
***MOHAMMED LAWAL UWAIS PUBLIC
SERVICE AWARD LECTURE***
**THE PUBLIC SERVICE AND THE
TRANSFORMATION AGENDA:
REDEFINING THE RULES OF
ENGAGEMENT**

Award Lecture Series

**MOHAMMED LAWAL UWAIS PUBLIC
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THE PUBLIC SERVICE AND THE
TRANSFORMATION AGENDA:
REDEFINING THE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT**

By

Chief Philip C. Asiodu, *CON*



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Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies

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Foreword

Chief Philip Asiodu, *CON*, a prominent Nigerian and a house name is well grounded in government and administration. His paper on the topic *Public Service and the Transformation Agenda: Redefining the Rules of Engagement* under scores the fact that the public service led by the Civil Service is the main instrument for implementing the policies and decisions of the Government as the member of the Public Service are often the only concrete manifestation of government for the citizens whether in the urban centre or in the remote areas. Consequently, the efficiency, effectiveness, conduct, fairness, integrity of the Public Servants often determines the citizen's opinions about the Government. Hence the need for an articulate government programme and policies to enable the public service to commit to them and to deliver.

After carefully going down the memory lane, the author points out that successive militates administration never really come on board with any concrete development plan for the public service. The promulgation of Decree No. 43 of 1988 according to the paper further compounded the civil service by politicizing it as the functions of the independent public service commission were transferred to the ministries.

The author acknowledges that various development plans have also been prepared in recent PAST ranging from the 1st implementation plan 2010-2013 to the Transformation Agenda of 2011-2015. He however emphasize that there is the need for adequate publicity of the agenda which will enable the generality of the nation and the public servants to buy into it.

More importantly the author identifies some existing challenges which he emphasized must first and foremost be accomplished. The present post must be addressed. Present day political parties which were hastily formed must understand and imbibe the self sacrifice, patriotism and idealism spirit. They must believe in clear party manifesto and programmes to promote national progress. Indeed they should base their programmes on vision 2020. Corruption must cease. There should be a more realistic national remuneration scales. There

should be cost effective, transparent public procurement. There must be a drastic reduction of cost of governance amongst others.

Furthermore, the author also advocates that there is need for constitutional amendment to provide for independent candidature to enable some outstanding candidates have a chance of getting elected. On the reform of the service sector the author acknowledge the series of programmes in the past geared towards this aim and further stressed that efforts must be intensified to achieve effective and fair governance, organizational efficiency and effectiveness, professional and result oriented service sector, ethical and accountable workforce with positively changed work culture, improved competence and capacity and knowledge based workforce as a merit driven public service is more germane for the nation's development.

The lecture also points out that it is important to implement remuneration and rewards system for the public service as that will attract the best talents. The paper indeed has touched on very key issues affecting the performance of the public sector in the country and the nation in general. Useful suggestion is also proffered to reposition the public service in Nigeria. I find the lecture quite informative, rich in content and I recommend to all government functionaries and Nigerians in general to read it.

Professor Epiphany Azinge, SAN, PhD, LLD
Director-General
September, 2012

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By

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Chairman
Your Excellencies
My Lords
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

I feel greatly honoured to have been invited to speak to you today on this very important subject. The Public Service and the Transformation Agenda: Redefining the Rules of Engagement. I thank the Director-General of the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, Prof. Epiphany Azinge and the Organizing Committee for inviting me.

Severe Challenges Confront Nigeria

These are still very anxious times for most citizens of Nigeria. Massive challenges confront the country today – on issues of security of persons and property, political stability, economic growth and development. There are also the challenges of poverty alleviation, power infrastructure, education, health and the war against corruption. It is the role of the national leadership and the Government to address all these issues and to deliver services which will

lead to improvements in the standard of living and quality of life of the general citizenry.

The Public Service led by the Civil Service is the main instrument for implementing the policies and decisions of the Government. The members of the Public Service are often the only concrete manifestation of government for the citizens whether in the urban centres or in the remoter rural areas. The efficiency, effectiveness, conduct, fairness, integrity of the public servants often determines the citizen's opinions about the Government. It is important therefore that the Government should clearly articulate and canvass its programmes and policies to enable the Public Service to commit to them and to deliver.

