



MID-TERM REPORT OF THE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

7TH HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



Promoting Good Governance and Citizens Access

MID-TERM REPORT OF THE LEGISLATIVE
AGENDA

7TH HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Mid-term Report of the 7th Legislative Agenda of the 7th House of Representatives was prepared by the Ad hoc Committee on the Legislative Agenda of the House.

It followed several weeks of meetings, discussions and review of the performance of the 7th Legislative Agenda carried out by the Ad hoc Committee chaired by Rt. Hon. Emeka Ihedioha, Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives.

The report was laid before the House and accepted as a true and proper mid-term review of the Agenda.

It provides a basis for measuring the effectiveness of the House's responsiveness to its own agenda and mandate.

In publishing this, Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC) aims to disseminate the review and create wider awareness of the achievements and challenges of the House of Representatives and its commitment to delivering on its legislative goals.

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CHAPTER ONE.

Introduction

At the beginning of the 7th House of Representatives, the Speaker, Rt. Hon. Aminu Waziri Tambuwal, set up a process of developing a Legislative Agenda for the House of Representatives. The process involved an in depth review of the Houses' records, processes, practices and goals. The process of developing the Legislative Agenda went through several debates leading to the adoption and passage of the Agenda.

The House went through several weeks of identifying, deliberating and passing of an aggressive Legislative Agenda to reposition itself as a key branch of government, able and determined to deliver on key elements of governance. Every member of the House had the opportunity to contribute to the debate on the Legislative Agenda document on the floor of the House. The document was thereafter adopted by a unanimous vote of the House, on 27th of July 2011, thus making it a document owned by every member of the House.

The Legislative Agenda set the goal of reforming the processes of the House, identifying legislative priorities and outlining a programme of action to achieve the set goals. The Agenda focused on initiating a new order to foster transparency and institutional integrity for the House of Representatives.

The decision to carve a new image for the House arose from the huge groundswell of popular support by Nigerians for the decision of the House to decide by itself how its leadership should emerge. With a leadership popularly elected and high expectations amongst Nigerians, the decision of the House to draw up a Legislative Agenda as a guiding document to enable it deliver on its set goals became imperative.

Prior to the 7th Assembly the perception in the public mind of the Assembly was a mixed one. Members of the public were skeptical of the efforts of the National legislature and its membership to fully represent the interests of their constituents. The public was sometimes very harsh in its verdict on the efforts of the National Assembly to fulfill its legislative responsibilities. The Legislative Agenda was developed in response to these concerns and to position the House of Representatives as a champion of the peoples' cause.

The Agenda sets targets to be achieved on virtually every aspect of the legislative business of the House of Representatives. The Agenda covered areas such as the

internal processes of the House, its Committee system and functions including oversight and administration. The Agenda also committed to review legislative branch budget in line with the requirements of openness, effectiveness and accountability and to achieving fiscal conservatism in the management of the Houses' funds.

The Legislative Agenda committed to the promotion and building of a strong and virile economy with emphasis on strict compliance to the provisions of the Fiscal Responsibility Act and principles of global budgetary best practices.

The House also outlined in the Agenda, its objective of designing and implementing an e-parliament blueprint to elevate the National Assembly's operations to international best standards and ensure public access to legislative information and records.

The House recognized legislation as the hallmark of the legislature and committing itself to the quick passage of high impact and people centered legislations that can improve the quality of life across the nation. The Agenda also accorded priority to the importance of its relationship with civil society organisations. The Agenda outlined the key partnership that could be fostered with Civil Society Organisation CSOs, to enable delivery on the national goals of development.

The House Legislative Agenda committed to doing things differently and reversing the notion of business-as-usual that has characterized the politics of the country. To operationalize the Legislative Agenda, an *Ad hoc* Committee headed by the Deputy Speaker, Rt. Hon. Emeka Ihedioha, *CON* was set up.

As the 7th House of Representatives marks two years of its existence, there is an important need to assess its achievements and the extent of delivery on the goals outlined in the Legislative Agenda.

CHAPTER 2

REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

1. Internal processes of the House

In its Legislative Agenda, the 7th House of Representatives undertook to overhaul its legislative processes and improve its systems, in order to achieve quicker passage of bills and ensure strict compliance with time frames.

In the period since the adoption of the Legislative Agenda, the House has accomplished the following:

- i. Amendment of its Standing Orders to fast track the process of the passage of Bills and Resolutions. For instance, *Order 12, Rule 94* was introduced to fast track the process of passage of bills passed in the previous Assembly which either failed to achieve concurrence in the Senate or Presidential Assent. Such bills had been required to start *de novo*. Instead, they are now committed to the Committee of the whole House, upon publication and Resolution of the House for consideration. The House further introduced *Order 8, Rule 51, (5)* requiring motions relating to infrastructure, utilities, natural disasters and related subjects to be referred to the relevant standing Committees without debate.
- ii. The House also set time limits for Committees to consider bills referred to it and report back

(a) Committee system in the House

The Legislative Agenda had outlined efficiency, transparency and accountability to guide the operations and activities of the Committees of the House.

