

**WELCOME ADDRESS BY DISTINGUISHED SENATOR DANJUMA
GOJE, CHAIRMAN, SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
ON THE OCCASION OF THE JOINT PUBLIC HEARING ON THE
2018 NATIONAL BUDGET HELD ON TUESDAY 27TH -
WEDNESDAY 28TH MARCH AT CONFERENCE ROOM 022,
SENATE BUILDING, NATIONAL ASSEMBLY COMPLEX**

PROTOCOLS

His Excellency, The President of the Senate

The Rt. Honourable Speaker, House of Representatives

Principal Officers of the National Assembly

Distinguished Senators

Honourable Members

Honourable Ministers of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

Heads of MDAs

Development Partners

Civil Societies Organisations

Other invited Guests

Gentlemen of the Press

Ladies and gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure and honour to welcome you to this occasion of the 2nd Joint Public Hearing on the National Budget. The 2018 Budget which we are here to receive views from Stakeholders and other interest groups is a total sum of N8, 612,236,953,214.

On behalf of the members of the Appropriations Committee of the Senate and House of Representatives, I want to thank our Special guests of honor; The President of the Senate His Excellency, Senator (Dr). Abubakar Olubukola Saraki, GCON and the Honourable Speaker, House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Yakubu Dogara, who have continued to maintain their promise of ensuring open government by approving this joint public hearing. We are highly honoured. You are most welcome.

The main objective of this hearing is to ensure an inclusively active stakeholder participation in the processing of the 2018 budget which is a line expression of the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (EPGP) 2017-2020, of the Federal Government. We all are

scientist and laboratory technicians ready to mix and condition chemicals in the recently launched ERGP laboratory to get the best result for the people.

The hearing is also an entrenched part of the 8th National Assembly legislative Agenda of openness in governance and public sector matters because the people we represent deserve to know and should know how our commonwealth is distributed.

Permit me to mention one of the major achievements of the 2017 National Budget Public Hearing: it brought among others, the vexed issue of lack of funds to pay pensioners to a major National Budget platform (which made government to act); and today, it is pleasing to note that pensioners complaints of nonpayment of pension and gratuity have greatly reduced.

Criticism whether of self/within or from without, is a fertilizer of knowledge, a harbinger and conveyor of change and growth. The joint committee is inundated with petitions, complaints and

observations with recommendations to expunge "frivolous, inappropriate, unclear and wasteful estimates" in the 2018 Budget of many MDAs. The Committee will look through the claims with the deserved attention they merit.

We are aware that most MDAs, in compliance to Mr. President's directive are appearing before the Appropriations Sub-committees to defend their proposals. However, we believe that our work will be better and richer with inputs from the larger Nigerian public - the CSOs, NGOs and other interest groups and stakeholders who are present here to defend their memoranda.

Once again, you are welcome.