**LAND USE ACT**

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**CHAPTER L5**  
LAND USE ACT

**An Act to vest all land comprised in the territory of each State (except land vested in  
the Federal Government or its agencies) solely in the Governor of the State, who  
would hold such land in trust for the people and would henceforth be responsible  
for allocation of land in all urban areas to individuals resident in the State and to  
organisations for residential, agricultural, commercial and other purposes while  
similar powers with respect to non-urban areas are conferred on Local Governments.**

[1978 No. 6.)

*[29th March, 1978]*

[Commencement.)

PART I

*General*

1. **Vesting of all land in the State**

Subject to the provisions of this Act, all land comprised in the territory of each State  
in the Federation is hereby vested in the Governor of that State, and such land shall be  
held in trust and administered for the use and common benefit of all Nigerians in accor-  
dance with the provisions of this Act.

1. **Control and management of land; advisory bodies**  
   (1) As from the commencement of this Act-

*(a)*all land in urban areas shall be under the control and management of the Gov-  
ernor of each State; and

*(b)*all other land shall, subject to this Act, be under the control and management  
of the local government within the area of jurisdiction of which the land is  
situated.

(2) There shall be established in each State a body to be known as "the Land Use and  
Allocation Committee" which shall have responsibility for-

*(a)*advising the Governor on any matter connected with the management of land  
to which paragraph *(a)*of subsection (1) of this section relates;

*(b)*advising the Governor on any matter connected with the resettlement of per-  
sons affected by the revocation of rights of occupancy on the ground of over-  
riding public interest under this Act; and

*(c)*determining disputes as to the amount of compensation payable under this Act  
for improvements on land.

(3) The Land Use and Allocation Committee shall consist of such a number of per-  
sons as the Governor may determine and shall include in its membership--

*(a)*not less than two persons possessing qualifications approved for appointment  
to the civil service as estate surveyors or land officers and who have had such  
qualification for not less than five years; and

*(b)*a legal practitioner.

(4) The Land Use and Allocation Committee shall be presided over by such one of its  
members as may be designated by the Governor and, subject to such directions as may be  
given in that regard by the Governor, shall have power to regulate its proceedings.

(5) There shall also be established for each Local Government a body to be known as  
"the Land Allocation Advisory Committee" which shall consist of such person as may be  
determined by the Governor acting after consultation with the local government and shall  
have responsibility for advising the local government on any matter connected with the  
management of land to which paragraph *(b)*of subsection (1) of this section relates.

1. **Designation of urban areas**

Subject to such general conditions as may be specified in that behalf by the National  
Council of States, the Governor may for the purposes of this Act by order published in  
the State *Gazette*designate the parts of the area of the territory of the State constituting  
land in an urban area.

1. **Applicable law for the interim management of land**

Until other provisions are made in that behalf and, subject to the provisions of this  
Act, land under the control and management of the Governor under this Act shall be ad-  
ministered-

*(a)*in the case of any State where the Land Tenure Law of the former Northern  
Nigeria applies, in accordance with the provisions of that law; and

*(b)*in every other case, in accordance with the provisions of the State Land Law

     applicable in respect of State land in the State,

and the provisions of the Land Tenure Law or the State Land Law, as the case may be,  
shall have effect with such modifications as would bring those laws into conformity with  
this Act or its general intendment.

PART II

*Principles of land tenure, powers of Governor and local governments,  
and rights of occupiers*

1. **Powers of the Governor in relation to land**

(1) It shall be lawful for the Governor in respect of land, whether or not in an urban  
area to--

*(a)*grant statutory rights of occupancy to any person for all purposes;

*(b)*grant easements appurtenant to statutory rights of occupancy;

*(c)*demand rental for any such land granted to any person;

*(d)*revise the said rental-

          (i) at such intervals as may be specified in the certificate of occupancy; or  
          (ii) where no intervals are specified in the certificate of occupancy at any time during the term of the statutory right of occupancy;

*(e)*impose a penal rent for a breach of any covenant in a certificate of occupancy  
requiring the holder to develop or effect improvements on the land, the subject  
of the certificate of occupancy, and to revise such penal rent as provided in  
section 19 of this Act;

*(f)*impose a penal rent for a breach of any condition, express or implied, which  
precludes the holder of a statutory right of occupancy from alienating the right  
of occupancy or any part thereof by sale, mortgage, transfer of possession, sub-  
lease or bequest or otherwise howsoever without the prior consent of the Governor;

*(g)*waive, wholly or partially, except as otherwise prescribed, all or any of the cove-  
nants or conditions to which a statutory right of occupancy is subject where,  
owing to special circumstances, compliance therewith would be impossible or  
great hardship would be imposed upon the holder;

*(h)*extend except as otherwise prescribed, the time to the holder of a statutory  
right of occupancy for performing any of the conditions of the right of occu-  
pancy upon such terms and conditions as he may think fit.

(2) Upon the grant of a statutory right of occupancy under the provisions of subsec-  
tion (1) of this section, all existing rights to the use and occupation of the land, which is  
the subject of the statutory right of occupancy, shall be extinguished.

1. **Powers of local government in relation to land not in urban areas**

(1) It shall be lawful for a local government in respect of land not in an urban area  
to-

*(a)*grant customary rights of occupancy to any person or organisation for the use  
of land in the local government area for agricultural, residential and other pur-  
poses;

*(b)*grant customary rights of occupancy to any person or organisation for the use  
of land for grazing purposes and such other purposes ancillary to agricultural  
purposes as may be customary in the local government area concerned.

(2) No single customary right of occupancy shall be granted in respect of an area of  
land in excess of 500 hectares if granted for agricultural purposes, or 5,000 hectares if  
granted for grazing purposes, except with the consent of the Governor.