In the period since the adoption of the Legislative Agenda, the House has accomplished the following:

- i. In the appointment of the leadership and membership of the Standing Committees in the House, great effort was put into identifying the skills, experience and competences of members. In addition, certain investigative matters had been entrusted to Ad-Hoc Committees carefully chosen to meet the requirements of competence, skill and experience.

- ii. The House developed templates and manuals for Committee operations by standardizing the reporting of oversight activities, reporting on Committee activities, Minutes of meetings, Public Hearing Report template and Quarterly/Annual Report format, which has improved the process and quality of legislation and administration.
- iii. Committee clerks and members were trained in the operationalization and use of the templates and manuals that were developed, which has led to improved processes.
- iv. There are now regular meetings of the Committees of the House.
- v. Continuing training of members and staff of committees on the mandates of the Committees has increased. This has helped to improve the functioning and efficiency of the Committees.
- vi. The House has set clear guidelines and code of conduct for its members and where there have been complaints the House has taken steps to ensure that such members are brought to account. Actions have been taken including suspension and removal of Committee Chairmen.
- vii. The House has continued to work to improve the relationship between members and staff.
- viii. The Public Petitions Committee has been strengthened to deepen public access to the House. To this end, over 1000 petitions were laid on the floor of the House of Representatives in the last two years. The House has concluded and reported on very many of them. The Public petitions process is a major avenue for ventilation of the interests and complaints of the general Public and is critical to the representative function of the House of Representatives. The House devotes a specific time everyday to receive petitions by Nigerians who feel aggrieved on any subject.
- ix. The House has improved its communication mechanism with the Senate. On a daily basis, there is provision in the Order paper for Communication from the Senate to the House.

(b) Oversight

Through its oversight function, the House has been able to expose corruption, inefficiency and waste in governance. Huge sums of money running into trillions

of naira have been saved as a result of the robust oversight regime currently in place in the House. Pursuant to this power, the House has conducted major investigative hearings into fundamental issues including but not limited to:

- i. Fuel subsidy regime
- ii. Aviation,
- iii. Capital market,
- iv. Non - remittance of revenues by MDAs,
- v. Non - implementation of budget
- vi. Banking
- vii. Employment and Labour Issues
- viii. Education
- ix. Agriculture

In addition, Committees of the House regularly hold meetings and ensure the scrutiny of agencies under their purview.

(c) Administrative cost of the House

In line with the Legislative Agenda, the House has reviewed legislative branch budget to achieve the requirements of openness, effectiveness and accountability and to achieving fiscal conservatism and prudence in the management of funds. The House has exercised fiscal discipline and prudence in the management of its funds in spite of its increased activities. These increased activities and additional expenditure items are evidenced in the recent establishment of the National Institute for Legislative Studies (NILS), a major capacity development agency of the National Assembly and increased activities of the National Assembly Budget and Research Office (NABRO), as well as increased training programmes for members and staff of the National Assembly.

Furthermore, the robust oversight and investigative hearings conducted by the House has taken a toll on the finances of the House. Indeed the house is currently unable to broadcast most of its sittings and investigative hearings *live* due to paucity of funds.

The additional activities in the House of Representatives have been achieved within the existing budget, as the House has maintained a ceiling on its budget since the beginning of the 7th House of Representatives.

II. E-Parliament, Archiving and Documentation

In line with its objectives as contained in the Legislative Agenda, the House committed itself to modernizing and improving its ICT use and services to enhance its efficiency and effectiveness. To this end, the House set up a specialized Ad-Hoc Committee to drive the process of actualizing this aspect of the agenda. The House is yet to achieve the use of electronic voting system as regular feature of House activities, but work is on-going towards accomplishing this. In the current fiscal year budgetary provision has been made in the FCT budget to automate the *Chamber and* Committee rooms of the House of Representatives.

III. National Economy and Budgetary Process

The Legislative Agenda indicated its commitment to putting in place, legislative measures to achieving the best development outcome from government spending, including promotion of economic growth and social welfare.

The accomplishments in this regard include:

- i. The steady improvement in the timely presentation and passage of the 2013 budget.
- ii. Greater scrutiny of the budget to ensure adequate allocation of resources to critical sectors of the economy.
- iii. Ensuring the passage of the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) as a basis for the preparation of annual budgets.
- iv. Proposing amendments to the relevant provisions of the Constitution (sections 81 and 82) to achieve the presentation of budgets by the executive, at least three months before the end of a fiscal year and limiting the period for spending into the next fiscal year without Appropriation to three months, instead of six months.
- v. Efforts are on-going to operationalize the National Assembly Budget and Research Office (NABRO). A bill for this important agency has passed second

reading in the House, with the same bill also receiving attention in the Senate. It is envisaged that with NABRO fully operational, the rancor experienced on the passage of the 2012 and 2013 budgets will become a thing of the past.

a. Federal Revenue Disclosures

The Legislative Agenda identified federal revenue leakages as a major source of concern and outlined measures to deal with the problem. In accordance with the Fiscal Responsibility Act, the Legislative Agenda sought to plug leakages of federally collectable revenue and full and transparent disclosure of all revenue and receipts by Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) on behalf of government.

