HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS

Monday, 9 November, 2015

1. The House met at 12.20 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, 5 November, 2015.

By unanimous consent, the Votes and Proceedings was adopted.

3. **Admittance of Invited Guests**
Motion made and Question proposed, "That the House do admit into the Floor of the House, the Senate President, Senators, former Presiding Officers of the House, former Clerks of National Assembly, former Clerks of the House, the Chief Justice of the Federation, the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, the Head of Service, Service Chiefs, the Inspector-General of Police, Corps Marshall of the Federal Road Safety Commission, Commandant-General of the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps, Representative of the Civil Society Organization, and Traditional Rulers, and other invited guests for the purpose of the inauguration ceremony of the Special and Standing Committees of the House, pursuant to Order XIX, Rule 217 (1) and (2) of the Standing Orders" (*Hon. Alhassan Ado Garba — Chief Whip*).

Question put and agreed to.

The invited guests were accordingly admitted into the Chamber of the House.

4. **Welcome Address**
The Deputy Leader, Hon. Buba Jibril, on behalf of the House, welcomed all invited guests to the inauguration ceremony of the newly constituted Committees. He underscored the centrality of Committees in the conduct of legislative business, and assured that the present Committee leadership will meet the expectation of the Nigerian people.

5. **Goodwill Messages**
The following guests presented goodwill messages:

(*i*) The Representative of the President of the Civil Society Organizations (CSO) — Hon. Uche Ekwe; and

(*ii*) The Representative of the Forum of former Presiding Officers — Hon. Agunwa Anekwe.

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6. Paper presentation

Rt. Hon. Chibudom Nwuche, OFR, former Deputy Speaker (1999 -2003), presented a paper on *The **Role of Committees in a Presidential System of Government*** as follows:

Introduction

Historically, Nigeria came from a background of parliamentary system of government at independence in 1960. *But that system ended abruptly due to military intervention in government in January* 1966. *Thus, the military involvement in constitutional development led to the* 1979 *Constitution which put in place a presidential system that sharply departed from the erstwhile Westminster parliamentary system, which we inherited in* 1960. *Remarkably, at the national level, Nigeria has always operated the bicameral system of legislature right from the colonial period till date.*

Since the commencement of the presidential system, Nigeria imbibed the committee system which is similar to that of the United States of America. The committees are vested with constitutional powers to exercise sufficient oversight on the activities of the other arms of government. The committees are expected to be sufficiently provided with the most modern equipment and to be manned by highly trained, disciplined and motivated staff, to enable them achieve optimum results.

The presidential system prospers on vibrant committee system that practically assists the legislature to participate in the national policy process, through effective research, communication, interaction with national institutions and polity, intensive study and analysis of the interplay of the socio-economic, cultural and political variables that are the causes of legislation at both national and state levels.

More importantly, the committee system is the fulcrum of the legislative process in a presidential system. When it is effective, it operates as the functional tool of the legislative institution for the purpose of demonstrating separation of powers, overseeing the activities of the other arms of government on behalf of the people and procuring relevant information to facilitate the building or restructuring of the statutory fabric of the nation.

Presidential System of Government

A presidential system is a system of government where an executive branch is led by a president who serves as both head of state and head of government. In such a system, this branch exists separately from the legislature, to which it is not responsible and which it cannot, in normal circumstances, dismiss. In presidential system, the president takes more direct personal charge of policy than the cabinet does in a parliamentary system. But the president is directly elected by the people. Unlike parliamentary cabinet, the presidential cabinet must not contain only party notables. The president is also the head of the army and directly responsible for foreign policy.

Responsibility for policy is more difficult to identify in a presidential system because it is hard to blame anyone: the President often blames the National Assembly who in turn, blame the President. However, presidential systems tend to be more efficient for large countries like ours (Nigeria) and the USA.

Presidential systems possess several defining features including the separation of power between the executive and the legislative branches of government, weak party discipline, and a powerful committee system. Presidential systems, first devised in the United States as an alternative to the monarchical system, are characterized by a separation of powers. Not only do the executive and the legislature exist independently of one another, but they are also elected independently of one another. Moreover, those who are members of one cannot be members of the other.

