FOURTH REPUBLIC
7TH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
THIRD SESSION
No. 64

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS

Tuesday, 11 March, 2014

1. The House met at 12.09 p.m. Mr Speaker read the Prayers.

2. **Votes and Proceedings:**
Mr Speaker announced that he had examined and approved the *Votes and Proceedings* of Thursday, 20 February, 2014.

By unanimous consent, the Votes and Proceedings was adopted.

3. **Announcement:**

(*i*) ***Visitors in the Gallery*:**
Mr Speaker recognized the presence of the following:

(*a*) Political Science Students, Plateau State University, Bokkos;

(*b*) Staff and Pupils of Standard Basic Schools, New Nyanya, Karu Local Government Area, Nasarawa State.

(*ii*) ***Bereavement*:**
Mr Speaker read a communication from Hon. Ajibola Famurewa (*Atakumosa East/Atakumosa West/Ilesa East/Ilesa West Federal Constituency*), announcing the demise of Alhaja Nimota Bola Sarumi, Member representing Ilesa Federal Constituency (1992 - 1993) who died on Monday, 3 March, 2014.

A minute silence was observed in honour of the deceased.

4. **Special Session:**
Motion made and Question proposed, "That this House do hold a Special Session to deliberate on the incessant killings and maiming of people and residents of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States by the Boko Haram insurgents" (*Hon. Mulikat Akande-Adeola — House Leader*).

Question put and agreed to.

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Mr Speaker's Opening Speech:
Mr Speaker addressed the House as follows:

ONE MASSACRE TOO MANY

My dear Honourable colleague,

I welcome you back to the Plenary Session of the House of Representatives. In the last two weeks, various Committees of the House had been working assiduously on the 2014 *Appropriation Bill. The House is grateful to the Committees for their hard work and dedication.*

2. *Our reunion at times like this has always been one of joy for accomplishment of a civic responsibility. However on this day it is with the greatest sense of anguish that I welcome you back.*

3. *On February* 25, 2014, *the very day the House adjourned Plenary, Nigeria suffered a horrendous terrorist attack that struck a fatal blow at the heart and soul of the Nigerian nation and desecrated values that decent peoples of all nations hold dear. On that night, about* 59 *students of Federal Government College, Buni Yadi, Yobe State were killed in the most heinous manner. Some of our future national leaders were mowed down in gruesome circumstances in their sleep. Some were shot dead while many were burnt beyond recognition. That day was a day that will live in infamy in the history of this nation.*

4. *When innocent, harmless and defenseless women and children become the targets of these heartless murderous bandits; when the lives of sleeping children are so callously snuffed out, it becomes clear that these agents of terror have murdered sleep and they henceforth deserve none.*

5. *Whatever grievances the terrorists harbor against the government of Nigeria, Nigeria's innocent children have nothing to do with it. Nigeria's children bear no responsibility for either policy making or policy implementation in Nigeria. It is therefore an act of cowardice worthy of ringing condemnation to target the children, to strike at those who are not only innocent but are also unable to strike back or defend themselves. There can be no reason, no justification and no acceptable excuse for this act of mindless brutality. Whatever message the terrorists set out to send to the Nigerian government has been drowned out by the cries for justice by the blood of these innocent martyrs.*

6. *It is to remember these innocent children and other victims of violence in this country, that the House has declared today "A day of mourning" to express our collective outrage on these killings that have gone on for far too long.*

7. *My dear Colleagues, please travel with me on an imaginary journey to Federal Government College, Buni Yadi.*

8. *Picture the scene as the terrorists creep into the hostels and the children being to wake up one after the other, with their eyes heavy with sleep, each of them convinced that this is some nightmare.*

9. *Picture the chaos in the rooms and the terror on the faces of the children as they watch the murderers attack the first set of students, the ones nearest to the entrance, and the students begin to realize that what is happening is not a nightmare but a reality far harsher that any nightmare the mind of a child can construct.*

10. *Hear the panic in the voices of the children as they begin to scream for help, from God, their parents or security. But no help will come tonight.*

11. *Feel the unbearable horror of this night, and hear the fading cries of these children as they finally succumb to the murderous onslaught.*

12. *Finally, my dear colleagues imagine that it is your own child in the hostels at Buni Yadi on this hellish night.*

