAEMU definition, the basic fiscal deficit is defined as the basic balance described under paragraph 26 plus budgetary grants.

38. The floor on poverty-reducing expenditure is an indicative target for the program. This expenditure comprises all budget lines included in the Unified Priority List (UPL) of poverty-reducing and HIPC-financed expenditures.

39. A limit is set on the amount of expenditures paid through exceptional procedures (without prior commitment) excluding debt service payments and expenditures linked to tax exemptions. The limit is 5 percent of total authorized expenditures during the quarter for which the target is assessed.

Reporting Requirement

40. Information on basic budget revenue and expenditures will be provided to the IMF monthly, within six weeks after the end of each month.

41. Information on UPL expenditures will be provided to the IMF quarterly, within six weeks after the end of each quarter.

42. Information on exceptional expenditure will be provided to the IMF quarterly after six weeks after the end of the quarter.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR PROGRAM MONITORING

A. Government Finance

43. The authorities will forward the following to IMF staff:

- Detailed monthly estimates of revenue and expenditure, including priority expenditure, the payment of domestic and external arrears, and a breakdown of customs, DGI, and Treasury revenue.
- The Table of Government Financial Operations with comprehensive monthly data on domestic and external financing of the budget, and changes in arrears and Treasury balances outstanding. These data are to be provided monthly, within six weeks after the end of each month.
- Comprehensive monthly data on net nonbank domestic financing: (i) the change in the stock of government securities (Treasury bills and bonds) issued in CFAF on the WAEMU regional financial market and not held by resident commercial banks; (ii) the change in the balance of

various deposit accounts at the Treasury; (iii) the change in the stock of claims on the government forgiven by the private sector.

- Quarterly data on expenditure for UPL lines (statement of appropriations approved, disbursed, and used).
- Quarterly reports on budget execution, including the rate of execution of poverty-reducing expenditure and, in particular, the use of appropriations by the line ministries concerned (National Education, Public Health, Equipment, Agriculture, Livestock).
- Monthly data on Treasury balances outstanding, by reference fiscal year, with a breakdown of maturities of more than and less than 90 days.
- Monthly data on effective debt service (principal and interest) compared with the programmed maturities provided within four weeks after the end of each month; and
- List of external loans contracted in process of negotiation and projected borrowing in the next six months, including the financial terms and conditions.

B. Monetary Sector

44. The authorities will provide the following information each month, within eight weeks following the end of each month:

- Consolidated balance sheet of monetary institutions and, where applicable, the consolidated balance sheets of individual banks;
- Monetary survey, within eight weeks following the end of each month, for provisional data;
- Borrowing and lending interest rates; and
- Customary banking supervision indicators for banks and nonbank financial institutions (where applicable, these same indicators for individual institutions may also be provided).

C. Balance of Payments

45. The authorities will provide IMF staff with the following information:

- Any revision of balance of payments data (including services, private transfers, official transfers, and capital transactions³) whenever they occur;
- Preliminary annual balance of payments data, within six months after the end of the reference year.

D. Real Sector

46. The authorities will provide IMF staff with the following information:

- Disaggregated monthly consumer price indexes, within two weeks following the end of each month;
- The national accounts, within six months after the end of the year; and
- Any revision of the national accounts.

E. Structural Reforms and Other Data

47. The authorities will provide IMF staff with the following information:

- Any study or official report on Niger's economy, within two weeks after its publication;
- Any decision, order, law, decree, ordinance, or circular with economic or financial implications, upon its publication or, at the latest, when it enters into force.
- Any draft contract in the mining and petroleum sectors, including production and sales volumes, prices, and foreign investment; and
- Any agreement with private sector stakeholders having economic or financial repercussions for the government, including in the natural resources sector.