The question immediately arises whether we have a new context for pursuing national development. President Goodluck Jonathan in his inaugural address to the nation pledged that he would provide a leadership that would be "decidedly transformative" in all critical sectors. He reaffirmed the commitment to Vision 20: 2020 first made by the Yar'Adua Administration. Vision 20: 2020 was elaborated under the Present Administration, the goal being to make Nigeria one of the 20 largest economies in the world by 2020AD and meanwhile to ensure the achievement before then of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a drastic reduction of the proportion of Nigerians living below the poverty line, and significant improvement in Nigeria's HDI score. It was agreed to have three Implementation Plans for the realization of Vision 20: 2020 covering the periods : 2010 – 2013, 2014 – 2017, 2018 – 2021. The 2010 – 2013 was developed in full detail. Subsequently, the Jonathan Transformation Plan 2011 –

2015 was elaborated which is coherent with the 2010 – 2013 Plan and anticipates part of the 2014 – 2017 Plan.

The Need for a Vision or Agreed National Goals

It is a critical necessity for a developing country to be inspired by a Vision – which clearly articulates uplifting goals and objectives, especially in a country like Nigeria inhabited by a large number of different ethnic and linguistic groups organized into a Federation where the development and cohesion of the nation is still very much “work-in-progress”. The absence of such a Vision to which the leadership and all the people were committed largely explains the floundering and sub-optimal performance which Nigeria has suffered over the past three and a half decades.

The philosophy and goals of the leaders of the struggle for Independence, the promise of pro-people programmes that would follow the attainment of Independence inspired the remarkable progress achieved in the decade before Independence and the immediate post-independence years. One should recall the very rapid expansion of educational facilities, the introduction of free primary education, farm settlement schemes, and the beginning of industrialization, the formulation and implementation of the First National Development Plan with the economy growing under the 1962 – 66 Plan later extended to 1968 at over 6% per annum.

Unfortunately, there were serious political problems, particularly the longstanding demand of the minorities in the three regions of North, East and West for three separate states, one in each Region.

In January 1966, some elements in the Nigerian Army carried out a coup d'état which ended Civilian Rule and the First Republic in January 1966. Political parties were proscribed and their assets confiscated. However, the coup makers failed to capture power. The rest of the Nigerian Army rallied round the G. O. C. Gen. Aguiyi Ironsi. We would never know if the coup makers had worked out a coherent long term programme for running the country and if they had beforehand identified a corps of convinced and dedicated persons who would execute the programme. There is no evidence that was the case. Certainly, the Military Administration of Gen. Aguiyi Ironsi which assumed power had not planned the coup and had no programme to be implemented on seizing power. Similarly, the coup of July 1966 which ended the Ironsi Administration and which installed the Gowon Administration was not inspired by a desire to implement any carefully articulated Plan for national development.

What Type of Public Service?

Fortunately for Nigeria, the Ironsi and Gowon Military Administrations left intact the professional, non-partisan, disciplined, merit-driven Civil Service developed over decades by the British Colonial Administration similar to the Civil Services inherited at Independence by the older Dominions like Canada, and Australia and never ones like India, Pakistan, Ghana, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, etc.

We may recall that the type of Civil Service suitable for Nigeria was discussed during the Constitutional Conferences leading up to Independence. The British Government representatives had recommended to the Nigerian leaders the British system. In January 1954, after

careful consideration, the Nigerian leaders of the political parties in government and in the opposition, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe (NCNC), Sir Ahmadu Bello (NPC), Chief Obafemi Awolowo (AG), Mallam Aminu Kano (NEPU) and Prof. Eyo Ita (UNIP) signed the following joint-statement:

We fully support the principle that all public service questions including appointments, promotions, transfers, postings, dismissal and other disciplinary matters should be kept completely free and independent of political control. We hope that the traditional principle of promotion according to qualifications, experience, merit, without regard to race will be maintained.

The British Ministers had advised that “It would be disastrous to have a Civil Service under the control of the Executive, and for appointments to change according to the turn of the political wheel would lead to instability. In some countries such a system had proved nearly fatal”.

