A New Dawn
(Volume Two)

A Collection of Speeches
of
President Olusegun Obasanjo

Edited by
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A New Dawn
[Volume Two]
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It is my honour and privilege to be in your midst today at the invitation of the warm and friendly people of Canada.

My wife, my entourage, and myself have enjoyed the last 24 hours as eventful and strongly indicating a memorable and successful State Visit. We feel honoured for this evening of grand State Dinner.

Only a couple of months ago, you, Mr Prime Minister, was in Nigeria, helping us invigorate our recently established democratic dispensation as well as nurture bilateral relation that has a long history. My return visit, as it were, has turned out to be a unique one, in the sense that my presence represents the first time ever of an official State Visit by a serving Nigerian Head of State. Our decision to be here today is informed by our conviction of the unique position Canada occupies in the heart of our nation.

Excellencies, at this juncture, permit me to commend the courage and commitment of your country when Canada solidly stood on the side of justice when Nigeria was languishing in a dark tunnel of injustice and bad governance. Canada’s image within the international community has once been biblically likened to that of Joshua bringing down the walls of Jericho with his trumpet. No matter how debatable the role of Canada may have been in bringing down the evil regime in Nigeria, one thing is clear: the process and outcome may have been remarkably different without Canada. And for that, Nigeria and Nigerian people fully acknowledge with deep appreciation and gratitude the role played by Canada.

It is thus true that my presence as the democratically elected president of Nigeria owes to contribution made by Canada to the evolution of democracy in Nigeria. My appeal, however, is that you see how much you have supported us to the beginning of a process that has only just begun. Throughout history, democracy has always been a process, as human societies and those within them define their roles and their
responsibilities, with the sole purpose of ensuring survival and co-existence by the most equitable means possible. The relative age of democracy in Nigeria highlights democracy as a process: the truth is that we have only just started.

I stand before you today as the leader of a democratic country and I want to appeal to the people of Canada not to relent in their support for the democratic project. What I mean in this wise is that the economies of the world should cooperate in helping to translate the trust put in us by the people into tangible dividends.

Right Honourable Prime Minister, for the masses who voted for us, it was an opportunity to register their aspirations and hopes for a new and improved future. In this regard, we strongly desire to avoid invoking the debt overhang as an excuse for responding to the loud signal of hungry mouths in need of being fed. The issue of the debt overhang continues to incapacitate our ability to provide succour to our people, and we fear that each day that passes without a favourable resolution of the debt problem is a day lost for democracy. What I am advocating is that, while appreciating Canada’s past support for the reduction and cancellation of debt, I wish to appeal to you to redouble your efforts into seeing to the total cancellation of all the Third World debts. This will go a long way in assisting to give our suffering masses another chance to begin afresh and live decent lives.

Right Honourable Prime Minister, recently, when you visited, I had the opportunity to lay before you some of the measures we have adopted to revive our economy and attract genuine foreign investors. We also rejuvenated the Nigeria-Canada Joint Commission in the hope that Canadian investors will take advantage of the abundant new investment opportunities in our land. It is my earnest hope that our visit to your country at this material time will help to boost the frontiers of cooperation between our two countries toward the better understanding and prosperity of our peoples.

Right Honourable Prime Minister, the Nigerian investment environment is replete with opportunities, ranging from agriculture, health, education, transport, power generation, mining, to agro-allied concerns and a host of other viable sectors. The Canadian investor has been further protected by the favourable investment code which we have enacted, part
of which is the relaxed system of profit remittances and generous freehold land policy. To complement these measures is the availability of a vibrant and resourceful population representing over half of the population of the entire sub-region. Today, Nigeria is the tenth largest oil-producing nation in the world, complimented with over 300 assorted types of solid materials that have been identified to exist in viable quantities. By investing in Nigeria, the Canadian investors will also be helping to create employment for a large sector of the populace and by inference, help to reduce crime and sustain democracy.

Excellencies, while tabling our list of expectations, we must not forget to thank your government and the good people of Canada for the unrelenting support you have given to the sustenance of the peace of our continent. We do recall with glowing admiration, your remarkable role in the Sierra Leone conflict and the ongoing problem in the Congo. We salute your courage and urge you to continue to do the good work that your government has come to be known for.

Finally, Honourable Prime Minister and Madame Chretien, in ending my address this evening, I wish to put on record my personal gratitude to your family for the unparalleled love and commitment to the salvation of Nigeria. Your government remains the first and only country to have taken the initiative to unilaterally cancel Third World debts. You have also championed the issue of the oppressed and heavily indebted nations of the world. I salute your commitment and urge you to carry this message to the next G8 meeting holding in Okinawa, Japan, so that the entire industrialised world can take a concerted action to eliminate this global problem that has been so crippling to the developing world.

Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, please join me in rising to toast to the good health of the Prime Minister and Madame Chretien, and to the friendly and unending Nigeria-Canada relations.

May Nigeria-Canada relations grow from strength to strength.
It is indeed an honour and privilege to address this august gathering on a subject so real, so topical and so close to the hearts of all of us whom God in His infinite wisdom has placed on the continent of Africa – the cradle of humanity.

But let me first thank the people and government of Canada whose invitation to a state visit has been largely responsible for my presence here today. My wife, my entourage, and myself have really had a wonderful time in the past four days here in a country that is highly regarded by a large majority of Nigerians. In the context of the theme for this conference, I personally believe that the future of Africa stands to gain a lot from Canada’s image as a nation with a good heart, as demonstrated by her excellent record of genuine concern for the plight of less endowed nations.

We Africans may feel proud to note our continent as the cradle of humanity. However, the recent history of Africa makes it hard for us to claim that prize with confidence. How could we, when, as once remarked by the late Mwalimu Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, ‘Africa has suffered in the hands of foreigners like no other continent’. What is more, most of this suffering was concentrated in the last two centuries, so much so that if we Africans could ordain it, we would strongly be tempted to erase these dehumanising centuries from our memory, if only for the sake of alleviating the pain and anguish associated with the period.

But, ladies and gentlemen, we cannot and will not do that. We need the lessons of the past to inform and strengthen our resolve and determination to win back some of the losses, as we surely must do, if we are to survive.

Africa entered the last century with the hands of colonialism round its throat. The grip would tighten into a stranglehold that was maintained
through two thirds of the twentieth century. During that period, Africans had no say in the way they were governed, nor did they have any say in the development and progress of their societies. Until the 1970s, most Africans were subjected to governance of exploitation, designed to extract the maximum out of their continent for the sole benefit of those who could not care less about the destiny of African societies.

Ladies and gentlemen, the losses directly attributable to the wholesale colonisation of our continent are simply incalculable. First we lost through exploitation, namely illegitimate profit from the use of our human and natural resources. And the fight against colonialism cost us tens of thousands of lives, as well as drained our intellectual, human and material resources. Then, to top it all, when we thought we had regained control of our destiny, and when we believed that we had earned our rights to join the rest of the world as equal partners and discuss mutual cooperation on the basis of equitability, we discovered that the position of our continent in the world order had been disadvantageously fixed and pre-determined by numerous factors which, for want of a better description, we call colonial legacies.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, none of the foregoing is aimed at blaming anyone for the plight of our continent, nor do Africans intend to seek refuge in the excuse that we have been innocent victims of world history. Nevertheless, it puts in perspective Africans’ feeling that the one thing we all could genuinely celebrate about the last century was the final exit of colonialism, when majority rule was eventually established in South Africa.

All over the continent, we had fought hard for our political independence. The pain of injustice inherent in colonialism in any part and in any region, was shared by all of us. And we are delighted that we are not carrying the colonial burden into the new century, indeed into the new millennium.

Africa’s developmental balance sheet at the beginning of this century shows huge deficits that are accounted for by the following factors:

- demographic explosion;
- rapid desertification;
• frequent periodic droughts in economies that are excessively dependent on rain-fed agriculture;

• lack of appropriate technological know-how and sustainable human development;

• debt overhang and low level of domestic and foreign investment;

• the pervasiveness of conflicts and wars;

• failure to achieve any major breakthrough in regional cooperation and integration;

• lopsided and inequitable nature of international trade regime.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to add to these the factor of killer diseases whose full dimensions emerged at a recent conference on malaria, held in Abuja. Malaria currently kills nearly two million Africans every year, and has been doing so for quite some time. Economists reckon that the total cost of the effect of malaria to post-independent Africa may be as high as 50 per cent of points lost in economic prosperity. Tragically, malaria has now been joined by HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis in a lethal nexus that is now threatening the very existence of life in our continent. All of the aforementioned have combined to wreak havoc on life in Africa.

Globalisation
Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, in Africa we are coming to grips with the reality that our uncertain journey into the new millennium will continue to be shaped by the profound forces of globalisation and liberalisation unleashed in the final years of the 20th century. As modern technology relentlessly drives the globalisation of economic activities, market forces now determine the allocation of resources, and the State is fast becoming irrelevant in economic planning. Globalisation has brought in its wake, new opportunities and challenges for all peoples in all countries. The consequent expansion of world trade and output, the acceleration of the mobility of factors of production and seeming disappearance of national frontiers, have altogether led to the emergence of a global village in which,
it was assumed, all countries and peoples will prosper.

However, our experience so far clearly indicates that globalisation has brought mixed blessings. The prosperity it engenders is unevenly shared among countries and regions of the world. While the industrialised countries remain its major beneficiaries, hardly any African nation has been able to take advantage of the opportunities presented by this phenomenon. We have been consigned to the periphery of the global economy, with the risk of further marginalisation and possible de-linkage.

These adverse consequences of globalisation have led us in Nigeria to conclude that a troubled relationship has emerged between globalisation and the imperatives of development. This disturbing reality is more than amply demonstrated by the failure of globalisation to spur economic recovery, faster growth, greater employment opportunities and poverty eradication. Rather, it has exhibited a tendency to accentuate the income and welfare gaps between the rich and the poor, among and within countries and regions. Never has the world witnessed such massive disparities in international economic and social activities. And nowhere is this trend more glaring than with African countries.

In the quest for a better management of a globalised world economy, it is incumbent on us to direct our searchlight on the unsatisfactory evolution of the multilateral trading system. The developing countries participated, with enthusiasm and high expectations, in the historic Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations that ushered in the new rules-based Multilateral Trading System (MTS) and the birth of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). They had hoped that the new trading regime would enhance their trade fortunes, facilitate effective integration into the world economy, and arrest their marginalisation from global trading system. In assuming commitments under the various Uruguay Round Agreements (URAs), our countries reaffirmed the primacy of a transparent, fair and equitable rules-based multilateral trading system, in recognition of the vital role of international trade in the process of economic development.

But unfortunately, the vast majority of developing countries, particularly in Africa, have so far been unable to reap the benefits arising from their membership of the WTO. The imbalance between rights and obligations of membership is reflected in the failure of the major trading
nations to faithfully implement the development dimensions of the various WTO Agreements. Africa’s trade prospects continue to be hampered by the non-implementation of the special and differential measures in favour of developing countries, and the increasing protectionist measures on their export products. Besides, the paucity of technical and financial assistance, that would have enabled us take advantage of the limited market access opportunities that exist, continue to deepen Africa’s marginalisation in the globalised world economy. Regrettably, the major trading nations are bent on advancing the process of globalisation and liberalisation by introducing, on the global trade agenda, new issues with additional obligations for developing countries.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is sad to note that Africa, the least developed of all the regions and the least able to cope with external shocks, has been the principal victim of the dark side of globalisation and liberalisation of the world economy. The continent’s continuing marginalisation is increasingly defined by its low level of exports and decreasing share in world trade, during the past four decades. The consequence has been import compression, weak productivity and low output.

Similarly, Africa’s share in the manufacturing value-added has fallen to an all time low. Its share in total foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows to developing countries, for instance, dropped significantly to less than five per cent in the second half of the 1990s, and a meagre 1.2 per cent of world FDI flows in 1997. This trend has continued, despite the efforts of African countries to implement far-reaching economic reforms and maintain macro-economic stability, particularly the introduction of a more open and business-friendly investment regime, and the provision of incentives to attract foreign investment.

Agricultural performance and commodity export, upon which the African economy’s overall growth depends, have even fared worse. The traditional internal structural difficulties, aggravated by external systemic constraints, have rendered African agriculture unable to respond to the opportunities presented by globalisation and liberalisation. As a result, low agricultural productivity and competitiveness, and the dramatic collapse of commodity prices, continue to dim the prospects of agriculture as a pillar of Africa’s efforts at poverty alleviation and sustainable development.
Debts

The heavy external debt burden and large unsustainable debt service obligations of African countries constitute a major impediment to their quest for social and economic development. Debts undermine the capacity of our countries to make positive adjustments. They also create the greatest obstacle in our determined effort to move our people out of poverty. It is clearly unacceptable that the external debt burden should continue to constrain our ability to channel public investment into physical and social infrastructures and human resource development. Furthermore, the debt burden continues to deter new foreign investments and erode the ability of our countries to participate meaningfully in a globalised world economy.

For us in the African region, the persisting external debt burden has a paralysing effect on social and economic development, as illustrated by the following grim statistics:

- By the end of 1998, total debt, as a percentage of GDP, reached 65.5 per cent;
- The debt stock represented 303 per cent of exports of goods and services in 1998;
- Debt service, as a percentage of exports of goods and services, rose to 30.9 per cent in 1998;
- Some countries spend up to 40 per cent of their national budget on debt servicing;
- Accumulated arrears on interest and principal payments reached 64 billion US dollars in 1996, representing 27.4 per cent of total debt;
- Two-thirds of the increase in the total debt stock since 1988 has been due to arrears, and not new loans – Africa has indeed been making net negative transfers to creditors as interest payments exceed new lending;
- The debt per capita, standing at 357 US dollars, far exceeds the per capita income of the average African, which is 100 US dollars.

Ladies and gentlemen, there is no better time than now, at the dawn of a new millennium, to give African countries a fresh start to enable them
meet the challenges of providing the basic necessities of life for their citizens. To facilitate such a fresh start, it is imperative for our development partners to take immediate steps to relieve us of our crippling debt burden by outright cancellation of the debts, much of which are known to be spurious.

There is an urgent need for decisive international actions to reduce the incidence of financial volatility associated especially with short-term speculative capital flows, which have grave social and economic consequences for developing countries. In this regard, we welcome the ongoing debate on the reform of the international financial institutions and the imperative for developing countries to participate fully and effectively in the design and management of the new international financial architecture, which should be structured and sufficiently funded to respond to the needs of developing countries. A central element of this new international financial architecture must include such definitive resolution of the external debt problems of developing countries. Similarly, it must include measures to arrest the growing phenomenon of illegal capital flight and the repatriation of illicit wealth, siphoned abroad by corrupt political leaders and their collaborators, back to their countries of origin.

Our Development Partners
Ladies and gentlemen, surely, increasing interdependence among countries at different levels of social and economic development in our global village of today, compels a new form of multilateral relations. Such relationship should be based on the principles of mutuality of interests and benefits, shared responsibilities, and genuine partnership. Essential elements of this engagement should entail decisive international actions to ensure the mobilisation of human and material resources for the elimination of inequalities among and within the countries of the world.

It is thus a matter of concern that the core resources of the United Nations Funds and Programmes that have traditionally brought meaningful improvement to the lives of our people have been declining in recent years. We must call on developed countries to halt this decline. And we must urge them to fully and faithfully implement their commitment to provide substantial resources to these Funds and Programmes. Similarly, the
alarming decline of Official Development Assistance (ODA) must be arrested. ODA, had traditionally bridged the financing gap in assistance to developing countries, particularly the Least Developed Countries – most of which are in Africa. It is regrettable that the ODA has been on the downward trend since the second half of the 1990s. The current ODA flows are at their lowest levels ever, recording less than one-third of the internationally agreed target of 0.7 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product of donor countries. It must be acknowledged that few donor countries have faithfully and consistently kept to their commitment of meeting the 0.7 per cent ODA target, and in some cases even surpassed it. However, a meeting such as this conference ought to record its recognition of the imperative for the international community to take urgent action to reverse the downward slide of ODA.

Conflicts

Without stable political conditions and good governance, poverty alleviation will remain a pipe dream. Yet, today as many as 19 of Sub-Saharan countries are engaged in armed conflict. That is about half of Black African countries. If the 1980s was Africa’s lost decade economically, the 1990s has turned out to be the decade when conflicts have reached an ominous proportion. In the interest of Africa, and indeed the whole world, the trend has been halted and reversed.

As I speak, one of our neighbouring countries in the West African sub-region is burning. This has been a conflict for which Nigeria has made enormous sacrifices. And we are prepared to make more, to ensure that peace should return to the people of Sierra Leone.

We are pleased to note that on the insistence of African countries, the UN has assumed some responsibility for the situation in Sierra Leone. There is still need for the Security Council to assume further responsibility in other flashpoints of conflicts in Africa. For too long, impoverished Africans have struggled to maintain peace in their region to save their haemorrhaging neighbours. Resources diverted to these peace-making and peace-keeping efforts become unavailable for other pressing developmental requirements. The United Nations should however do a lot more in providing logistic and financial supports to assist regional peace-keeping
and peace-building efforts as well as the welfare of refugees and other displaced persons.

Ladies and gentlemen, the more violent and protracted the conflict, the greater and more pervasive the negative impact. Conflicts result in considerable human, social, economic and environmental destruction, and create huge structural imbalances. The destructive impact of low-intensity conflict, such as that which was waged in my own country between June 1993 and June 1998, is just as devastating as that of armed high-intensity conflict.

Our failure to fully comprehend the fundamental, long-term historical causes of conflicts in Africa has prevented us from their mastery. Poverty and conflicts feed on each other while both go hand-in-hand with bad governance, whose hallmarks are the marginalisation and social exclusion of the majority of the population, the neglect of the social services and infrastructure, and the failure to maintain law and order. Invariably, the remote as well as immediate causes of conflicts in Africa are real and perceived political, social and economic injustice and inequity. In short, bad governance. Mastery of conflict is more than mere cessation of hostilities. We must address their fundamental causes in order to prevent their recurrence.

Ladies and gentlemen, I began this address by referring to how much our continent and our peoples have suffered in the hands of non-Africans. It was by no means an attempt to defend Africa against such labels as ‘The Hopeless Continent’, as proclaimed on the cover of the latest edition of The Economist, which I have no doubt many members of this audience would have seen. Needless to say that for us, Africans living in Africa, development and progress are not topics for idle debate. For us, it is a matter of life and death! We certainly cannot afford the intellectual luxury of writing off our continent. Nor can we even begin to weigh the possible validity of the rather racist connotation that underdevelopment is innate to the character of Africans and African societies.

Ladies and gentlemen, The Economist, as authoritative as it might be, conspicuously omitted reference to one quarter of Black Africa, that is Nigeria, where we have been devoting all our energy to rebuilding our nation after years of traumatic misrule and mismanagement by our own people. The current administration, which will be a year old in a couple
of weeks, is wholeheartedly and irrevocably committed to reversing the fortunes of Nigeria. The process has begun and we all know that the process of national rebirth is mostly arduous. The road has been – and will be – bumpy, as some of you may know from recent events in our country. But we are winning. And by the Grace of God we will succeed. All Nigerians now know that we cannot afford to fail!

Throughout Africa we recognise the need to rise to the challenge of putting our house in order. The key is effective leadership that is transparently democratic and duly sensitive to the needs and aspirations of our peoples. There is no difficulty in having a vision of Africa that is free of strife and where the people live peacefully and prosperously. And we have no reason to doubt our ability to achieve progress. We believe we can do it. We know we can do it. And we will do it.

But, ladies and gentlemen, Africa’s internal efforts are currently circumscribed by the mostly disadvantageous and inequitable status within the international order. Our situation is like that of a man in a wet pit, he needs a lifeline to make his climbing efforts a success. The history of humankind is replete with such complementarity of efforts. Our vision for this coming century cannot exclude the trend of the world becoming a global village. But let it be a village in which good neighbourliness, governed by mutuality of interests is the norm. Let it be a village in which a burst pipe in one compound makes all neighbours sit up with genuine concern and desire to help. It is not – and cannot be – a meaningful village if certain compounds are, for whatever reasons, de-linked, as it is now happening to Africa.

We are struggling and asking for Africa to be re-linked equitably into the international order, politically, economically, socially and technologically. This demand is predicated on humanity and morality, which are two essential factors that differentiate humans from beasts of the wild. If we can attain this, it will be a quantum leap for humankind in the 21st Century.

I thank you all.
May I, on behalf of the government and people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, heartily welcome you to this special session of the Summit of Heads of State and Government which is being held to commemorate the Silver Jubilee celebration of the Economic Community of West African States. May I, particularly, welcome our special guests, friends, and well-wishers who have come to celebrate this special occasion with us.

We in Nigeria are particularly happy that this celebration coincides with the First Anniversary of the present democratically elected government in office. Both events call for special celebration because they represent very important landmarks. It is therefore, my great pleasure to invite you all to join the government and people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in celebrating the two occasions.

ECOWAS is 25 years old today and we have every cause to be grateful to Almighty God for sustaining the Economic Community so far, in spite of all odds. It is quite a thing of joy to mark this occasion with all pomp and pageantry and in doing so, may I use this opportunity to pay glowing tributes to the Founding Fathers of ECOWAS for their foresight, vision, and initiative in setting up the institution. I am particularly delighted to note that two of the Founding Fathers, President Mathieu Kerekou of Benin, and President Gnassingbe Eyadema of Togo are still with us today, availing us their wealth of experience and wisdom in piloting the affairs of the Community. General Yakubu Gowon, who presided over the signing of the Treaty establishing the Economic Community, is also present here today as a Special Guest representing the other Heads of State/Founding Fathers of ECOWAS. I wish to, through him, greet them on this occasion.

I wish to remember those among the Founding Fathers, who have passed to the world beyond. May their souls rest in perfect peace. For those among them who are still alive, I salute them too. There is no doubt,
that wherever they may be today, this occasion would constitute the happiest and most joyous moment in their lives. These illustrious Sons of Africa, deserve to have their names written in gold for their contributions to the socio-economic emancipation of the sub-region. As a mark of appreciation of their vision and sense of purpose, the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS should be mandated to establish a Role of Honour in their remembrance which should be displayed in a very conspicuous location within the Secretariat.

In celebrating the 25 years of existence of our Community today, it is a thing of joy for me to note the major strides which we have made in the past 25 years to integrate the economies of our 16 member countries into a strong and virile economic Community. We have been able to establish a functional and effective administrative machinery in the ECOWAS Secretariat for executing ECOWAS policies and programmes.

We have made remarkable progress in initiating certain viable integration programmes which have impacted on the lives of our citizens. For instance, our citizens now move about within the sub-region without visa requirements and can settle down in any part of the sub-region in accordance with the provisions of the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Goods and Services and the Right of Residence and Establishment. We have also succeeded in implementing projects and programmes such as the Trans West African Highways and the Telecommunication programme, which have enhanced sub-regional integration process.

In the political scene, the Community has successfully intervened in resolving crises in conflict areas in the sub-region. The activities of ECOMOG in Liberia and Sierra Leone are manifestations of our determination to achieve lasting peace and political stability within the sub-region. This determination explains the setting up of a permanent mechanism for conflict resolution and management so as to have a crises and tension-free sub-region.

I am happy that by our decision to adopt the two-track approach to programme implementation during our last Summit in Lome in December, 1999, we have succeeded in addressing the serious problem of slow implementation of Community decisions, protocols and economic integration programmes. The various measures which have been taken

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since the adoption of a two-track approach to programme implementation points to the fact that we can be rest assured that the phenomenon of slow programme implementation has been permanently put behind us.

This special occasion offers us a good opportunity to reflect on our achievements and learn from our shortcomings; and to chart a future course for our future cooperation and integration within the Community. In doing so, we should borrow from the experiences of other integration institutions within and outside Africa.

We need to realise that we are operating within an international environment where regional cooperation and integration has been adopted as a means of further developing and enlarging markets, promoting industrialisation and enhancing the standard of living of the people. Affluent societies in Europe, America and Asia are still integrating in spite of the achievements they have made at industrialisation and attaining improved welfare of their citizens.

The challenges which therefore face us, as we commence the second stage of our integration process which incidentally coincides with the beginning of a new millennium should be, to now more than ever before, dedicate ourselves to the ideals of cooperation and integration as initiated by the Founding Fathers of ECOWAS. Our economies are not only weak and fragmented, but also heavily dependent on the outside world. We can, therefore, not survive as individual countries and successfully face the challenges in the international economic arena in the face of international competition, particularly from more advanced economies that have consolidated themselves into larger economic groupings.

We are confronted by global issues of trade, investment and capital flows, factor mobility, information technology, social security and the environment. These global issues can only be more effectively addressed under an enlarged economic Community. Our share of the world trade can also be increased as an enlarged Community as against 16 fragmented economies. So also, can we work towards attaining the 7 per cent growth rate considered necessary to reduce the level of poverty in our sub-region by half over the next 15 years.

We therefore, need to strengthen and re-focus our approach to integration. One of the ways to achieve this is to create an effective Regional Consultation Framework on Economic Reforms, for discussing specific...
issues pertaining to integration of markets and in particular, trade liberalisation, Common External Tariff and the means of achieving macro-economic convergence.

We must involve the Private Sector more in the integration process in recognition of the strategic role envisaged for that sector as the engine of growth and driving force of our economies. In this respect, it is imperative for us to create a conducive environment for our private sector to collaborate and provide necessary institutional support to enable them serve as partners in progress in the integration process.

Africa is rich in human and natural resources. Particular efforts therefore, have to be made to harness these resources for the growth and development of our sub-region. Our relationship with our development partners also need to be re-focused with a view to increasing access to their markets and support to make our products competitive, secure increased inflow of foreign capital, and reduction of our debts in order to free our resources for more productive economic activities.

These challenges call for total commitment and dedication at the highest political levels and increased involvement of the civil society in the integration process. Let me therefore use this opportunity to assure you of Nigeria’s unflinching commitment to the ECOWAS integration process. In the past, we have demonstrated this commitment through the mobilisation of our human and financial resources in support of ECOWAS programmes and initiatives.

We in Nigeria realise the full benefits derivable from sub-region economic cooperation and integration and the positive impact of such efforts on the living standards of our citizens. We will therefore continue to initiate programmes which can enhance cooperation and integration among ourselves. We will continue to mobilise more resources and further liberalise our markets to enable other ECOWAS member countries take full advantage of its size to promote their exports.

May I seize this opportunity to appeal to our brothers and sisters in the sub-region not to misconstrue these efforts, but rather regard them as our humble contribution towards improving the socio-economic conditions of our member States.

Your Excellencies, the important message which we should carry with us as we commence the second phase of our integration process is to renew our commitments to the attainment of our long-term objective of
transforming our various economies into a resilient and viable economic union with a virile common market, strong single currency, and a Free Trade Area freed from all forms of tariff and non-tariff barriers.

We should all contribute to build an economic Community where our citizens can move freely without any form of hindrance, and where the rights of residence and establishment of our citizens are guaranteed. We should aim at a balanced development of the sub-region and eliminate the serious economic predicaments facing us. We should increase intra-regional trade and investment and reduce our level of dependence on the outside world for our existence. The momentum has already been built-up. We should not allow any distractions to slow us down.

Your Excellencies, it is my great pleasure to once again welcome you to this special event and to wish you a happy anniversary.

I wish ECOWAS a prosperous future in a thriving spirit of fraternity in West Africa.

I thank you for your attention.
Fellow Nigerians, it is exactly one year ago today since democracy was restored in our dear country. As we are all aware, the battle to restore democracy was a hard one. That battle divided our society into four categories of Nigerians — the dead, the imprisoned or detained, the exiled and the cowed and the silenced. The few vocal ones who were yet to be behind bars or on exile had their voices drowned by those unpatriotic and corrupt ones who could sell their future for a pot of porridge.

Many lives were lost. Many more were injured through incarceration and other forms of brutality that are painful to recall. Yet many more suffered psychologically as they had to escape from their own fatherland, leaving behind loved ones and seeking refuge in strange lands and among strange people. May 29, 1999, was the end of a national trauma which we pray to the Almighty should never happen to this country again!

The official decision to declare May 29 as Democracy Day is partly intended to be some of our tribute to all those who sacrificed their lives so that Nigeria would see democracy. We should pay tribute to all those who withstood assault on their dignity so that Nigeria would see democracy. We should pay tribute to all those who continued with the struggle both within and outside our shores so that Nigeria will see democracy. Fellow Nigerians, the greatest tribute we can pay to these people is for us all to renew our determination to ensure that democracy takes a firm root in our body politic. The Democracy Day is designed for us not to take democracy for granted. It is a day specially set aside for reflection, meditation, studies, and workshops on how to nurture, reinforce and strengthen democracy.

We owe God gratitude for the opportunity to rebuild our nation. Let us thank God for His guidance in the last twelve months as we picked up

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the pieces of what was left by the devastation of the most evil governance this nation has ever experienced. Hovering over the precipice, as we were, there was such possibility of so much that could have gone wrong in the last twelve months. We thank God for his providence, for imbuing us with patience, and for letting us see reason in the many delicate decisions we have had to make in order to come through the many rough patches as we progressed towards a saner, more peaceful society, and the enthronement of justice that will underpin a society that we can enjoy and proudly bequeath to future generations.

Fellow Nigerians, the occasion this time last year in Eagle Square was the culmination of a nerve-wracking six months of transition process that taxed every form of our resources individually and collectively, mentally, physically psychologically, spiritually and materially. The success of the transition programme itself is a testimony to our firm belief and commitment to the merits and virtues of democracy. By all accounts, we worked very hard for democratic governance. We all had every right to have high expectations of democratic dispensation. We still have the right to continue to expect more. In a way, the high expectations are brought about by the apparent success of the democratic dispensation itself.

Fellow Nigerians, indeed we are entitled to celebrate this day that marks twelve full months of the restoration of democratic governance to our country. I would like to thank every Nigerian man, woman and child, who have firmly worked with me and supported me in the leadership for which I was overwhelmingly given mandate in February last year. I would also like to use this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation for the support that I have received from all members of our Administration. I would like to singularly point out the Vice President, Abubakar Atiku, whose companionship, official and private, not only made the task of leadership more bearable, but helped to keep in focus our objective and determination to make a firm positive change to the Nigerian nation.

In addition, I thank all members of the Federal Executive Council for the shared vision and unity of purpose with which most of us have approached our sense of public responsibility for the destiny of our country.

Fellow Nigerians, even before we commenced our leadership duties, we were fully conscious of the drastic realities that we had to contend with. If there was a situation at any time in this country that deserved the
description of emergency, the initial condition at this time last year was unquestionably one.

Let me ask you to cast your minds back to those queues at our fuel stations. The distress, the agony and the shame depicted in those queues constituted the clearest manifestation of the symptoms of decay in our society and deterioration of our system. And there were many of these symptoms:

- the economy was in shambles;
- poverty was pervasive in rural and urban areas of the country;
- all the components of the national infrastructure were in severe stages of decay and dereliction;
- our hospitals had become mortuaries;
- our railway system had been abandoned;
- our National Shipping Line collapsed, while our sea-ports could no longer compete favourably with the ports of our neighbours;
- flights of our national carrier became a rarity, and many of our airports were abandoned;
- there was severe shortage of potable water both in our cities and in the rural areas;
- our power generation dwindled to absolute minimum and power supply meant more darkness than light;
- internationally, Nigeria had become a pariah state, shunned by many countries, tolerated by a few, and treated with contempt and condescension by all;
- we carried a heavy burden of international debt that seemed quite likely to ensure that most of our earnings would be committed merely to paying mostly doubtful debts, leaving us little with which to address the legitimate needs of our people;
- our factories were operating at abysmally low levels;
- schools collapsed, and unpaid teachers were getting used to staying at home;
- cultism was taking high toll on lives and moral value of students of our secondary and tertiary institutions;
- there was fear all round, due to lack of security in all forms;
there was economic mismanagement on a colossal scale with naira perpetually unstable and diminishing in its purchasing power;

our national institutions had existed only by name; and

to cap it all, there was Corruption! Corruption! and Corruption! — everywhere and all the time! Corruption was not only rife, it had eaten so deeply into the marrow of our existence that looters and fraudsters had become our heroes, and it seemed we could no longer place any faith in honesty, decency and hard work.

All in all, it appeared that our country had gone so far on the road of self-destruction, that even otherwise reasonable men and women had begun to feel that the very idea of Nigeria was a huge and cynical joke. And so our Administration had to combat despair and despondency. We had to fight against entrenched skepticism that derived from profound distrust of authority and leadership that had consistently let people down over a decade and a half. This time last year, many wondered if the situation was salvageable. ‘Where do you begin?’ was a question that was uppermost on many people’s mind.

Fellow Nigerians, we gave you our word to do everything possible to get Nigeria back on her feet. We said at the time that we did not posses a magic wand, needless to add that there could not be an instant fix for our myriad of problems. But we promised you total and unequivocal commitment to national reconstruction. We fully accepted the weight of responsibility placed on our shoulders with the confidence you reposed in us with your ballot paper. And we were fully determined not to let you down. Personally, I would like to renew my pledge to give the necessary and required leadership. I shall spare no effort, I will do anything and go anywhere for the ultimate success of the Nigerian nation.

Despite some setbacks in the last twelve months, a quarter of our tenure in office, it can hardly be said to have been wasted. We have indeed made a beginning in many areas of our public life.

- We have established the modalities for reactivating most of our institutional services.
- We have set standards for the development and sustenance of social services.
We have launched the Universal Basic Education Scheme designed to educate our people and enable them participate fully in our political and economic activities.

We have repositioned and refocused many of our institutions in the process of making them fully functional and in tune with vision for the country.

We have taken steps to revive the spirit of service in the military, the Police and the Civil Service, all of which are now gradually being refocused so that they are better able to discharge their duties to the nation.

The Civil Service Rules and Financial Instructions have been reviewed and re-issued, and special training courses and seminars have been conducted at every level of the system.

We have rationalised the oil sector such that, apart from the odd hiccup, Nigerians will never again have to spend days in fuel queues.

With the recent announcement on minimum wage, we have moved to ensure that Nigerians begin to get adequate remuneration for the full labour of their hands.

We have taken decisive action on food security for the population; we had earlier in our Administration re-introduced subsidy on fertilizer decision to withdraw direct subsidy and replace it with zero import duty subsidy.

We have taken serious actions to combat cultism in our secondary and tertiary educational institutions.

If not for the recent action of RUF in Sierra Leone, we have almost withdrawn all our military men from Sierra Leone from under ECOMOG. Other troops are under UN peacekeeping forces.

**Poverty Alleviation:** We have recently launched a phase of Poverty Alleviation Programme which is already making an impact and which we intend to continue to implement with vigour and imagination. I reiterate that poverty alleviation remains for us the litmus test for the relevance and appropriateness of all our policies in all sectors. This will remain so until we achieve victory in the war against want.

**The Economy:** We have announced our economic policy and set out targets for our term of office. Within a few months, inflation
was brought down to single digit, and it is holding. The naira has been stabilised and our foreign reserve has once more become substantial. Our policy of invigorating the private sector has remained on course with investment already trickling in and with the steady progress of the privatisation programme.

- **Foreign Policy:** By all indications, we can now proudly claim to have now been accepted by the international community. We have taken up our rightful place among the comity of nations. We now enjoy the confidence of our development partners and major international organisations, such as the World Bank and IMF. It is our intention to work on this positive relations for the benefit of our overall development strategy, including debt remission and recovery and repatriation of Nigerian fortune stashed abroad.

- **Corruption:** It is regrettable that the urgency of our crusade against corruption is not reflected in the speed with which the Anti-Corruption Bill has been handled in the National Assembly. In the meantime we have been using existing legal means, as inadequate as they are, to fight the evil of corruption in our system. A few thieves have been caught and we have evidence that this is already having deterrent effect. Our relentless pursuit of looters has so far yielded around 100 billion naira of recovered cash and assets. And as I speak, another two billion US dollars is frozen in foreign accounts, with possibility of recovery and repatriation. We are doing what we need to do at home so that the countries abroad can act to return the money which is ours back to us.

- **Power Supply:** I take it that Nigerians accept my apology offered on behalf of NEPA for its disappointing performance. The situation with NEPA became critical and I acted as I did two months ago. I am pleased to report that the NEPA Technical Board is making steady progress. The countdown to the end of epileptic power supply has begun in earnest. I promised the deadline of end of next year, and, by the Grace of God, we will keep our promise.

- **Politics:** Without compunction, we formed the most inclusive government in the chequered history of representative government in our country. This decision was informed by our desire to allow everyone to have a stake in the success of our new democracy. I am
pleased to report that we are working harmoniously. And this has given us political stability and more involvement by people than we would have had.

It would indeed have been a miracle if our progress in the last twelve months had been completely hitch-free. Prolonged dictatorship had kept a tight lid on a number of social, political, and economic contradictions that should have been healthily resolved through dialogue in the context of participatory democracy. Thus, our journey so far has had its share of bumps, and our efforts have suffered a number of bruises. I would be deceiving you, Fellow Nigerians, if I gave the impression that the last 12 months have been easy. They have not.

We have, during this period, done our best to manage the constant cries of marginalisation from virtually every part of the country. People feel marginalised because of real and perceived injustice and inequity in government policies. As mistrusted as the previous regime was, it is understandable that it was accountable for much of the feelings of marginalisation. But our regime is different. We are uncompromisingly committed to justice and equity in all our policies. And I can give my word that our Administration will never knowingly marginalise any group or sections of Nigerian society. At the same time, we will move swiftly to deal with recognised cases of neglect, as we have since been aiming to do with Niger Delta where a Bill was promptly put before the National Assembly. We are irrevocably committed to even-development and making everybody have a stake and a sense of belonging.

Tragically, we have also had to contend with the consequences of Sharia. The loss of hundreds of lives and destruction that accompanied this represents the saddest episode in the brief period of our democratic dispensation. I reckon the conflagration may even have set the nation back for a few months, in terms of the bitterness engendered and the loss of goodwill by our international friends and observers. The bloodletting has to stop. We are going to make sure it stops. Closer investigation of the second eruption in Kaduna has revealed more than meets the eye. The old habit, fear and dichotomy in the old Zaria Province came to the fore. We are embarking on dialogue with all concerned.

We have been confronted by a large number of violent local disturbances in various communities across the country, some initiated
by adults, and others by the youth; but virtually all of them leading to severe losses of lives and property. In all these disturbances, however, it has been our Administration’s determination to insist on the preservation of law and order, and also on the need to settle these violent uprisings as justly as possible. It is now clear that there are Nigerians who believe that democracy and freedom give them the right to flout our laws at will. I am also aware that there are Nigerians who believe that government should employ the discredited responses of past military governments to tackle what they see as unjustified challenges to the authority of the federal government. I am convinced, however, that neither of these approaches are appropriate in our circumstances. Consequently, I shall continue to pursue the course of dialogue, without abandoning my responsibility to the Constitution for a moment; and maintain my oath to uphold the laws of the land without fear or favour. My personal intervention in the Ife-Modakeke crisis recently gave hope for possible resolution in a manner that may satisfy both sides.

During the past year also, the executive and legislative branches of government have sometimes engaged in what I consider to be fruitless and time-consuming disagreements over the nature and extent of the powers granted each arm in our Constitution. I myself have always insisted, and will continue to insist, that just as the Executive may not appropriate any of the powers of the Legislature, so also do I not intend to concede any of the powers of the Executive to the Legislature. Consultation — yes, but ceding power, no!

When we started on this journey a year ago, both sides, I confess, were somewhat uncertain of the true constitutional powers that they possess. We have all consequently made some mistakes. But I am indeed happy to note that on both sides, reason, common sense, patriotism, and a desire for compromise have begun to play much more important roles in all our deliberations. I, therefore, fully expect the future relations between the two branches to be more cordial as we move along on the challenging journey towards the goal of true democracy in our country, especially if we put the interest of the ordinary Nigerian above our own personal interests.

We are entering this our second year with greater determination and with a clearer perception of the way we can move things forward. I am
more determined than before to stretch out hands of dialogue and consultation, but not hands of surrender of executive duty and responsibility. Today, in place of anarchy and dictatorship, we have a constitutional and democratic system of government whose stability and permanence are underwritten by the people themselves, and which, in spite of the periodic crises we have encountered, and still likely to encounter in the future, promises to be the surest way of guaranteeing the freedom of the people, and the maximum satisfaction of their just expectations.

At no time in our country’s history have we been as well placed as we are today, to take the decisive and positive steps that will transform Nigeria into what God destined it to be – a land of opportunity, equity, progress and prosperity for all. I know that among the cynics and pessimists in our midst, this belief is perhaps unduly sentimental. But it is impossible not to take account of the facts both of our history and our condition. We are blessed with a climate that must be the envy of many countries both in the developed and developing world. We have a strong and virile population that is capable of immense productive activity, if the conditions in which they labour are equitable and just. We do have a large expanse of land mostly free of elements of natural disasters. We are blessed with natural resources. And we are not surrounded or threatened by hostile neighbours. Have we been complacent, too complacent because we have no serious challenge to keep us on our toes?

Those who continue to believe that Nigeria is nothing but a mere geographical expression are mistaking in this belief. The multi-cultural, multi-religious diversity of our nation is a source of strength, not of weakness. It opens up for us, in spite of the occasional differences of perception, a far wider canvass of choices, in politics, and in social and economic planning. Far more than it is the case in mono-cultural societies, it brings home to us, more tangibly and in our daily transactions, the fundamental belief that everyman’s freedom is our collective freedom, and that the denial of a single citizen’s rights under our Constitution diminishes all of us, and exposes us all to the dangers of tyranny. Democracy and patriotism, commitment to moral values and to our duties both to the State and to our fellow citizens, are not restricted to any single culture or religion. They are universal values which all our cultures and religions endorse. Poverty does not recognize any religious, ethnic, cultural
or political restrictions; and it is our duty, no matter what religion we profess or what language we speak, to strive to eradicate it from our society.

As in many other societies, Nigerians have periodically quarrelled and disagreed among themselves. But we have also managed, all the time, to move away from the brink, to seek reconciliation, rather than disintegration. After our civil war, we adopted a unique policy of reconciliation which demonstrated our maturity to the world, and made it possible for our citizens, no matter where they stood in that war, to re-assert their commitment to the fundamental ideal of unity.

In pursuance of this objective of unity, and recognizing the fact that justice must at all times be tempered with mercy, the federal government has decided that all officers who were dismissed from service because of the stand they took in the war, will now have their dismissals converted to retirement. There may be more of such acts of reconciliation in the future. But our Administration is convinced that this decision will, to a great extent, help put behind us the lingering bitterness and alienation arising from that tragic episode of our history. This Administration will continue to heal wounds and ensure genuine reconciliation.

Fellow Nigerians, the process of rebuilding Nigeria has begun in earnest. For our Administration, this first year has seen us take the first steps in a long journey. One year ago, we accepted the challenge to turn around the fortunes of our nation. Those challenges are still there. Meanwhile, our experience so far, as we examined in details the task ahead of us, has thrown up new challenges and revealed a bigger dimension for the ones we thought we knew well.

The bulk of our efforts in the last year is to prepare the ground with policies that will re-position and re-activate our system for the necessary action to lift up Nigeria. The challenge, this year, is to begin to see the implementation of those policies. Our aim is that by this time next year, our score card will contain positive statistics of the improvement in the lives of all citizens. More than ever, all hands need to be on deck for this next stage.

We need to renew our resolve to fight corruption to a standstill. My commitment here is total. And I repeat this for all those who still have not got the message that it cannot be business as usual. Some of them have been reported to believe that my fight against corruption would run out of
steam when I get exhausted. As long as God gives me strength, anyone waiting for Obasanjo to get tired will be waiting in vain — until he breathes his last breath.

It is now clear to us that the worst legacies of the past 15 years before our coming into office, is the extent to which Nigeria has fallen off the agenda of public discourse and in the personal consideration of most Nigerians. This ‘What’s-in-it-for-me’ syndrome is the essence of corruption, and it is the justification for inefficiency in the public service — hence the tendency to ridicule individuals who wish to serve well. Most dangerously, this ‘What’s-in-it-for-me’ syndrome distorts serious and rational debates that should be the primary ingredient of democracy. Further progress in the evolution of democracy would be impossible without fully and consciously re-instating Nigeria into our national agenda, as our Administration has always aimed to do.

Fellow Nigerians, on this first democracy birthday, I would like you all to join me in making a wish: that from now we will always ask, ‘what’s in it for Nigeria?’ Let this be our slogan for national re-birth. Let it be our mantra for service to the nation. Let this be our battle cry in our fight against the many ills that plague our nation. And by the Grace of God, victory will surely be ours!

I wish you all a peaceful Democracy Day!
Long live the Federal Republic of Nigeria.
I thank you. May God bless you all.
On behalf of the government and people of Nigeria, I feel honoured to make this presentation to this august meeting of the Tenth Summit-level Consultation and Cooperation of the Group of Fifteen. I am equally honoured to be making this response on behalf of the region of Africa.

Let me start by expressing heartfelt appreciation to our host, President Hosni Mubarak, for the warm hospitality and excellent facilities provided for the success of this Summit. The excellent reception by the government and people of Egypt is hardly surprising, given the historic role which your country has traditionally played on developmental issues. We are encouraged by the important statement which you have just delivered. Your statement has indeed set the tone for this important Summit. Let me assure you, on behalf of my brother Heads of State and Government from the African Region, of our co-operation with you in the task of steering this Summit to a successful conclusion.

The Group of Fifteen clearly embodies the resolve of our countries to shape the development agenda in our world, and ensure the evolution of a new, more equitable world economic system, based on genuine partnership and interdependence. Since its constitution as a select group of developing countries united in their vision of that world, our Group has steadily advanced towards its chosen goal.

Mr Chairman, the challenges which developing countries face today are no less daunting than those we faced at our first Summit in Kuala Lumpur in 1990. On that occasion, we resolved, among other objectives, to respond to the opportunities for peace and development created by the lessened world tension in the post Cold War era. We also embraced, with all seriousness, the attendant development challenges and undertook to reopen and ensure effective dialogue with the developed countries.
Today, we face challenges of a different order. Our societies are overwhelmed by the strident consequences of globalisation, and its twin phenomenon of trade liberalisation. The options open to us have narrowed as our increasingly shrinking world impose on our countries the choice of integration with severe conditions or marginalisation and stagnation. But we all know that the options cannot be that clear cut, if only because the full implications of globalisation are yet to be fully understood, even by its most ardent advocates.

Mr Chairman, for our region, Africa, with inadequate infrastructure and fragile economies, and gross shortage of capital and finance, globalisation and liberalisation portend grave uncertainties, or even risks. Our vulnerability is best illustrated by the statistics of our share of world trade. The collapse of commodity prices, in a World market dominated and shaped by the preferences of the major trading countries, has made mockery of the efforts of our farmers to increase productivity.

Also, the vision which impelled us to participate in the Uruguay Round and to witness the birth of the WTO in Marakesh in 1996, has foundered on the reluctance of our trading partners to support a truly multilateral, rules-based trading system. How can we convince our people to work hard to increase output while the value of their products in the world market today is not worth what it was some two decades ago? How can our people appreciate and intone the sweet refrain of democratic governance and enjoy the much talked about “democracy dividend” when they see their leaders’ capacity to deliver their electoral promises hamstrung in spite of their best efforts at keeping those promises?

Mr Chairman, for so long have our countries continued to appeal for due consideration of the crushing external debt burden and debt service obligations which encumber our development and progress. From some 300 billion US dollars in 1997, Africa’s debt rose to 350 billion US dollars in 1998, an increase of one-sixth within twelve months. Africa’s debt as a percentage of her Gross Domestic Product stood at 65.5 per cent in 1998, whilst close to 40 per cent of Africa’s annual budget is tied to debt servicing. Africa’s debt to export ratio in 1998 stood at 303 per cent. Time is too short to bore you with further grim statistics on African’s debts. Suffice it to point out that the situation is dire, and severely limits our ability to begin to think positively of development and progress in our region.
Mr Chairman, at this juncture, I would like to express our appreciation of the singular initiatives of some of our development partners in writing off part of Africa's official debt owed them. The steps taken to ameliorate the debt burden, particularly of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) under the HIPC initiative, have encouraged us. But more needs to be done. With the limited, and declining resources now available, our countries are ill-equipped, however well intentioned, to confront the serious problem of disease, hunger, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic ravaging our lands.

What Africa needs is not the constant recitation of the litany of our woes, which afflict the continent or long and tired sermons on how to reorder our priorities. This is not to say these reminders are unnecessary. However, this is hardly the time to disregard the human tragedy confronting our continent, putting at risk the destiny of millions of our people. We can ill-afford to be lulled into complacency and continued inaction by the evidence of the few successes on the continent.

Africa calls for action, for fresh and imaginative approaches that will solve the continent's debt problem once and for all. Our Group should add its voice to the strident call by our region for complete debt write-off. Let us, from this summit, carry the message loud and clear to our development partners that the debt burden is a millstone around Africa's neck that needs to be removed and urgently too. This is an imperative if the incipient marginalisation of our continent is to be reversed and global peace and security guaranteed.

Mr Chairman, the defining characteristic of the G-15 is co-operation among the countries of the South. The original vision was for our members to demonstrate, through practical examples, how commercially viable projects can be implemented using the technology, experience and capital from the South. Regrettably, these dreams still remain largely unfulfilled.

We in Africa continue to have faith in the G-15 as a potent vehicle for genuine co-operation and wealth creation for the people of the South. We see South-South co-operation as a cost-effective mechanism for attaining the frontiers of knowledge and technology, which, today, are pre-requisites for prosperity in whatever form. Moreover, such co-operation will enable us safeguard our common trade interests and provide the basis for genuine co-operation with the North.
The time to re-focus our strategy for South-South Co-operation is now!, as we begin the new millennium. Let us, therefore, encourage investment across the borders of the countries of the South. Effective and productive linkages among our private sector operators are indispensable if the numerous opportunities in our respective countries are to be fully exploited to our collective advantage. We must re-dedicate ourselves to exploiting the comparative advantages and complementarities inherent in our respective economies, adopting new and innovative approaches in pursuing these objectives.

Mr Chairman, in the tenth year of the founding of our Group, let us make the principles of good governance, accountability, probity and transparency our watchwords in the dealings among ourselves and among our entrepreneurs. Let us move closer and reinforce current linkages. We have, through sheer perseverance, forced through the reconsideration of the international mechanism for capital and financial movement across national borders. We must not relent in this advocacy until new rules that reflect our interests and goals are written and accepted by all.

Finally, Mr Chairman, let Cairo signal a renewal, indeed a new beginning, for our Group. For the countries in our region, such a resolve will be a fitting tribute to our past efforts and an assurance that the beginning of the new millennium would indeed signal the creation of a New World of hope and encouragement for the teeming masses of the South. We must do everything possible, not only to keep this hope alive, but also to see to its realization.

I thank you.
Let me begin by thanking the government and people of Norway for the invitation extended to me for this State Visit to your beautiful country. We are particularly delighted to be welcomed to your midst in this fabled land of the Vikings, with its long history, rich and diverse culture, and resourceful people.

On behalf of the government and people of Nigeria, and on behalf of my wife and the entire members of my delegation, I wish to express our sincere appreciation for the warm reception that has been accorded us at every turn since our arrival here. It is indeed a great pleasure for me, my wife and my entourage to be so well received and treated to a Banquet of this grandeur.

It is for me, and the members of my delegation, a matter of great joy and honour to be with you today as part of our desire for Nigeria to re-establish the foundations of old friendships and build new bridges for the equally new era that has dawned in our country.

Your Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, when in February this year, the immediate past Prime Minister of this great country visited us in Nigeria, it was an occasion to celebrate the cordial relationships that have existed between our two countries and peoples over the years, and the mutual desire which we share to take these relations to new heights in the immediate future. And that is as it should be, for Norway and Nigeria share a number of common interests, values and ideals that serve to underpin our friendship and mutual solidarity. Our visit here is, therefore, more than a gesture of reciprocity. Indeed, it is designed to carry further and in a concrete manner, the joint resolve which we have made to deepen and broaden relations between our countries and peoples in the new millennium.

Politically, our two countries have been committed to the ideals of maintaining international peace and security in the context of the sovereign
equality of all nations, and the establishment of a fairer international system. Our contributions to international peace keeping operations, and our roles as regional factors for the peaceful resolution of disputes, are eloquent testimonies to this shared commitment. They have been closely linked to our concerns about international arms proliferation — including, more recently, the manufacture, exportation, and importation of the light weapons that have tended to fuel conflicts across the region of Africa.

To be sure, our commitment to international stability and peace has not been without its price, both human and financial. However, I want to assure you today, that in spite of the enormous sacrifices, which we have had to make over the years in our quest to promote peace and stability in West Africa and beyond, the government and people of Nigeria remain determined to continue to play a wholesome role as a responsible member of the international community. We will continue to do this, not only within the framework of the Economic Community of West African States and the Organization of African Unity, but also in association with Norway and other members of the United Nations who share our vision for a peaceful, orderly and just world.

Economically, Nigeria and Norway are both blessed with oil and gas reserves whose exploitation now play major roles in both our national economies. The management of the opportunities and dilemmas associated with oil and gas production, have increasingly focused the attention of our policy makers. They also underscore the necessity of regular and institutionalized high-level consultations between us, at the governmental as well as private sector levels. This is made all the more important by the ever-changing global context within which our countries operate, the challenges which are posed to national economic development by the accelerated processes of globalization which we are all experiencing, and the stringent requirements of environmental sustainability that are associated with resource extraction in the modern age.

Honourable Prime Minister, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I cannot fail, on an occasion such as this, to draw attention to the continuing external debt crisis afflicting many developing countries, and the need for concerted international efforts to offer remission. In this regard, I am pleased to observe the strong and consistent commitment which Norway has brought to bear on this issue, in a clear spirit of international solidarity...
and justice. I would, therefore, like to take this opportunity to pay warm tribute to the government and people of Norway for the leadership, which they showed in 1996 by passing an enabling parliamentary bill cancelling the bilateral debts of several developing countries.

Without doubt, lightening the debt burden of developing countries through meaningful and well-meaning remission will benefit governments such as ours and enable them to have a greater chance in tackling widespread poverty, increasing the life expectancy of the populace, giving the citizenry a real stake in the process of development, and enhancing the competitiveness of our economies. Debt remission is also central to the prospects for greater investments in our economies without which the yawning gap between the rich and the poor countries of the world cannot be narrowed.

I know that Norway, in line with its historic commitment to the evolution of a fairer international order, will continue through its actions and counsels, to be a valuable ally of Nigeria and other developing countries in the search for far-reaching measures to reduce the debt burden of developing countries who are struggling to sustain democracy under circumstances that are severely constrained by debt service obligations. Democracy and debt are strange bedfellows. Debts do not allow nascent democracies to dream of democracy dividends, let alone to have it.

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, as you know, just over a year ago, Nigerians voted massively for a return to democracy, and in so doing, entrusted to us, the task of charting their destiny into the new millennium as a free and dignified people. In taking up this challenge, we elected officials, and indeed the entire population of Nigeria, were fully mindful of the unwholesome legacy of the most regressive governance that was ever experienced in the history of our nation. We were, however, encouraged and re-assured by the expressions of solidarity and goodwill that flowed in from around the world, including from our many friends and well-wishers in Oslo.

Fully aware of the contributions, which the Norwegian government and people made to the struggle for the restoration of democratic rule in Nigeria, I am glad to let you know today that our resolve to reconstruct our nation is as firm as ever. We are confident, that by the Grace of God, the principles of justice, equity and good governance will so take root in our nation that we can proudly proclaim the final demise of unelected and
unjust government.

It is a resolve which our Administration is determined to defend at all costs, and in doing so, we are hopeful that our people from whom so much sacrifices have been exacted in the past, and of whom much is still being asked, will begin to reap the dividends of our new democracy. It is this resolve and the need to build on it, that underpins the broad economic and social policy framework, which we have put in place since we assumed office, namely:

- the promotion of private sector-driven market economy, together with poverty alleviation programme and other social services, to improve our economic prosperity and enhance the quality of life for all Nigerians, in an environment that is devoid of corruption and other social malpractices that hinder fairness and equity.

In this connection, we have undertaken an overhaul of the legal and institutional framework for private foreign investors to participate in our economy, and we have embarked on a far-ranging programme of public enterprise privatization that is probably the most extensive of its kind in Africa.

We have also opened up the frontiers of our economy, so that private investors can freely enter into arenas that were previously considered as the exclusive domain of the State. Furthermore, we have adopted a system of investment evaluation, including open competitive bidding that conforms to the highest international standards of transparency and accountability.