(3) It shall be lawful for a local government to enter upon, use and occupy for public  
purposes any land within the area of its jurisdiction which is not-

*(a)*land within an area declared to be an urban area pursuant to section 3 of this Act;

*(b)*the subject of a statutory right of occupancy;

*(c)*within any area compulsorily acquired by the Government of the Federation or  
                      of the State concerned;

*(d)*the subject of any laws relating to minerals or mineral oils,

and for the purpose, to revoke any customary right of occupancy on any such land.

(4) The local government shall have exclusive rights to the lands so occupied against  
all persons except the Governor.

(5) The holder and the occupier according to their respective interests of any custom-  
ary right of occupancy revoked under subsection (3) of this section shall be entitled to  
compensation, for the value at the date of revocation, of their unexhausted improvements.

(6) Where land in respect of which a customary right of occupancy is revoked under  
this Act was used for agricultural purposes by the holder, the local government shall allo-  
cate to such holder alternative land for use for the same purpose.

(7) If a local government refuses or neglects within a reasonable time to pay compen-  
sation to a holder and an occupier according to their respective interests under the provi-  
sions of subsection (5) of this section, the Governor may proceed to the assessment of  
compensation under section 29 of this Act and direct the local government to pay the  
amount of such compensation to the holder and occupier according to their respective  
interests.

1. **Restriction on rights of persons under the age of 21**

It shall not be lawful for the Governor to grant a statutory right of occupancy or con-  
sent to the assignment or subletting of a statutory right of occupancy to a person under  
the age of 21 years:

Provided that-

*(a)*where a guardian or trustee of a person under the age of 21 years has been duly  
appointed for such purpose, the Governor may grant or consent to the assign-  
ment or subletting of a statutory right of occupancy to such guardian or trustee  
on behalf of such person under age;

*(b)*a person under the age of 21 years upon whom a statutory right of occupancy  
devolves on the death of the holder, shall have the same liabilities and obliga-  
tions under and in respect of his right of occupancy as if he were of full age,  
notwithstanding the fact that no guardian or trustee has been appointed for  
him.

1. **Special contracts**

Statutory right of occupancy granted under the provisions of section 5 (1) *(a)*of this  
Act shall be for a definite term and may be granted subject to the terms of any contract  
which may be made by the Governor and the holder not being inconsistent with the pro-  
visions of this Act.

**9. Certificates of occupancy**

(1) It shall be lawful for the Governor-

*(a)*when granting a statutory right of occupancy to any person; or

*(b)*when any person is in occupation of land under a customary right of occu-  
                   pancy and applies in the prescribed manner; or

*(c)*when any person is entitled to a statutory right of occupancy,

to issue a certificate under his hand in evidence of such right of occupancy.

(2) Such certificate shall be termed a certificate of occupancy and there shall be paid  
therefor, by the person in whose name it is issued, such fee (if any) as may be prescribed.

(3) If the person in whose name a certificate of occupancy is issued, without lawful  
excuse, refuses or neglects to accept and pay for the certificate, the Governor may cancel  
the certificate and recover from such person any expenses incidental thereto, and in the  
case of a certificate evidencing a statutory right of occupancy to be granted under para-  
graph *(a)*of subsection (1) of this section, the Governor may revoke the statutory right of  
occupancy.

(4) The terms and conditions of a certificate of occupancy granted under this Act and  
which has been accepted by the holder shall be enforceable against the holder and his  
successors in title, notwithstanding that the acceptance of such terms and conditions is  
not evidenced by the signature of the holder or is evidenced by the signature only or, in  
the case of a corporation, is evidenced by the signature only of some person purporting to  
accept on behalf of the corporation.

**10. Conditions and provisions implied in certificate of occupancy**

Every certificate of occupancy shall be deemed to contain provisions to the following  
effect-

*(a)*that the holder binds himself to pay to the Governor the amount found to be  
payable in respect of any unexhausted improvements existing on the land at  
the date of his entering into occupation;

*(b)*that the holder binds himself to pay to the Governor the rent fixed by the Gov-  
ernor and any rent which may be agreed or fixed on revision in accordance  
with the provisions of section 16 of this Act.

**11. Power of Governor or public officer to enter and inspect land and improvements**

The Governor or any public officer duly authorised by the Governor in that behalf,  
shall have the power to enter upon and inspect the land comprised in any statutory right  
of occupancy or any improvements effected thereon, at any reasonable hours in the day  
time, and the occupier shall permit and give free access to the Governor or any such offi-  
cer to enter and inspect.

**12. Power of Governor to grant licences to take building materials**

(1) It shall be lawful for the Governor to grant a licence to any person to enter upon  
any land which is not the subject of a statutory right of occupancy or of a mining lease,  
mining right or exclusive prospecting licence granted under the Minerals and Mining Act  
or any other enactment, and remove or extract therefrom any stone, gravel, clay, sand or  
other similar substance (not being a mineral within the meaning assigned to that term in the Minerals and Mining Act) that may be required for building or for the manufacture of  
building materials.

[Cap. M12.]

(2) Any such licence may be granted for such period and subject to such conditions  
as the Governor may think proper or as may be prescribed.

(3) No such licence shall be granted in respect of an area exceeding 400 hectares.

(4) It shall not be lawful for any licensee to transfer his licence in any manner what-  
soever without the consent of the Governor first had and obtained, and such transfer ef-  
fected without the consent of the Governor shall be null and void.

(5) The Governor may cancel any such licence if the licensee fails to comply with  
any of the conditions of the licence.

**13. Duty of occupier of statutory right of occupancy to maintain beacons**

(1) The occupier of a statutory right of occupancy shall at all times maintain in good  
and substantial repair to the satisfaction of the Governor, or of such public officer as the  
Governor may appoint in that behalf, all beacons or other land marks by which the bound-  
aries of the land comprised in the statutory right of occupancy are defined and in default  
of his so doing the Governor or such public officer as aforesaid may by notice in writing  
require the occupier to define the boundaries in the manner and within the time specified  
in such notice.