So it was that during the crisis years of 1966 – 1970 of two military coups and the Civil War, Nigeria had a Federal Civil Service which had authority. Its morale was high. It was confident, professional, competent, non-partisan, disciplined, non-corrupt and much respected. It was dedicated to the service of the people generally. The Civil Service was able to:

- Maintain day-to-day orderly administration of the country despite the escalating confrontation and defiance of the Federal Military Government by the Eastern Region Military Government;
- Organize the campaign to rally the rest of the country to support the Federal Military Government in its desire to maintain one united country;
- Insist on and eventually persuade the Military Authorities to invite well-known political leaders of the country into the Government to give credibility to the Government, ensure the people's support and assure the external world that the Federal Military Government was not a military tyranny. Thus Chief Awolowo, Chief Enahoro, Mallam Aminu Kano, Chief J. S. Tarka, Mr. Wenike Briggs, Mr Okoi Arikpo and others were brought into the Government;
- Plan and co-ordinate the required diplomatic effort to maintain the support of the UN, OAU and of nearly all sovereign countries for the Federal Government;
- Organize the resources and logistics to enable the Federal Army grow from under 10,000 men to over 200,000 men and to prosecute the War;
- Develop the 3Rs Programme (Rehabilitation, Reconciliation and Reconstruction) to address the immediate Post Civil War situation; and
- Develop and launch the 1970 – 74 Plan.

There is an attempt at the beginning of the 1970 – 74 Plan to suggest the adoption of some national objectives or ideology. Five principal national objectives are indicated:

- (i) A united, strong and self-reliant nation;
- (ii) A great and dynamic economy;
- (iii) A just and egalitarian society;
- (iv) A land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens; and
- (v) A free and democratic society.

One must also give due credit to the competence and resourcefulness of the Regions' Civil Services, particularly the Eastern Region Civil Service.

In 1970, Chief S. O. Adebayo, who was the Chairman of the Salaries and Wages Review Commission stated in his Report : "We have earlier referred to the arduous responsibilities which the Civil Service shoulders. We have suggested that it is on its creditable performance as a flexible modern machinery for the management of complex programmes that the survival, stability, progress and development of Nigerian society ultimately depend. This thesis has been amply borne out by our national experience over the last decade and does not require further elucidation". Chief J. O. Udoji, The Chairman of the Public Service Review Commission also said: "It is fitting here to state our appreciation of the achievements made by Nigeria's public servants, especially over the last 14 years.".

The 1975 Overthrow of the Gowon Administration

The 1975 coup which overthrew The Gowon Administration may have been planned over a considerable period but again the planners did not develop beforehand a long-term plan for economic development and growth, or for continuing the task of developing and strengthening the

Nigerian nation by pursuing concrete uniting and integrating programmes. However, the Murtala Mohammed / Obasanjo Administration which succeeded Gowon implemented three measures which have impacted negatively on governance and the development and cohesion of a Nigerian nation:

1. Whereas, the creation of 12 states in May 1967 on the eve of the declaration of Biafran Secession was meant firstly, to address the old demand of the Middle Belt Movement in the North and the Calabar-Ogoja-Rivers State Movement in the East to complement the creation of the Mid-West Region in 1963, and secondly, as a strategic imperative to contain Biafran Secession Attempt, the 1975 division of the country into 19 states pandered to the desire of some influential sectors for dividing and sharing the national cake, not for baking it. The rapid expansion of oil production and with it the OPEC – led dramatic increases in oil revenues accruing to oil producers made it possible to indulge in this pre-occupation with sharing oil revenues while paying less attention to genuine development and growth of the economy. The formula for the allocation of federally collected revenues (more than 85% of it from oil and gas taxes) – 50% allocated in equal proportion to each state and 50% on the basis of population encourages the demands for further creation of more states.
2. The traumatic massive purge of about 10,000 officials over a period of two months, without due

process, involving officials from the rank of Permanent Secretary to the class of messengers being retired or dismissed, including some obvious leaders and role models, some without any terminal benefits or pensions destroyed the professional, non-partisan, fearless, prestigious, merit-driven Civil Service and Public Service inherited from the British Colonial Administration. In the process, the nation lost a great deal of institutional memory and valuable international connections.

The more senior ones, who inspired by the ideals of the Pre-Independence movement and the patriotic commitments of the leaders of the First Republic, were still energetic in suggesting and developing policies, programmes and projects and who also imbued as they were with the old core values would be able to provide some checks and balances were swept away. The suffering, including the pre-mature death of scores of officials affected by the purge fuelled the resort to “make hay while the sun shines” an obvious euphemism for corruption which now threatens the future of the country.