May I take this opportunity, therefore, to extend a right hand of fellowship to Norwegian investors to take advantage of our new investment climate, and join us in the development of the numerous opportunities that are being created in Africa's biggest market. In particular, I would like to invite the Norwegian private sector to explore the range of opportunities that are on offer, not only in the field of oil and gas where Statoil and the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation are already cooperating closely, but also in the areas of environment, telecommunications, agriculture and fisheries, building and construction, electricity generation and distribution, shipping, forestry, and tourism. I have no doubt that the expertise, which Norwegian investors have accumulated...
over the years, at home and abroad, equips them well to be active partners in the development of the Nigerian economy. Such investors can also count on the determination of our government to ensure that their interests will be fully protected, in accordance with established international conventions.

We are also convinced that the partnership which we seek with private investors will fit well into the broad-ranging social policies which we have been pursuing over the last twelve months, including the creation of a targeted poverty alleviation programme, the upward review of the national minimum wage, the generation of employment for young graduates, the promotion of a universal basic education programme, and provision of avenues for skills renewal and upgrading. We particularly welcome Norwegian investors because of their well developed culture and tradition of social responsibility in their business and methods and operation, and the sharing of such responsibility with the government.

Honourable Prime Minister, may I, at the same time as I am extending our hand of friendship to the Norwegian investor community, use this occasion to make the case for increased people to people contacts between Nigerians and Norwegians at all levels of human endeavour. Cultural and scientific exchanges between our countries have, perhaps, been the least developed aspect of our relationship, and it is my sincere hope that with the new climate of sustained political and economic reform in Nigeria, such exchanges will be systematically and deliberately stepped up in order to deepen mutual understanding among our peoples, old and young.

Let me at this juncture, and on behalf of all of us in developing countries, express sincere appreciation to the government and people of Norway who have consistently met the UN target of 0.7 per cent of GDP as overseas development assistance contributions. In a situation where some countries are complaining of ODA-fatigue, your spectacular achievement of surpassing the international benchmark of 0.7 per cent — and aiming at one per cent — must be celebrated. But more important, is the fact that a recent opinion poll showed well over 80 per cent of Norwegians to be firmly in support of this manner of discharging a moral obligation to the less fortunate peoples of other lands, who are sympathetically considered as neighbours in need.

Earlier in the year, we had honour to host an international summit
devoted to the quest for the eradication of the scourge of malaria, a disease which continues needlessly to claim the lives of many people across the developing world. We were pleased, in this regard, to enjoy the support of the World Health Organisation whose leadership under your compatriot and former Prime Minister, Dr Gro Bruntland, won our admiration for the decision to make the fight against malaria a top priority. Of concern to us too is the increasing scourge of HIV/AIDS which, together with malaria and tuberculosis, now forms a lethal nexus that is devastating our population in the region of Africa. We will appreciate the support of Norway in dealing with these health problems, as well as in child immunisation to reduce our high infant mortality, and in curbing high maternal deaths.

Nigeria is currently spearheading South-South healthcare delivery programme initiated by developing countries at the South Summit held in Havana, last April. This programme needs the vital support of caring nations like Norway for its ultimate success.

Honourable Prime Minister, a few weeks ago, our nation got an anti-corruption law whose uniqueness is now being acclaimed internationally. For us, corruption is the anti-thesis of development and progress, and this law is a forceful expression to fight the social malaise to a standstill. Grand corruption is stealing from the poor by the powerful rich. We are proud to see our resolve to make and implement this law as a positive contribution to the concept of globalisation that now dominates the agenda of international discussion on the world order.

However, we recognise that the fight against corruption must, of necessity, entail the need to remove circumstances that encourage corrupt practices. Thus, we must undertake a wholesale overhaul of our national institutions, through manpower development, capacity building and capacity utilisation. This is another area, Honourable Prime Minister, where our efforts could benefit significantly from support by Norway.

Honourable Prime Minister, on occasions such as these, when old friends meet to compare notes on the road which they travelled together in the past and chart a joint course for the journey that lies ahead, it is difficult not to be full of hope and optimism for the future. Tonight, I feel proud to be the Nigerian leader in the midst of friends in Norway. I am full of high expectations for the future of our relationship and the shared
values on which it is founded. It is in this spirit of joy and hope that I would now like to invite you all, Your Excellencies, to please rise and join me in drinking a toast to the Honourable Prime Minister, for his good health and well-being, and for the continuing peace and prosperity of the Kingdom of Norway.

Long live Nigeria-Norway friendship and solidarity.

I thank you.
It gives me great pleasure to address this conference on a topic that is of vital importance to all of us, in our various capacities as producers or consumers of oil and gas and their derivatives.

Let me begin by drawing attention to a basic fact about our relationship with the environment today: namely, that the exploitation of fossil fuels marks a dangerous trend in the mankind’s use of nature for survival. As the apex creature of God’s creation, man is to enjoy the benefit of nature. That is what the Holy Bible says when God told Adam and Eve to take whatever they needed from the rich supplies in the Garden of Eden. The reality in obeying this divine survival injunction, however, is that each time we took from nature, the environment is somewhat altered, we disrupt the balance of nature, or to put it in modern lingo, we affect the ecosystem. But the disruption was always temporary, as nature has a way of replenishing itself to produce an equilibrium. That is until mankind discovered the exploitation of fossil fuel, and the temporary disruption became permanent destruction. The exploitation and the use of fossil fuels permanently alter the system.

Literally, we can say the sky is the limit for the permanent alteration to nature by mankind’s exploitation of fossil fuel: from the depletion of the ozone layer down to deep underground changes inside planet Earth. For this reason, the subject of this conference should be of permanent concern to every human being on earth. There is an inevitability in the exploitation of fossil fuel: we have grown too dependent on it, and we cannot stop the process now. At the same time, we need to maintain permanent alertness for the consequences which we must manage successfully or perish in the fire of fossil fuels.
As an oil-producing nation, Nigeria has special interest in the health, safety, and environmental (HSE) aspect of the industry. How do we continue to benefit from our rich deposit of oil and gas without being consumed by the adverse consequences of the attendant permanent changes to our environment? I believe also that Nigerians who are present in this conference, including myself, will learn a lot from the wealth of professional experience on HSE practices in the North Sea which is reputed to be the most environmentally stringent oil and gas zone in the world.

Since the commencement of commercial exploitation of oil and gas in the mid 19th century, professionals in petroleum industry have striven to address the intricate problems that confronted them with considerable success. The body of knowledge so acquired has been of benefit to Nigeria and all other oil producers in the world.

Like any other human endeavour however, the business of oil and gas exploration and production has its peculiar dangers and uncertainties which must be preempted as much as possible and prevented with appropriate means. Over time, a number of safety features and measures have been adopted in the industry to protect the individual worker as well as installations which often cost huge amounts of money to erect. To a large extent, the safety record in the industry has been reasonably good although accidents could still occur due to human errors — and only God can give absolute guarantee against accidents.

Perhaps, the aspect of HSE that is of greater concern to all the stakeholders in the industry, and especially in Nigeria, is the environment, as the effects tend to be persistent, affecting both the present generation and posterity. This all-important aspect of HSE will therefore be the focus of my brief address.

We have noted that because of their mode of occurrence within the earth, oil and gas exploration and production necessarily have ecological consequences, and therefore some adverse impact on the environment. But such adverse impact has to be curtailed to the absolute minimum if the industry is to enjoy the goodwill of the world that is progressively becoming environmentally conscious.

Virtually every aspect of the business of oil and gas exploration and production poses some form of danger to the environment:
The acquisition of seismic data, which has become the standard tool for determining potential accumulations of oil and gas, involves the use of explosive and other impact devices. Offshore, the devices pose danger by themselves, and the impacts affect aquatic population. Onshore, the discharge from the explosives, which are often planted in the soil, is often washed into underground water systems.

Drilling, which is the only way of proving the presence or absence of oil and gas from a potential accumulation identified on seismic instrument, carries with it potential environmental hazards. Rigs, which are large contraptions used for drilling, require large space that directly impact on the ecosystem, both onshore and offshore. And wastes from the drilling operation is one of the major sources of pollution in the industry.

The production and transportation of crude oil and gas probably constitute the single most important source of pollution in the industry, coming mainly through oil spills and oil-field flaring of associated gas.

Even prior to the 1972 Stockholm Declaration on the Environment and the follow-up in Rio in 1992, the potential dangers posed to the environment by oil and gas exploration and production have been recognized in every land and clime where the commodity is produced. And Nigeria is not an exception.

In fact, our experience in the oil sector showed that expanded exploration programmes aimed at increasing our oil reserves increased the dangers of oil-well blowouts and oil spills. From available statistics, Nigeria witnessed over 6,000 oil spill incidents within the past twenty-five years. The total amount of oil released into the environment from these spills amounted to over two and a half million barrels.

Over the forty years of Nigeria’s history as an oil and gas-producing nation, the country has put in place numerous policy guidelines, operational standards, regulations, legislation as well as structures to control environmental practice in the industry. These efforts have shaped the development of environmental practice in the country to the current position as we have it today.
Policy Guidelines and Operational Standards
The most comprehensive policy guideline operational in the industry today is the *Environmental Guidelines and Standards for the Petroleum Industry in Nigeria*, published by the Department of Petroleum Resources, which is the arm of the Ministry of Petroleum Resources that oversees all operational activities in the industry. First published in 1981, the publication has gone through several revisions and updates, as concerns for the environmental change, in context and emphasis, from remediation to protection. The publication contains a number of guidelines on reference practices and standards including the following among others:

- type and handling of seismic explosives that can be used in the country;
- type of drilling fluid that could be used in the industry;
- treatment and disposal of spent chemicals and effluents;
- quality of produced water that could be discharged into the environment;
- treatment and control of wastes; and
- control and management of pipeline operations.

Presently, the government is working on a National Gas Policy, which is a revamp of an initial framework dating back to 1995. The new policy will have among other things the basic objective of extinguishing oil field flares — for which Nigeria is arguably the world’s greatest culprit, as well as specifying a time frame and strategies for achieving the goal. It will also streamline all the various laws, policy guidelines and pronouncements regulating the gas industry in Nigeria.

Structures
In order to underscore the emphasis that our present Administration in Nigeria places on the issue of environment, a *Ministry of Environment* was established in 1999, which effectively took over the functions and responsibilities of the defunct Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA). The new Ministry has assumed all environmental functions
including those of the Department of Petroleum Resources, for greater effectiveness in monitoring environmental practices in the oil and gas industry.

Regulations and Legislations
The numerous laws and extra-legislative pronouncements, as well as regulation on environmental practices in existence, especially in relation to reduction of gas flaring in the country, are indications of government’s frustration with respect to the issue. Since 1963, there have been seven major laws pertaining to prevention of pollution to watercourses and the atmosphere in relation to oil.

Gas, compared to oil, has attracted a lot more legislative and regulatory pronouncements, largely because of the effect of its flaring. One of the earliest legislation on gas flaring is the Petroleum (Drilling and Production) Regulation Decree of 1969, which provides for all licensees of blocks to submit to government, a programme for the utilization of gas, not later than five years after the commencement of production from the relevant area. The regulation does not carry any penalty for violation. In 1973, the law was amended to allow government take, at the flare, free of charge or at an agreed cost and without payment of royalty, all natural gas produced with oil by a licensee.

With the languid response to the earlier laws, the government in 1979, put forward the Associated Gas Re-injection Act, which requires all producing companies to re-inject associated gas, and stipulated a date of 1st January 1984 for licensees to stop flaring. Probably as a way of enforcing compliance, the law was amended in 1985 with the introduction of a fine of 2 kobo (equivalent to 4 cents) per million cubic feet of gas flared. The penalty was later increased to 6 cents and further to 12.5 cents.

After almost two decades of limited results from the various laws regulating the flaring of gas, a new approach to the problem was adopted. Starting with the law establishing the Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) Project in 1990, the government changed strategy on how to minimize gas flaring by rolling out a number of incentives for investment in gas projects. Since then, not less than four of such incentives have been put forward by government, the most recent of which granted the same
set of incentives for investment in both associated and non-associated gases.

In consideration of the incessant community unrest in the oil producing areas and its disruptive effects on the operations of the oil companies, several attempts have been made in the past to assuage the oil producing communities. For several reasons, these initiatives have fallen short of the expected results. The NDDC Bill is intended to accelerate the development of infrastructure in the Niger Delta area from where most of Nigeria’s oil is produced. This bold developmental initiative is one of the efforts being made to stem the wave of unrest, which emanated from apparent neglect of the area and growing youth unemployment, and which has become a regular feature of the area in recent times.

**Efforts of the Oil Companies**

The oil companies have fully funded the Niger Delta Environmental Survey [NDES], which is meant to establish an ecological reference point for determining the environmental impact of oil industry activities on the various delicate and sensitive ecosystems in the Niger Delta. This is to help establish the nature and amount of remediation or post impact reclamation that needs to be carried out as a result of oil and gas exploration and production activities.

In spite of the efforts of both the government and the oil companies in controlling environmental pollution in the Niger Delta, the scorecard still shows a dismal performance, and nowhere is this more apparent than in the continuous flaring of gas in the country’s oil fields. Nigeria today flares about 65 per cent of the approximately 3.0 billion Standard Cubic feet of gas produced daily in association with oil, and records a catalogue of poor waste disposal and management practices which have brought the oil companies in confrontation with their host communities. The environmental condition of the Niger Delta indicates the limited impact of the efforts by both the government and the companies to contain the situation.

For the multinational oil companies which control Nigeria’s oil and gas exploration and production — and having similar activities in other parts of the world, including the North Sea, renowned for its strict
environmental practice, there are international operating standards which they are all too familiar with. It would seem, however, that the standards with which they operate in Nigeria fall markedly short of the international level. For example, quite a number of the companies have zero flare policies as part of their field development practices in other locales of operation, but this policy seemed to have found no application in the Nigerian case.

By the same token, the disposal and management of effluents and wastes, especially in onshore and swamp locations, often fall short of practices adopted elsewhere by the same companies. Therefore, beyond all the laws and regulations, the cooperation of our corporate guests and the practitioners in the industry is very vital to the success of any scheme that is proposed by government. This is even more pertinent as the government is planning to license new blocks with the hope of attracting new corporate bodies who are likely to operate on the basis of the rules on the ground.

It is on this score that I call on all the stakeholders in the oil and gas industry in Nigeria, especially the multinationals, with their wealth of experience in the North Sea and other areas, to come together and formulate a code of conduct that they will all willingly comply with for the sake of the environment whose present appalling state we are all responsible for, and share the blame. The initiative which started with the Niger Delta Environmental Survey should not be allowed to die, as government will be interested in the results, for the sake of the present generation as well as posterity. The government on its part will continue to create the enabling environment for responsible and sensitive investors to operate profitably. What we are asking for are corporate investors with consciousness and sensitivity for the environment, with social responsibility and humane and moral standards.

We would also appreciate the assistance of the various regulatory authorities operating in the North Sea to our Department of Petroleum Resources and the Ministry of Environment in the areas of training and policy formulation for effective discharge of their duties. Such assistance will go a long way in helping to streamline the country’s pollution control measures.
Challenges of the Future

We need to join forces to deal with the socio-economic and indeed political issues which present new complexities and will forever constitute challenges in the future. Additionally, there are other challenges of the future which have been identified and about which Nigeria is preparing to equip itself to meet. These include:

- Evolvement of enforceable regulations based on currently available technologies
- Attainment of self-regulation by the operators
- Evolving regulation and enforcement strategies for regulating oil gas exploitation and production in the new high risk deep offshore area where the most current technologies in exploration and production are being introduced
- Community participation
- Encouraging operators to enhance and empower the host communities in order to alleviate poverty.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am sure that you will agree with me that it is an enormous task to evolve appropriate solutions to the socio-economic and environmental problems associated with the oil industry. And I hope that by the end of this conference, you will all come out better informed and more determined to adopt more effective methods of detecting, preventing and controlling oil pollution for the enhancement of safe and healthy environment for all.

I understand that the sub-theme of this conference is “Progress Through Sharing Values”. I am certain that all representatives here present will be favourably disposed to open and sincere discussions on a variety of issues. And I sincerely hope that through sharing values and ideas, we would collectively achieve more progress for all of us in this business of oil and gas exploration worldwide.

I thank you.
THE NATION NEEDS HONEST DEDICATED SERVICE

At the Swearing-in Ceremony of Nineteen Newly-appointed Permanent Secretaries
Abuja, 3 July, 2000

It is indeed a matter of joy for me to initiate, as it were, the nineteen newly appointed permanent secretaries. I welcome all of you to the top level of Civil Service in Nigeria. From now on, you are all aboard the executive boat of this Administration, sharing with us our vision, our concern, our successes, our inadequacies, which we hope, by the Grace of God, will be few. Our people at large will see you so. Your ministers, with whom you are partners, will regard you so. And, of course, the Presidency will relate to you accordingly.

Let me say that an aspect of democracy dividend expected by the people is improvement of the bureaucracy, in terms of dedication, efficiency, transparency, accountability and selfless service. In recognition of these values, our Administration has since the very beginning, worked hard to promote change in orientation and attitudes in public servants in particular, and indeed the entire nation.

One of the earliest tasks of this Administration was the revision of Civil Service Rules and Financial Regulations, so as to reflect the prevailing circumstances of the new political dispensation. When people talk of inefficiency in the system, they usually mean the civil service who are ultimately responsible for moving those files that are the vehicles for the implementation of government policies. When a file gets lost or gets stuck, a civil servant somewhere is responsible.

When people talk of corruption in government, politicians as policy makers may be the first line of attack. But politicians come and go. So civil servants who tend to be there for all seasons get their share of the blame. It is the civil servants who are in position to frustrate the public and then capitalise on their frustration, by asking to be ‘settled’ before action is taken on their matter.
In recognition of this malady, we have since instituted regular training programmes to help members of the civil service polish up on administrative skills and professionalism. In addition, the civil service is the primary target audience for our crusade against corruption, which recently culminated in the enactment of the Anti-Corruption Law and the establishment of the Anti-Corruption Commission. Despite these efforts, I regret to note that the civil service has conspicuously lagged behind: it has clearly not moved sufficiently to reflect our determination to change for the better.

Ladies and gentlemen, civil servants run the shop of government business, and the public is yet to report an improvement in your service. On May 29, 1999, we proclaimed that it would no longer be business as usual. But the verdict now would seem to indicate that our message has not reached home. Incessant reports still indicate that efficiency within the service still leaves a lot to be desired, both in speed of action and organisational details.

As it is publicly known, we have had to deal with cases of corruption in the higher echelons of the civil service even before the Anti-corruption Act took effect. There are even those who think cynically that our anti-corruption crusade will be frustrated mainly by public servants who have so made corruption a way of life that it is normal not to expect them survive on their official and legitimate remuneration. Civil servants are reported to have developed infinite number of ways of out-smarting the system to avoid detection of their fraudulent practices.

But they will not win. Over the ages, offensive weapons have always outmatched defensive actions and strategies. Let me assure all Nigerians that adequate offensive weapons will be devised and deployed to fight all acts of corruption. And it is not a lone struggle. It is a divine struggle.

Under no circumstances will we relent in our resolve to fight corruption to a standstill. I have said this on numerous occasions, and I will say it again: there will be no sacred cows! And we will do everything within our power to restore sanity and morality to our system, by eliminating the twin evils of corruption and inefficiency.

As the chief accounting officer of the ministry, I hold each Permanent Secretary responsible for the performance or lack of it, in his or her ministry. You also have the responsibility for monitoring and making sure
that the persistent habits of corruption and inefficiency be dealt with effectively and promptly.

This Administration is fully committed to the practical application of equity, justice and fairness. Personally, I have always been an apostle of federal character long before this principle became enshrined in our constitution. Accordingly, I will always see to it that no section of the Nigerian society is left without adequate representation at the federal level of administration in this country. I therefore note with particular satisfaction that for the first time, we now have a situation whereby each of the 36 states of the federation has at least one Permanent Secretary.

In the same vein, I am pleased to note that no state has more than two permanent secretaries. Also, we now have seven women Permanent Secretaries. This is the highest representation of women, at Perm. Sec. level, of any Administration in this country so far. Nevertheless, I am not yet satisfied with the position of women in our public service. My covenant with women folk is that this Administration will press ahead with the policy of affirmative action until women are equitably represented in our entire system of government and public offices.

In order to continue with our efforts to improve quality of service, it is our intention to use some of the retired permanent secretaries who have served loyally, meritoriously and with distinguished records. They will be called upon to pass on their wealth of experience in a systematic training programme for successive generations.

Ladies and gentlemen, I congratulate you on your appointments, which have been largely determined by your track records of service to the country. May God give you the strength and wisdom to continue to serve with honour and to the best of your abilities.

I thank you. And may God bless you all.
Let me begin by thanking the government and people of the Republic of Korea for the invitation extended to me for this official visit to your beautiful country. On behalf of the government and people of Nigeria, and on behalf of the members of my delegation, I wish to express our sincere appreciation for the warm reception that has been accorded us at every turn since our arrival here.

Mr President, I would also like to seize this opportunity to once again congratulate you, the government and the entire people of the Republic of Korea for the successful outcome of the first ever Summit Talks between South and North Korea. Nigeria is happy and satisfied with the successful result of the Summit, which is a credit to your enlightened and dedicated leadership. We support efforts to strengthen direct inter-Korean dialogue which, no doubt, will give considerable impetus to reconciliation, facilitate mutual cooperation, peace and unity of the Korean people, and ensure stability and progress in the entire sub-region of northeast Asia.

As Your Excellency has rightly mentioned, relations between our two countries have been very cordial over the years. We would like to admit that the coincidence of our national aspirations explains our two governments’ membership of some international organizations, especially the United Nations. But perhaps more than mere membership, what pulls us closer as countries are the commonality of views which we share on virtually all major subjects in that particular organization.

Mr President, having said that, please permit me to observe that true friendship, particularly between nations, has to be nurtured in order for it to flower to the fullest, that is, through continuous interaction. Quite often, individuals or States enter into relationships with apprehension as to what ought to be done and how much to open up. But it is only when we start to interact that we become enamoured by the realization that
most fears and hesitations are unfounded and that our relationship could blossom as much as we desire. As we relate more with each other, the areas of our individual worth and our collective strength become more obvious.

Mr President, please excuse the digression, but it seems to help explain the purpose of our visit and, indeed, our presence in your beautiful city of Seoul. Our visit here is meant to demonstrate the importance which my country attaches to its relations with the Republic of Korea. But much more than that, we want to break new grounds to these relations through regular contacts and dialogue. We want to proceed from here to take concrete steps to implement projects of mutual interests. After all these years, it is time for us to anchor our relations on areas that will be of direct social and economic benefit to our peoples.

We in Nigeria have been watching with close interest how the Republic of Korea has been transforming its economy through purposeful policies. Your economic success from being an agrarian country with a per capita income of only 80 US dollars in 1960 to an industrial country with a per capita income of over 11000 US dollars has been one of the miracles of the last century. We have no doubt that the creative energy of the hardworking people of the Republic of Korea provided the favourable environment for the growth of your economy. We in Nigeria would like to learn from the experiences of Korea and also take advantage of whatever support we can get to transform our own economy. In addition, we would like to see trade exchange that truly portrays the enormous potentials of our two countries.

Mr President, I am full of hopes that by the end of our visit, new bridges for human traffic, goods, and services would have been built between our two countries. Our bilateral trade must be made to reflect the true depth of our cordial relations and the immense opportunities that remain largely unexplored. We must set up joint business endeavours in both countries which will generate employment for our people and provide for them qualitative goods and services. Your experiences and knowledge in the field of science and technology, agriculture, medicine, banking and finance, mining, energy, etc., must be openly shared to improve our respective standards of living.

Indeed, Mr President, the increasing globalization and liberalization
of trade all over the world which we are now witnessing, call for concerted efforts and the integration of business activities between friendly nations. The globalization of world economy could result in a much wider gap in the economic fortunes of the developed countries and the developing countries. Globalization may pre-suppose that we are all in the same boat, that we prosper together, and suffer together or indeed, and that there is a common destiny for all countries of the world. That supposition may be idealistic, but unless attitudes change, a more permanent marginalisation and international dominance may emerge. The only means of avoiding this threatening possibility as I said earlier, will be for the developing countries to pool their resources and cooperate in order to protect their common interests.

The Joint Commission between our two countries, which I am told has been confirmed for August this year, is expected to play a significant role in promoting and strengthening economic relations between our two countries. I have no doubt that our two countries have a lot to offer each other, and indeed, the world. Hence the need for our efforts to be geared towards intensifying our bilateral cooperation for the benefit of our peoples. In order to achieve economic growth and development in Nigeria, we have realised the need for massive flow of investments and we are therefore committed to creating the favourable conditions for such inflows. It is estimated that for Nigeria to achieve the targeted five per cent growth rate this year and 10 per cent per annum by the year 2003, an annual inflow of 10 billion US dollars in foreign direct investment into the country is needed by the end of 2003.

Mr President, I cannot but make mention of the negative image that Nigeria had acquired in the eyes of the world. Among other things, Nigeria was perceived as a corruption-ridden and crime-infested country. We were also seen as a nation bedevilled by political, ethnic and religious conflicts. However, since the inception of our Administration, we have taken a number of legislative measures and introduced appropriate policies in order to regain the confidence of the international community and foreign investors. I am happy to inform you Mr President that things have begun to take shape. Our resolve to stay on course has found expression in momentous changes that are part of the process of re-construction, re-focusing, re-orientation and a rebirth of our nation as well as a revival of
our economic fortunes. Much has also been done to improve the internal security system of our country in order to enhance safety and security of lives and property.

Also, our Administration has taken giant strides in combating corruption in the Nigerian society. The anti-corruption Bill was recently passed into law. Hitherto, the existing law was used to bring to book individuals who failed to heed our warning that corruption would be fought to a standstill. While we will continue to appropriately reward all honest Nigerians, we will not relent in our efforts to unplug access to illegitimate acquisition of wealth. We are determined to erase the impression that corruption is a way of life in Nigeria.

We believe that democratic governance is the best means of attaining peace and stability in our society, and ensuring a safe environment for domestic and foreign investors. With a democratically-elected government in place, and the assistance of the World Bank and other International financial institutions in our economic development programmes, Nigeria has become very attractive to investors. It is, therefore, not surprising that since 1999, Nigeria has witnessed the influx of entrepreneurs, particularly Western and Japanese investors, seeking to take legitimate advantage of the improved investment climate in the country.

We have no doubt that many Korean businessmen and indeed, the private sector, will be interested in tapping Nigeria’s huge market. Indeed, the potential for mutually beneficial commercial activities between our two countries is vast, and the Korean private sector should not be left behind in the current trend being observed in Nigeria.

Mr President, we in Nigeria are proud that we have entered the new millennium with greater hopes, confidence, and zeal to build a better nation and join hands with the rest of the world to make our planet a safer and healthier place for mankind. We are committed to defending our democratic values. Also, we have not only pledged our respect for, and observance of human rights wherever they are violated, we are also poised to join hands with our friends all over the world to harness the enormous resources in our country to improve the living conditions of our people. We need the support and cooperation of our friends to improve the infrastructural facilities in Nigeria by making them more efficient and people-oriented in this regard. And as I said earlier, we have put in place policies aimed at
attracting foreign participation in our developmental efforts through direct investments. There is no gainsaying that Nigeria is now witnessing the most investment friendly era ever. And it is my pleasure to invite the Korean business community to take advantage of these attractive investment opportunities by investing in such areas of the Nigerian economy as the energy, telecommunication, mining, petroleum and gas, railways, roads, harbour development and management, small and medium scale enterprises.

In conclusion, Your Excellency, let me say once more that we are delighted to be here in the Republic of Korea and we thank you most sincerely for the wonderful reception and warm hospitality. It is our hope that this visit will usher in a new era in South Korea-Nigeria relationship for the mutual benefit of our peoples and the entire human race.

NIGERIA-TURKEY RELATIONS

At the State Dinner Hosted by President Ahmet Necdet Sezer
of the Republic of Turkey
Ankara, 24 July, 2000

Your Excellency, President of the Republic of Turkey, Mr Ahmet Necdet Sezer and Mrs Sezer; Your Excellency, Prime Minister; Honourable Ministers, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I wish, on behalf of my country Nigeria and on my own behalf, to express my heartfelt gratitude for the kind invitation extended to me to visit this your great and beautiful country, the inheritor of the Ottoman Dynasty and an early centre of human civilization. Turkey is not only a very strategically located country at the crossroads of two great continents, Europe and Asia, but to some extent, it is located also next to Africa via the Mediterranean.

Mr President, let me also express my personal appreciation for the very kind and warm words which you have just expressed about my country and myself. The warm reception which has been extended to me and my delegation since our arrival here yesterday is a clear testimony of the cordial relations which exist between our two countries, relations that have existed over the centuries. Your Excellency, permit me, once again to congratulate you and the people of Turkey on your recent inauguration as President. I am sure that with the great people of Turkey solidly behind you, Turkey is poised to further achieve its economic potentials as a rapidly developing country.

Mr President, my presence here today is a clear testimony and reflection of the growing strong ties between my country Nigeria and the Republic of Turkey. This growing friendly relations have been made possible by earlier individual contacts made through trade, dating back to the 16th century. This eventually culminated in the formal establishment of diplomatic relations between our two countries after Nigeria’s Independence in 1960. I am happy to note that the relations have remained cordial ever since.
Mr President, I am also happy to note that the friendly relations have continued to improve with the exchange of visits at various levels, and cooperation in International Organisations in which Turkey and Nigeria are both members. Even when our Mission was temporarily closed in 1984, relations between our two countries remained cordial. The recent reopening of the Mission further illustrates our desire to move bilateral relations between Turkey and Nigeria to new and improved heights.

Despite the close collaborations between our countries in the political field, there still remains a lot to be achieved in the economic field, to fully realise our great economic potentials. There is, therefore, the immediate need, more than ever before, for our countries to intensify our efforts at close economic cooperation. It is regrettable to note that up till now, the volume of trade and level of cooperation between our countries do not quite reflect the true economic potentials and realities of our countries. Turkish businessmen and women need to take advantage of the ongoing deregulation of the Nigerian economy. Since our assumption of office in May 1999, we have endeavoured to create a favourable environment for foreign investors to come in and invest in virtually all spheres of our economy. We have similarly put in place several incentives and tax relief to attract investment.

Mr President, may I seize this opportunity to appeal to Turkish entrepreneurs to take advantage of our restructuring efforts in Nigeria and invest in such areas as small and medium scale industries, telecommunications, gas and oil-related industries, agriculture etc. We have opened up these areas to attract the necessary foreign investment. In this regard, Mr President, we have since embarked on total rehabilitation of our collapsed infrastructures which were adversely affected by prolonged bad governance and economic mismanagement.

Mr President, the gap between the rich industrialised countries of the North and the poor developing countries of the South continues to increase, much to the discomfort of the majority of people in the world. To overcome this unfortunate situations, there is the urgent need to intensify South-South cooperation. My presence here today is partly in furtherance of this objective, that is, to increase the level of political and economic cooperation between Nigeria and Turkey, to the mutual benefits of our peoples.
Your Excellency, you are no doubt aware of the vast potentials of Nigeria. Not only do we have the largest population in Africa, but we also have the largest market. Our natural resources range from arable land, animal and forestry, oil and gas, gold, timber, tin, to cocoa. I am informed that Nigerian and Turkish industrialists are already fully aware of the opportunities that exist for increased trade and economic relations between our two brotherly countries. To concretise this relationship, our two governments will be signing a number of agreements during this visit. I am aware that discussions and consultations are still ongoing on several other agreements such as that on Bilateral Air Services Agreement. I hope this will be speedily concluded so that our two countries can be directly linked by air.

I am happy to note that Nigerian and Turkish businessmen and industrialists are already fully aware of the opportunities that exist for increase in trade relations between our two countries. I therefore hope this visit will expedite and enhance the process of economic and industrial cooperation between our two nations.

Your Excellency, I am aware that there are a number of Turkish businessmen and industrialists among us here. I wish to let them know that their Nigerian counterparts, some of whom are also here, and the generality of the Nigerian people are looking forward to improved relations in all areas of economic activities between Nigeria and Turkey. My government will not fail to give all necessary assistance to all Turkish nationals who want to take advantage of the current situation and invest in our country.

Finally, Mr President, I wish to seize this opportunity to express my very sincere appreciation and that of the people of Nigeria for the hospitality extended to Nigerians resident in Turkey and for the award of scholarships to Nigerians to study in Turkish institutions of higher learning. I wish also to express my sincere appreciation for the warm reception accorded me and my entourage since my arrival at the Republic of Turkey yesterday. It has been wonderful and I feel really at home. I have heard so much in the past about the hospitality of the Turkish people. Today, I must say that I have experienced it. Turks are indeed very friendly people.

His Excellency, The Vice President of the Federation; The Executive Governors of States; Honourable Ministers; The Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria; distinguished invitees; ladies and gentlemen, we are gathered here this morning to witness the formal inauguration of the National Economic Council (NEC), which is the highest organ for advising on the co-ordination of economic planning and programmes in the country.

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is quite clear in its provisions for the Council which is charged with the responsibility of advising “the President concerning economic affairs of the Federation, and in particular on measures necessary for the co-ordination of the economic planning efforts or economic programmes of the various Governments of the Federation.” The importance of the Council is clearly discernible from its composition. The Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is the Chairman, with the Executive Governors of states of the Federation and the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) as members.

I have on previous occasions spoken on the state of the economy at the beginning of this Administration and equally expounded the economic policy of the Administration. As you are aware, the present Administration places a lot of premium on rapid and sustained economic growth and development of the country in order to abolish poverty and consolidate our newly restored democracy.

We have resuscitated and improved the necessary institutions and administrative procedures for economic planning and management, to ensure that our national objectives and targets are achieved within a reasonable time frame. As you are aware, the government has already taken a number of measures among which are: the restructuring of the
management of the Central Bank of Nigeria; the restructuring of the NNPC and the placement of the affairs of the Federal Ministry of Petroleum Resources under the Presidency. The government has also reconstituted the National Planning Commission, of which the Vice President is also Chairman, with its full compliment of full-time Commissioners; and appointed the Chief Economic Adviser to the President, as the Commission’s Deputy Chairman and Chief Executive.

What we are witnessing today is the final building block in the hierarchy of the institutions for guiding the economy into the path of recovery and of sustained development and growth. The task ahead is daunting, as we all know, considering that the economy is still deep in the trough of more than twenty years of stagnation and decline.

The current human development indices for Nigeria are very sad to read, and they underline the enormity of the tasks facing the National Economic Council. It is pertinent to remind ourselves that 70 per cent of the Nigerian population is living below the poverty line, of which 48.5 per cent of them are in abject poverty; per capita income of the country is about US$300.00, which places us amongst the 30 poorest nations of the world; the national economy is still mono-cultural, with oil revenues providing 95 per cent of total export income; the GDP growth rate is still less than 3 per cent per annum; our external debt-burden is currently US$30 billion; our external reserve of about US$6.693 billion is just enough to pay for a little over the minimum level of 3 months of import bill; the level of capacity utilisation in manufacturing is not more than 30 per cent; and the level of unemployment is very high.

The 1998 Human Development Index (HDI) of the World Bank further indicates that the life-expectancy of the average Nigerian is 52 years, which implies that over one-third of Nigerians will not live to be 40 years. The infant mortality per 1,000 births is put at 79 as compared to the figure of 10 for developed countries; while the adult literacy rate is put at 44 per cent, meaning that 56 per cent of the population is illiterate. These are but only a few of the elements that constitute the gruesome picture of the Nigerian economy, to which this Council is expected to help find sustainable solutions.

Government has, however, given careful consideration to these issues, and has recently adopted the economic policy programme enunciated in
The Nigerian Economic Policy: 1999-2003.” The document sets out certain targets that MUST be achieved by the end of year 2003 in the attempt to reverse the deplorable situation inherited by the Administration. Among these targets are, the attainment of the GDP growth rate of 10 per cent by 2003 compared with the 1999 2.4 per cent level; achievement of a single digit inflation rate; attainment of 70 per cent employment rate in the economy; and 60 per cent of the population having access to safe drinking water. Other targets set include achieving 60 per cent level for household access to electricity from the current level of 34 per cent; and 90 per cent enrolment rate of the population of children of school age.

I have mentioned the above statistics to emphasise the level of the gravity of the challenges facing us and the National Economic Council which we are now inaugurating. I look up to the Council to recommend programmes, projects, policies, and strategies that will ensure that come year 2003, the country would have attained or surpassed the targets enumerated in the 1990-2003, policy document. I am sure that you have all read the National Economic Policy 1999-2003, copies of which have already been widely distributed.

In carrying out its functions, the Council should not hesitate to:

i. ask for and obtain from any Government agency or other private institutions statistical or other information relevant to the functions of the Council;

ii. bring to the attention of the President, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, areas where national policies and programmes are seriously hampered or inadequate;

iii. recommend action to be pursued by any government agency for the attainment of identified specific national objectives; and

iv. advise the President, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, on the measures to be undertaken generally by appropriate agencies or bodies in order to ensure their compliance with national policies or programmes.

At this juncture, let me mention that while the Council is constitutionally charged with offering advice on economic matters, we must however recognise that socio-political situations can impact seriously
in one way or the other on economic progress of the nation. Accordingly, I call on the Council to also take cognisance of a number of critical factors which we must collectively and satisfactorily address if Nigeria is to begin in earnest to reverse the economic stagnation and decline experienced in the past. Addressing these factors successfully forms the essential pre-condition for recovery and economic progress. These critical factors include:

i. political stability;

ii. social stability; and

iii. co-operation and co-ordination at all tiers of governance.

Recent events in the country continue to threaten the realisation of these pre-conditions. I also expect to receive regularly the Council’s suggestions on how to achieve these pre-conditions for the rapid development of the national economy and consequently, early visible improvement in the quality of life of all Nigerians.

As I have already acknowledged, the challenge facing the Council is by no means an easy one. However, I am confident that the Council will be up to the challenge and will assiduously work to ensure the attainment of our objective of significantly improving the welfare of the greatest majority of the people. That, after all, is why we were all elected to our various offices. I wish you all the very best in discharging this arduous assignment.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my honour and privilege to now inaugurate “The National Economic Council (NEC).”

I thank you for your patience.
It is indeed a matter of joy and pride for any country, and for any leader to play host to the President of the United States of America, especially if that President is as exceptional as Mr William Jefferson Clinton. Mr President, it is my honour and privilege to welcome you, once again, to my beloved country Nigeria and to this State banquet. I do so on behalf of every man, woman and child in this great country in Africa.

On a very personal note, I am delighted to receive Mr William Jefferson Clinton, my friend, the friend of Nigeria, the friend of Africa, and indeed the acknowledged friend of peoples of African descent wherever they might be. I heartily welcome Mr Clinton with the firmly established reputation for believing in the cause of the underprivileged and working tirelessly for that cause.

About twenty-two years ago, I had the singular honour of hosting the first ever visit of an American President to Nigeria. Today, here we are, hosting another American President: a man whose achievements are likely to place him in the top league of successful leaders in recent world history.

Mr President, it is no secret that this visit is a fulfilment of the promise you made to me during my own visit to your great country in October last year. You told me at the time that you would regard it as an important aspect of your foreign policy to visit Nigeria before the end of your final term.

Mr President, I wish to express profound thanks to you and to your dear daughter, Chelsea, for honouring my invitation to visit our dear country. I express my delight and appreciation personally, and on behalf of my own family, as well as the government and the entire people of Nigeria.
Nigeria. We would have dearly loved to have Mrs Hilary Clinton also here. But, we fully appreciate the important preoccupation keeping her at home at this time. Mr President, please convey our sincere gratitude to her for sparing you and Chelsea, her two beloved family members, to visit us. We wish her success in the forthcoming elections.

Our welcome and thanks must also go to all members of your government who worked tirelessly to ensure that the visit took place. Our appreciation is gratefully extended particularly to the members of your entourage. Mr President, we are delighted that they will be received here at home by their Nigerian counterparts with whom they have worked so hard to cement the relationship between our two countries.

It is indeed a pleasure to also welcome here this evening, my brother Mr Tanja, the democratically elected President of Niger, who, in a spirit of good neighbourliness, has come all the way here to join us in welcoming you and your party, Mr President.

Nigerians welcome you with heartfelt joy and singular happiness, with the sincere wish and prayer that you will, on your all-too-short visit, find our country warm to savour, alluring to admire, and attractive for another visit. As you would have noticed since your arrival this morning, Nigerians in Abuja are all excited to see you amongst them. Your visit is indeed too short, and too restricted to Abuja, both for reasons beyond our control. But, Mr President, you will see enough in Abuja to convince you, Chelsea, and your party, that Nigerians sincerely love and welcome you.

The United States is now the only super power in the world, enjoying unprecedented prosperity. That notwithstanding, the spontaneous show of admiration and affection for you, Mr President, arises largely from your own exceptional qualities. Nigerians admire and salute your very high intellect, your ingenuity in political strategy, your consummate mastering of the practice of governance, your incredible success in inducing sustained economic prosperity in your country and beyond, your image as the world’s No. 1 democrat, and your deep preoccupation with improving the lot of ordinary working families everywhere, especially in your beloved country, the United States. You were not born with ‘a silver spoon in your mouth’ But in these eight years, you worked hard to put a silver spoon in the mouths of most Americans.

These are reasons why the American people love you, especially
combined with your personal charm and grace, generously given with so much bonhomie. But, we have many more reasons to salute you, President Clinton. We know that you wanted to, but could not bring yourself to visit Nigeria during your first African tour of 1998, when we were still under the heavy yoke of pernicious dictatorship. It takes a caring friend to call and find you hostile and unapproachable, leave, only to call again later. That is typical of the care and concern you have for the whole of Africa and for all peoples of African descent, at home in the US and elsewhere. The claim of being the First Black President of the United States is most endearing and, I daresay, quite befitting.

For us, on this visit, you have come home. We welcome you and tonight we confer upon you three Nigerian names in one, to reflect your love for the people, your indomitable courage and your glorious homecoming. Mr President, we name you: SODANGI OKORO OMOWALE. You and your family will always be welcome to your home, Africa and Nigeria, after you complete your term of office as President. If you should want to follow my footsteps and retire into farming at the end of your term, land will be available. Furthermore, the road from the International Airport to the Abuja – Lokoja Highway, will henceforth be called President Clinton Drive.

These are all tokens of appreciation and gratitude by Nigeria, as a country and on behalf of Africa.

Nigerians will never forget the assistance that you, together with many of your fellow countrymen and women, gave us when you all so sturdily stood by us in some of the most perilous, uncertain and painful moments in our recent history.

Today, Mr President, we thank Divine Providence that you are here to celebrate with us the freedom that Nigerians, through the support of friends like yourself, wrenched for themselves from the jaws of tyranny driven by personal ambition and moral delinquency of a seemingly interminable interregnum. Democracy and freedom, which had both eluded us for too long, are with us again. We are now ready to embark on the path of progress and prosperity for all of our people in the spirit of unity, pride, discipline, patriotism, accountability and good governance.

Mr President, we all know that the struggle for freedom, democracy and prosperity is long and tortuous. But we are determined in Nigeria to
assail any obstacle, go any distance, work any late hour, expend any energy and call on any human resourcefulness to get there. By the grace of God, the support of genuine and understanding friends, the just, stable and prosperous society we seek for our children and their children, shall be ours to the Glory of God and the pride of future generations.

Since our return to civil democratic rule last year, we are learning a lot about the practice of democracy. And we like it. I take advantage of this rare opportunity to thank you, Mr President, and all Americans for their unwavering commitment, through advice and through technical and material support, to our quest for a stable, democratic dispensation since May last year.

But, right now, we are preoccupied with the equally difficult task of mending our society and our infrastructure, both severely damaged by mismanagement, corruption and political abuse of the recent past. This Administration came in to find our people very much divided, with great resentment and mistrust pervading the society. We have also been faced, as everyone knows, with circumstances in which everything, from fuel to drinking water, had become unaffordable luxuries for our citizens. Nothing at all seemed to function adequately. Worst of all, our cherished social institutions had virtually lost all credibility.

The relative good news is that, over the past year, through judicious planning and fiscal discipline; targeted allocation of resources; together with uncompromising moral and legal stance against corruption, things are generally beginning to shape up meaningfully. Most of all, we are now sensing the restoration of trust in government and leadership, a social asset in nation-building that had previously been wasted by greed and selfishness.

My countrymen are very vibrant, teeming, articulate, upwardly mobile and assertive. That vibrancy and assertiveness is the stuff of which Nigerians are made. That is why both our politics and our governance are sometimes loud. But to borrow a leaf from you on another occasion, there is no amount of this verbal altercation or seeming provocation and apparent insults, that will deter me from working with all in the three arms of government; indeed, with everyone in the country, to try to serve the best interests of the Nigerian people. For me, the cause of Nigeria and the cause of democracy and good governance is worth sacrificing everything for. Except that I will not compromise my integrity,
and I will not sacrifice my conscience.

For all the boisterousness of our politics, Nigerians are of very generous spirit. Our people care, and they willingly share. They may be strong-willed, but they are soft-hearted, particularly over any matter affecting Africa. You yourself, Mr President, spontaneously recalled last February, at the National Summit on Africa in Washington, how Nigeria spent up to 10 billion US dollars on peacekeeping in Liberia and Sierra Leone. This has been typical of our knee jerk response to the needs of Africa, since independence. If something affects Africa, we do not look at our pocket book before going headlong to give whatever assistance we can.

But, with the burgeoning population of Nigerians, the legitimate aspirations and the acquired tastes of the people, Nigeria is hard pressed, and needs relief, if we are to deliver democracy dividends to those who have all been waiting long enough for it. We have sufficient numbers of trained people and plenty of undeveloped natural resources. But, we know that we cannot achieve our desired socio-economic development if we continue to bleed from the gushing wounds of an ever-penetrating debt repayment lance.

Debt burden will frustrate our fresh approach to political and economic strategy. That is why we urge that we be relieved of that burden, not because we want to shirk responsibility, abdicate from tough choices, or we wish to obtain something for nothing. No, Mr President, and distinguished guests. The reason is that we have followed the trend of events and have done our sums. We find that given the present loan structure, with the oppressive force of compound interest, there is no light at the end of the tunnel. We shall perpetually remain in debt. Our development aspirations will be frustrated and we shall not wean ourselves from the aid-receiving mentality and rise up to the trade and cooperation pedestal. We shall not be in the position to help others nor contribute regularly to world peace and prosperity. This will be our fate even with petroleum exports, which draw undue world indignance when prices are temporarily high, but with high cost of the cost of exploration and production unsympathetically taken for granted when the prices, as often happens, fall.

The reality of our plight can best be understood by a singular
The World Health Organisation reckons that, in order to achieve minimum health standards in any country, at least 60 US dollars will need to be spent on every citizen annually. In our last national budget, with the best of intentions, we could only manage to allocate to the health sector the equivalent of less than one US dollar for each Nigerian, this year. This enormous financial gap in minimum provision of healthcare speaks for itself, even if State and Local Government provisions are taken into account.

One clear reason why we cannot advance anywhere near the minimum requirement for health in this country is undoubtedly the debt repayment burden. Yet, these are debts whose principals have already been repaid several times over; these are debts incurred during periods of reckless leadership and mismanagement; and these are debts whose substantial portions have been stolen and remain corruptly lodged in the banks of some of the creditor countries.

Mr President, the world will bear witness to the fact that we are doing everything to achieve economic reforms by assailing all the evils and faulty strategies that wrecked our economy in the past. We are willing to improve the management of the oil industry to cut out inefficiency and waste. The non-oil, particularly the Agriculture and solid mineral sub-sectors are being revitalized in a determined and serious fashion. Government overheads are being pruned, and wastage will no longer be accepted as inevitable. The inefficiency inherent in the government running of enterprises is being excised away through the systematic and patriotic privatisation of our publicly owned enterprises. Our people shall be motivated and empowered by better governance and by assault on their crippling poverty. Of course, we have engaged in an unrelenting war against corruption and abuse of office. We shall gladly work with anybody or institution that has good advice to offer, and recognizes our national sovereignty and dignity.

Nigeria now has, for the first time in its history, a political party that won a successful general election with a sweeping majority across the entire nation; has leaders elected without any dispute; and has a military determined to play only its constitutional role. We thus have these ingredients for taking all of our people along the challenging but exciting path of democracy and freedom through transparent leadership, good
governance, political stability, social advancement, economic prosperity and national greatness. That is our path. And that is the path all our friends, all over the world, should wish for us, pray for us, and assist us to remain on.

It is not going to be easy. There will always be both inevitable and wanton distractions. But, while everything comes from God, no sustainable good comes instantly or cheaply.

Mr President, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, what is true of Nigeria, is true of Africa. After having the honour of sharing a fraternal repast in this banquet, I should not sour our moods by recounting the succession of tragedies that brought Africa to its present unenviable status among the continents of the world. Besides, the United States of America has shared the experience of colonialism, the struggle for independence, and the pains of a civil war. But, while America has, in a period of less than two hundred years, grown to be the most powerful nation in the world, Africa lapsed into stagnation, poverty and strife.

Mr President, our dreams of the early independence years of the 1960s have been replaced by disillusionment, disease and despair. It is mercifully true that Africa has rid itself of direct external colonialism, and has been able to produce leaders and descendants occupying positions of power, reverence and admiration in the world. Unfortunately, these leaders, who would have been busy rebuilding Africa and restoring its shattered dreams, find themselves endlessly preoccupied with peace making efforts among warring African nations, in disputes that should never have arisen in the first place.

This continuing continental chaos cannot be expected to result only in the status quo. The lost time and the missed opportunities result in increasing poverty, and environmental degradation with mass migration, brain drain and the failure to control disease. It is, therefore, little wonder that HIV/AIDS is now ravaging Africa and bringing in its trail the assault by diseases once thought to be reasonably treatable like malaria, tuberculosis and hepatitis. Africa today is becoming the end stage of the manifestation of the injustice of slavery, colonialism, poor political education, faulty transfer of power, and economic exploitation of the last few centuries.

There is no way that the rest of the world can plead innocence to the
plight of Africa. It is certainly unthinkable that, on top of all of its seemingly endless tribulations, Africa will also be called upon to bear the crushing burden of debts arising from a conceptually unfair international economic system.

Mr President, the world needs to acknowledge and accept the reality of Africa. No one is asking the rest of the world to stop while Africa recovers and catches up. The world simply needs to mobilize to save and restore Africa to the path of growth, development and hope. The transfer of wealth from the very poor to the very rich must stop. A long term master plan of technical assistance, technical cooperation and trade and investment is urgently needed. We fully accept that African nations themselves need to help themselves by getting their acts together, by being serious, and by stopping their nations from being turned into private fiefdoms of plundering, tyrannical and undemocratically elected rulers.

African nations need to move from the position of being preys to their own predator leaders to becoming contractual societies where government exists solely by the wishes of the people and for the people. They should, also, in their economic policies, make their countries attractive to investors in terms of security, facilities and returns. Fortunately, we do not know of any African nations that disagrees with the need to woo investors. But African nations also need to take cue from Nigeria. Here in Nigeria, we have had examples of predatory leadership. By the grace of God, we have rid ourselves of it, for good, and wish other sister African countries to do the same, if Africa is to have any chance in the future.

Mr President, I realize that all these will not be easy. But we do take hope in the silver lining that your tenure of office as US President represented around this dark cloud of uncertainty about the future of Africa.

In word and in deed, you lived by your oft repeated assertion that Africa matters and that the people of Africa work very hard but reap very little as a result of multiple factors. You articulated the need to support Africa in trade, in economic assistance, in conquering poverty, ignorance and disease, and in bringing about peace through democracy, economic reforms and better leadership. This vision has been elaborated into your “Partnership with Africa” policy. No greater evidence of your seriousness
about Africa exists than the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act, passed by the US Congress and signed by you into law. It will open the US market to all African businesses to sell their wares.

For us in Nigeria, we know that there has been special treatment. Your Administration identified Nigeria as one of the four countries around the globe for special engagement in support of emerging democracy. The activities of our Joint Economic Partnership Committee (JEPC), the bold and wide-ranging activities of the USAID, the return of the US EXIM BANK, the programme to assist in the rehabilitation of our Defence establishment, the thrust of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation [OPIC], and the re-establishment of air link and our mutual agreement on open skies, all bear testimony to our intensified cooperation as a result of your leadership and initiative. In the not too distant future, the fruits of this cooperation will yield dividends for all to see. I am confident of that.

In the world-wide canvas, the United States cooperates as a keen advocate of our cause on all major international platforms, such as the World Bank, the IMF, the Paris Club and the United Nations. We thank you, Mr President, and your Administration, as well as members of the US Congress.

We can still expand our cooperation and it is my particular hope that the JEPC will transform into the US-Nigeria Joint Commission. It is also my hope that Mr President will support us to host the US-Africa Ministerial Partnership for the 21st Century here in Abuja in March, 2001.

Mr President, your legacy in Nigeria and in Africa is well laden, and my prayer is that we shall all work so that, even after your term of office expires, you will always look back with the satisfaction that you did the best by us. We wish you and your family God’s blessings.

Mr President, I must now thank the members of your party, particularly the Cabinet Secretaries, among them Secretary Slater and Secretary Richardson, the Distinguished members of the US Congress and the Leaders of Corporate America in your distinguished entourage. We hope that they have the opportunity of meeting with their counterparts here. I particularly wish to assure the potential investors of the readiness of this government, and of this country, to make the Nigerian attractive to your plans. We know that nobody enters into any business in order to
suffer or to lose. You will find us worthy partners.

Your visit, Mr President, marks the dawn of a new epoch in US-Nigeria relations. This, coming at the dawn of a new century and millennium, bears good portends. Our stretched hands of partnership join in the spirit of our shared past experiences, our mutual understanding of the present, and our brightest hopes for the future. We are well aware of the heavy responsibilities world leadership places on America. In the spirit of our deep friendship and prized values, you can always count on Nigerians as a genuine and sincere partner.

In conclusion, Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, may I now request all present to join me in a toast to our most distinguished guest and statesman, Mr William Jefferson Clinton, President of the United States of America, and for his continued good health, personal well being, and to the friendly and unending relations between Nigeria and the United States of America.

I thank you.
THE MARCH OF CIVILISATION

At the Presidential Roundtable on Dialogue Among Civilisations,
United Nations Headquarters,
New York, 5 September, 2000

This Presidential Round Table is indeed an opportuned occasion, both in terms of timing and in terms of substance and scope. We are at the eve of the Millennium Summit, to which so many of us have looked forward in anticipation for breakthroughs in the reform of the United Nations; or some initiatives that could be of advantage to the developing countries in a world that is increasingly inequitable. While these hopes may not be fulfilled, we have today a rare opportunity to reflect on the foundations, indeed the underpinnings of multilateral engagement.

The Dialogue of Civilisations is not an ancient abstract notion. It is very much a fresh and badly needed approach to help us understand each other better, to capture and respect complexities and diversity in a globalising world, and to help build a more effective framework for cooperation. Dialogue is the very essence of the United Nations and so I welcome the General Assembly’s decision last year, to declare 2001 as the United Nations Year for Dialogue Among Civilisations — a decision which owes so much to the initiatives of President Mohammed Khatami of Iran.

I also salute UNESCO and its Director-General for organising this novel event. We are convinced that UNESCO is well-placed to play a leading role to promote this dialogue, and we are confident that we will be able to engage in many more fruitful events over the next 15 months.

Indeed, throughout its history, humankind has experienced the conflict of civilisations, prompted by the hegemony of civilisations, and sustained by the arrogance of civilisations. These tendencies have been the cause of deep anguish for the world community. Behind the masks of ethnic, religious and economic causes of disharmony among peoples and nations, there was always the inability of peoples to give due regard to the heritage and identities of others.
Sometimes this disregard and lack of respect for the worth of others has been manifested so blatantly and with such brutality that it affronted the collective conscience of humankind. But most often, it is expressed in subtle and unspoken ways, which nevertheless precipitate disruptions and instability in human relations. The world has long registered the consequences of this human disability such as hatred, wars, mutual contempt, suspicion among nations, and lack of peace.

The United Nations was founded on the belief that the scourge of war can be minimised while the virtues of peace can be perennially promoted. In the past fifty-five years, we have pursued those goals vigorously and with varying degrees of commitment and success. Now, I truly believe that we are making a great leap forward in the realisation that peace is bound up inextricably with a clear understanding and respect for the mutuality of diversities of human heritage and identity.

