

ADDRESS BY THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA, HIS EXCELLENCY, RT. HONOURABLE YAKUBU DOGARA, AT THE RESUMPTION OF PLENARY TO HERALD THE BEGINNING OF THE 4TH AND FINAL SESSION OF THE 8TH ASSEMBLY, ON TUESDAY, 3RD JULY, 2018

Protocols:

I warmly welcome all Members back to the Chambers after our short break to observe the Eid El Fitri holiday. I congratulate our Muslim brothers and sisters, once again, on the successful completion of the Ramadan fast, and the rites that followed. This short break also marked the end of the 3rd session and the beginning of the 4th session of the House of Representatives. I believe that we are fully prepared to conclude the legislative journey we started in June 2015.

2. Let me also reiterate my congratulations to all the members of our party, the All Progressives Congress, APC, on the successful conduct of our elective National Convention, and to wish the new National Chairman and his team a successful tenure of office.

3. Honourable Members, we are well aware of the intense outpouring of grief on a national scale on account of senseless and barbaric killings of our citizens, notably in Benue, Adamawa, Kaduna, Zamfara and now Plateau states. Tragedy struck also in Bauchi state. Azare market was gutted by fire and a ravaging windstorm occasioned the death of dozens of citizens, destroyed goods and properties worth billions, shattering livelihoods of many of our constituents. Once again, may I on behalf of the House, offer our condolences to families of the victims and may God rest the gentle souls of the departed in perfect peace.

4. Hon colleagues, what jolted the conscience of our dear nation most during the recess was the gruesome, heartless and senseless killing of about 200 people in some Local Government Areas of Plateau State, between 23rd and 24th June 2018. This is obviously one needless destruction of lives and property too many. It is a national shame. I

have, on behalf of the House, paid a condolence visit to Plateau State Governor, the Gbong Gwom, Jos, as well as some of the injured in hospitals and other victims who are in Internally Displaced Persons Camps in Jos. You may be aware also that the President of the Senate and I visited His Excellency, President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR, to offer our condolences and to interact with him on finding lasting solutions to these incessant and very unfortunate killings.

5. There is no gainsaying the fact that the most fundamental and basic responsibility of any government is the security of lives and property. History will have a harsh verdict for us as a Government if we fail to live up to this responsibility and it won't matter if we succeed in other areas. Unfortunately, the stark reality now is that our citizens are fast losing confidence in our security system. This must not be the case. Before we ebb to the realm of anarchy, we must rise up as true representatives of the Nigerian people to salvage the situation and defend our hard-won democracy.

6. Hon Members, you will no doubt agree with me that the unresolved issue of rampant killing of defenseless people, including innocent and vulnerable children and women, in various parts of the country, calls for a sober reflection and more concerted efforts by the National Assembly to exploit all our Constitutional powers and privileges to ensure the protection of lives and property in the entire country by our security agencies. It is obvious that with the unrestrained killings being witnessed in the country, our security agencies have fallen short of the demands of their offices and the expectations of the nation. We must urgently work with the Executive Arm to facilitate the re-engineering of our security architecture to serve our collective interests and aspirations.

7. Let me seize this opportunity to again call on all Nigerians to give peace a chance, and to have respect for the sanctity of life. Our citizens must never lose hope in project Nigeria because evil, no matter how viciously prosecuted, will never triumph over Nigeria.

8. The whole world is watching us with apprehension. I read a report in the newspaper recently where Lord Alton of the UK House of Lords said, during a debate on the Nigerian situation, that the world should wake up for Nigeria, and not "watch one of Africa's greatest countries go the way of Sudan". What readily comes to mind therefore, is the question what happens if the world does not wake up for Nigeria? This is the question all patriots must answer.

9. On other fronts, we are happy to note that Mr. President signed the 2018 Appropriations Bill into law during this period. However, while signing the Bill, Mr. President made some remarks that bothered on the powers and procedures of Appropriations in Nigeria. It is important to reiterate once again, that the National Assembly has the Constitutional powers, duty and responsibility to intervene in the budgeting process to ensure equity, federal character and even distribution of projects and amenities to all nooks and crannies of this great country as direct Representatives of the people. It is also important to emphasise that the 2018 budget benefitted from active cooperation and consultation between the Executive and Legislature during the Appropriation process. No doubt, Nigeria's budgeting processes is in need of further reforms and that is why the National Assembly took the bold initiative to introduce the Budget Process Bill that is expected to lay out, timelines that will guide the appropriations process from conception to passage. But for this Bill to be passed, section (81) subsection (1) which gives the President power to prepare and lay before each House of the National Assembly AT ANY TIME estimates of revenue and expenditure in the financial year must be amended.

10. It is as a result of this that the National Assembly proposed an amendment to the section to require the President to submit the Appropriation Bill not later than 90 days to the end of the financial year. The President has not yet signed this Bill which is so critical to an orderly Appropriations process. Let me use this opportunity to remind Mr President of the fact that if this Bill does not become law, any talk of an orderly appropriations process would be mere cheap talk.

11. I will urge all relevant Committees of the House to increase their oversight activities to ensure implementation of the 2018 budget for the benefit of our people. In this regard also we await Mr. President's supplementary budget proposals which we promise to dispassionately consider in the overall interest of our people.

12. Honourable colleagues, permit me to, at this juncture, remind us that we have entered the final year of our tenure as a Parliament. The implication of which is that we have very limited time but we must not be carried away by politics of 2019 as we still have constitutional responsibilities to discharge our mandate faithfully to our people to the very end.

Thus, House Committees should process all pending legislative measures before them and ensure expeditious consideration as we enter the twilight

of our legislative mandate. We already have a record number of Bills, Resolutions and Public Petitions passed more than any other Assembly before us and we can do even more in the remaining period of our tenure.

13. As we enter the period of elections, let me use this opportunity to caution all actors namely the INEC, security agencies, political parties and politicians to play by the rules of the game and ensure that our primaries and general elections are free, fair and credible. For this to be achieved the political environment must be free from violence and intimidation of whatever nature and we have the moral and legal responsibility to ensure this. We must do all within our powers to maintain and improve on the gains of the 2015 elections. Anything less or short of this will amount to betrayal of the the trust reposed on us by our citizens.

14. The National Assembly stands ready to provide any financial, logistics or legislative support required to ensure that the 2019 elections are successful and better organized than the 2015 elections.

15. Finally, I want to conclude by thanking you all for your continued cooperation and support to the leadership of the House and the preservation of the bond of unity and comradeship across Party and geopolitical divides. I urge you to sustain same at this period as I sincerely wish us all success in all our endeavours.

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