For this purpose, the House conducted very revealing public hearings on revenues collected by some MDAs including NNPC, CBN, and FIRS.

These MDAs are now being made to account for and remit to the Consolidated Revenue Fund of the Federation, incomes received on behalf of the Federal government. This has led to accruals of huge funds into the Consolidated Revenue Fund.

The House has also mandated its Committee on International Donors and Civil Society Organisations to examine grants and assistance received from donor organisations, track the use and disbursement of the funds and ensure that donor funds are deployed in accordance with international best practices and the provisions of extant laws and agreements.

b. Reducing Cost of Governance

In the Legislative Agenda, the House sought to review laws establishing Commissions and Agencies with a view to eliminating duplication of mandate and reducing waste.

In the 2013 budget, the House championed the need to reduce bloated personnel costs and insisted on a biometric review of personnel of MDAs.

The House awaits collaboration with the Executive to further this objective after the Executive issues its *White Paper* on the “*Oransanye Report*”

Furthermore, the House demonstrated its commitment towards reducing the cost of governance through the timely passage of the National Economic Intelligence

Committee (Establishment) Act (Repeal) Bill, 2012 and the National Automotive Design and Development Council Bill, 2012 among others

The House has also through its oversight and Appropriation process sought to reduce costs and duplication in government expenditure.

IV. PRIORITY LEGISLATION AND POLICY ISSUES

The primary responsibility of the National Assembly is to make laws for the peace, order and good government of the Federation.

In this regard, the 7th House of Representatives outlined some priority areas for legislation, including the Petroleum Industry Bill; Electoral Reform; Constitution Amendment; Power and Transportation, Education Reforms; Agriculture and Land Reforms; Job Creation; Youth and Social Development; Environmental issues among others.

In the last two years, the House has demonstrated commitment in actualizing the above stated agenda in the following bills:

i. The Petroleum Industry Bill: The 7th House of Representatives conscious of the importance of the Oil and Gas sector to the economy, introduced the Petroleum Industry Bill, (PIB,) (HB: 54) in July 2011, as a private Member bill to fast track its passage. The Executive insisted it did not want to be rushed into a PIB and consequently introduced the new PIB more than one year after the House Bill was introduced.

The PIB as introduced by the Executive has now passed second reading in the House. Furthering the process of its passage, the House set up an Ad hoc Committee, which has held public hearings in the six geo-political zones of the country. Further legislative processing is ongoing.

ii. Electoral Reform: Effort in this direction is being given attention in the on - going Constitution Amendment exercise. However, the House will engage critical stakeholders like the Political Parties, Civil Society Organisations, (CSOs,) Professional Organisations and politicians to come up with suggestions that may lead to the Amendment of the Electoral Act to strengthen the electoral process. To this end, the House Committee on Electoral Matters is being supported to craft appropriate amendments to the current Electoral Act.

iii. Constitution Amendment: The House has pursued vigorously the issue of Constitution Amendment in consonance with the yearnings and aspirations of Nigerians. Toward this end, an Ad-hoc Committee headed by the Deputy Speaker was set up to handle the exercise. Peoples' Public Sessions have been conducted in the 360 Federal Constituencies to enable Nigerians make inputs into the Constitution amendment process. The Peoples' Public Sessions have been adjudged as a laudable innovation in the history of Constitution Amendment in the country. The report emanating from these sessions has been presented to the public and is available on the website of the Ad-hoc Committee.

iv. Power: In recognizing the importance of Electric Power in driving national development, the House has initiated legislation aimed at repositioning the power sector for optimal performance. In particular, the Hydro - Electric Power Producing Areas Development Commission (amendment) bill 2012, the Clean Energy (Establishment) (etc) bill 2012 and the Utilities Charges Regulations (etc) bill have been referred to the relevant Committee for further action.

Furthermore, there is a proposal before the Constitution Amendment Committee to place power generation, distribution and transmission matters squarely in the *Concurrent Legislative List*, such that a state government can generate, transmit and distribute electricity within their state

v. MDGs: In line with the Millennium Development Goals, (MDGs,) the House has considered a number of legislations on food security, health, transport, women empowerment, youth development, maternal and child health, HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases and environment.

vi. Security: Security has remained a major challenge in the country. In response to this, the House has passed numerous Resolutions and initiated many bills to address the security challenges in the country, for example the Terrorism (Prevention) Act Amendment Bill 2012 and a host of others. The House also passed Resolutions inviting security agencies to explain measures taken to forestall incidents of insecurity in the country. In the 2012 budget, the House approved the highest budgetary allocation for security.

- vii.** Bills that have been passed or are still under consideration in the House include but not limited to the following:
- a.** State of the Nation Address Bill
 - b.** NDDC Statutory Appropriation Bill
 - c.** National Health Insurance Bill
 - d.** Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Bill
 - e.** Terrorism (Prevention) Act
 - f.** Witness Protection Programme Bill
 - g.** Nigerian Railway Corporation Act (Amendment) Bill
 - h.** Maintenance of Public Infrastructure Bill
 - i.** Skills Acquisition and Development Trust Fund (Establishment) Bill

In all, sixty Bills have been passed in the last two years while 134 Bills are undergoing legislative action in the Committees. See the attached schedule for details.