3. The new Administration abandoned the implementation of the 1975 – 80 Plan with its great promise of creating the basis for economic diversification and industrialization. Some very significant new projects were embarked upon while some properly costed Plan projects were aborted or not started. More destructively the discipline of planning was abandoned.

This set the stage for the economic stagnation and the degradation of infrastructure, educational, health and other sectors over the next two and a half decades despite the fairly high level of oil revenues compared with the Pre-Civil War situation. The statistical data clearly illustrate this. Indeed the growth rate in the decade up to 1999 averaged only 2% per annum, while the population was growing at 3% per annum.

The woes of the Civil Service were compounded by the promulgation of Decree No. 43 of 1988 which politicized the Civil Service. Under it the ministers, transient as they often were, could hire and fire civil servants; the functions of the Independent Public Service Commission were transferred to the ministries; the Minister replaced the Permanent Secretary, now re-styled Director-General, as the Accounting Officer of the Ministry. Although repealed in 1995 the great damage done to the Public Service under the decree still afflicts the Service.

Vision 20:2020 and the Jonathan Transformation Agenda

After the death of Gen. Abacha in 1998, democratic rule was hastily restored with the election and installation of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as President in May 1999. Towards the end of his second term Goldman Sachs published a Report which listed Nigeria amongst 10 other countries, and which suggested that if Nigeria pursued all the right policies and achieved international competitiveness she could become one of the 20 largest economies in the World by 2025. The other countries are Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Korea, Mexico, Pakistan and Turkey. We should note that even in this list

we are No. 7. In adopting the target of the Report, the Nigerian Authorities brought the date nearer by 5 years to 2020!

As I indicated earlier, the Government had prepared and launched the 1st Implementation Plan 2010 – 2013, otherwise called the 5th National Development Plan. This is now superseded by the Jonathan Transformation Agenda 2011 – 2015.

Transformation implies a complete change in form or character. I have described at great length the present situation in Nigeria and how we arrived there in order for us to appreciate the enormity of the tasks before us in undertaking the revolutionary changes required to achieve the desired transformation. The Jonathan Administration emphasizes “The need for a holistic transformation of the Nigerian State” and the imperatives of “continuity, consistency and commitment”. In launching the Transformation Agenda the Government states that “The Transformation Agenda which is based and draws inspiration from the NV. 20 : 2020 and the 1st National Implementation Plan (NIP) aims to deepen the effects and provide a sense of direction for the current administration over the next four years. The Agenda is based on a set of priority policies and programmes which when implemented will transform the Nigerian Economy to meet the future needs of the Nigerian people”.

The Transformation Agenda as you all probably know envisages total investment of ₦40.75 Trillion in the period 2011 to 2015 broken down as follows:

Public Sector 60%	-	₦24.45 Trillion
Private Sector 40%	-	₦16.30 Trillion

Within the Public Sector, Federal Government is expected to invest ₦12.86 Trillion while the States and LGAs will invest ₦11.5 Trillion. The bulk of the funding required must come from abroad. Such funding will flow in only when Nigeria has successfully addressed all the issues which will make her internationally competitive and these are mainly issues of good governance.

The Agenda has set out very good programmes and projects for human capital development, health sector, labour and productivity, the main growth sectors of agriculture, manufacturing, oil and gas, power, transportation, housing, ICT, FCT, Niger Delta, etc.

However, the Government quite rightly states : “Nigeria’s inability to decisively tackle most development challenges such as poverty, unemployment, security, and deplorable state of infrastructure has been largely attributed to bad governance in all its ramifications. These include political governance, economic governance, corporate governance and effectiveness.....

During 2011 – 2015, the policies and programmes directed at addressing governance challenges will focus on the public service, security, law and order; the legislature; anti-corruption measures and institutions; the judiciary; economic co-ordination; and support for private investment”. I am quoting from a publication of the National Planning Commission.

Generating Commitment and Enthusiasm for the Transformation Agenda

I am sorry to observe that the vast majority of Nigerians are not aware of the Transformation Agenda – its contents and

what it means for them now and in future. I am also not so sure how well the civil servants and the public service in general and even our legislators know the details of the Transformation Agenda. It is very necessary for the Government to give effective and sustained publicity to elicit the ‘buy-in’ of the general citizenry.