(2) If the occupier of a statutory right of occupancy fails to comply with a notice  
served under subsection (1) of this section he shall be liable to pay the expenses (if any)  
incurred by the Governor in defining the boundaries which the occupier has neglected to  
define.

**14. Exclusive rights of occupiers**

Subject to the other provisions of this Act and of any laws relating to way leaves, to  
prospecting for minerals or mineral oils or to mining or to oil pipelines and subject to the  
terms and conditions of any contract made under section 8 of this Act, the occupier shall  
have exclusive rights to the land the subject of the statutory right of occupancy against all  
persons other than the Governor.

**15. The right to improvements**

During the term of a statutory right of occupancy the holder-

*(a)*shall have the sole right to and absolute possession of all the improvements on  
the land;

*(b)*may, subject to the prior consent of the Governor, transfer, assign or mortgage  
any improvements on the land which have been effected pursuant to the terms  
and conditions of the certificate of occupancy relating to the land.

PART III

*Rents*

**16. Principles to be observed in fixing and revising rents**

In determining the amount of the original rent to be fixed for any particular land and  
the amount of the revised rent to be fixed on any subsequent revision of rent, the Governor-

*(a)*shall take into consideration the rent previously fixed in respect of any other  
land in the immediate neighbourhood and shall have regard to all the circum-  
stances of the case;

*(b)*shall not take into consideration any value due to capital expended upon the  
land by the same or any previous occupier during his term or terms of occu-  
pancy, or any increase in the value of the land the rental of which is under con-  
sideration, due to the employment of such capital.

**17. Power of Governor to grant rights of occupancy free of rent or at reduced rent**  
(1) The Governor may grant a statutory right of occupancy free of rent or at a re-  
duced rent in any case in which he is satisfied that it would be in the public interest to do  
so.

(2) Where a statutory right of occupancy has been granted free of rent, the Governor  
may, subject to the express provisions of the certificate of occupancy, nevertheless im-  
pose a rent in respect of the land the subject of the right of occupancy if and when he may  
think fit.

**18. Acceptance of rent not to operate as a waiver of forfeiture**

Subject to the provisions of sections 20 and 21 of this Act, the acceptance by or on  
behalf of the Governor of any rent shall not operate as a waiver by the Governor of any  
forfeiture accruing by reason of the breach of any covenant or condition, express or im-  
plied, in any certificate of occupancy granted under this Act.

**19. Penal rent**

(1) When in any certificate of occupancy the holder has covenanted to develop or ef-  
fect improvements on the land, the subject of the certificate of occupancy, and has com-  
mitted a breach of such covenant the Governor may-

*(a)*at the time of such breach or at any time thereafter, so long as the breach re-  
mains unremedied, fix a penal rent which shall be payable for twelve months  
from the date of such breach; and

*(b)*on the expiration of twelve months from the date of such breach and on the  
expiration of every subsequent twelve months so long as the breach continues,  
revise the penal rent to be paid.

(2) Such penal rent or any revision thereof shall be in addition to the rent reserved by  
the certificate of occupancy and shall be recoverable as rent:

Provided that the first penal rent fixed shall not exceed the rent so reserved and any  
revised penal rent shall not exceed double the penal rent payable in respect of the twelve  
months preceding the date of revision.

(3) If the Governor fixes or revises a penal rent, he shall cause a notice in writing to  
be sent to the holder informing him of the amount thereof and the rent so fixed or revised  
shall commence to be payable one calendar month from the date of the receipt of such  
notice.

(4) If the breach for which a penal rent has been imposed is remedied before the expi-  
ration of the period for which such rent has been paid, the Governor may in his discretion  
refund such portion of the penal rent paid for such period as he may think fit.

(5) The fact that a penal rent or a revised penal rent has been imposed shall not pre-  
clude the Governor, in lieu of fixing a subsequent penal rent, from revoking the statutory  
right of occupancy:

Provided that the statutory right of occupancy shall not be revoked during the pe-  
riod for which a penal rent has been paid.

**20. Additional penal rent for unlawful alienation**

(1) If there has been any breach of any of the provisions of section 22 or 23 of this  
Act, the Governor may in lieu of revoking the statutory right of occupancy concerned,  
demand that the holder shall pay an additional and penal rent for and in respect of each  
day during which the land the subject of the statutory right of occupancy or any portion  
thereof or any buildings or other works erected thereon shall be or remain in the posses-  
sion, control or occupation of any person whomsoever other than the holder.

(2) Such additional and penal rent shall be payable upon demand and shall be recov-  
erable as rent.

(3) The acceptance by or on behalf of the Governor of any such additional and penal  
rent shall not operate as a waiver by the Governor of any breach of section 22 or 23 of  
this Act which may continue after the date up to and in respect of which such additional  
and penal rent has been paid or is due and owing and the Governor shall accordingly be  
entitled to exercise in respect of any such continuing breach all or any of the powers con-  
ferred upon him by this Act.

           PART IV

*Alienation and surrender of rights of occupancy*

**21. Prohibition of alienation of customary right of occupancy except with requisite  
consent or approval**

It shall not be lawful for any customary right of occupancy or any part thereof to be  
alienated by assignment, mortgage, transfer of possession, sublease or otherwise howso-  
ever-

*(a)*without the consent of the Governor in cases where the property is to be sold  
by or under the order of any court under the provisions of the applicable Sher-  
iffs and Civil Process Law; or

*(b)*in other cases without the approval of the appropriate local government.