Furthermore, many important Resolutions affecting the Peace, Order and Good Governance of Nigeria have been passed by the House within the last two years. Details of these Resolutions are attached in the schedule.

viii. Ratification and Domestication of Treaties: The House passed a resolution requiring the Executive to ensure that all treaties are ratified and domesticated before application in Nigeria in compliance with Constitutional provisions. For instance, the *Green Tree Agreement* between Nigeria and Cameroun was not ratified by the National Assembly. Indeed, the House of Representatives passed a Resolution rejecting the Agreement as not being in the national interest.

b. Constitution Reform Process

The Legislative Agenda promised to achieve further amendments to the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This objective is being carried out and has led to the widest ever participatory consultation and involvement of Nigerians in the amendment of the Constitution since independence in 1960. On Saturday November 10, 2012, every of the 360 members of the House of Representatives relocated to their constituencies and participated in sessions involving their Constituents, representatives of civil society organizations, and

stakeholders to deliberate on a 43 item template that articulated all of the issues, views and memoranda submitted by Nigerians on issues they would like to see amended in the Constitution of Nigeria.

The sessions across the 360 Federal Constituencies of Nigeria were all very well attended by representatives of Labor, the Nigerian Bar Association, Academic Staff Union of Universities, National Union of Teachers, Pro-democracy and Civil Society Organisations, Youths and Students Groups, Women Groups, Special Interests Groups and indeed, the plurality of interests in the Constituencies such as artisans, journalists, religious groups, town unions and associations.

Deliberations at each of these sessions were free, robust, and participatory. Nigerians got the opportunity to say their minds and air their views. The issues that were captured in the template included:

- a. Creation of New States
- b. Local Government Autonomy
- c. Indigene-ship and Citizenship
- d. Devolution of Powers and Fiscal Federalism
- e. Financial Autonomy/Independence for State Houses of Assembly
- f. Zoning for the Office of the President and State Governors
- g. Reform of Judicial Institutions
- h. Reform of the Electoral Law
- i. Increased Elective Seats for Women
- j. Constitutional Protection for Persons Living with Disabilities

At the end of deliberations, participants in the Sessions voted, which votes were recorded in the full view and participation of all.

The results of the public sessions have already been publicized and are currently being drafted into bills for further legislative action and passage.

V. ENGAGEMENT WITH STAKEHOLDERS

a. Civil Society Organizations and Other Professional Groups.

In recognition of the importance and role of constituents and critical stakeholders in the legislative process, the House engaged Civil Society Organisations,

Professional Bodies, Labour, Media and other stakeholders to achieve participatory representation in the process of legislation and oversight.

In the last two years, the House has improved the quality and frequency of consultations with CSOs and other stakeholders to enhance public participation in the law making process especially in the PIB and Constitution Amendment process. There is challenge in repositioning the office of the National Assembly Civil Society Liaison Office to achieve effective engagement with CSOs.

b. House Relationships

The House has sustained a cordial relationship with the Senate through routine consultations and sharing of information for smooth functioning of the National Assembly. This was evident in the smooth and timely passage of the Appropriation Bill 2013.

Efforts are presently being intensified to strengthen the Conference of Presiding Officers of the Nigerian Legislatures, COPON, for good governance in the country.

The House has continued to constructively engage the Executive on national issues while ensuring the independence and autonomy of the legislature. The intervention of the House, on the fuel subsidy strike in January 2012, which nearly brought the nation's economy to a standstill, is a clear demonstration of effective Legislature – Executive engagement.

The House has sustained its participation in international parliamentary activities such as Inter-Parliamentary Union, (IPU,) Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, (CPA,) African Parliamentary Union, (APU,) ECOWAS, Pan African and ACP –EU Joint Parliaments etc.

Indeed the President of the Pan African Parliament is a member of the House of Representatives while the Deputy President of the Senate is the Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament.

STABILITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

The hallmark of 2 years of the 7th House of Representatives is the unprecedented calmness and stability of the House. It is on record that there has been no rancor or

disturbances in the House in the last two years. This is perhaps the most stable House since 1999.

The method of election of the Leadership of the House, whose members chose its leaders in spite of spirited attempts of external interference, has been the key to this state of affairs.

In addition, the Leadership of the House has demonstrated transparency in the management of House affairs.

CHAPTER THREE

CHALLENGES

- i. **Funding:** One area where activities of the House have suffered from funding inadequacy has been Committees oversight activities. Budgetary provision for this purpose has never been enough, which makes it difficult for Committees to optimally perform their oversight functions. Consequently, public access to legislative activities, which is critical to the sustenance of our democracy, has suffered. Increasingly, it is no longer sustainable to broadcast *live* House proceedings and investigative hearings on television and radio.
- ii. **Capacity Development:** For quality legislation, it is important that Legislators are trained and retrained in the core functions of lawmaking, representation and oversight. The National Institute for Legislative Studies needs to be further supported to deliver on this need.
- iii. **Executive Non- Cooperation:** The apparent constant feud between the Executive and the Legislature on issues of national importance is caused by poor understanding of the role and relevance of the Legislature in our democracy. The Executive still perceive the input of the legislature as unimportant and intrusive. The Executive regularly disregards well-meaning Resolutions of the House which has led to avoidable friction and tension

The House has consistently demonstrated that while it guards its independence and autonomy jealously, it is keenly aware that at the end of the day, the Nigerian people must remain the focus of our legislative activities.