However, their overlapping responsibility for designing public policy often leads to competition and conflict between the two. This system encourages the fragmentation of power through the presence of checks and balances whereby each branch of government has some powers that intervene in the powers of the others. These features limit the powers enjoyed by each of the branches of government, however, they tend to mean that bills can be blocked at a variety of points and that comprehensive policies are difficult to achieve. There is generally a written constitution that defines the powers enjoyed by each branch of government, and that makes the presence of judicial review, whereby the courts review legislation to determine its constitutionality, a necessity.

Party discipline is weak under a presidential system, so party organisation tends to be decentralised. Although political parties can be used to ease the tension and cooperation between the executive and the legislature, there is no guarantee that the party which holds the presidency will also control the legislature. Furthermore, voting in the legislature is more of an independent, rather than party affair. This means that the members of the legislature can be more constituencies oriented.

The committee structure inherent in the presidential system provides another check on the power of political leaders and serves to weaken a leader's ability to control the legislature. This is because all bills must first be considered by committees which operate under an independent structure, often with investigative capabilities. These committees may alter a bill considerably before bringing it to the entire legislature for consideration.

Policy leadership tends to rest with the office of the president because he/she is endowed with a personal mandate from the voters. In a presidential system, the symbolic and political aspects of the executive are fused: the president is both the head of state and the head of government. Since no other political official is directly elected by all the voters of the state, the president is seen to have a right of command to direct policy initiatives. Generally, the legislature acts in a responsive manner to bills put forward, or anticipated to be put forward, by the president. Through the president there is a clear focus of policy leadership. However, due to the committee system and the absence of strong party discipline in the legislature, final responsibility for particular policies is not clearly identifiable. To assist the president in his/her duties, he/she appoints a group of cabinet officials. These individuals tend to be a mixture of prominent political figures and non politicians/bureaucrats.

Committees

Committees may simply be explained as small groups or sub-divisions of legislators that have been assigned on temporary or permanent basis during the life-span of a parliament to examine matters more closely than could be done in the plenary. A committee provides a better forum under which certain matters can best be discussed and finalised than under a general atmosphere. Members are appointed to Committees by the Committee of Selection. Membership of a Committee consists of the Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Members.

In the Senate, membership of Committees is not less than nine and not more than thirteen Senators. While in the House of Representatives a Member is not to belong to more than five Committees for effective legislative performance.

The number of committees in the chambers of the National Assembly are not static/or fixed. They vary from one session to another. For now, while the House of Representatives has in the current session fixed about 90 *committees, that of the Senate is* 65.

Why Committees?

In most jurisdictions especially under the presidential system, committees are required for the same purpose and indeed, perform the same role. Globally, there is a trend to move toward more reliance on committees to conduct the work of parliament, and the greatest reason for this trend is a concern for efficiency. The demands on a modern parliament are numerous and it is more or less impossible for the whole House to consider all the details necessary for performing the proper function of a legislature.

Thus, committees are essential to the effective operation of legislative bodies. Committee membership enables members to develop specialised knowledge of the matters under their jurisdiction. They monitor on-going governmental operations, identify issues suitable for legislative review, gather and evaluate information; and recommend courses of action to their parent body.

In Nigerian National Assembly, though members come from more than two political parties, they are basically divided into two main groups, namely, the majority party and minority party.

Most democracies if not all derive their committees from their legal document, which is the constitution of a given country. In other words, committees are usually established by the country's constitution. In Nigeria, Section 62 (1) *of the* 1999 *Constitution, as amended, empowers each House of the National Assembly to appoint Committees for both special and general purpose as may be considered expedient. For instance, the Senate Standing Order* 96 *provides for the establishment of Special Committees within the first fourteen legislative days of its first sitting. Similarly, House Standing Order XIV provides for the establishment of same within the first thirty legislative days. These are guidelines to ensure that the National Assembly do not fall in the trap of undue delay of parliamentary proceedings.*

In addition section 62 (3) *of the Constitution provides for the appointment of a Joint Finance Committee by the Senate and House of Representatives, while section* 85 (5) *makes the establishment of Public Accounts Committee in each House mandatory. Section* 62 (4) *empowers each House of the National Assembly to make its internal regulations for conduct of legislative business.*