**22. Prohibition of alienation of statutory right of occupancy without consent of Governor**

(1) It shall not be lawful for the holder of a statutory right of occupancy granted by  
the Governor to alienate his right of occupancy or any part thereof by assignment, mort-  
gage, transfer of possession, sublease or otherwise howsoever without the consent of the  
Governor first had and obtained:

Provided that the consent of the Governor-

*(a)*shall not be required to the creation of a legal mortgage over a statutory right  
of occupancy in favour of a person in whose favour an equitable mortgage  
over the right of occupancy has already been created with the consent of the  
Governor;

*(b)*shall not be required to the reconveyance or release by a mortgagee to a holder  
or occupier of a statutory right of occupancy which that holder or occupier has  
mortgaged to that mortgagee with the consent of the Governor;

*(c)*to the renewal of a sub-lease shall not be presumed by reason only of his hav-  
ing consented to the grant of a sub-lease containing an option to renew the  
same.

(2) The Governor when giving his consent to an assignment, mortgage or sub-lease  
may require the holder of a statutory right of occupancy to submit an instrument executed  
in evidence of the assignment, mortgage or sub-lease and the holder shall when so re-  
quired deliver the said instrument to the Governor in order that the consent given by the  
Governor under subsection (1) of this section may be signified by endorsement thereon.

**23. Sub-underleases**

(1) A sub-lessee of a statutory right of occupancy may, with the prior consent of the  
Governor and with the approval of the holder of the statutory right of occupancy, demise  
by way of sub-underlease to another person the land comprised in the sub-lease held by  
him or any portion of the land.

(2) The provisions of subsection (2) of section 22 of this Act shall apply *mutatis mu-  
tandis*to any transaction effected under subsection (1) of this section as if it were a sub-  
lease granted under section 22 of this Act.

**24. Devolution of rights of occupancy on death**

The devolution of the rights of an occupier upon death shall-

*(a)*in the case of a customary right of occupancy, unless non-customary law or  
any other customary law applies, be regulated by the customary law existing in  
the locality in which the land is situated; and

*(b)*in the case of a statutory right of occupancy (unless any non-customary law or  
other customary law applies) be regulated by the customary law of the de-  
ceased occupier at the time of his death relating to the distribution of property  
of like nature to a right of occupancy:

             Provided that

      (c)              no customary law prohibiting, restricting or regulating the devolution on death  
to any particular class of persons or the right to occupy any land shall operate  
to deprive any person of any beneficial interest in such land (other than the  
right to occupy the same) or in the proceeds of sale thereof to which he may be  
entitled under the rules of inheritance of any other customary law;

*(d)*a statutory right of occupancy shall not be divided into two or more parts on  
devolution by the death of the occupier, except with the consent of the Gover-  
nor.

**25. Effect of deed or will where non-customary law applies**

In the case of the devolution or transfer of rights to which any non-customary law ap-  
plies, no deed or will shall operate to create any proprietary right over land except that of  
a plain transfer of the whole of the rights of occupation over the whole of the land.

**26. Null-and-void transactions and instruments**

Any transaction or any instrument which purports to confer on or vest in any person  
any interest or right over land other than in accordance with the provisions of this Act  
shall be null and void.

**27. Surrender of statutory rights of occupancy**

The Governor may accept on such terms and conditions as he may think proper the  
surrender of any statutory right of occupancy granted under this Act.

PART V

*Revocation of rights of occupancy and compensation therefor*

**28. Power of Governor to revoke rights of occupancy**

(1) It shall be lawful for the Governor to revoke a right of occupancy for overriding  
public interest.

(2) Overriding public interest in the case of a statutory right of occupancy means-

       (c)              the alienation by the occupier by assignment, mortgage, transfer of possession,  
sub-lease, or otherwise of any right of occupancy or part thereof contrary to  
the provisions of this Act or of any regulations made thereunder;

*(b)*the requirement of the land by the Government of the State or by a Local Gov-  
ernment in the State, in either case for public purposes within the State, or the  
requirement of the land by the Government of the Federation for public pur-  
poses of the Federation;

       (c)              the requirement of the land for mining purposes or oil pipelines or for any pur-  
pose connected therewith.

(3) Overriding public interest in the case of a customary right of occupancy means-

*(a)*the requirement of the land by the Government of the State or by a Local Gov-  
ernment in the State, in either case for public purposes within the State, or the  
requirement of the land by the Government of the Federation for public pur-  
poses of the Federation;

*(b)*the requirement of the land for mining purposes or oil pipelines or for any pur-  
pose connected therewith;

*(c)*the requirement of the land for the extraction of building materials;

     (d)              the alienation by the occupier by sale, assignment, mortgage, transfer of possession, sub-lease, bequest or otherwise of the right of occupancy without the  
requisite consent or approval.

(4) The Governor shall revoke a right of occupancy in the event of the issue of a no-  
tice by or on behalf of the President if such notice declares such land to be required by  
the Government for public purposes.

(5) The Governor may revoke a statutory right of occupancy on the ground of-

*(a)*a breach of any of the provisions which a certificate of occupancy is by sec-  
tion 10 of this Act deemed to contain;

*(b)*a breach of any term contained in the certificate of occupancy or in any special  
contract made under section 8 of this Act;

*(c)*a refusal or neglect to accept and pay for a certificate which was issued in evidence of a right of occupancy but has been cancelled by the governor under

subsection (3) of section 9 of this Act.

(6) The revocation of a right of occupancy shall be signified under the hand of a pub-  
lic officer duly authorised in that behalf by the Governor and notice thereof shall be given  
to the holder.

(7) The title of the holder of a right of occupancy shall be extinguished on receipt by  
him of a notice given under subsection (6) of this section or on such later date as may be  
stated in the notice.

**29. Compensation payable on revocation of right of occupancy by Governor in cer-  
tain**cases

(1) If a right of occupancy is revoked for the cause set out in paragraph *(b)*of sub-  
section (2) of section 28 of this Act or in paragraph *(a)*or *(c)*of subsection (3) of the  
same section, the holder and the occupier shall be entitled to compensation for the value  
at the date of revocation of their unexhausted improvements.