13. *I can still hear the voice of the father of Aliyu Yola, one of the victim's of the school massacre crying, "Aliyu was scared to go back to school after the last holiday. I forced him to resume not knowing he will never come back to me again".*

14. *As Jodi Picoult writes in her book "My Sister's Keeper", "In the English language there are orphans and widows, but there is no word for the parent who loses a child".*

15. *Dear colleagues, please let us rise for a minute silence in honor of the murdered children of Buni Yadi and of the many valuable Nigerians that have been lost in this needless orgy of violence.*

[P A U S E]. MA Y THEIR INNOCENT SOULS REST IN PERFECT PEACE

16. *Today is not a day to apportion blames. It is a day for the expression of our sense of personal and national loss. But it is also a day for us to look for concrete solutions.*

17. *In my brief statement immediately after that attack, I warned that Nigeria is running out-of excuses for our failure to live up to our responsibility to protect our citizens. Today I wish to amend that comment and declare that we HAVE run out of excuses. We no longer have any excuse for our inability to protect our innocent defenseless children from gratuitous violence.*

18. *In recent times, it seems the nation wakes up every morning to the sad news of one gory tale, of bloodletting and killing of innocent Nigerians or another: in the North East States of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe; in the-North Central States of Benue and Plateau; and in other parts of Nigeria.*

19. *We wake up to the disturbing news of daring and dastardly attacks on our military establishments resulting in the dissipation of our military infrastructure and the destruction of the lives of the heroic Nigerians who have committed their lives to the defense of our territorial integrity.*

20. *In Maiduguri for instance, expensive military aircraft and equipment and whole military barracks have been lost in addition to the loss of men and women of our Military and other law enforcement agencies.*

21. *We wake up to the chilling news of the total annihilation of innocent, law abiding families and entire communities in the most callous, reprehensible and bizarre fashion. This cannot continue. We must rise up collectively and decisively to stop these orgy of deaths, destruction and waste.*

22. *Section 14 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides that the security and welfare of our people is the primary purpose of government. In making this provision, the Constitution places a duty on all of us here and everyone else entrusted with the mandate of governance and representation to place a high premium on the security of lives arid property of Nigerians.*

23. *By this parameter, the Nigerian government must rise to the occasion. And by government I do not mean only the Executive. We in the Legislature arm also part of government. And we cannot therefore merely join in the chorus of lamentations. Our duty is, to act swiftly and decisively in the protection of the citizenry.*

24. *In the past, this House had initiated and supported all measures needed to combat terrorism in the Country. Since active terrorism started manifesting itself, the House has taken the following steps:*

i. We have passed over twenty resolutions on the issue of national security.

ii. We amended the Anti-Terrorism Act, 2011 to strengthen the Security Agencies

iii. We have appropriated huge sums of money for the Security Agencies.

iv. Only recently, January 30, 2014 *the House in making its recommendations for Constitutional Amendment voted to include the National Security Agencies and the Nigerian Police on the First Line charge for purpose of ensuring their financial independence and timely release of funds when appropriated.*

25. *While we await the completion of the Constitutional amendment process in which we have thus sought to remove the funding bottleneck that impedes the operational effectiveness of our security institutions, we must in the interim adopt definite measures to ensure that the security agencies have all the support they need to put an end to this long-running orgy of blood bath so that Nigerians can sleep with both eyes closed. That is the most basic service citizens expect from their government.*

26. *My dear Colleagues, let us not forget that we have in place a State of Emergency in the three affected North East States. Yet the killings have continued unabated in spite of the gallant efforts of our security forces. It is therefore clear that we need to come up with other ideas for a solution. There are certain questions that this House must now ask.*

27. *How do we ensure that the welfare of our military is effectively administered and that they have the appropriate equipment to execute their hazardous assignment? The sad events of recent weeks have once again made Nigerians ask whether moneys appropriated for the welfare of our security forces are properly administered.*

28. *How do we strengthen the intelligence gathering capabilities of our intelligence agencies?*

29. *How do we encourage the Nigerian Police Force to institutionalize Community Policing as a framework for engaging local Communities in a partnership for checking crime and terrorism?*