Surely, with assignment of peace, we face the challenge of human diversity. The foremost challenge lies in our ability to recognise these diversities, and to admit that their existence is a positive thing and not a pointer to mindless hegemony; and to respect them as we aspire to greater success in our assignment.

The second challenge will lie in our capacity to appreciate the richness of the diversity in cultures, religion and ethnic values, and in morals and traditions of other cultures in their levels of creativity. These variety of experiences together, provide an abundant storehouse of knowledge for the upliftment of humankind.

The global village will not owe its existence solely to scientific, technological and economic advances. It will survive only when its development process incorporates the educational with the cultural, the social with spiritual, the religious and ethnic with the traditional. These are the true indices of the intellectual content of the emerging new world. Prejudice towards other cultures and civilisations are a major impediment to true globalisation.

While dialogue at the international level is ostensibly the focus of our meeting here today, dialogue begins at home. A democratic dispensation and a spirit of good governance affords us the opportunity to dialogue, debate and deliberate together for peaceful solutions, rather than bitterness, confrontation, and violence.
Each nation must embark on the urgent task of reconciliation and confidence-building which is vital to the building and continuous review of relations among communities. In many developing countries, reconciliation and harmony among communities and various interest groups is indispensable for economic and social development. Reconciliation is also at the heart of enjoying the fundamental rights enshrined in our constitutions, which comprise the freedom of worship and speech, and the freedom from all forms of discrimination guaranteed to every citizen. We must cherish and uphold these fundamental freedoms.

Within many countries, industrialised and developing alike, we must hold in check the temptation to resort to violence for settling differences between groups, whether religious, ethnic or political. We must rid ourselves of the mentality and propensity to resort to violence that stems from fear and suspicion of the other person. We must rediscover the value of dialogue.

In our communities, in our nations, and indeed in the global community, we must begin to return to the fundamental faith that life, all life, is sacred. There is nothing in any of our cultures that even remotely justifies the cynicism with which many today respond to acts of lawlessness, corruption and wickedness. We must demonstrate our good neighbourliness and willingness to be keepers of our brothers and sisters, and to preserve a sense of outrage and moral sensitivity. We must care to share.

Looking at disturbances my country experienced earlier this year, I noted in a speech to the Nigerian nation that Islam and Christianity are based on peace. Love is cardinal to the creed of both religions. Any adherent of either religion would thus be failing his or her faith if he or she were to resort to violence, destruction of life and property. It is irrational, to say the least, to assert our faith in a manner that engenders conflict and violence. Instead, we must enthroned tolerance, constitutionality, decency and good neighbourliness. Extremism in religion, nationalism, or in any other belief is self-destructive, in addition to possibly destroying its victim.

What seemed to have happened in Nigeria is that, after many years of tyranny, misrule and mindless violence, encouraged and practised by the state itself, a general atmosphere of moral apathy set in, and the population grew indifferent to the moral, even religious duties that we all owe one
another. Today, as we are no longer hostages of an evil and lawless government, we are striving to ensure that our conduct, our relationships, whether religious, ethnic or political, is governed by the laws of the land. We are once more dealing with each other in transparent comradeship. We now seek to settle our differences peacefully, decently and humanely. Above all, in matters of religion and conscience, rational and just behaviour guide our actions in our institutions, and at all levels of government because we place the highest premium on peace and harmony in the society.

Peace is not a means. Peace is an end in itself. Peace is indivisible. A life without peace is not worth contemplating. The greatest and the most enduring legacy is peace. Peace is the foundation of all development and progress, and it is either there or not there. We need peace everywhere—at home, at work, in our family, in our community, in our locality, in our country, in our continent and in our world. There is no substitute for peace. And any sacrifice is worth making for peace. This message is the very essence of the International Year of Culture of Peace for which the year 2000 was designated by the UN General Assembly, and which will now be followed by the Decade of the Culture of Peace.

Dialogue is an imperative at both the international and national levels. There is no hierarchy in culture, nor is there superiority in the manifestations of human civilisation. Rather, they are cumulative and progressive.

It is thus noteworthy that earlier this year, political leaders of Africa and Europe sat down in a dialogue to promote cooperation for the mutual benefit of Africans and Europeans. A little more than a century ago, the continent of Africa was partitioned in Berlin among European powers, who proceeded to impose a regime of colonial administration on the continent, the negative consequences of which are still with us today.

Africa’s modern history has, since the 1884 Berlin Conference, been essentially the story of the European impact on Africa:

- it is a story of how autonomous African people were forcefully divided and separated by a stroke of the pen;
- it is a story of how they were merged into different political units without rational justification;
- it is a story of how, for most of this century, this arbitrary partition has led to constant war and conflict between African countries.
It is also a story of:
- many bloody revolts against colonial oppression and racism;
- the emergence of modern African states; and
- how African countries in the contemporary period have embarked on the search for a more equitable form of partnership with European and other industrialized countries of the world.

The dismemberment of Africa by Europe did not, of course, begin with the partition of 1884-1885. For four previous centuries, European countries had rivalled one another in competition to seize and transport the largest amount of Africa’s youth to the Americas. The Slave Trade, by which this macabre project was cynically called, is an epitome of man’s inhumanity to man, and an act of criminality against our continent:
- it depopulated the continent;
- it deprived it of its most able-bodied persons and productive inhabitants,
- and it destroyed its economy and traditional political structures.

Africa became so brutally de-linked from world history that African peoples and societies were rendered helpless to cope with and manage the technological revolution of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Between 1884 and 1960, African affairs were generally regarded by many in Europe as simply an extension of political and economic conflicts in Europe. African colonies had no say in the determination of their own fate. They had no control over their own resources. They were obliged to live with whatever the political masters in Europe imposed. When there was war in Europe, they were drafted to fight, quite often without knowing exactly what it was they were fighting or dying for. And when, in the 1960s, most African countries gradually began to attain their independence, they inherited severely depleted natural resources, and economies that were contrived almost entirely for the benefit of the former colonial masters, to the exclusion of the interests of their respective citizens.

Colonialism made its exit just before the end of the last century, but that process is still at work. Who can deny the imprint of that process when we still carry tags of Lusophone, Anglophone, and Francophone
Africa? Today, millions of Africans speak European languages, together with the inherent cultural implications of the transformation of their original African cultural values.

Yet, there is all too often a tendency in the industrialised world to indulge in the comfortable myth that the so-called backwardness of Africa is divinely ordained. It most certainly is not. It is, instead, the direct consequence of a deliberate policy adopted and practised by virtually all European countries for over half a millennium, to degrade, depopulate and denude the continent for the benefit of Europe. This might seem hard, but it has to be said.

The relationship between the rest of the world, particularly the Western world, and the people of Africa, is laden with pointers for re-defining the human values for the new millennium. There are good reasons for the feeling among many Africans that the continent has disproportionately suffered in the hands of foreigners. Many even reckon that the suffering is unparalleled. Critically, the treatment of African peoples has uniquely exhibited racial implications and designs. Indeed, other groups around the world have at one time or another suffered discrimination because of their faith, religion, or culture. However, Africans seem to have been the only people who have been subjected to the worst form of indignity simply on account of their race for which they are indelibly marked by physical features.

With all the advances in human genetics, there may be the temptation to regard the issue of race as academic. But not for us Africans. Scars of historic and individual experiences are too deep and too fresh for us to engage in Dialogue Among Civilisations without due recognition of the negative force of racism, even when it exists subliminally. For some time to come into this new century, a degree of soul-searching is an imperative for all dialogues between Africa and the world until the ghost of racism is finally laid to rest.

I have recently been calling for A New Berlin Conference that would see to the beginning of a series of dialogues which will restore the parity between Africa and the rest of the world culturally, politically and economically. Primarily, the dialogue would be between Africa and Europe, two continents which God in His infinite wisdom has put next to each other to share a common destiny. The hope is that Africans will get the
chance to participate in the agenda set in motion by the formulations of the Berlin Conference of 1884.

No time can be better than now, the beginning of a new century, with all the opportunities offered for incorporating our mutual hopes, wishes and aspirations into a new agenda. Our common destinies should be peace, security, harmony, prosperity and cooperation, in a stable and sustainable environment. Our partnership must be based on common concern for equity, justice, mutual respect and primary regard for the upliftment of underprivileged people everywhere, but particularly for African peoples, from their present economic and social predicament. That is the true meaning of dialogue today.

Let us begin to get the future right on the occasion of this unique Millennium Summit! We will not have many more such historic, solemn and defining moments in the history of humankind. Our generation has a particular responsibility not to fritter away the unique opportunity.

I thank you.
HUMAN SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION

At the Forum 2000: Programme of the North-South Roundtable at the Mahbub ul Haq Human Development Centre
New York, 7 September, 2000

It is indeed a pleasure for me to share with you my thoughts on the very important, if not critical, issues of human security, development cooperation assistance and the overarching challenge facing us in Africa, indeed the whole world, today, which is the challenge of combating poverty.

Let me say that I find it apt to begin with tribute to Mahbub ul Haq who was an accomplished economist and administrator. But he is remembered as something more: a philosopher and a visionary, one of the people whose views have strongly influenced our perception of the world. Such people possess a rare talent, namely their ability to express what we all perceive but cannot quite articulate. Once the words are out they seem so obvious, the idea so clear, that we wonder how we never thought of it before. And pretty soon we begin to imagine we did think of it. The idea passes into our common store of ideas, and we take it for granted.

Only two years after his death, such a process is happening with Mahbub ul Haq’s idea of human security. It is such a simple concept – of course, it is humanity we are talking about: and humanity we must protect. Nations grew up in the first place to promote and protect human security. Today, the threats are transnational or sub-national. They are: environmental deterioration and natural disasters, war and ethnic conflict, economic fluctuations and poverty, crime and terrorism, infections and diseases. Individual governments are limited in their ability to deal with these problems, unless they act in concert with other countries. Where human security is threatened from within, governments must reach out to communities and non-governmental organisations for support in solving the related problems.

Like many simple ideas, the implications of the concept of human
security are tremendous. They include much closer co-operation between states. They also imply that the world is one and indivisible, and at the same time that each human being is unique and uniquely precious, and his/her security and well-being is the purpose of government and its prime responsibility. Such vision lay behind the old ideas of pan-Africanism, and maybe the time will come when we can develop it for our mutual benefit.

We have taken our first faltering moves towards basing national and international policy on a foundation of human security. We can already see some of the basic requirements, some of which I will now mention.

One, the end of the Cold War, more than anything else, has opened up the possibility of new ways of thinking. It is thus vital for human security that no new distortion of international relations will come to dominate geo-political thinking. We must look for a continual downscaling of the world’s armed forces, and a real willingness to seek non-violent means of conflict resolution. I look forward to a time when the United Nations will have a rapid-response capability of its own.

Secondly, one of Mahbub ul Haq’s insights was that most conflicts today are internal rather than international. Now, every nation is sovereign and must have the right to manage its own affairs. But there are recent cases, some in the sub-region of Africa, where national integrity and the state’s ability to guarantee human security have had to be protected by international intervention. I would hope that we might view international intervention in that light, and welcome it.

Thirdly, all threats to human security are made more menacing by poverty. Natural disasters are far more devastating to poor countries and poor populations. Poor people have the greatest difficulty protecting themselves from the dangers of war or civil conflict. The poor are most liable to suffer the effects of violent crime. And the poor are the most vulnerable to malnutrition, the most exposed to infection, and have the least ability to protect themselves against it. Any human security agenda must, therefore, have at the top of the list a direct and determined assault on poverty and the causes of poverty.

The logic of traditional economics which has since become increasingly unpopular, assumes that benefits will flow from top to bottom of an economy, and that in the end “a rising tide lifts all boats”. The reality which we all now know too well, is that the assumption has been
faulty and the anticipated results have failed both within and across nations. Large numbers of people have been left untouched by increasing prosperity. Larger numbers still stand to be adversely affected.

For example, the structural adjustment to which many countries have been subjected has meant drastic reduction of money spent on public services. But in doing so, those public services have suffered quantitatively and qualitatively. Often the services hardest hit have been those on which the poor depend. Poor women and their children depend on public services for their basic health needs. Public education is most widely used by the poor. The low-income earners need some form of support in housing and transport. Thus, the blanket removal or curtailing of these services has adversely affected the quality of life for many millions of the poorest people on earth.

Even prosperity itself has not been without damaging environmental effects. In our urban centers, the rising cost of housing has forced many people who need to live and work in the cities, to inhabit dangerous sites, places that are liable to flooding or landslips, or places so devoid of basic amenities such as sanitation that life is constantly circumscribed by the threat of diseases and epidemics of all sorts. The waste products of industrial production are often found near the houses of the poor. It is a great paradox that many poor people are actually living on garbage dumps out of which they make a living. Apart from the health hazards, there have been several recent instances where such dumps have collapsed, destroying the lives and homes of those who depended on them.

In many countries, it is easy to point to instances where advances in agriculture have actually harmed the poor. Cash crops have sometimes taken the best land, forcing poor people to cultivate low-quality land often on fragile sites. Badly managed large-scale farming and indiscriminate use of fertiliser and unecological irrigation have often failed to benefit the poor, rather they have undercut the small farmer, forcing him to become a landless labourer.

No one can deny the need for technological advancement, but advancing human security also means that we must look at all the above causes and effects most carefully, to ensure that our development plans are structured to promote not only production and productivity, but also preserve the flourishing of communities and cultures. This sounds like a
tall order. But it is the only sure foundation for a world order based on human security. It will call for the most determined action, not only from all governments — North and South of the global divide — but from the private sector too. We can, and we must, insist that the transnational companies become good corporate citizens, and that they are sensitive to their social responsibilities to the countries and communities where they make their investments and from which they derive their profit.

The poor are also the most deeply affected by economic fluctuations, and among the hardest hit of all are women. Women employees are likely to be in the least secure jobs, for example. And women entrepreneurs find it the most difficult to restart their businesses after a crisis.

The fundamentals of fighting poverty are: first, health; second, education; and third, employment. In today’s globalised world, the last of these depends more and more on the first two. A human security approach demands that governments spend more, not less, on basic health care and education. The truth is that the private sector cannot take the place of government in these areas. In both health and education, special attention must be given to the needs of women and girls — after all, we cannot afford to leave out half of the nation.

This is not a list of demands. This is simply a statement of the minimum requirements for building human security. But clearly they call for extensive and determined action, not only by governments, North and South, but by the whole international civil society.

My country, Nigeria is one of the most diverse nation States on earth:

• it is a country of deltas and deserts, of rolling savannah and tropical forest, of high plateaus and low-lying swamps;
• it is a country of Christians, Muslims and practitioners of indigenous religions;
• it is a country of so many ethnic groups that our languages are yet to be fully catalogued;
• it is a country of great natural riches and terrible human poverty.

But, above all, Nigeria is a country that has had to build itself from all these diverse elements, helped, but mostly hindered, by the legacy of colonialism.

We are, if you like, a test-bed for ideas of human security. On the one hand, building human security gives us hope for the future. On the other
hand, if it can work in Nigeria it will work anywhere. And we are committed to making it work in Nigeria!

Nigerians have heard me describe myself as a bridge between the military and civilians. The reasons are obvious enough from my career. But the real point is that I know enough of both sides to definitely decide which is better for the political development of the society. I know both sides enough to confidently and unequivocally declare that there is no alternative to democratic governance for the process of nation building and healthy evolution of the society. Democracy is the only means of establishing and working through the concepts of human security.

But I also know that we cannot do it alone. Nigeria may be a vast and powerful nation, at least potentially, but the nature of the threats to Nigerian democracy, and to human security, are such that we need all the support we can get from our international friends to put us on the right track and keep us there, until our democracy comes of age.

I am not necessarily talking about development aid. That is not to say that debt remission for us is not an imperative and will not be of enormous benefit in our plans for universal basic education, poverty alleviation in general — so that we can plan effectively for such basic necessities of life for our citizens. But, most of all, we need a fundamental understanding and commitment to join efforts with us in working out sustainable solutions to these endemic problems of development and progress that encompass health, education, housing, transportation, and basic infrastructure.

I am talking about something more far-reaching. I am talking of a major revision in international economic order so that our problems are seen to be what they really are: the problems of the whole world. If human security means anything, it means this: we are all now so interconnected and interdependent, that we are like one family, and we must learn to act like a caring, considerate family, sharing one another’s burden. In this context, our slogan for the new century should be: We care to share! We have little to lose by this philosophy. On the contrary, we have everything to gain.

I thank you.
THE GLOBAL MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE

At the UN Millennium Summit,
New York, 8 September, 2000

Your Excellencies, humanity has come a long way out of the ruins of the Second World War; thanks to this august organization – the United Nations. We have emerged from the era of Cold War and incessant fears of global conflagrations. A new horizon is now in front of us, predicated on ever-widening possibilities for development in all spheres of human endeavours, resulting from unparalleled advances in science and technology.

But new challenges have also emerged; challenges of poverty and new diseases that have so far defied scientific knowledge and control. The world is also faced with the scourge of internal conflicts which threaten regional peace and impede social and economic development.

Although the world has generally become a safer place to live in, thanks to the contributions of the United Nations, we must all feel deeply worried that the message of hope which this organization has been spreading is yet to reach the millions of mankind for whom it is intended. For the vast majority of our peoples, grinding poverty has remained a fact of their everyday existence.

The national governments to whom these millions look up to, for succour, find themselves in the unenviable predicament of helplessness, incapable of bringing meaningful changes in their peoples’ well-being, due to the heavy burden of external debts which have crippled their capacities for national initiatives.

Old diseases, such as tuberculosis, which we all thought had been eradicated, have re-appeared with devastating consequences, especially in developing countries. In addition, we now have HIV/AIDS which continues to defy control, and has now combined with malaria, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases, to form a lethal nexus with as much potential for devastation as war itself, and thus a modern day threat to world peace and security.
The new millennium is being shaped by forces of globalisation that are turning our world into a village. Thus, the new millennium will demand of us, more than ever before, to live and work together as members of one human family. But up to now, globalisation has meant prosperity only for the chosen few of the industrialised countries. For us in the developing world, globalisation will continue to ring hollow and of dubious value, until we see its positive effects on our fortunes. In short, globalisation has to be seen to mean the eradication of poverty. And then, and only then, will the true spirit of good neighbourliness reign in the new global village.

The world community is challenged to evolve a new system of international cooperation that will help to eliminate abject poverty throughout the world, and integrate the developing countries into the globalised world economy. At the first South Summit of the G-77, held in Havana Cuba last April, it was resolved that a new and meaningful partnership with the industrialised nations needed to be forged, in order to make this earth a better place for all of us.

We must all be concerned about the persistence of internal conflicts, more especially in our region of Africa. These conflicts have proved to be very brutal, savage, and devastating. The unfortunate destruction of lives and properties and their effects on the weaker members of the society, namely children and women, remind us as members of the UN, that our objective of world peace is still beyond many communities. Our aim in the new millennium therefore must include a renewed determination to resolve these conflicts and prevent new ones so that together, all humanity will reap the benefit of peace and march forward in harmony and prosperity.

External debt has emerged as the greatest obstacle to progress in developing countries. Indeed, we note with appreciation, that a number of initiatives have been put in place. The reality, however, is that these measures are inadequate. The G-77 strongly urge creditor nations to seize this historic moment to unshackle the economies of developing countries by cancelling all their external debts. This is the only way these countries can be given the chance to effectively plan for the improvement of living standards for their peoples.

We are at the beginning of a new dawn; what it portends we cannot say. But this much we owe to ourselves and to succeeding generations: a world where all nations, all races and all peoples can live in dignity and in
peace with one another. We must all resolve to strengthen and reinvigorate the United Nations for the work ahead.

The reform of the United Nations, in particular, the expansion and democratization of the Security Council is, therefore, a task which can no longer be postponed, if our organization must brace up for the challenges of the new millennium. In this respect, the G-77 pledges its willingness to enter into meaningful dialogue with all our partners so as to re-energize the UN — indeed, a body for which there is no substitute — to meet the challenges of the 21st century and Third Millennium.

I thank you.
I address you this morning not only with much pleasure and privilege, but fully seized of a deep sense of history and a vibrant feeling of confidence in the bright promise of a process that we are starting here today. For here and now, Nigeria is taking the bold first step to enable Nigerians living outside the country to participate fully in the process of visioning, planning and pursuing the political well being, the economic development and the sound governance of their country. They are being brought back to the fold, not as a response to any expediency, but as an overdue development, as it were, to bring all hands on deck in the refitted and highly seaworthy Noah’s Ark of Nigeria.

Atlanta is, for many reasons, an appropriate venue for us in Nigeria to hold the first Diaspora Dialogue. It was in this city four years ago, 1996, that Nigeria distinguished herself in the Olympic Games as the champion of the world in football, the most popular game ever. This is also the city of the late Martin Luther King Jr., the acknowledged leader and martyr for the advancement of Black people, particularly in this great country. Besides, the City is richly endowed with other illustrious sons and daughters who distinguished themselves in leading the long struggle for human rights and civil rights; among them, my friends former President Jimmy Carter and former Mayor, Ambassador Andrew Young. For good measure, the Atlanta area is populated by a large number of Nigerians of all ages and stations in life. It is a rich ecological zone of the Nigerian Diaspora.

Atlanta apart, the United States is the logical place to commence and focus our diasporic activities. For obvious reasons, when people from many different nations all over the world refer to their Diaspora, they are very likely, first and foremost, referring to their indigenes living in America. Rich endowment in natural resources combined with
democracy, freedom, and free enterprise have made the United States of America very attractive to all progressive people all over the world who have something to offer to come and actualize their dreams. In this gathering today, my fellow countrymen and women came from all parts of the United States, because this country has one of the largest Nigerian communities outside Nigeria. The recent visit to Nigeria by President Clinton clearly demonstrates that this booming community of our people has a meaning and purpose.

My political party, the Peoples Democratic Party, and my government, indeed, all Nigerian governments have always expressed commitment to giving full opportunity to all Nigerians to contribute to the development of their country. That is consistent with our Constitutional Directive Principles of State Policy. But, this particular issue of a formalized participation of Nigerians in the Diaspora in the affairs of their country has been an issue gnawing at my mind for a very long time. The more I think of it, the more it becomes imperative to do something about it as soon as Providence affords me the opportunity. Those here who are old enough to remember, will surely recall that our preoccupation with the political programme and national security did not allow us to embark on long term processes like this one during the period that some call Obasanjo One. By the Grace of God, we have been favoured with the second chance to act and will do so.

My Fellow countrymen and women, all of us are deeply concerned about the prospects as well as the problems of our dear country and we have surely agreed on the need to move forward to maximize our opportunities, decisively solve both our political and economic problems and to develop into a united, great and benevolent nation to bequeath to our children and to Africa and the world. In that formidable task, we shall require all our will and all our wits. As they say, we need to get our acts together. In this task, we thank God that we have the freedom to take our own decisions.

Then, we must mobilize our total resources. That has wide connotations, including imaginative planning, cutting out waste and inefficiency, exorcising corruption as completely as possible, keeping more of our earnings instead of bleeding to the payment of unfair debts, and gathering as much supplementation as possible from our friends and well-
wishers disposed to do so. We are doing all that, with new resolve and firmness, and are determined to make a difference.

Manpower is the most vital component of resources. The mobilization just referred to cannot take place in the absence of high quality manpower. But, manpower has to be properly understood and applied as a resource. Far too often, labour and capital are applied as inputs to the development process without much tangible result, even if the intentions are noble. So, what could be wrong?

It is now accepted that improvement in productivity is very much dependent upon, as I said, the proper understanding of human capital, in its very fine and profound aspects. The most important distinguishing element of the human capital is knowledge. Knowledge and the ability to diversify, expand and spread it, is an attribute that divine providence has showered on man. Knowledge is spread through education. Knowledge should thus be expanded through investment in education, skills and research. Knowledge should be understood as the intangible that reflects the power of God. You give as much as you have and are still left with all that you have.

Understanding knowledge must be followed by properly applying it to the economy. Job satisfaction, for example, is necessary for the optimal use of acquired knowledge and skill. For all that, knowledge should be used and not feared or shunned. Anti-intellectualism is a very poor economic strategy. That knowledge, or "human capital", is the keyword in today's development economics as a World Bank concept, that I fully subscribe to. We all recollect that the United States Senate passed an Act introducing Gifted Education in the United States as a shocked response to the Soviet launching of the first sputnik in 1957. This was a sharp and timely resort to the development of human capital, which no doubt contributed to some of the spectacular space achievements of this our host country.

Finally, understanding knowledge is to know that it can be accessed and used without necessarily amassing "manpower" for the purpose. This is because of the great advances in communication technology like the e-mail, internet, satellite broadcast, etc. In other words, we can tap the knowledge and skills of many of our fellow Nigerians, wherever they are, provided they are willing to oblige. Gone were the days when a professional
had to be physically at home before one can use his or her skills. It is no longer necessary, in many instances, although we would still prefer to have them home.

We can now summarize the foregoing by outlining the scenario. Nigeria is a country in dire need of economic development and the improvement of the standard of living of the people. The country has invested much in education. Access was expanded at all levels, particularly since the Civil War. Oil was converted to knowledge. The quality of the education received was high. That is why many of our nationals were able to leave the country and find greener pastures elsewhere. Many of them have indeed achieved positions of eminence in the adopted countries of residence. For long, for various unedifying reasons, not much was done to try to tap the knowledge and skills of these Nigerians outside. Part of the reasons arose from the limited understanding of the concept of human capital as just "manpower", and it was assumed that there was sufficient manpower available since there was a considerable amount of "unemployment" at home.

With advances in science and technology of communications, and with a new approach to economics as being necessarily knowledge-based, drawing on intellect and skill both near and far, it became not only morally right but expedient to seek for and utilize the knowledge and skills of Nigerians wherever they are. That is precisely what we are setting out to do, starting from here. Fellow compatriots, that is the movement we are asking you to patriotically enroll in and work with us to the Glory of God and our Fatherland.

I know that some refer to me these days as a preacher. While I do not deny doing that in my spare time, I dislike preaching to the converted. I shall, therefore, not spend any time giving you here, and all those elsewhere in the wide world, who are not here, reasons why you should participate in this project, more than to say for the Glory of God and our Fatherland, because I know that we are on the same side of the divide on this issue.

I assure you that I do take encouragement that you are already part of it. Your presence here and your hard work since yesterday bear eloquent testimony to your affirmative response to our call. I thank you very much, but posterity will thank you more. I, therefore, propose to devote the rest
of this address to the mechanics of the process: how to get the best results in the shortest time in an affordable and sustainable way. We have no doubt that you may also have been thinking of how to proceed. What we suggest here should be used to guide or supplement whatever you may have elaborated in your discussions.

Let me start by expressing to you what this movement is not, in order to avoid misunderstanding. First of all, we are not embarking on a massive recruitment drive or scholarship sponsorship exercise. We are expanding the job market at home by the totality of what we are doing, and these new jobs will be accessed in the normal fashion, notwithstanding the fact that we shall from time to time be conducting "head hunts", seeking for particular individuals to fit into appropriate super-skilled jobs. We would not like to convey the impression that we are out to promote a homeward exodus.

Secondly, this is not a new public relations exercise, like a number of failed past national mobilization initiatives each characterized by the structural defects of the binge element, by the defect of undue publicity with heightened personality cults and expectations of instant political dividend, and by the defect of being the opportunity to expend or siphon away public funds. We have hopefully left for good that blighted phase of our life as a people. This is a serious movement that we hope will elicit the best of patriotic motives, one that will develop its own momentum and become a regular part of our system, sine qua non.

Finally, this is not another manifestation of the mentality of big government, wanting to do everything for everybody in an unrealistic Santa Claus fashion in order to increase its grip on society. We are very much believers in the political and economic reforms that seek to transfer much power and function to the civil society, in this case, precisely to the private sector. It does not in anyway mean abdicating responsibility. We shall be there to give every help that may be required of government. But, the activities will be initiated and promoted by the private sector which we are grooming to be weaned off and even become the dominant partner to government.

It is important to accept and use the reigning concept that civil society has, within the past decade, become the stakeholder in development. In traditional capitalism, the company or firm is the investor. But in the

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human capital theory, individuals are regarded as investors, and demonstrate investment faculties throughout their lives in the choices they make in their education, place of abode, choice of partners, choice of occupations. All these are regarded as investments aimed at maximizing returns in the form of livelihood. That is why, in this initiative, civil society is a more appropriate agent than government.

It is envisaged that a Foundation shall be established as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) to promote the attainment of the goals of the movement. The NGO will establish structures and networks that will promote the use of special skills of Nigerians in the Diaspora. This can be a reimbursable service with the promise of a handsome return. Being a professional practice, the NGO will establish data banks of expertise using the latest tools of technology.

Government will assume two roles. The first is that of a facilitator to enable the process to take off. We think that this will justify the limited use of public funds. Secondly, government will be an end-user of the service of the NGO, on a reimbursable basis. In other words, government, like any other user, will assign the NGO to undertake activities, each for a given fee. But, government does not have to be the sole user or even the principal user. Government will facilitate the work of the NGO by its direction of public policy and establishment of the proper economic framework, both as part of its constitutional responsibility and its implementation of the programmes in its political manifesto. Besides, the availability of such a service can, for example, stimulate government to embark on the human capital audit of its programmes and projects in order to take good stock of the availability of such a resource. This widens legitimate and beneficial assignment opportunities for the NGO.

The activities of the NGO should prove very attractive to foreign companies, as well as multilateral agencies and other governments. There are the current problems of staffing technical cooperation agreements with expensive expatriate staff, and the continuation of such projects after the expiry of the cooperation protocol. All these will be addressed by the NGO on a win-win basis.

The possibilities are limitless. A large and accessible pool of high skilled Nigerians driven by patriotism, and encouraged by just remuneration for their skilled services, is potentially an efficient engine
for accelerated development on a sound, reliable and affordable basis.

Naturally, much consultation and planning are required. We need the seed of core investors to set the ball rolling. We also need to sensitize our fellow Nigerians all over the world to this idea. Of course, we need to convince the potential end-users – Governments, at all tiers and levels in Nigeria; the multilateral agencies like the World Bank, IMF, WHO, UNDP, USAID, European Union; and others, as well as all cooperating foreign governments in particular programmes, like those of ECOWAS.

One thing is certain, the federal government we are privileged to head will leave no stone unturned to help in the capacity we have here outlined.

It is my hope that our First Diaspora Dialogue will elucidate the scheme and the mechanism further, highlighting areas of emphasis and drawing attention to potential difficulties that need to be pre-emptively addressed.

Later this week, I hope to hold another Diaspora meeting in London, England. It is our intention to hold as many of such meetings as possible, in the next year or two, to cover all areas of concentration of Nigerian skills. For example, it is our hope to hold more of such meetings here in other American cities, as time goes. But, it is my feeling that this movement will gain sufficient momentum for the necessary structures to be set up without the necessity of huge preliminary meetings, certainly without the necessity of the President being in attendance.

There is a standing committee at home, made up of ministers of the appropriate ministries and, for now, headed by the Minister of Education. We are also receiving advice from different expert sources, among them our very good friends here in the USA. Besides, I assure you that, during this formative period, all reports of preparatory meetings and other activities will end up on my desk, to receive my personal attention. My interest is not a flash-in-the-pan fleeting fancy. It has been long standing and consuming, and will not flag until our noble objectives in the Diaspora Movement are achieved.

Before I conclude, my fellow countrymen and women, let me try to clear in advance any charge of over-simplification. I am quite aware that I have been talking of Nigerians in the Diaspora who have acquired high level marketable skills. Clearly, it cannot be so for everyone. There are
different classes of expatriate Nigerians; for example, here in the USA., some were students who came on their own, or on scholarship and then defected. There are also professionals who may still have a bond or contract on them at home; while many may be free. There are family entourage migrants and some were transported in the first few months of their fetal lives to be born here as American citizens. I am also aware of the self-made refugees. Some were justifiably political refugees, although we can no longer see any justification for such a status now. Others are economic refugees or fugitives from justice.

Finally, there are entrepreneurs in politics and in economics, both with varying degrees of success. I note with pride that a Nigerian, Mr Emmanuel W. Onunwor, is the Mayor of East Cleveland and there are many holding positions of eminence, trust and responsibility in the American federal and state governments, in large companies, multilateral agencies and even in the Silicon Valley.

All of you can contribute to the development of your country. I know that some of you are already doing much privately, particularly with your families. I urge you to continue with all the good things you are doing. Just build on the goals of our new Diaspora movement, and work with others.

Some of you can contribute better by remaining here to take advantage of the vast opportunities in the USA. Others will contribute better by going home. All those with scholarship bonds and contracts should go home. All those who are here to spoil the good name of the country through trafficking of drugs, 419 fraud or other crimes should also go home. There is nothing on earth to justify your ruining the good name and image of your country for your illegal personal gain. To those who think that they have done so well here, that they have forgotten Nigeria, I say: East or West, Home is the Best. But to those who are prepared to give a chance, by jumping in and participating positively, to the ideas discussed here, I say: Welcome Brother, Welcome Sister!

I thank you for your kind attention. Let me now declare this meeting formally open, and thereby launching, at the same time, our Nigerian Diaspora Movement. God bless you all.
It gives me great pleasure and delight to address you on the historic occasion of the 18th Convocation and 21st Anniversary of your great College. We salute the vision and foresight of the founding fathers of your College who, as members of the Nigerian Medical Council in 1966, first mooted the idea of setting up locally, a postgraduate training college in order to produce specialists and teachers for referral hospitals, medical and dental schools.

The planning that followed culminated in the formal establishment of this College by the promulgation of Decree 67 on the 24th September 1979, which, as providence would have it, was signed by me as the then Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Federal Republic of Nigeria. Now, 21 years after, providence has designed it that I shall be here today to be part of this success story.

I am happy to note that this College has so far produced two thousand one hundred Fellows – comprising 668 Foundation Fellows, one thousand one hundred and twenty-three fellows by examinations and three hundred and nine Fellows by election. It is also noteworthy that the bulk of the clinical teachers in our medical schools as well as consultants in Teaching and Specialist Hospitals throughout the length and breadth of our nation are products of this college. I am also aware of the contributions of some of the products of the college in ameliorating the negative impact of the brain drain phenomenon in the health sector of our nation.

Your college has saved this country a total of well over thirty-six million pounds sterling (that is over six billion naira) which would have been incurred by this country in training all the 1,123 Fellows by examination overseas. By training them locally, your college not only saved the nation the huge foreign exchange, but also made it possible for Nigerians to benefit from their services even during the period of their
training.

In spite of these remarkable achievements, I am not unaware of the problem confronting the college: problems of inadequate infrastructure, need for access road, poor internal road network, lack of water supply, poorly stocked library, lack of e-mail facilities and internet access, standby generator, and the need to put in place a well-equipped college museum to mention but a few.

I want to assure you that my Administration will continue to do its best in according your college greater attention in terms of improved funding and greater recognition that has been the case. In return, I will expect from you greater dedication to duty, proper prioritisation of projects, transparency and accountability. Your research facilities – library, computers, and all its opportunities – should be given top priority.

Your College is uniquely placed to make significant input into the formulation of policies and programmes in medical and dental education as well as of health care delivery in this country. You should endeavour to make available to government pieces of advice to help us formulate effective policies.

Finally, let me congratulate the College President, Principal Officers, the Governing Board and Senate Fellows, Convokes and Staff of this College, for this notable and milestone achievement and for your commitment and patriotism in contributing your own quota to the production of medical and dental manpower at the highest level for this country.

I thank you. And may God bless you all.
Your Excellency, Gnassingbe Eyadema, President of the Republic of Togo; Your Excellencies, Brother Heads of State and Government of Africa; Your Excellencies, other Heads of Delegations; Your Excellency, Dr Salim Ahmed Salim, Secretary General of the OAU; distinguished ladies and gentlemen. I feel honoured to give a keynote address on this historic occasion of the 36th Ordinary Summit of our Organisation. However, let me first of all express on my own behalf and on behalf of the Nigerian delegation, our profound appreciation to our host, my friend and brother, President Gnassingbe Eyadema, the people and government of Togo for the usual warm reception and generous hospitality extended to us since our arrival. We appreciate the excellent facilities, which have been placed at our disposal for this Summit.

On a personal note, I am delighted to be back again in Togo, seven months after the 36th Ordinary Summit of the Authority of the Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) which took place in this city in December 1999. It was in this city that we in ECOWAS took the bold initiative and decision to concretely move forward with the integration of our sub-region, to complement the African dream of an integrated continent. Our meeting here again is a testimony to President Eyadema’s commitment to the cause of Africa that Togo is hosting the Summit of our Organisation at this time. We thank him for his gesture as well as for the vision he has so eloquently articulated for our organisation in his address.

Mr Chairman, permit me also to indicate that I am highly honoured at the invitation, graciously extended to me to address this august gathering on an issue that lies at the heart of our existence as nation States and as governments endeavouring to give our peoples a better quality of life. The issues of peace, security and development on which I am basing this address, are eminently important for our Summit, not only because of...
their inter-linkages, but also because of their profound effect on
governance, and to a considerable extent, the *raison d’être* for our
Organisation’s existence could be radically called to question.

The founding fathers of our Organisation in framing the Charter, 37
years ago, were mindful of the necessity to establish peace within and
among States, as well as between Africa and the global community at
large. Our Charter recognised and reflected their desire to ensure adequate
security for our continent not only in relation to its constituent States but
also with the rest of the international community. These sentiments and
concerns for peace and security were also demonstrably shown in relation
to the issue of our quest for development. However, in spite of the passage
of time and of the gains that have been attained in the areas of
decolonisation and political emancipation, our continent has lagged behind
in the pursuit of peace, security and development. Indeed, without fear of
contradiction, it can be stated that the challenges, which Africa face in
this new millennium, revolve around these critical issues.

As the starting point of our discourse, permit me to define the concepts
of peace, security and development. What do we mean by peace? What
do we mean by security? And what do we mean by development?

Your Excellencies, peace, as we all know, is not just the absence of
war or conflicts or civil disorder; it is something more fundamental and
more all-embracing. It is the existence of harmony either in an individual
or in the society, community, and nation or between nations. It is the
absence of conflicts, belligerence, instability, strife, hostilities, negative
propaganda and insecurity, to name a few. Peace is vital for productive
inter-State relations, co-operation and progress. Peace is an essential
pre-requisite for development.

It is futile to talk of, or expect peace in an environment of social
injustice, inequity and lack of fairplay; in an environment where the human
person is degraded by the scourge of hunger, lack of shelter and clothing;
in an environment where he or she is oppressed and repressed through the
denial of fundamental freedom and basic human rights.

Security is also an all-encompassing concept — an attribute which
individuals or states may be adjudged to have when they are safe and free
from danger or anxiety. It is a condition, which enables them to live in
peace and harmony, with equal access to resources and participation in
the process of governance.

Historically speaking, in our continent, experience has shown that governance has been seriously compromised under the guise of defence or protection of national security. This arises from a fundamental misunderstanding of what constitutes the security of government or State, as distinct from the security of the people. Most times, the security of leadership or government has been substituted for the security of the people, and the welfare of the citizenry sacrificed on the altar of the protection of the State.

Security for any country may be analysed at two broad levels: internal and external. The internal component of security has two ramifications: the security of the people and the security of the State. Its external aspect relates to security in terms of threats from outside political actors, be they states, individuals or organisations. From this somewhat global perspectives on security, it is logical to surmise that the actions and policies of States should be such that they foster and improve the security of the individual, the state and the continent in an assured and holistic manner.

Mr Chairman, development encapsulates the advancement of the standards of living or well-being of the individual or society in all its facets — political, economic and social. Since the beginning of time, this has posed a major challenge to humanity. For us in Africa, the challenge of development is a question of survival. Explanations for the underdeveloped state of most of our countries vary from one to the other, but the consensus view, which emerges, is that a major cause of Africa’s development crisis, at least in the economic sphere, is the absolute reliance or dependence on the production of primary commodities for export. The statistics of Africa’s underdevelopment are revealing and daunting. They are evident in the low level share of Africa in world trade (estimated at two per cent); a crippling debt over-hang (estimated at 300 billion US dollars and growing); weak productivity and low output (most factories in our continent produce below 30 per cent of installed capacity) and finally, a depressing share in total Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) — 1.2 per cent of world FDI flows in 1997.

Africa’s crisis of growth in the social sector is complicated by high income inequality, high unemployment and underemployment, increasing levels of poverty, social exclusion and uneven access to resources including
access to health facilities, education and basic infrastructure. Malaria, HIV/AIDS pandemic and other diseases are exacting enormous toll on life expectancy in our continent. In the political sphere, the challenge of development is manifested in the fledgling institutions of political and economic governance, lack of transparency, threats or the reality of violent conflicts, and state disintegration.

**Conflicts and Civil Wars**

Of all the most visible manifestations of the predicaments facing our continent, perhaps the most invidious and intractable has been, and continues to be, the proliferation of conflicts. Today, about one fifth of the peoples of our continent live in countries severely disrupted by conflicts. Since independence in the 1960s, no less than 20 or more than one third of our countries have experienced one form of conflict or the other, excluding liberation struggles. In the Cold War years, most of these conflicts were fanned and compounded by the ideological rivalries of the super powers. The momentous changes, which followed in the wake of the end of the Cold War, were expected to bring relief to the African situation and produce a “peace dividend” for its people. However, none of these expectations materialised. Rather, we have witnessed protracted civil wars and increased lawlessness, which have taken the centre stage in the political lives of our countries, with attendant devastating consequences for peace and socio-economic development. From the Great Lakes region to the Horn of Africa, from the Maghreb to West Africa, and in virtually all the regions of our continent, our nations are overwhelmed by the fruitless struggles for political power, territorial acquisition, religious supremacy and ethnic domination.

These conflicts impose heavy economic and social costs on our government and people. Aside from the destruction of infrastructure and wastage of capital, they result in the needless loss of human lives — Africa’s most potent resource base. The double jeopardy, so to speak, of this tragic situation is that the costs of these conflicts impact beyond the theatres where they occur. Indeed, neighbouring countries are shackled by the burden of refugee flows, disruption of economic enterprises and reduced trade and investment flows, which stem from the general climate
of fear and insecurity associated with conflicts.

Your Excellencies, in a letter I wrote in 1993 to all African Foreign Ministers under the title “Africa in Search of Common Values”, I raised some questions, which I will crave your indulgence to restate here:

If in 1956, 1957 and 1960 we could claim inadequate awareness, inadequate preparation, inadequate skill and capacity, and inadequate experience (to deal with our problems), do we have the same excuse in 1993? Can we diagnose our ailment and prescribe cure and administer the cure? Should we continue to stagnate or retrogress while the rest of the world moves forward? Can we continue indefinitely to blame the past for our present? Do we have a chance of making a change in our situation and if we do, how? Can we put our act together? Can we continue to fold our arms while other nations on our continent are burning and are being destroyed? Where is the humanity in us when unnecessary carnage, destruction and desolation go on in Liberia, Somalia and Sudan, filling the world with horror and a sense of revulsion with our apparent hopeless powerlessness? And yet we are reputed as a race for respecting our dead. Why are we so seemingly callous about our living? These are some of the questions we cannot run away from.

These questions contained in my remark made 7 years ago, I believe, are still relevant for our continent today. As we begin the march into the new millennium, this Summit, which has been aptly described as the millennium Summit, offers a unique opportunity to refocus our efforts and tackle decisively the problems which stand on our way of building durable peace, security and sustainable development for our countries and peoples.

Fortunately, our Organisation in the past, has made some positive efforts and developed policy initiatives upon which we can build, to pull our continent out of its present difficulties and promote political stability and economic development.

In the realm of political stability, the African Charter for Popular Participation and Development and the Declaration on the Political and Socio-Economic Situation in Africa and the Fundamental Changes Taking Place in the World, were adopted in 1990. In June 1993, in Cairo, Egypt, a declaration establishing a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution was adopted. In 1981 and 1998 respectively, the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights, and the Protocol on the establishment of the African Court on Human and People’s Rights,
were adopted. In July 1997, the Summit in Harare took an unprecedented decision against *Unconstitutional Changes of Government* — a decision reinforced at the Algiers Summit two years later to strengthen respect for democracy, the rule of law, good governance and stability in our continent.

In the area of development and cooperation, the Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos were adopted in 1980. In 1991 and 1995 respectively, the historic treaty establishing the African Economic Community and the Cairo Agenda for Re-launching the Economic and Social Development of Africa were adopted.

**The Algiers and Sirte Summits: A remarkable New Era**

Your Excellencies, last year at the Algiers Summit, we agreed to strengthen solidarity and peace within our continent and proclaimed the year 2000, a Year of Peace, Stability and Solidarity for Africa. To give substance to this declaration, speaking on that occasion, I enjoined that we re-examine the possibility of launching a process leading to a Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA) — a proposal which had been submitted to the OAU back in 1991 as the product of a conference held in Uganda that year at the invitation of President Museveni, and organised by the Africa Leadership Forum and the Secretariats of OAU and ECA.

Building on the declaration and decision of Algiers, the 4th Extra Ordinary Summit of our Organisation in Sirte, Libya in September 1999 took a number of additional steps to reinforce our continental unity and address our political and economic challenges. Specifically, we agreed to establish an African Union consistent with the ultimate objectives of the OAU Charter and the relevant provisions of the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community; and to accelerate the process of implementing the Treaty. In that regard, we agreed on two immediate courses of action, namely, to shorten the implementation periods of the Treaty and ensure the speedy establishment of all the institutions provided for in it, including the African Central Bank, the African Monetary Union, the African Court of Justice and in particular, the Pan-African Parliament.
At Sirte we went even further. On the question of Africa’s external indebtedness we requested our Brother Presidents, Abdulaziz Bouteflika of Algeria and Thabo Mbeki of South Africa to engage our external creditors with a view to securing the total cancellation of Africa’s debt. Finally, we directed that an African Ministerial Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa should be convened as soon as possible.

I should state, for the avoidance of doubt, that these were truly remarkable and significant decisions for our continent, reflecting our collective desire and commitment to give responsible leadership in charting the way forward for Africa, in a more focused and invigorated manner. I am delighted that this Summit will be examining the reports of the Secretary General on the implementation of these decisions. Our agenda and the documents submitted by the Secretariat for our consideration indicate that much has been done to set the stage for the implementation of the decisions.

**The Way Forward**

Few will doubt that the persistence and the intractability of the challenges, which confront our continent today, have not been due to the dearth of ideas or policy initiatives. What has been seriously lacking, we must be frank with ourselves to admit, is the capacity and the resolve to give effect to decisions. Consequently, we have spent long hours in meetings and summits and produced several blueprints for political, economic and social development, which were never fully implemented. Not only is such an approach awfully wasteful and unhelpful, it is also counter productive and can hardly be justified. Thus, I believe that we should resolve at this Summit that the decisions we take must be implemented. This is a duty we owe to ourselves; an obligation we owe to our people and our continent.

Your Excellencies, permit me, at this juncture, to share with you my thoughts on some of the concrete issues on the agenda of our Summit, which have bearings on the promotion of peace, security and development in Africa.
Peace and Security

The Algiers and Sirte Summits could go down in history as two of the most important and foresighted Summits in the annals of our Organisation. But this assessment may translate into mere platitude if such decisions, as the establishment of the African Union and the Pan-African Parliament, are left unimplemented. The arguments in favour of an African Union and a Pan-African Parliament are self-evident and can no longer be controverted. With a strong Union, which gives a new meaning and injects a new dynamism into our sense of continental solidarity, coupled with a Parliament, which gives voice and representation to the African peoples, our continent should be better placed to deal with the multiple challenges, which confront it. We must therefore, at this Summit take the necessary practical steps to facilitate the establishment of both institutions. However, in doing so, we must also be realistic and recognise that it is not the speed at which we attain unity that is the most important. Rather, it is how methodical and consistent we are, in bringing about a Union that will not only work but will also endure.

A key decision taken in Sirte was to convene an African Ministerial Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in the continent. It was taken partly in recognition of the important role which such a mechanism could play as a framework for collective action and for cooperation at continental, regional and international levels, on the issues of socio-economic development, integration, security and stability, democratisation and human rights. The CSSDCA, indeed, took place in Abuja in May, and I had the pleasure to address it. I have read, with interest, the comprehensive report, including its proposals and conclusions and would like to commend the Ministers and the OAU Secretariat for their excellent work. When they are carefully implemented, I believe, the recommendations contained in the report should further help Africa to prosper and achieve the desired progress.

I, therefore, commend the report to this Summit and invite Heads of State to adopt the CSSDCA Principles of the Plan of Action and follow-up mechanism contained in it. Furthermore, we should adopt a solemn declaration on the CSSDCA to serve as the operational framework for the process and guide future policies and actions, in relation to the issues
of security, stability, cooperation and development in Africa. I am of course aware that it has not been the practice to sign OAU declarations. However, I will strongly recommend that we sign the CSSDCA Declaration, not only because of its importance, but to demonstrate our commitment to its implementation.

Development

Your Excellencies, the crisis of development will continue to defy solution, unless concrete measures are taken at national, continental and global levels, to seriously address the situation. A major aspect of that crisis, as we have indicated, is the external debt burden, which constitutes a cog in the wheels of progress in our respective countries. Our total debt stock estimated at around US$350 billion comes with such grim statistics which vividly portrays a situation that current efforts at macro-economic reforms can only dent the problem, not resolve it. When it is realised that by the end of 1998, total debt as percentage of GDP was 65.5 per cent, many of our countries needed 40 per cent of national budgets for debt servicing.

In Sirte, we were therefore right when we mandated Presidents Thabo Mbeki and Abdelaziz Bouteflika to negotiate with our external creditors the possibility of total debt cancellation for Africa. Let me reiterate that, the demand for debt cancellation for Africa and the rest of the developing world is not a plea for charity; it is one for social and economic justice. Let there be no doubt about this, that until our external debt situation is addressed urgently and fairly, and complemented by new inflows of capital, our development process will continue to be stymied, and there can be little prospects for peace and stability in our lands.

It is in this context that I want to address the strategic partnership between Africa and our main European Trading partners in the recent Africa-Europe Summit in Cairo hosted by Brother Hosni Mubarak. It is my hope that the Bi-Regional Group that is being established will take on with vigour and commitment the assignment to examine the external debt problem. Their work, I also expect, would be ably complemented by a sustained effort to facilitate the return of illegally acquired public funds, which have been stashed away in foreign banks. We will also hold our partners across the Mediterranean Sea to the promised assistance for a
higher inflow of development and investment capital into Africa. We also look forward to their help in strengthening our indigenous capital markets and general private sector mobilization.

The solidarity and unity of purpose to pursue our common Agenda in Cairo was, indeed, commendable. Africa refused to be fragmented by the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement of the Lome Convention, the Barcelona Process with North Africa, and the Trade and Development Cooperation Agreement with South Africa. We should build on this committed integration of efforts to accelerate, as we pledged in Sirte, the process of regional integration and the implementation of the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community. In this connection, we should endeavour to do our level best, to move quickly on the track of harmonising our trade and financial policies. This should help to create the necessary environment for the speedy establishment of such vital Pan-African institutions as the African Central Bank and the African Monetary Union. We must move surely and steadily to establish these institutions which underpin our self-reliant efforts to meet new developmental challenges.

The major issue that development in Africa must address in the new millennium is the momentum of globalisation, as advances in technology, increased competitiveness of products, fluid capital mobility and even pandemics, crash down national barriers. Rather, unfortunately, instead of the vast opportunities that are supposed to be created in the process, the reverse appears to be the case with Africa. The absence of sophisticated “Star wars” technology, critical high-level skills and access to vital information has put us at a comparative disadvantage in exploiting the creative possibilities of globalisation; and tend to make us spectators in the developmental race. At the moment, the race appears to be for the strong and swift. Nevertheless, Africa has determined that she must be part of this race. It will be helpful if the developed world endeavours to live up to its obligations under the various trade and financial arrangements to enable us to catch up early. Nevertheless catch up we must, catch up we will, even if by our own efforts alone. We have already set the train of our economic emancipation to top gear through the accelerated implementation of the Abuja Treaty. All we now need is sustained and consistent commitment to the cause.
Finally, the agenda for our future development efforts should include improving governance in our countries and resolving conflicts; capacity building through investment in our peoples, especially our women who, in most cases, constitute the majority of our labour force; the adoption of measures to increase our competitiveness and diversify our economies; and the reduction of dependence on aid as capital for development.

All these are steps that we must take in the overall interest of our development. Yet we must not forget that however invaluable the support and cooperation of our external partners could be in assisting our continent towards development, the ultimate burden and responsibility lie squarely on our shoulders and none other. We must, therefore, take our destiny in our hands.

As earlier indicated, we decided in Algiers last year to declare 2000 as the year of Peace, Stability, and Solidarity. We are now mid-way in the year. We must therefore ask ourselves how well we have done, since Algiers. Regrettably, my sincere assessment is that we have not done too well. When we thought that we were moving towards peace in Sierra Leone, the agents of destruction there, the RUF, struck again setting back the peace process in that embattled country. The state of play in the Congo Democratic Republic has not changed for the better, in spite of our best efforts. A tiny minority in The Comoros continues to defy the continent and Somalia remains where it was when we last met in Algiers. Fortunately, a peace agreement has now been signed by Ethiopia and Eritrea, but this was only after the resumption of hostilities between these two brotherly countries.

Nevertheless, we can at last rejoice that Ethiopia and Eritrea have now agreed to a cease-fire and undertaken to settle current and future conflicts through peaceful means. I join others in congratulating the two countries for this important development and urge them to take the peace process to its final and logical conclusion. The feat achieved through the hard work of our Organisation and our Chairman, His Excellency President Abdulaziz Bouteflika, is an indication of what could be achieved through hard work, good faith and a spirit of cooperation and compromise. I congratulate President Bouteflika on this important achievement and we thank him for his dedication to the cause of peace. I thank and congratulate the Secretary General and his staff on the success recorded here.
I invite African leaders to recognise that, without peace, we cannot expect stability or experience development in our countries and in our continent. I call on you all to make a special effort that will ensure that when we take stock at the end of the year, our balance sheet would be positive.

Mr Chairman, Your Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, Africa can be great and the present state of our political and economic development enhanced, if we fully recommit ourselves to rise up to the challenges facing it. I believe that we can and must do so, in the interest of our peoples. Let this Summit reinforce that commitment and actualise our dreams for an Africa that is peaceful, stable, secure and developed.

I thank you.
Four decades ago, five countries had the foresight to recognise the benefits of coordinating some of their basic policies on oil production. It was realised that, as countries that were substantially dependent on exports in what always has been — and always will be — a dynamic world petroleum market, they would be confronted by many challenges to the mainstays of their economies and the well-being of their people. They, and the countries that subsequently joined OPEC, understood that differences due to diversity of interests had to be overcome, in order to enjoy the advantage of strength that derives from unity.

On behalf of the government and people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, I wish to pay tribute to the founders of OPEC and congratulate all of us for the courage to stick together in bad times as well as the good.

Nigeria has been a proud member of OPEC for nearly half of the Organisation’s existence. We have contributed to the Organisation our loyalty, our dedication, and — not least of all — the esteemed Secretary General, Alhaji Rilwanu Lukman. Let me assure Your Excellencies that you can count on Nigeria’s unequivocal commitment to achieving the goals of the Organisation. And where individual Nigerians are involved, you may also count on their patriotic and selfless service to the Organisation for the overall benefit of our nations.

The horizon is full of many challenges to OPEC, as we look ahead to our common future. Two of the most serious ones are:

One, the need to act together to attract investment, so we can meet the world’s petroleum supply requirements; and

Two, the grave challenges posed directly to petroleum producers by attempts to deal with the issue of potential global climate change.

These two challenges have linkages.
As leaders of the member-countries of OPEC, you and I are accustomed to confronting many challenges. But we also know there is the brighter side of things, called opportunities, and I shall comment briefly on one of them as I visualize it for OPEC.

Our experience these past two months tells us that OPEC members must attract huge, new investments from outside our borders to expand our petroleum production capacity. As the population and the economy of the world grow, petroleum demand will rise. OPEC may hold nearly 80 per cent of the world’s total proven crude oil reserves, but we all know that we may be uncomfortably close to not having adequate production capability.

As developing countries, we have great demands on our domestic capital. Therefore, we must turn to foreign sources and international institutions, none of which are bottomless pits of money. They are the targets of marketing efforts of several other developing and Eastern European countries, many of which aggressively tout for the investment opportunities in their lands. OPEC is pledged to fair returns on capital to investors in our industry. However, in an age of increased global demand for capital, that may not be sufficient. I propose that we in OPEC collaborate in understanding and developing ways to establish in our countries the appropriate environments that will enable the necessary investments in the petroleum industry.