(2) If a right of occupancy is revoked for the cause set out in paragraph *(c)*of subsec-  
tion (2) of section 28 of this Act or in paragraph *(b)*of subsection (3) of the same section  
the holder and the occupier shall be entitled to compensation under the appropriate provi-  
sions of the Minerals and Mining Act or the Petroleum Act or any legislation replacing  
the same.

[Cap. M12. Cap. P10.]

(3) If the holder or the occupier entitled to compensation under this section is a  
community the Governor may direct that any compensation payable to it shall be paid-

*(a)*to the community; or

*(b)*to the chief or leader of the community to be disposed of by him for the benefit  
of the community in accordance with the applicable customary law; or

*(c)*into some fund specified by the Governor for the purpose of being utilised or  
applied for the benefit of the community.

(4) Compensation under subsection (1) of this section shall be, as respects-

*(a)*the land, for an amount equal to the rent, if any, paid by the occupier during  
the year in which the right of occupancy was revoked;

*(b)*buildings, installation or improvements thereon, for the amount of the replace-  
ment cost of the building, installation or improvement, that is to say, such cost  
as may be assessed on the basis of the prescribed method of assessment as de-  
termined by the appropriate officer less any depreciation, together with interest  
at the bank rate for delayed payment of compensation and in respect of any  
improvement in the nature of reclamation works, being such cost thereof as  
may be substantiated by documentary evidence and proof to the satisfaction of  
the appropriate officer;

*(c)*crops on land apart from any building, installation or improvement thereon, for  
an amount equal to the value as prescribed and determined by the appropriate  
officer.

(5) Where the land in respect of which a right of occupancy has been revoked forms  
part of a larger area, the compensation payable shall be computed as in subsection (4) *(a)*  
of this section less a proportionate amount calculated in relation to that part of the area  
not affected by the revocation, but of which the portion revoked forms a part and any  
interest payable shall be assessed and computed in the like manner.

(6) Where there is any building, installation or improvement or crops on the land to  
which subsection (5) of this section applies, then compensation shall be computed as  
specified hereunder, that is as respects-

*(a)*such land, on the basis specified in that subsection;

*(b)*any building, installation or improvement or corps thereon (or any combination  
of two or all of those things) on the basis specified in that subsection and sub-  
section (4) of this section, or so much of those provisions as are applicable,

and any interest payable under those provisions shall be computed in the like manner.

(7) For the purposes of this section, **"installation"**means any mechanical apparatus  
set up or put in position for use or materials set up in or on land or other equipment, but  
excludes any fixture in or on any building.

**30. Reference of dispute as to compensation**

Where there arises any dispute as to the amount of compensation calculated in accor-  
dance with the provisions of section 29 of this Act, such dispute shall be referred to the  
appropriate Land Use and Allocation Committee.

**31. Exclusion of the application of the Public Lands Acquisition (Miscellaneous  
Provisions) Act**

The provisions of the Public Lands Acquisition (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act shall  
not apply in respect of any land vested in, or taken over by, the Governor or any local  
government pursuant to this Act or the right of occupancy to which is revoked under the provisions of this Act but shall continue to apply in respect of land compulsorily acquired  
before the commencement of this Act.

[1976 No. 33.]

**32. Debt due to Government not extinguished by revocation**

The revocation of a statutory right of occupancy shall not operate to extinguish any  
debt due to the Government under or in respect of such right of occupancy.

**33. Option to accept resettlement in case of revocation of right of occupancy**

(1) Where a right of occupancy in respect of any developed land on which a residen-  
tial building has been erected is revoked under this Act, the Governor or the local gov-  
ernment, as the case may be, may in his or its discretion offer in lieu of compensation  
payable in accordance with the provisions of this Act, resettlement in any other place or  
area by way of a reasonable alternative accommodation (if appropriate in the circum-  
stances).

(2) Where the value of any alternative accommodation as determined by the appro-  
priate officer or the Land Use and Allocation Committee is higher than the compensation  
payable under this Act, the parties concerned may by agreement require that the excess in  
value in relation to the property concerned shall be treated as a loan which the person  
affected shall refund or repay to the Government in the prescribed manner.

(3) Where a person accepts a resettlement pursuant to subsection (1) of this section,  
his right to compensation shall be deemed to have been duly satisfied and no further  
compensation shall be payable to such person.

PART VI

*Transitional and other related provisions*

**34. Transitional provisions on land in urban areas**

(1) The following provisions of this section shall have effect in respect of land in an  
urban area vested in any person immediately before the commencement of this Act.

(2) Where the land is developed the land shall continue to be held by the person in  
whom it was vested immediately before the commencement of this Act as if the holder of  
the land was the holder of a statutory right of occupancy issued by the Governor under  
this Act.

(3) In respect of land to which subsection (2) of this section applies there shall be is-  
sued by the Governor on application to him in the prescribed form a certificate of occu-  
pancy if the Governor is satisfied that the land was, immediately before the commence-  
ment of this Act, vested in that person.

(4) Where the land to which subsection (2) of this section applies was subject to any  
mortgage, legal or equitable, or any encumbrance or interest valid in law such land shall  
continue to be so subject and the certificate of occupancy issued, shall indicate that the  
land is so subject, unless the continued operation of the encumbrance or interest would in  
the opinion of the Governor be inconsistent with the provisions, or general intendment of  
this Act.

 (5) Where on the commencement of this Act the land is undeveloped, then-

*(a)*one plot or portion of the land not exceeding half of one hectare in area shall,  
subject to subsection (6) of this section, continue to be held by the person in  
whom the land was so vested as if the holder of the land was the holder of a  
statutory right of occupancy granted by the Governor in respect of the plot or  
portion as aforesaid under this Act; and

*(b)*all the rights formerly vested in the holder in respect of the excess of the land  
shall on the commencement of this Act be extinguished and the excess of the  
land shall be taken over by the Governor and administered as provided in this  
Act.