The Role of Committees

Perhaps I should start this section by making a well known declaration that the Legislature is a very important arm of the government without which the art of governance becomes meaningless if not impossible in a democratic setting. What is more, the success of the Legislature is actually dependent on the viability and the efficacy of the constituted committees. Since the present democratic system began in Nigeria, legislative committees have undertaken a wide range of functions such as scrutinising bills, overseeing government programmes and providing the public with an opportunity to participate in the legislative process. When committees are properly organised and constituted, they become vital tools for oversight functions. This is because committees are the right channel for executing oversight functions by legislature. As it is, legislative oversight committees allow for division of labour that promotes specialisation and legislative expertise, all of which accelerate productivity.

Again, committees promote informal discussions of issues among committee members, while making parliamentary debate less cumbersome, manageable and decorous. It is equally an access to building of consensus on major policy matters. A functional committee system is particularly beneficial to the budgetary process by helping to critically analyse and process the quantum of information usually contained therein, as shown by several studies — National Democratic Institute (NDI), etc. Ideally, committees are duty bound to monitor budget implementation through their oversight functions. In this wise, committees act as agents for promoting accountability and transparency in governance. This also tells us that where committees are effectively performing their duties, corruption in government can be highly minimised. The corollary is that government can become very corrupt, non-transparent and unaccountable to the people when legislative committees become very docile and uncourageous in their duty.

Importantly, Nigeria presents a good case study of exploring the budgetary oversight of the legislature as well laid out in section 80 (3)-(4) *of the* 1999. *This section of the Constitution provides sufficient power of the purse to the national legislature when it avers that "no money shall be withdrawn from any public fund of the federation, other than the consolidated revenue fund of the federation, unless the issue of this money has been authorised by an Act of the National Assembly"* (*Federal Republic of Nigeria*, 1999).

In addition, committees system in presidential system of government helps to scruitnise potential public officers' credentials and investigates issues of petitions against such candidates before they are appointed. This is to ensure that only clean hands are appointed into public offices by the government. This unique function was ably demonstrated during the just concluded Senate screening of the President's ministerial list.

I would like to emphasize that it is the duty of committees of the National Assembly to initiate moves and encourage genuine investigative public hearings, receive petitions from the general public on critical issues that pertain to economic sabotage, corruption and even those issues that tend to trample on the rights and privileges of the common man in the society.

The most important role of committees, on the other hand, is to develop expertise, to gather information and to do the detailed work that must underpin properly informed decisions about public policy. Since committees deal with the detail of legislation and policy issues, political differences will not always dominate and this allows expertise to develop. Furthermore, public hearings are an important method of gathering information and committees provide the best forum for this - they act as a vital contact point with the public.

Thus committees can provide a forum for public participation, a source of expertise outside the executive and less partisan, more problem-oriented discussion. Besides, it is the role of the committees, in a plenary session to recieve referrals, present consideration of referrals, presentation of reports and defense of committee reports. Referral is a parliamentary language, which simply means any item of legislative business assigned to a specific committee for further consideration. The legislative item may be a bill, a petition, screening exercise, request for opinion, or an enquiry

The Chairman, with the consent of Members of the Committee shall present Report of the Committee in a Plenary Session. In the absence of the Chairman, the Vice or Deputy Chairman as the case may be and in their absence, a Chairman pro tempore appointed by the Committee shall present the Report.

The Nigerian National Assembly possesses a level of developed committee system for conducting its oversight responsibilities. These include standing committees, special committees, ad-hoc committees, joint committees, sub-committees and committee of the whole house. This is quite synonymous with what operates in the United State Congress. In short, these committees have demonstrated at one time or the other their zeal for oversight. Nevertheless, their interventions have been hampered by a number of challenges such as leadership instability, and executive interference and sometimes, it is the question of inadequate funds. Unfortunately, these challenges still persist today even though they were more pronounced in our time. You will recall that there was a time when executive interference constituted a lot of instability in the leadership of the National Assembly.