The House recently set aside one full legislative day to attend a capacity building workshop on Executive/Legislative Relationship in the Spirit of Co-operation organized by the Special Adviser to the President on National Assembly Matters.

- iv. **Weak Monitoring:** Though Committees of the House carried out oversight functions during the last two years, which led to a lot of discoveries in the Oil

sector, Capital Market, Aviation etc there is still a huge gap in the area of oversight of government agencies and their activities. It is obvious that the bureaucratic machinery of the National Assembly needs to be further improved to enable it better coordinate oversight activities, timely submission of oversight reports and follow –up actions by Committees

- v. **Budget Implementation:** The vision of the House is to see the full implementation of annual budgets but making this to happen has not been successful in the past two years. Issues of late submission of budget proposals, Presidential assent and releases of approved funds and slow and inefficient procurement processes still bug our budgetary processes, and hinder the full implementation of budgets. The Executive is yet to evolve a holistic mechanism for early release of funds to MDAs as well as early completion of project contract time. The House will however continue to insist on strict compliance with the provisions of the Fiscal Responsibility Act, the Appropriation Acts and the elevation of the Public Procurement process to meet international best practices and promote a robust and virile economy for the country.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

The Legislative Agenda is a four year road map for the House. In Implementing the Legislative Agenda, the House has achieved some milestones during the period under review, notwithstanding some challenges.

The House is determined to pursue the full implementation of the Agenda within the 4-year lifespan of the 7th House of Representatives.

The House is also determined to use its legislative authority to ensure order, peace and stability and promote good governance.

Oversight functions of the House will continue to receive appropriate attention in the next two years in order to ensure value for money, proper implementation of laws and reduction of corruption, inefficiency and waste in governance.

The House will review all existing laws to bring them into conformity with the 1999 Constitution. The House will ensure that Constitution Amendment process will be in line with the wishes of the Nigerian people as collectively determined during the Peoples' Public Sessions in all the 360 Federal Constituencies.

The House will continue to ensure that square pegs are put into square holes, in order to ensure that various Committees work optimally in the remaining period of the 7th Assembly to achieve more in the areas of budget oversight and monitoring of the MDAs to achieve a higher level of performance of the Budget.

The House of Representatives will strive harder in the areas of legislative oversight, and public hearings on bills, for better quality legislation as well as to ensure the early passage of bills before it within the lifespan of this House.

The House of Representatives will not ignore useful recommendations from stakeholders. The House will work to preserve the integrity of the legislature and will not allow its activities to be smeared with corruption. Disciplinary measures have been taken against Members that got involved in bribery scandal, which should act as deterrent to others.

The House Leadership will continue to cooperate with the Executive in the national interest. This is clearly evident in the approval of the State of Emergency declared by the President in the three States of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe.

The House is committed to the full implementation of this Legislative Agenda.

APPENDIX I

A LONG WALK TO GOOD GOVERNANCE: BEING TEXT OF REMARKS BY THE SPEAKER, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA, RT. HON. DR. AMINU WAZIRI TAMBUWAL CFR, AT THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY CEREMONY OF THE 7TH HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, HELD IN THE GREEN CHAMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, ON 6TH JUNE, 2013

Protocols:

My Dear Honourable Colleagues,

Exactly two years ago, today this hallowed Chambers hosted the inauguration of this 7th Assembly, specifically the House of Representatives Chambers, today we commemorate our second anniversary. I am sure, my dear colleagues, these two years have been a cocktail of experiences. We are sincerely grateful to the Almighty God for his grace and sustenance; we deeply appreciate the media for their unwavering partnership, your criticisms, counsel and deep rooted analysis of our operations have been helpful in shaping as well as sharpening our focus. We commend the Executive and Judicial arms with whom it has been a period of mutual complimentary operation, the management and staff of the House have been a wonderful lot working successfully under over 360 masters. Our brothers the Civil Society have continued to challenge us with their quick wit, alertness, penchant for detail and unalloyed commitment to the defense of the defenseless. To all Nigerians, I must state that we are humbled by your trust, confidence, cooperation, patience and understanding even in the face of deficits in the fulfilment of your aspiration and expectations, to all of you my dear colleagues, on behalf of the Leadership, I thank you for being an unshaken and unshakable pillar of support and inspiration.

At the commencement of this journey, the 7th House of Representatives fashioned for itself a Legislative Agenda to guide its processes, programmes and operations. This agenda is consistent with the constitutional mandate of the legislature to wit: Legislation, Representation and Oversight. The legislative function of making laws for the peace order and good government of Nigeria appears reasonably well

appreciated now by the general public, so is the function of oversight of the implementation of the laws so made pursuant to the law making function. There however appears to be great difficulty in understanding the legislative function of Representation and it is this that I am persuaded to briefly highlight.