(6) Paragraph *(a)*of subsection (5) of this section shall not apply in the case of any  
person who was on the commencement of this Act also the holder of any undeveloped  
land elsewhere in any urban area in the State and in respect of such a person all his hold-  
ings of undeveloped land in any urban area in the State shall be considered together and  
out of the undeveloped land so considered together-

*(a)*one plot or portion not exceeding half of one hectare in area shall continue to  
be held by such a person as if a right of occupancy had been granted to him by  
the Governor in respect of that plot or portion; and

*(b)*the remainder of the land (so considered together) in excess of half of one  
hectare shall be taken over by the Governor and administered in accordance  
with this Act and the rights formerly vested in the holder in respect of such  
land shall be extinguished.

(7) No land to which subsection (5) *(a)*or (6) of this section applies held by any per-  
son shall be further subdivided or laid out in plots and no such land shall be transferred to  
any person except with the prior consent in writing of the Governor.

(8) Any instrument purporting to transfer any undeveloped land in contravention of  
subsection (7) of this section shall be void and of no effect whatsoever in law and any  
party to any such instrument shall be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to im-  
prisonment for one year or a fine of ~~N~~5,000.

(9) In relation to land to which subsection (5) *(a)*or (6) *(a)*of this section applies  
there shall be issued by the Governor on application therefor in the prescribed form a  
certificate of occupancy if the Governor is satisfied that the land was immediately before  
the commencement of this Act vested in that person.

**35. Compensation for improvements in certain cases**

(1) Section 34 of this Act shall have effect notwithstanding that the land in question  
was held under a leasehold, whether customary or otherwise, and formed part of an estate  
laid out by any person, group or family in whom the leasehold interest or reversion in  
respect of the land was vested immediately before the commencement of this Act, so  
however that if there has been any improvements on the land effected by the person,  
group or family in whom the leasehold interest or reversion was vested as aforesaid the  
Governor shall, in respect of the improvements, pay to that person, group or family, com-  
pensation computed as specified in section 29 of this Act.

 (2) There shall be deducted from the compensation payable under subsection (1) of  
this section, any levy by way of development or similar charges paid in respect of the  
improvements on the land by the lessee to the person, group or family in whom the lease-  
hold interest or reversion was vested and the amount to be deducted shall be determined  
by the Governor taking into consideration all the circumstances of the case.

**36. Transitional provisions on land not in urban areas**

(1) The following provisions of this section shall have effect in respect of land not in  
an urban area which was immediately before the commencement of this Act held or oc-  
cupied by any person.

(2) Any occupier or holder of such land, whether under customary rights or otherwise  
howsoever, shall if that land was on the commencement of this Act being used for agri-  
cultural purposes, continue to be entitled to possession of the land for use for agricultural  
purposes as if a customary right of occupancy had been granted to the occupier or holder  
thereof by the appropriate local government and the reference in this subsection to land  
being used for agricultural purposes includes land which is, in accordance with the cus-  
tomary law of the locality concerned, allowed to lie fallow for purposes of recuperation  
of the soil.

(3) On the production to the local government by the occupier of such land, at his  
discretion, of a sketch or diagram or other sufficient description of the land in question  
and on application there for in the prescribed form the Local Government shall, if satisfied  
that the occupier or holder was entitled to the possession of such land whether under cus-  
tomary rights or otherwise howsoever, and that the land was being used for agricultural  
purposes at the commencement of this Act, register the holder or occupier as one to  
whom a customary right of occupancy had been issued in respect of the land in question.

(4) Where the land is developed, the land shall continue to be held by the person in  
whom it was vested immediately before the commencement of this Act as if the holder of  
the land was the holder of a customary right of occupancy issued by the Local Govern-  
ment, and if the holder or occupier of such developed land, at his discretion, produces a  
sketch or diagram showing the area of the land so developed, the Local Government  
shall, if satisfied that that person immediately before the commencement of this Act has  
the land vested in him, register the holder or occupier as one in respect of whom a cus-  
tomary right of occupancy has been granted by the Local Government.

*(5)*No land to which this section applies shall be sub-divided or laid out in plots and  
no such land shall be transferred to any person by the person in whom the land was  
vested as aforesaid.

(6) Any instrument purporting to transfer any land to which this section relates shall  
be void and of no effect whatsoever in law and every party to any such instrument shall  
be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a fine of ~~N~~5,000 or to imprisonment  
for one year.

**37. Penalty for false claims, etc., in respect of land**

If any person other than one in whom any land was lawfully vested immediately be-  
fore the commencement of this Act enters any land in purported exercise of any right in  
relation to possession of the land or makes any false claim in respect of the land to the Governor or any Local Government for any purpose under this section he shall be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to imprisonment for one year or to a fine of ~~N~~5,000.

**38. Preservation of power of Governor to revoke rights of occupancy**

Nothing in this Part shall be construed as precluding the exercise by the Governor or  
as the case may be the Local Government concerned of the powers to revoke, in accor-  
dance with the applicable provisions of this Act, rights of occupancy, whether statutory  
or customary, in respect to any land to which this Part of this Act relates.

PART VII

*Jurisdiction of High Courts and other courts*

**39. Jurisdiction of High Courts**

(1) The High Court shall have exclusive original jurisdiction in respect of the follow-  
ing proceedings-

*(a)*proceedings in respect of any land the subject of a statutory right of occupancy  
granted by the Governor or deemed to be granted by him under this Act; and  
for the purposes of this paragraph, proceedings includes proceedings for a  
declaration of title to a statutory right of occupancy;

*(b)*proceedings to determine any question as to the persons entitled to compensation payable for improvements on land under this Act.      .

(2) All laws, including rules of court, regulating the practice and procedure of the  
High Court shall apply in respect of proceedings to which this section relates and the  
laws shall have effect with such modifications as would enable effect to be given to the  
provisions of this section.