Committees and Public Hearing

This is one area committees in the National Assembly can positively influence the public to participate in House deliberations. Through public hearing, committees can create avenue for public participation in legislative business in the National Assembly. It is an avenue whereby committees can enlighten, educate and inform the public of their intents in law making including other aspects of legislative functions. As a matter of fact, committee hearing serves several purposes.

(*a*) *It permits committees to gather a lot of information about proposed legislation.*

(*b*) *It is helpful during legislative oversight duties.*

(*c*) *It helps in the process of investigation of reported cases of wrongdoing.*

(*d*) *It provides opportunity for exchange of ideas with the executive branch including other agencies/groups in the society.*

International Practice

From the global perspectives, legislatures fall essentially into two main groups: those that give committees great autonomy (like the US Congress) and those that delegate responsibilities to their committees but keep decision-making power in the plenary (like South Africa and the UK).

Although the Nigerian Constitution gives legislative committees considerable powers to gather information (through summoning people and demanding reports, for instance), the final decision-making power remains with the plenary. Final decision-making in the plenary ensures the representation of a diversity of interests.

In the US Congress, committees are essential to the effective operation of legislative bodies. Committee membership enables members to develop specialized knowledge of the matters under their jurisdiction. Committees monitor on-going governmental operations, identify issues suitable for legislative review, gather and evaluate information, and recommend courses of action to the Congress.

There are similarities in the typology of committees system in the USA and that of our great country, Nigeria. For instance, the following committees exist and perform the same role as in Nigeria.

Standing Committees are permanent committees established under the standing rules of the Senate and specialize in the consideration of particular subject areas. The Senate currently has16 standing committees.

Joint Committees include membership from both houses of Congress. Joint committees are usually established with narrow jurisdictions and normally lack authority to report legislation. Select and joint committees generally handle oversight or housekeeping responsibilities. Chairmanship usually alternates in each Congress between members from the House and Senate. These include the Joint Economic Committee, Joint Committee on Library of Congress, Joint Committee on Printing, and Joint Committee on Taxation. As their names indicate, they either perform housekeeping functions or conduct studies.

Special or Select Committees are established by the Congress for a limited time period to perform a particular study or investigation. These committees might be given or denied authority to report legislation to the Senate.

Special investigating committees, such as the 1973 Select Committee to Investigate Presidential Campaign Activities (the Watergate Committee), expire after they submit their final report to the Senate.

In most parliaments, the indispensable role of committees in the legislative process places great power in the hands of their individual chairmen. This is the general picture in Nigeria and the US. In 1946, and again in the 1970s, the US Senate moved to democratize committee procedures. These reforms included, but were not limited to:

1. *Establishment of regular weekly, biweekly, or monthly meeting dates;*
2. *Provision for special meetings with or without the chairman's approval;*
3. *Authorization for minority members to select and call witnesses;*
4. *Advance public announcement of hearings and advance filing of witness testimony;*
5. *Public access, including radio and television coverage, to meetings and hearings unless specifically closed by a committee majority as provided in Senate rules;*
6. *Public access to a record of committee proceedings and votes, and a formal public report of committee activities during the previous Congress; and*

7. *Timely reporting of a fully documented resolution authorising committee expenditures.*

The dominant practice in most presidential democracies, through the plenary, legislative and policy initiatives are presented to the public, especially when bills are voted on. It is the plenary session that ultimately accepts or rejects legislation although most of the detailed analysis of issues may have taken place in committees. Furthermore, there are occasions when a full debate on issues of fundamental importance to the nation or province as a whole must take place. Committees are not the natural forum for such debates as they are less visible and have narrow mandates in specific policy areas. Debates in plenary, however, can brin g together different policy areas and perspectives and catch the attention of the press and the public. Thus, the main role of the plenary is to provide a forum for public debate and decision-making.

Conclusion

The committee system has become part and parcel of our democratic process, which cannot be ignored or discarded. It has to continue to be so in view of the important roles committees play in the legislative process. In the past, both the committees and plenary play complementary roles such that one cannot do without the other. Therefore, the need to strengthen the existing relationship in handling the committees system and the plenary cannot be overemphasised.