The House of Representatives is the House of the Nigerian people, it is the congregation of over 160 million Nigerians in representative capacity. As it is well entrenched in the Principal-Agent relationship, so is the relationship and duty of the representative to the constituents and ultimately the entire people of Nigeria. The people may seem weak against the government they have put in place, though it ought not to be so, but the people must be heard nonetheless. If the people yearn for fair patronage from their government, be it development, employment or whatever, a true representative must stand with the people. Where they unjustifiably neglect, it will amount to abuse of mandate and it is in order to forestall this abuse that the people have reserved for themselves the power to recall compromising and erring representatives.

If the people feel neglected or unprotected by the government they have put in place and they either cry out or even murmur, the representative is duty bound to pick up the gauntlet of this groaning to the attention of the relevant arm of government. When therefore natural disasters occur, epidemics threatens communities, civil disturbances result in loss of lives and property and the representatives raise motions on the floor and pass remedial resolutions in that regard, it is in fulfilment of this mandate of Representation. We do not make any pretensions that Representatives are robots to jump at any hue and cry, no, they make informed decisions pursuant to their representative duties.

PROGRESS

The 7th Assembly has operated its Legislative Agenda in the last two years with appreciable successes but not without rather weak scores in some objectives. The House Committee on the Legislative Agenda has drawn up a comprehensive report, the clean copy of which should be in circulation immediately after now. I shall therefore merely highlight a few areas here since we have programmed to dedicate more time to external assessment.

UNPRECEDENTED STABILITY:

The House has witnessed unprecedented stability in the last two years. The conducive atmosphere created by this stability is no doubt the foundation for any success that we can lay claim to. Let me state here that the credit for this stability goes to all the Members of the House and not the Leadership. During these two long years, Honourable Members have exhibited uncommon diligence, support, inspiration, selflessness, passion, maturity and willingness to sacrifice towards the promotion and preservation of the National Interest. On behalf of the Leadership, I most sincerely commend this spirit.

I desire that at all times, it should rest in our consciousness that this is a House of 360 equals, each representing a Constituency absolutely and by electing us to the offices of Presiding and Principal Officers, you have merely conferred on us the status of Primus Inter Pares. We are human, we are fallible and I urge you as always to exercise your liberty to call us to order when you feel that we are steering the ship off course, such is imperative for our collective good and indeed the good of all Nigerians whom we represent.

CONSULTATIVE REPRESENTATION AND VIBRANCY:

8. Another area in which we have made progress is that of Consultative Representation. As part of our agenda to remain true and faithful representatives, we have elected to consult the people on all critical issues. Pursuant to this, the Peoples' Public Sessions were held in the 360 constituencies nationwide to avail the people the opportunity to participate in the making of their Constitution. This initiative was well received by the people, participation was massive and contributions robust and far reaching. Again the Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB) has undergone public hearings at the six geo political zones and arrangements are underway to have a central hearing in Abuja for those in the Federal Capital and all other Nigerians and groups who were unable to take advantage of the zonal hearings.

This is apart from the series of routine public hearings on critical issues such as Fuel Subsidy regime, Aviation, Capital Market, Non-remittance of revenues by MDAs, Non-implementation of budget among others.

One major lesson derived from the consultative approach is the fact that the citizens are zealous and passionate in participating in the running of their government and constitute a rich bank from which invaluable ideas can be tapped in pursuit of good governance. In the years ahead, we intend to further advance the cause of citizens participation through this consultative approach.

TRANSPARENCY, FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ANTI-CORRUPTION:

The National Assembly has exercised fiscal discipline and prudence in the management of its finances. In the face of increased activity including the establishment of the Institute for Legislative Studies (NILS) and enhanced activity by the National Assembly Budget and Research Office (NABRO), the 7th National Assembly has maintained its Budget ceiling since inception.

Regarding the objective of zero tolerance to corruption, the House has been decisive in meting out administrative sanctions even when judicial processes are inchoate. We have had to apply such sanctions as suspension and removal from committee headships on our colleagues as means of self censorship and internal discipline. The House is gradually but firmly institutionalizing the war against corruption in order to maintain high ethical standard for all Legislators. In this regard, the House Committee on Ethics and Privileges is hereby directed to expeditiously undertake the comprehensive review of the Code of conduct to bring it up to international parliamentary best practices.

The role of the legislature in the sustenance of true democracy is critical and imperative, therefore if the legislature loses credibility and the moral standing to efficiently perform its constitutional duties of checks and balances, then democracy is threatened because bigotry, authoritarianism, despotism and all the negative isms will mount the saddle and absolute corruption will run the nation aground. Certainly we have no mandate to oversight the failing of the State.