**40. Special provisions in respect of pending proceedings**

Where on the commencement of this Act proceedings had been commenced or were  
pending in any court or tribunal (whether at first instance or on appeal) in respect of any  
question concerning or pertaining to title to any land or interest therein, such proceedings  
may be continued and be finally disposed of by the court concerned but any order or de-  
cision of the court shall only be as respects the entitlement of either of the parties to the  
proceedings to a right of occupancy, whether statutory or customary, in respect of such  
land as provided in this Act.

**41. Jurisdiction of area courts or customary courts, etc.**

An area court or customary court or other court of equivalent jurisdiction in a State  
shall have jurisdiction in respect of proceedings in respect of a customary right of occu-  
pancy granted by a Local Government under this Act; and for the purposes of this para-  
graph "proceedings" includes proceedings for a declaration of title to a customary right of  
occupancy and all laws including rules of court regulating practice and procedure of such  
courts shall have effect with such modifications as would enable effect to be given to this  
section.

**42. Proceedings for recovery of rent in respect of certificate of occupancy, etc.**

(1) Proceedings for the recovery of rent payable in respect of any certificate of occu-  
pancy may be taken before a magistrate's court of competent jurisdiction by and in the  
name of the Chief Lands Officer or by and in the name of any other officer appointed by  
the Governor in that behalf.

(2) Proceedings for the recovery of rent payable in respect of any customary right of  
occupancy may be taken by and in the name of the local government concerned in the  
area court or customary court or any court of equivalent jurisdiction.

PART VIII

*Supplemental*

**43. Prohibition of and penalties for unauthorised use of land**

(1) Save as permitted under section 34 of this Act, as from the commencement of this  
Act no person shall in an urban area-

*(a)*erect any building, wall, fence or other structure upon; or

*(b)*enclose, obstruct, cultivate or do any act on or in relation to,

any land which is not the subject of a right of occupancy or licence lawfully held by him  
or in respect of which he has not received the permission of the Governor to enter and  
erect improvements prior to the grant to him of a right of occupancy.

(2) Any person who contravenes any of the provisions of subsection (1) of this sec-  
tion shall on being required by the Governor so to do and within the period of time fixed  
by the Governor, remove any building, wall, fence, obstruction, structure or thing which  
he may have caused to be placed on the land and he shall put the land in the same condi-  
tion as nearly as may be in which it was before such contravention.

(3) Any person who contravenes any of the provisions of subsection (1) of this sec-  
tion shall be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to imprisonment for one year or  
to a fine of ~~N~~5,000.

(4) Any person who fails or refuses to comply with a requirement made by the Gov-  
ernor under subsection (2) of this section shall be guilty of an offence and liable on con-  
viction to a fine of ~~N~~100 for each day during which he makes default in complying with  
the requirement of the Governor.

**44. Service of notices**

Any notice required by this Act to be served on any person shall be effectively served

on him-

*(a)*by delivering it to the person on whom it is to be served; or

*(b)*by leaving it at the usual or last known place of abode of that person; or

*(c)*by sending it in a prepaid registered letter addressed to that person at his usual or last known place of abode; or

*(d)*in the case of an incorporated company or body, by delivering it to the secre-  
tary or clerk of the company or body at its registered or principal office or  
sending it in a prepaid registered letter addressed to the secretary or clerk of  
the company or body at that office; or

*(e)*if it is not practicable after reasonable inquiry to ascertain the name or address  
of a holder or occupier of land on whom it should be served, by addressing it  
to him by the description of "holder" or "occupier" of the premises (naming  
them) to which it relates, and by delivering it to some person on the premises  
or, if there is no person on the premises to whom it can be delivered, by affix-  
ing it, or a copy of it, to some conspicuous part of the premises.

**45. Delegation of powers**

(1) The Governor may delegate to the State Commissioner all or any of the powers  
conferred on the Governor by this Act, subject to such restrictions, conditions and quali-  
fications, not being inconsistent with the provisions, or general intendment, of this Act as  
the Governor may specify.

(2) Where the power to grant certificates has been delegated to the State Commis-  
sioner, such certificates shall be expressed to be granted on behalf of the Governor.

**46. Power to make regulations**

(1) The National Council of States may make regulations for the purpose of carrying  
this Act into effect and particularly with regard to the following matters-

*(a)*the transfer by assignment or otherwise howsoever of any rights of occupancy, whether statutory or customary, including the conditions applicable to the transfer of such rights to persons who are not Nigerians;

*(b)*the terms and conditions upon which special contracts may be made under

      section 8 of this Act;

*(c)*the grant of certificates of occupancy under section 9 of this Act;

*(d)*the grant of temporary rights of occupancy;

*(e)*the method of assessment of compensation for the purposes of section 29 of this Act.

(2) The Governor may, subject to subsection (1) of this section, make regulations  
with regard to the following matters-

*(a)*the method of application for any licence or permit and the terms and condi-

    tions under which licences may be granted;

*(b)*the procedure to be observed in revising rents;

*(c)*the fees to be paid for any matter or thing done under this Act;

*(d)*the forms to be used for any document or purpose.

**47. Exclusion of certain proceedings**

(1) This Act shall have effect notwithstanding anything to the contrary in any law  
or rule of law including the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 and, without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, no court shall have jurisdiction to  
inquire into-

[Cap. C23.]

*(a)*any question concerning or pertaining to the vesting of all land in the Governor  
in accordance with the provisions of this Act; or

*(b)*any question concerning or pertaining to the right of the Governor to grant a  
statutory right of occupancy in accordance with the provisions of this Act; or

*(c)*any question concerning or pertaining to the right of a local government to  
grant a customary right of occupancy under this Act.

(2) No court shall have jurisdiction to inquire into any question concerning or per-  
taining to the amount or adequacy of any compensation paid or to be paid under this Act.