7. Address by the President of the Senate

The President of the Senate, Senator Bukola Saraki, presented a speech as follows:

1. *It gives me great pleasure to be joining the leadership of this great chamber of the people — the House of Representatives as you inaugurate the Committees of the House. I bring you goodwill and solidarity from the Senate.*

2. *This inauguration is unique, Its signposts the readiness and commitment of the National Assembly comprising the House and the Senate to innovative lawmaking. It also evidences that this 8th National Assembly is ready to do this differently, quickly and with purpose.*

3. *It will be recalled that for the first time in the history of the National Assembly the two chambers of the House and the Senate separately forged and adopted legislative agenda to guide its activities in order to give the 8th National Assembly ambition, direction and a national goal towards socio-economic and political reforms.*

4. *Law is that superstructure on which our economic development, social and political reforms can rest and be consolidated. Today, by this inauguration, the House has set the stage for the practical application of its own legislative agenda through this inauguration. The Senate supports this direction of things as it is in tandem with its legislative goals also and is ready to work with the House to deliver on its legislative agenda.*

5. *My dear brothers and sisters, the National Assembly like most other legislative establishments rely heavily on the committees for effectiveness. The House Committees remain the epicenter of lawmaking. You are by this unique inauguration exemplifying the next generation vision where efficiency and determination matters. Yes, we have as a country a myriad of problems but the solutions are also in our hands.*

6. *As the highest lawmaking body in the country, we have a huge task ahead of us, to find answers to our numerous problems. The committee system is the veritable tool that helps to organize the most important works including considering, shaping, and passing our laws. They remain the most potent system for oversight and therefore anti-corruption.*

7. *I am happy to be part of the inauguration of these House Committees and it surely is a pointer to what is possible with the 8th National Assembly because of the caliber of men and women it is blessed with. This inauguration once again encapsulates the entrenching notion we the Senate share in equal measure with this present House of Representatives, that though we are two different chambers, we share a bound mandate, with singularity of purpose and vision to ensure that the laws we pass here impact lives positively.*

8. *In this vein therefore, may I enjoin the new committees to operate above board. This has become necessary as we seek to re-engineer our economy and introduce a new regime of openness, efficiency, probity and institutional integrity. We cannot afford to fail Nigerians. Our citizens have demanded for change and we must give it to them through cooperation and diligence. The legislative agendas of both chambers converge in so many ways, I wish to use this opportunity to also solicit that we speedily dispatch issues for which we have consensus and reduce the time taken to pass critical legislation before us.*

9. *To all Nigerians I say this, as your representatives, we owe you not only our hard-work, but our judgment, This National Assembly will not be a parliament of ambassadors from different and hostile interests; which interests we maintain as agents and advocates against one another in perpetual conflict.*

Rather, the 8th National Assembly will remain a united, deliberative assembly of one Nation, with one interest, that of the whole nation, not local prejudices or affiliations but working for the public good with collective purpose.

10. *I therefore call on all, to join hands with this 8th National Assembly and its committees to engender purposeful lawmaking that guarantees development and the protection of our liberty as a people.*

11. *With God on our side we shall overcome. Thank you and may God bless Nigeria*

8. Mr Speaker's Inauguration Address

Mr Speaker presented his address as follows:

It is with a deep sense of duty that I welcome you all to this ceremony of the formal inauguration of all the Special and Standing Committees of the House. I wish to thank all our Leaders and invited Guests who have graced this occasion at such a short notice.

2. *On Thursday, October* 22, 2015, *in the exercise of powers conferred by the Constitution and Standing Orders of the House, and in consultation with the Principal Officers of the House, Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen of Committees of the House, were appointed. The House Committee on Selection has also concluded selection of members for the Special and Standing Committees. For the avoidance of doubt,* ***Section 62 (1), (2) of the Constitution provides that —***

(1) *The Senate or House of Representatives may appoint a Committee of its members for such special or general purpose as in its opinion would be better regulated and managed by means of such a Committee, and may by Resolution, Reguation or otherwise, as it thinks fit, delegate any functions exercisable by it to any such Committee.*

(2) *The number of members of a Committee appointed under this Section, their terms of office and quorum shall be fixed by the House appointing it.*

3. *The decision to formally inauqurate all the Committees at once is borne out of the need for the Committees to hit the ground running. It is also informed by the need to save cost and reduce legislative time that may be spent in inaugurating each Committee independently.*