The Transformation Agenda and the subsequent Implementation Plans for Vision 20 : 2020 should be publicized and canvassed continuously in many fora all over the country – in schools, universities, work places, barracks, professional societies, civil service clubs, social clubs, until the goals, objectives, targets, strategies, the sustained hard work and consistency required become accepted by the generality of our people. Vision 20 : 2020 can and should be made the nation’s rallying anchor for years to come, transcending conflicting partisan interests just as the promise of Independence was a uniting anchor despite the partisan clashes before 1st October, 1960. Indeed such a general commitment and buy-in by various stakeholders will put added pressure on the Public Service and other Agencies to deliver.

The President and national Leadership should find ways of continuously communicating to the general public their commitment and enthusiasm for the Transformation Agenda. I shall repeat some of the suggestions I made at another forum recently. Vigorous and disciplined implementation of the Jonathan Transformation Agenda, as well as leading the PDP and the nation to embrace all the aspects of good governance will launch Nigeria irreversibly on the path to unity and greatness. However, there are immediate difficult things which must be accomplished:

- The present post – 1998 political parties formed even more hastily than those in 1979 have no roots in past political parties and usages. They have not yet articulated long-term party visions for Nigerian Society or the Federal Country which they seek to administer. Most of our new politicians are not aware of the self-sacrifice, the patriotism, the idealism, the promise and commitment of the pre-independence politicians to improving the welfare of the broad masses after Independence nor do they know about the discipline and self-restraint required in managing the lean resources of pre-oil Nigerian. I mean no offence. No fault of theirs. Most of the comments on the past in our media since 1966 have been self-denigrating and abusive of the national psyche.

Let us remind ourselves that throughout British Colonial Rule the annual revenue of the Government never exceeded £40 million. It was under Balewa after Independence that it reached £50 million, and it rose to £100 million in the 2nd year of Gowon's Administration and by then we were already engulfed in the Civil War.

You can then try to imagine how frugally public funds were managed when you consider that the ports of Lagos, Warri, Port Harcourt, and Calabar, the 4000 miles of railways, the telegraph lines which crisscrossed the country from North to South and East to West the good schools which mine and earlier generations attended and from which we went direct to the best British, American and other universities were all developed with such meager resources!

- The political parties and the party system have to be re-invented and re-engineered to become patriotic responsive vehicles for promoting the general welfare of all citizens and national greatness. They must adopt and believe in clear manifestos and programmes to promote national progress. Indeed, it will be desirable for all of them to base their programmes on Vision 2020 and let partisan competition and differences be on how best to achieve Vision 2020 and loftier goals beyond. Indeed, achieving the targets contained in Vision 20;2020 may take us beyond 2025. What is important is to embark earnestly on its implementation. The political parties must become effective organs for selecting and disciplining candidates for positions in the executive and legislature all of them subscribing to the same policies and programmes for moving the nation forward. Only such re-engineered political parties can help the President and his successors in achieving Vision 20;2020 and good governance.
- The current epidemic of competitive corruption, and excessive greed amongst the political class and our elites in appropriating national resources to themselves must be stopped immediately.
- The President should lead the nation to adopt and live with more realistic national remuneration scales for all those paid from the public purse. Nigeria's per capita income is only ₦300,000 per annum. I would suggest the following maximum figures for aggregate remuneration (basic salary + allowances)

per annum– President ₦30 million. Governors ₦25 million. Head of National Assembly, Judiciary, and Federal Ministers ₦24 million.

- Proportionate reasonable adjustment of these figures down the various hierarchies.
- Enhancement of present relative positions of certain groups like teachers.
- Cost effective, transparent public procurement. Over 200% inflation of costs have been reported in some instances these days.
- Return to the old values of patient, disciplined life-time career progression as opposed to the current craze to achieve billionaire status, if possible, before the age of 35.
- Above all, a far-reaching rationalization of the Ministries and Agencies of Governments taking into account the Oronsanye Report. There must be a drastic reduction in the cost of governance at Federal, State and Local Government levels. Let us remind ourselves that the Federal Government of USA is run through 12 Departments (our equivalent of ministries) and no American State has more than 6 persons of the status of our state commissioners. Here some states have more than 24 Commissioners and scores of Special Advisers and Special Assistants.