30. *What about integrating local security structures into the regular security windows of the Nigerian Police Force with the Federal, State and Local Governments supporting them with necessary resources? Is it perhaps time for us to revisit the idea of State Police?*

31. *How do we develop an institutional framework for securing the land through a neighborhood audit where a tab is kept on every member and every housing structure whether completed or uncompleted?*

32. *A fully engaged and strongly organized local population would not allow terrorism in their community or across their territory. Nigerian citizens must therefore be mobilized to take back their communities. Intelligence gathering will improve tremendously if security structures at the local levels are tapped effectively by the Police.*

33. *How do we institute a form of 'Marshall Plan' to effectively address the economic circumstances of the affected regions? Such a measure will serve to check youth restiveness, unemployment and mass poverty. The private sector also has a huge role to play in this.*

34. *What about our traditional rulers, religious leaders and other stakeholders? Does the government now need to intensify engagement with these elders to take advantage of their unique position, wisdom and influence?*

35. *These few suggestions are only intended to serve as stimuli for further discourse. I challenge my colleagues and other Nigerians to come forward with other ideas and solutions on how we can as a nation address this situation.*

36. *The involvement of the citizenry in the fight against terrorism is a vital issue. For the campaign against terrorism to succeed the people must get involved. A crisis of this magnitude is beyond the capacity of any government to resolve on its own without the support of the people. Whenever the stability and survival of a nation is threatened, the most potent weapon in repelling the threat is the active engagement of the people of that nation.*

37. *I humbly appeal to the Nigerian people to join in this struggle for the soul of our nation and embrace as a sacred duty the mission of restoring peace and stability in Nigeria. We must draw from the heartbreak of Buni Yadi, and other areas affected by mindless violence, an inspiration to rededicate ourselves to the cause of nation building.*

38. *One hundred years after Nigeria was amalgamated into one country, there are Nigerians who would still prefer to emphasize and celebrate our differentness and blame the British for amalgamating us, rather than embrace the reality of our oneness. At this stage of our Journey of nationhood, all Nigerians should be highlighting the ties that bind us. We should be promoting the elements of our common heritage and emphasizing the imperatives of our common destiny.*

39. *In the light of a heart-wrenching tragedy like this, our people must now see that those political, sectional and sectarian differences that have made it impossible for us to present a united front against our challenges are petty and self-absorbed. If a tragedy of the Buni Yadi magnitude does not bring us together as one nation, if the loss of our innocent children whose only offence was that they went to school to gain education and wisdom in preparation for a future of service to Nigeria and humanity does not unite us in grief, then we need to ask ourselves if we truly meet the basic spiritual requirements of nationhood.*

40. *We cannot claim to be one nation, if we cannot find unity in grief; just as we cannot claim to be a great nation when we are incapable of preventing horrendous attacks on our children peacefully asleep in their beds.*

41. *As a people we are known to be our brothers' keeper. Terror has never been in our character and with God on our side we shall surely defeat this minority tribe of violence. Let us therefore arise with a single-minded resolve that the Buni Yadi massacre is one massacre too many and we shall tolerate no more.*

42. *My dear colleagues:*

— Our nation is in mourning, and it is in urgent need of consolation;

— Our nation is puzzled, and in urgent need of answers;

— Our nation is disillusioned, and in urgent need of reassurance.

43. *As the elected representatives of the people, it is our duty to offer that consolation, administer that healing, provide those answers and furnish that reassurance that our people need to make them continue to believe in the Nigerian nation.*

44. *Thank you and God bless Nigeria.*

A minute silence was observed in honour of the students of Federal Government College, Buni Yadi, Yobe State, and others who were recently murdered by the Boko Haram insurgents.

Motion made and Question proposed, "That the House adopt the speech delivered by the Hon. Speaker, as its official position on the incessant killings and maiming of people and residents of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States by the Boko Haram insurgents" (*Hon. Suleiman A. Kawu — Fagge Federal Constituency*).

Question put agreed to.

5. **Adjournment:**
That the House do adjourn till Tuesday, 18 *March*, 2014 *at* 11.00 *a.m. to enable the Committees conclude work on the Appropriations Bill*, 2014 (*Hon. Mulikat Akande-Adeola — House Leader*).

The House adjourned accordingly at 12 .43 *p.m.*

Aminu Waziri Tambuwal
Speaker