4. *Some commentators have decried the large number of Committees as being unwieldy and, non cost effective. This criticism, even though, apparently well intentioned, misses the point. Experience gained from the operation of Committees since* 1999, *shows that some Committees' functions and mandates are very wide indeed and cannot be effectively supervised and oversighted by a single Committee. For instance, the House split the Committee on Education into two, namely: Basic Education and Services and Tertiary Education and Services. The old Committee on Education had a mandate to oversight the budqet and policy issues of the following institutions*:

104 *No. Unity Schools*

22 *No. Federal Colleges of Education*

36 *No. Federal Universities*

24 *No. Federal Polytechnics*

In addition, it had responsibility also for the Ministry itself and about 25 *other Government Agencies and all aspects of education in Nigeria.*

There is no way a single Committee can adequately oversight all these agencies with House members also attending to other issues in Plenary Sessions, like lawmaking and other representational responsibilities.

5. *Furthermore, there are two schools of thought with respect to the method of executing legislative functions.* ***One school of thought,*** *employs the strategy of fewer Standing Committees, with many sub-Committees to deal with relevant subject matters. For instance, the United States Congress has about* 22 *Standing and Select Committees but about* 100 *Sub-Committees. The* ***second school of thought,*** *employs the method of delineating various subject matters carefully and constituting separate Committees to handle them. We have embraced the second option. This is as a result of practical experience of running Committees since* 1999. *The Standing Orders of the House enjoin Special and Standing Committees, to create Sub-Committees as may be required and to appoint Sub-Committee Chairmen, In consultation with the Speaker. However, in practice, this has led to friction between Chairmen of substantive Committees and Chairmen of Sub-Committees. So in order to avoid gridlock, even though the Committees are still expected to have sub-Committees, effort has been made to create substantive Committees where necessary in order. to devote more attention to issues of particular and priority concern to the House.*

6. *It is to ensure value for money for Nigerians, and that our laws and policies are implemented faithfully, that many Committees have been created. The need also of more effective and efficient legislative oversight activities also informed this action. This reasoning also informed the splitting of other Committees, like* ***Health*** *which has about* 150 *institutions.* ***Agriculture Committee*** *was also split for the same reason. There is merit sometimes in setting up specific Committees to handle specific problems.*

7. *Undoubtedly, the legislature remains the only institution with appropriate constitutional and statutory powers to check the Executive branch and ensure that it discharges its mandate to the full benefit of all Nigerians. It is important to note that the CHANGE promised Nigerian can only endure and outlive any government that introduced it only when it is anchored on legislation and not mere policy. Policy changes can easily be changed by an incoming government. Change itself must be regulated, so that our people would not face the dangers of unregulated Change. That is why the legislative institution is central to the future we seek as a people.*

8. *It is necessary to point out that the splitting of Committees has not resulted in increased cost of running the House as posited by many uninformed commentators. The Committee Clerks and other staff of the Committees are sourced from the existing pool of staff that is paid salaries and allowances already by the National Assembly. The Committee members are already paid salaries also by the National Assembly. No person gets an increased remuneration by virtue of appointment*

as a Committee member or Chairman. The National Assembly budget has not been increased as a result. The situation in the Legislature is slightly different from the situation in the Executive branch where creating a new Agency or Ministry may lead to increased costs of running the offices.

9. *Some new Committees were also set up to meet the exigencies of the moment and in response to the demand of some of our development partners for better oversight of funds that are being raised for a particular sector. This reason informed the creation of* ***the new Committee on IDPs, Refugees, and Initiatives on the North East****. The House also created a* ***new Committee on Delegated Legislation*** *to fulfill our Legislative Agenda where the House committed itself to evolving mechanisms to track delegated legislation. Our Legislative Agenda provides:*

> *"There is currently no properly defined mechanism and process of Rule making, Regulations and general subsidiary legislation by Executive Departments. of government. Very important aspects of Nigerian economy are often subjected to delegated legislation that has no input of elected representatives. Fiscal and taxation matters are regularly fixed through Regulations often without adequate notice and not properly thought through or subjected to the rigours of consultation process of lawmaking".*