If above suggestions are strictly implemented, we would be aiming for target resource allocation of at least Recurrent to Capital ratio of 45 Recurrent, 55 capital, compared with the ratio of 74 Recurrent, 26 Capital in the Federal Budget of 2012. Considerable resources will then be freed to be invested in Education, Power, Transportation, Health and other priority sectors in pursuance of the Transformation Agenda

We must recall the example of Balewa, the Regional Premiers, and all the Ministers, who in 1962 at the launching of the 1962 – 68 National Plan took 10% cut in their salaries to signal the need for national savings to help finance the Plan. That measure brought the salary of a Federal Minister below that of a Federal Permanent Secretary!

I should add that in the First Republic, the salaries of a Professor, Federal Permanent Secretary and Federal Minister were about equal. A Federal Legislator who was part time then earned about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the Minister's figure. Compare the position today!

The Private Sector in Nigeria also needs to improve corporate governance and to rein in excessive Executive Greed. Some of the charges in court against some bank managers, for example, made me extremely sad.

A few constitutional amendments would also be useful. There should be provision for independent candidates. Some outstanding independent candidates will get elected and help to improve the calibre of members in the legislatures. Consideration should be given to increasing the membership of the State Assemblies to make it more difficult for state governors to direct and manipulate the State Assemblies. They should not be full time but have

two sessions of 2 -3 months each a year. Their salaries and allowances should also be drastically reduced to free resources for capital investments. The Federal and Regional Legislatures before Independence and during the First Republic -1960 – 66 were part time.

The 774 Local Governments recognized under the 1999 constitution are too many. Many of them are too small to be able to deliver their constitutional services unlike the situation before Independence and the First Republic where you had Local Governments like the Lagos City Council, the Kano Native Authority, and the Benin Native Authority etc. which were large enough and had the resources to maintain professional and technical departments, able to deliver good services in health, educational, and public works sectors. In our present circumstances of very atomized LGAs consideration should be given to enabling several LGAs to be grouped in viable catchment areas to establish competent Technical Boards funded equitably per capita by the co-operating LGAs to deliver services in sectors such as Educational Inspectorates, Teachers Commissions, Public Health Services, Rural Roads etc. There is no time to go into other desirable re-organization details to ensure service delivery.

It is very necessary and urgent for the Government to continue the reforms towards the re-establishment of a greatly improved, re-organized, re-oriented, re-motivated, continuously trained and re-trained professional, non-partisan, empowered, well-remunerated, non-corrupt, investor-friendly Civil Service which is merit and productivity driven. This is to enable the Government deliver.

Can Nigerian leaders and citizens rise to these challenges and do what is necessary to save the country? Let us recall some achievements in the past:

- The achievements in the vast improvement in the provision of education for children, the establishment of plantations and farm settlement schemes and initiating industrial development under Regional Self-Government in the late 1950s and the First Republic up to 1966.
- Despite the dire predictions of the doom of genocide and lynching which would follow the defeat of Biafran Secession, Nigeria surprised the world with the success of its programme of Rehabilitation, Reconciliation and Reconstruction under the 1970 – 74 2nd National Plan.
- The impressive average annual growth rate of 6%+ from 1962 - 1966; and after the Civil War, the average annual growth rate from 1970 – 75 of 11.75%.
- Supposing even after removing Gen. Gowon, his successors had continued with the disciplined implementation of the 1975 – 1980 3rd National Plan, and if under subsequent National Plans, 10%+ average annual growth rate was maintained for the next two decades, Nigeria would have escaped from poverty and under-development and would today be an African Lion or Tiger amongst Asian Tigers.

Other Initiatives for Promoting National Integration

Besides economic growth and improving welfare for all citizens there are other initiatives a patriotic leadership can take to foster national integration. Supposing following up on the early successes of the National Youth Service, the Nigerian leadership was able to introduce a Language Policy to foster national integration? This people like me would have urged on the patriotic nation-building listening leadership which we had then but for the termination of the Gowon Administration by the coup of July 1975. Such a policy would require each child to learn to read and write the local language where he is born. By the age of 10, the child begins to receive his instructions in English. The new policy would be that by the age of 12 or 13 when he or she enters a secondary school, he/she has to make a choice. If he is in the North, he must choose one Southern Language which he will be taught to speak, read and write. The chances are that the child will choose either Ibo or Yoruba. In the South, the child will likely choose Hausa as a Northern Language which he will be taught to speak, read and write. All secondary schools will have the necessary language departments.