**48. Modification of existing laws**

All existing laws relating to the registration of title to, or interest in, land or the trans-  
fer of title to or any interest in land shall have effect subject to such modifications  
(whether by way of addition, alteration or omission) as will bring those laws into con-  
formity with this Act or its general intendment.

**49. Exemption with respect to Federal Government lands, etc.**

(1) Nothing in this Act shall affect any title to land, whether developed or undevel-  
oped, held by the Federal Government or any agency of the Federal Government at the  
commencement of this Act and, accordingly, any such land shall continue to vest in the  
Federal Government or the agency concerned.

(2) In this section, "agency" includes any statutory corporation or any other statutory  
body (whether corporate or unincorporate) or any company wholly owned by the Federal  
Government.

**50. Validity of laws, etc.**

(1) Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in this Act or any other enactment, all  
laws and subsidiary legislation made at any time between the commencement of this Act  
and 30 September 1979 by an Administrator (or former Governor), the Executive Coun-  
cil, a Commissioner or any other authority or any public officer of a State shall be  
deemed to have been validly made and shall have effect as if they had been made under  
or pursuant to the Act and accordingly, shall hereafter continue to have effect according  
to their tenor and intendment as if they were regulations made under or pursuant to sec-  
tion 46 of this Act.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1) of this section-

*(a)*all contracts and all executive and judicial acts, including acts pertaining to the  
establishment, membership and functions of any Land Use and Allocation  
Committee or of any other authority or to the appointment of any person, shall  
be deemed to have been validly entered into or done and shall hereafter con-  
tinue to have effect as provided in the said subsection; and

*(b)*any instrument or other evidence relating to the allocation of any land, whether  
or not expressed to have been made under this Act, shall be deemed to have been validly issued or given under or pursuant to this Act and shall continue to have effect according to its tenor and intendment accordingly.

**51. Interpretation**

(1) In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires-

**"agricultural purposes"** includes the planting of any crops of economic value;

 includes the planting of any crops of economic value;

**"appropriate officer"** means the Chief Lands Officer of a State and in the case of the  
Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, means the Chief Federal Lands Officer;

**"customary right of occupancy"** means the right of a person or community lawfully  
using or occupying land in accordance with customary law and includes a customary  
right of occupancy granted by a local government under this Act;

**"developed land"** means land where there exists any physical improvement in the  
nature of road development services, water, electricity, drainage, building, structure or  
such improvement that may enhance the value of the land for industrial, agricultural or  
residential purposes;

**"easement"** means a right annexed to land to utilise other land in different holding in  
a particular manner (not involving the taking of any part of the natural produce of that  
land or of any part of its soil) or to prevent the holder of the other land from utilising his  
land in a particular manner;

**"Government"** means the Government of the Federation or the Government of a  
State;

**"Governor"** means the Governor of the State concerned;

**"grazing purposes"** includes only such agricultural operations as are required for  
growing fodder for livestock on the grazing area;

**"High Court"** means the High Court of the State concerned;

**"holder"** in relation to a right of occupancy, means a person entitled to a right of oc-  
cupancy and includes any person to whom a right of occupancy has been validly assigned  
or has validly passed on the death of a holder but does not include any person to whom a  
right of occupancy has been sold or transferred without a valid assignment, nor a mortga-  
gee, sub-lessee or sub-underlessee;

**"improvements"** or **"unexhausted improvements"** means anything of any quality  
permanently attached to the land, directly resulting from the expenditure of capital or  
labour by an occupier or any person acting on his behalf, and increasing the productive  
capacity, the utility or the amenity thereof and includes buildings, plantations of long-  
lived crops or trees, fencing, a well, roads and irrigation or reclamation works, but does  
not include the result of ordinary cultivation other than growing produce;

**"interest** **at the bank rate"** means a simple interest payable at the rate per cent per  
annum at which the Central Bank of Nigeria will rediscount bills of exchange;

**"local government"** means the appropriate local government or any other body hav-  
ing or exercising the powers of a local government as provided by law in respect of the  
area where the land in question is situated;

**"mortgage"** includes a second and subsequent mortgage and equitable mortgage;

**"occupier"** means any person lawfully occupying land under customary law and a  
person using or occupying land in accordance with customary law and includes the sub-  
lessee or sub-lessee of a holder;

**"public purposes"** includes-

*(a)*for exclusive Government use or for general public use;

*(b)*for use by any body corporate directly established by law or by any body cor-  
porate registered under the Companies and Allied Matters Act as respects  
which the Government owns shares, stocks or debentures;

[Cap. C20.]

*(c)*for or in connection with sanitary improvements of any kind;

*(d)*for obtaining control over land contiguous to any part or over land the value of  
which will be enhanced by the construction of any railway, road or other pub-  
lic work or convenience about to be undertaken or provided by the Government;

*(e)*for obtaining control over land required for or in connection with development  
of telecommunications or provision of electricity;

*(f)*for obtaining control over land required for or in connection with mining pur-  
poses;

*(g)*for obtaining control over land required for or in connection with planned ur-  
ban or rural development or settlement;

*(h)*for obtaining control over land required for or in connection with economic,  
industrial or agricultural development;

*(i)*for educational and other social services;

**"statutory right of occupancy"** means a right of occupancy granted by the Governor  
under this Act;

**"sub-lease"** includes a sub-underlease;

**"urban area"** means such area of the State as may be designated as such by the Gov-  
ernor pursuant to section 3 of this Act.

(2) The powers of a Governor under this Act shall, in respect of land comprised in  
the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, or any land held or vested in the Federal Govern-  
ment in any State, be exercisable by the President or any Minister designated by him in  
that behalf and references in this Act to Governor shall be construed accordingly.

**52. Short title**

This Act may be cited as the Land Use Act.

LAND USE ACT

**SUBSIDIARY LEGISLATION**

*No Subsidiary Legislation*