The House retained its Committee on ***FOI*** **(*Reform of Government Institutions*)** *as the Committee is a mandatory creature' of Statute, The Freedom of Information Act, Section* 29 (4). *Some Committees like those of Political Parties; Habitat, etc. were either merged with existing Committees or scrapped, depending on their usefulness.*

10. *The media has been awash with how some members got* ***"Juicy Committees"*** *and some didn't. Let me use this opportunity to restate that there is nothing like juicy Committee or non-juicy Committees. I personally do not understand what is meant by that. If it means, opportunity to contribute, we can assure you that every member of a Committee would enjoy ample and equal opportunity. Every Committee of the House is very important and is designed to handle specific functions for the House and on behalf of the Nigerian people who elected us.*

11. *We are committed to the* ***anti-corruption fight of the present*** *administration, therefore each Committee of the House is expected to lead this fight through their legislative actions. The Constitution has specifically reposed in the National Assembly, not the Executive, the duty and responsibility to* ***"expose corruption, inefficiency or waste in the execution or administration of laws within its legislative competence and in the disbursement or administration of funds appropriated by it"*** **(*Section* 88 (2) (*b*)**. *The Committees remain the most important mechanism for carrying out this solemn constitutional mandate. The leadership of the House will, consequently, be very sensitive to any report of wrongdoing or corrupt practices by any member or leadership of a Committee.*

12. *By choice we have declared in our Legislative Agenda that ours is a people centered House. The implication of this is that in this season of Change, our People must be at the Centre of our Committees' oversight assignment. In this season of Change, we have lost the liberty to engage in the pursuit of self. The unbridled pursuit of self may justly be pronounced the very definition of Poverty. It is hoped, therefore, that Committee placements will afford us the opportunity to serve and ernpower our people and not ourselves. This is no time for partisanshipo, it's time for work. The urgency of our work demands that we put the nation first before any other interest.*

13. *Let me remind all of us of the need to work together as a team. A Committee that works together has better chances of executing its mandate successfully. The leadership of Committees should involve Committee members fully In Committee assignments. Related Committees should hold Joint Policy Oversight and investigative Hearings, where convenient. Effort should be made to involve your counterparts in the Senate where the same issues are being investigated, to avoid dissipation of parliamentary energy. Committees should be guided by the relevant Standing Orders, the Constitution, existing Laws, judicial precedents and our Legislative Agenda document in the discharge of their duties.*

14. *Finally, I congratulate you all for your appointment into these Committees both as members and as Leaders and wish you all a successful tenure. The leadership of the House will continue to monitor the performance of the Leadership of the various Committees and will conduct a mid-term review. Those who have not been appointed into leadership of Committees should note that it is not a reflection of their capacity or competence. There will be other avenues to render service to the House and the nation. In any case, if any member in a leadership position fails to justify the confidence reposed in him or her, other persons will be given the responsibility.*

15. *May I therefore formally inaugurate all the Special and Standing Committees .of the House to begin the great task of working with the Executive in bringing CHANGE to Nigeria.*

16. *May God bless you all and bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.*

9. Remarks by the Representative of Committee Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen

Speaking on behalf of Chairmen, Deputy Chairmen and members of Committees of the House, the Chairman, Committee on Appropriations, Hon. Abdulmumin Jibrin expressed gratitude to Mr Speaker and other members of his leadership team for the confidence reposed in them. He assured the leadership of the House and the public of their determination to discharge their responsibilities to the best of their ability in the interest of the Nigerian people.

10. Vote of Thanks

The Deputy Speaker of the House, Hon. Yussuff Sulaimon Lasun, in his vote of thanks, appreciated the guests for honouring the invitation of the House. He thanked all the appointed Committee Chairmen, Deputy Chairmen and members of the various constituted Committees for accepting to serve the nation and enjoined them to discharge their duties efficiently.

11. Adjournment

That the House do adjourn till Tuesday, 10 *November*, 2015 *at* 10.00 *a.m.* (*Hon. Buba Jibril – Deputy House Leader*).

The House adjourned accordingly at 2.16 *p.m.*

Yakubu Dogara
Speaker