However, global investments and capital flows can only flourish in an economic environment that encourages free and fair trade. The unfair taxation of petroleum products, particularly in the major consuming countries is unhealthy. In the European Union for example, an average of 68 per cent of the price of a litre of petrol goes to government coffers to clear budget deficits! The tax revolt we witnessed recently in many parts of Europe testifies to this.

For over ten years, OPEC Members have been in the vanguard of efforts to have the international community adopt scientifically sound and economically rational policies to the threatening issue of global climate change. Unfortunately, the dominant attitude in the international negotiations on climate-change is bent on driving a stake into the heart of oil production, especially in member countries. Policies like the new or increased energy or carbon taxes, illustrate the point. Most of these policies
are explicitly intended to dramatically reduce the consumption of fossil fuels — both the solid and liquid forms. Our attention has been drawn to persuasive economic analyses of the Kyoto Protocol which, conservatively, indicate that oil exporting countries would stand to lose more than 20 billion US dollars of revenue by the year 2010. Even without assuming subsequent, more stringent international agreements, which are highly likely, that revenue loss will jump to more than 60 billion US dollars in 2030 — in constant US dollars.

The scenario would worsen if developing countries were to succumb to pressure by the North to undertake their own commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as this would imply a catastrophic reduction in the consumption of petroleum and petroleum products by those countries.

The Kyoto Protocol is only the first step. Your Excellencies, we must face the fact that efforts already are being made, and surely will be intensified, in the climate-change negotiations to tip the scales of the investment criteria ever more strongly against the petroleum industry in our countries. This could adversely affect investments, stifling expansion and restricting our ability to maintain existing production capacity.

This November, the governments of the world gather in The Hague to consider decisions to implement the Kyoto Protocol. Events in the most recent rounds of negotiations persuade our government that the developed world may not be dealing with us in good faith. It has signaled a determination to counter the effects of the few provisions in the Protocol that are intended to give OPEC members some limited protection against the adverse impacts of the North’s policies on climate-change.

May I urge Your Excellencies to encourage your representatives in these negotiations to contribute actively to a strong, united OPEC front. We must demonstrate to the world in this arena the same courage that OPEC has been called upon to muster these past 40 years, and to reject approaches that defy our individual and common well-being as major petroleum exporters. We have a duty to defend our future against those who choose not to respect it.

As we ponder on our future, we ought to be asking, whether, after 40 years, we cannot do more than set production quotas and focus on the vital goal of fair and stable prices for oil. We OPEC nations have an
aggregate gross domestic product of about *three-quarters of a trillion US dollars*, which is exceeded in size by the individual economies of only eight countries in the world. We certainly understand the crucial role played in our economies by our major involvement in international trade. Yet, we trade so very little amongst ourselves. It is as though we in OPEC are colleagues and strangers, all at the same time.

Groups of countries all over the world have formed trading blocs. Do they have more in common than we do? I doubt it. For one, none of them has the unifying factor of a shared cornerstone for their economies that we do. And if the factor that binds us together also creates conditions that prevent our realizing the benefits of greatly enhanced trade with each other, maybe we should ponder on what to do about that. Perhaps it is time for us to think about expanding our horizons and considering additional ways that OPEC can help position our countries to move forward together to an ever brighter future.

Your Excellencies, permit me to raise before you the issue of debt burden on our national economies. The situation calls for urgent and concrete action by the creditor nations, if the sharp division between the North and the South is to be bridged. Our economies continue to bleed while our teeming populations continue to suffer inadequate infrastructure and lack of basic requirements for life. Globalisation can only be meaningful if the debt burden of developing countries is addressed urgently and purposefully.

President Chavez, let me thank you, personally and on behalf of the Government and people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, for having initiated this Second Summit of OPEC. It has been 25 years since the last Summit was held in 1975 in Algiers, which is much too long a wait for an important gathering such as this. We must not repeat that mistake. And, of course, we thank you, your government, and the gracious people of Venezuela for the marvelous hospitality you have extended to us, and for making our stay in Caracas a memorable one.

I thank you all. May God bless OPEC.
Let me say that I cannot convey to you fully enough, how pleased I am today to be inaugurating the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission.

Many of you may already be aware that I have for many years held the view that corruption, in all its manifestations, is the greatest single impediment to our national aspiration to enter the new millennium with confidence. Corruption check-mates all vision for a morally strong and economically prosperous society. Indeed, corruption is the anti-thesis of development and progress.

It is an indication of the seriousness with which I regarded – and still regard – the matter of corruption in our governance, that the Corrupt Practices and Related Offences Bill was the first Bill that was submitted to the National Assembly, almost immediately after the inauguration of our Administration. Indeed, you could say that this Bill was brewing in my pocket even during the election campaigns, as I prayed that God would grant me the opportunity to work with the Legislature to transform it into law. Total commitment to anti-corruption crusade was one of the major promises I gave to the electorate. And I intend to keep my word.

In this regard, I wish to express my appreciation to the National Assembly for not only sharing my own concern about the dangers of corruption, but also for taking steps to pass the Bill into law within a reasonable length of time. I note with deep appreciation that the National Assembly enriched the provisions of the draft Bill, which augurs well for our struggle against corruption.

Soon after assuming office, in my Independence Day Address to the nation last year, I observed as follows:

For those who are tempted to believe that our struggle against Corruption is utopian, let me remind them that we have no choice in the matter. Corruption is not only illegal, it is bad because it corrupts the very soul of...
our community. It makes nonsense of all planning and budgeting, and it wastefully depletes our inadequate resources. It breeds cynicism, and promotes inequality. It almost renders it impossible for this Administration to address the objectives of equity and justice in our society with any seriousness. And finally, it destroys the social fabric of our society, leaving each individual on his own, to do only whatever is best for himself.

Twelve months after these remarks, the signs are that we have only just begun to scratch the surface of this terrible blight on our efforts to transform this country. The task before you, Chairman and Members of the Commission, is consequently, a very grave one indeed. With your coming into being, our Administration hopes to serve the final notice on the evil of corruption. Many ordinary Nigerians will join me in praying to God to guide you so that the beginning of your office will also be the countdown to the beginning of a sanitised moral environment, with honesty as the guiding value in our daily lives, privately or publicly.

In discharging your duty, you will be at the vanguard of the reformation of Nigeria, politically, economically, and socially. It is in recognition of this fact that the process by which you were selected has been a very careful and thorough one. The responsibility you bear from now on is a heavy one, and you have been selected because you are men and women of integrity, who can be relied upon to discharge your duties in the knowledge that you are now our standard bearers in the crucial battle against corruption. You will be expected to carry out your duties in strict compliance with the provisions of the law that has brought your commission into being. You will be required to fear nothing and no one but God. And you will so conduct yourselves as to leave no room for doubt, as to your integrity, honesty, or decisiveness.

The law you are called upon to uphold and execute is a stringent one. It punishes both those who receive, and those who offer gratification. It imposes a duty, the breach of which is punishable by law, on everyone, from those who directly participate in the crime of corruption, to those who, though not participating in it, yet have knowledge that such a crime has been committed, or is being committed, and failed to report it to the Commission. It is unique law whose merit has already been acclaimed by expert observers at home and abroad. It is a very bold step, and a very necessary one in the right direction.
By all considerations, this is a very powerful law that is going to touch the lives of most Nigerians. In order to ensure that ignorance does not become an excuse, the Nigerian public should be made fully aware of the full scope of this law. Thus, the Commission is expected to carry out full scale enlightenment programme that will drive home the moral as well as the legal message to the Nigerian public, so that the citizens will know their rights and obligations under this new law.

Also, it is a well known fact that many aspects of procedures in Government and general conduct of public affairs have been so thoroughly corrupted that the procedures themselves have become excuses for those who may not be inclined to fraudulent behaviour. The Commission should critically look into this ‘corrupt environment’, so to speak. The questions are: Are there elements in procedures that compel corruption or make corruption easy? How can we sanitise our procedures so as to remove corruption that has become embedded in it? We look up to the Commission for answers.

You are most likely to come under pressure to bend the law to accommodate family, friends and colleagues. No doubt some of those who have cases before you will attempt to bribe you. And some will even threaten you. But you have all been selected with considerable care, and I am confident that you possess the qualities of honesty and diligence which are indispensable, if you must discharge your duties satisfactorily. You have an obligation to yourselves, to the country, and to God. You must not fail us.

I thank you. May God bless you.
Fellow Nigerians, it is a privilege and a great honour to address you, on the 40th Anniversary of our national independence from Britain.

We owe gratitude to the Almighty for protecting and preserving us individually and our society as a whole to witness this moment in our history which coincides with the millennium milestone in the history of humankind. Let us thank God for the fulfillment and achievement of many of our wishes, and let us pray to him to give us strength to persevere in our efforts to overcome our weaknesses, especially as pertaining to those areas where we have suffered set-backs and success has so far eluded us.

As tempting as it might be, I will not use this occasion to dwell on our Administration’s plans or extol our achievements as a Government or as a Party. There is a risk of doing some of that. But, I thought we should all treat this as an occasion for sober reflection, as the hallowed saying goes.

The fortieth anniversary, at the turn of the century and the beginning of a new millennium is a unique and symbolically compelling moment to reflect on our journey so far and to articulate and affirm an animating, elevating, and enduring vision and ideals for Nigeria, and an unwavering commitment to the actualisation of a great Nigeria.

In most cultures and societies, the fortieth birthday is a significant landmark in any person’s life. Any man or woman who reaches 40 years of age is judged to be truly mature, and worthy of being entrusted with sacred responsibilities.

At Forty

- *it is time* to part with youthful pursuits and settle to a life of reasonableness, decency, good family values, good citizenship and leadership;
it is also a time to henceforth enjoin the good and eschew the evil;
and it is the age to be realistic, candid and to abandon deceiving oneself and others.

We all remember the old cliché: *a fool at forty is a fool forever!*
But, we have even more reason to feel and act mature, because Nigeria is, as a matter of fact, much older than 40. Nigeria – the name – may have been stamped on our land by colonial design. But Nigeria – the people and the society – did not commence existence with political independence from Britain.

Nigeria did not even begin in 1914, or even with the arrival of the White Man on the shores of West Africa. *Our people,* the Nigerians of today, have been living together as neighbours and interrelating accordingly. We have been visiting each other, we have traded among ourselves, we have blended our cultures. And, yes, we have quarreled, fought and reconciled with each other. We shared the joys of harvest and growth as well as the natural disasters of flood, drought or pestilence. The long distance trade in cattle and kolanuts has, for example, been going on for centuries. What about the great Empires that once existed in Benin, Oyo, Songhai, Sokoto and Borno? The name and the political boundary may be relatively recent. But, our people have been together from time immemorial. We have been around for a very long time and, by the Grace of God, we will be here in perpetual succession!

I know there will be some of us who will, on this anniversary, be wondering whether or not we have any reason to celebrate. The many difficulties, shortcomings and set-backs on the road to national development provide good grounds for this cynicism.

I would personally count myself among those who have been most disappointed or saddened by our many problems, especially as most of them have been thoroughly avoidable and often self-inflicted.

As at the *first of October 1979,* when we handed over a robust nation and a new Constitution to an elected Civilian Government to launch the Second Republic, some of you may recall from my farewell broadcast my vision of Nigeria being among the top ten greatest nations in the world by the end of the Twentieth Century. We were then ranked 48th in the league of prosperity. Now Nigeria has sunk into the league of poverty,
where we are ranked as the thirteenth poorest nation on earth.

Earlier than that, I also unfolded my vision of a Nigeria aiming to succeed at building a just, disciplined and humane African Society. Instead, Nigeria is now perceived as the most corrupt nation in the world, and so listed by an organization that I co-founded because of my belief in fundamental moral values.

How can anyone deny the blight on our society when we all know how much our society has degenerated into a kleptomaniac culture, where everyone entrusted with any funds, public or corporate, everyone but a few, steals at every stage of the way, from paper clips, through ghost worker proceeds and contract stealing, to outright plundering of the nation’s resources? How can anyone deny the unfathomable shame:

- when the whole world regards us as “born scammers”, because of the worldwide white-collar fraudulent activities of some of us;
- and, when there are many among us who look at every new law, not as a tool for improving society, but as a means to be rich through corruptly circumventing it, in one way or another?

How can anyone deny the pervading depravity, when so many of us do not like to do any form of productive work, but prefer to get something for nothing, regardless of the morality of our activities?

With due modesty, I can claim that there are not many who would be more disappointed than myself. I foresaw Nigeria as a great industrial giant, and great in agriculture, petroleum resources and other minerals, with an economy that exported finished or value added goods, making the most of what we needed, selling it to the world and importing much less than we would be exporting. Instead, Nigeria, apart from crude oil, exports little. It has been turned into a paradise for smugglers, commission agents and a dream market for manufacturers of junk and fake goods from overseas.

Fellow Nigerians, Nigeria has the land and the ecosystem, as we all know, to be a country of flourishing forests and grasslands, with rich wild life to savour and a healthy air to breathe and clean water to drink, and a land of variety and beauty of nature. Instead, Nigeria has become an environmental disaster, an ecology decimated of its animals and trees,
and with the Sahara and erosion aggressively eating up the usable land. And no one is doing much about it. Ours is now a land of rural deprivation and urban subhuman congestion and suffering. It is clear that unless we do something, we shall soon have nothing to show but decadence and what was and what could have been.

Many of us had good reasons to dream of Nigeria as a Mecca for investors, scholars, artists and tourists from all parts of the world, where efficiency and enterprise would create wealth in the service area. Instead, Nigeria has become a country most difficult to do business with, to visit or to return to, all because of indolence, discourtesy, indiscipline, insecurity, and, of course, corruption. Nigeria became the country where things, anything, just did not work.

Fellow Nigerians, this country was set to be a proud homeland where young people had their career expectations of rising into the middle class fulfilled, with all the people enjoying full opportunities of employment, particularly in the burgeoning private sector—a country with free enterprise, a country of economic growth and development. Instead, Nigeria became a country of stagnation, retarding economic growth and unemployment. The middle class was all but destroyed. Professionals and academics found ready successor in brain drain, resulting in a large pool of Nigerian talent in the Diaspora and solving other people's problems. Those left behind at home became idle and frustrated, steeped in poverty with disruption of social relations. A young graduate could not look forward to a job, a house, a car, let alone the self-respect and joy of marrying and raising a family.

We had all the opportunity, after successfully winning a civil war of unity and achieving reconciliation, of becoming a truly united and powerful country where everyone of its citizens was proud, nationalistic and patriotic, feeling free and welcome in any part of this country. Instead, Nigeria was allowed to become a country where politicians wantonly practise the politics of ethnic and religious divisiveness, and where the responsible elite leadership thoughtlessly talk of the disintegration and dismemberment of the country whenever it suited their personal political whims and caprices.

Not so long ago, many of us indulged in the intellectual luxury of seeing Nigeria as a free and democratic nation with full freedom and
human rights guaranteed to every citizen. Instead, Nigeria was steadily pushed into a most brutal dictatorship which corrupted everything and almost everybody, not excluding our cherished traditional and religious institutions. Nigerians became so impotent to the extent that a brutal dictatorship could ride roughshod over the collective will, freedom and voice of the people, openly plundering every public treasury or account, arresting, detaining, torturing and even killing its perceived enemies, and still had among our men and our women, disgusting but rich sycophants loudly cheering it. No one would have thought that Nigeria would suffer such prolonged and brutal tyranny of a few people over the rest, and be saved only by divine Providence.

Fellow Nigerians, I could go on with the list. Each one of us has been disappointed to a greater or lesser degree by the developments that shaped our nation in the last two decades. Some of the disappointments we can share, others we cannot, but all of them have been by our own acts of omission or commission over the period.

Maybe these are some of the reasons which make some of us feel that we have no cause for celebration. I disagree. Even if things were much worse, Nigeria is worth celebrating. Because all these wrongs are within our power and ability to correct. All we need to do is resolve to put things right! We will of course need God’s guidance and support, but, as is known and believed in all faiths, the Almighty will only help us to change if we ourselves demonstrate the will to do so. We can right the wrongs because we still have the country and the freedom to take our decisions. Many other peoples in this world have to start by, first of all, finding a country, and then fighting for freedom to self-determination.

We can right the wrongs because we have lived together all this while and know ourselves. We know our strengths and weaknesses. We have shared experiences. We shared the sweat of the struggle for freedom from colonial rule; together we savoured the sweetness of attaining self-government, followed by independence, and then full nationhood of republicanism. We endured the crisis leading to the Civil War, and suffered together the pain of fighting our brothers, friends, colleagues, teachers or classmates. And we rejoiced as one at the end of that war, and we celebrated the re-establishment of kinship ties in the context of a country that we all believed was heading for greatness. We went through all these experiences
together, and more. Those who were present taught those who were absent or unborn. In between, we witnessed together real life cycles of flood and drought, boom and burst, ease and anxiety, pleasure and pain, happiness and grief, excitement and frustration. But we never shared despondency. And we never had reason to lose hope. All those who in the dark days of their lives lost hope for Nigeria only lived to eat their words and rue it!

We can right the wrongs because we have been blessed in so many ways that, compared to our assets, our problems become mere opportunity to show what we can really do. Our physical endowments – the land, the flora and fauna, and the mineral wealth – can support much larger populations, living happily and enjoying a much better standard of living than we have been able to attain. We are also blessed that these sources of wealth are utilisable by us in our time. The oil has, for example, been there for a million years and could remain for as long if only we were to leave it there.

Fellow Nigerians, I believe that we can right the wrongs of Nigeria because we have our people. The men, the women and the children, these are our greatest treasure. The people are not only an unsurpassed asset, it is also our people who give us our intangible blessings – our history, as well as our rich cultures and traditions, and our value systems.

It is worth dwelling for a while on what our people represent for us, what they have done for us and what we can, together, make of the future. It does not seem as if many of us reflect deeply enough on what a great blessing our people are. They are not just dead weight statistical burdens.

All those who struggled for our independence remain our great heroes, in whatever way they may have contributed to the common goal. They recovered our dignity from the clutches of foreign imperialism. They inspired us with a sense of common destiny. They claimed for us a nation with much promise. Tragically, less than six years after independence, the most prominent fell victim to badly conceived political judgements and actions, when they were overthrown, some killed and others rendered redundant. If only the dead could return, they would surely wonder with much agony at what we have made of the vision and system they had bequeathed to us. In many ways, they would feel badly let down. It was quite appropriate for the Founders of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party,
on the occasion of the Party’s inauguration, to have expressed words of apology to those leaders of years gone for our collective failures of the country.

Fellow Nigerians, we have had leaders. People like Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Sir Ahmadu Bello, Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Malam Aminu Kano, would all rank very high as quality leaders in any period and at any time, anywhere in the world. We should not forget the sad and tragic circumstances of the demise of Chief Samuel Akintola and Chief Festus Okotie-Ebor. There were also younger heroic leaders like General Murtala Muhammad, Chief M. K. O. Abiola, and General Shehu Musa Yar’Adua. All of them have gone to the great beyond. But, their memories remain fresh in our minds and their heroism evergreen in our hearts. Their memories remain an abiding source of inspiration and pride. They and their contemporaries, freed and built Nigeria. Their work, their vision and their sacrifice serve to illuminate our road map into the future as one country.

We are not only blessed with early political leadership in every other field of human endeavour, Nigeria has heroes and heroines that are not only to be proud of and to be admired, but to be regarded as everlasting treasures in the history of a great nation. Our military can boast of officers of sheer courage like the first Nigerian GOC of our Army, General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi; Colonel Unegbe, who sacrificed his life in opposition to military take-over; Colonel Adekunle Fajuyi who chose death rather than abandon honour. We also have Ademulegun, Maimalari, Sodeinde, Mohammed, Largema, James Pam and WU Bassey, who were men of great courage in a wide variety of situations.

We also had – and still have – outstanding professionals and academics and policy managers in all fields of human endeavour. They rose to lofty eminence in their respective specialities where they achieved both national and world recognition and honours, especially and including literary men like Abubakar Imam, Chinua Achebe, and Nobel Laureate, Wole Soyinka. This nation still has people whose very names are synonymous with the struggle for freedom, liberty, human rights and good governance. Let us pay homage to those entrepreneurs who started from nothing, yet honestly built empires of wealth and opportunity, providing jobs and succour for many. Great men of enterprise like Alhassan Dantata,
Sir Odumegwu Ojukwu, and Ogbeni Oja, Adeola Odutola.

And we have our great athletes and other sportsmen and women, fetching trophies and gold medals in world games and sports. Let alone our fine artists and performing artistes who are admired, and whose works are collected, listened to, or watched the world over. You know this is true.

These heroes did not just turn up from nowhere. They arose from amongst us. We, the collective rest, past and present. They selectively inherited the high qualities of the society and excelled. In other words, the real hero is the ordinary Nigerian, alive or dead.

Fellow Nigerians, I sincerely believe in the intrinsically good nature of the Nigerian character. Of course, like all societies we have our share of deviants and criminals. And ordinarily, our exuberance and boisterousness may often give the impression of aggression and abrasiveness. But behind all that there is a great Nigerian, a kind and warm Nigerian. Our people are diverse, beautiful, warm, friendly and hospitable. They are respectful without possessing a complex. They are highly assertive at whatever level of authority, but generous and helpful if correctly approached. Our people love beautiful things – and we must rank among the most well dressed people in the world. Not only do our people like beautiful things, they admire success. They celebrate it heartily in themselves and rejoice for others in boisterous participation.

Our people are in love with education. That is why our great investment in education succeeded in creating such a vibrant society where social gaps have been greatly closed. Their love for education goes hand in hand with the love for upward mobility even though some of the desperate means are not laudable.

The Nigerian is indeed of generous spirit. We care for our people, and we share what we have with friends and relatives. A lot of the time, foreigners, particularly from the so-called developed countries, admire the classical African way – we care for our kinsfolk: parents, children and all relatives, to whatever extent we can. By tradition we care to share.

It is this generosity of spirit that enabled us, over the ages, to build a very fluid society whereby anyone can rise to the top in wealth or power regardless of pedigree or even early status in life. The truth of this statement is borne out by numerous examples that surround us in the society.

Not least of all, Nigerians are great believers in freedom. That is
why dictators may come, oppress, maim and kill, but never totally subdue the spirit of the people.

We may have our defects as individuals and as a society, but I have not said here any good things that we are not. We may be too involved with ourselves to appreciate our laudable qualities. But, others do. None of us can fail to be impressed by how worried the rest of the world became during the throes of our recent plight and how welcome to many nations far and near, was the restoration of democracy and freedom in Nigeria.

The rest of the world was justified to welcome and appreciate Nigeria, and we should be thankful for that. This nation has carried, and continues honourably, to carry the burden of other nations, especially Africa. When we recount what we have done for others, it is not the wish to belittle them. No, in moments like this, we need to remind ourselves of the good we do as part of our celebration. Whether in the United Nations, G77 and Non-Aligned Movement, Black Diaspora, the Commonwealth, anywhere, Nigeria has discharged its responsibilities many times over. We have done so regardless of our own difficulties internally, and our imposed burden of foreign debt.

Nowhere, however, have we had more satisfaction than with what we have been able to do in Africa on bilateral basis, in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), or in the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). This country has, for the past forty years, and even more, worked and owned for Africa. We imported and distributed for Africa. We sacrificed, fought and died for Africa. We have done so and we will not stop doing any of these. When the great nations of the world are avowing not to send their nationals to fight for any cause abroad, we have fresh in our minds, our over *one thousand troops* who, in the last decade, have died trying to restore peace in our West Africa sub-region alone. And this is not counting material costs. All over Africa, there are tombs of Nigerian soldiers who went to sacrifice their lives for peace. Our troops are still out there.

History will surely record forever Nigeria’s inimitable African Nationalism of being located in West Africa and yet declaring itself a frontline State in the struggle to rid our African brothers and ourselves, and the world of the heinous evils of colonialism and apartheid in Southern Africa, and successfully contributing to the eventual victory. And there is
no stopping for us. Wherever there is a real need for us, we will be there.

We have every cause to celebrate and to give thanks to God Almighty for Nigeria. Some of us can be very hard or cynical and say that all these foregoing blessings and achievements might be very well, but that we have squandered all the goodwill, opportunities, and mutual brotherly feeling, and that there is little left to save. They cannot be more wrong, especially when they consider the alternative, or when they consider that there is really no alternative to a united, strong and confident Nigeria forging ahead.

Besides, and fortunately, such people do not represent many, let alone the majority of our people.

The experience of evil governance in the years preceding transition has raised serious questions about the strength of foundation of corporate Nigeria. Who wants Nigeria? How do the parts see themselves fitting into Nigeria? These questions were further highlighted by many of the incidents and disturbances in many communities since we came into office. In order to deal with the question, particularly with the fortieth anniversary approaching, I invited a wide cross-section of the political, traditional and religious leadership of each of the six zones of the federation to a separate dialogue in the State House in Abuja. We talked with each group at length. They were very candid with us. Their demands and complaints were varied, but of the usual vintage of equity, justice, development, power sharing, marginalisation, security, empowerment, resource control and the like.

For example:

- One of the zones expressed firm belief in ONE Nigeria, but with true federalism based on equality, power-sharing and justice, where each tier of Government – i.e. federal, state, and local governments – has its functions and performs its functions adequately and efficiently.

- Another zone does not only want the unity and oneness of Nigeria, but also wants it with equity, and is ready to fight for it.

- A zone recognises its people as essentially itinerant all over Nigeria, they need the unity and progress of Nigeria as much as any other group, but it must be unity and progress with security.
• Yet another zone talked of indivisibility of unity and oneness but with greater involvement in the resources of their region.

• One of the zone simply abhors marginalisation.

• Another simply cries for development.

We were rather pleased with the outcome, because the issues speak of an underlying oneness in the pursuit of a fair and progressive society. But, it was significant that not one zone said that it did not believe in a strong and united Nigeria. Let me say that I most strongly share the sentiment of the zone whose people were prepared to fight for the unity of Nigeria. I have once fought for the Unity of Nigeria. And I am prepared to do so again, if need be. Let us all be prepared to fight for Nigeria, that unity with progress is worth any sacrifice!

The outcome from the interactive consultation with leaders from the six zones point us to the formulation of a binding national ideology which could read thus:

• **To build a truly great African democratic country, politically united and stable, economically prosperous, socially organised, with equal opportunity for all and making adequate all-embracing contributions sub-regionally, regionally and globally.**

This should substitute for political religion, tribalism and sectionalism. This national binding ideology has a place for each Nigerian, no matter his place of residence, his birthplace, state or region, religion, political affiliation, occupation, social status, gender, or present place of residence. It is both fulfilling and challenging. It elevates rather than diminishes.

If we all embrace this national ethos and live by it and for it, the name of Nigeria will cease to conjure up in the minds of some outsiders the image of chaos and confusion, military coups and instability, corruption, non-working utilities, repression and brutality, violation of human rights, drug trafficking and business fraud.

I have always believed in democracy. And I will always do. I have a track record for that. I shall therefore never knowingly subvert the spirit, let alone the letter of the Constitution that I have, not for the first time, sworn to defend. People will naturally always try to find ways by which they can do their jobs more easily. But, I shall never forget that we all
came through democratic elections and have a Constitution to operate and defend in our respective assignments.

I have always believed in fundamental human rights and freedom, because I know that these values represent the best expression of democracy. I also know what it is to be deprived of human rights because I was once deprived of my own.

I have always believed in working as part of a team. Military training and my military experience demand no less. Even where I have been given the leverage to determine the composition of a team, I have endeavoured to maintain team spirit. Similarly, belonging to a political party means being part of a team.

And I concede full loyalty to our Party. Our victorious party, the Peoples' Democratic Party, is a phenomenon in Nigeria, being the first to win a very large absolute majority at all levels of government in a country where coalition governments had been the traditional means of making the centre hold. We have to purge and strengthen the Party by manifesting a democratic instinct at every turn, by successfully managing our impressive majority and, above all, by making a difference for the better, for all Nigerians, everyone, everywhere, and irrespective of party affiliation or other group identity.

I have always believed in the great potential of our people. Every man, woman or child has, or will have much to offer, given a fighting chance. In particular, I entertain great hope in, and have much respect for our youth. I do not disdain the youth or youthfulness. Like everyone else, I also grew up and do have my own children. Furthermore, I know that the young must have a voice and that the young shall grow, which is what keeps the world going. We are currently in the process of formulating a Youth Policy which, I believe, will provide a suitable formula for looking after our youth.

I have always believed that the education we receive and the positions we hold are mere tools and opportunities for greater service to our fellow beings, especially our fellow countrymen and women. We are not colonialists, and have not been put there to replace the British Colonialists. We are supposed to be better than they were. That is the whole point of independence. We certainly have no right to act even worse than the colonialists did. The nation owes us citizenship, liberty, justice
and opportunity. It does not owe us a living, let alone callous aristocracy over our own people. Furthermore, the fact that others misbehave, even if they get away with it, is no reason or excuse for any of us to also knowingly do so.

The immediate future the task in hand must include: fight against corruption, enthronement of equity and justice, need for moral re-armament and spiritual regeneration, move away from recourse to ethnicity and religious sentiments to sustain evil, greed, corruption, and oppression of others. It is a sin against humanity and God to condone, actively or passively, man’s evil against other people because the perpetrator is related to you in any way or you hope to benefit from the misdeed.

We are determined to move away from the past practices where corruption, crime, injustice, indolence and perversion were seen by many as legitimate avenues for wealth and advancement. Initiatives, industry, decency and good performance will be commended and rewarded, while corruption, crime and poor performance will be punished. We must enhance moral tone and bring about spiritual regeneration in our national life.

We are fully committed to make every Nigerian feel secure, where security implies freedom from fear, not just in terms of defending territory but more in protecting people and providing for their basic and essential needs. First, this must involve preventing deadly conflicts by promoting political and social arrangements in which all groups are fairly represented, combined with human rights, minority rights and broad-based economic development. The socio-economic programme must be predicated on equity, accountability, and alleviation of poverty.

Despite all the difficulties that we have had to confront, and are still confronting, it is always important that we all continue to have as our motivation, and as the justification of all our actions, the duty to work, with vigour and purposefulness, towards achieving our manifest destiny.

And that destiny is this: that by virtue of our size, our population, the ingenuity of our citizens, their ability to endure, and the natural resources with which God in His mercy has endowed us, it is our fate to be great. But in order to achieve this, two things are essential: we must convince ourselves that this destiny is a realistic one; and we must ourselves work at it persistently and deliberately.

We must all rededicate ourselves, at the beginning of the new
millennium, to the search for unity of purpose and faithfulness to the vision of the founders of our great country.

I particularly wish to appeal to our leaders in Ohaneze, Afenifere and Arewa Forum to genuinely dialogue with one another, rather than talk against one another from entrenched positions and postures. There is absolutely no virtue in confrontation. Each of these groups, in spite of its apparent large following in the context of Nigeria, will be diminished as an independent nation by itself.

We all have a stake in Enterprise—Nigeria!

National survival in the coming years cannot be achieved through weakness, or through lack of self-esteem. We owe it as a duty to ourselves, to our children, and to our children’s children, to do everything possible to guarantee for Nigeria the best that our human and material resources entitle us to. We have only just begun the struggle. The coming years are fraught with challenges. But on behalf of this Administration, I solemnly commit myself to do everything necessary, even at the risk of offending a few interest groups, to make Nigeria a country, which in the future we can all be proud of. I know how painful and difficult change always is, but I also know that with patience, with determination and by the grace of God, we shall all overcome. And we will all be beneficiaries of the fruit of the positive change.

We all have our respective tasks clearly defined in front of us. This Government and this President will faithfully pursue our Party manifesto and our other programmes in the spirit of patriotism and discipline, justice and fairplay, due diligence and efficiency, transparency and accountability. In particular, we are inseparably engaged in poverty alleviation, in the basic education scheme, revitalizing health care services and economic reconstruction. Above all, we shall ensure with all the sweat and blood we can muster, that our present democracy survives and grows and that Nigeria remains a strong and united nation that every Nigerian shall feel proud to belong to.

As part of our efforts to cast our net wide in seeking advice from relevant quarters, I have decided to establish honorary Presidential Advisory Councils—of not more than seven members per Council—on a number of subjects, such as foreign relations, investment, youth...
development, and so on. Such advice can only enhance the quality of decisions, policy formulation and execution on these issues.

We shall also demonstrate compassion and appreciation in all we do. This is an appropriate point to thank all who have been working for this country. I thank the leaders in both public and the private sector, our teachers and students, our doctors and nurses, all of our workers, all of our good people, men and women. The going may be tough, but we are determined and, by the Grace of God, success lies ahead.

Those who achieve shall be recognized and honoured just as miscreants are fished out and punished. Those who need compassion will find it. It is in accordance with this and in celebrating our 40th Anniversary of Independence that I have granted amnesty to some of our convicts whose release will pose no danger to society. Those who can be defensively pardoned will receive sympathetic consideration.

Even as I thank you very much for your attention and wish us all a very Happy 40th Anniversary of Independence, let me earnestly commend to you the words of our National Anthem. Those words say it all.

God bless the good people of Nigeria.
God bless our country, Nigeria.
Long live the Federal Republic of Nigeria.
It is a matter of great joy for me to have you in our midst, my Brother President Thabo Mbeki. I most heartily welcome you and your entourage to our country. On behalf of the government and people of Nigeria, I wish to express our deep appreciation for the fact that you found time to share with us the joy of the very historic moment of the Fortieth Anniversary of our independence.

I am pleased to note that Nigeria is certainly not an unfamiliar terrain to you, Mr President. A little over two decades ago, you were our guest, but in different circumstances. You were then the Principal Representative of your most respected organization, the African National Congress, which is today the ruling party in South Africa. Your visit is, therefore, one of homecoming. Mr President, I warmly welcome you home.

For us, there has never been any doubt about the fraternity between our peoples. As is well known, there was once a time when Nigeria's foreign policy was seen to be centred on the southern Africa sub-region, with South Africa as the focus. There is nothing to be ashamed of about that. In fact, we are proud of it. We are proud to have shared strongly the sentiment expressed by Dr Kwame Nkrumah when he said, at the moment when Ghana was blazing the trail of political independence in Africa, that Ghana's independence was meaningless for as long as any African country remained under colonial rule.

The pain of the evils of apartheid was anguish for all Africa, for it was the climax of the unparalleled suffering that this blessed continent of ours has suffered in the hands of foreigners. Apartheid was the ultimate demonstration of the disgusting truth that of all races in the world, Africans have been the only peoples to be discriminated against solely because of their colour. The universal axiom is that human dignity is priceless. I will
further say that, for us, the dignity of African peoples is indivisible. And it is, has been, and will continue to be, worth any sacrifice.

Mr President, we are proud that in our response to the evil of apartheid, our national boundary had been the continent of Africa. We are thus glad that the modest contributions to the struggle earned us the status of being a Frontline State. And we are delighted that apartheid was vanquished before the end of the last century, thus allowing us to enter the new millennium with Africa as a totally free continent, and with Africans being in-charge of their destiny.

Had apartheid been alive today – and thank God that it is not – our Fortieth Anniversary would have been hollow, to say the least. So, Mr President, your presence here has fully added the African dimension of the significance of the freedom that we have been celebrating. And I thank you very much for joining us.

It had also been our hope that in an Africa that was free of foreign domination, Africans (Nigerians or South Africans) would feel at home anywhere on the continent. With over 250 ethnic groups, speaking more than 350 distinct languages, the indications are that Nigeria has been a kind of ethnic confluence in the history of migrations of African peoples. This diversity also apply to the Republic of South Africa – the Rainbow Nation. Mr President, our two countries present to the world, the metaphor of man’s existence: that we are the same humanity. We must therefore stand together, for it is only in unity and solidarity that we can truly grasp the opportunities that abound in Africa.

Mr President, we in Nigeria have continued to follow, with much interest, the developments in your great country. Your progress so far has confirmed our pride to have been associated with the heroic struggle of your gallant men and women who fought for the liberation of their people from the shackles of oppression and man’s inhumanity to man, which the obnoxious apartheid system represented. We salute their courage. We equally remember and pay tribute to those of your compatriots who had to make the supreme sacrifice, in order to ensure a better and more decent life, for future generations and for the restoration of the dignity of the black man.

Mr President, it is impossible to write the contemporary history of the Republic of South Africa without the due recognition and
acknowledgement of the indelible role played by that illustrious son of Africa and foremost nationalist, former President Nelson Mandela. His statesmanship has been largely responsible for the political stability and economic and social progress which South Africa has recorded in the past six years. It is, therefore, heartening to note, Mr President, that since your assumption of office, a little over one year ago, not only have you continued to build on the solid foundations laid by the venerable MADIBA, but you have also demonstrated your genuine commitment and determination towards improving the living standards of your people, and taking South Africa to even greater heights. You have indeed been honourably answering the noble challenge to every younger generation, which is to improve on the efforts of their predecessors.

Mr President, as you are aware, democracy was restored in Nigeria sixteen months ago, following fifteen years of uninterrupted and prolonged military rule. Since the inception of our Administration, concrete steps have been taken to foster the process of national reconciliation, as well as evolve sound social and economic programmes aimed at improving the quality of the lives of our people within the shortest possible time. We are not unmindful of the challenges that lie ahead, but our resolve to work with vigour and determination, to ensure the success of the democratic process this time around, remains unshaken.

Mr President, your visit here is testimony to how the fraternal bond between our two countries has happily continued to grow from strength to strength. We have very encouraging statistics on trade and cooperation in various fields of human endeavour, as well as increased consultation, between layers of our societies. Prior to this time, the formal and informal trade between Nigeria and South Africa was rather insignificant. Within a short space of time, however, we have witnessed an exchange of goods and services in excess of one hundred million US dollars in 1999 alone. Furthermore, South Africa’s export to Nigeria rose by 65 per cent, while Nigeria’s export to South Africa rose by 54 per cent. Also, in the same period, we have formed a Joint Commission under which various Agreements have been signed.

Mr President, you are a strong advocate of the view that man is the most important factor in trade and development. I also believe that our people can share ideas through enhanced interaction, particularly in the
areas of education and information. Indeed, there is urgent need for the media of both our countries to cooperate and use their combined resources to the advantage of the people of Africa. As you must be aware, the media has a crucial role to play in the enlightenment of our peoples; for it is through enlightened discourse and objective reportage, that we can jointly eliminate unfair and unjust stereotyping on our continent.

In the energy sector, South African companies are working closely with their Nigerian counterparts. For example, SASOL is working with Chevron, while Eskom is working with our National Electric Power Authority (NEPA). By far, the most dramatic of these is the Agreement between Nigeria Airways and South African Airways. Thus, movement of peoples between the two countries is being made easier. It is our hope that the remaining barriers in our effort to develop more meaningful ties would be broken when there is a free flow of persons between our two nations.

Nigeria has expertise that is well acknowledged all over the world. In the past few years, some of them have been contributing their quota to the development of South Africa. These and several others are signposts of our commitment to Human Resource development in South Africa. We should continue to encourage the transfer of skills and technological know-how, and also the infusion of men and women of talent and creativity, so as to enrich our economy and society.

Mr President, I am sure that members of the business sector in your entourage would have interacted with their Nigerian counterparts, with a view to creating more business and employment opportunities. Cooperation is so essential in a world where Africa’s marginalisation in world trade has become so obvious and glaring. There is indication that if we do not pool our resources together, and maintain a common front, we would be further marginalized. Our initial response to this lamentable trade pattern within the continent is the establishment of a Ministry for Cooperation and Integration in Africa, and that of Commerce in Africa. We have done this in order to create the institutional framework for improving intra-African trade, and as a necessary step towards securing a more equitable share for Africa in world trade.

Mr President, you are aware of the debt overhang of our continent. Africa has continually sold its resources to the developed nations at prices
dictated by the latter, yet the greater proportion of our income evaporates into the gaping hole of debt service. Consequently, our institutions and social infrastructure have received less attention than hitherto, thereby stifling economic growth and development.

The confidence reposed in us, as hopes of our continent in particular and the developing nations in general, is signified by the assignment given to our two nations to champion the twin-cause of debt cancellation and eradication of poverty. Consequently, we have ceaselessly tabled the case for debt remission before the Group of Seven and multilateral institutions and only recently, brought to the attention of the world, during the Millennium Summit, the poverty situation of our continent. Our hope is that these problems would soon be tackled with all the seriousness that they deserve.

On our part as government, we have liberalized the business environment and we will continue to reform and fine-tune it to make it more conducive to investment. Our expectation is that the private sector would do its part by taking the critical initiatives to propel our economy along the much-needed path of growth.

It is imperative that we hasten to develop. Our location, our destiny and the contemporary forces of globalisation have thrust upon us the burden of turning around the fortunes of our continent. We must not and we cannot shy away from this responsibility.

South Africa and Nigeria, put together, account for more than a quarter of the population of Africa. Our GDP, together, accounts for more than two thirds of that of the continent. Yet, the majority of our peoples live below poverty level. Poverty is the largest monster threatening the peaceful existence of our people on the continent. Indeed, without eradicating poverty, conflict prevention and resolution would become more difficult.

Furthermore, disease, the sibling of poverty, would also continue to ravage our land. For example, malaria is still one of the major causes of infant mortality. This was the reason for our hosting the Roll-Back Malaria Conference here in Abuja, in April. Nigeria, with vast experience in the treatment of the disease, will provide necessary ingredients for joint research with South Africa, in order to eliminate it.

There is also the HIV/AIDS pandemic that has attained frightening proportions in our continent. We must equally jointly engage in vigorous
research for cost-effective solutions as well as search for new techniques for controlling its spread.

As beneficiaries of our history, we know and we saw and we are living witnesses to the horrors of slave trade. Today, before our own eyes too, malaria and HIV/AIDS have combined to pluck the best and the youth of our lands. Put differently, the true spirit of African brotherhood dictates that we should show some concern and care about our brothers. We should share in their joys and pains. As you well know, Mr President, the human capital is critical to the survival of our continent.

Our greatest challenge of the century, Mr President, is how our two nations can jointly attack this monster that is destroying our continent. We fought together to end colonialism; we combined our moral and political forces to defeat apartheid; it is time to again combine our political will and technological know-how to fight this new African scourge. As a first step, we must first cooperate and pool resources. We must build new institutions and strengthen existing ones, on which we shall stand to fight our battle of survival. In the same spirit of African brotherhood, and togetherness, we must use our resources to eliminate poverty. Our manpower is there for South Africa to utilize and for us, we shall freely use South African technology.

Our joint positions on matters affecting the continent is an indication of our commitment to finding solutions to our numerous problems in Africa. One of such problems is its seemingly intractable intra-state conflicts. We must begin by claiming ownership of our problems and we must recognize the simple truth that no one can do anything to us worse than what we can do to ourselves. Neither can anyone do for us anything better than what we can do for ourselves. Indeed, experience has shown us that a sub-regional and, eventually, a regional approach to conflict resolution will yield better results. We must not turn away from a helping hand, but we must acknowledge the obvious. God will help those who help themselves. Waiting for help from outside the continent has not really helped us.

Nigeria and South Africa will continue to forge a common front through closer cooperation and collaboration, to resolve these conflicts. We shall maximize our resources for optimum results.

Our geographical location and status in the continent have combined
to give us an advantage. South Africa, no doubt, is the powerhouse of the
Southern Africa sub-region and its institution, the Southern African
Development Community (SADC). The same goes for Nigeria, within
ECOWAS. You may wish to recall, Mr President, that in my address to
the Summit of Heads of State of SADC in August 1999, I proposed that
both ECOWAS and SADC should start working out modalities for
cooperation.

I wish to restate that demand which has become more critical to our
survival and competitiveness. We need to move faster if we are to realise
any positive results within the next few years. Our peoples, who have
waited patiently for the dividends of democracy, as well as the dividends
from their God-given resources cannot wait for too long. They cannot
and must not wait in vain. The task that the African century has thrust on
us, Mr President, is to deliver the continent from poverty and disease and
the social alienation and economic marginalisation that derive from them.

It is indeed our sincere hope that the warm fraternal relations existing
between both countries would continue to be strengthened in the years
ahead, to the mutual benefit of our peoples who have since longed for the
potential advantages of an Abuja-Pretoria Axis.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, on the occasion of this
memorable and historic visit, may I now invite all of you to rise and join
me in toasting to the continued good health and personal well-being of
His Excellency, President Thabo Mbeki, of the Republic of South Africa,
and for the peace and progress of the peoples of South Africa and Nigeria.

May God bless and strengthen Nigeria-South Africa relations. Long
live African solidarity.

I thank you all.
Let me begin by saying how most delighted I am to be here to share with you during this retreat some of the thoughts which must be considered if your parastatals are to succeed. These ideas are so basic that they only have to be stated for the truth and power therein to become self-evident. I want us to dialogue, and for all of us to leave here with one concept about the fundamental principles and concepts of what public service means, and what it does not mean.

I am not here to read you a riot act. I hope that at the end of these deliberations your actions, together with mine, would be guided by the imperative of truth and honesty in public service, and by the overarching need for good men and women to serve their nation — a nation which for so long has been severely and persistently raped, ravaged and plundered by men and women occupying positions such as you now hold, for their own selfish interests and enrichment.

Government has set up public enterprises, corporations, commissions, companies, etc, so that these businesses will act within the public arena almost as private companies, freed from and independent of restrictiveness of bureaucracy. In doing so, it is expected that men who have experience in private enterprise and public service would be appointed to the Boards of these enterprises and bring their wealth of experience to bear on them. Parastatals were never established as sinecures for the indolent, nor as businesses to be run for the personal benefit of its Chairmen, Chief Executive officers and management.

Sadly, our experience has been one of the most shameless histories of thievery by both Board members and management. Financial prudence gave way to profligacy. Parastatals which ought to be accountable, and indeed yield profit, became conduits for government funds to be wastefully
and criminally spent on members of the Board, management, their relatives, and agents.

Many of you, if not all of you, may already know of certain bewildering facts about parastatals, such as:

- hardly did any parastatals produce audited annual accounts on a regular basis;
- and that nearly all of them depend on government subventions of which they cannot have enough; and
- that a large number of them have gone borrowing with no intention to repay.

I am sure that many of you who assumed office recently — that is since the inauguration of our Administration — may have more horror stories to tell about the scale of looting and theft that beats one’s imagination and simply boggles the mind: stories, which unfortunately, are often very true.

For a developing economy such as ours, it was necessary to make our parastatals the pillars of our industry and the bedrock of our national economy. Accordingly, the monumental failure of the parastatals remain the worst instances of how we as a nation have failed miserably to manage our resources. The worst cases have been cited again and again, but I will repeat them because the lessons cannot be over-emphasised:

- Twenty-one years ago, the Nigerian National Shipping Line had 25 ships, nineteen of which had been newly acquired by the outgoing military administration — today there is no Nigerian National Shipping Line, let alone a ship;
- Nigeria Airways, which in 1979 had a fleet of over 30 aircraft, today does not have the planes to service any of its routes;
- National Electricity Power Authority, which had an installed capacity of over 5,000 megawatts, by May 1999 was unable to generate more than 1,500 megawatts; and
- Four refineries which had a combined capacity to meet and exceed our domestic consumption, by May 1999 had become so run-down that none of them could operate.

We have served enough notice on the attitude and behaviour behind such catastrophes in our public establishments. We have repeatedly said:
it is no longer business as usual. And we mean it — in the absolute and categoric sense! There is a new beginning. And we intend not only to thoroughly clean out the stable, we will sanitise it! We will definitely not witch-hunt, even though the process will be rational, legitimate and just. But if in cleaning out the stable we find cesspools of rogues, we will go after them, recover the money belonging to the nation and bring the full weight of law on them. This will be the case for anybody found to be corrupt, regardless of whose ox is gored during this process. There will be no sacred cows!

It is lamentable that in this country when unarmed robbers are being requested to give up their ill-gotten acquisition by which others have been impoverished, some disreputable men and women would bring feeble and shameful defence on ethnicity, religion, and politics.

How did matters reach the depressing situation in which we found ourselves when the Administration took over? I have already given you some of the reasons. But in the future we will move in the direction of profits, good housekeeping, good management and transparency.

If you want to be in a job just because you are jobless, then you have missed the road by coming on the board of a parastatal. What the parastatal can legitimately pay you will not be sufficient to maintain yourself and your family as part-time Board members. You may therefore be sorely tempted to augment your allowance by doing business with the corporation. This is a form of insider dealing, which is illegal, and certainly unethical. It is also a conflict of interests. As a member of a Board, your interest is to get the best price and best quality of goods for the company or corporation. You, as a supplier, are biased in favour of your goods. As a buyer you can influence your colleagues; most important of all, you know everyone’s prices and can adjust yours where others cannot.

To be a board member is to offer service to the Board, and thereby to the nation. To do this successfully you must know what the Board does. Often, people come to me and say, "I want to be on the board of NMA, Port Authority, LNG," etc. These are often people who know practically nothing of what these parastatals are about or what they do, other than that they believe that they can go there to make money. This perception and the attendant attitude underlay the running down — and ultimate destruction — of parastatals in the past.
Before accepting a Board appointment, you should think very carefully about the responsibility that you would be assuming and how best to discharge your duties accordingly. Our Administration wants people who can render services. What can you offer? We don’t need carpet-baggers.

People have been more concerned about getting their friends and nominees on parastatals rather than on the health, survival and performance of the Boards. Very few have ever wondered how these nominees perform while on the Board. Ethnicity is no criteria for appointment. The principle of Federal Character will always be a consideration. Far more important will be the issues of assessments of how a Board member will perform based on his or her previous record of performance. If Federal Character has been employed in selecting and placing Board members, only performance will keep you on the Board. This is our guiding principle. I wish to make this abundantly clear. There is no other way. If NEPA does not work I cannot explain to Nigerians that the failure was due to the fact that the Chief Executive Officer is from this tribe or that tribe. Apart from being an insult to that tribe, it is not even a good excuse. The only acceptable explanation is one based on performance.

Chairpersons of parastatals must not turn themselves into or see themselves as Chief Executives, no matter how highly placed the Chairpersons may regard themselves. A Chairperson of the Board is no more than a *primus inter pares* among Board members. Chairpersons are there to help the Chief Executive Officer to do what is right, and not to supplant the Chief Executive, who is answerable to the Board as a whole and not just to one individual. Where there is doubt or dispute about this principle, the matter should be referred to the supervising Minister. If the supervising Minister is in doubt, he refers the matter to the Presidency.

The supervising Ministers have already been given the following instructions:

- *they are not to interfere* in the day-to-day running of the parastatals;
- *they are to be fully briefed* on what is going on in the parastatals;
- *they must know* whether policies set by the Administration are being strictly followed — and if not, why not?

This, however, is no license for unnecessary and incessant interference in the day-to-day operation of the parastatals. Neither is the parastatal to
serve the personal interest, comfort or convenience of the Minister or the Permanent Secretary.

Let me make this clear: The relationship between the Minister and the Parastatal, through the Board, is one of interdependence, not independence. If the Minister seeks to know something about what is happening in a parastatal, how its finances, for example, are being spent, he must always be fully briefed.

You cannot, as I said earlier, be on a Board of a Parastatal to do business or to get contracts from the same Board. It is immoral, unethical, unfair, and does not follow the path of transparency. In other words, it is a form of corruption. To clarify these and other issues, we will issue a Code of Conduct for members of Boards of Parastatals. Parastatals are commercial enterprises and will be judged accordingly – on the basis of performance – on monthly, quarterly and annual reports, which must be filed on time and in the format acceptable to normal business enterprises. The parastatals must be faithful to the instruments and laws setting them up, as well as to the law affecting companies (Companies Acts) and with their various amendments. What applies to Board members applies even more to Chief Executives who are invariably accounting officers and members of the management team of the parastatal or company.

Overseas travel must be severely curtailed and undertaken only when absolutely purposeful and necessary. Where a parastatal is not performing or is performing below targets, that parastatal will either be scrapped or its Board and/or its Management replaced by those who can perform. The public expects the highest standard of public performance: parastatals must eschew nepotism, favouritism, corruption; whilst extolling and practising transparency, openness, fairness, equity and efficiency.

I will remain with you on this retreat for a while, to dialogue with you, with the hope that at the end we will all leave here effectively focused on the new orientation of our democratic dispensation, namely national re-birth and economic revival.

I thank you.
ABUJA IS OPEN FOR BUSINESS

At the Opening of the 16th World Conference of Mayors
Abuja, 16 October, 2000

I am indeed pleased to address this important gathering of the Sixteenth Annual Conference of Mayors. On behalf of the Government and people of Nigeria, I welcome you all most heartily to our national Capital, Abuja.

I understand that your organisation, the World Conference of Mayors (WCM), was founded in 1964 out of the initiative of the then Mayor of Tuskegee, in the State of Alabama, USA, the Honourable Johnny Ford. Honourable Ford’s wisdom and foresight resulted in the convening of the first ever global meeting of Mayors with participants drawn mainly from Europe, Africa, the Caribbean and Black Mayors in the United States. Since that historic meeting, Honourable Ford’s initiative has grown from strength to strength.

Lamentably, Nigerian cities have until very recently been unable to participate fully in the activities of the WCM. It is understandable that the WCM shunned Nigeria, particularly in the more recent years when we languished in a dark tunnel of evil and corrupt governance and our cities became notorious as nasty and brutish den of thieves and armed robbers.

The good news is that with the successful completion of transition on May 29, 1999, when our Administration was installed, things began to look better, and have continued to improve ever since. By the Grace of God, we will never again return to the conditions of those dark years.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I note with deep appreciation that although Nigeria’s first attendance at your conference was only a few years ago, you decided at the Fifteenth Annual Meeting in Libreville, Gabon, to elect Nigeria into the Governing Board of the WCM and granted us the right to host the current meeting. This was a clear demonstration of your solidarity with the effort of the government and people of Nigeria to build an enduring democracy for themselves and for posterity. This gesture
has no doubt contributed to the improvement of Nigeria’s image and respectability within the world community. And we are grateful for it.

Your presence, however, has even more far-reaching significance. It might come as a surprise to some of you, and indeed many Nigerians are yet to fully absorb the full implications of the reality that our Administration is the first legitimate government to be formally inaugurated and installed in Abuja. From the beginning, the decision to establish Abuja was challenged by skeptics and cynics, local and international, who wondered for a variety of political, economic and logistic reasons, whether Abuja would ever become a reality. In fact, the development of this city has experienced the full turmoil of our national politics. But that decision has survived and is now confirmed to be a valid and relevant one. Because it was borne out of a very potent ideology: namely, the unity of Nigeria.

I had the honour, twenty-four years ago, to have been one of those who developed and decided on the vision of Abuja as the Federal Capital Territory that would be the heart of nation. Today, I am pleased to see the existence of Abuja as a confirmation of my personal conviction that the unity of Nigeria is an enduring vision that is capable of withstanding the worst of the ups and downs of our national politics.

Coincidentally, when the decision was made twenty-four years ago to establish this new capital, the completion date was about now. Thus, your presence here is symbolically the international baptism for our new city. I consider the occasion here today to be as good an opportunity as any to declare Abuja open for business!

Like any typical city, Abuja has already become the place to feel the pulse of the Nigerian society from which it draws its inhabitants. Many of you are mayors of cities that are microcosms of the societies in your countries. Very often, your city is the first point of contact for visitors to get that critical first impression of the society. It is in the city that one observes signs of prosperity and progress – or lack of it. It is in the city that one samples the cross-section of cultural tendencies that gets labelled as the mentality of the people.

Your job as mayors is to manage and administer the dynamics of the city to achieve optimum harmony and efficiency in the lives of the inhabitants as they go about in their daily business. Some of you are elected, and some of you are appointed. But, no matter how you got into
office, the essence of your job is leadership, and for that you must be of
good character, possess integrity and command respect within your
community. And to be successful, you need political sensitivity, you must
have that feeling of connection and involvement with the grassroots
population that make up your city.

In this context I would like to register before you, Distinguished
Mayors of the world, my concern for the events that are happening in
cities of the Middle East. I would like to make a strong appeal to the
Israeli and Palestinian authorities to please stop the violence, and return
to dialogue. The rest of the world has been delighted with the considerable
progress made towards peace, all of which would be jeopardised if the
remaining grounds are not covered. It would be an exemplary mark of
statesmanship on the part of the leaders on both sides if they could reconcile
their differences for the sake of badly needed peace in this region which
happens to be the spiritual focus for the world’s three leading religions.

The inhabitants of Abuja, indeed all Nigerians, would appreciate
the benefit of the WCM’s experience of several decades. Our Federal
Capital is a very young city that must be one of the most rapidly growing
in the world. There is a lot we can still learn, particularly on how to avoid
the mistakes of older cities.

