

**ACCEPTANCE SPEECH BY RT. HON DOGARA YAKUBU ON
ELECTION AS SPEAKER OF THE 8TH HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES**

“It is with a deep sense of honour, humility, and with gratitude to God that I take the chair as Speaker of the 8th House of Representatives of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

I want to express my sincere appreciation to my colleagues, Honourable members of this House, for this confidence you have reposed in me and for this huge responsibility you have thrust on me.

May I also express my thanks to our Party, the All Progressive Congress, APC, for providing us with the platform to come to the House, to my constituents, the great people of Bogoro/ Dass/ TafawaBalewa Federal constituency of Bauchi State, I thank you for sending me once again to the National Assembly. To our dear President, President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR, we say thank you for providing the leadership through which CHANGE came to Nigeria and for also providing the enabling environment that made this day possible. Of course, my wife and family have remained my greatest pillar of strength. To all our Campaign Staff and all those, too many to mention, who played a role one way or the other for this day to come, my sincere appreciation.

I must commend the transparent nature of this election as a tribute to the bureaucracy of the National Assembly led by the Clerk to the National Assembly, Alhaji Salisu Maikasuwa, and the Clerk House of Representatives, Alhaji M.A. Sani – Omolori and other National Assembly Officials and Staff. To all the past leaders of this legislative institution, we thank you for your continued support. To the media and all those who report or work in the National Assembly, we are most grateful for your support. This victory is for all Nigerians.

I salute the doggedness and service of Hon. Femi Gbajabiamila, who fought a good fight and who has served this House and the nation with distinction. Together we will heal the wounds and divisions of this contest. Together we shall work to deliver good legislation and good government to our people.

I wish to use this opportunity to formally welcome all of us both new and returning members to the 8th National Assembly. Inauguration of the 8th House of Representatives should be a day of joy for members who toiled

day and night and went through great difficulties to be elected. It is indeed a wonderful honour and privilege to be entrusted with so great a responsibility and opportunity by our constituents. You are one of the 360 Nigerians to be so honoured out of over 150 million people. To God be the glory.

What has been demonstrated here today is the resolve of Members of the House to assert the independence of the legislature as a co-equal arm of government. My dear colleagues, by electing me as Speaker you have demonstrated to the world that our legislature is living up to the dreams and aspirations of our founding fathers. You are leaving a legacy of an accountable, autonomous, focused, progressive and united House capable of playing its role as the stabilizing force in our polity. We have shown once again that this is a House of the Nigerian people.

After 16 years of unbroken experiment in Constitutional democracy, it is right to say that the Nigerian legislature has come of age. The House continues to remain the repository of the democratic hopes and ambitious of our people. This is a truly representative chamber that can be relied upon to rise to the occasion when duty calls.

It should be noted that we are heirs to a long tradition of a House where debates are robustly undertaken, where radicalism flows as an institutional prerogative. We continue to be the bulwark for the defence of the rights and privileges of the “common man”. We shall continue to champion the rights of the weak and poor. We shall continue to be the anchor for the wellbeing of our people.

My Honourable Colleagues, after the euphoria of today comes the difficulties of tomorrow. We take office at a period in our history when the morale of our people are at its lowest ebb. We take office when our economy is in shambles, when the living conditions of Nigerians are in poor shape, when infrastructures are nonexistent or at best decayed. Our people are no longer safe in their homes. We face a debt crises once again. We are in a period of great social and political malaise. Provision of basic necessities of life for our people is becoming increasingly difficult. Long fuel lines, high cost of living, and epileptic electricity supply or in most instances complete darkness has become the order of the day. The Health needs of the majority of our people are not being met. Extreme poverty still envelops a large percentage of our population. For too long, Nigerians have suffered degradation and neglect. The list is endless.

It will be unfair to say that efforts have not been made by our past leaders to solve all these problems. Quite to the contrary, a lot of progress has been made in many fields. But it appears as if we have not done enough, as the problems still remain.

We are poised to use our new office to wage a mortal combat with the cancer of corruption, incompetence, insecurity, bad governance and infrastructural decay. We shall wage an unrelenting legislative war on insecurity, unemployment, poverty, lack of power supply, educational inadequacies, health problems and social decay.

We have run out of excuses.

We may be accused of falling short at the end of the day, but we will not be accused of not doing our best to reposition this nation, Nigeria, as a beacon of hope for Africa. We hope that our best will be good enough. I pledge to you my colleagues and Nigerians that we will play our part in this new opportunity offered us by Nigerians to recover our nation from the clutches of hunger, poverty, disease, social, economic, political and infrastructural quagmire.

It is now our responsibility to fashion out the legislative instruments that will lead to Nigeria's renaissance. Let the word go forth from here that it shall not be legislative business as usual again in Nigeria.

We, as a parliament can only justify the confidence of our people by keeping faith with our duties of law making, representation and oversight of the Executive arm of government. However, inspite of our responsibility for checking and balancing the Executive, good governance can only be effected when all arms of government are working in harmony and partnership to bring about the CHANGES voted for by Nigerians on March 28, 2015.

We shall cooperate and work harmoniously with the Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to deliver on the mandate given to us by Nigerians.

We have already outlined a legislative programme of action and a legislative compass to guide our actions in office in the document titled: My Legislative Agenda for the 8th House of Representatives, which was released recently.

Highlights of our Legislative proposals are:

Enhancing the independence and autonomy of the House of Representatives
Overhauling the budgetary processes of the National Assembly
Improved oversight coordination and processes
Strengthening the Committees of the House of Representatives
Transparency and accountability on the issue of salaries, allowances and running Cost of the Legislature:
Improving communications with the general public.
Conducting a legislative needs assessment.
Review of the Standing Orders of the House
Introducing a robust Code of Conduct for Members
Strengthening the Committees of the House of Representatives
Improving physical structures and equipment used in the House
Priority legislation, other legislative measures and conclusion of outstanding bills from the 7th House of Representatives:

Representatives while maintaining a robust and cooperative relationship with the Executive.

We further pledged that:

The 8th House of Representatives will concentrate on legislation that will bring the changes required and voted for by Nigerians. Legislative measures that will tackle the issue of endemic unemployment crises; insecurity of lives and property; poverty alleviation; health and education; endemic corruption; electricity and energy crises; general infrastructure, decay etc. We shall work closely and speedily to pass legislation that will tackle these matters.

We also propose to introduce the following:

Sectoral Debates:

Sectoral debates on various aspects of the Nigerian economy are some of the legislative measures we would introduce . This proposal envisages that the House will designate specific legislative sitting days or weeks in its calendar specifically for discussion on various problems facing the nation. Such identified themes, sectors, areas or problems include unemployment, health, education and social services; power/energy sector, oil and gas, science and technology; commerce and industry; transportation; telecommunications; agriculture; mining; manufacturing; diversification of the economy, finance, corruption, security matters, infrastructure.

We expect that these debates will lead to crafting of new laws or an amendment to existing ones or indeed make recommendations on how to better manage the economy.

We shall fine-tune this document and present it to the entire House for debate, amendments and adoption as soon as we commence legislative duties.

Conclusion

Let me once again thank my colleagues for this honour and to all Nigerians for their interest and participation in this keenly contested race. Elections are over. The onerous task of governance begins. I plead with all the supporters of both camps in this election to quickly bury the hatchet and forge a united front to tackle the myriads of problems facing the nation.

I thank you all and may God Bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria”.

POLICY AND LEGAL ADVOCACY CENTRE (POLYAC)