

REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY, SPEAKER, NIGERIA'S HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, RT. HON. YAKUBU DOGARA, AT THE OCCASION OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE 2018 BUDGET PROPOSALS BY HIS EXCELLENCY, PRESIDENT MUHAMMADU BUHARI, GCFR ON 7TH NOVEMBER, 2017, AT THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY.

Protocols:

It is my singular pleasure and honour to once again welcome His Excellency, President, Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR, and his entourage to the National Assembly.

2. Your Excellencies, my job at this ceremony is clearly defined and that is to deliver the vote of thanks. Therefore, permit me, on behalf of the National Assembly, to formally and specifically thank Mr. President, Commander in Chief of Nigerian Armed Forces, for competently and graciously fulfilling his constitutional obligation of presenting the estimates of receipts and expenditure proposed for the next financial year for the Federal Republic of Nigeria to the National Assembly.

3. I recognize that the Constitution in Section 5 vests the executive authority of the Federation in Mr. President but with an admonition to carry out this function in consultation with the Vice President and his cabinet. It is as a result that I must also thank the Vice President, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo, GCON, and all the Ministers, particularly, the Hon. Minister of Budget and National Planning, Senator Udoma O. Udoma and the Honourable Minister of Finance, Mrs. Kemi Adeosun.

4. Your Excellencies, permit me to single out the newly appointed Secretary to the Government of the federation, Bar. Boss Mustapha who only yesterday, in an unprecedented move, visited the Leadership of both Houses of the National Assembly to canvass support for Government policies and to strengthen the often strained Executive - Legislative relations. Let me also extend our special thanks to all Heads of MDAS here present, Service Chiefs, leaders of political parties most especially Chief John Oyegun, Chairman of the ruling Party, APC, captains of industry, and distinguished elder statesmen and personalities that have all gathered here to witness this epoch making event.

5. It is important to note that if this ceremony is smooth and efficient, the credit must go to the Clerk to the National Assembly, Mr. Ataba Sani-Omolori, and the entire bureaucracy of the National Assembly and all those that provided support services including the Media, Security agencies and other unseen hands. We thank you all.

6. To our colleagues, members of the Senate and House of Representatives, I salute your patriotism and sense of national purpose in providing the peaceful enabling environment for Mr. President to deliver his Budget Address. The success of this event separates us as true Leaders who in the midst of a hazy Executive - Legislative relationship elected not to turn on ourselves but to turn to each other in the very interest

of our constituents and national progress. This is the way we must go as our Constitutional Order is organized in a way that deliberately denies any of the three Arms the strength to go at it alone on any national issue. Where that has happened, it's progress that suffers. That reminds us of the adage that says, "If you want to go fast, go alone but if you want to go far, go together". Examples abound on how fast but not far, the Executive have gone on some national issues where they have decided to go alone. There is no national challenge we cannot overcome if we work together.

7. I crave your indulgence to allow me congratulate Mr. President for honouring the provisions of the 2016 Appropriation Act which required the budget to last for 12 months in line with the provisions of S. 318 of the Constitution, from May 2016 when it was assented to, to May 2017. This enabled the Executive to report an accomplishment of over N5 Trillion expenditure out of the N7.4 Trillion budgeted for 2016, an unprecedented record by all standards, made possible only because the execution of the budget was allowed to last for 12 months. That is what the National Assembly has always called for inline with the original intent of the framers of our constitution

8. Mr. President, as legislators, what agitates us is the prospects of totally abandoning the 2017 Budget and the dire consequences of doing so. The questions that must be answered include whether we have effectively enforced 2017 fiscal targets and whether managers have complied with the budget as authorized by the legislature. Our experience with the implementation of the 2016 Budget amply demonstrates that obeying our Appropriation Laws maximizes the release of our potentials while violating the Appropriation Laws caps the release of our national potentials. This means that we have to redouble our efforts in implementing the 2017 Budget, if we must retire it in January or at the very least roll over most of the projects in 2017 budget to 2018. No need to remind us that fiscal indiscipline is as grievous a problem as corruption which this Government is busy eliminating.

9. Once again, let me place it on record that the 2018 Budget preparations suffer from inadequate consultations between the MDAS and various over- sighting Committees of the National Assembly. Consequently, one can only hope and pray that it does not lead to delay in consideration and passage of the Budget.

10. May I also use this opportunity to congratulate Mr. President for leading Nigeria out of recession. Although recession has technically ended, most Nigerian families are still struggling. As a Government, we must do all within our powers to hasten their long night of panic and fear into a glorious morning. We must never allow this nation to slide into recession, not now, not ever again. We cannot therefore discountenance policy consistency and synergy between all stakeholders, if we must sustain economic growth and development, going forward. Mr. President, I urge that you take no prisoners in the implementation of your well crafted and thought-out Economic Recovery and Growth Plan, which you launched in January 2017.

11. May I conclude, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen, by once again, thanking everybody for the various roles played in making

this joint Session a huge success. We look forward to a cooperative, consultative and inclusive consideration of the 2018 Budget proposals so ably presented by Mr. President.

12. God bless you and may God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.