

**REMARKS BY THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
RT. HON FEMI GBAJABIAMILA ON THE OCCASION OF THE
PRESENTATION OF THE 2020 APPROPRIATIONS BILL BY THE
PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA, HIS
EXCELLENCY, MUHAMMADU BUHARI, GCFR AT THE NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY.**

PROTOCOLS

On behalf of the National Assembly, it is my honour to express our sincere appreciation to His Excellency, President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, for coming to the National Assembly to address this joint session, in fulfilment of his constitutional obligation.

Special appreciation also goes to the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Boss Mustapha, the Honourable Ministers of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Heads of the Departments and Agencies of the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and all those whose joint efforts have contributed to this Appropriation Bill which we have received today and will shortly begin to consider and deliberate upon. I must also specially recognise our men and women in uniform who are on the frontlines daily sacrificing for our safety.

The tradition of receiving the President of the Republic in the legislature for the presentation of the Appropriation Bill is in recognition of the legislature's constitutional obligation to serve as guardian of the purse in whom resides the absolute authority to make appropriations from the common treasury, in service of the national interest and for the benefit of all our citizens. It also attests to the abiding partnership between the legislature and the executive, without which no meaningful national objective can be achieved.

The Appropriation Bill that Mr President has presented to us today is a statement of intent. ***The budget we enact into law will be proof of our priorities and a reflection of the values we hold.*** What are those values? Integrity, accountability in managing the affairs of state and absolute commitment to the best interests of the Nigerian people. What are our priorities? Building an economy that provides sufficient opportunity for our people to achieve the dreams they hold dear – equipping our children with an education that prepares them for the challenges and opportunities of a rapidly changing world – protecting the rights of our citizens and securing them from internal and external aggression. This is our commitment and we will ensure that this commitment is reflected in the 2020 Appropriation Act.

There are significant flaws in the process of passage and implementation of our annual national budgets. Some of these problems are structural, others are a function of failures of process and inadequacies in attitude. ***We intend in this 9th Assembly to improve on these past imperfections and to leave a legacy of budgets that are enacted without rancour, implemented diligently and that achieve the objectives of national development for which they are intended.*** We fully intend to return to a January to December budget cycle and to put an end to the policy instability and economic uncertainty that is a consequence of an unpredictable budget cycle.

We recognise that our highest ambitions and the collective best interests of our nationhood can only be achieved when the legislature and the executive work together in pursuit of our shared ambitions. Therefore, we will make every effort in this 9th assembly to achieve constructive collaboration with the executive on all matters of appropriation, implementation and oversight.

We will seek collaboration, but we will not yield on our constitutional obligation to ensure faithful compliance with the letter and spirit of the Appropriation Act by the Ministries, Departments and Agencies of the government. ***We will strive for big wins, resisting the temptation to bask in the false allure of mediocre achievements because this moment calls for nothing short of grand ambition, and transformative ideas.*** Above all else, we will hold ourselves in the legislature and others, to the highest standards of probity because to fall short of excellence will be to betray the calling of leadership to which we all have answered.

Once more, I thank you, Mr President, for your presence here today. I thank the Clerk of the National Assembly, Mr Sani Ataba – Omolori and the entire management and staff of the National Assembly who have worked to make this joint session a resounding success. And I thank all of you who have presented yourselves to witness this noblest of democratic traditions.

God bless you all.

God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.