RESULTS OF THE CONDUCTIVE ATMOSPHERE AND PROPER FOCUS:

The peaceful environment and the positively inclined disposition of the Members as well as the staff of the House have yielded impressive performance and attainment of the set goals. In the area of legislation a total of five hundred and twelve bills (512) have been raised all of which have passed first readings; sixty (60) bills have so far been passed into law, while one hundred and thirty four (134) are undergoing legislative action, having undergone second reading and are at Committee stage. Some of the bills passed include NNDC Statutory Appropriation Act; State of the Nation Address Act; Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act; Terrorism (Prevention) Act; Maintenance of Public Infrastructure; Banking; Employment and labour issues; education; agriculture while some of the important ones at Committee stage include the constitution Amendment Bill, the Petroleum Industry Bill, the Hydro-Electric Power Production Areas Development Commission (Amendment) bill among others.

Pursuant to the Representation function, the House made stringent effort to ensure that there is at least minimal patronage of all segments of the country in the Annual budgets. The House has continued to press for constituency projects to ameliorate situations of total neglect of certain section especially the rural areas where over 70% of the citizens reside. Notwithstanding misconceptions in certain quarters, I make board to state that if constituency projects are removed from the budget, over 40% of Federal constituencies may witness no federal patronage in a whole budget year, we see no equity in that.

Furthermore, a total of over seven hundred (700) motions were raised on the floor and resolutions passed on matters of concern to the citizens such as national disasters, Communal violence, and governmental oppression among others. I wish to state here that whereas failure to respect House resolutions may not be justifiable before the regular courts, it is certainly justifiable before the people's courts and granted that our mandate emanates from the people and not the courts, we ought to be mindful of the people's judgment.

The House Committee on public petitions, which is the legislative instrument for Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), has continued to grow very popular with the citizens. In the period under review, over one thousand (1000) Petitions were received

and laid on the table out of which a majority have been fully considered while the rest are pending in the Committee. The activities of the Committee have afforded citizens at least a vent and in most cases solution and remedies for infractions complained against.

On oversight, the House has been able to expose corruption, inefficiency and waste in governance. Huge sums of money running into trillions of naira have been saved as a result of the robust oversight regime currently in place. Major investigative hearings in to fundamental issues were conducted in the period under review amongst which are fuel subsidy regime, aviation, capital market, non-remittance of revenues by MDA's and non-implementation of Annual budgets.

DEFICIENCIES:

i) Weak Committee Reportage On Referrals.

Given the improvements in some House processes aimed at reducing legislative red tape, it must be admitted that the timeous reportage by House Committees on bills and other matters referred to them for action has been far from satisfactory. This has impacted negatively on the accomplishment of targets. Henceforth, Committees will be sited for such breaches and sanctioned appropriately.

ii) Electronic Voting and e-System General.

The objective of the House to put in place an efficiently functional electronic voting system has suffered some set back, this has deprived the House of the several benefits accruing from the system. This is regrettable. However feasibility has been completed and appropriate budgetary provisions made under the 2013 budget of the FCT for the comprehensive rehabilitation and upgrading of the system both for the Chambers and other ancillary infrastructure. the adhoc committee on e-parliament and FCT have been mandated to keep a close tap on this project to ensure its successfully execution.

iii) Oversight Duplication.

Whereas on the whole the oversight functions have recorded impressive results, in the course of our interaction, concerns had been expressed on the practice where some House Committees invite MDAs outside their supervisory jurisdiction to their

oversight meetings on routine non-contentious matters. I wish to state that this is counterproductive.

Accordingly in order to enhance better coordination and liaison amongst House Committees, the House Committee on Rules and Business is hereby directed to expeditiously work out a framework of engagement to ensure that these concerns are effectively addressed.

IMPORTANT NATIONAL CONCERNS:

Honourable colleagues, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, it is crucial for us to remind ourselves all the time that the Legislature is one out of the three arms of this democratic government and therefore we must endeavour to seek legislative perspectives from which we can contribute to the resolution of critical national challenges. Today a series of these challenges stare us in the face:

iv. Poor Democratic Culture.

After fourteen years of uninterrupted practice of democracy we still suffer acute poverty of democratic culture and practices. This is a challenge to all Nigerians but more so for those of us deeply concerned in the democratic process and operation. We must place national interest above selfish interest, we must place objective principles above parochialism and whims. We must deliberately promote a viable and transparent electoral process. The right to opinion and dissent must be given space in our political discuss. Internal party democracy is a sine qua non to the genuine development of democratic culture therefore as we work and walk towards 2015, we ought to take the vow that all votes must count whether in intra party democratic processes or at the level of inter party contests. True democracy does not happen by accident, it is therefore our duty as intimate practitioners and beneficiaries of political patronage to be in the vanguard of the deepening of democracy. The people of Nigeria desire and deserve this, it is right and honourable, we have a duty to deliver these noble expectations.

The Cankerworms Of Poverty, Unemployment And Insecurity.

The vicious circle of unemployment, poverty and insecurity constitute a grave social malady in our body politic. Sadly the debilitating insecurity situation has forced us to

declare a war on consequences rather than causes. For now it may be imperative to fight the consequences in order to create a conducive atmosphere for the prosecution of the war against the causes. It is important to realize that along the line we must commence the war against unemployment and poverty as a consolidation strategy. Agriculture provides for the nation the sector with the shortest gestation period for job creation.