It is now my singular honour and privilege to declare open the
Sixteenth World Conference of Mayors. I wish you a very successful
deliberation.

I thank you. May God bless you and your Conference.
Fellow Nigerians, it is a great pleasure for me to address you on this important day, the Twentieth World Food Day Celebration of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations.

As you are aware, each year since 1981, the World Food Day has been observed on the Sixteenth of October throughout the world, and a focal theme is selected for critical examination of national and global food security. Last year, I had the honour of addressing the nation on the Nineteenth World Food Day, when the theme was ‘Youth Against Hunger’. Today, by God’s Grace, we are celebrating, along with about one hundred and fifty countries worldwide, the Twentieth World Food Day.

This year’s theme, ‘A Millennium Free from Hunger’, focuses attention on national and international strategies for fighting hunger. Personally, both as a farmer and in service of the nation, I have long identified with this global aspiration that all people should have access to adequate food at all times, and at affordable prices. The priority of this Administration, which I sincerely hope is now clear to all Nigerians, is to attain, within the shortest possible time, food security for all citizens. Thus, for us, this year’s theme of ‘A Millennium Free from Hunger’, could not be more apt.

I equally share the thoughts of the organisers of this year’s celebration in the choice of the essay topic of ‘Nurturing Secondary School Students in Eradicating Hunger in Nigeria in the 21st Century’. This topic, I understand, was keenly competed for by all Federal Secondary Schools nationwide. There is no doubt that in our collective efforts at fighting hunger, the youths of today have a significant role to play as they constitute our investment and hope for the future.

We, as a people, must appreciate that the goal of food security for our large and fast growing population is a challenging vision, particularly
in view of the past neglect of Nigeria’s agriculture, mostly because petroleum has come to dominate our national economy. This neglect has not only distorted our economic development, but has cost us dearly, socially and culturally. The undeniable truth is that our culture is agriculture! It has always been so, and must remain so. We must be able to feed ourselves, and the only way to achieve food security and well-being of a large majority of Nigerians is through virile and sustainable agriculture.

At the current rate of population growth, about 2.83 per cent per annum, Nigeria’s present population of about 120 million is projected to rise to about 500 million by year 2050. Meanwhile, our agricultural production has only managed to attain a growth rate of less than five per cent per annum in recent years. A fresh initiative is therefore required to re-invigorate our agricultural sector to meet the challenges of providing food for Nigerians in the new millennium. This is no mean task, if the bulk of the food consumed in Nigeria is to be produced by this sector.

I wish to use this occasion to reiterate this Administration’s commitment towards redressing the unacceptable level of poor nourishment and poverty in our land. Available data shows that about 60 per cent Nigerians live below the poverty line. Around 50 per cent of the population have no access to safe water; about 38 per cent do not have access to primary health care; and most Nigerians consume less than a third of the minimum required protein and vitamins intake, mostly because they cannot afford it. This condition is unacceptable to this government.

We strongly believe that a nation that cannot feed itself will be enslaved. This is why agriculture is the cornerstone of our development strategies. It is also why food security is the number one item on our list of priorities. In fact, the benefit of all other policy items are judged by whether or not they contribute to our efforts to adequately and sustainably feed ourselves.

It is true that the present level of poverty and hunger in our land has been brought about by over two decades of political instability, policy inconsistencies, low capacity utilization and bad governance, amongst others. The major consequences of the above lapses are the unacceptably high level of unemployment and widespread poverty and hunger in our land. It is in demonstration of our commitment towards fighting the problems of unemployment, poverty and hunger, that this administration has constituted a Poverty Alleviation Council, chaired by myself. We
believe that the twin problem of hunger and poverty can be effectively tackled if there is firm commitment on the part of government, and unity of purpose among stakeholders.

The task for the agricultural producers as the major stakeholder in the Poverty Alleviation Programme is to strive to surpass the present growth rate of 4.5 per cent per annum and achieve a minimum growth rate of 6 per cent in the short term. This will go a long way towards ensuring that our goal of food self-sufficiency and food security is realized within a reasonable time. I am pleased to note that recent efforts in this sector are pointing in the direction of this growth target.

The continued huge losses of agricultural produce due to spoilage, pests and diseases have been the major problem of this sector. To this effect, reduction of post-harvest crop losses at the farm level is being promoted through the adoption of improved simple and efficient small-scale technologies. Our research results are being effectively applied in the following areas: soil and water management, forestry, arable and horticultural crops, tree crops, fisheries, livestock and poultry, wildlife and extension. These research findings are critical to this Administration’s development strategy in the fight against hunger. It is gratifying to note that our research institutes’ efforts have further enhanced Nigeria’s position as the world’s largest cassava producer.

There is a strong need for viable co-operative and farmers’ associations whose activities can enhance food production, processing and marketing. And I want to commend non-governmental organisations for their strong presence at this year’s World Food Day, especially the Nigerian Union of Fishermen and Seafood Dealers which was incorporated as far back as 1945 to cater for the needs of the fisheries sub-sector and fisherfolks.

On the whole, I am confident that the problem of hunger in the new millennium will be markedly ameliorated, and soon. As part of our national revival, we must re-invigorate our belief in our ability not just to feed ourselves, but to feed ourselves well. And by God’s Grace, this country will comfortably and prosperously survive on the fruits of this land.

I thank you. And may God bless you all.
I am indeed pleased to be here this morning to share with you the joy of commissioning one thousand newly procured security jeeps by your Association. Let me say a big congratulation to all of you for this bold initiative, which is so impressive that I get particular satisfaction from being the first President to be performing this role of commissioning vehicles on behalf of Local Government Chairpersons.

The media – which I hope will pick this impressive sight here in Eagle Square – are going to carry the message that our Local Governments are at last in action in the service of those who elected them into office. And, presumably, when these vehicles are operating, the ordinary man woman and child in our rural areas will perceive the reality and effectiveness of having local governments.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, you are all politicians, and you all know that impression counts very much in the relations between yourselves and the electorate. Not only must you perform, you have to be seen to be performing. In this regard, local governments have a special role to play in our new dispensation. By being in direct contact with the grassroots, you have a special duty to make that ‘ordinary Nigerian’ feel and believe that not only has democracy returned, it is working well for him or her.

Not so long ago, local governments meant a lot to many Nigerians. They used to be called Native Authority, and they combined the moral authority of traditional rulers and the efficiency of modern administrative methods to offer a combination of justice, amenities and services for the benefit of local people. The Native Authority used to have a clear image of a fully established government, complete with active departments for
such services as health, education, public works and agriculture.

Our constitution has consistently recognised the role of local
governments and retained them firmly as the third tier of government. This is in consonance with the full recognition of local governance as being at the heart of participatory democracy.

Like all other institutions in this country, local governments have suffered degradation from bad governance at the centre, state and local levels. Nevertheless, you have so multiplied that, by numbers alone, Nigerians should be able to claim that they are well served by local governments.

As Local Government Chairpersons, you are in direct contact with the grassroots. You should aim to be the first port of call when a Nigerian wishes to stake his claim on government. You should be the first to hear the cry of that child who is hungry because of lack of food. You should be the first to sense the agony of the sick who cannot get treatment because of poor health facilities. And if the people are feeling insecure because of widespread crime, they should be able to call on you to do something about it.

As a local person whose background is familiar to the local people, your moral authority is critical. To successfully exercise this moral authority, your leadership qualities must of necessity be that of integrity, political sensitivity, and effective decision and implementation.

As frontline operators of our new Republic, your performance in office will be a major index of future prospects of Nigerian democracy. Through you, the people of this country should actively sense the advantages of a peaceful, stable and democratic political system. For in the circumstances in which we are pushing for national rebirth, local government will be left behind if they cannot come up with new ideas, new orientations, new attitudes and new vistas. It would be a disaster if you failed and were left behind.

Our Administration has stated its total commitment to giving just and efficient leadership at the federal level. There are many areas where the Federal Government, constitutionally, cannot – and must not – dictate or interfere with the other tiers of government. In these areas, we hope that the relationship will be of cordiality, cooperation and complementarity, and we will as much as possible offer support, assistance, and advice to
those who care to share our views. We should understand the partnership of the three tiers of government in development and as joint stakeholders in progress. But in those areas where Federal laws and policy need to be complied with, our Administration will act swiftly and decisively against any local government that acts in breach.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is now my pleasure and honour to commission these one thousand security jeeps to the glory of God and for the welfare and well-being of all Nigerians through control and reduction of crime.

I thank you. May God bless you all.
It is indeed a matter of pleasure for me to meet most of you again, soon after the launching of the ALGON security vehicles earlier this week. This meeting, however, has a specific purpose that being the first occasion when you and I in our capacities and roles in government will interact and rub minds to obtain a focus on the orientation of governance under the new democratic dispensation.

Specifically, my invitation to you stems from my experiences as I have gone round the country and realised that there are certain areas where there is need to listen to grassroots voices expressing their concerns and problems. Let me make it clear that in this interaction, you are to see yourselves as chief executives of Local Government Councils, which is not just a third tier of governance of the federation, but a government in the full sense of the word.

This was how local government was conceived and perceived in the original Government Act of 1976 which I had the honour and privilege to spearhead and broker. It is true that subsequent constitutions, while retaining the basic concept of local governments, may have influenced and altered the scope of your jurisdiction, especially by increasing the number of states which, while reducing the distance between state governments and local governments, has accentuated direct influence of the authorities of the state governments. Nevertheless, there is no substitute for your role as the first point of contact for the grassroots population.

You have a responsibility which the electorate expects of you when they cast their votes to elect you. It is the responsibility which is defined by the constitution that provides that you be entitled to a share of federal revenue to give you the means to cater for the needs of the people in the local area.

Your responsibilities do not have to be invented. Functioning local
governments are within living memory. Most Nigerians will remember being educated in schools run by local administrations. Equal number of Nigerians will also remember receiving treatment in health centres and dispensaries run by local governments.

We remember the army of sanitary inspectors checking on public health as part of the service for local governments. And local governments had public works departments that built and catered for roads between villages, constructed and looked after local markets – all contributions to striving local economies and small businesses.

Lamentably, these indications of effective local government in action have all but faded away. This is at a time when the number of local governments have multiplied by many folds and Nigerians have been dragged out to register their democratic awareness and recognition of local governance through electoral activities. In short, Nigerian voters have every right to feel that when it comes to local governance, that they are now being short-changed. This situation has to be stopped. Most of all, because it is completely out of alignment with the new orientation at the federal level where we are fully committed to vigorously pushing for national re-birth and reconstruction.

Let us examine our limitations and failures so that we can deliver on our electoral promises. We must deliver in the improvement of infrastructures, in our conduct and public behaviour, and in our prompt reaction to the plights of our people. Being closer to the people, you are the resident symbols of democracy.

All other tiers of government must support you in the discharge of your roles so that, together, we can address the issues of rural poverty, urban squalor and social disharmony. A practical process of forging a coalition of purpose for our actions should be another subject of this meeting.

You are all aware of the government’s crusade against corruption. Transparency and accountability in the conduct of public business is an imperative for development and progress. The recently enacted Anti-Corruption Law, together with the inauguration of the Anti-Corruption Commission, is for all Nigerians, both in private and public life, and all who do business with us. Let nobody deceive you that the law is applicable only to Federal Public Office holders. And let nobody test the will of this Administration to enforce it whenever and wherever it is necessary.
The essence of this law is that all those who are custodians of public trust should serve in the public interest, and public funds should be legally managed for the public purpose. The enactment of this law is morally right, politically correct and it is absolutely necessary for the restoration of confidence in our ability to regulate ourselves.

The legally inclined minds should study Section 60 (a) of the Second Schedule of Legislative Powers in the Exclusive Legislative List together with section 15 (5) of the Nigerian Constitution. It is clear that the law is for all Nigerians. Therefore, all tiers of government, their agencies, and public office holders should adhere to the provisions of the anti-corruption law. While there shall be no sacred cows, the law itself assures the protection of honest Public Officers against frivolous and unfounded accusations. I urge you to acquaint yourselves with the stipulations of this very important law.

The Federal Government is initiating a number of programmes for poverty alleviation and reduction. It has embarked on the implementation of some programmes in the areas of social services such as health care delivery, sanitation, water and electricity supply, in which we anticipate bilateral and multilateral assistance. We have set for ourselves a realistic target and we are on schedule.

Very soon, government will introduce Youth Employment Schemes (YES) which is designed to bring succour to unemployed youths in all the nooks and corners of the country and assist all those who want to start small businesses. The central objective of YES is to train and deploy people without jobs to do the jobs without people! It will be our new deal.

However, the effectiveness of these programmes and those initiated by State Governments can only be assured through the cooperation of the Local Governments. There is, therefore, the need for harmony in intergovernmental relations and activities in the interest of the nascent democracy. I hope this meeting will dwell on this issue so that every responsibility will stand on the plank of an appropriate measure of authority.

Let me also appeal to you to continue to fulfill your constitutional roles and be good partners in the task of nation building.

I sincerely welcome you and I hope we shall take full advantage of this meeting.

I thank you. Let us talk.
I am very pleased to welcome you all to Abuja, to this meeting of the Global Coalition for Africa. I have been associated with the GCA since its establishment, and I have participated in many of its activities. But I am particularly honoured to play host to this Policy Forum, being the first time that the GCA is meeting in Nigeria. I thank you all for making the journey here, and I look forward to our dialogue during the course of the next two days.

We are here to discuss urbanization in Africa, and the promises and challenges that it presents. This is very much an issue for our time, and how we address it will affect the legacy we leave for future generations.

Although Africa is the continent with the most rapid rate of urban growth, it frequently seems as though urbanization has caught us unawares. In many—_if not most_—instances, the growth of our cities has lacked planning and coordination. Often, we do not recognize the full social and environmental implications of urban growth. As a result, our policies tend to be reactive, as we struggle to catch up with a rapidly changing and deteriorating situation. There is no doubt that a more proactive approach is needed: one that is comprehensive and sees urban development as an integral part of the challenges of national development.

It is imperative that we in Africa pay greater attention to urbanization, if we are to effectively rise to the challenge of creating a better quality of life for our current urban population as well as bequeath a healthy environment to future generations. Cities are important realities of our present, and, given the present growth rate, they will become an even greater part of our social structure in the future.

Lamentably, urbanization in Africa has proceeded without the economic growth and increased prosperity that historically accompanied the growth of cities in other regions. _In predominantly poor countries, we have predominantly poor cities._ Even worse, for the most part, economic growth in urban areas has not kept pace with the increase in the
urban population. The result has been the increasing urbanization of poverty. We must not take this to be inevitable. We must change it.

It is perhaps appropriate that this meeting is taking place in Nigeria, which contains some of the largest cities on the continent. There is a pointed lesson in sitting here, in Abuja, which is indeed a city in the making – in the fastest sense!

Nigeria is arguably the most urbanized of African countries. Lagos, with an estimated population of almost thirteen million people, is the largest city in sub-Saharan Africa, and already belongs to the league of the world’s mega cities. By the year 2005, Lagos is expected to be among the five largest cities in the world.

Lagos can be seen as a glaring example of all that is good and bad about urbanization. The vitality, the opportunities, and the openness to new ideas, that are the positive side of urbanization are all abundantly evident in Lagos. But so too are the inequality, the poor services and infrastructure, the dehumanizing misery of the poor, and the lack of security that have become a common feature of large cities.

Though it is by far the largest city in Nigeria, Lagos is not the only major urban center. Unlike many countries in Africa where one city dominates, in Nigeria it is estimated that we currently have some fourteen cities of over a million inhabitants. That number is expected to increase to eighteen by 2010. The sustainability of cities and their effective governance is thus the reality we in Nigeria face on a continual basis.

Urban migration in Africa has followed the same pattern of human behaviour throughout the world, namely, that people migrate to cities in search of a better life and greater opportunities. We need to create urban environments where these hopes and dreams can be realized. Too often, the reality is that people find themselves trapped in poverty and unemployment, and their hopes turned to despair.

Research indicates that up to two thirds of all urban dwellers in Africa end up in informal settlements, without adequate access to such basic services as water and sanitation. For many, the daily struggle to survive becomes overwhelming – nasty, brutish, and all too often very short. We have to ask ourselves what hope is there for those who cannot find work or feed their families? What hope is there for children whose only homes are the streets? How can they contribute to the development of their country?
We must not, out of despair, see urbanization as necessarily negative. After all, cities have historically acted as hot houses for creative ideas and innovation, hence as driving forces for development and progress. This attribute of the city is what we in Africa should capitalize on and encourage. We need to ensure that our cities are centres of growth by creating the sort of environment that attracts investment and promotes entrepreneurship. We need to provide the education that will equip our young people for the 21st century and give them the skills that investors and the private sector are looking for. We also need to make cities safe. No one is going to invest if they cannot venture outside of their homes or offices without fear, or if all of their profits have to be spent on paying for the security that municipal authorities are unable to provide.

Urban problems require political, as well as technical solutions. They also require innovation. The financial viability of cities will depend on the extent to which resources can be generated and costs recovered. Ways of achieving this on a sustainable basis, have to be found. Greater local responsibility and increased involvement of residents could help to improve urban governance, while partnerships between the public and private sectors could enhance and expand the provision of services. At the same time, the development of public sector planning and management capacity, and mechanisms to promote accountability, cannot be ignored. These are complex issues, but they are also issues which we must confront fully or face the risk of being overwhelmed by the consequences of failure.

The other side of urbanization is the need for appropriate rural development policies and strategies. Greater opportunities and a better life in rural areas and small towns would no doubt slow the exodus to major urban centres, and at the same time contribute to the overall development of our countries. We need to avoid a situation where the only people left in rural areas are the old, the sick and the very young. This situation of decimated rural areas and the death of small towns is already a feature of many industrialized countries, and is becoming apparent in Africa. We must quickly assimilate the lessons here. Let us take advantage of the fact that, relatively, our rural population is still very large, and let us find ways of helping rural areas survive. They are an integral part of our past, and must also be part of our future. We must strike the right balance, and not focus on cities at the expense of rural
areas, or on rural areas at the expense of the cities. Our national development strategies should encompass both.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, urbanization is a global phenomenon. It is the effect as well the cause of modernisation and progress. We in Africa must learn to manage and benefit from it. The challenges are enormous, but so are the potential rewards. I am confident that our discussions during this meeting will contribute to our understanding of the problems and the possible solutions.

I thank you. May God bless you all.
It is a matter of great joy for me to have you, President Robert Mugabe and Mrs Mugabe in our midst. On behalf of the government and people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, I most heartily welcome you, your wife, and the distinguished members of your entourage.

Only last year, we were honoured by your presence at the inauguration of a democratic government in Nigeria. Mr President, it is gratifying to recall that the fraternal relations between us was forged way back in the time of the struggle for the liberation of Zimbabwe from the clutches of colonialism. It was a matter of pride and joy for all Nigerians to have made contributions to the episode of the bitter struggle to restore the honour of all black peoples that is symbolically represented in the transformation of Rhodesia to Zimbabwe.

We are proud to have earned ourselves the status of a Frontline State with the nations of southern Africa; and to remain united with independent Zimbabwe, as you provided the most important and strategic foothold for the final onslaught against racialist governance of apartheid in South Africa.

Not surprisingly, Nigeria and Zimbabwe have continued to count on each other for mutual cooperation on international issues in the context of the warmest relations at bilateral and multilateral levels.

Unfortunately, Mr President, this high level of political cooperation has not quite translated into prosperous economic relations between us. It is thus a matter of regret that the Joint Commission established in the late 1980s, has remained largely dormant, and failed to become the intended framework for consultation and cooperation and to facilitate trade, air services and technical cooperation between our countries. Although the failure to implement the terms of the Joint Commission could mostly be
attributed to procrastination on both sides – the international reputation of Nigeria in the dark years of evil governance did not help matters.

Let me say that I am pleased to note that the restoration of democracy in Nigeria has meant the return of mutual trust between our countries, and government-to-government and people-to-people relations are set to take off as it should be between our two sister nations. And I am delighted that we have underscored this situation in our discussions, when we agreed on the need to urgently resuscitate the Joint Commission, with a view to identifying and developing the various areas of cooperation between us. We have also agreed on the need for our relevant authorities to convene periodic meetings, mutual cooperation and assistance, on areas of concern to both countries.

Mr President, we in Nigeria have followed with keen interest, the developments in your great country since independence. In particular, we note the difficulties surrounding the issue of land, which we appreciate as an extension of the liberation struggle. Because it is about land appropriated under the aegis of colonial rule!

It was in recognition of this fact, that the Lancaster House Agreement for the independence of Zimbabwe provided for constitutional safeguards for and promises that the metropolitan power would pay compensation to support equitable re-distribution of land in post-independent Zimbabwe.

Whereas the constitutional safeguard for landowners have expired, the promises of compensation have not been fulfilled. The people of Zimbabwe have become more restive and agitated. And there has been a breakdown in the consensus reached in Lancaster House between the metropolitan powers and the leaders of independent Zimbabwe. We consider the conditions of Lancaster House Agreement to be adequate and equitable, and all parties to this dispute have a duty to return to the conditions as negotiated and agreed.

We in Nigeria fully support the liberation struggle, as is known to the whole world. And we will not relent in our support for our brothers and sisters in Zimbabwe until all aspects of the liberation process are fulfilled.

In recent times we have acted as facilitators for meetings between the governments of Britain and Zimbabwe. We still hold ourselves available for this role which we sincerely believe to be useful for meaningful dialogue.
and final conclusion of one of the unpleasant chapters of liberation struggle in Africa.

Mr President, it has been only seventeen months since the restoration of democracy and civil rule in Nigeria. Our Administration has since strived to bring about national reconciliation as well as people-oriented policies, geared towards social and economic reconstruction of the polity, with a view to improving the quality of life of our people within the shortest possible time. Nigerians are determined and are confident to make a success of the sustenance of the democracy. With the cooperation and support of our friends, including your country, and by the special Grace of God, Nigeria will surmount her present difficulties.

Mr President, it is regrettable that at the dawn of the 21st century, and in the age of globalisation, Africa continues to be beset by wars and fratricidal conflicts, which sadly, have brought misery and untold hardship on the peoples of the continent. While the rest of the world is making monumental efforts in other positive endeavours, Africa struggles with starvation, drought, disease, and numerous social vices. In this quagmire, Africa is unable to keep pace with the rest of the world.

To ease the tension and reduce instability on the continent, dialogue remains the best option to resolve disputes. Thus, there is the need to strengthen the capacity of the various sub-regional organisations and the OAU, in dealing with the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. In this regard, I use this occasion once more, to appeal to the various warring parties in Africa to resort to the use of dialogue for amicable and peaceful settlement of conflicts which plague our continent. It is only in a climate of peace and stability that economic development can thrive.

It is also in this regard that we in Nigeria believe that African countries should address and devote attention to the more pressing issues of regional economic integration and development so as to improve the standard of living of the people. The goal of Africa in the new millennium must be economic prosperity amidst the global race. Africa must resolve to tackle all the multi-faceted problems confronting the continent, primarily through its own cooperative efforts. We must not, however, shy away from accepting assistance from our friends beyond the continent, as no society can exist in isolation in the present international system.
Mr President, Nigeria has valued the excellent cooperation that has characterised our relations with the Republic of Zimbabwe, particularly on matters that affect Africa. It is, therefore, my hope that Nigeria can continue to count on your support. We cherish your partnership and constructive contribution to the development of bilateral relations. We look forward to the growth of such relations. It is our sincere hope that the warm fraternal relations existing between our two countries would continue to grow in the years ahead.

Ladies and gentlemen, on the occasion of this memorable and historic visit, may I invite you all to please rise and join me for a toast to the good health and personal well-being of His Excellency, President Robert Mugabe; the First Lady, Mrs Grace Mugabe; as well as the peace and progress of the peoples of the Republic of Zimbabwe and the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

May God bless Zimbabwe-Nigeria Relations!
Long live African solidarity!
I thank you.
It is with great pleasure that I address you on the Appropriation Bill of the Federal Government of Nigeria for the year 2001.

In my address during the signing of the 2000 Appropriation Bill, I made two promises:

- to consult with key stakeholders in the budget process, and
- to present the budget before the end of October 2000.

In this spirit, I initiated and consulted widely with the leadership and members of the National Assembly during the preparation of the budget. As promised, I submitted the Bill on Monday 30 October and I have evidence of an acknowledgment of receipt by the office of the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Senate President. Let me thank the National Assembly for working on the presented budget in earnest. And now I am formally presenting this budget address to the joint session of the National Assembly today to highlight to you and to the nation the concept and the direction of the budget as we have discussed with the leadership of the National Assembly during the preparation of the budget through regular consultations.

I commend the leadership and members of the National Assembly for the energy, determination and sense of responsibility shown during the Budget 2001 consultations.

Seventeen months into the life of our democracy, the outlook remains positive. A solid foundation has been laid with the achievement of macroeconomic stability. We are beginning to enjoy a good standing in the global community because of our ongoing commitment to democracy, economic reforms, sustainable peace and development, particularly in our sub-region. Yet, for this government and most Nigerians, our hard-won democracy is
yet to translate into significant improvements in our lives.

This democratic endeavour demands that as a government, we exercise choices, which must reflect both our immediate priorities and those elements of our longer-term vision. These make for durable peace, democracy and rising standards of living.

The challenges before us as a people are fairly clear:

- **First**, how do we make the Nigerian dream of a better life under democracy a reality?

- **Second**, how do we return our people to work and revitalize the productive sector?

- **Third**, how do we promote and strengthen national integration by reducing the wide disparities in economic development between states and between urban and rural areas in the country?

- And, **lastly** how do we meet these challenges together as one nation and one indivisible people?

These challenges informed the philosophy and preparation of the budget, and I will expatiate on these. In this budget, we intend to invest in human development through a significant re-direction of expenditure in favour of social development and poverty reduction. We will continue to address those bottlenecks that increase the cost of doing business. We will provide incentives for the private sector to be the leading engine of growth through increased investments. Accordingly, this year, we are presenting a budget, which we hope will pave the way for the revamping of the productive sector.

**Overview of the Economy in the Year 2000**

During the year 2000, government maintained disciplined monetary and fiscal policies. This enabled the achievement of macroeconomic stability. The resultant effect of these have been single digit inflation rate, fairly stable, market-determined exchange rate, stable interest rates and modest growth rate.

The GDP in the year 2000 is estimated to grow at the rate of 3 per cent, which compares favourably with 2.7 per cent achieved in 1999. However, the population growth rate of 2.7 per cent almost effectively
wipes out the growth in nominal GDP. This indicates that the per capita income and correspondingly, the standard of living of our people, has barely improved. The real GDP per capita, which declined by 0.12 per cent in 1999, has increased marginally by 0.1 per cent in 2000. Value added in agriculture is estimated to attain a growth rate of 4 per cent in 2000 compared with 3.90 per cent in 1999. The external reserves position improved from 5.4 billion US dollars in December 1999 to 8.2 billion US dollars in August 2000. If current levels of oil prices remain, our external reserves will exceed an all-time high of 10 billion US dollars by the end of the year 2000.

The rate of inflation was 7.5 per cent in December 1999. In the year 2000, single digit inflation rate has been maintained so far. Indeed, it is expected to decline to about 4 per cent by the end of the year. During the year, interest rates declined slightly. However, lending rates are still high, and the spread between lending and deposit rates remains too wide.

The exchange rate of the naira to the dollar was market-determined and fairly stable, hovering around one hundred naira to one US dollar. As part of our efforts to maintain exchange rate stability, all ministries and government agencies have been directed to open or revalidate their capital expenditure accounts with the Central Bank of Nigeria.

In August 2000, government signed a Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). With this, Nigeria hopes to obtain International donor’s financial support to meet funding requirements of social sector and poverty alleviation projects. We are optimistic that with the SBA in place, we will gain investor confidence in the management of our economy. Government does not intend to draw down on the SBA facility.

The wage increase from May 1, 2000 saddled government with an unexpectedly heavy recurrent expenditure. By the end of September 2000, our total overhead cost was 219.2 billion naira. This amount is 49.8 billion naira higher than the comparable budget of 169.4 billion naira for the period. However, the staff audit of the ministries undertaken by government during the year has so far recorded about 25 per cent savings in the personnel cost. Additional savings are expected when the manpower audit of the Police, Armed Forces and the Parastatals is carried out.
As a result of the late approval of budget 2000 and the need to ensure the observance of due process and procedure in incurring expenditure, we have ensured that expenditure matches budget revenue. And this would mean recurrent budget as a result of increases in wages eating into capital budget if we will put a lid on inflation and exchange rate stability.

Revenue Performance in 2000
Total federally collected revenue from January to August 31, 2000 amounted to 930.8163 billion naira, indicating an increase of 100.1497 billion naira over the corresponding budget estimate of 830.6666 billion naira. The oil sector recorded a positive variance of 145.3416 billion naira, while the non-oil sector showed a negative variance of 32.9190 billion naira.

Oil Revenue
Receipts from crude oil and liquid gas exports for the first eight months of the year were 596.6574 billion naira. The amount is higher than the corresponding budget estimate of 504.9067 billion naira by 91.7507 billion naira or 18.71 per cent. Receipts from oil Joint Ventures in respect of PPT, royalties, rent, etc., amounted to 298.3927 billion naira between January and August 2000. This amount represents an increase of 17.97 billion naira or 6.02 per cent over the corresponding budget estimate of 280.4266 naira for the period.

Non-oil Revenue
Non-oil revenue for the eight months of the year amounted to 197.8081 billion naira, which was 32.591 billion naira below the corresponding budget estimate of 230.4 billion naira for the same period.

Foreign Exchange Earnings
Foreign Exchange receipts for the first eight months of the year amounted to 8,742.07 million US dollars, indicating an excess of 1,682.07 million US dollars, or 23.8 per cent over the corresponding budget estimate of
$7,060 million US dollars for the same period. Out of the total receipts for
the period, NNPC crude oil and gas exports accounted for $6,050.50 million
US dollars or 67.9 per cent; while PPT, royalties, and other payments by
oil Joint Ventures accounted for $2,780 million US dollars or 32.1 per
cent.

Independent revenue of the federal government
Total federal government independent revenue collected between January
and August 2000 was 32.05 billion naira. This amount is 1.28 billion
naira lower than the corresponding budget estimate of 33.33 billion naira
for the period.

Economic Prospects for Year 2001
The economic outlook for 2001 is based on the macroeconomic framework
of the 2001-2003 Rolling Plan. The framework consists of:

- maintenance of disciplined fiscal and monetary policy;
- continued liberalization of the economy to attract assistance from
  the international community and other donor and multilateral
  agencies;
- improved security of life and property;
- sustained transparency, accountability and value for money in
  the procurement of products and services for government;
- diversification of the economy through increased private sector
  participation in production and exports of manufactured goods;
- accelerated implementation of the privatization and deregulation
  programme;
- incentives to attract increased inflow of foreign and domestic
  investments;
- upgrading the performance of key infrastructure using private
  sector participation wherever feasible; and
- improvement of human capital through targeted investment in
health, education, sanitation and skills acquisition.

In the 2001 fiscal year, the economy is projected to grow by about 5 per cent, compared with 3 per cent in year 2000. The projected growth of 5 per cent anticipates improvements in agriculture, manufacturing, mining, oil and gas, and wholesale and retail trade, amongst others. In particular, the agricultural sector is projected to grow from estimated 4.0 per cent in 2000 to 6.0 per cent in 2001. In the same vein, growth in manufacturing is expected to increase from 1.5 per cent in 2000 to 2.5 per cent in 2001.

**Policy Thrust for 2001**
The policy thrust of the year 2001 Budget includes:

- restructuring the Nigerian economy to make it market-oriented, private sector-led and technology driven;
- stimulating of agricultural and industrial production;
- reducing unemployment and increasing productivity;
- maintaining price and exchange rate stability and a healthy balance of payments;
- reducing lending rates and improving savings;
- implementing the Universal Basic Education and Skills Acquisition Schemes;
- improving the performance of major infrastructure such as power supply, communications and transportation;
- improving the operational capabilities, effectiveness and efficiency of the law enforcement agencies in crime prevention, detection and control;
- entrenching probity, transparency and accountability in governance and ensuring value for money in public expenditure; and
- improving credit delivery and extension services to small and medium scale enterprises.
Implementation Strategies
To achieve these objectives, government will adopt the following key strategies.

Power generation and transmission
The poor power supply situation will receive priority attention in Budget 2001. Government recognizes the importance of regular power supply as a pre-requisite for speedy economic growth and basic need of our people. In line with this Administration’s commitment to provide stable electricity by the end of 2001, we invested heavily this year in power generation. We intend to build on our efforts by focusing on transmission, distribution and rural electrification in year 2001. In addition, government will implement its Emergency Power Programme (EPP) and encourage the establishment of Merchant Power Plants (MPPs) as part of continuing efforts to deregulate power production and supply in Nigeria.

Water supply
Most of our towns and villages lack access to potable water. In 2001, rural and urban water supply nationwide will be accorded priority attention. The Federal Ministry of Water Resources will work closely with other tiers of government to enhance the achievement of this objective.

Works and housing
Government recognizes the importance of good, motorable roads in facilitating the movement of goods and people. In the year 2000, road construction and rehabilitation received this Administration’s attention. This will continue in year 2001. However, a Road Maintenance Agency will be established as part of government’s efforts to ensure that our people imbibe a maintenance culture. Government will also announce a new housing policy in 2001. Accordingly, the options of the Federal Mortgage Bank will be improved to enable it discharge its mandate as a development bank in the housing sector.

Agriculture
Government will expand the Buyer of Last Resort Scheme under the
framework of the Farmers Income Guarantee Scheme especially as regards grains. The aim of extending the scheme is to cover other crops such as palm-kernel, soya-beans and groundnuts. It is hoped that the programme will provide the much-needed succour to the rural farmers in addition to providing agro-based industries with stable supply of raw materials. We will develop nurseries for tree plants throughout the country.

Similarly, the government will address the other constraints in this sector, which is the availability of credit to farmers. The Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme will be strengthened to ensure access to credit for our farmers to procure key agricultural inputs. At the same time, the Nigerian Agricultural and Cooperative Bank will be recapitalized and restructured to perform the functions of a development bank in the agricultural sector.

**Education**
The implementation of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Scheme, rehabilitation of higher institutions, as well as the completion of ongoing or abandoned projects in tertiary institutions, will receive priority attention in 2001. Also, secondary and tertiary curricula will be expanded to include information technology skills amongst others, so that the appropriate quantity and quality of skilled manpower is produced.

Distance learning schemes will be introduced in 2001, with the Federal Ministry of Information empowered and strengthened to provide the necessary infrastructure.

**Health**
In 2001, our healthcare delivery system will be improved. Accordingly, basic health care has, therefore, been given priority attention. The services and infrastructure of the teaching hospitals of the Universities in Ibadan, Enugu, Zaria, Maiduguri, Jos, Port Harcourt, Lagos and Ilorin are to receive attention.

**Small and Medium Enterprises (SME)**
The development of small and medium scale enterprises is fundamentally important to the growth and employment potential of our economy. In 2001, government will make available five billion naira as one of the initiatives to improve the availability of credit to SMEs. To complement government
initiatives in this sub-sector, the banking industry will continue to contribute 10 per cent of its profits to the sector as term loans and equity.

I also intend to send before the National Assembly for enactment, a Bill for the establishment of a Trust Fund to administer unclaimed dividends, which will provide additional source of funding for small and medium scale enterprises.

**Petroleum products**

This Administration increased domestic refining capability from 36,000 barrels per day to 127,000 barrels per day. It is expected that by the end of 2001, domestic refining capability will utilize its maximum allocation of 300,000 barrels per day.

In our determination to make our industries competitive and reduce production cost, one of the key policies regarding petroleum products is to make the adequate supply of diesel and LPFO to major industries a priority in 2001. The NNPC will sign bulk purchase agreements with major industrial users and a commitment to ensure adequate supply of diesel. In addition, priority allocation will be given to major industrial users of LPFO over exports.

**Transportation**

In 2001, government intends to fund the Inland Waterways and Railways. Work will continue on the construction of Itakpe-Ajaokuta-Warri Line. The Nigeria Railways Corporation will undertake additional rail rehabilitation. The rail rehabilitation project contracted to the Chinese will now continue since the panel has submitted its report on the project.

**Anti-corruption commission**

Government is committed to the fight against corruption and in that regard, adequate funding has been provided for the effective take-off and operation of the Commission.

**HIV/AIDS**

The AIDS epidemic continues to ravage the population of sub-Saharan Africa and is seen as a threat to productivity and development. The incidence of the disease in Nigeria is at an all time high with an estimated 2.6 million Nigerians already infected. Government will continue to
sponsor awareness and enlightenment campaigns on HIV/AIDS. It has also commenced the development of instructional materials as preparatory efforts towards the integration of HIV/AIDS awareness into the curricula of secondary and primary schools. Furthermore, government has allocated the sum of Four billion naira for 2001 to be administered by the National Action Committee on AIDS. Nigeria has also secured the financial assistance of Multilateral Financial Institutions, to the tune of 80 million US dollars towards the fight against HIV/AIDS. Nigeria will host an African Summit on HIV/AIDS in April 2001.

Security of lives and property
The protection of lives and property is a major concern of this Administration. In 2001, we will continue to improve the operational capabilities of the Law Enforcement Agencies at crime detection and control. We will also address the issue of morale, training, welfare and living conditions of the Police. In this regard therefore, the sum of four billion naira has been allocated for the repairs, maintenance and renovation of Barracks for the Military and Police.

Poverty alleviation programme – skill acquisition scheme
The Poverty Alleviation Programme will continue in 2001. However, it will be improved to accommodate a Skill Acquisition Scheme.

Defence
The government recognizes that training is the bedrock of Military professionalism. Already, this year the Military has embarked on both local and overseas training, which had been suspended for years. The past neglect of the Military barracks, equipment and welfare will be addressed in 2001.

Revenue Estimates for 2001
The estimated federally collectible revenue in 2001 is 1, 589.4451 billion naira from both the oil and non-oil sectors.

Oil revenue
At a price of 22 US dollars per barrel and an export volume of 2.4112
million barrels per day, total receipts from Government crude for 2001 is estimated at 862.740 billion naira. Petroleum Profit Tax (PPT) is projected to yield 353.43 billion naira while oil royalties, rent on gas flared, etc. are expected to generate 163.18 billion naira.

Domestic crude allocation of 300,000 barrels per day to the NNPC is estimated to yield only 104.3100 billion naira in revenues at a subsidized price of 9.50 US dollars per barrel and an exchange rate of 100.00 naira to the dollar. Accordingly, the in-built subsidy amounts to 137.25 billion naira for the year. Earnings from the up-stream gas operations and other miscellaneous oil sector activities are projected to generate 42.30 billion naira in the 2001. Thus, the total expected revenue from the oil sector is 1,136.1451 billion naira. In addition, a transfer of 99.73 billion naira will be made from the Excess Crude Account to augment the total revenue from the oil sector to 1,235.88 billion naira.

To support our oil revenue projections, the Joint Venture Cash Calls will continue to receive priority attention. Therefore, the sum of 3.5 billion US dollars has been allocated for cash calls of which the sum of 300 million US dollars will be used to pay the Cash Call arrears.

Non-oil sector
Total revenue from the non-oil sector is projected at 453.3 billion naira. The sources are Customs & Excise, Companies Income Tax, VAT, Federal Government Independent Revenue, levies, education tax, tax on petroleum products, proceeds from sale of grains, fertilizer, and privatization proceeds. In addition, government expects to earn a minimum of 40 billion naira from the auction of four GSM licenses. Accordingly, the total projected federally collected revenue from both oil and non-oil sectors will be 1,589.445 billion naira, an increase of 343.445 billion naira or 27.56 per cent over the 2000 budget estimate of 1,246.000 billion naira.

Government intends to embark on a vigorous non-oil revenue drive in 2001. Accordingly, a Non-oil Revenue Committee to include members of the Chartered Institute of Taxation has been established. The Committee’s objective is to substantially increase non-oil revenue in 2001.

States and Local Government Finances
The performance of State Governments and Local Government Councils
in terms of revenue receipts in 2000 was relatively satisfactory. While the Federation Account Revenue estimate for Year 2000 was ₦1,099.44 billion, the actual disbursement from January to September 2000 was 777.933 billion naira. With regard to the Value Added Tax (VAT), the actual amount disbursed from January to September 2000 was 40.927 billion naira as against the 60.7 billion naira budgeted for the year.

Consequent upon these receipts, the sum of 362.736 billion naira went to the Federal Government; 236.116 billion naira to the States and FCT; and 149.600 billion naira to the Local Government Councils including the Area Councils of the FCT. The 13 per cent derivation principle, which took effect from January 01, 2000, was implemented in April 2000. Between January and September 2000, the sum of 47.781 billion naira was paid to the oil producing states on the 13 per cent derivation principle.

Government has commenced the implementation of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) Act, and the federal government’s provision has been made for in budget 2001.

**Recovered Public Assets**

In 2001, the sum of 80 billion naira will be used to finance part of our expenditure. Government remains committed to the recovery of looted Nigerian money in overseas bank accounts.

**Fiscal policy**

The fiscal policy thrust of the Budget for the year 2001 is designed to achieve the following objectives:

- enhance capacity utilization in agriculture, manufacturing and mining industries;
- provide appropriate protection for domestic industries against unfair competition from imports and dumping;
- encourage diversification of foreign exchange earnings through increased export activities;
• reduce operating costs and inflationary pressures; and
• provide appropriate incentives for investment in manufacturing, agriculture and mining.

Expenditure estimates
Because our resources are finite, there is the need to ensure prudence and discipline in our expenditure pattern. We have to manage our resources prudently focusing on the need to ensure value for money. In 2000, the World Bank, jointly with Federal Government Officials, carried out a “Country Procurement Assessment Study”, the outcome of which is expected to reform our contract award system and make it more transparent. Meanwhile, we are overhauling our procurement system to ensure that we get value for every naira of expenditure.

Recurrent expenditure
The estimated recurrent expenditure for 2001 is 414.2 billion naira. Of this amount, the sum of 204 billion naira is earmarked for personnel costs, 110.2 billion naira for overheads and 100 billion naira for Domestic Debt Service. The increase in personnel cost by 34 billion naira over the 170.17 billion naira budgeted in 2000 is due to the wage review in the public sector.

Capital expenditure
The proposed total capital expenditure for 2001 is 480 billion naira. In 2001, the priorities of government for enhanced funding shall be in the following areas:

Power and Steel – 69.8 billion naira
Works and Housing – 53 billion naira
Water Resources – 49.8 billion naira
Education – 24.8 billion naira
Health – 29.1 billion naira
Transport – 23.0 billion naira
Agriculture – 18.1 billion naira

These ministries account for 267.6 billion naira or 55.7 per cent of total capital expenditure for the year. Allocations made to Ministries/Agencies
will cover ongoing and new projects. Priority will be given to meet each ministry's critical needs and some of those projects not implemented in year 2000. As a follow-up to the consultations with the leadership of the National Assembly, efforts will be made to ensure that expenditure under the priority areas is equitably distributed along the various geopolitical zones.

A provision of 20 billion naira has been made for the payment of debts owed on National Priority Projects. As from the year 2002, all provisions in respect of on-going priority projects will be made through the implementing line ministries/agencies.

**Taxation**

In 2001, government intends to consolidate the gains of previous years derived from a stable tax regime and to increase the disposable income of individual taxpayers. The policies on the following areas will be reviewed to positively impact on real income.

*Personal Income Tax*

Tax-free earned income of individuals will be increased to positively impact on the real income.

Allowances approved to workers as non-taxable in both public and private sectors will be undertaken subject to specified limits, and widening of the personal income tax bracket will be effected.

*Companies Income Tax*

Tax-free interest on foreign loans, tax-free interest earned from loans made to export-oriented companies, and investment tax credit and taxation in the shipping sector will all be reviewed.

*Value Added Tax (VAT)*

This has become a veritable source of revenue earnings for the government and therefore, needs to be strengthened and expanded. To broaden the tax base and to bring the VAT administration closer to the taxpayers, new local VAT Offices shall be established all over the country in Year 2001.

*VAT Branch Registration*

To ensure fair VAT distribution based on the principle of derivation of
VAT proceeds, it is recommended that the VAT law should be amended.

**Administration of tax collection**

The administration of tax collection will be strengthened to ensure more efficient tax collection, through training of staff, awareness campaigns and computerisation of Customs Tariff.

We will continue to ensure that the tariff policy enables our local industries to be competitive. Specifically, in 2001, aggressive action will be taken to block revenue leakages on high duty goods and bulk items. This will include, amongst others, the review of the relevant policies, adequate funding of the Customs Agency, and introduction of sanctions on erring Pre-shipment agents who contravene any section of the Pre-shipment Inspection Decree No 11 of April 1996.

**Port Reforms**

Government will continue to take steps to remove all bottlenecks at our ports, make it competitive and reduce the diversion to neighbouring countries. Such reforms will include in particular, the rehabilitation of the ports, computerisation and the installation by the private sector of high technology X-ray scanners at the ports.

**External Debt Management**

As at September 2000, Nigeria’s external debt stock stood at the equivalent of 28.5 billion US dollars (or US$238 per capita) out of which 19 billion US dollars was in arrears. Virtually all the arrears were due to the Paris Club of creditors. In budget 2001, a sum of 1.5 billion US dollars is provided for external debt service, as was the case in 2000.

During the course of year 2000, Government took two major steps to address the debt issue. The first was the conclusion of a Standby Arrangement (SBA) with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which was approved by the Executive Board of the Fund on August 4, 2000. The second was the establishment of a Debt Management Office (DMO) in August 2000 to consolidate and centralize the management of our external and domestic debts.
External Borrowing
Nigeria continues to enjoy positive cooperation from multilateral financial institutions, notably the World Bank and the African Development Bank Group (ADB).

In 2000, negotiations with the World Bank and IFAD for four projects in the sum of 113.4 million US dollars were concluded. The projects are: Second Primary Education Project, Small Town Water Supply and Sanitation Project, Economic Management Capacity Project (EMCAP), and the second Fadama Agricultural Project.

With the signing of a Stand-By Arrangement with IMF in August 2000, government hopes to obtain additional International donors’ financial support to meet funding requirements of other social sector and Poverty Alleviation Projects. The World Bank and the ADB are already working together to provide support for the Poverty Reduction Programme with a combined facility of about 500 million US dollars. Government will continue to pursue the objectives of the SBA through the vigorous implementation of major macro-economic reforms to attain the set goals.

It is expected that the successful implementation of the SBA programme will enable government proceed with the design and implementation of a Medium Term Economic Strategy (MTES). The MTES will subsequently pave way for negotiation with Paris Club of Creditors for concessional debt relief.

Budget Implementation
In 2001, Government will ensure adequate and timely release of funds both for effective budget implementation and to sustain the macro-economic stability achieved this year. To ensure value for money, feasibility studies, quantitative analyses and proper costing of projects, as well as satisfactory monitoring reports shall form the basis for the release of funds in 2001. Full details of implementation procedure shall be released early in the year to all ministries/agencies for their guidance.

A proper budget-monitoring and price intelligence unit will be set up in the Presidency, and along with other relevant agencies, will see to the implementation of the budget to the letter.
A regular forum will be established, where the key players in the manufacturing industry and the highest economic policy body of Government – the Economic Policy Coordinating Committee – will review during the year the implementation of our policies in budget 2001 as it relates to creating an enabling environment to stimulate growth and facilitate investment in the productive sector.

Conclusion
The budget was a product borne out of consultations and interactions with members of the National Assembly. This consultative process augurs well for the smooth passage of the Bill before the end of the year.

We must work together. The people of this Nation elected us to do that. They want us to be partners, not partisans. The spirit we bring to our work will make all the difference. We must be committed to the creation of equal opportunity for all Nigerians. And we must be committed to a new kind of Government, not to solve all our problems, but to give our people – all our people! – the tools they need to realize their fullest potentials.

This Bill is an instrument by which the commitment and performance of our Administration may be measured. It is simultaneously a tool by which accelerated industrialization can take place, and significant poverty reduction realized by providing basic services to our people. The successful implementation of this Appropriation Bill ought to set this nation well on the road to recovery and should mark the beginning of the visibility of democracy dividend for our people.
It is indeed a great pleasure for me to welcome all of you, particularly the Awardees of this year’s National Honours, to this very important occasion in the life of our nation.

It has been said that a nation defines itself, not just through the men and women it produces, but through the men and women it honours. This is the spirit that I would commend to you today, as we honour the distinguished men and women before us.

This is a great day for our society. For it is the day that we reaffirm our belief in the human capital as the living foundation of the existence of our nation. This is the day we count our heroes, those whose exemplary lives and achievements mark the road map to the future of our country. It is a day to look at ourselves and feel proud as a people with the potential to produce individuals capable of attaining the highest human standards. On this day, we acclaim, endorse and register all those destined to enter our hall of fame to become permanent reference points and sources of inspiration for us now and for future generations. It is a day of hope and glory.

I have no doubt that today is also a great moment for those being honoured. You have been identified as our heroes because you have distinguished yourselves by serving the society honourably, honestly and successfully, as we can ascertain. Your achievements in your respective fields have been recognised and that is why you are the recipients of the honour and reward that our society can bestow. The honour you are about to receive is certainly something that money cannot buy. It transcends materialism and will last as long as the society endures, which, by the Grace of God, will remain in perpetuity. That you are being honoured today, confirms that it pays to serve your society honourably, honestly and selflessly.

Our nation treasures you. And let the National Honour be a treasure for you also. In the words of the Holy Bible: “Do not store up treasures
on earth where moth and rust can destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in, and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Although the history of national honours goes back to our Republican Constitution in 1963, it is a mistake to regard it as a mere replacement for the honours conferred by our colonial masters. Nigerian traditional societies have always had values by which individuals are recognised and honoured. And we continue to do so, as clearly indicated by the thriving culture of traditional titles up and down the country.

Admittedly, the pattern and process of awarding national honours in post-independence Nigeria has been rather inconsistent and has reflected some of the unfortunate aspects of our nation-building. But the spirit has endured, and this Administration is determined to set the record straight, in every sense. Beginning with this year, the process of award will be based on thorough criteria that will pick out the best men and women in society. This will be conducted regularly – annually, and systematically – to ensure that all deserving citizens are honoured as and at when due. The Book of Honours will be properly maintained.

Our tradition and practice these past thirty-six years have been to pay due homage to our citizens who have served their nation in exemplary ways. The recipients of the Nigerian national awards are, therefore, men and women who have given genuine service, selfless service, and service in the overwhelming interest of Nigeria. These are men and women infused with the highest sentiments and ideals of patriotism. Above all, in the rough and tumble of an upside-down world in which good is locked in a mortal combat against evil, these are brave citizens. Some of them have had distinguished careers, and as retired citizens, they are still engaged in that noble endeavour – creating a better Nigerian society.

Ladies and gentlemen, our country is not only at cross-roads, it is engaged in perhaps the most crucial experiment in its chequered history. We have to make democracy work. We have to establish a strong and stable economy. We have to build a strong defence for Nigeria. The supreme task is to keep our citizens confident, secure and united. Only with the exemplary talents we honour here today can we be certain that we will succeed.
And so I ask of all our people today: Let us continue to give honour to those who deserve it. Let us set up high parameters for these honours. And let us ensure that those we choose every year for these awards are men and women who are truly deserving. Let the word go forth as from today that devotion to principles, industry, patriotism and probity are once again national virtues. Nigeria needs men and women who are ready to give their best so that our fellow citizens can rise to new heights, so that our nation will repossess its God-given prosperity, and so that those who succeed will have the right spirit and the means to pull up those who are in danger of falling by the wayside. If in your community, your absence is not felt, you may not be of much worth in that community.

But, as we all know, being good is not a one-way affair. Let me, here and now, reiterate the commitment of our Administration to develop wise and steadfast policies, geared towards enhancing our national prosperity, our unity and strength, and our standing among the nations of the world. We also will give of our best to create, under God, the right environment for noble minds and attitudes to blossom.

The generality of our citizens also have an important role to play in these matters. There is no doubt that the award of National Honours in the past has not always been done with due diligence. It has been cheapened, and some people of dubious characters have attempted to muscle in on these awards as if they were extra decorations and common chieftaincy titles.

Let me therefore be clear. These national honours are not extra decorations for adorning egos. They are the recognition which the people of Nigeria offer their best and brightest. As such, they constitute an earnest expression that our people are committed to the highest standards. At the same time, they represent a collective hope and desire that excellence should be our goal in all we do.

Let me, therefore, call on individual citizens and groups to add their voices to the selection process. There is every reason in the world why they should have a say.

I wish, on behalf of all Nigerians, to heartily congratulate all the 340 recipients of the Millennium National Honours. I urge you not to rest on your laurels. Keep up the good work for as long as the Almighty gives you strength, for we still have a lot to do, and the nation still needs you.
Help us train those who follow you, in the virtues of commitment, selfless service, probity, and good neighbourliness.

We salute you. We are all proud of you. In a way we are like that gentleman who was complimented on his daughter’s beauty, to which he replied. “Oh! You have not seen her when she has just taken a bath!!” You are all looking eminent and representative, but what we see here today is only the beginning.

In addition to all the privileges you will be entitled to, your names will be inscribed on the Honours Register and on a Roll of Honour which will remain a proud legacy to prosperity.

I thank you all. And may the Almighty continue to bless you and bless Nigeria.
am indeed pleased to be here on the occasion of the official launch of the Human Development Report 2000. The issue of human development, which is the subject of this gathering, is one that calls for continuous exploration and sustained attention. And I commend UNDP’s efforts towards evolving a sustainable human development paradigm.

We identify with the theme of this year’s Report, Human Rights and Human Development, for its relevance to our own development context and for the concrete steps already taken by our Administration to address the underlying principles.

In the immediate years before the transition, Nigerian society experienced evil governance. Nigerians were so traumatised by the experience that transition alone was not an adequate palliative. In recognition of this, our Administration immediately set up a Commission to look into all complaints of human rights abuses in the past. The purpose of the Commission is principally to evolve a framework for true national revival and a re-awakened sense of belonging through the process of reconciliation. As may be judged from media reports, the commission seems to be achieving the desired effects, namely, that many people have felt a sense of relief simply because they have had the chance to air their grievances and put their cases before someone who is willing and prepared to listen. I can personally testify to the fact that there is therapy in being heard.

Besides our concerns about the past and how to put it behind us, we are also putting in place policies that will on a sustainable basis, address genuine cases of institutional unfairness. The Anti-Corruption law and the Niger Delta Development Commission are practical expressions of human rights-based development.

On the social and economic front, the emphasis of our Administration has remained committed to the provision of basic social services which
the Human Development Reports have persistently canvassed as the safest and quickest means to poverty alleviation and human development. Our programmes on Universal Basic Education, Primary Health Care, the National Programme on Immunization, and the Poverty Alleviation Programme are designed to make concrete and measurable impact on poverty reduction and progress in human development.

The basic thrust of the initiative underscores the government’s resolve that putting the State on the path of development can be postponed no longer. Opportunities must be created to enable individuals realise their potentials and meet their legitimate expectations. The basic needs of all can and must be met, now, as a matter of their fundamental rights.

The economic policy of this government is designed around the principal objective of meeting the global commitment of halving poverty by the year 2015. In the immediate term, the policy objectives and targets have been set in terms of human development indicators. Our firm belief is that every Nigerian has a right to these basic social services: basic education, access to functional health care, immunization for children, employment for youths, living wages for workers, clean water for all, and security of lives and property. In essence, development cannot be anything but the fundamental responsibility of government and the basic rights of citizens.

Although some progress have been recorded, the government is not oblivious of the fact that the patience of many Nigerians is running very thin. The truth is that human rights suppressed and development denied for so long has taken unimaginable toll on the fabric of the Nigerian society. However, after painstaking efforts and a studious assessment of the situation, the government is now better placed to confidently and steadily pursue its priorities.

With this realization has come the obvious but crucially important point of effective partnership. We believe that development is a collective effort. No single stakeholder, including the government can do it all alone. Efforts must be coordinated and focused.

In this regard, every development partner, the private sector, the civil society and the international community among others should join hands with the government in these efforts. In particular, Nigeria appreciates the renewed attention and enhanced development assistance it has continued to receive from its friends.
However, no matter the quantum of assistance, the real impact on poverty and human development cannot be maximised unless conscious attention is paid to the twin issues of targeting and coordination. By the sheer number and varied interests of development actors, the challenge of effective collaboration and coordination cannot be greater. This is more so against the context of Nigeria’s experience where the impact of not a few development projects have been compromised by lack of coordination among and between development partners, both local and international.

