

SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE AND CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA, SENATOR AHMAD IBRAHIM LAWAN PhD, CON, AT THE PRESENTATION OF THE 2020 BUDGET ESTIMATES BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA, MUHAMMADU BUHARI, GCFR, TO A JOINT SESSION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, ON TUESDAY, 8TH OCTOBER 2019.

PROTOCOL.

1. Mr President, on behalf of my colleagues, Distinguished Senators of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Honourable Members of the House of Representatives, I welcome you and members of your entourage to this first Joint Session of the 9th National Assembly for the presentation of the 2020 Budget Estimates.

2. All of us members of the National Assembly here today, and indeed all Nigerians, look forward to this day with great expectations. As representatives of the people, we are assembled here to listen and receive the fiscal plans for the year 2020, for the people that we represent. For every Nigerian, this day is significant as you unfold the plans of the Federal Government on how our socio-economic wellbeing will be enhanced in the 2020 financial year. Your Excellency, all eyes and ears in Nigeria and indeed the world, are on this event and the moment is yours.

3. Your Excellency, today marks another day of exercising the constitutional obligations and mandates by both the Legislature and the Executive as provided for in Section 81 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, as amended.

4. This function being the first in the 9th session of the National Assembly, makes it even more significant as both the Legislature and the

Executive have demonstrated readiness and commitment to work together in order to pass the 2020 Budget in a good and desirable time. Clearly, this effort is to enable the Federal government provide those laudable objectives of physical infrastructure and socio-economic services to our citizens.

5. The public, as well as the private sectors need a reliable Budget cycle that is predictable, and reliable for planning and execution of their fiscal and financial policies and programmes. It is therefore, necessary that the present cycle is changed to a January-December cycle. In this regard, the National Assembly, and the Executive must work together to ensure the realization of this important objective.

6. The National Assembly after the receipt of the Budget Estimates today, will swing into swift action, to start work. Both Chambers of the National Assembly have constituted their Committees, we are therefore, ready to start processing the Budget estimates.

7. The 9th National Assembly has shown capacity, commitment and willingness to treat legislative matters that will impact on the lives of our citizens with dispatch and every sense of urgency. This was clearly demonstrated last week, when we received, processed and passed the request of Mr. President on the 2020-2022 Medium Term Expenditure Framework and Fiscal Strategy Paper (MTEF/FSP).

8. Your Excellency, the National Assembly will treat the 2020 Budget Estimates with the same commitment or even more. In our effort to pass the Budget, we will also be guided by the legislative requirement of a thorough scrutiny.

9. Mr. President, the National Assembly Committees are ready to receive the Honourable Ministers and other heads of government agencies for the defense of the Budget estimates of the various MDAs. In

order for timely passage, all MDAs are expected to appear before the Committees for the defense of their Budget estimates within the month of October. We have earmarked the month of October to be the sole window for all Budget defense activities in this year, by all MDAs.

10. In this regard, our Committees will be expected to conclude their work on Budget defense within October, this year. The subsequent necessary legislative work will be carried out in November and December, leading to eventual passage before the end of this year.

11. Recently, the Senate passed its Legislative Agenda and the House of Representatives will pass its Legislative Agenda soon. Though the agendas are separately treated, the objectives and goals are the same. At the heart of our agendas are the Nigerian people. Mr President, both the Legislature and the Executive have the same agenda – a commitment to taking Nigeria to the Next Level of development.

12. We all want to ensure that the Federal Government is better enabled to provide enhanced security for protection of lives and property of Nigerians, an improved and revitalised economy, that is all inclusive; able to create and sustain employment opportunities for our teeming youths; taking Nigerians out of poverty to prosperity and sustainable development. Mr. President, we are all on the same page.

13. Mr. President, the Budget Estimates, will remain what they are, estimates, until we are able to generate and receive the necessary revenues to fund and foot the bills. It is imperative therefore, that our revenue generating agencies be more alive to their responsibilities, more innovative and focused on how to meet their revenue targets.

14. The National Assembly will continue to review how our revenue generation, collection and remittance would be more effective and efficient. We therefore need to review the laws establishing the agencies

responsible with a view to enhancing their capacity and capability.

15. The implementation of the Budget is as important and vital as the passage of the Bill, probably even more. Our Committees will work assiduously to undertake oversight to ensure proper and timely execution of the programmes and projects of Government. We need to ensure prudence, economy and value for money in the delivery of services to our people.

16. Over the years, our public procurement process appears to be encumbered by a lengthy bidding process and inadequate mobilisation of funds, amongst other limitations of the Public Procurement Act 2007, as amended. These tend to delay execution of Government programmes and projects, or even stalled achieving the execution at all. The National Assembly, will fast track the amendment of the Act, to ensure effective and efficient implementation of our Budgets.

17. Finally, let me assure Your Excellency of the readiness of the members of the 9th National Assembly to partner with your administration to achieve all the goals and targets of taking Nigeria to the Next Level of development and prosperity.

18. On this note, it is now my pleasure and privilege to invite His Excellency, Mr. President, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federation, Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR, to present the 2020 Budget Estimates to the Joint Session.

19. I thank you all for your kind attention.

20. Mr. President, Sir.

Senator Ahmad Ibrahim Lawan PhD, CON,
PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE, AND
CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY