

REMARKS BY H.E. (DR.) ABUBAKAR BUKOLA PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA, AT THE 2ND YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE 8TH SENATE TODAY JUNE 9TH 2017.

PROTOCOL

1. Distinguished colleagues, our invited guests, ladies and gentlemen, I am immensely pleased to welcome you to this special session on the second anniversary of the 8th Senate. Let me begin by thanking all of you my wonderful colleagues for the exemplary and unflinching support you have given to me and the entire leadership of the Senate thus far. Every one of you deserve to be singled out and acknowledged individually for your remarkable commitment and oneness of spirit. I thank you most especially for the sacrifices and your perseverance that has seen the Senate succeed thus far.

2. I cannot fail to mention in particular the support and partnership I have enjoyed with our ever-amiable and dependable DSP H.E Ike Ekweremadu(the Ikeoha ndigbo), our Senate Leader, Senator Ahmad Lawan for his immeasurable industry and broadmindedness, our minority leader, H.E Senator, Godswill Akpabio and the entire leadership of the Senate. Thank you all for the bipartisanship, vision, patriotism, fraternity and solidarity.

3. Distinguished Colleagues, our invited guests, today is an historical day for many reasons. First of all, today marks a celebration of our deliberative democracy and the immense opportunity to be part of an enduring legacy of political tolerance, engagement, participation and commitment. We are two year on this saddle and it has been two years of productive lawmaking period.

4. While acknowledging the great work our predecessors had done before us, let me put on record that this current Senate has made progress on every front and therefore deserve to mark this day as a special day.

5. When we started, I knew that the 8th Senate was going to be significantly different and effective. I saw across the aisle, a passionate, energetic and a set of leaders made of sterner stuff, and a desire to make the difference. Though we inherited a legacy that created in some minds cynicism and despondency, we were undeterred irrespective of an unending barrage of virulent attacks and unprovoked aggression, the 8th Senate matched on, together erasing records and setting new ones. Today, the 8th Senate has passed 96 bills and 72 petitions in just 2years eclipsing the highest ever in the history of the National Assembly, a record held by the 5th Senate after passing about 65 bills and 6 petitions respectively within the same time period.

6. The 8th Senate has led with courage and taken up more hot-button- national and legislative issues and successfully dealt with them. We committed ourselves to greater openness and accountability and many doubted our capacity to do as we preach. But we have led from the frontline on the war against corruption, having passed several corruption-exposing resolutions that have saved our government billions of naira cumulatively. Today, in keeping with our pledge, the National Assembly has opened its line-by-line Itemed budget to the world (a first in the history of the National Assembly).

7. I sincerely congratulate every one of you for putting in the shift to ensure we realized these milestones. Indeed, there have been many more. We have taken on the toughest bills and challenges affecting our unity, the welfare and security of our people and the necessary platform for a greater Nigerian economy. From the Nigerian Railway Bill, the Public Procurement Act Amendment, the Nigerian Ports & Harbour Bill, the National Road Funds Bill, the National Transport Commission Bill, the National Inland Waterways Bill and the Federal Roads Bill, the Competition and Consumer

Protection Bill, the Investment & Securities Act Amendment, the Companies and Allied Matters Act Amendment, the Secure Transactions in Movable Assets Bill, the Independent Warehouse Regulatory Bill, the Bankruptcy & Insolvency Act (Repeal & RE-enactment) Bill, the Electronic Transactions Bill and the Nigerian Postal Commission Bill all of these and many more have been the highest compendium of economic reforms ever undertaken by any administration in the history of our country. But we are taking it and one by one we are laying the foundation for a new Nigerian economy to emerge. One that is empowering the private sector and liberal.

8. Distinguished colleagues, our invited guests, today, the 8th Senate is laying markers and engraving its legacy in time by championing several first and providing the legislature with audacity. On the issue of opening the lawmaking process we have not been afraid to push the boundaries of convention, that is why the 8th Senate can be credited to initiated the first-ever National Assembly Joint Public Hearing on the Budget; the 8th Senate broke the 12year jinx on the PIB by passing the Petroleum Industry Governance Bill (PIGB) that will reform the NNPC and return accountability in the petroleum industry. The 8th Senate scored another first as it become the first Senate to unveil and pursue a self-developed economic reform agenda to aid the ease of doing business in Nigeria and create new frameworks for creating jobs and improving Nigeria' ranking in the global competitiveness index.

9. On choice of bills to pass and be focused on, we have for the first time after many decades of trying passed bills that will see us reform the big elephant in the room (the NNPC), also, the Nigerian railway corporation, FERMA, the maritime regulatory institutions, including the Corporate Affairs Commission, the Securities and Exchange Commission are other critical general market regulatory structures that we have undertaken and are working very hard to pass into law through a well-orchestrated and comprehensive legislative policy framework. This would enable theNigerian market join the league of nations and compete favourably as a destination for foreign direct investment and for ease of doing business.

10. All of these we have done because we know and we believe that in order to create millions of employments quickly, give more opportunities to our people as well as get the full potential of our diversification of the economy policy on the one hand and close the gap on our infrastructure deficit we needed to get rid of our old and obsolete laws and enact new laws that have the right modern and intellectual mix.

11. My Distinguished colleagues, I want to thank you again, for the great lawmaking environment that is empowering and genuinely fraternal and less divisive. This has enabled us focus a lot more on the work than on politics ensuring that our people are the ultimate beneficiaries of our time and energy. Today, we can be rest assured that though it may take a while to gestate, the initiatives we have started here will endure and bloom; from the made-in-Nigeria initiative, to infrastructure renewal framework to the access to finance initiative, all of these will come together to lay the new foundation on which the Nigerian economy for the better part of the 21st century will be built.

12. My distinguished colleagues and friends, we have come a long way. I remember asking you to make sacrifices and more sacrifices. You answered my call emphatically and through hard work and commitment we have come this far, together. And I say thank you

13. Though, it has been a rough journey you have remained undaunted. Together, we have walked through the turbulence and in the last two years shown that with determination and courage of conviction we can get the job done. I am here to tell you that your sacrifices have not been in vain. Your steadfastness has paid dividend and if we keep at it, we will be delivering very soon to the Nigerian people a holistic legislative reform package that would see us enter a new era of prosperity built upon a solid legal foundation that would transform our economy, deepen our democracy, close our infrastructure deficit, grow and add millions of new jobs and help activate enterprise and reward innovation.

14. I would like to end this address by appealing to every Nigerian citizen to be patient with the current administration of President Buhari. This government is sincerely disposed to turning things around but in a much more enduring manner. Let us pray to God to grant our President full recovery and give him the fortitude to continue to pilot the affair of state in the vision he has started with. as for us in the Senate we are firmly and fully committed to his leadership and will continue to do all in our power to support and give him all the encouragement to lead us into a strong united and more virile nation.

15. I must also use this opportunity to thank our Acting President, Prof. Oluyemi Osinbajo, for his providing leadership and character and leading with conviction. Together with the executive this Senate is committed to continue to support our government and the Nigerian people all the way. We will not relent in our commitment to the enthronement of a strong and resilient Nigerian economy capable of ensuring the welfare and protection of every Nigerian irrespective of his ethnic group, political affiliation, sex or religious creed.

16. We must eschew bigotry, tribalism and see each other as one and together build a new Nigeria of our dreams.

17. May God bless Nigeria.

Thank you.