The challenge here is for donors to work in priority areas identified by government as enunciated in the economic blueprint. These include:

- Provision of basic social and essential services — education, health, clean water, food security, etc.
- Rehabilitation of dilapidated social and economic infrastructure.
- Creating new employment and income opportunities especially for youths, school-leavers, and rural folks.
- Strengthening institutions of governance at all levels including adequate attention to human rights, conflict prevention and consensus building.

In all of these, attempts should be made to support genuine national efforts, involve national stakeholders and utilize existing national capacity. Development, if not nationally owned and nationally led, cannot optimize the delivery of desired benefits. We should also plan to utilize our resources in few well-targeted areas where the impact of our interventions can be real and far-reaching rather than attempting to provide support in every field.

The government has already put in place machinery for effective mapping of national needs in key development areas, such as poverty alleviation, good governance, sustainable environment, basic education, primary health care, HIV/AIDS control programme and food security among others. An immediate benefit of this will be to provide the framework for the coordination of efforts and enhancing the ability of government to respond to partnership requirements through coherent institutional structures, rather than working in random and oftentimes, frustrating circumstances.
Let me commend the UNDP for drawing the world’s attention to the menace of poverty and its consequences on human progress; and for its support to the national priorities, even during the most turbulent years which this country has seen.

The annual *Human Development Reports* continue to be a powerful tool with which to monitor world development. The Report is useful in the hands of policy-makers in the developing countries who need to retool and re-engineer their development policies and programmes.

It is useful in the hands of the developed world that has to review the implications of their actions on human development in the developing countries. And to the world creditors who would also find it useful to rethink their conditionalities and appreciate the imperative of debt remission. There is something in it for every development stakeholder. And, I commend it to all those genuinely concerned with the theme of the development.

It is now my pleasure to launch the *Human Development Report 2000*.

I thank you. And may God bless you all.
It gives me profound pleasure to address this very august assembly of the cream of our nation’s engineers, on the occasion of the 2000 National Conference of the Society.

I am particularly pleased, because the theme of this year’s conference, Engineering Strategy for Poverty Alleviation, is very appropriate and in line with the policy initiatives of our government, as they concern our commitment to providing concrete infrastructure, as well as sturdy and lasting legacy, for the socio-cultural, economic and political re-engineering of our nation.

The fact is, engineering is about building, construction, fabrication; and these are cardinal aspects of human projects which, if they are to endure and achieve their objectives, we must first design appropriately, select the suitable materials, and then build and finish according to plan.

The fashioning of stone age equipments may be counted as the primary expression of human engineering skills. Thereafter, engineering has been about applying the cumulative knowledge of science to optimise the processing of resources, designing and processing such resources for the improvement of the quality of life.

It was for his engineering skill that the Whiteman was admired when our forefathers looked at him and said: “The Whiteman knows how not to suffer in life”. Since then, the challenge has been for all of us in the succeeding generation to make engineering deliver to our people what they require for improved quality of life, and to prevent whatever will hinder the enhancement of their quality of life.

In the context of the central theme of this conference here, namely how engineering can contribute to the government’s plan to reduce poverty, I will go as far as to say that engineering is almost everything! Let me list the key elements of this poverty reduction programme: Water supply, rural electrification, agriculture and food production, small and medium
scale industries, road construction, healthcare, and housing. These are
the pointers of our dream to rebuild Nigeria. And in all of them, engineering
projects are pivotal and are the platforms for success.

So I will begin by throwing you a challenge: that you ensure that the
engineering community plays the all-important role needed to lift up our
country and our society. Your fellow Nigerians are conscious that engineers
rank among our best and our brightest. Let us see you apply your skills,
talent and knowledge to our numerous problems. Many of them are
solutions you can transfer from the existing body of knowledge in the
world of engineering. Others you may have to invent to match the unique
needs of our society. We are confident that you are capable of that. As the
saying goes, necessity is the mother of invention, to which we can add
that invention is the visible sign of advancement of the frontier of
knowledge and technology. Engineers by training, certification, and
acquired experience possess the tools to alleviate or reduce poverty by
providing means of adding value or changing the resources.

Industrialisation of the Western world took off on the industrial
revolution. Without re-inventing the wheel, we too can do with
 technological revolution. Let us demonstrate that our education has been
worth it; let us stop the suffering of our people due to poverty.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me reiterate our Administration’s
commitment to poverty reduction in the country. This programme, now
being modified and expanded into a second phase which will include skill-
acquisition, Youth Employment Scheme, and graduate employment
programme, is the cornerstone for all our policies, and we use it as the
litmus test for the relevance and value of virtually all our other policies.

Hardly any of our policy thrusts is without engineering content. But
there are those with high engineering input, such as the drive to rehabilitate
our infrastructural facilities. I believe you will all quickly point to NITEL
and NEPA as the big monsters needing to be tamed. We are committed to
revamping the services from these two: we have no choice. Our economic
prosperity will remain a dream without adequate power supply and good
communication system.

Again, in the specific instance of NEPA, I will repeat my promise to
Nigerians: around this time next year we will be at final stages of the
countdown to the end of epileptic power supply. We still have a lot of
ground to cover in tackling the backlog of institutional and technical problems here. But we are not going to relent. And by the Grace of God, I will not let Nigerians down.

Meanwhile, let me explain what happened to NEPA in the last ten to fourteen days. There was vandalisation of the transmission lines in the Delta area. We lost about 300MW which we could not hook unto the national grid. Due to failure of the standby pump, Kainji was flooded. Here, we lost another 200MW. One out of the four working units at Egbin had to be withdrawn for due maintenance and service. Happily, by the end of this week, the vandalised transmission in the Delta should have been repaired.

Closely related to the issue of power supply is the condition of national road network. While government invested a huge financial outlay in the provision of roads, there were no adequate maintenance strategies, and this led to total collapse of our road network, with adverse effects on the transportation system in Nigeria.

In recognition of the enormity of this problem, a Maintenance Agency will be established under the Ministry of Works and Housing that will be responsible for the maintenance of our highways. We are also considering the involvement of private participation in the construction and maintenance of our roads. A system of Build, Operate and Transfer (BOT) is being fine-tuned by the government. Let me, therefore, use this occasion to invite the engineering community and companies to get involved in this proposed programme.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me assure you that I personally believe in the ability and capability of Nigerian engineers to handle projects of national importance. Accordingly, I believe that the deliberate involvement of indigenous consultants and contractors will not only generate wealth, it will also create a fertile training ground for our young engineers whose unemployment must be an embarrassment to all of us. It is in this vein that our ministries and parastatals are being encouraged to patronise goods made in Nigeria. This policy should have the effect of patronising our own engineers and other professionals.

You will find in government a fitting ally in this your resolve to improve our engineering sector. I believe that Nigerian engineers should form a credible consortium that is capable of bidding for jobs. Such a consortium
will properly address the problems of machinery and equipment, funding of projects, and good and excellent performance.

Nigeria is blessed with excellent and intelligent people. Whether in the United States, in Europe, Asia, or even here in Africa. Nigerians are making consistent and important contributions in the areas of engineering and technological development. We must begin, as a country, to tap into this immense resource, to improve our skills and boost our economy. As this Administration continues to re-orientate and restructure our national psyche, and as it continues to influence, positively, the way we do business, particularly government business, we shall ensure that our national budget and policies are designed to meet the basic needs of the Nigerian people.

Engineers have a major role to play in our crusade against corruption, now fully on course with the inauguration of the Anti-Corruption Commission. Over 80 per cent of government budget at both the federal and state levels are centred on physical development with high engineering content, with engineers often having the bulk of the responsibility for executing the projects. If the engineers were to collectively adopt a rigorous code of conduct, they would no doubt have great impact on efforts to rid our society of the evil of corruption.

I note with appreciation the fact that the Nigerian Society of Engineers launched its own war against corruption in engineering projects in 1998. I urge you to maintain this spirit which ought to be re-invigorated by the new Anti-Corruption Legislation.

On our part, the government will continue to provide a conducive environment to encourage all professionals. It is in this regard that the Federal Executive Council recently approved the retention of NASENI (National Agency for Science Engineering Infrastructure) as a parastatal with the responsibility of promoting technology at the grassroots. All necessary support will be given to NASENI to perform well. I will also expect those charged with the implementation of the objectives of the organisation to reciprocate government’s gesture.

Similarly, government has noted the efforts so far made by NSE and the Ministry of Science and Technology to promote technology through the hosting of technology summits and recently, the SET (Science Engineering & Technology) Summit. We shall continue to support this
Summit and also ensure that any programmes aimed at developing technology is given top priority.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me congratulate you on your efforts to relocate your National Secretariat from Lagos to Abuja, which is now fully open for business. The Nigerian public quite rightly has high expectations of us engineers. After all, the engineer is your proverbial Mr fix-it, whom you turn to when things do not work. We are expected to have the know-how, and to use our knowledge to help those who need the expert. On the larger scale, the ordinary person looks up to the engineer to help them process resources for utilisation in improving their benefit.

In order not to let our people down, we must commit and re-dedicate ourselves to the service of the society. For instance, engineers must take up the challenge of establishing a maintenance culture in our society, by which facilities put in place with government resources will be serviced and well maintained. Such initiatives are within the purview of the Nigerian Society of Engineers and its members.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I wish to formally declare this conference open.

I thank you. And May God bless you all.
RECOGNISING CREATIVITY AND
REWARDING EXCELLENCE

At the Investiture Ceremony of the Nigerian National Merit Award
Abuja, 6 December, 2000

I am pleased to participate in this ceremony, which is the 16th since
the inception of the Nigerian National Merit Award in 1979.

 Barely two months ago, when the Governing Board of the NNMA
was reconstituted, the new Board was challenged not only to sustain, but
also to improve on the achievements of the previous Boards that had
succeeded in laying a solid foundation of commitment, dedication and
impartiality. By this token, today’s ceremony is an eloquent testimony to
the tradition of excellence associated with the NNMA over the years.

Let me, therefore, begin by congratulating the three Laureates for
the Year 2000 Award:
• Professor Akinwumi Isola, for the Award in Humanities
• Professor Peter Ebigho, for the Award in Medicine
• Professor A. O. E. Animalu, for the Award in Science

Each of you has been recognised for your outstanding achievement in
your respective fields. You are duly acknowledged as men of ideas and
creativity: qualities that have piloted the evolution of humankind through
the ages. You have distinguished yourselves, and have been identified as
beacons in the wide field of activities of the human intellect – God’s
greatest gift to us humans. On behalf of all Nigerians, I salute you. We
honour and respect you. We are indeed proud of you.

Only three weeks ago, several prominent Nigerians were conferred
with National Honours, in recognition of their contributions to the progress
and advancement of our nation. The Honours were tokens of the nation’s
acknowledgment and appreciation for the contributions of the outstanding
citizens in all fields of human endeavour.
The Nigerian National Merit Award is a separate system for recognising excellence in specific fields of humanities, medicine, arts and culture, science and technology. The objective and purpose of the NMA is to consciously encourage, cultivate and nurture the growth of creativity among our people, by identifying and honouring individuals whose ideas have impacted on development and progress of our society. It was the belief of the Founding Fathers of the Award, that the cumulative gains from properly husbanding such creative ideas will benefit our people and make a difference to the course of the history of this nation.

Every society should have a way of edifying excellence of the human intellect. The history of humankind is essentially an account of how changes in the societies have been affected by potent ideas at the right time and at the right place – or, as the saying goes, an idea whose time has come. The edification process helps to create role models for younger generation, and underscore the point that there is more to life than the pursuit of material gains. This is why we should jealously guard the standards by which we select our NNMA Laureates. Our standards must ensure that these are men and women, who by their achievements, have not only distinguished themselves among their peers worldwide, but who this nation can proudly hold up as national symbols of creativity.

At our current stage of development, our nation is particularly hungry for innovative ideas, and the ideal source should be our own crop of the finest minds whose socio-cultural affinity should add value of appropriateness and suitability to their ideas and theories. The outstanding records of the Laureates here today add to the indisputable truth that intellectual endowment of our citizens is a major aspect of the many blessings from God that this country enjoys. In other words, the technological gap between us and the industrialised societies is certainly not God-given. All we need to do is to think right, organise and dedicate ourselves to excellence, and by the Grace of God, Nigeria should become a great country. To this end, and in the context of the National Merit Awards, it is imperative that we develop functional linkages between the activities in our ivory towers and the everyday productive life of our people.

Let me once again congratulate the members of the recently reconstituted Nigerian National Merit Award Governing Board, and
inform you that the critical nature of the role of the Board in national development, places greater responsibilities and obligations on you. Those who select persons of merit must themselves be persons of outstanding qualities, and your selection has taken cognisance of this. Once again, I wish to congratulate the year 2000 Awardees. I urge you to remain sensitive to the fact that more than ever before, the honour that has been bestowed on you today by this great nation, places a greater obligation on you to continue to give the best to the nation.

Above all, the greatest legacy you will leave behind is that your action by this Award will serve to challenge more and more Nigerians to strive for excellence and commitment to our nation’s interests.

I thank you. And may God bless you all.
TOWARDS AN ENLIGHTENED CIVIL SOCIETY

At the Launching of the Open Society Initiative for West Africa
Abuja, 11 December, 2000

I am pleased to take part in the inauguration of the Open Society Initiative for West Africa [OSIWA] which has established its headquarters in Abuja. And I salute and welcome my friend George Soros to Nigeria.

Mr Soros launched the Open Society Initiative for West Africa, OSIWA, to promote the development of democratic institutions and open societies in eighteen countries, that is the sixteen countries of ECOWAS plus Cameroon and Chad.

I take particular personal satisfaction in the establishment of OSIWA because it is a happy conclusion to a discussion between myself and George Soros that began in New York shortly after recovering from being a victim of injustice. I am glad that I was able to encourage Mr Soros to contribute to the development of an open society in Nigeria.

OSIWA joins a network of more than thirty Soros Foundations in different parts of the world. It is the third Soros Foundation to be established in Africa.

Nigeria is proud to be the home for OSIWA. Our country has come a long way in the struggle for democracy. Since the transition to civil rule, our society has now become a dynamic theatre for free expression and open dialogue between various interest groups. Public policies are openly discussed and criticized, and nobody is persecuted for his or her political beliefs. These developments are a relief for all Nigerians after the traumatic dark years of evil governance that preceded the transition to democracy.

Let us acknowledge those whose efforts and sacrifices produced this progress. In particular, I salute Nigerian Civil Society organizations for their tenacity in standing against the most evil regime this country has ever known. And let us thank God for the divine providence that saved
this country from a violent conclusion to a vigorous campaign.

Ultimately, an enlightened civil society is the best insurance against bad governance. It is in this regard that we welcome the activities of NGO's like OSIWA which I am confident will positively support civil society organisations in our country and our sub-region, in their responsibility of being moral watchdogs.

We share the values for which the Soros Foundations stand in all the countries in which they operate, namely:

• democratic governance;
• transparency as an antidote to the corruption and rampant avarice from which our country has suffered;
• the rule of law;
• freedom and diversity of expression; and
• the peaceful resolution of social conflicts due to ethnic or religious differences, in the interest of building a peaceful and orderly society.

It is gratifying to see that our conversation played a part in the formation of OSIWA. In locating OSIWA in Abuja, Mr Soros has recognized how important it is that democratic government should succeed in Nigeria. George Soros has achieved an international network of foundations by entering countries at a time of democratic transition to assist those who are building an open society. If Nigeria succeeds, the chances are greatly improved that democratic government will succeed not only in the ECOWAS sub-region, but also in all of Africa. Though democracy by itself will not solve all the problems of the continent, it does provide the opportunity for the people of Africa to use their creative energies in addressing the critical issues that we face.

Mr Soros is known not only as a philanthropist and as an advocate of open societies, but also as an investor. It is his wise and judicious investments that have provided him with the means to pursue his philanthropic endeavours. I am pleased to welcome him also in his capacity as an investor both because we trust that his visit to Nigeria will impress him with our country’s varied investment opportunities and because, as a man of the market, he has been singularly outspoken in insisting that the market is not the cure for all the world’s ills.

A New Dawn Two 199
As he writes in his new book — *Open Society: Reforming Global Capitalism*:

The global capitalist system has produced a very uneven playing field. The gap between rich and poor is getting wider. This is dangerous, because a system that does not offer some hope and benefit to the losers is liable to be disrupted by acts of desperation. By contrast, if we offer economic incentives to countries that are eager to take advantage of them we create a powerful tool for crisis prevention. Incentives foster economic and political development; the fact that they can be withdrawn provides leverage that can be used against recalcitrant governments.

Unfortunately, the global financial architecture that prevails today offers practically no support to those who are less fortunate. Current trends go in the opposite direction. After the recent financial crisis, the aim has been to impose greater market discipline. But if markets are inherently unstable, imposing market discipline means imposing instability — and how much instability can societies tolerate?

George Soros understands, as he further writes, that:

It is in the interest of the countries at the center of the global capitalist system to foster the economic and political development of periphery countries.

George Soros’s views about the need for a level playing field to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor is consistent with his commitment to use his resources to promote democratic development and open societies in Africa and around the world. Nigeria has high hopes for OSIWA. It has assembled a distinguished Board of Directors headed by Ellen Johnson Sirleaf from Liberia and is building a staff under the direction of Nii Akuetteh from Ghana. Also in our midst is Mr Aryeh Neier, the human rights campaigner and author who has run the network of Soros Foundations for Mr Soros since 1993. I am pleased to welcome them and the members of the Board of Directors from Nigeria and from other West African countries to Abuja, and to wish them well in their vital task of assisting the peoples of our region in creating open societies.

I thank you all. And may God grant you wisdom in your activities.
It is indeed a great pleasure for me to be present at this historic moment that should mark the beginning of peace between our two brothers, Prime Minister Melles of Ethiopia, and President Isaias Afwerki of Eritrea. It is a great day for you, my brothers, and a great day for the peoples of your two countries. But it is equally a great day for your sub-region, and indeed for the whole Africa.

Let me commend the efforts of our brother, President Bouteflika, for this success story that began with him as the Chairman of the OAU when we declared this year as the Year of Peace, Security and Solidarity in Africa. President Bouteflika took his responsibility seriously and he ably carried it through to achieve a trophy for this African initiative.

I would also like to pay tribute to the Secretariat of the OAU, the Secretary General, Dr Salim Ahmed Salim, and his officials who made sure that this peace agreement bore the stamp of a process that was homegrown in Africa. Let me commend our development partners, particularly the United States of America, for their support in the process of resolving this conflict.

My dear brothers, you are about to endorse a victory, not for any country in particular, but for all the men, women and children in both Eritrea and Ethiopia. No conflict pays, moreso when the conflict is between brothers and cousins, regardless of the immediate or remote causes.

We must admit that peace is not a means. Peace is an end in itself. A life without peace is not worth contemplating. Let me add that the greatest and the most enduring legacy is peace. Peace is the foundation of all development and progress. There is no substitute for peace. And any sacrifice is worth making for peace.

In making a case for the declaration of the Year of Peace, Security and Solidarity in Africa, we took note of the African value which we must always cherish: namely, that we care for our brothers and sisters.
By that tradition, we regard peace as indivisible. The pain of one is the pain of all. It is thus our sincere hope that the successful and formal resolution of the conflict that we are witnessing here today, will be replicated wherever there are conflicts in Africa, such as in the Sudan, Sierra Leone, Democratic Republic of the Congo, just to mention a few.

In the meantime, I most heartily congratulate all the parties to this agreement for the remarkable achievement of peace. May the Almighty continue to bless and sustain peace and harmony between Eritrea and Ethiopia. And may peace spread and reign supreme throughout Africa.

I thank you.
I feel honoured to be asked to respond to the welcome address of our Brother and President of the Republic of Mali, President Alpha Oumar Konare. Let me, on behalf of all colleagues and brother Heads of State and Government, and on my own behalf, express profound appreciation to the government and people of Mali for the warm hospitality and excellent facilities that have been put at our disposal since our arrival in this beautiful and serene city of Bamako.

Let me also pay a special tribute to President Alpha Oumar Konare, whose steadfastness in the pursuit of the objectives of our organisation has facilitated the significant achievements recorded in the past few years. Through his purposeful leadership, our organisation is now better focused and has been put on a firm and sound footing, guaranteeing a secure future for our sub-region. President Konare has successfully employed the consultative process to resolve many burning issues within our Community. He has been instrumental to the successful launching of our Fast-Track Initiative, which has facilitated the speedy implementation of Community programmes. I am confident that this new spirit of consultation and commitment to the integration process will be sustained in the years to come.

Economic Condition

*Your Excellencies,* despite our best efforts, the economic condition of our peoples is far from satisfactory. Indeed, it is still depressing. The vast majority of our people are still mired in poverty, disease and squalour. The average per capita income of our region is today far less than it was in the 1970s. More than half of our peoples continue to live at subsistence
level, on less than one US dollar a day. Infant mortality remains high at 650 per 100,000, 50 per cent higher than the average in other developing countries.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic, malaria and other preventable diseases are wreaking havoc on our people. This situation is made worse by chronic poverty. The external debt stock of our members is now put at 70 billion US dollars. Twelve of our members are classified as HIPC, with debt service obligations of over 30 per cent of export earnings. If we must meet the objectives of poverty eradication in our countries, we must subscribe to broader and deeper debt relief, including outright cancellation of the debts, (which we have consistently advocated), some of which were incurred in circumstances that were dubious and less than transparent.

For the HIPC initiative to be meaningful, its eligibility criteria needs to be made more flexible and more inclusive in order that more of our members can take advantage of the agreed terms. Creditor nations need to address the debt burden in a more forthright and definitive manner in order that the objective of freeing resources for the execution of development and poverty alleviation programmes can be achieved.

The recent decision of the British government to cancel and suspend payments of debts owed by some of our members is a significant step in the right direction. I call on all creditor nations to emulate this laudable example.

The success of our efforts at eradicating poverty and promoting rapid economic development can only be enhanced by the successes of ECOWAS as a regional body. It is imperative that we coordinate our policies and programmes as well as strategies for addressing the challenges that we all face.

Almost seven months ago, we celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the establishment of ECOWAS. On that occasion, we reflected on the achievements and failures of our Community since its inception. That exercise in self-discovery enabled us to determine areas of comparative advantage possessed by each member state, which can form the basis of a more enduring integration process.

While the major objectives of our organisation are yet to be fully realised, we can look back at our modest achievements with some pride and satisfaction. At the national level, it is gratifying to note that many of
our economies moved away from zero or negative growth, though our overall macro-economic performance in the past year was a mere 2.5. Yet, for us to reduce poverty by half in 2015, our economies must grow by seven per cent. This calls for speedy implementation of economic reforms in our countries, and the harmonisation of our policies at sub-regional level. It requires an end to civil wars, inter-state disputes and bickering among member states. Above all, it requires the demonstration of greater political will to implement all Community decisions and programmes.

The implementation of the Trade Liberalisation Scheme and the Protocol on Free Movement of Goods and Services has reached an advanced stage, though the Scheme is still faced with some difficulties, especially at the borders. The Single Customs Declaration Form has been adopted, but will need to be put into use by all member States. In the transport and telecommunication sectors, the construction of the Trans-West Africa Highway road network is now 83 per cent completed, while the Trans-Sahelian Highway has also reached 87 per cent completion stage. The INTELCOM ONE project in the sphere of telecommunication now makes it possible for us to communicate with each other directly without passing through countries outside Africa. The Protocol on Community Levy is also being implemented, though there is room for improvement in its administration.

Despite these modest achievements, including the successful launching of ECOWAS Travellers’ cheque, the inauguration of the ECOWAS Parliament, and many more, it is regrettable that some of the laudable programmes of our organisation have remained unimplemented. For me, the process of integration in the sub-region has not gone far enough and fast enough. The world outside is not going to wait for us. The poverty of our people is not God-given and therefore can, and must, be eliminated by us.

In one instance, the number of countries participating in the Fast-Track Initiative in the area of ECOWAS Trading System has not yet gone beyond two. Only six of our member States have so far undertaken to participate in the second monetary zone with a view to establishing a single monetary zone by 2004. The report of the Convergence Council on the Second Monetary Zone, which we received this morning, was very encouraging; and we heartily welcome the establishment of the West
African Monetary Institute, with effect from January 2001.

We need to take some concrete steps to harmonise ECOWAS and UEMOA programmes into a single coherent policy that would lead to the creation of a single market for the entire West African region as envisaged in the ECOWAS Treaty. We need to pursue concrete programmes in the field of information and communication technologies, designed to create the basic infrastructure necessary for the participation of the region in the global revolution in this sector. This will also enable us to take full advantage of the benefits of globalisation and minimise its negative impact.

For us in Nigeria, the success of ECOWAS is crucial to our own success. This is why successive governments in Nigeria have been resolute in their commitments to the organisation since its inception. My Administration recognises that Nigeria can only continue to make meaningful contributions to ECOWAS if we have a strong domestic polity and a dynamic economy. Hence, our determination to pursue the implementation of economic reforms that are hinged on the twin policies of liberalisation and privatisation. We are also undertaking the reform and rehabilitation of public infrastructure as a means of creating an enabling environment for economic growth and development. We are confident that, before long, the fruits of our efforts will begin to show positively in the lives of our people.

The Partnership for Africa Renewal Programme
Presidents Thabo Mbeki, Abdulaziz Bouteflika and I have been exchanging ideas on a new initiative aimed at facilitating the renewal of Africa, and launching it on a sound path of economic development at the onset of the new millennium. This initiative, the details of which are still being discussed, is anchored on our firm belief that Africa can, on its own and in partnership with the rest of the world, regenerate itself, and move the continent forward.

This initiative is new in many respects. One is the political environment of the continent, which is more propitious than ever before. Second, is the increasing number of African leaders with the political will and a common vision for a better future for the continent. The programme is focused on partnership for development and is, therefore, in many ways
complementary to the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA), a process which was adopted at the last Summit of the OAU in Lome. We will be intensifying the process of consultation with colleagues and our development partners on this new initiative in due course.

**Conflict Resolution**

Your excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, it is satisfying to note that our organisation has given greater expression to the dictum that economic integration cannot be foisted on an unstable political environment. This is why we have remained relentless in our search for peace and security in the sub-region.

**Sierra Leone**

The situation in the sister Republic of Sierra Leone continues to engage our attention. After the interruption, last May, of the period of relative peace that was achieved in the past year, the government of Sierra Leone and the RUF concluded a cease-fire agreement in Abuja on 10 November this year. Let me commend the political will demonstrated by the parties to this tragic conflict and the political sagacity of the ECOWAS Committee of Six on Sierra Leone in facilitating this agreement. I call on all sides to the conflict to give peace a chance by faithfully implementing the peace and cease-fire accords so that the good people of Sierra Leone can resume their normal lives in peace and prosperity.

The situation in Sierra Leone has also been of interest to the UN Security Council. The visit of the Council’s team to the sub-region last September provided members the rare opportunity for close consultation between the Council and countries in the theatre of conflict. This close consultation between the Council and the countries involved in the search for peace in conflict areas on the one hand, as well as the United Nations Security Council and regional organisations, on the other, is a new initiative that needs to be sustained.

I would like to commend the members of the Council and the international community for their continued engagement in the Sierra
Leonean peace process. In particular, we must salute the courage and devotion to the ideals of peace demonstrated by the officers and men of UNAMSIL and the British Forces in Sierra Leone. The best tribute we can pay to the fallen UN soldiers in Sierra Leone is for all of us, especially the RUF and its backers, to rededicate themselves to the peace process so that the suffering of the innocent people in Sierra Leone may be brought to an end.

The RUF must always remember that there are two options to making peace in Sierra Leone: the political *cum* diplomatic option, and the military option. If the political option is not given a chance, the military option will take sway. I appeal to the RUF to implement the ceasefire agreement it voluntarily entered into.

**Mano River Union**

The situations in the Mano River Union, especially the relations between Liberia and Guinea, two neighbours, have also engaged our attention. Apart from the ECOWAS Assessment Mission to the border areas, Mali and Nigeria have made available some troops for patrol along the borders between the two countries. I call on other members of our organisation to join hands so that together we can contribute to the restoration of good neighbourly relations between Liberia and Guinea.

We call on the two brotherly countries to implement the confidence-building measures recommended to advance improved relations between them. Any inordinate expenditure on arms and militarism by either country will exacerbate their poverty situation.

**Cote d’Ivoire**

The situation in Cote d’Ivoire continues to be of concern to all of us in the sub-region. Let me use this forum to appeal, once again, to the authorities in Cote d’Ivoire to show greater magnanimity, accommodation, and to demonstrate a greater spirit of reconciliation, with a view to ensuring a speedy return of normality to the country. On our part, we stand ready, as always, to assist in the resolution of this crisis, convinced that none of us at this Summit should rest on our oars until peace and stability is fully restored to the entire sub-region.
Control of Light Arms and Small Weapons

Our organisation deserves to be commended for the far-reaching measures we recently adopted to stem the illegal flow of light arms and small weapons into the region. ECOWAS has, by these measures, gone furthest than any other regional organisation in the world in this sphere. We are determined to put an end to the proliferation of these weapons of death and destruction. I say to the illegal arms merchants: keep off our region and leave us in peace.

Good Governance

It is now generally agreed that good governance, respect for the rule of law, the promotion of human rights, accountability as well as probity in public life are essential ingredients of democracy. We need to nurture these values in the sub-region as the foundation for good governance on the basis of which meaningful integration of West Africa can be promoted. The inauguration of the ECOWAS Parliament, a monumental achievement, is a demonstration of our resolve to promote these democratic ideals. I congratulate all members of the Parliament on their election and wish them success in the discharge of their mandate.

In the same vein, we will soon be witnessing the inception of the ECOWAS Court of Justice. Our organisation deserves to be congratulated on these significant achievements. It behoves us to show concrete support for these supra-national institutions for their take-off and effective operation. I call on the international community to provide every possible assistance to these community institutions that are essential to the consolidation of democracy and rule of law in our sub-regional integration.

ECO-passport

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, the launching of ECOWAS Passports to replace the ECOWAS Travelling Certificate is another manifestation of our collective resolve to ensure free movement of peoples in our region. Our expectation is that within the next five years, all our national passports would have been replaced by the ECOWAS passports. With this development, the concept of community citizenship for all our people would have become a reality.
I, for one, will like to be a proud possessor of a Nigerian Eco-Passport which bears the emblem of Nigeria on one side and the emblem of ECOWAS on the other.

Private Sector Participation in Integration

The role of the private sector as the engine of growth of modern economies is no more in doubt. The implementation of economic reforms and rehabilitation of the basic infrastructure in our countries are intended to create a conducive environment for enhanced private sector participation in the economy. The private sector should therefore respond to this challenge by investing in the productive sectors across borders such that they can take full advantage of the economies of scale offered by the integration process. In the same vein, the civil society must be involved if the process is to be sustained. It is gratifying to note that some private enterprises have responded to this challenge by taking advantage of the ECOWAS trade liberalisation scheme.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, this Summit represents a significant milestone in the history of our organisation. It has demonstrated our resolve to move closer as a family, and to take measures that will uplift the condition of life of our people. The challenge before us is to ensure that we accelerate the process of integration so that the objectives of ECOWAS can be fully realised. This we must do; for it is only by acting together as one family and one people, by being our brother’s keeper in the true tradition of Africa, and by being willing to care and share that we can guarantee a prosperous future for our region and its people. We will be shirking our responsibility if we fail to give the leadership and direction that is required for ECOWAS to succeed. This we can ill-afford.

May God continue to bless our integration efforts.
I thank you.
The Niger Delta Development Commission

At the Inauguration of the Board of Directors of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC)
Abuja, 21 December, 2000

It is indeed a matter of joy for me to inaugurate the first board of Directors of the Niger Delta Development Commission. This is a moment for which our Administration has worked since the very beginning of our assuming office. This is an occasion that is of such political and economic significance, that many Nigerians and their friends at home and abroad, have eagerly awaited it.

For quite some time now, the Niger Delta has tragically acquired the image of a crisis zone. Various interest groups, in seeking expression for their views, have often resorted to means that were frequently violent, resulting in instability and threat to life and property. This was the scenario before the transition to democracy. I took a personal interest in the situation, and in my tour of the area before the elections, I gave my word that I would seek immediate solutions that would bring enduring peace and progress to the people of Niger Delta.

It is thus no coincidence that the bill to establish the Niger Delta Development Commission was the second (after the Anti-Corruption bill) that our Administration sent to the National Assembly. Many of you will recall that our Administration, within the first week of office, set up a Special Projects Unit in the Presidency, with the responsibility of preparing a development master plan for the region. By the end of June 1999, a Minister of State was appointed to oversee the Special Projects Unit of the Presidency, with special responsibility on the Niger Delta region. This was quickly followed by my submission to the National Assembly, in the first week of July 1999, of a bill on the establishment of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC).

I personally believe in the potential of the NDDC Act to offer a lasting solution to the socio-economic difficulties of the Niger Delta region.
which successive governments have grappled with, even before independence in 1960. By this token, this ceremony today, in addition to being an expression of my promise to the people of Niger Delta, and indeed all Nigerians, marks a historic government policy for addressing developmental issues.

It has been most unfortunate that the passage of the NDDC Bill through the Legislature was complicated, and consequently delayed by the politicisation of the issues involved. The core concern of the NDDC Bill is development and the well-being of our citizens, and as such, the fundamental issue ought to be above mundane politics. The implementation of the NDDC Act, is thus conditioned on an understanding and arrangements with the leadership of the National Assembly and state governors concerned, to amend the bill in such a way that the stakeholders and contributors can all be involved and make this vital project a people-oriented one.

While I thank all concerned, particularly the National Assembly, for the journey so far, this appreciation will be full and complete when the pending amendments are made for the unfettered implementation of the Act as conceived for full effect.

Let me stress that the NDDC is about a regional development programme. The Commission is an agency and one of the stakeholders in the development of the Niger Delta Region. Its activities do not preclude other Federal Government development programmes that are normally due to the states, nor is the NDDC intended to inhibit local initiatives that are the normal responsibilities of state governments, local governments or local communities. The Commission is not to take over constitutional responsibilities of any tier of government in the region. The federal ministries and agencies will continue to carry out projects in the region just as the states, the local governments, the oil companies, etc. With contributions from this multiplicity of stakeholders, there arises an absolute need for a development master plan by which available resources can be effectively coordinated and utilised.

The NDDC board, which is being inaugurated today, has a lot of challenges before it. Some skeptics are already predicting its failure, on the basis of the notorious record and experience of OMPADEC and the Petroleum (Special) Trust Fund. In formulating the NDDC Bill, we drew
lessons from the shortcomings of OMPADEC and the PTF, while care was taken to include provisions that will assist the NDDC to perform effectively and creditably. And that is why the amendment that will strengthen the Act should be promulgated soonest, to ensure the commitment and collaboration of all stakeholders.

Apart from the mode of funding, there are other aspects of the NDDC Act that are aimed at ensuring transparency, equity and accountability. There is an advisory committee, made up of governors of the Niger Delta states. They will regularly scrutinise the activities of the Commission. A monitoring committee, with the secretariat in the office of the Minister of Special Projects in the Presidency, will soon be set up. This monitoring committee will have access to the accounts books and other records of the NDDC and submit periodic reports to me. The board is also expected to submit quarterly reports to my office as well as audited annual accounts and reports which shall also be presented to the National Assembly.

Let me say this loud and clear; the NDDC will not be a honeypot to serve the personal greed of anyone. I will personally make sure of that, and I have the Anti-Corruption Commission to support me. I will take a personal interest in the progress of this Commission. I will want the board to give the issue of a development master plan for the region very high priority. The office of the Minister for Special Projects has already collated more than 700 expressions of interest submitted by various consultants and this should assist the board in expediting action on the master plan. While the planning process will be on, development projects that will be incorporated into the master plan shall also be carried out. There are projects already on the ground which are crying out to be completed. There are others crying out to be initiated. You should waste no time to be effective.

A problem that may easily arise is duplication of efforts resulting in wastage of resources, and conflicts. The NDDC will therefore be expected to set up a development coordination unit. This unit will monitor development efforts of all the stakeholders in the region to ensure that they comply with the approved master plan. It will also serve as a clearing house during the planning and budgeting stages, to ensure that stakeholders are aware of what others are doing or are planning to do. The reports of this unit will go a long way to confirm or disprove claims of development initiatives by the various stakeholders in the oil-producing communities of the region.
The greatest challenge that faces this pioneer board of the NDDC is to convert these comparative advantages into competitive advantages that will translate into more sustainable jobs and standard of living. Some experts have indicated that the non-oil resources of the region far exceed the oil and gas resources. The Board will do well to investigate these claims and see what can be done to explore and exploit them.

Another serious problem of the Niger Delta region is that of environmental degradation and pollution. While the NDDC, with the Ministry of Environment, will be expected to ensure that the oil companies give due consideration to environmental issues, it should also avoid being the problem itself. Environmental impact requirements for major projects must be complied with, and where mistakes are made, immediate action should be taken to alleviate the problems resulting from such mistakes.

Let me congratulate all the members of this Commission. Your nomination and appointment as board members was based on your track record of integrity, professionalism and dedication. The Government and all the people of Nigeria are looking up to you for quality service to match the historic significance of the NDDC Act. Your success will be a prize for efforts to revive the economic and political fortunes of this country.

There is a very important area where I would urge you to distinguish yourself in the history of boards in this country. We have had far too many cases where boards have irresponsibly and disproportionately allocated funds to overhead costs. Let the NDDC Board not be another board where resources are wasted in providing luxury for its members. Of course, I expect that you will be adequately remunerated and appropriately provided for. But your physical and material comfort should never at any time appear to be at the expense of the development of the Niger Delta, which is the primary and priority purpose of the resources made available for your budget.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, it is now my pleasure to inaugurate the pioneer board of the Niger Delta Development Commission. May the Almighty guide you in your activities in the service of the people of Nigeria.

I thank you. God bless you all.
LET'S LIVE AS BROTHERS AND SISTERS

Message to the Nation on the Occasion of
Christmas and Eid-el-Fitri
Abuja, 25 December, 2000

There is so much joy in my heart as I bring you very warm greetings on this very unique occasion of Christmas and Eid-el-Fitri celebrations. Indeed, this year’s festive season for both Muslims and Christians is a very historic one, not just because it is the first in this century and in this millennium, but for the extraordinary coincidence of having Christmas and Eid-el-Fitri on the same day.

This convergence must be seen as a divinely ordained meeting point of the two great religions – Islam and Christianity. For us as a nation, there cannot be any better time than now to reflect on our religious beliefs and practices, so as to bring out the best in us for God’s glory and service to Nigeria in particular, and to the rest of humanity at large. This is our sacred duty and responsibility.

We should all reflect on our lives individually, the history and the situation of our communities as well as our nation. We have all performed below expectation and fallen short of the standard set for us by the Almighty, our Creator. This is not only a time for reflection, but also a time for confession and seeking forgiveness for our shortcomings. God in His Grace and Mercy will forgive us and reconcile us anew with Himself and with one another in friendship and love.

It is most interesting to observe that Eid-el-Fitri marks the end of fasting and ushers in a period of celebration of a renewed relationship with God and fellow human beings. In a similar vein, Christmas is a celebration of the birth of Jesus as the Christ, whose life provides salvation from human self-centeredness to a new life in God and a new bond of dynamic fellowship of love with one another. What else can be a better opportunity for us as a people in a nation where these two religions provide the basis for our operational faith and conduct?

Let our belief and confession of one God inspire us to live together as brothers and sisters regardless of our differences in whatever manner and at any level that we exist. We can achieve this as we pledge anew our
commitment to the ideals of our religious claims.

Again, during this period, the two religions emphasise giving out gifts of all kinds to loved ones and the needy in general. This noble practice can be extended to include the idea of giving our best of service to Nigeria as a gift for this generation and posterity. If we give alms to the poor and give out Christmas gifts of assorted values and fail to offer our country the best of our lives and talents for the common good of all, we are still far from fulfilling our religious obligation to God and to the nation. God demands our best for Nigeria today and tomorrow.

Furthermore, our two religions place emphasis on a sense of belonging which creates a community of people united mainly for a common socio-religious purpose. We can further exploit this and expand our sense of belonging to cover a country of our own called Nigeria, where we must live and work together as one united, indivisible, peaceful, just and prosperous nation. Nigeria is our country and we have no other nation to depend upon as we struggle to shape our individual and collective destiny.

While we move away from posturing for regional hegemony, let us continue to strengthen the fabric of our society through dedication and commitment to our national ideals.

We dare not throw away our present golden opportunity to rebuild Nigeria of our collective dream. We have enough positive values in our two dominant religions to provide the spiritual and moral anchor that we need to transform our present situation. In our daily conduct, let us bring in love, peace, justice, honesty, fairness, equity, charity, discipline and hardwork. We are certain to move ahead more positively to greater heights as a nation if we live by these basic tenets of our religions.

As I conclude this short goodwill message, let me express my appreciation to all the faithful of our two religions for the prayers that are being offered daily for Nigeria, the leadership and the entire citizenry. Let us not relent in our efforts in this direction. The prayer of the faithful is always effective, elevating and fulfilling.

In this regard, let us continue to pray for the peace, unity, harmony, progress and prosperity of our nation. May God continue to touch the lives of those whose hearts are not in tune with the spirit of the season.

God bless Nigeria.

I wish you all a very successful celebration. And may God continue to crown all our positive efforts with success. Amen.
I bring forth warm and fraternal greetings from the people and government of Nigeria.

We in Nigeria congratulate and rejoice with Mr John Agyekum Kufuor, and the entire people of Ghana, on this momentous occasion that marks a peaceful change of government. History is made today, with the democratic transfer of power from one government to another, most significantly, to the flag-bearer of a party other than the ruling one. We note with joy that with this smooth and peaceful transfer of power, Ghana will be making a significant contribution to the march of democracy in Africa.

To the new President of Ghana, let me observe that the task ahead is of daunting proportions. And I am speaking with the experience of a person who only 19 months ago faced such similar gigantic challenges in my own country. The people of Ghana have given you their mandate and they rightly expect a lot from you. In order not to let them down, it is important that you begin by identifying, as a matter of priority, what needs to be put right, what needs to be done, and how to bring about those changes that will be sensitive to the aspirations of the people, as well as effective in enhancing the quality life throughout the country.

You must also initiate policies and take measures whose effectiveness is convincing enough to attract your international friends to assist you.

And let me tell all Ghanaians, again I am speaking from experience, that change will not happen overnight. It will be unrealistic to expect that. The process of change needs to be nurtured with full commitment and hope in the Lord. And you must bear in mind, that all changes require sacrifice, even more so when the change implies reversing a downward trend in socio-economic circumstances.

Mr President, the task in hand cannot be done successfully by any individuals, be they in groups or selected sections of a society. You will require all hands to be on deck in the truest sense of democracy.

You will need to inspire all Ghanaians with the spirit of patriotism
which recognises that every man, woman and child is a stakeholder, and that selfless service to the nation is not only the most noble thing to do, but also the surest means of building a truly viable and progressive society.

The history of fraternal relationship between Ghana and Nigeria goes a long way back. Even before the advent of colonialism, we intermingled and traded with each other.

Today, we enjoy true neighbourliness, especially in the context of our sub-regional organisation, ECOWAS. It is in this spirit of neighbourliness that Nigeria has been, and will always be, deeply interested and genuinely concerned with the events and developments in Ghana.

Let me say, at this point, that Nigeria will continue to be willing and prepared to support political stability, economic prosperity and general social well-being of the people of Ghana.

I would like to pay homage and tribute to the steadfastness, dedication, patriotism and brotherly cooperation, which Former President Jerry Rawlings exhibited in the handling of bilateral and multi-lateral relations between Ghana and Nigeria. He has creditably acquitted himself in the on-going efforts to accelerate the integration within our sub-regional organisation, ECOWAS.

I welcome His Excellency President Kufour to the fold of African Heads State and Government. I am confident that I can count on your contributions towards accelerated socio-economic transformation of the West African sub-region, and the integrational efforts at the continental level.

My dear brothers and sisters of Ghana, you have done remarkably well to have successfully participated in the democratic process that has delivered to you a brand new President. But that is only the beginning. For democracy is a process. And it is a process that necessitates consistent and persistent vigilance and involvement of all citizens.

Your President needs you. And you need your President. But above all, Ghana needs each and every Ghanaian. If you could thus achieve this degree of democratic harmony, you will, with God’s Grace, make Ghana a great nation and a star of Africa – a status that you once earned when you became the first black African nation to attain independence in 1957.

I wish the new government and all the people of Ghana God’s blessing for a brighter future, brighter century, and brighter millennium.

I thank you. May God bless you all.
At the State Banquet Hosted by 
Hojjatoleslam Seyed Mohammad Khatami,
President of the Islamic Republic of Iran
Teheran, 10 January, 2001

Y our Excellency, President Hojjatoleslam Seyed Mohammad Khatami, Honourable Ministers, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, let me begin by thanking the government and people of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the invitation extended to me for this official visit to your beautiful country. On behalf of the government and people of Nigeria, my wife, and the members of my entourage, I wish to express our sincere appreciation for the warm reception that has been accorded us at every turn since our arrival here in this beautiful and historic city of Teheran. I want to assure you, Your Excellency, that we are indeed feeling very much at home.

Mr President, you will recall that you and I had the opportunity of meeting and exchanging views on common interests to our two countries last year, on the occasion of the United Nations Millennium Summit in New York; and during the last OPEC Summit in Caracas, Venezuela. My presence here today further confirms the desire of our two nations to come closer together in relations that would be mutually beneficial to our peoples.

Mr President, our two countries are no strangers to each other. Bilateral relations between Nigeria and the Islamic Republic of Iran have remained warm and cordial since formal diplomatic relations were established in the 1970s, as confirmed by the frequent exchange of visits by top officials of both countries over the years.

It is in the same spirit that my visit to Teheran, the first ever by a Nigerian President, is being undertaken. It is an historic visit, and I feel delighted and honoured to be here tonight.

Mr President, our two countries may be reasonably apart
geographically, but the Almighty has endowed us with a number of common attributes, such as our regional status, strategic location, natural resources, large population and cultural affinity, all of which impose on both our countries commensurate responsibilities and obligations that extend beyond our national boundaries.

Our two countries can play pivotal role in the equitable management of global wealth between the industrialised and the developing countries. This common concern is already being expressed through our common membership of such international organisations as the G77 at the UN, the Non-Aligned-Movement, the G15. Similarly, we are together in OPEC, where we are joining efforts to protect our interests as major oil producers and exporters.

Mr President, we in Nigeria have observed with keen interest, developments in Iran, particularly the impressive changes introduced by your administration since 1997. We join the rest of the world in commending your leadership for the positive orientation in Iran’s foreign policy, with emphasis on detente and dialogue. Let me say that not only do we in Nigeria appreciate and highly regard your leadership, we are also committed to work with your leadership for the sustenance of peace and development in your region, and indeed the whole world.

It is gratifying to note that Iran is utilizing the experience gained from her long history, renowned civilization, and rich cultural heritage in addressing some of the concerns affecting humankind. I am, of course, referring to the Iranian initiative, The Dialogue Among Civilizations, with which, Mr President, you are strongly and uniquely associated. We believe the Dialogue Among Civilizations is a strong instrument for bringing together the diverse peoples of the world and for seeking rational solutions to major world problems, such as international peace and security, world economic order and other problems confronting humankind. Nigeria extended her full support for this Iranian initiative at the UN Round Table Discussions in New York last year, when this year was declared the UN Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations. I want to reassure you, Mr President, that Nigeria will continue to lend support to this important initiative so as to contribute towards the realization of its noble objectives.

Mr President, as you may be aware, Nigeria has been engaged in structural changes in the economy and within her body politic. In the last
eighteen months, we have endeavoured to push ahead with reforms aimed at remedying the damage to our system as a result of the most difficult and tragic years in our social and political history. I am glad to say that we have made substantial progress in restoring fundamental values of democracy and associated aspects of the peoples rights to just, secure and decent life. There is still much to do, but we are confident that with God’s guidance and assistance, we will fully succeed.

Economically, we have been rationalising and re-structuring so as to optimise our prosperity. We are drastically reducing government’s involvement in industry, having since realized that economic growth is best achieved with private investment as the driving force. Public institutions or enterprises, which have been responsible for providing vital services such as power generation and distribution, and telecommunications are in various stages of privatization. Unwieldy rules and regulations that have hindered the flow of foreign investments and beneficial trade exchanges are being revised, repealed, and replaced by new laws that would facilitate the free flow of foreign investment and trade. In addition, new trade and investment policies have been designed to give protection to the investor wishing to stake his money in Nigeria. I have been made to understand that Iran is carrying out similar reforms.

Mr President, under this conducive environment, economic exchanges between our two countries should thrive. For many years, our two countries have fallen victims of the myths of distance; similarity of products that our two countries produce, such as oil and agricultural produce; and cultural affinity. Adherence to these myths have, regrettably, hindered the emergence and growth of genuine bilateral economic and trade exchanges. You will agree with me, Mr President, that in the present age of globalization, and with the varying successes and achievements in our respective economies, our two countries are in a vantage position to engage in profitable, mutually beneficial, and sustainable bilateral economic cooperation.

This realization, Mr President, encouraged me to include in my entourage a strong private sector representation. I am confident that their Iranian counterparts would, in the spirit of South-South Co-operation, explore the possibilities of engaging in discussions that would enhance bilateral economic and commercial exchanges between Nigeria and the
Islamic Republic of Iran. I trust that Your Excellency would give personal and enthusiastic support to the Nigerian private sector representatives in order to open the vast opportunities for commercial exchanges between us.

Mr President, I cannot complete these remarks without making a short reference to the outstanding issue of the G77, whose Chairmanship (currently held by my country) will shortly be taken over by your country. Let me say that your country’s willingness to assume the leadership of this important Third World institution is borne out of very strong conviction, commitment and desire to protect and safeguard the interest of developing countries. I pledge to work closely with you, Mr President, in order to ensure a smooth transition and subsequent taking over of the Group’s Chairmanship for the current year.

An important positive development in the Group’s agenda is the South Summit that took place in Havana, Cuba, last year. This Summit adopted a number of resolutions which are to be implemented over the next five years, under my chairmanship. Among other things, participating countries resolved to unite in addressing global issues. Part of the resolution included the need to maintain dialogue with the G8 of industrialised nations. This we have already started doing, with the G8 meeting in Japan last year. And we intend to hold another round of discussions at this year’s meeting in Italy.

Mr President, the implementation of South Summit resolutions is aimed at complementing and strengthening the G77’s role as the voice of developing countries. Thus, as Chairman of the South Summit, I definitely look forward to fruitful cooperation with G77 under your chairmanship.

Mr President, I once again wish to express deep gratitude for the warm welcome accorded myself and my entourage by the people and government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and by your good self. Let us pray that this historic visit will usher in a period, which will infuse a new lease of life to Nigeria-Iran relations. We should endeavour to ensure that the discussions and agreements achieved in this visit provide impetus to the further expansion and enrichment of the political and economic relations of our two countries. I also wish to seize this opportunity, Mr President, to extend invitation to you to pay a similar State Visit to Abuja, Nigeria: a visit which I believe, would provide an additional opportunity to
concretize the achievements reached so far.

I believe that all our cooperation efforts at bilateral level should be encapsulated in a Joint Commission programme, which will be regularly reviewed for progress. And I would like to suggest that the first meeting of such a Joint Commission should take place within *six months*, and preferably before Your Excellency's visit to Nigeria.

I thank you. And may God bless you all.
NIGERIA-JAPAN: IMPROVING OLD TIES

At the State Banquet in Honour of
Mr Yoshiro Mori, Prime Minister of Japan
Abuja, 12 January, 2001

It is a matter of great joy for me to have you, Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori in our midst. On behalf of the government and people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, I most heartily welcome you and the distinguished members of your entourage.

May I particularly express my delight in welcoming Madame Ogata, a friend of Africa, who is a member of your entourage.

Mr Prime Minister, we note with satisfaction the historic fact that your visit is the first ever to the African continent by a serving Prime Minister of Japan. For that, you and your entourage deserve a particularly big welcome to our continent. You are blazing a new trail at the beginning of a new century, and a new millennium.

Nigeria and Japan have had a long history of bilateral relations. We note Japan’s spectacular success in trade with Nigeria, and indeed with the entire region of Africa. Japan was not a colonial power in Africa, yet you persisted in offering Africans an alternative to colonial trading habits. Some might even describe your success as a contribution to the liberation of Africa’s trade links.

Relations between Nigeria and Japan have covered political, economic and socio-cultural spheres and have been sustained over the years by the mutuality of interests and the friendship of our peoples. The relations have been characterised by frankness and trust between the leaders of our two countries, and owe a great deal to the desire of our two countries to forge ahead in addressing important issues that would make the world a better and more secure place to live. We in Nigeria cherish our ties with your country and would continue to devote our best endeavour towards consolidating these ties as well as facilitating the furtherance of relations in other spheres.

Apart from being a world economic and technological power, your country has also distinguished herself as a leading voice in the struggle to
foster the principles of democracy, good governance and respect for the human rights of peoples throughout the world. It was no coincidence that Japan was among the first countries that I chose to visit after my election that successfully concluded our electoral aspect of transition to democracy, nearly two years ago. Let me, once more, thank the people and government of Japan for the constructive support for Nigerian people in the most tragic years of our national history. By your visit, we are re-assured and confident of Japan’s continued support and cooperation as we nurture our young and fledgling democracy.

Mr Prime Minister, I am happy to tell you that, apart from the odd bumps, the process has so far remained focused and has given new hope and confidence to our people. As I speak to you, the democratic institutions which we have put in place are operating effectively within the confines of the system of checks and balances enshrined in our constitution. Our Administration has also put in place appropriate legal framework for the protection of foreign investments and repatriation of profits. We are resolved and willing to work hard and make the necessary sacrifice in order to ensure that our current democratic dispensation not only survives, but takes root and becomes the entrenched political heritage of our children and their children.

Mr Prime Minister, it is gratifying to note that our commitment to improving the socio-economic fortunes of our country coincides with the expectations of the international community. For Nigeria, this means the expectation to emerge as a stable polity that respects the human rights of its people while pursuing sensitive and effective economic policies that would benefit her citizens, and play a significant role in African regional affairs. It has been said that Nigeria embodies the hopes and aspirations of Africa. However, salutary as this may seem, it imposes an awesome burden on Nigeria and its leadership. There is no compromise in our resolve to turn our country round and take up our proper position in the comity of nations. We will not disappoint our brothers and sisters in our sub-region and on the continent of Africa, who expect so much from us.

We appreciate the international community’s role in the process of our transition to democracy and we look forward to the strengthening of political and economic cooperation with our friends. The virtues of good and democratic governance is bound to remain hollow if the people fail to
realise democracy dividends in their personal lives, namely, tangible improvement in poverty reduction accompanied by the basic requirements of life such as food security, potable water, housing, healthcare, education, employment and energy. We would, therefore, welcome all the support and assistance that would contribute to strengthening our fledgling democratic arrangement.

Mr Prime Minister, we are indeed pleased to record that Japan has resumed its development assistance to Nigeria in such vital areas as water supply, healthcare delivery, education, rural electrification. Poverty and democracy are strange bed-fellows. Democracy is good development as it releases energy for development, thereby enhancing economic encounter and interaction between nations.

Mr Prime Minister, you would by now have had first hand experience of the well-known African condition, with its climate of poverty, insecurity, conflicts and war. For us Africans, this condition is indeed a matter of life and death, and it is of everyday experience and everyday concern. Whereas there might be some truth in ascribing these conditions to misplacement of priorities of government policies, corruption and mismanagement on the part of past leaders, these alone do not completely explain the fundamental causes of the pervading crises which have continued to afflict Africa.

The truth is some of the root causes of the African condition are to be found in the impact of global economic disequilibrium – popularly known as globalisation, the external debt burden, lack of access to capital and declining overseas development assistance, all of which militate against growth of African nation states, as well as make it impossible for African governments to provide basic social services and amenities to their people. Consequently, we have the situation where Africa alone accounts for 32 of the least developed countries in the world.

Mr Prime Minister, it is no longer a secret that external debt has emerged as the greatest obstacle to progress for us in Africa. Nigeria has continued to stress this point, and some results have been achieved bilaterally and for the region of Africa. But much more has to be done. In fact, we believe that ultimately the surest remedy to unshackle the economies of African countries is through remission of debts, with determined and realistic developmental programmes. There are many ways
this can be achieved, and we are going to remain engaged in seeking a mutually acceptable approach. This is one of the ways by which we can be given the chance to effectively plan the improvement of quality of life of our peoples.