Our national statistics reveal that 70% of our population is engaged in agriculture, 20% in services and the remaining 10% in industry. It means the agriculture sector alone accounts for over 70 million Nigerians of working age, even then over 65 million would be in subsistence agriculture where they are either grossly underemployed or mal-employed thus constituting a waste of the workforce because any employment that does not offer a living wage is a manpower waste. This underemployment and mal-employment is replicated in similar proportion in the services and industry. The challenge before us is therefore not merely to create jobs but infact to recreate jobs by upgrading all those existing jobs that are indeed pretentious employments offering no living wage. We certainly posses the capacity to attain this in good record time given proper focus. On our part, a couple of Bills are already before the House to address the issue of unemployment, poverty and insecurity.

The Pace, Substance and Quality of Governance.

Our nation is living in unusual times and unusual times require drastic and unusual remedies. In setting the pace of governance we must realise that we are grossly in arrears of our developmental expectations and capacities. Our goals and targets must be premised on our collective capacity rather the limited capacity of an individual or a select few otherwise we will continue to promote waste. Our job design and job deployment must be functional and waste free.

Going forward therefore we must begin to premise our job designs on our peculiar unacceptable position on the rungs of the development ladder.

The strategies that suit us are those of the successful emerging economies and not the strategies of the developed economies. The substance and quality of our governance

must therefore either be intelligently original or the intelligent adaption of what is relevant, right and proper. That way we shall be coasting home to the land flowing with milk and honey.

CONCLUSION:

My dear colleagues, distinguished invited guests, beloved Nigerians, the challenges may be daunting we are sure to berth because we possess the capacity and all that we need is will, zeal and passion. We therefore must never despair for if we chose we are well able to accomplish. I am confident that though it may have been a long walk, soon and very soon, Nigeria will rise up with the wings of the eagle and in that day no height nor distance shall be unassailable. God's love for our dear nation will accomplish this.

Once more, I welcome you to the 7th House of Representatives second anniversary celebration, most especially our guest speakers and invited guests, and hope all that will transpire here today will benefit our people and grant all the institutions of State veritable impetus for greater heights.

Thank you all and God bless.

APPENDIX II

VOTE OF THANKS BY DEPUTY SPEAKER, RT. HON. CHUKWUEMEKA NKEM IHEDIOHA

Your Excellency the Rt. Hon. Speaker, Leaders of the House of Representatives, our former Presiding Officers, Members of the House of Representatives, Special Adviser to Mr. President on National Assembly Matters, the Joy of the National Assembly and Joy of the Villa, our Guest Speakers, the representative of His Royal Majesty the Sultan of Sokoto, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, members of the Press.

Mr. Speaker and my Colleagues, you will agree with me that I stand short to speak after the very respectful orators who have mounted this rostrum today. I therefore, on behalf of my Colleagues, Members of the Legislative Agenda Committee, in particular and indeed the generality of our Members, to express our deep gratitude to these statesmen and women who came to grace this occasion, for finding it necessary to respond to our invitation. I dare say that I made no effort to personally call any of these speakers today, because I felt that the system had to run. But they came, they respected us they have given us food for thought. Obviously we have learnt something new and I think that was the essence of today. We are lawmakers, we are representatives of the people, but we believe that every passing day we have something new to add to our collection of ideas. And today from Professor Isawa Elaigwu to Chidi Odinkalu, to Dr. Saddique Abubakar Mohammed, to our very own Femi Falana; and indeed, the Joy of the National Assembly and the Villa; and to the representative of the Sultan; and indeed, Sir, I dare mention, the legendary Ghali Umar Na'abba, the Speaker; our words of knowledge have been enriched.

We thank them for this honour and for their words of kindness, obviously we are more challenges; and I dare say, we are aware that the expectations are high and to whom much is given much is also expected. Therefore, Members of the 7th House of Representatives are conscious of the fact that we can only guard our lands and work harder and continue to impress on Nigerians and show Nigerians that with this House there is indeed hope.

The challenges are there, there are doubts but we believe that with God on our side, with dedication on our path; and particularly the fact that we still remember and work

with our fathers, just like one of the Speakers said. We thank them most especially because they chose to respect the fact that all of them may not be able to speak to us. They came in on good time; they were here by 10:00am. And are here with us. I dare say that even the past Clerks of the National Assembly have given us once more yet another rare respect, the Clerk of the National Assembly, his Deputy and of course, members of staff of the National Assembly have found time to be with us.

We are indeed very grateful to our former Speakers, Benjamin Chiaha, Agunwa Anekwe, Ghali Na'abba, Bello Masari, Babangida Nguroje, Austin Opara, Chibudom Nwuche; and indeed, my boss, our boss and friend Hon. Bayero Nafada, the former Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, he is still part and parcel of this House. We thank them for always standing by us at all times. I dare urge my Colleagues that time has called again when we have to re-enact those qualities that have stood us out amongst our people.

Mr. Speaker, we thank you most especially for your leadership of this 7th House of Representatives. You have led us well and it shows very clearly by the way and manner our Colleagues have stood behind you and the rest of the leadership.

To my Colleagues, Members of the House of Representatives, I say a very big thank you. We will continue to work with the fear of God and believing that together we shall get there.

Thank you very much.