Summary of Data to be Reported

Type of Data	Table	Frequency	Reporting Deadline
Real sector	National accounts.	Annual	End-year + 6 months
	Revisions of the national accounts.	Variable	8 weeks after the revision
	Disaggregated consumer price indexes.	Monthly	End-month + 2 weeks
Government finance	Net government position vis-à-vis the banking system.	Monthly	End-month + 6 weeks
	Complete monthly data on net nonbank domestic financing: (i) change in the stock of government securities (Treasury bills and bonds) issued in CFAF on the WAEMU regional financial market and not held by resident commercial banks; (ii) change in the balance of various deposit accounts at the Treasury; (iii) change in the stock of claims on the government forgiven by the private sector.	Monthly	End-month + 6 weeks
	Provisional TOFE, including a breakdown of revenue (DGI, Monthly DGD and DGTCP) and expenditure, including the repayment of domestic wage and nonwage arrears, as at end-1999, and the change in Treasury balances outstanding.	Monthly	End-month + 6 weeks
	Data on Treasury balances outstanding (RAP), by reference fiscal year (total and RAP at more than 90 days).	Monthly	End-month + 6 weeks
	Monthly statement of Treasury correspondents' deposit accounts.	Monthly	End-month + 6 weeks
	Execution of the investment budget.	Quarterly	End-quarter + 6 weeks

Type of Data	Table	Frequency	Reporting Deadline
	Table of fiscal expenditure execution, unified list expenditure, and HIPC-financed expenditure.	Monthly	End-month + 6 weeks
	Treasury accounts trial balance.		
	Monthly statement of the balances of accounts of the Treasury and of other public accounts at the BCEAO.	Monthly	End-month + 6 weeks (provisional) End-month + 10 weeks (final)
	Petroleum products pricing formula, petroleum products tax receipts, and pricing differentials.	Monthly	End-month + 6 weeks
	Monetary survey		
Monetary and financial data	Consolidated balance sheet of monetary institutions and, where applicable, consolidated balance sheets of individual banks.	Monthly	End-month + 8 weeks
	Borrowing and lending interest rates.	Monthly	End-month + 8 weeks
	Banking supervision prudential indicators.	Quarterly	End-quarter + 8 weeks
Balance of payments	Balance of payments	Annual	End-year + 6 months
	Balance of payments revisions	Variable	At the time of the revision.
External debt	Stock and repayment of external arrears.	Monthly	End-month + 6 weeks
	Breakdown of all new external loans signed and projected borrowing, including the financial terms and conditions.		End-month + 6 weeks
	Table on the monthly effective service of external debt (principal and interests), compared with the programmed maturities.	Monthly	End-month + 4 weeks

**Statement by Mr. Sembene, Executive Director for Niger, and Mr. Diakite, Advisor to the
Executive Director for Niger
June 1, 2018**

The Nigerien authorities are appreciative of the Fund's continued support for their reform and policy agenda. The staff report on the second review of the program supported by the Extended Credit Facility (ECF) shows that Niger continues to make good progress toward program objectives amid daunting security challenges, climatic shocks, and unfavorable evolution of some commodity prices. Overall, program performance was strong even though the target on revenue mobilization was missed due to transitory shocks experienced in 2017. Nevertheless, revenue performance during the first quarter of 2018 was robust, demonstrating that the corrective actions taken subsequently by the authorities are yielding positive results.

Going forward, the authorities continue to be fully committed to the objectives of the ECF-supported program. Sustaining fiscal consolidation and improving public financial management will continue to be key in their reform efforts to create fiscal space for priority investments and increase the resilience to shocks. Economic diversification and private sector development are equally important priorities that are also underscored in Niger's quinquennial development plan (PDES 2017-21).

Performance under the ECF-Supported Program

The authorities met all performance criteria and indicative targets except for the revenue target. As indicated above, total revenue fell below program target, notably as a result of traders' strikes, and delays in the sale of telecom licenses and collection of tax arrears. However, the shortfall in tax revenue was offset by higher than expected external budget support, while public expenditure was kept well below program targets. As a result, the overall fiscal deficit was reduced from 6.1 percent in 2016 to about 5 percent in 2017.

A number of structural benchmarks were met—albeit with delay in some cases. These include the preparation of the updated national gender policy, the establishment of performance plans for tax and customs administrations, and the submission of a new PPP law to the Cabinet. At the same time, progress was made in advancing several structural reforms in various areas, including the energy sector, the financial sector, the business climate, and governance. Going forward, they are mindful that capacity constraints will need to be overcome to accelerate the implementation of the structural reform agenda.