Mr Prime Minister, Japan and Nigeria need to strengthen the scope and content of their economic relations. The areas of interest to Nigeria are vast. It is my belief that your visit should avail the opportunity for us to deliberate and agree on other areas of cooperation between our two countries. One major area in our bilateral relations where we need to take urgent action concerns our bilateral economic relations, in particular, in the area of trade. It is my hope that your presence in Nigeria will provide opportunity for the officials of our two governments to revive all the outstanding bilateral agreements with a view to working towards their speedy conclusion.

Since its inception, our Administration has taken various measures to create an enabling environment for local and foreign investment to thrive. We have also put in place appropriate legal framework for the protection of foreign investment and the repatriation of legitimate profit. We are determined to change from the way and manner business was done in Nigeria in the recent past in order to institute a new regime of accountability and transparency in conformity with internationally accepted code of business ethics. All these are aimed at enhancing the accessibility of Nigeria to foreign investment capital to facilitate an accelerated rate of economic development.

Our programme of privatisation to substantially disengage government from direct involvement in business has gone nearly half way. The major areas identified for privatisation include: telecommunications, power generation and distribution, petroleum, gas, fertiliser production, machine tool fabrication, steel and aluminium, mining and solid mineral extraction, sugar, and cement production, finance and banking, hotels, tourism and leisure.

I would, therefore, like to invite Japanese public investment institutions and private entrepreneurs to avail themselves of the immense and ample opportunities available for profitable investment in Nigeria under the present democratic dispensation. I am optimistic that the next market, and the market of the millennium, is in the making in Nigeria and
covering the West African region.

I am happy that we have, during your visit, deliberated on these and other matters of interest to our two countries. Your visit would also enable us to harmonise our two countries’ position on a number of issues affecting Africa as well as other issues of international concern, especially on international peace, conflict management and security.

Mr Prime Minister, please permit me to acknowledge the presence in our midst this evening, of my brother and friend, a great son of Africa, and an advocate of peace, security, cooperation and integration in Africa, President Alpha Oumar Konare of Mali. I am sure, Mr Prime Minister, that you have found his contributions to our deliberations instructive, stimulating, and adding to the wider perspective of the sub-regional and regional picture.

Mr President, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, to mark this memorable occasion, I would like to invite all present here to please rise and join me in a toast to the continued good health and personal well-being of the Prime Minister of Japan, a distinguished statesman, Honourable Yoshiro Mori, and for the peace, progress and continued friendship of the peoples of Japan and Nigeria.

May Japan-Nigeria bilateral relations grow from strength to strength.

I thank you.
Chairman and Members of the Nigerian Legion, distinguished ladies and gentlemen. It is my pleasure to welcome you to the year 2000 formal launching of the Armed Forces Remembrance Day Celebration and the Emblem appeal programme.

The Armed Forces Remembrance Day is an occasion for celebrating the heroic sacrifices of those who laid down their lives in Military operations in order to give the people of this country and the rest of the world unity, freedom, peace and stability. The celebration also offers us an opportunity to contribute financially and in kind to the welfare of the families left behind by those fallen heroes as well as those veterans who, though survived the service, have been rendered handicapped and in some cases, destitute.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, permit me to go a little into the history of this celebration. The remembrance day celebration was instituted way back in colonial days, when it was set aside to honour the servicemen who died in the First and Second World Wars. The day 11th November, of each year was chosen for the ceremony among the Commonwealth countries. That is why it was then nicknamed Eleven-Eleven event. But in the late 1970s, the date of the celebration in Nigeria was changed to the 15th January, to conform more with the country’s most significant historical military events.

This ceremony is observed in virtually every country of the world. In the case of Nigeria, it is meant to honour the servicemen who died in action in the military operations in which the country has participated, either as a colonial territory or as a sovereign nation. These operations include the First World War (1914-1918), the Second World War (1939-
1945), the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970), the Bakassi skirmishes, and the various peace-keeping missions under the auspices of the United Nations, the OAU and ECOWAS.

I observed that many people, having witnessed or heard about this ceremony over the years, have come to regard it as a mere annual ritual which they treat with passive indifference. Some have even become loathful towards it as part of the negative attitude towards the recent experience under oppressive and corrupt military governments. It is therefore very pertinent for me to revive our positive disposition towards this event and to emphasize that this is a national event.

The year 2001 edition of the Armed Forces Remembrance Day and Emblem Appeal Celebration is commencing one month earlier than it used to be. This has become necessary to allow time for better participation by the public.

Without attempting to be immodest, I make bold to assert that I am privileged to be one of the not too many citizens of this country who were active players in the real theatre of battle, especially during the Nigerian Civil War. I can declare to you that the greatest horror in this world is to witness and participate in military combat. Even those who have heard the cacophony of sounds of various guns from a distance can tell you the effect of that on their nerves.

I as a commander have beheld gory scenes of casualty — many cases ending up in death and many others resulting in maiming. Combatants have witnessed their colleagues and friends caught and killed instantly by bullets, rockets and explosives and yet fought on doggedly.

The deeds of these servicemen were most noble and heroic. These were men who were ready to lay down their lives not for personal material reward, not for power, not for ego boosting, not for the lack of other means of livelihood, but for the unity, freedom, peace, stability and happiness of all. I shudder to think about what would have become of our country or the rest of the world if those men did not struggle to make those wars and operations end the way they did. In the words of Winston Churchill, “the so many people of this country and the world owe so much to those men for the peaceful lives they live today”.

It is indeed unfortunate that the price of peace and happiness which
these gallant men paid with their lives is now being taken away by a small minority of people who have launched an undeclared war on the citizenry, through violent crimes such as armed robbery, rape, assassinations and others. I seize this opportunity to advise the people perpetuating these wicked and ignoble acts to reflect on the lessons of the lives of our fallen heroes and to change their course towards the positive track.

The vast majority of the citizenry are beneficiaries of the sacrifices of the fallen heroes. In the African spirit of gratitude therefore, it behoves us to show appreciation for this. This we can do by the following:

a. donating financially and in kind towards the Emblem Appeal;
b. showing concern throughout the year by helping the veterans and their families in our personal or official capacities.

I know that Nigerians are naturally charitable. But I want everybody to see this programme not only as an opportunity to help genuinely deserving people, but as a duty to show gratitude to people who have helped us, helped our families and helped our country to survive and entrench democracy.

This year, therefore, I implore every Nigerian citizen, and corporate entities to endeavour to make a contribution to the Emblem Appeal. It is true that government has an obligation to cater for the families of the fallen servicemen and the other handicapped legionnaires. But apart from the fact that government has limited resources which have to be spread among limitless services to the people, it is proper that the citizenry should be given an opportunity to make personal contributions, at least to express their own appreciation. The contribution is collected because it is not right and fair that the families of those who laid down their lives for us as well as their living colleagues are left to suffer destitution.

The Nigerian Legion, which is the organisation of veterans in the country, is responsible for the collection and administration of the contributions. The Legion is, however, assisted by serving men and women of the Armed Forces, under the auspices of the Ministry of Defence. I have been briefed about the welfare and other projects of the Legion on which the fund and donations in kind are being utilised, and I am satisfied with the programme. I have directed the Ministry of Defence to render continuous and effective assistance to the Legion in its programmes.
Another important area where the citizenry can be of assistance to the veterans is to provide them employment in jobs where they are suitable. I urge organisations both in the public and private sectors to provide for this in their employment schemes, as some of the ex-servicemen are still capable of making their contributions to the economy in this wise. In the same vein, I implore the Nigerian Legion to establish a scheme for training and counselling their members for the challenges of the skills and ethics of modern employment.

I now have the pleasure to formally launch the Armed Forces Remembrance Day Celebrations and the Emblem Appeal for year 2001. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. I wish you God’s blessing and guidance.
WE ALL FIGHT CORRUPTION

At the National Symposium on
Corruption and National Rebirth
Abuja, 22 January, 2001

In my address in September last year, at the inauguration of the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission and the swearing-in of its members, I drew attention to the challenges that the Commission was likely to face, and made no attempt to gloss over the difficulties that were certain to attend any systematic effort to tackle them.

If anything, actual experience has since shown that we, in fact, underestimated the deep-seated nature and the complexity of the problem of corruption in our midst. Previously, for instance, it was believed that the challenge of corruption, and the dangers which it posed to our survival as a strong, modern State, applied substantially only to the public sector, and to the transactions of government at various levels. We were lured into this belief by the fact that government has for a long time been the single most important economic and even cultural institution in the country, and consequently, virtually dictates both the standard of living and conduct in every sphere of our national life. But as we travel the road of deregulation, privatisation, and liberalization, we are beginning to discover that corruption is a public sector problem: in fact, it permeates every aspect of our lives.

I am sure you will all admit that public sector fraud and corruption have so become a way of life in Nigeria that the average citizen hardly ever pauses to reflect on the damage it does to all our hopes and dreams. But what we so often fail, or refuse to admit is that corruption in the public sector would be impossible to sustain, without the active involvement, cooperation and connivance of persons not employed by any government or public institution.

- The man who vandalises NEPA installations for monetary gain;
- the person who bribes NITEL officials to avoid paying his telephone bills;
• the street urchin who adulterates petrol and sells it off at an exorbitant price;
• the criminal who breaks pipe-lines to siphon petrol for quick money;
• the prominent businessman who diverts millions of litres of petrol away from our fuel stations and sells them across our borders at very high margins

These are not necessarily government officials! But they do share one thing in common with the highly placed public officer who casually inflates the value of contracts, or fraudulently documents the receipt of goods or services that were never delivered or rendered, respectively. They are all Nigerian citizens. And they collectively endanger the moral fabric of our society, and jeopardize all our efforts to pull this country out of poverty, disease and underdevelopment.

I am aware that the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission has been in existence for only a few months, and has understandably been preoccupied with the need to set up its own logistics and infrastructure. I am also aware that much to its credit, despite the teething problems that any such new institution must have to grapple with, it has nevertheless been able to initiate a number of activities which will, no doubt, enhance its long-term effectiveness. I note, particularly, the close cooperation between the Commission and the National Orientation Agency on the one hand, and between the Commission and local and foreign NGOs involved in anti-corruption projects, on the other.

But I must equally state, as forcefully as I can, that the Commission was not intended to be the sole, exclusive organ through which we can hope to eradicate corruption in our national life. The Commission, it is true, must serve as the vanguard: the formal and primary focus of our collective war against corruption. But that war must at all times be seen as a collective project in which everyone, every citizen is involved.

To this end, we must admit from the start that it is mandatory to adopt an integrated approach to our war against corruption. This approach must be both preventive and punitive. And it must be seen as a struggle, which is total and comprehensive.

There is no doubt that the preventive approach to our anti-corruption battle is more likely, in the long run, to yield the results we desire, than a
merely punitive approach. I would like, in this regard therefore, to see a sustained and spirited campaign of public enlightenment that adopts all the modern instruments of communications to bring home to our citizens the dangers of corruption. We should use television, radio, newspapers and magazines, travelling theatres and every other means of mass communication to convince our citizenry that fraud and corruption, not tribe or religion or political affiliation, are their most fatal enemies.

We should integrate a carefully designed programme of civic education that highlights the evils of corruption into the curriculum of our schools at all levels. We should seek to engage the churches, the mosques, social clubs and professional associations in this most significant struggle.

All the current evidence appears to suggest that while progress is still slow and sometimes imprecise, the consciousness of our people is gradually being sensitized to the need to fight corruption with every weapon we have. Despite the sneers of the incurable cynics in our midst, something is already happening out there among our people, especially when one observes that those who stubbornly refuse to change their old, fraudulent ways are now being compelled to constantly device new, more subtle and more sophisticated methods of going about their corrupt and criminal trade. And this must surely be a sign that the fear of detection, and the attendant probability of severe punishment, are beginning to serve as a positive deterrent against corruption, fraud, and lack of transparency and accountability in our transactions, both public and private.

But while it is evident that the crusade against corruption is building up in intensity, I must also observe, with some sadness, that the most visible sign of commitment against this danger appears to be remarkable mostly in individual men and women, acting alone. What we seem to have today, are islands of integrity and commitment to transparency, of individuals waging a lonely war in an ocean of moral filth, rather than citizens acting in concert. Instead of these commendable islands of conscience and probity, let there be huge and vast waves of determined citizens waging global war against this threat to their destiny.

In this regard, I note with considerable satisfaction the pioneering efforts of the personnel of the Federal Ministry of Transport, who have voluntarily chosen to police themselves, to encourage among themselves
some adherence to reasonable standards of official conduct. It would indeed be a great tactical victory in our war against corruption, if other departments of government at all levels, and institutions in the private sector also, were to emulate this example.

Let me draw some attention to an issue which appears to be causing a great deal of confusion and unnecessary rejection of personal and collective responsibility among some of our citizens. In fashioning the *Corrupt Practices and Allied Offences Act*, considerable care was taken to incorporate into it provisions which are possibly extra-legal, but which were deliberately intended to allow sufficient scope for ordinary citizens, not formally responsible for the execution of the Act, to participate in its enforcement. The law, for instance, permits citizens to report cases of corrupt conduct, whether in the public or private sectors, without disclosing their identity to the authorities. In fact, it imposes a lawful responsibility on any citizen who has knowledge of any corrupt act to report the matter; failure to do so constituting an offence against the law.

The inclusion of this provision in the Act was deliberately intended to encourage full participation of all citizens in the crusade against corruption. To this extent, it would be spurious to argue that because the ordinary citizen does not possess the power to arrest anyone suspected of corrupt conduct, this necessarily relieves him of the duty even merely to report such a matter to the appropriate authorities.

I stress this point because I believe that the ordinary citizen has a greater responsibility in this matter even than the Police. Those who are employed both in the private and public sectors, and especially those who are members of the Nigerian Labour Congress, do have a particular interest in exposing every single case of corrupt practice that comes to their attention. Every single incident of corrupt conduct clearly affects, negatively, their economic, financial and social well-being. Every single naira stolen from public funds or from stakeholders’ funds renders it more difficult for the State to provide more effectively for their needs. For them, therefore, it is not simply a question of encouraging adherence to the law. It is not for them simply a matter of legality. They have a clear, tangible and obvious interest in the matter, because every money stolen is money stolen from them.

Let me give an example. It is said that many employees of NNPC
are corrupt. It is said that many marketers of petroleum products are corrupt. But merely saying so does not help matters at all. When corrupt practices in the oil industry are left unreported and unpunished, it is not the perpetrators of the crime who suffer. It is rather the worker who has to pay upwards of fifty naira for a litre of petrol, or forty naira for a litre of kerosene, who suffers.

Consequently, those workers who refuse to do anything about crimes, which they see being perpetrated every day, merely on the grounds that they are not members of the Police Force, are doing a grave disservice both to themselves and to the entire country.

I, personally, do not accept it as a legitimate excuse to claim that actual cases of probable corrupt conduct reported to the Police are frequently ignored. I know, in a very personal way, that when the Nigerian Labour Congress is sufficiently agitated by any issue that in its view affects the well-being of its members, it has usually come up with quite ingenious and effective, and sometimes distracting ways of making its position very clear indeed.

So, whenever I am told that an institution as powerful as the NLC is powerless to intervene in the crusade against corruption, I am inclined to suspect, no matter how unfairly, that the great institution does not consider the matter of corruption serious enough to justify its active intervention, or that some of its members condone it, because they also benefit from it. As it is with the oil industry, so also it is with every other sector that employs labour: the civil service and government parastatals; the legislature and the judiciary; the banks and insurance companies; the industrial and commercial institutions; the universities and schools. All these institutions employ labour, and I do not see the rationale behind labour’s legitimate insistence on fair and reasonable prices for the goods and services which its members must purchase, on the one hand, and its corresponding refusal to actively and systematically intervene against any distortion of the pricing system arising from avoidable corruption and fraud.

Ladies and gentlemen, I say all this not to antagonize any group of our citizens, but rather as a means of emphasizing my personal and passionate appeal to all citizens, and to all foreigners who reside within our borders, to join this critical struggle against corruption. It is not a matter to be left to the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission alone.
It is a struggle in which all of us must be involved. It will be a long and difficult struggle. But it is a struggle we cannot afford to lose. If we cannot find it in ourselves to join the battle out of our commitment to lawful conduct, let us at least do so because we each have a very personal interest in creating the foundations of a society free of corruption and the dangers it poses for our present and our future. I am very hopeful that during the course of this seminar, you will come up with imaginative and innovative ways of tackling this grave threat to our prospects as a modern nation.

I wish you all successful deliberations.

I thank you. May God bless you all.
It is with profound pleasure that I address this unique gathering of the Nigerian youth today. This National Youth Summit is indeed a historic occasion for several reasons. First, it is the collective needs and aspirations of our youth. Second, it has been conceived as a platform for setting a new and more purposeful agenda for battling with the immense problems that the youth have to face and have been facing. Third, it has been an opportunity for you, as representatives of our youth, to make collective input into the design of the new agenda, so that the resultant National Youth Development Policy can be a well-considered and comprehensive document that can concretely address your hopes and expectations, and that of the nation.

I am happy to note, from available reports, that you have utilized the opportunity of your gathering here appropriately and responsibly. The document you have reviewed, endorsed and presented to me today is an embodiment of your hope for a better Nigeria. And I undertake, to the best of my ability, to see to its full implementation in accordance with your wishes and expectations. I accept this policy document from you as a contract with the Nigerian youth, and I intend to honour it fully and totally. I am equally happy to inform you that we have already put in place a comprehensive implementation strategy with the appropriate mechanisms to ensure success.

Let me briefly go down memory lane and observe that over the years, we have all watched with sadness, the degeneration of the material well-being and values of our society. The situation has resulted in growing lack of confidence and disillusionment amongst our youth. Many have become hungry, frustrated and angry. Some have been transformed from young persons imbued with pride to sectional agitators of primordial agendas or violent criminals. Others have capitulated to apathy and fear and seem to lose their capacity to believe, to trust, and to dream about...
good things for themselves and for their country. This kind of situation has been immensely detrimental to our quest for national unity, progress and development. It has reached the extent that it must now be urgently reversed, if our country is to reclaim an enviable place in the comity of decent nations.

Thus, this government has recognised that we can no longer afford to ignore the problems bedevilling our youth if we want to develop and progress as a nation in this 21st century. As a nation, we can no longer afford to tolerate joblessness, aimlessness and hopelessness amongst our youth, who constitute a large percentage of our population, and who represent the most vital, the most energetic, and yet the most vulnerable segment of our society. Six out of every ten Nigerians are under 25 years of age, which suggests that our population is predominantly youth, and we must take that into serious account in our national development policy and planning processes.

Our Administration is therefore committed to renewal of hope in our youth and in our nation. We are committed to harvesting and tapping the energy, vitality, resourcefulness and creativity of our youth, as necessary and desirable inputs to national development. Indeed, we are committed to doing whatever it takes to fully utilise the immense positive qualities of our youth in order to move our country forward on the path of progress, productivity and prosperity.

I strongly believe that our youth are the concrete pillars on which our nation should, and must be built. You are the real hope of our future. In fact, at the risk of the stating the obvious, the future belongs to you. You are the core stakeholders in the future. You must be the future leaders: you owe that to yourselves and to the succeeding generation.

You are not yet the wasted generation, and on your shoulders our nation places its hope for national rebirth. I therefore urge you to let your hopes rise again, we shall strive to make them realisable. Let your dreams resurrect, we shall nurture them, and let your belief in the capacity of this Administration to address most of your problems and challenges be revived because we shall endeavour to strengthen them. That I can promise you.

Henceforth, this policy document on youth development will be the official declaration of the importance we have attached to youth in the national development process. It reflects and portrays the readiness of the
Federal Government to articulate a set of guidelines and framework for finding solutions to the problems and challenges facing our youth. It also represents a set of guidelines for all stakeholders in the collective effort to empower our youth, so that they can realise their potentialities and take advantage of the opportunities available to them for self-improvement and for making positive contributions to the well-being of the society in which they live.

Let me use this opportunity to reassure you, the representatives of our youth, that the essential tenets of this national youth development policy, which you have just endorsed and presented to me, deal with problems, and finding solutions, which is dear to my heart and at the centre of my government’s programme of activities. For example, youth unemployment has been a great source of worry for this Administration, and we have been working hard to find concrete solutions to it. We have also been striving to address other youth-related social problems, such as cultist activities in schools and colleges, prostitution, child labour, teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, crime and delinquency, and violence. The obligations of relevant agencies, such as governments, communities, religious institutions, schools and parents, need to be looked into to ensure appropriate strategies for implementation.

For the first time in the history of our nation, I am proud as a citizen, as a father, and as your President, to state that we have together developed a responsive, responsible and pragmatic Youth Policy. We have a Youth Policy which will go to the root of unemployment and seek to uproot it. We have a Youth Policy, which will take millions of our youths without jobs to millions of jobs without people. We have a Youth Policy, designed with input from the youth, for the benefit of the youth, and for the ultimate glory of our nation. Let me reassure you that this Administration will hold this document sacrosanct and will strictly pursue its implementation.

Indeed, in order to ensure the immediate implementation of the objectives and programmes of this Youth Policy, particularly as they concern youth employment, we have established the National Poverty Eradication Programme, with the relevant structures which will implement, among others, the Youth Employment Scheme (YES). We have also set targets, within which our youth are already being placed in positions of employment and responsibility.
Yes, YES is a component of the National Youth Development Policy. Under YES, we have developed the Mandatory Attachment Programme (MAP), which will attach unemployed Nigerian professional graduates to specific government projects, the Capacity Acquisition Programme (CAP), which will teach Nigerian youth new and relevant skills, including entrepreneurial skills and then equip them when necessary, through the Micro-Credit Financing Programme (MFP) with the resources, the opportunities and guidance on how to realise their dreams. YES will also provide Youth Development and Information Technology Centres in each state and local government in order to provide them with opportunities for personal and communal development open to their counterparts abroad.

This Youth Development Policy will undoubtedly serve as the appropriate framework needed for strategic intervention by the Government to address the problems and challenges confronting our youths, as well as harness and channel their unbound energies into purposeful national development. It will ensure that all young persons are given equal opportunities and guided to reach their full potentials. It will ensure that our youths are involved in decision-making at the appropriate levels. And, above all, it will ensure that they have something positive and productive to do, to keep them busy while making positive contributions to the evolution of our society.

Let me point out and stress that the success of this Youth Development Policy will greatly depend on a strong bond of partnership amongst all stakeholders. Thus, although the Federal Government is setting the pace and leading the initiative, the State and Local Governments have an equally great role to play in the actualisation of the objectives of this policy. Similarly, youth and organisations, the private sector, other non-governmental civil society and organisations, as well as the international donor agencies have great positive roles to play. There is need for all of us to work together in concert and in harmony to facilitate the actualisation of the lofty goals of this policy. The Federal Government therefore, wishes to extend its hands of fellowship to all national tiers of government, and other groups and organisations both nationally and internationally, so as to achieve the successful implementation of the programmes outlined in this youth development policy document.

In particular, our youth organisations need to appropriately and
conscientiously claim ownership of the policy and serve as catalysts for its successful implementation. All Nigerian youth now have a responsibility and an obligation to contribute positively and dynamically to the actualisation of the noble aims and objectives of this policy document. We cannot afford to fail. We shall do our best not to fail. And the youth should make it difficult for us to fail.

From now on, the youth of this country will be in the front seat in our voyage to a greater and more prosperous future. I salute all of you, the youths, who have come from the nooks and crannies of this country to represent your contemporaries in the shaping of this important policy document that is aimed at the renewal of hope in our youth, our nation and in our future as one prosperous and united country. Let us try harder to make our county great and a place of continuous pride and joy for our children and grandchildren in the immediate future, and for ever and ever!

I thank you, and may the Almighty bless you and the future of our country.
I am indeed pleased to have been invited to this rather special event, the first ever retreat, for the Senators of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. As the apex chamber of legislature of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, productive and effective interaction with the Senate, is a constitutional responsibility for you and me, but this occasion goes beyond the constitution. Some may even call it a spiritual occasion, and I therefore feel honoured to share the experience with you.

The purpose of a retreat is to mentally and physically detach oneself from the hurly-burly and routine pressures of normal daily activities, and withdraw into an environment that allows mental space and is therefore conducive for reflection, meditation and profound dialogue and interaction. Such an environment has to be decent, pleasant and comfortable, such an environment has to be relaxed, as well as relaxing and inspiring. The choice of Calabar as the venue for the retreat is appropriate in many ways:

- Calabar, as the capital of Nigeria at the initial period of nationhood, invokes a sense of political history that is very pertinent to this meeting;
- Calabar is physically peaceful, serene and definitely inspiring;
- Also, if one is looking for a town where the people have a high reputation for hospitality and congeniality, Calabar is the place.

Once again, I feel honoured to be present in this idyllic environment and to share with you, in a soul-searching fashion, some of my thoughts about an issue which is our common preoccupation, namely, the Nigerian nation, and the Nigerian people, which we both serve. I, in my executive capacity, and you, in your capacity as members of the apex legislative chamber.

Distinguished Senators, I am sure that I need not remind you who you are: by any definition, you are leaders! Accordingly, the people of
Nigeria are all looking up to you as pace-setters and for leadership. Naturally, that puts extra responsibility on you to show leadership and set examples, individually and collectively. There is always greater demand from, and more searchlight on the leadership of a leadership group. Whatever happens to you, whatever behaviour you exhibit, either as a group or by yourselves, is a reflection on you all, and on our country, Nigeria. Your actions can enhance our progress or detract from it.

May I, therefore, call on the leadership to ensure quality leadership by transparent example, team work and team spirit, and thoughtful considerations for all. And at all levels of leadership, let us eschew the PHD syndrome - pull him down! Let us act to build up, rather than act to pull down!

Distinguished Senators, our notion and perceptions of duty is, and must be, firmly rooted in the expectations of the electorate who reposed such confidence in us with their ballot papers. The people of Nigeria, in whom the power ultimately resides, have entrusted us with that power, with which we are to make decisions that will improve the quality of their lives. You have been exercising that power for nearly two years now, that is about half the life of the tenure allowed you by the mandate of the people. If you intend, in two years time, to seek the people’s mandate again — and I hope you all wish to come back — then this is the time to start focusing your mind on the future, a future in which you will have to give account of your service to the people.

It has been two hectic years, laden with intense and profound experiences. You ought to be able to find numerous potent answers to the question “What lessons have I learnt?” You will, as you should, be concerned with tangible results and achievements that count towards the expectations of your constituencies. I share those concerns with you, because the expectations of my constituency is the aggregate of the expectations of your various constituencies.

Let me mention some of these expectations:

- good roads and effective transportation;
- popular participation;
- adequate potable water supply;
- adequate health and healthcare delivery services;
- good communication;
• food security;
• employment;
• dependable infrastructural facilities;
• good schools and education for our children;
• regular power supply.

In short, every man, woman and child in Nigeria, is looking up to us to improve the quality of their lives. This is no mean task, given the abysmally mad initial conditions for the current democratic dispensation. But, we have a duty to make things better. We can only make things better. We cannot fail to make things better.

While we are making things better in the material sense, let us not forget that without a corresponding improvement in the spiritual and moral sense, we might end up building castles in the air. This is why our biggest concern, while we reflect on the condition of our country, must be how to bring about a fundamental change in attitude, and a new orientation in Nigeria. Let there be no mistake about it, evil governance has scarred our society and left us with evil tendencies which we must deliberately and consciously adopt suitable means to eradicate.

I count as one of the most unfortunate habits, the extent to which our sense of service has so diminished, that people boast of how clever they have been, when they have manipulated the system so as to put themselves first. This is categorically wrong, and we have very little chance to make progress, until there are enough Nigerians who put service to the society above their individual, selfish interests.

How do we eschew corruption and extol righteousness as a virtue worth living for, and even worth dying for? How do we make a difference in our own time, within our own community, within our own society, and within our own nation? How do we live in the hearts of human-kind, knowing that this is the only place of permanence in time and history, and that any other place or monument can only last for a limited time?

These questions, Distinguished Senators, should guide our reflections and deliberations at this Retreat. For they are questions that underlie the significance of that appointment that we have with history by virtue of carrying the responsibility of power entrusted to us by the people. When all is said and done, the most enduring legacy that you will leave behind,
what your constituencies will most remember you for, is the quality of selfless service.

The greatest achievement of this retreat would be for it to have been a source of inspiration for a Calabar Declaration: by which each and everyone of you re-dedicates and re-commits himself or herself to selfless, honest and virtuous service to your community in particular, and indeed to the entire nation. This is the only way to move our society forward. This is the only way to make Nigeria great again.

I thank you. May the Almighty bless your deliberations and meditations with divine wisdom.
THE SAHARA AS AN INSTRUMENT OF INTEGRATION

At the 3rd Ordinary Session of the Conference of Heads of State of the Sahel-Saharan Community (CEN-SAD), Khartoum, Sudan, 12 February, 2001

Let me first of all express my pleasure at the honour and opportunity of being in this distinguished gathering today, on the occasion of the Third Ordinary Session of the Conference of Heads of State of Sahel-Saharan Community. I am also glad to be here, once again, in this city of Khartoum, famous for its rich history and fortuitous strategic location at the confluence of the two Niles.

On behalf of the government and people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, I wish to extend heartfelt congratulations to our esteemed host, President El Bashir, on the renewal of the mandate by the people of The Sudan, to direct their affairs. I am seizing this opportunity to convey to him our best wishes for his personal well-being and greater success in office. And I wish to register the sincere appreciation of my delegation for the warm care and fraternal hospitality being accorded to us by the government and people of The Sudan. The feeling of being at home here and the excellent facilities placed at the disposal of this conference should, no doubt, lay a firm basis for its constructive deliberations and success.

My presence here is particularly significant as it marks the very first time that Nigeria is taking part in a CEN-SAD Meeting. I thank both the CEN-SAD Secretariat and the government of The Sudan for the opportunity of attending and addressing this meeting. I also want to express with satisfaction, our appreciation at the unanimous decision to formally accept Nigeria as a member of the CEN-SAD community.

Mr Chairman, Your Excellencies, as you are aware, Nigeria did hesitate to join this organization at its initial stages. Our hesitation had to do with our belief in the ideals of the OAU as the rallying point for veritable African unity and the dynamic integration of the continent. The continental
organization had already decided that the existing sub-regional economic communities should constitute the building blocks of the envisaged integration of Africa. And we fully subscribe to that policy and principle.

We have, however, watched, the strides made by CEN-SAD in its short period of existence. We have seen that its progress was not only in terms of policies that addressed the common concerns of member States, but also, in its ability to promote socio-economic integration of its member states. We have always appreciated the bonds of brotherhood and commitment to the common cause of peace, security and prosperity which are the driving force within the communities of the Sahel and the Sahara.

I salute the founding fathers of the Organization for their vision and the courage to live their dream. It is a testimony to political will and the dynamic character of the countries that make up the Community, that they have taken up the challenge of turning the Sahara, which is naturally harsh and indeed daunting for human survival and habitation, into a potent instrument of fraternal collaboration and integration.

The seriousness and commitment with which CEN-SAD collectively challenges the developmental imperatives of the Sahara, and the feeling of fraternal kinship among its members, should continue to engender interest in this region that is demarcated by nature. This growth of unity from diversity has given the Community a unique characteristic of incorporating membership that cuts across other African sub-regional groups, including the Arab Maghreb Union, ECOWAS and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development [IGAD].

This unique feature carries some responsibilities, which I believe that CEN-SAD can live up to. It invests the Community with the opportunity to serve as a propelling momentum for the accelerated integration of our continent into the new borderless entity of the Union of Africa. Indeed, many Africans will judge the Community’s success by the way its strategies and policies harmonize with the programmes of the Regional Economic Communities that it straddles. CEN-SAD should be — and I hope it would be — a reliable partner with these other Regional Economic Communities. It is also my hope that the other Regional Economic Communities and CEN-SAD would work complementarily to constitute the building blocks of a full Union, in the very near future. Our objective is clear — the Union of Africa. All Regional Communities must have that

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as the ultimate objective.

Mr Chairman, as I have said earlier, Nigeria has watched with keen interest CEN-SAD’s activities. We can live with it. We see in it opportunities and potentialities. Such opportunities range from its vibrant institutions, to its objectives of combating the ravages of nature, as well as the integration of economies and people into seamless borders. We are also mindful of its impressive and well-articulated general and sectoral strategies for advancing its objectives.

We also see the prospect of CEN-SAD’s involvement in strengthening peace, security and stability in its region and beyond, as a veritable vanguard for Africa’s deep yearning for a tranquil and stable continent with prospects for economic progress and prosperity. These are ideals which are ardently cherished by Nigeria and which are the underlying force for our active involvement in the affairs of our continent. Thus, Nigeria is prepared to cooperate with all the members of the Community, as well as play an effective role, in order to ensure the success of our integrational endeavours.

Nigeria remains resolutely committed to peace, security and stability in our troubled West African sub-region, as borne out by the human and material resources that we have continued to sacrifice for the cause. Recent initiatives promoted by Nigeria, such as the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa [CSSDCA], a process expected to reinforce the impulses of stability and progress on our continent, are also manifestations of our commitment to the African cause.

The tragic socio-economic conditions of our continent, together with the persistent atmosphere of crises in our neighbourhood, demand that a lot more needs to be done to positively align Africa with the emerging global order of the 21st century and 3rd millennium. As Africa marks this signpost in history with expectations of a better future, we look forward to joining hands with our brothers in CEN-SAD to tackle the challenges — man-made or otherwise — in the Community and beyond. We remain very mindful of the fact that the success of the Community is a reflection of the effectiveness of the contributions of individual member states. As we accede to the charter of the Community, we pledge to uphold all the goals and objectives of the Community and shall undertake such actions as will advance its interests.

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Mr Chairman, Your Excellencies, I cannot complete this address without paying special tribute to the visionary role and effort that the leader of the great Al-Fateh Revolution in the Libyan Socialist Arab Jamahiriya, my brother and friend, Colonel Muammar Ghadaffi, has committed to the success of the Community. My delegation, particularly commends the able manner in which he has risen to the mandate given to him by the Community, for the promotion of peace and security in the sub-region.

Long live the Sahel-Saharan Community. Long live African Unity and Solidarity. May God Almighty crown our integrational efforts with success and prosperity for all our peoples.

I thank you.
I am glad to be invited to declare this conference open today. My presence here, today, evokes a feeling of nostalgia about those days when some described me as an NGO activist. Many of you may recall that my NGO, Africa Leadership Forum, designed and convened a series of fora where crucial African problems were discussed.

My practical experience has strengthened my belief in the virtue of NGOs as instruments for bringing about positive changes in communities, societies, and indeed in world order. If the appropriate role of government is to create conditions for the fulfilment of citizen’s aspirations, it is most often the role of NGOs and civil society organisations to reinforce communities’ capacities to articulate their claims and make contributions to social development.

Let me commend Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF), an NGO initiated by Mrs Amina Titi Atiku Abubakar, for its commitment to the crusade against human trafficking. I have had the pleasure of meeting with the leadership of WOTCLEF and they have given me a full overview of what is possible when people come together, as we have done in this forum today.

By all accounts, the scourge of human trafficking and child labour has assumed alarming dimensions. For instance, it is estimated that the evil trafficking, both in women and children, is now the third largest profit-earner for organised crime, after drugs and guns.

It is, indeed, such a serious global problem that every responsible government has a duty, not only to be aware of it, but also to have clear strategies for combating it.

The report from Nigerian Police Force indicates that between March 1999 and December 2000, about One thousand, one hundred and seventy eight (1,178) trafficked Nigerians were deported back home from foreign
countries. *Over ninety-five percent* (1126) of this number were women and children. It is no longer debatable that trafficking is a threat to our women and children.

The general impression is that many governments are yet to fully appreciate the gravity of the situation and are, therefore, still at the early stages of addressing the problem. Even where it is addressed, it has been left to individual governments within the region. It is my sincere hope that this Pan-African conference will go a long way, as its theme suggests, to evolve an African regional initiative against the evil business that is threatening to engulf our women and children.

Our Administration is, however, aware of the need to take urgent action on this matter. And we intend to do just that.

Our Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) is one programme designed to address the root cause of trafficking and child labour among the vulnerable groups, i.e. the youths. About two weeks ago, the government organised a National Youths Summit to address some of the problems faced by the youths, and to proffer solutions to them.

Prior to this, successive Nigerian governments have either been signatory or party to important international resolutions which protect women and children. Nigeria was among the first nations to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Our Government is further prepared to do all it can, including:

- alleviation of poverty, so as to tackle the fundamental factor behind trafficking;
- development of the National Policy on women, by giving it proper publicity and effective implementation;
- dealing effectively with the issue of trafficking in persons, by giving it priority among government policies;
- empowerment of the Nigerian Police Force, Immigration and Customs, through the provision of adequate modern equipment and training;
- taking all necessary legal steps to arrest the scourge of human trafficking.

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Ladies and gentlemen, I welcome all of you to this all-important conference. I wish you a very fruitful deliberation, and journey mercies back to your various destinations.

To the glory of God and the preservation of the dignity of humanity, I hereby declare this Conference open.

I thank you. May God bless you all.
I am indeed delighted to welcome you, my very Dear Brother and Friend, President John Kufour, on this occasion of your first official visit to Nigeria. I hope that you will find the ambience of Abuja, our capital city, as convivial as that of Accra, and that you will always regard here as your second home.

Let me also say how nice it is to see you again, six weeks after I was privileged to be present at your inauguration ceremony in Accra, to share with you and the entire people of Ghana, the joy of that memorable occasion and the celebrations of the dawn of a new era in the history of your great country.

I wish to, once again, renew, on behalf of myself, the government and people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, my heartfelt felicitations for the confidence which the people of Ghana have reposed in Your Excellency’s ability to steer the ship of the Ghanaian State in the coming years. Let me also again seize this opportunity to congratulate our brothers and sisters in Ghana for a successful election and the peaceful change of the baton of leadership. It is my sincere hope that this achievement represents the consolidation of democratic ideals in our sub-region and is therefore, commendable and worthy of emulation in the continent at large.

Mr President, the recent political development in your country is not surprising. Ghana has always been a source of progressive ideas as well as inspiration for political enlightenment, not only for our sub-region, but also for Africa. For instance, Ghana’s independence in 1957 blazed the trail for the political emancipation and freedom for colonial rule on the continent. We in Nigeria, have certainly found common cause with the progressive ideas emanating from your country, which has provided for us the solid basis for our amicable interaction and enduring amity in
our bilateral relations. The result has been increased consultations and collaborations at various levels and on various subjects of strategic importance to our two countries.

The age long affinity between our two peoples has provided the impetus for close interaction, not only at the highest level of government, but also among the other segments of our two societies. We have both accommodated large groups of our citizens who have successfully made a home in their host countries. I note, with pride, that commerce in Accra will not be complete without Makola market, while Ghanaians in Nigeria have distinguished themselves in many sectors, particularly in the development of the educational sector. I would also not forget to mention that the Kente cloth has added colour and regal elegance to the Nigerian fashion industry. It is, therefore, clear that our two countries have a lot in common, and it is the responsibility of the leadership of our two countries to continue to work assiduously to lift this enviable relationship to greater heights.

Your Excellency, it is gratifying to note the contribution of Ghana to the promotion of peace and security in the West Africa sub-region. We all remember the dark days of the 1980s when our sub-region was plunged into instability by the developments in Liberia. It was Ghana and Nigeria that immediately rose to the challenge posed by this grave threat to the peace and security of the sub-region. This manifested in the establishment of ECOMOG to which our two countries contributed immensely. Indeed the nationals of our two countries sometimes paid the supreme sacrifice in carrying out the task given to ECOMOG. Ever since, our two countries have not looked back. We have continued our collaboration in the maintenance of peace and security in our sub-region, to the admiration of the international community.

Your Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the commitment by our two countries to the peace and stability of our sub-region did not spring from a vacuum. It is no doubt, the way for laying a veritable foundation for the economic development of the sub-region. This is the only way that West Africa can provide the enabling environment for active economic exchange; attract foreign investment and economic integration. In this regard, let me also commend the government of Ghana for its active and sustained participation in the recent initiative for a fast-
track approach to sub-regional integration. Within the short period of its introduction, considerable progress has been made, and we have both succeeded in bringing on board many of our ECOWAS neighbours in this collaborative endeavour. Certainly, the efforts deployed by our two countries will serve the development needs of our peoples, not only of the present generation, but also of generations to come.

Your Excellency, your visit to Nigeria has provided an auspicious occasion to explore new areas and opportunities in our bilateral relations. We must take advantage of the momentum generated by the prevailing political will, to advance further the economic content of our joint action. Our attention should now focus on the total dismantling of all economic, and other barriers, that stand in the way of the total integration of our economies. The sub-regional projects must be pursued, in such a manner as to enhance our competitiveness in the global economy. In this respect, the importance of such joint projects as the West African Gas Pipeline, Trans-Saharan Highway, and the Joint Electrification Project in enhancing this potential cannot be over-emphasised.

Mr President, it is for these reasons that we attach great hope to your historic visit, so soon after your inauguration. It is our expectation that this will be a lasting testimony of your abiding faith and the conviction of your compatriots in the value of our common heritage as peoples with shared set of interests for good neighbourliness, and for the best in African brotherhood and understanding. It is equally my hope and expectation that, by this visit, the excellent relations which happily exist between our two countries will be enhanced and significantly deepened as a shining example of international cooperation.

Your Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, to mark this memorable occasion, let me invite you all to rise and join me to toast to the continued good health and personal well-being of His Excellency President Kufour, and for peace, progress and prosperity of the good peoples of Ghana and Nigeria. Long live friendship and understanding between Nigeria and Ghana.

May God bless African unity, solidarity and cooperation.

I thank you.
THE NEW ORIENTATION

At the 4th Retreat for Ministers and Permanent Secretaries
Kuru, 23 February, 2001

Let me say that it is a matter of great joy and satisfaction for me to meet you again at this 4th Retreat, which is taking place in this most exhilarating environment of the Plateau. On behalf of myself and all participants at this Retreat, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the Director General of NIPSS, Major General Joe Garba, and all his staff, for the warm reception and hospitality accorded us here in this highly intellectual but reflective atmosphere.

Those of you who have been privileged to join me in the previous retreats, already appreciate how much I believe in the value of this type of retreat. I appreciate your sharing with me the task of governance, with all its ups and downs, as we strive to meet the expectations of the Nigerian people. And to those of you who are coming here for the first time, let me congratulate you and welcome you on board. I sincerely hope that this retreat marks another stage of your initiation into the executive team of the government of the federation.

Personally, this retreat has an added significance in the timing, which is approximately the second anniversary of the Presidential elections, even though it will be three months to the anniversary of the inauguration. My personal commitment to the service of the nation in this regard, began with the victory that concluded the electoral process for the transition to democracy in 1999. We owe God much gratitude for His guidance and protection in these past months that have been, by any description, very eventful. Let us continue to pray to God to grant us wisdom in the management of the affairs of this country.

Ladies and gentlemen, I promised in the first retreat that this Administration would be underpinned and propelled by collective responsibility for executive decisions. I am pleased to note that we have been consistent in the frequency of meetings of the Federal Executive
Council, where every minister has had the opportunity to make contributions. Admittedly, not all decisions have been easy to make. But in every instance, a decision was reached, as it has to be, if we are to move along in determining the affairs of the nation. In the end, the spirit of dialogue has triumphed, the principles of democracy have thrived, and the nation has benefited from a deepening culture of collective responsibility.

A retreat, however, is not an Executive Council meeting. A retreat is an occasion when we reflect and meditate, not so much on what specific actions to take, but on how and why we have been doing things. In other words, we go back to the first principle of leadership with such questions as:

- Have we achieved the optimum results?
- Have we done our best in the service of the nation?
- Is there anything we can do better?
- Are we meeting the people’s expectations?
- Are we moving the nation forward?
- Do we properly and accurately access obstacles on our path?
- And are we staying focused on our vision for the nation?

Many of you might recall from my broadcast to the nation on the 40th Anniversary of Independence, my account of how, in order to determine the nature of Enterprise Nigeria, I held consultative meetings with leaders from all parts of the country. I was delighted by the positive sentiments that I gathered from these leaders. The sentiments were so strong that I sought to encapsulate them in a binding National Ideology, which reads thus:

To build a truly great African democratic country, politically united and stable, economically prosperous, socially organized, with equal opportunity for all, and making adequate all-embracing contributions, sub-regionally, regionally and globally.

Subsequently, I had fervent discussions in a radio chat with the Nigerian public, on a set of agenda that will lead to the attainment and realization
of this National Ideology. The new National Ideology, and the minimum agenda for it, are the precepts of the theme for this retreat namely: *The New Orientation*.

Since the very beginning of our government, there has been agitation and expectations for the nation to quickly begin to enjoy democracy dividend. Yet, it is obvious that there is no way this dividend can be secured expeditiously, unless revolutionary changes take place in the highly polluted social and economic environment of living and working in this country. It is this, more than anything else, that makes fostering of a new orientation for the elite, and all the economically active population of the country, a matter of great urgency. And there is no better place to begin such a crusade than at the highest level of government, among the chosen few who have the responsibility for leadership.

The new orientation has both individual and institutional dimensions. At the *individual* level, the new orientation requires that leaders and functionaries of government re-dedicate themselves and those who serve under them to the values of:

- honesty;
- hard work and diligence;
- merit and excellence;
- trustworthiness;
- personal discipline;
- justice and fairness; and
- love, care and compassion

In other words, it has become imperative that ministers in particular must eschew negative values of dishonesty, slothfulness, nepotism, indiscipline, bitterness and various manifestations of anti-social behaviour.

But it is the *institutional dimension* of the *New Orientation* that is critical for the greater effectiveness of governance. Let me spell out some aspects of this institutional dimension.

*Expeditiousness or concern with issues of timeliness in policy, programme and budget implementation.* This will require serious review
of practices and procedures in every ministry and department of
government. A better appreciation of the value of time will transform the
lackadaisical attitude in government, to the acquisition and use of modern
technological devices in speeding up decision-making, policy and
programme implementation processes. Greater attention also needs to be
paid to introducing and inculcating modern management techniques and
procedures in every department of government so as to rapidly increase
their productivity in service delivery to the public.

*Partnership, or concern with contractual obligations.* The new orientation
requires a strengthened partnership in working with the private sector.
This new partnership should be conceived, not in the old sense of a sector
always seeking contract awards from government, or one that should be
extorted for being engaged in making money. Rather, partnership relates
to a better appreciation of the wealth-creating capacity of this sector and
the need for government, through its various ministries and legislative
processes, to create an enabling environment for the sector to function
efficiently as the major driver of the economy. This new orientation,
therefore, demands a new attitude among the leaders and functionaries of
government, which requires them to imbibe the culture of consulting and
working closely with the leadership of the organized private sector.

*Participation – or concern with citizens' convenience.* The new orientation
requires that all ministries pay greater attention to how to mobilize, involve
and seek the convenience of the stakeholders, namely, the society in general.
Since, in the ultimate, all decisions and actions of government are aimed
at the promotion of public welfare, there is need for a new attitude that
has that welfare permanently in focus, as the only goal, and that the
economic well-being of even the lowliest of citizens is of cardinal
importance.

*Monitoring – or concern with efficiency.* The new orientation requires
greater efficiency in the use of manpower, money and material. Monitoring
is the means of ensuring such efficiency, through enforcing and inculcating
an accountable culture of how these three factors of production are utilized
within a given period, and with what results. It was to this purpose that
each ministry has, apart from a unit of the Auditor-General’s Office, a Department of Planning, Research and Statistics which, unfortunately, has generally been treated by ministers at best, with benign indifference. A new orientation which insists on timely returns and report of performance will revive the importance of this department in each ministry and agency of government, and ensure that, at least on a quarterly basis, they report on the performance of every arm of the ministry. Inefficiency is wasteful. And waste is a form of corruption.

Supervision – or concern with effectiveness. The new orientation requires frequent inspection and supervision of the activities of ministries and agencies of government, to ensure that what needs to be done is actually done, and to the standard and quality demanded. Inspection should be a random process, undertaken usually without advanced notices, so as to ensure that its impact is not vitiated by eye-service and selective performance. All levels of management in a ministry or agency of government need to be frequently on the field, and sometimes, unannounced so as to create a culture whereby workers get to perform their duty effectively not knowing when a supervisor may come along by chance.

The new orientation, both in its individual and institutional dimensions, is meant to enable the government to begin to deal with the disenabling factors, which have continued to make it difficult for both indigenes and foreigners to do business in Nigeria. For each element of the new orientation, actual strategy and techniques of implementation need to be designed by the leadership of each ministry and agency of government, so as to ensure that the values being inculcated permeate down to all levels of management and staff.

I am confident that the promotion of this new orientation in all ministries and parastatals, will positively alter the way government is perceived by the citizenry. In any case, without the new orientation, we cannot be sure of the successful execution of the many laudable programmes of our Administration.

Corruption

Once again, this retreat returns to the subject of corruption. Corruption was the main subject of the very first retreat and in all subsequent ones.
And corruption is likely to be the big issue for future retreats, until such a time that we have clear evidence of victory in this battle against the singular antithesis to all development plans and executive actions.

All our executive efforts to move the nation forward will add up to nothing, for as long as our system remains corruption-ridden. Our vision of a great Nigeria will be mere pipe dreams, for as long as the dominant attitude of the functionaries assumes the need to be corrupt in order to survive. The confidence and trust of the citizens is the most important social capital that needs to be invested in the reconstruction of Nigeria, but that social capital will continue to elude us for as long as those in authority are perceived to put personal interests above service to the nation.

I made it abundantly clear in a variety of ways at the beginning of my term of office, that all holders of high office, and Ministers in particular, needed to be – and must be seen to be – the standard bearers of integrity. In pursuit of this, I held workshops for Permanent Secretaries and a Retreat for Ministers. At the latter, a Code of Conduct for Ministers was discussed and adopted, before being signed individually by all Ministers. The Ministers not only endorsed the Code, but they also recommended that it became the norm for Ministers to sign such a Code. In initiating this Code, I believe we have set a new benchmark in Africa. I know, for instance, that the new regime in Ghana plans to have such a code.

The clear message of our anti-corruption campaign and of the Code of Conduct for Ministers was that it was no longer going to be “business as usual”. Unfortunately, there is indication that this message may not have quite gotten through to all. It may well be the case that there are many Ministers and senior government officials that are not corrupt, but the public perception is regrettably, otherwise. Where there has been clear evidence, I have acted swiftly and decisively and removed them. But while there might not have been a lot of obvious gross misconduct, there have neither been, with one or two exceptions, much evidence of obvious dedication to fighting corruption.

It is imperative that in word and in deed, every Minister must not only be transparent, but must be seen and perceived, not to be corrupt and to be incorruptible. Let it be clear on every street in our cities, and in all our villages, that the credibility of our Administration is uncompromisable at all times.
It has not been clear to the public that Ministers and Permanent Secretaries are in the forefront in fighting corruption. Rather, both locally and internationally, it is said that Obasanjo wants to fight corruption – as a lone ranger! And so there is public skepticism about the seriousness of the anti-corruption campaign – most people really think that it is still “business as usual”. For me it is not. I do not accept “business as usual”. I am committed to change, and I intend to get it. You are either with me or you are with “business as usual”.

The rank and file will not feel the winds of change unless you blow that wind through your ministries, departments, and parastatals. There are senior public servants who in the public image are not bribable. Their numbers need to be increased significantly. The Ministers and Permanent Secretaries must ensure integrity, probity, transparency and efficiency with accountability in the parastatals under their supervision. No excuses will be accepted for any lapses from either the board, or the management of any parastatal or company.

Apart from the Code of Conduct for Ministers, we now have the Anti-Corruption Practices Act and the new Anti-Corruption Commission. The latter, I am glad to note, is making an energetic start; and I look forward to some early results. Like everyone else, I would like to see a start on getting some corrupters behind bars. We should be seeing this if the Commission gets going, and the revitalised older agencies, such as the Code of Conduct Bureau and Tribunal, plus the Public Complaints Commission, move into higher gear, along with the Police and the Attorney General.

The public wants to see many of the big fish landed, but that depends on the efforts of these agencies and the Judicial system. It also depends on there being reliable evidence and for that, the public has to play its part. I believe you will find that public support, and readiness to cooperate will improve, if it is felt that this government, and that means all of us, are really committed to change. Public support is linked to confidence in us.

It is no comfort to me that people think that I am serious, but not other members of my government. It is not a comfort, but a challenge – the challenge being to reform our country, a country that everyone knows should be a world leader on several fronts. I alone cannot meet these challenges. So I call upon you to so commit yourselves to the
anti-corruption campaign that by the end of our term in office, Nigerians will be able to feel the difference, taste the reform, and have a positive approach to doing business with government offices. Loyalty must involve integrity. I will not regard you as a loyal and committed member of this government if your integrity is not above board.

Ladies and gentlemen, with most of you, we have been joined together in the leadership of this country for nearly two years. That is enough time for us to have gained experience on the do's and don'ts, on the what's and what-not's, of how to achieve the best results, and how to perform creditably. Our achievement scale is of the highest. It is so demanded by the service to which we have all pledged ourselves. And the nation expects no less. Anyone who fails to meet the performance standard, would first and foremost, be failing the nation: and we all know the people are becoming more impatient, and many people are already saying 'after two years experience, if you cannot shape up, please ship out'. I would add that anyone who fails to perform, would also be letting me down, and likely to dampen the forward thrust which this government has to sustain, if we are to make a difference – as we must have to!

Finally, let me leave you with a point on discipline. You cannot be a good manager, or by extension, a good leader, if you will condone misdemeanour and cover up indiscipline. You are to me, as good a leader as you stand against indiscipline and inefficiency, which do go hand-in-hand. And both ills, as we have stated, are forms of corruption. Your primary responsibility is to root out corruption from public life in Nigeria.

I thank you. And may God bless our reflections and deliberations.
DEBT BURDEN: A HINDRANCE TO DEMOCRACY

At the 3rd D-8 Summit
Cairo, Egypt, 25 February, 2001

May I, on behalf of the Nigerian delegation express our deep appreciation to the government and people of the Arab Republic of Egypt, for the warm and brotherly welcome accorded us since our arrival in the country.

The holding of the 3rd Summit here shows how much confidence leaders of the group have in the Arab Republic of Egypt. The convening of the Summit in Cairo is a manifestation of our commitment and determination towards promotion of the South-South cooperation, and the cause of the D-8, as spelled out in the Istanbul Declaration. I note with satisfaction the significant progress that the Group has since made in the pursuit of a better standard of living for all our peoples.

Mr Chairman, today, extreme poverty stalks over one billion people, while another two billion people live in varying conditions of poverty. Different conferences and summits of the closing decade of the last century, have proffered action plans to eradicate poverty. Regrettably, however, poverty continues to develop in developing countries.

We all have embraced the challenge of poverty alleviation. Let our collective resolve at this Summit be made to have direct positive impact on the lives of our peoples. The time is Now!, when we should establish a clear strategy for action for tangible reduction – if not total eradication – of poverty amongst our peoples. I am convinced that we can lift our people out of poverty.

Our war against the oppressive twin of poverty and under-development will not succeed without resolving the equally oppressive issue of heavy debt burden, which constitutes the greatest impediment to development and progress in developing countries. No significant measure of development is at all possible, as long as countries continue to devote substantial amount of their often limited resources to debt servicing.
Rescheduling, as we know from experience, does not address the fundamental problem of huge and unwieldy debt exposure.

The fact is that debt erodes the will of government to address the needs of its people. Democracy, which we all want, and which we all practise, is seriously threatened by an environment of strangulating debt, where there are social and economic needs to be satisfied. It is reassuring to note that the need for decisive steps to resolve the debt problem, is today, well recognized. What is lacking is the political courage and will, on the part of developed countries, to translate this into policy, for the benefits of the developing countries. Our Group should add its voice to this campaign, because it is the right thing to do. It is the only thing to do.

While we appreciate the various initiatives that have been proffered, we must be honest with ourselves and acknowledge that these measures are inadequate. Even the much heralded highly indebted poor countries (HIPC) debt initiative, has not provided the expected relief, or the way out, for extremely poor countries. The Third UN conference on the least developed countries slated for May this year, provides us another opportunity to speak with one voice to urge the developed countries to implement the enhanced programme of debt relief for the heavily indebted poor countries, without further delay. It is also my strong belief that there is no better moment than now to call on the creditor nations to take decisive action to cancel the external debt of all developing countries, so as to give them a fresh start. We must also stress the fact that debt remission and debt cancellation should not be viewed as alternative to the much needed official development assistance (ODA), on which many developing countries depend. To this end, I call on all of us to mobilize requisite external resources, especially foreign direct investment (FDI), for development of our countries.

