

REMARKS BY THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, REP. FEMI GBAJABIAMILA ON THE OCCASION OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE 2021 APPROPRIATION BILL BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA, HIS EXCELLENCY, PRESIDENT MUHAMMADU BUHARI, GCFR TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. 8TH OCTOBER, 2020.

Protocols:

We have once again just experienced the beauty and majesty of our democracy – The Laying of the Budget proposals before the Legislature for consideration and approval.

On behalf of the Senate and House of Representatives of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, I extend sincere appreciation to His Excellency, President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR for coming to the House today for this purpose, in fulfilment of the obligations of his office.

2. When just over a year ago, we gathered in this chamber to receive the budget proposal and begin the appropriation process, we made specific commitments to the Nigerian people. We promised that we would pass the budget promptly, free of the rancour that had bedevilled the process in time past. We delivered on that promise.

3. I thank my colleagues in the National Assembly for the dedication and commitment they showed last year during the appropriation process. Senators and members of the House of Representatives toiled night and day, sometimes through the night and into the wee hours of the morning to ensure that we achieved our commitment to return to the January to December budget cycle as envisaged by the constitution. I do not doubt that we will exhibit the same commitment to nation-building and deliver a good budget on time. We cannot afford a return to the old practices, and we must do everything in our power to avoid such an outcome.

4. We also promised to pass a budget that reflected our priorities – healthcare, education, public infrastructure and the development of an economy that is less dependent on fossil fuels and gives to all Nigerians, the ability to achieve their dreams equal to their effort and commitment. We kept that promise too. We recognise that more needs to be done, and I assure all the Nigerian people that we will continue in this regard.

5. Let me also use this opportunity to announce a new protocol in the House. Henceforth, all Ministries, Departments and Agencies who come to defend their budget proposals, will do so without their security details present. We must take this course of action to prevent the unacceptable proliferation of sidearms in the hearing rooms during such engagements. Additionally, the House intends to adhere to the Covid-19 social distancing protocols, and we need to be able to limit the numbers of people in these hearing rooms at any point in time.

6. The world changes quickly, often without notice, and always with consequences. We have learned this lesson at a high cost in the past few months, and we must ensure that the lessons learned are reflected in the budget that emerges from the appropriations process. We must make sure that we are better prepared for next time because there will be the next time.

7. The reality of globalisation and the connected interdependence of nations means that there will always be something on the horizon that threatens to destabilise our world. Let us move forward in this certainty and make sure that we are prepared for the future, whatever it may bring.

8. I thank His Excellency, President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR; the Vice President, Professor Yemi Osinbajo, the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Mr Boss Mustapha, the Budget Office, Honourable Ministers and all those who have laboured to develop the proposal that Mr President has laid before parliament.

9. I believe I speak on behalf of the entire National Assembly, in assuring you that this proposal will receive thorough and speedy consideration. We will collaborate with the Ministries, Departments and Agencies of the Executive to deliver a budget that meets the needs and matches the ambitions of the Nigerian people. And we will hold ourselves in the legislature to the highest standards of integrity so that our deliberations and contributions to this process are motivated only by considerations of the best interests of the Nigerian people.

10. I thank you all for joining us here today.

11. God bless you all.

12. God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.