The upshot of this policy will be that within 15 to 20 years all educated Nigerians (like the Swiss) will, apart from their local language and English, be able to communicate in one or more Nigerian languages. With the ongoing inter-action and cultural exchanges and the pressures of globalization, you can imagine the situation among our children and grand children twenty years hence. Such a policy should be implemented after careful detailed consultations and preparation.

Reform and Repositioning of the Civil Service

A great deal of effort and resources have been devoted since 1999 towards reforming and repositioning the Civil Service and the Public Service generally to enhance service delivery. External organizations such as the World Bank and The British Government DFID are supporting some of the programmes. Many workshops and training programmes have been conducted and are continuing.

The Bureau of Public Service Reforms (BPSR) was established in 2004 as a central coordinating office for reforms of the Civil Service. SERVICOM (Service Compact With All Nigerians) was also established to monitor ethics and efficient service delivery. More recently, the Government has adopted a National Strategy for Public Service Reform which we are informed will lead to the creation of a “world class Public Service, delivering government, policies and programmes with professionalism, excellence and passion”. The NPSR has three phases 2011–2013, 2013 – 2016 and the final phase 2016 – 2020. What is important is that the efforts will be intensified to achieve:

- Effective and fair Governance of the Civil Service;
- Organizational efficiency and effectiveness;
- Professional and result-oriented civil servants;
- Ethical and accountable workforce with a positively changed work culture;
- Improved competence and capacity; and
- Knowledge based workforce.

It is critically necessary at this stage of Nigeria’s development to return to a merit-driven Public Service. The Federal Character principle should not be used to prevent it.

It is better at the point of recruitment to stretch the net as wide as possible to ensure as much widespread representation of areas and communities as possible. But every candidate recruited must meet the minimum pre-set qualifications. After recruitment, there must be training at various stages and good career planning to be undertaken by the greatly improved Human Resources Management Departments being developed. Once in the service promotion and advancement should be strictly on the basis of merit and productivity. The practice of transferring junior less experienced and not so competent officials from outside organizations and other services to become bosses of their former seniors after contrived promotions in such external organizations must not be allowed.

It is also important to implement a Remuneration and Rewards system for the public service that will attract the best talents. That was the situation in pre Independence days. As far back as 1955, the British Government adopted the principle of “comparability with private enterprise rates”. The USA adopted the same principle in their Federal Salary Reform Acts of 1962 and 1964. This principle could be applied in formulating the more realistic national remunerations which I recommended earlier.

We were informed in a recent seminar of many significant milestones already attained in the ongoing Civil Service Reforms. Unfortunately, the image of the Civil Service and the Public Service amongst the citizens is not good. This may not be the fault of the Public Service. It does not operate in isolation. At the end of the reform process, the civil servant must earn and acquire a new image - that of a friendly, helpful, prompt, competent servant of the people who is pro-investment and is a willing

midwife to the birth of new productive enterprises and to wealth creation. He must discard the image of the arrogant intimidator or of the corrupt extortioner. It is then that he can help to deliver the desired Transformation Agenda.

Need For a Call to Order

To the outsider, the pace of the conduct of national affairs appears lethargic. There is a prevailing mood of insecurity and uneasiness amongst the general public, I believe that there is need now for a dramatic “Call To Order” by Mr. President that the leaders of all sectors of government and society must try to undergo the necessary drastic change of attitude and embrace all the aspects of good governance which entails:

- The Rule of Law;
- Efficient and prompt administration of justice;
- Predictability, objectivity and consistency in government measures;
- Respect for the sanctity of contracts;
- Abandonment of the pursuit of self-enrichment as the motive for seeking political leadership and office;
- Zero tolerance for corruption and the prompt application of adequate sanctions against offenders including seizure of all properties corruptly acquired;
- Efficient and timely service delivery by all government agencies;
- Return to planning and submission to the discipline of planning, respecting pre-determined priorities in the utilization of national resources;
- Return to the principle of collective responsibility of government; and

- Entrenchment of merit and the pursuit of excellence as a core.

The Government should also embark on effective and sustained publicity of the Transformation Agenda - what it means for all of us and why we should all support it and participate in delivery where we can. Nigerians are governable. The people need to be mobilized so that the Transformation Agenda can be achieved.

I thank you all for listening to me patiently.

Chief Philip C. Asiodu, CON

Abuja

11th September, 2012