GOOGLE NEWS QUERY: NUPRC · NIGERIA

Nigeria opens 40-block licensing round portal Nov 20

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Nigeria's upstream regulator, the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC), has fixed 20 November as the date for opening the bid portal for its 2026 licensing round, covering 40 oil and gas blocks. The announcement was made as NUPRC actively courted global investors, including at the ADIPEC conference in Abu Dhabi, where the commission's chief executive promoted the round under the message that Nigeria remains a stable destination for upstream capital.

The 40 blocks on offer represent one of the more substantial licensing exercises Nigeria has conducted in recent years. NUPRC has not yet disclosed the specific breakdown of block types, locations, or water depth classifications in publicly available reporting, though the round has attracted coverage across Nigeria's major financial and energy press. The regulator has framed the exercise as an opportunity for both established majors and new entrants, signalling an intent to diversify the investor base beyond traditional operators.

The round has not been without friction. Nigerian media has reported controversy surrounding associates linked to the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited's Group CEO, Bayo Ojulari, in connection with the process — a political dimension that prospective bidders will need to monitor as due diligence progresses. NUPRC has not publicly addressed these concerns in detail, and it remains unclear whether the controversy will affect the timeline or terms of the round.

For international service and equipment companies, this licensing round is a leading indicator rather than an immediate procurement trigger. Block awards from this round will not translate into drilling programmes, FEED studies, or supply chain activity for some time — realistically 2027 at the earliest for early movers, and later for blocks requiring significant appraisal. The instrument at this stage is a licensing round announcement and bid portal opening, not a block award or signed contract. Norwegian companies should treat this as a relationship-building and market-positioning moment, not an outreach-to-procurement event.

Nigeria's upstream sector continues to offer material scope for Norwegian service companies across the full project lifecycle, from subsea tie-backs on deepwater acreage to well services and FPSO solutions on shelf and swamp blocks. The 2026 round, if it proceeds on schedule and clears its political headwinds, could seed a new wave of development activity in the latter part of this decade. Tracking which operators are awarded which blocks — and their stated development timelines — will be the critical next step for companies building Nigeria account plans.

Why this matters to partners and clients of Saga

This is a licensing round announcement at bid-portal-opening stage — no blocks have been awarded and no contracts exist yet. Norwegian service companies should monitor the round closely, identify which operators win acreage in technically complex or deepwater positions, and invest now in relationship-building with likely winners and with NUPRC itself.
Procurement outreach is premature until block awards are confirmed and operator development plans take shape, likely from mid-2026 onward.

PARTNER ANGLES

- **Subsea/FPSO:** Track which of the 40 blocks are deepwater or pre-salt to position early for future FEED and EPCI conversations with winning operators.
- **Drilling:** Monitor operator identities post-award to anticipate rig and well-services demand as new acreage holders move toward exploration drilling.
- **Well Services:** Engage with both IOC and indigenous Nigerian companies participating in the round to build preferred-supplier relationships ahead of appraisal campaigns.

- **Pipeline:** Assess whether any awarded blocks sit in areas requiring new export infrastructure tie-ins, particularly in the Niger Delta shelf.
- **LNG:** Watch for gas-prone blocks in the round that could feed Nigeria LNG expansion or new midstream projects, where Norwegian process and marine expertise is relevant.

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