Mr Chairman, today, our world is being steadily transformed by the combined forces of globalisation and liberalization, which have turned our world into a global village. While globalisation has created prosperity for industrialized countries, the vast majority of the developing countries lack the resources and infrastructure to take advantage of its opportunities. For us in the developing world, globalisation will remain a phantom notion until we can perceive the benefits in our lives.

I am glad to note that our Group is taking up the challenge through
its action plans to address the negative impact of globalisation on developing countries. The programmes to tackle obstacles to free trade among the D-8 countries, are highly commendable. It must, however, be stated that free trade can only be secured through determined political leadership, which I believe D-8 represents.

Nigeria is currently engaged in radical transformation of its economy. It is our belief that careful and consistently sound policies will enable us harness this vast amount of human and natural resources in order to bring about an improvement in the standard of living of our people. With a population of about 120 million citizens, Nigeria, without doubt, has a large internal market for the consumption of various manufactured goods and services. At the moment, our products are widely consumed, not only in our immediate neighbouring countries of ECOWAS sub-region, but also in several other African countries. We have, therefore, been promoting trade in accordance with the principles of South-South cooperation.

In the same vein, we would like to see member states of the D-8, adopt policies of unimpeded access to one another’s market, so as to improve the present unsatisfactory volume of trade between them. A review of visa policy in order to allow our business communities free interaction, would be a welcome development. In West Africa, we have initiated a regional wide initiative to guarantee freedom of movement of goods and services, as well as persons, and a common currency for the sub-region is envisaged by 2002. Also, a common passport for our itinerant nationals has already been introduced for the sub-region. If I cite these few instances, it is to demonstrate what partnership can achieve. It is in this spirit, that I call on all member states, to take practical steps to remove the major impediments to development of our countries, as this will complement our collective efforts for solutions to the existing global economic problems.

The private sector, as the engine of our economic growth, has an invaluable contribution to make. In this regard, in Nigeria, we have embarked on a programme of privatization. We feel government can provide policy guidelines and allow private enterprise to flourish. It is our view that with vibrant economies, D-8 Group will be in a better position to contribute to the attainment of our common objectives. I am happy that
a D-8 forum for chambers of commerce and industry, has been set up, and in fact had its first meeting three days ago. Nigeria will sooner than later sign the charter creating this important forum because of our conviction that if D-8 cooperation is to be meaningful, private sector must be actively involved.

Mr Chairman, the central role of information and communication technologies (ICT) in today’s emerging global economy, is well established. ICT represents a most practical and realistic short-cut to integrating developing countries into the global economy. Regrettably, its huge potentials for advancing development has not been realized in the majority of developing countries. I am aware of the significant strides which some of our members have made to challenge Western dominance of the ICT. Indeed, their courage and resourcefulness should point the way forward to what can be done, if we set our minds to execute carefully planned policies that will improve our capacity in that critical area. For those of us who are still lagging behind, we have the challenge to overcome the growing ‘digital divide’. Let us therefore, embrace with renewed interest, this challenge, so that our people can truly share in the bounteous advantages of globalized information and communication technology within our borders. At this Summit therefore, we must set target for the use of ICT in all member states of the D-8.

Mr Chairman, it is pleasing to note that majority of the member states of our organization are already vigorously pursuing the objectives and principles for which our organization was established. At this juncture, I would like to congratulate the Islamic Republic of Iran, for successfully launching the Industrial and Technological Data Bank (ITDB), in May, last year. I also commend the Turkish Government for successfully manufacturing the prototype of the agricultural aircraft.

I wish to recall that at the inception of D-8, Nigeria was passing through one of the darkest period in her history. If the Group saw less of Nigeria’s participation in its activities, it was because we were bogged down in our efforts to put our house in order. If we were to make any meaningful contribution, domestic stability was needed. I am happy to inform this august gathering that we have not only achieved our goal of the return to democracy and the rule of law, but have also made significant progress in our economic reforms. I am taking this opportunity to assure you.
of Nigeria’s active involvement in all future activities of the D-8 countries.

Mr Chairman, these are auspicious times for developing countries, and for the members of the Group in particular. We are no longer called upon to dream of cooperation and development; we are to actualize these dreams in cooperative ventures that will give our economies a firm and respectable place in the international economic order.

Our countries cannot afford to throw away the opportunities that we have today, to satisfy the yearnings of our people, for improved standard of living. I will like to reiterate Nigeria’s believe in the objectives of D-8 Group, and urge member states to give their maximum support in order to enable the organization achieve its objectives. Many hands, they say, make work light. It is my sincere hope that our decisions at this Summit, will be a forward thrust, in achieving our common objectives.

I thank you.
THE IMPERATIVE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOR DEMOCRACY

At the Inauguration of the Presidential Advisory Council on Investment
Abuja, 27 February, 2001

It gives me great joy and immense pleasure to welcome you, Mr Chairman and other distinguished members, to Nigeria on the historic occasion of the maiden meeting of the Honorary Presidential Advisory Council on Investments in Nigeria. I hardly need to say that your nomination to serve our Administration and Nigeria in this capacity, is in recognition, not only of your impressive international track record of achievements in many aspects of human endeavour, but especially of your regard for Nigeria, and for humanity; as well as your faith in the future potentials of our country, and the crucial role that a prosperous, democratic and stable Nigeria could play in the security, harmony and stability of international relations, particularly in our region, as well as in the future peace and security of life, globally.

This first meeting is meant to set the tone for the Council’s subsequent work, provide an opportunity for us to get to know one another more intimately, and to rub minds on the sacred mission that we have set for ourselves. It would enable us to define our goals, as well as the contents, modalities and strategies to implement our mission. I am pleased by your spontaneous acceptance, and your willingness to be of service. I can assure you that all Nigerians do appreciate your service and your sacrifice in placing at the disposal of Nigeria, your wide and varied experience, in this historic and critical stage of her economic and political evolution. I have no doubt, that your individual and collective contributions would mark a significant turning point in the economic development of our country.

Mr Chairman, permit me to mention that the task before you is not an easy one, but I am reassured by your enthusiasm as well as your stature and position in the international community, that you are more than equal to the enormous challenges posed by the problems of achieving desirable
flow of foreign investment into Nigeria, which will make the necessary impact on our economy. The previous efforts to attract investment, particularly foreign investment, had been frustrated by many factors, including the long spell of military dictatorship, corruption, the attendant neglect of infrastructural facilities, high cost of doing business, policy inconsistencies, and insecurity. Worse still, the pariah-status imposed on Nigeria during those dark days also resulted in massive disinvestments, and the consequent change of direction by our developmental partners, to greener fields.

This position has drastically changed in the last 20 months of democratic and predictable governance, and fundamental economic reforms. We have also embarked on a comprehensive but phased, and consistent privatization programme that would turn the economy around, create employment, and lead to greater efficiency in the deployment of our national resources and the re-orientation of the erstwhile state-owned companies. The government’s anti-corruption and public accountability programme and practice are being pursued with vigour. We are fighting corruption and crime with all the weapons at our disposal. In all these struggles, we are not going to give in or give up, until we achieve success. Also, the poor infrastructural facilities in the energy, transport and communications sectors are being seriously addressed. Aside from efforts to consolidate the gains of democracy, our Administration remains committed to forward-looking socio-economic programmes in the area of education, particularly universal basic education (UBE), primary healthcare delivery and poverty eradication programmes, all geared towards empowering the people, and enhancing the quality of their life. We have also endeavoured to maintain consistent policies, macro-economic stability, renewed openness and transparency in the conduct of government business, and a determined effort to make the people reap democracy dividend. The recent GSM bidding has aroused greater international confidence in our economy, and the successful outcome was indeed a pointer to the determination of Nigerians to join hands with foreign partners and investors to energize the economy, and let the investors reap the benefits of a liberalized, private sector-led economy.

Mr Chairman and Distinguished Council Members, you are no doubt aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the Nigerian economy. The oil
and gas sector had constituted the major source of our foreign exchange earnings for many years — and still does. But there are several other areas of comparative economic advantage which include agriculture and agro-allied industries, solid minerals, petro-chemicals, as well as downstream oil and gas sectors. Areas as energy, communications, manufacturing, and information technology are crying for massive injection of capital management and technology. It is therefore my hope that you would bring your wealth of experience and influence to bear on the development of these critical sectors of our economy, for the mutual benefit of Nigerians and the investors from around the world.

Mr Chairman, the challenges posed by your assignment are enormous and I believe that your rich experience and global networks in various national and international capacity, have prepared you adequately for the task ahead. Your renowned standing, Mr Chairman, in the world of international banking, finance and investment, would be an added advantage to us as we continue our ongoing dialogue and consultations with the World Bank, IMF, and other development agencies, to secure the best concessions for the country, in order to develop the critical sectors of the economy.

Mr Chairman, distinguished members, ladies and gentlemen, I believe you can make a very historic and invaluable contribution through your collective efforts to consolidate the nascent Nigerian democracy. You have all seen it work in your respective countries, and I am convinced that with your help, it can also work in Nigeria. We must, on our part, work together to create the necessary enabling environment for massive foreign investment, so badly needed to re-invent Nigeria.

I am confident that you would help me to achieve the 10 billion US dollars foreign investment target, outside oil and gas, that I have set for this nation, for the current year, 2001.

I thank you.
It is a matter of great joy for me to have you, President Abdurrahman Wahid in our midst. On behalf of the government and people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, I most heartily welcome you, and the distinguished members of your entourage.

Mr President, your visit is not only a veritable demonstration of the warmth in the bilateral relations between our two countries and peoples which dated back to 1965 with the establishment of diplomatic relations, but indeed, an expression of confidence and support for our nascent democracy. This is all in the spirit of excellent relations existing between our two countries. We wish to move the existing cordial relations between us to higher levels.

In the course of your visit, we have had the opportunity to put our heads together both in our private and official discussions, and have agreed on specific actions to strengthen our two countries as well as harmonise our position on major international issues.

Our discussions have been frank and fruitful, reflecting the rekindling of the warmth which hitherto had characterised our relations and heralded a new dawn of understanding, mutual respect, friendship, cooperation and collaboration between our two governments and peoples.

As Your Excellency may recall, since our two countries established diplomatic relations in 1965, we have been able to maintain cordial relations based on mutual trust, reciprocal respect and understanding. It is gratifying to note that our two countries share a determination to see a new world order in which there is freedom, equality, economic progress, peaceful co-existence and social justice. Our two countries have always expressed similar views at meetings of international organizations to which both are members, and have consistently respected each other’s differences of opinion.
Mr President, Nigeria is in a delicate transition period, after emerging from many difficult years of undemocratic and traumatic governance. In our determination to see a successful democratic dispensation, we are paying special attention to policies that will enable our country to realize its enormous potentials as well as improve of the standard of living of the ordinary people. Nigeria counts on long time friends like Indonesia to achieve these noble objectives.

Permit me, Mr President, to put on record our appreciation for the technical assistance your great country has offered to Nigeria under the auspices of your Technical Cooperation Among Developing Countries. Given the new challenges of the emerging globalization, there is now, more than ever before, the need for our two nations to maximize the benefits of our shared interests.

Nigeria has always admired Indonesia’s economic transformation from a country solely dependent on oil and gas in the 1960s to an enviable economic success story, with self-sufficiency in food production and an effective population control mechanism within a few decades. Mr President, we in Nigeria have been following with keen interest the impressive rate of economic recovery presently going on in your country, following the unfortunate 1997 Asian economic crisis.

To launch Nigeria into the technological age, we would like to share some Indonesia’s rich experiences in the fields of agricultural development, light machine tools, petroleum and energy. We believe that globalization with all its trappings cannot effectively substitute bilateral relations.

After decades of friendship, mutual trust and cooperation in various fields, we are pleased to note that the first ever bilateral agreement between our two countries was signed during the visit of our Foreign Minister to your country last December. This important Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation, we believe, should serve as a stimulant for the conclusion of many more of such bilateral agreements in the immediate future.

One of the major bonds that binds our long standing cordial relations has been trade and economic interaction. While we appreciate the tremendous increase in the volume of trade between our peoples and its apparent gross imbalance, there is a compelling need now for our two countries to formalise our trade relations.
I wish to take this opportunity to extend an open invitation to Indonesia investors and private business community. We would like to assure you that this is the best time for us to extend the horizon of our economic cooperation. You would have discovered that the scope and opportunities for profitable investment in Nigeria is very vast, particularly against the backdrop of investor-friendly policies that our Administration has been putting in place.

For our two countries to be relevant in the globalised economy, we need to open up more to each other. We want to believe that Your Excellency’s visit to our country at the dawn of the new millennium will open the door for other officials and our private sectors to follow. It is only through regular and purposeful exchange of such visits that our common problems and interests could be discussed and adequately addressed.

Your Excellency, we have observed with regret that in spite of the long-standing cordial relations our two countries enjoy, our peoples know very little about each other and about our countries. We are optimistic that with increased contacts at both official and person-to-person levels, general awareness and mutual understanding between our respective societies would increase.

It is generally true that the closer two friends are, the stronger will be the bonds of friendship. The relocation of your esteemed Embassy in Lagos to the new Federal Capital City of Abuja would not only facilitate faster and effective contacts between our officials and yours, but will help to spur other countries to follow suit.

Like Indonesia, Nigeria does not condone the increasing criminal activities of some of her dishonest citizens. Our National Drug and Law Enforcement Agency has not only relentlessly waged war on the narcotics trade both nationally and internationally, but has cooperated with similar agencies in other countries. While assuring Your Excellency of Nigeria’s unflinching support and cooperation in efforts to stem this unwholesome trend, we will appreciate that drug traffickers in Indonesia are prosecuted in accordance with the universal rule of law.

Mr President, your visit to Nigeria has marked a new dawn in our quest for closer ties in the new millennium. We are optimistic that by the time we meet again in your beautiful city for the G15 Summit in May, a
lot would have been done by our officials towards the strengthening of our relations.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, to mark this memorable occasion, I would like to invite all present here to please rise and join me in a toast to the continued good health and personal well being of the President of Indonesia, a distinguished statesman, for the peace, and progress and continued friendship of the peoples of Indonesia and Nigeria.

May Indonesia-Nigeria bilateral relations grow from strength to strength.

I thank you.
it is a great pleasure and honour to be back in the historic and scenic city of Sirte, as we hold for the second time in recent years, an extraordinary Summit of the Organisation of African Unity. On behalf of my delegation and the government and people of Nigeria, I want to thank our hosts, my brother and friend, Colonel Muammar Ghadaffi and the people of Libya, for the warm reception accorded us.

Let me commend the able manner in which our Chairman, President Gnassingbe Eyadema, has been piloting the affairs of this organisation since he assumed office at our last Summit in Lome. Also, I acknowledge the laudable efforts of the OAU Secretary-General, Dr Salim Ahmed Salim, in constantly providing us with up-to-date programmes and policy proposals.

Mr Chairman, let me once again pay tribute to our host, my brother, Colonel Muammar Ghadaffi, without whose commitment this meeting would not be taking place. His great vision and courage brought us to Sirte I, in September 1999, to decide on the African Union. His continued efforts and commitment to the cause, has once again, brought us here to breathe life into the new institution that was fashioned at the Lome Summit, with the aim of bringing diverse peoples, languages and cultures of Africa, into one unique union.

Mr Chairman, when we took the decision to establish the African Union on 9th September, 1999, it was in recognition of the reality that geography and history have thrust all of us together, as neighbours, friends and family on the African continent. And that Africa has little choice but to unite and integrate into one vibrant and solid bloc, in order to cope with further encroachment on her fortunes by a harsh physical environment. Our decision to begin to speak with one voice, march together in one step, and eventually merge into a single borderless entity, was indeed, to express Africa's determination to assert a new image in the
international scene.

The establishment of the Union marked a new beginning for Africa to realize aspects of the dreams of the founding fathers of the OAU, for our continent. In Sirte I, we affirmed our conviction about a new entity that will harness the desire for unity, peace, progress and prosperity. At the Lome Summit, we affirmed our determination to move the process forward, through the adoption of the Constitutive Act of the African Union.

From the reports before us, 41 countries have signed the Act, but only 12 have ratified it. This process may appear slow and discouraging. However, I believe that we have not done too badly, considering what we have set out to do. We planned to have in place the Pan African Parliament by 2000, promised the accelerated implementation of the Abuja Treaty plan, and planned to establish the Union, formally, by this year. These were tight benchmarks and targets, that we set ourselves. We may not be able to proclaim our Union formally here. However, what is important is that we remain on the right track. After all, it has taken the European Union so many decades to get to its present level of integration.

Perhaps we should use the occasion of our meeting today to re-examine our performance, if only to establish ways and means of it. We should also take a hard look at the challenges of sensitizing our populace to the hopes and promises that lie ahead in our new Union. After all, it is eventually going to be a Union of peoples of the African continent.

While the process unfolds towards the formal coming into being of the Union, let us examine how best to accelerate the establishment of its various institutions. Let us begin to exchange ideas about speeding up the process of the other vital components of the Union, such as the Court of Justice, its financial institutions, the functioning of its specialized technical committees, and even, the modalities and practicalities for the harmonization of the myriad functions identified for its Executive Council.

The Constitutive Act, we should all remember, is a declaration of intent, of our hopes and our joint investment in our collective future. The true test of what we have fashioned, will come in its implementation, as we put our words into will, and our will into concrete and sustained action.

Mr Chairman, I would like at this juncture, to dwell a little on the Pan African Parliament, particularly, its Protocol, which was recently finalised for our consideration in Pretoria, South Africa. The Draft

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Protocol establishing the Parliament, should, indeed, provide us with the vibrant and continental legislature, that will bring governance in our new Union, to the doorstep of our people. I commend the efforts of all those who have worked tirelessly on the document, particularly our comrades in the governing process, the African legislators, who fine-tuned and finalized the document for us. The provisions of the Protocol seem generally acceptable.

I applaud its emphasis on the sacred principle of the sovereign equality of states, enshrined in both the Charters of the OAU and its succeeding Union, and which have always guided our interaction as member states. However, the Protocol does not seem to have accorded the same degree of recognition to the sovereign equality of the diverse peoples of Africa that would be represented in our future continental Parliament, in the way it has determined representation on it.

This vibrant vehicle for articulating the wishes and voices of the people can only give our various peoples a sense of participation, if they see and know, that all shades of opinion and interests are equally and equitably represented in it. From the smallest to the biggest African state, and from the least populous to the most populous among us, all our citizens must equally have a sense of belonging as stake-holders in the continent’s future.

The logic, the merits, the fairness and the democratic contents of the provision that population size should be ignored in determining membership of the parliament, is still unclear to me. We should not be seen here as “robbing Peter to pay Paul”, by punishing states with large populations in order to protect the interest of those with smaller ones. I think that we should be consistent. When our obligations to our continental organization are being determined, the quantum of national taxpayers, whose sweat sustain our organization, become pertinent, but when it comes to the issue of its equitable representation, then he does not count.

Let us draw wisdom from the European model where sovereign member states have equal votes in the higher political organs but the Parliament endeavours to reflect the mosaic of interests and peoples of the Union. We can also draw inspiration from the recently established ECOWAS Parliament, which has taken account of the different population sizes in our sub-region in determining differing representations. I propose
that there should be a minimum number of candidates per country which should be graduated to an upper maximum which I would leave to this august body to decide.

Mr Chairman, for us in Nigeria, our commitment to the Union and its early realization is firm. We signed the Constitutive Act in New York, in September, 2000. We have thereafter embarked on the lengthy legal process of its ratification, in line with the requirements of our Constitution. Similarly, in line with our new democratic dispensation requiring the involvement of all our national stakeholders in governance, we have brought this issue of such overwhelming importance to their future, to the realm of public discourse. We have, therefore, arranged a series of public seminars and workshops to sensitize appropriate awareness of the issue in the Nigerian populace. We hope to complete the entire process before the Lusaka Summit of our Organization in July, 2001. It is also our hope that the required number of ratifications of the Act would have been realized, to enable the formal proclamation of our new continental entity into existence.

Mr Chairman, a dynamic momentum of change is upon us and is propelling us. These are interesting times. This is a period of new ideas that challenge the frontiers of knowledge. This is a period of dramatic transformation of aspirations that have brought the future to the present. With the decision for a Union, Africa has determined that it must be part of this global movement, with her renewed commitment for a stronger and cohesive continent. We must not fail. We will not fail.

God bless Mother Africa. Long live the African Union.
I thank you all.
Let me begin by thanking the Government and people of Russian Federation for the very kind invitation extended to me for this official visit to your beautiful and great country. Being the first African Head of State, and the first democratically elected Nigerian President to be so invited since President Putin’s electoral victory, it is indeed an honour and a great privilege.

Mr President, our visit here has so far been most hospitable. It is a very good indication of our mutual aspirations for stronger ties and more fruitful relations.

Your Excellency, I bring you warm and fraternal greetings from the people of Nigeria, who still remember with much appreciation, the invaluable role your country played in sustaining our nationhood during the difficult period in the mid-sixties’. In the same vein, Nigerians are also grateful for Russia’s contribution in the struggle against colonialism and apartheid in Africa. It was in appreciation of these noble roles, that our former Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon, paid a state visit in 1974, to the former Soviet Union.

Over the years, our two countries have consistently maintained contacts on domestic, regional and international issues of mutual concern. I am confident that this commonality of interests and views will be broadened and strengthened under your Administration.

Mr President, we in Nigeria have followed with keen interest, Russia’s steady progress, since you assumed office, especially your efforts in tackling the problems of the economy. We have also noted, the recent ten-year economic blueprint and other reform measures, designed to help economic recovery, and improve the standard of living of the average Russian. We wish you success and God’s guidance in your onerous task and service to your people.

Your Excellency, you are no doubt aware that several years of
political instability in Nigeria, coupled with unsettled debts, have been responsible for the incompletion of the Ajaokuta Iron and Steel Project, a major economic programme in our bilateral relations. Nigerians find it most regrettable that unnecessary delays and resultant waste in resources have denied them the benefits that should have accrued to the nation, if this programme had been duly completed.

However, due to the project's strategic importance to our economy, our Administration is determined to complete and inaugurate it before the end of my tenure. I am therefore very pleased with the signing of the agreement in December, 2000, for the final completion of the project, and I am hopeful that together, we shall realise our goals for the benefit of our people.

Your Excellency, since the inception of our Administration, we have enacted laws and various policy measures that should make Nigeria attractive for foreign investments. Our primary objective is to meet the expectations of the people of Nigeria, especially in terms of democratic dividend – improvement in their quality of life. The Nigerian investment climate is now full of opportunities, ranging from oil and gas, solid minerals, agriculture, metallurgy, building and construction, transportation, communication, energy and a host of other viable sectors. The Russian investor, like all other investors, is protected by the favourable investment atmosphere, part of which is the relaxed system of profit remittances and generous land policy.

In addition, Your Excellency, we have embarked on the deregulation of the Nigerian economy, and this involves the privatisation of key service industries like NITEL and NEPA. I invite the Russian private sector to invest in these areas and any other sectors of interest, in the Nigerian economy.

To complement these measures, there is the availability of a vibrant and resourceful population of about 120 million people, who represent over half of the entire population of the ECOWAS sub-region. By investing in Nigeria, the Russian investor will not only be enhancing our bilateral cooperation and relations, but also help to create employment opportunities, and by extension, contribute to the stable democracy and governance in both countries.
In order to achieve these goals, there is an urgent need for the conclusion of all outstanding bilateral agreements between our two countries, particularly, agreements on investment protection and promotion, avoidance of double taxation, and hopefully, a general economic cooperation agreement in the areas of oil, gas and solid minerals. The conclusion of these agreements, would provide the legal framework and desired confidence between the two private sectors in our countries, and also enhance bilateral interaction. The present low volume of trade between us does not reflect the enormous potentials and opportunities available in our respective economies. And we must rectify the situation.

Let me commend the Russian Government and the good people of Russia for their support and immense contribution in the maintenance of peace in the African continent. I refer, in particular, to the situations in Sierra Leone, the Central African Republic and the Southern African Region. We salute your courage and urge you to please continue to play this important role in the international community. As a great power, you are aware that failure of the UN peace-keeping move in Sierra Leone could adversely affect the prospects of future UN peace-keeping programmes in the world. I therefore appeal to Russia, as a major player in world affairs, to consider a stronger and more active role, as this will no doubt bring a renewed and stimulating contribution to UN operations in Sierra Leone, and indeed, the whole world.

Nigeria, as you are aware, has made tremendous sacrifices in Sierra Leone, and we are determined to ensure the full implementation of the Lome Peace Agreement. Nigeria, and Africa as a whole, expects Russia and the rest of the international community to quickly bring to an end, the immense suffering of the people of Sierra Leone.

Your Excellency, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, please join me in rising to toast to the good health and personal well being of the President of the Russian Federation, and for the consolidation and expansion of the unending friendship between Nigeria and Russia.

Thank you. And may God bless you all.
RUSSIA-AFRICA FRIENDSHIP

At the Peoples' Friendship University, Moscow,
7 March, 2001

It is a great pleasure and an honour to be in your midst this afternoon. Indeed, this is especially so, for an occasion I consider very memorable, coming soon after our two governments have taken deliberate measures to move the framework and fundamentals of our bilateral cooperation to a new phase.

Without doubt, the assemblage of top government functionaries, high-class intellectuals in various disciplines, and people from all walks of life, is a manifestation of the goodwill, respect and friendship that exists between our two countries.

I have listened with curiosity and attention to your address on the profile and activities of your respected institution. Let me say that The Peoples' Friendship University, does not need any introduction. During the Soviet era, in the developing world, and in Africa in particular, it was world renowned as a unique citadel of learning in research and scientific studies, and pedagogical works. The Patrick Lumumba University, as we knew it up till 1992, before it took its current name, was conceived with a unique perspective to train and equip specialists from developing countries with requisite skills for programme and national development.

Mr President, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, a university that boasts of such a large number of graduate and post-graduate students, with 300 professors and doctors of science, must be reckoned and associated with the highest standards of academic excellence. It is a milestone that at the 40th anniversary of the Peoples' Friendship University, it has graduated 36,000 students, and 3,500 doctoral graduates, all working in virtually all nations of the globe. Added to this, is its capacity to admit students annually from more than 100 countries, covering courses from the humanities, social and natural sciences, agriculture, medicine and applied engineering courses, among others.

It is equally significant that the Peoples’ Friendship University is fast adapting to the growing demands of modern society and globalisation,
by producing experts in the field of market economy, information technology, engineering design works, training in target international programmes, science and education. I urge you to continue to seek viable ways and means to embark on fruitful and intensive exchange programmes with Nigerian universities, that would involve lecturers and students, in the areas of research and development, science and technology, engineering studies, mathematics, medicine, linguistics, and other fields. I am confident that the existing platform for social and cultural interaction presents huge opportunities for desired interconnectivity required for national development efforts.

Mr President, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, it is self-evident that Russian education has contributed in immeasurable ways to literacy, artistic and cultural heritage of European civilization and beyond. It cannot be otherwise, given the greatness of Russia and her rich history and invaluable cultural touchstones.

It would be unfair to conclude this short address without adding a footnote on the remarkable academic achievements of Nigerians in particular, and Africans in general, attained at the Peoples’ Friendship University. It may be recalled that relations between Nigeria and the then Soviet Union, in the sphere of education, commenced in the 1960s under the Nigerian-Soviet Friendship Association. About 20,000 Nigerians have received training in various disciplines in Russian institutions of higher learning, particularly from the Peoples’ Friendship University, under the bureau for external aid programme. Their knack for hard work is on record and has been documented.

Mr President, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I am proud to inform you that many products of your esteemed institution, occupy high positions in Nigeria’s public and private sectors, in education, management, science, petroleum, research and engineering design works, business, media and cultural centres, to name a few. Among them are ministers, governors, legislators, diplomats, and I must add, professors.

I now have the singular honour to sincerely express my heart-felt appreciation, for the conferment on me, the status of an honorary doctorate degree. I am particularly humbled by the recognition, which the Russian Government, through your distinguished institution, has extended to me and my country. It is an honour, which I highly cherish. And I accept all

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the privileges and responsibilities thereto particularly, in the spirit of our common endeavours, in strengthening and broadening the frontiers of our bilateral cooperation.

Mr President, on the 40th year of your anniversary, I consider it apposite to charge you with a further responsibility. You should continue to churn out more skilled graduate and post-graduate materials, ready to create worldwide rainbow coalition across all nations and continents, irrespective of creed or colour, for the common good of mankind.

I thank you.
NIGERIA-POLAND RELATIONS

The State Banquet Hosted by President
Aleksander Kwasniewski of Republic of Poland
Warsaw, 8th March, 2001

Let me first of all thank you most sincerely on behalf of the Federal Government and people of Nigeria, for making this visit a reality. I will also seize this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the government and people of Poland for the very warm welcome and hospitality accorded me and members of my entourage since our arrival in this historic and beautiful city of Warsaw.

Mr President, this is my second state visit to Poland, the first time being twenty-three years ago, during my first coming, as everyone now says. I recall very vividly that during the visit of twenty-three years ago, the socio-political and economic situation was much different from what it is today. Your country, just like mine, has gone through a period of drastic changes. I note with fascination the positive changes that have taken place since then.

I salute the courage and the steadfastness of the Polish people, the leadership and members of the trade unions, professional associations, teachers and peasants, who risked their lives in order to see changes in the way and manner in which they are governed.

Mr President, there is no gainsaying the fact, that democracy and the rule of law, liberate the productive energy of a people, by providing a conducive atmosphere for sustainable economic growth and development, necessary for direct foreign investments, as evidenced by your experience. Democracy also encourages competition, increases efficiency and creates jobs and numerous opportunities for the citizens, thereby improving their lives. I am happy that our two nations are counted today in the comity of democratic nations.

Mr President, I would like to assure you and the good people of Poland of our continued respect for the long standing friendship, unity of purpose and co-operation between Nigeria and Poland, and even more when you become a member of the European Union. It is only through
multilateral relations among states that the positive benefits of globalisation can be achieved for the benefit of the world.

Since my arrival in Poland, Your Excellency, we have been able to deliberate on several and varied issues of bilateral interest, and have agreed on how best we can expand and consolidate our bilateral relations. We have also discussed our positions on international issues and agreed to harmonize our approach and strategy. I most sincerely wish and hope that our officials would follow-up our resolutions with a view to concretising our gains.

In this regard, I wish to express my deep appreciation to the several Polish companies that have been operating in Nigeria with the support of the Polish Government. These companies have in their various ways, contributed to the socio-economic advancement of Nigeria. And of course, they have contributed to strengthening our bilateral relations.

I wish to seize this opportunity to invite and assure all other Polish private sector operators, who may wish to invest in Nigeria, but have doubts, that there is no better time than now, to come and invest. In addition to a stable democratic political atmosphere, we have put in place various investment friendly policies and initiatives that will guarantee and give investors the confidence they require. We have also established a legal framework that would tackle the inadequacies of the past, especially corruption, that have scared away investors. Nigeria is a country abundant with opportunities and enormous untapped natural resources.

Your Excellency, as you are no doubt aware, Nigeria and the Republic of Poland have shared a long partnership in the maintenance of international peace and security. It is in pursuance of this ideal, that Nigeria took very active part in peace-keeping operations in the Congo, Namibia, Cambodia, Mozambique, Bosnia Herzegovina, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Poland on its part, participated in the Namibia operations, and also took part in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) operations in Yugoslavia, just to mention a few. Our two countries have thus made tremendous contributions to international peace and security, under the auspices of the United Nations.

There are still a number of conflict zones in Africa where your experience in peace-keeping could be most useful. As a member of NATO and a prospective member of the EU, we need your assistance to help us resolve these conflicts and maintain peace.
Permit me, Mr President, to express my profound appreciation to the government and people of Republic of Poland, for the protection of lives and property of Nigerians living in Poland. I observe that most of the members of the Nigerian community are highly educated professionals, who probably came to Poland to study, but found in this beautiful country, a place of abode. I sincerely hope that as law abiding immigrants, you will continue to avail them of the necessary protection that will enable them pursue their various endeavours in peace.

Mr President, Your Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I most sincerely wish that my visit would be the long desired opportunity to revamp and nurture our bilateral relations, which have the potentials of growing into fruitful developments for the benefit of our peoples.

May I now invite you, Your Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, to rise and join me in a toast to the good health of President Aleksander Kwasniewski, his personal well-being, peace and prosperity of the Republic of Poland, and for the continued cordial relationship between the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Republic of Poland.

I thank you.
Let me first of all thank the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), and its Executive Director, for choosing Nigeria as the base for launching the Global Campaign for Good Urban Governance in Africa. The choice of Nigeria is significant for two reasons: First, there is the size and historical antecedents of the country—it is estimated that every fourth African is a Nigerian, and Nigeria has a tradition of urbanization that goes way back into history. Secondly, there is the fact that good governance per se is the centrepoint of the existence of our Administration. Thus, the successful launch of this campaign will have tremendous impact for Nigerians as a whole as well as for the region of Africa.

Nigeria can ill afford to ignore good governance of her cities, if only because of the size and pace of urbanization in the country. In the 1991 census report, there were three hundred and fifty-nine urban centers in Nigeria with a population of twenty thousand or more. Estimates for year 2000, puts this figure at four hundred and fifty. Indeed, it is estimated that by the year 2010, urban population will exceed the number of people living in our rural areas. All these statistics underscore the need for us to take the governance of our cities far more seriously than we currently do.

The human settlements sector in Nigeria presents a great challenge. Our towns and cities are growing in leaps and bounds with the attendant problems not only of rapid urbanization, but also of the urbanization of poverty. Our Administration has been responding to the critical issues of poverty, inadequate power supply, poor urban housing, insecurity and poor conditions of urban infrastructure and services. But there is such a backlog of tasks to be accomplished that some people are of the impression that the government is not moving fast enough on these matters.
Nevertheless, we are committed to finding lasting solutions to these problems, and making our cities not only habitable and safe, but also centres for promoting massive employment opportunities and generating significant incomes for the people.

Good urban governance is crucial for the achievement of these goals. It is therefore important to remind ourselves of the norms of good urban governance. Apart from a commitment to reducing poverty among citizens of each city, these norms include:

- transparency and accountability;
- active participation of citizens;
- strong partnership with the private sector both in the formal and the informal economy;
- efficiency in the delivery of services;
- equal access for all citizens to opportunities and services provided by government, especially access for the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups such as women, children, the aged and handicapped;
- security for all; and
- the application of democratic principles in all decision-making processes.

On assumption of office in May, 1999, we found that many of these norms of good governance were either absent or degraded at the city level and at all tiers of government. Several years of non-democratic governance had eroded local democracy, discouraged active participation of the citizens in decision-making, reduced interest in stimulating real economic development and promoted corruption to epidemic proportions.

Most of you may be aware of our current national effort at poverty reduction and determined crusade against the evil of corruption. The latter is a battle on which we will not relent until all the rules and regulations designed to help honesty and transparency in dealings with Government, are fully restored and duly enforced. In this regard, it is encouraging to note that the Nigerian public are positively responding to our various pronouncements that are now legislatively backed by the establishment
of the Anti-corruption Commission. The launching here today of this Global Campaign for Good Urban Governance further encourages us with the support of the United Nations and the international community in the fight against corruption, and the importance of establishing good governance at all tiers of government, but especially in our cities and towns.

The Federal Government fully endorses the spirit by which the Constitution makes the quality of life in our cities the direct responsibility of State and Local governments. Consequently, allocation of funds to these tiers of government has increased both in magnitude (as much as 400 per cent), as well as regularity over the last two years. Unfortunately many inhabitants of our cities are yet to recognise their Local Governments for what they should be: the authorities which should directly impact on their daily activities and quality of life. In fact, the administrative style of many local governments leaves much to be desired and has engendered so much cynicism that the Federal Government is being warned that this may be a particularly difficult front for the war against corruption. It is my sincere hope that this Campaign for Good Urban Governance will activate the sense of duty and service that our elected officials owe to the citizens who trusted them with their votes.

In addition to the general cynicism about local administrations, there are indeed many obstacles to attaining the norms of good urban governance and institutionalizing them so that they become part of our everyday life. Let me name a few of them:

there is lack of concern by local governments in the economic prosperity, employment opportunities and the general social welfare of citizens in our towns and cities;

• there is lack of effectively coordinated city-wide municipal administrative structures, especially involving the wards and the neighbourhoods;

• Both human and material resources are often mismanaged, and corruptly dispensed;

• most local governments do not engage in generating enough revenue of their own and generally rely too heavily on fiscal support from the central government;
• city dwellers – who are the stakeholders in urban governance - are not generally consulted nor encouraged to have a say in matters that affect their lives through the decisions of local governments;

• insecurity to life and property is so prevalent that many city dwellers are genuinely and permanently afraid of life in our urban centers.

These obstacles are challenges which must be met through collaboration between all tiers of government. We can only succeed if our policies and actions are based on the principles of justice, accountability, love and care. Concern for the welfare of all our citizens and the desire to foster good neighbourliness amongst them, are traditional African values which should constitute binding precepts for all those who choose to provide leadership in our urban centres.

To further consolidate the gains of this historic occasion, I call on all our friends and development partners, particularly the United Nations Agencies, to deepen their involvement in the Global Good Urban Governance Campaign. I am aware that a lot is being done already in the area of governance by the United Nations Development Programme in collaboration with our National Planning Commission. I urge the two agencies to broaden their framework to incorporate the present urban governance programme of Habitat so that local governments in Nigeria can benefit from their wealth of experience, particularly in the area of urban safety and security.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is with great pleasure that I now launch this Global Campaign on Good Urban Governance in Nigeria. I implore all of you to contribute your best towards the success of the Campaign. I urge State Governors and Chairmen of local Governments to carry this very important message home and embark on promoting the norms of Good Urban Governance in their respective States and local Governments.

I thank you. May God bless you all.
POLITICS WITH MORAL VALUES

At the 3rd National Convention of the Peoples' Democratic Party

My dear Party men and women, I salute you on this great day as we convene to take annual stock of our achievements as a political party, and recharge ourselves for the commitments ahead of us.

At our last Convention in November 1999, we elected our National Executive Committee. Today, that committee is here and has given an account of its stewardship for the past one year. Today, also, our PDP Governments are almost two years in office. We want to assess our journey so far in delivering our mandate to our people and how best to strategize in order to be more effective in serving Nigeria for the remaining half of our tenure.

Some of the achievements in the last two years are documented in the reports of the National Chairman and the National Secretary of the Party. These include the establishment of the Peoples’ Democratic Institute, moving into the new National Secretariat, which is the largest and best of its kind in Nigeria’s political history. And, by all other activities, we have kept our enviable position as the largest political party on the continent.

For the PDP Federal Government which I have your mandate to lead, and the support of most Nigerians to sustain, we have gone a long way in raising our country from institutional and infrastructural decay, to a point where we can see our way clearly, and plan realistically for the future.

We inherited a depleted foreign reserve of around 3.7 billion US dollars, from which we have now built up to 10 billion US dollars within 20 months. This, together with other fiscal measures that we have undertaken, has restored the confidence of international financial organisations and foreign development partners.

By plugging avenues of waste in the system, we have been able to send over 400 per cent more money than was previously sent to state and...
local governments in monthly revenue allocation exercises.

The power, telecommunication and petroleum sectors we inherited in the country were comatose, to say the least. We have spent considerable amount of time and resources in these sectors. The results of the rehabilitation efforts have started to show.

In NEPA, we have increased our power generation capacity from 1500 megawatts to 2400 megawatts in 18 months. As we battle with lack of water at the Kainji Dam plus replacement of run-down and outdated equipment, we are also bringing Independent Power Producers on board. By the Grace of God, we aim to keep our promise to Nigerians that the end of this year will mark the beginning of a new era of adequate and dependable power supply for the country.

Two years ago, virtually all petroleum products used in this country were imported. Today our refineries are operating at 60 to 100 per cent installed capacity. But we still have some problems here, much of it having to do with the economically absurd fuel subsidy, which continues to straitjacket our production facilities, whilst distorting the market, keeping smugglers in lucrative business, and starving vital sectors of our economy of much needed resources for development. The PDP as a party must say NO! to this situation that is draining public purse to the tune of 200 billion naira annually.

The only solution is market liberalisation - which means more private-sector participation in downstream sector in the oil industry. And there are no ifs and buts about it. We intend to achieve this, while carefully managing the process to ensure minimum hardship to all concerned.

Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, our crusade against corruption in this country has continued relentlessly. The passing of the Anti-Corruption Act and the establishment of the Anti-Corruption Commission, all confirm our determination to fight corruption to a standstill. I am pleased to report that the general public is beginning to see our total commitment to rid our system of fraud and fraudulent attitude, which only satisfies greed and selfishness at the expense of national development and progress.

The anti-corruption crusade itself is one item on a broader canvass of the Government's vision, which I believe many members may have recently been acquainted with as the New National Ideology, which reads
thus: To build a truly great African democratic country, politically united, integrated and stable, economically prosperous, socially organized, with equal opportunity for all, and responsibility from all, to become the catalyst of Black Renaissance, and making adequate all-embracing contributions, sub-regionally, regionally, and globally.

As many of you may already be aware, the Federal Executive, that is, Federal Ministers and Permanent Secretaries at the 4th Retreat in Kuru, has adopted this new National Ideology. More importantly still, in the Kuru Declaration, the Ministers adopted the New Orientation as an agenda for attaining the New National Ideology. In doing so the Federal Executive publicly committed itself to the basic principle of leadership by example. For instance the Executive declared:

We rededicate ourselves and those who serve under us to the values of patriotism, honesty, hard work and diligence, merit and excellence, trustworthiness, personal discipline, tolerance and mutual respect, justice and fairness, love, care and compassion.

Fellow Party Members, the values enshrined in the Kuru Declaration are noble universal concepts which when fully imbibed ought to make Nigeria not just a decent society, but make the nation truly great. Federal Government will thus make all efforts to have these values permeate the fabric of the society. I have no hesitation whatsoever in commending these values to the Party with the strong recommendation that it be incorporated in our political philosophy and thinking, as an expression of our Party’s dedication to national reconstruction.

Let me once again commend each and every member of our great Party for sustaining the Party at the Local Government level, the State level and the National level. But, if I may seek your indulgence, I will want to use the opportunity of this Convention, which fortunately is free from election anxiety and tension, to bare my mind a bit and express my vision about a Party that should sustain the Nigeria of my dreams.

In a party political democracy, a party, particularly a victorious one, is the foundation of governance. In a nascent democracy like ours, the party must be so organised and constituted to spearhead the establishment of national ethos. It is, thus, imperative if a party is to be of value to the society, that party must be:
• cohesive about its political aims and objective,
• organisationally propelled by strict discipline,
• ideologically inspired by the highest human ideals and a sense of solidarity,
• socially motivated by unity of purpose and love of the fatherland.

Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, can we, in all honesty, say that we are such a Party? I have my doubts. At best, it could be said that we are a movement whose singular achievement has been our ability to weather a difficult and challenging transition process, from military rule to democracy, and emerging victorious.

But in reality, we are no more than a dynamic amalgam of interest groups. And what has held us together – if anything at all – is that our Party is in power and there is a strong expectation of patronage.

Our Party lacks cohesion, we have no order or tradition to speak of, and our rank and file seems devoid of simple decency and respect, which are hallmark values of the African society. All good products of traditional African upbringing will show respect for age and authority. Any one among us, who has no regard for these moral values and qualities casts doubt on his cultural background and upbringing as an African.

I believe that if this Party is to play the role that it is meant to play, and I am convinced that it should be the foundation of all government that will make Nigeria great in the foreseeable future, then we must demonstrably put our house in order.

I do hope that the amendments of the Party Constitution by this Convention, will go a long way to strengthen the Executive Committee of the Party at all levels, so that they can maintain discipline. Any human organisation which cannot discipline itself deserves no respect, neither can it be relied upon to achieve great heights.

I sincerely hope that the overall conduct of individuals and groups within the Party will now turn for the better. And that at all levels, local government, state and national, there will no longer be excuses for condoning anti-Party activities or malpractices, disgraceful behaviour and conduct unbecoming of people from whom leadership is expected. Whatever may have been the reasons for the lapses in the past, those reasons are no longer tenable, and we should declare zero tolerance for
all manifestations of such misdemeanour.

I must add that beyond the clouds that have gathered from our brief but rather turbulent period of existence, I see great hope. I am extremely optimistic because our Party contains the best—in every sense of the word—that this country has to offer. It is the Party of the present, and it is the Party of the future.

Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, I must ask earnestly at this Convention, that those of us who wear the mantle of leadership—the National Executive of the Party, the Board of Trustees, Members of the National Assembly, the State Executive of the Party, State Executive and the State Legislature, and myself with the National Executive of the Federal Government—in addition to the mandate you have given us, must all be given your full support, to make the most of this Party; so that at the next Convention, we will have a Party that is wholesome in every respect, strong, cohesive, disciplined, focused, decent, and respectable. In other words, a real Party, not just a motley of interest groups. I am determined to play my own role in this task of positively transforming the Party.

We have a Party that is the hope of the people of this country, the hope for the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria, and indeed for the continent of Africa. Let us use this opportunity of our National Convention to rededicate ourselves to the Party. Let it be a time of refreshment and reinvigoration. As we return to our various States and Local Government areas, and to our various duty posts, let us remember that our Party is supreme. It is the umbrella in every sense of the word, for all of us, and for all Nigerians under a PDP Government.

Finally, I commend and congratulate all PDP members and officials at all levels for a great and successful Convention. I thank the representatives of PDP Chapters from abroad who are participating in this great family re-union for the first time. I thank our brothers and sisters who represent the ruling parties from Mali, South Africa, Algeria and Ethiopia. If cooperation and integration in Africa is to be a reality in our time, it must involve the political parties, the government, the private sector, the civil society and the people.

May the Almighty continue to bless and guide our Great Party—PDP of Nigeria

I thank you all.
AFRICA MUST SURVIVE

At the OAU Summit on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis
and other Related Infectious Diseases
Abuja, 26 April, 2001

It is indeed a matter of profound satisfaction for me, the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and all the people of Nigeria, to host this Summit that aims to contain the greatest impediment to Africa's hope for a bright new century.

I salute and welcome my brother Heads of State, who have appropriately recognised the peril of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and other related infectious diseases, and resolved to use their continental organisation, the Organisation Of African Unity (OAU), to draw attention to this threat to the future of all our peoples.

I welcome the President of the UN General Assembly and the Secretary General of the UN, we appreciate your concern for our plight in Africa as demonstrated by your presence in our midst.

I salute the OAU Secretary General and all his staff for successfully pulling together eminent persons from all over the world, other multilateral organisations, Africa's development partners and aid agencies for this epochal meeting. I note with satisfaction the very special contribution of UNAIDS whose Director General has been in regular consultation with me for nearly two years.

On behalf of all my brother Heads of State, and on behalf of all participants at this Summit, and on my own behalf, I welcome President Clinton back to Africa so soon after leaving office.

Your Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, after the dismal records and performance of Africa in the last decade, which we now tragically call "the lost decade" in the annals of development in Africa, African peoples are desperately in need of a song of hope, if only to confound Afro-pessimism. African leaders have, in the last couple of years, risen to this challenge. We have been vigorously putting our house in order, proposing and enunciating policies based on good governance and quality leadership as a cornerstone for economic prosperity, social progress, and the improvement of the quality of life on our continent. In
this regard, I can confidently claim on behalf of my fellow brother Heads of State that we are beginning to see a flicker of that proverbial light at the end of the tunnel.

Tragically, this ray of hope will become a mirage if we cannot contain the spread and devastation of HIV/AIDS and other epidemic diseases in Africa.

Your Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I am sure many of you would have come across or experienced the horror story presented by the statistics of HIV/AIDS in Africa. I will spare you the gory details which this Summit will no doubt take decisive steps to throw out. But let me note a few points:

- In less than twenty years a staggering 11.6 million Africans have died from HIV/AIDS, almost three million of whom have been children;
- An estimated thirty-four million Sub-Saharan Africans are currently infected with the HIV virus;
- Every five minutes some youngsters between the ages of 15 and 24 are being infected with HIV in Africa;
- In some African countries, as much as one out of every three persons is HIV positive;
- In some other African countries, a quarter of pregnant women are infected each year, and this statistic is expected to increase;
- At least one third of African babies born to HIV-infected mothers will likely be unintentionally infected via prenatal transmission or breast-feeding;
- More than 90 per cent of the world’s AIDS orphans live in Africa, and Africa has 80 per cent of all AIDS deaths and 70 per cent of all new HIV infections;
- HIV/AIDS has drastically cut the life expectancy in some African countries, by more than thirty years in the hardest hit regions.

Your Excellencies, what we have is a pandemic out of control, which is gravely threatening our nations, our children, and our future. We are an endangered continent!
Fellow brother Heads of State, Your Excellencies, this sad reality of a dying continent and the challenge to prevent a monumental catastrophe are the only options for our decisions at this Summit. I mention this because of the apparent controversy that has developed over the politics of HIV/AIDS.

For us leaders, the plight of the continent is akin to a child brought home unconscious with eminent danger of his life being extinguished. There is only one action that accords with proper parental instinct: “How do I revive my child?” At this critical moment, it is of little relevance whether or not the child got into a fight, why and how the child may have got into that fight, who is responsible for his physical condition and whether the surrounding circumstances are just, or even politically correct.

Let us revive Africa! Without the life we cannot even begin to talk of seeking justice or insist on retributive action to correct the injustices inherent in the antecedents.

If we contain HIV/AIDS we will live, and it is only when we are alive that we can afford the luxury of the whys and hows of our existence, and how much of our tribulations can be blamed on our international neighbours on the globe.

Whereas it is the case that the politics is relatively unimportant at this stage, in the face of the developing devastation of HIV/AIDS, the pandemic has finally caught the imagination of the health authorities globally – as it should. After a long period of neglect, the scale of attention, materially, scientifically and even morally, that is being given to HIV/AIDS, is starting to rise to near the level that it requires.

We know from all this one frightful truth, which is that HIV/AIDS does not respect socio-cultural barriers, racial barriers, nor national barriers. And that for now, there is no cure for anyone infected with the HIV virus, though anti-retroviral drugs can increasingly extend the life of those infected with the virus.

We in Africa have watched the scale of this pandemic develop to the extent that some may even talk of AIDS being an African problem. And we observe with serious concern, that Africa has in no way benefited proportionately from the resources that have gone into the global effort to combat and contain the spread of the killer disease.

Africans as a whole occupy the lowest rung of the poverty ladder,
and African AIDS sufferers are made to feel that their march to the graveyard will be poor, nasty, and particularly painful. At least in comparison with AIDS sufferers in London, Paris or Los Angeles, where affluence means less suffering and longer lives, if not relative comfort, provided by the products of medical science and research in these countries.

We salute the recent breakthrough in accessing drugs manufactured for the treatment of AIDS in South Africa. It was a victory for all of us in Africa, and indeed for the whole world. We salute the recent actions by some major companies to provide their products on a no-profit basis to Africa. We, in Nigeria are also happy to record the beginning of a pilot project for the anti-retroviral treatment of 10,000 AIDS sufferers, using drugs imported at affordable prices from India. We hope that the pharmaceutical industry of the developed world will be as open and as helpful for a dramatic scaling-up of anti-retroviral and other treatment throughout Africa. We are ready to do business with those who are ready to show compassion.

Recent successes are but small steps in the context of the harsher realities of the African condition which is well known to leaders of the continent. For, ours is still a continent whose fortunes are strait-jacketed by debilitating foreign debts being serviced at a rate that we certainly cannot afford; ours is a continent whose economic prospects are circumscribed by tariff discrimination in the international trade; and ours is a continent that is virtually de-linked from all benefits of globalisation and subjected to the disadvantages of the same globalisation.

For now, we leaders of Africa have very little to say to the younger generation, other than that they are born to wallow in penury, poverty, and hopelessness. This is the reason why the specific task of containing HIV/AIDS and other related diseases is a fulcrum for broader resolve to meet the challenge of development and progress in Africa.

Our responsibility as African leaders is to give hope to our peoples, and to find solutions to our plight. This Summit here today, itself a product of the unanimous decision of African leaders, is an eloquent testimony of African leaders’ determination not to let their people down.

We must seek a global partnership to combat these diseases, as the whole world has great stakes in Africa’s battle against the killer disease. Africa must mobilise the political leadership, manpower, and community

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support needed in this struggle, and Africa looks to the international community to provide financial resources, low-cost drugs, and scientific partnership with Africa’s own experts. Specifically, there should be created a forum and space between African leaders and African peoples and the pharmaceutical industry, to seek drug and vaccines development and manufacture at affordable prices for poor Africa.

It has been estimated that Africa will need several billion dollars per year in international grant assistance, together with debt cancellation, in addition to the resources that Africa can muster out of its own strained budgets. Leading scientists and medical specialists around the world and within Africa, have demonstrated how such additional funding, combined with access to low-cost drugs of the world pharmaceutical industry, could save millions of lives each year.

Such an effort will be repaid many times over, in:

• reducing misery and suffering
• sparing millions of children the tragedy of becoming orphaned;
• helping to restore economic vitality and growth in Africa; and
• strengthening Africa’s societies and fragile democracies.

I would like to commend to this distinguished gathering the concept of a Global Trust Fund to fight the disease in Africa. This Global Trust Fund would receive grants from all governments - particularly from rich governments, multilateral agencies, philanthropists, and private businesses, and would disburse these funds to African governments to support their battles against diseases. The world’s pharmaceutical companies would agree to provide their drugs at low cost to the Trust Fund, so that these drugs may be widely used within Africa.

We hope that the World Health Organisation (WHO), UNAIDS, and other international bodies will work with Africa to make such a Global Trust Fund a new force in our struggle against diseases.

Vaccines represent the best long-term hope for ending the Aids epidemic. Africa has to commit the best science the world has to offer, and this must be done in full and close partnership with African scientists and research institutions. Nigeria will not be left behind in this endeavour.

But until an effective and affordable vaccine for HIV/AIDS is found,
prevention and treatment are the only real options. To prevent contracting and the further spread of the HIV virus, the only weapons we have are Information, Education and Communication, all linked to treatment programmes for those already infected. Responding to the HIV/AIDS epidemic requires the dissemination of information, to enable people protect themselves.

Despite the increased awareness campaigns on the existence of this disease, many of our citizens are yet to modify their high-risk lifestyles, and so the media and opinion leaders must develop better ways of communicating the needs for safer life styles and sexual behaviour. The power of knowledge in this regard cannot be over emphasised. The media and opinion leaders have enormous potential to influence public attitudes and it is imperative for HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases programme planners to work closely with the media, and opinion makers in politics, religious groups, sports, and entertainment, equipping them with up-to-date data, resulting in a more potent, scientific and well-rounded public knowledge on AIDS.

The impact of HIV/AIDS can be reduced by the generation of accurate epidemiological data. Since AIDS has no proven cure, people are reluctant to voluntarily test for AIDS, especially if no follow-up treatment is available as is often the case. Yet, if we have policies in place which mandate employers to carry out genotype and blood group tests on prospective employees, and if school authorities carry out similar mandatory tests on all admission-seeking students, then epidemiological HIV data of those in these categories can also be accessed, and infected individuals will be identified. Follow-up counselling and proper treatment and support packages, that includes anti-retroviral therapy when necessary, as well as housing and upkeep of victims and families, should be put in place. These actions will greatly encourage more people to come forward and test for AIDS.

Discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS is a serious human rights violation which also impedes the efforts to control the disease. There is need for a regional HIV/AIDS Coordinating Centre to collate, store and disseminate as may be required, all information and statistics pertaining to the spread of HIV/AIDS, research, control and treatment in Africa.
Your Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, in the next couple of days we shall have an opportunity to examine and review issues concerning HIV/AIDS and related epidemics. I hope we shall also be able to articulate the strategic plans and critical actions necessary to enable us jointly and frontally combat the epidemic of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and other related infectious diseases on this continent. And I firmly hope that our own efforts together with a Global Trust Fund will give us the resources that we critically need for the long struggle ahead.

More importantly, however, it is my belief that all of us, from within Africa and from abroad, will depart from this Summit having individually and collectively resolved to diminish, to the barest minimum possible, the impact of these most ravaging epidemics on Africa’s shores.

May the Almighty guide our thoughts and deliberations at this Summit, so that we can succeed in rescuing our blessed continent from an impending doom.

I thank you. And may God bless you all.
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