Economic and Financial Policies for the Remainder of 2018 and the Medium Term

The authorities are of the view that the economic outlook remains positive, predicated on reforms to increase agricultural productivity and food security, infrastructure investment, and externally financed projects. For 2018, projections suggest that GDP growth will be strong, hovering around 5.2 percent and driven notably by the construction and services sectors. In the medium term, the authorities' reform efforts, combined with increased oil production and external assistance, should sustain growth at around 6 percent.

Under the ECF-supported program, economic and financial policies will continue to be anchored to the PDES. Program priorities include maintaining macroeconomic stability, improving public financial and debt management, and expanding fiscal space by broadening the tax base and strengthening tax administration.

The authorities remain committed to achieving the program's fiscal targets for 2018. They are mindful

that this would require significant efforts and policy adjustment, particularly in view of the heavier burden of military and security expenditures that the country continues to bear amid terrorist threats facing the region. As illustrated in the staff report for the first review of the ECF arrangement (Figure 2), security spending was projected to increase noticeably between 2016 and 2017 and exceed 200 billion CFAF, thus claiming a macro-critical proportion of public expenditure. Under these circumstances, we would have expected the staff report to sustain a strong focus on security-related issues and related policy implications. In staff reports for future program reviews in fragile countries like Niger, we look forward to these important matters featuring the list of key policy issues addressed in a comprehensive manner so long as they remain macro-critical.

Moreover, the authorities are determined to embody reforms to tax exemption policies in a new draft legislation that will be submitted to the National Assembly in coming months. In the meantime, they will aim to limit the use of new discretionary exemptions. Performance plans will continue to be utilized to ensure that the tax and customs administrations sustain their efforts of revenue mobilization.

The authorities are committed to preserving the sustainability of public debt. To this end, they will continue their efforts to strengthen debt management, notably by operationalizing the inter-Ministerial committee on debt management and avoiding short-term external borrowing. The committee will certify that appropriate procedures have been used for selected projects to be financed. The validity of all loans contracts and public guarantees will require the signature of the Minister of Finance. In the medium term, the current institutional fragmentation will be addressed through the centralization of debt management at the Ministry of Finance, in line with West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) directives. Considering the recent upgrading of Niger's debt management capacity, the authorities request the modification of the performance criterion on external debt accumulation, consistent with the Fund's policy on debt limits.

On the expenditure side, the authorities will focus mainly on improving the quality of spending. To this end, a wide range of measures initiated to improve the management of public finances will be pursued, including the implementation of the single treasury account, program budgeting, and the road map adopted to absorb efficiently external financial assistance in support of the PDES 2017-21. The authorities consider taking these steps to be critical for effective delivery of public services throughout the country.

Other key priorities include reforming State-owned enterprises and civil service. In these areas, they are hopeful that progress will be made with the World Bank's assistance. More widespread use of new technologies is also envisaged to help improve the quality of expenditure, increase the efficiency of revenue administration, and ensure sound debt management.

The authorities believe that a strong private sector is essential for reducing poverty, raising the standard of living of the Nigerien population and strengthening long-term economic prospects. In this regard, they will continue their efforts to improve the business climate, increase access to credit, and address governance, demographic and gender issues.

While progress has been made to improve the business climate, as demonstrated by the improvement in the ranking of the country in "Doing Business", the authorities recognize that much remains to be done. To this end, they will continue to address major impediments identified by businesses, including frequent electricity shortages, competition from the informal sector, cumbersome customs procedures, weaknesses in the judicial system, and lack of infrastructure and human capital. They are also committed to making inroads in clearing domestic arrears, which should provide a boost to activities in the private sector. Furthermore, necessary steps are expected to be taken to rejoin the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) this year.

Efforts to address the low level of financial intermediation in Niger will continue. Increasing recourse to banking services for government payments will contribute to financial deepening and improved access to credit. Technical and financial assistance will be requested to consolidate microfinance institutions, develop training programs, and establish a refinancing scheme and guarantee funds.

Conclusion

The Nigerien authorities remain committed to their Fund-supported program, as reflected in the strong performance under the ECF arrangement. Going forward, they are determined to pursue their reform efforts to preserve macroeconomic stability and enhance fiscal buffers, with a view to achieving strong and inclusive economic growth. Given the difficult domestic and external environment, they will continue to value Fund's technical and financial assistance.

In this light, we would appreciate Directors' support for the completion of second review under the Fund-supported program and modification of the performance criterion on external public debt.