

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE, DISTINGUISHED SENATOR AHMAD IBRAHIM LAWAN, Ph.D., CON, AT THE RESUMPTION OF SENATE, 9TH FEBRUARY, 2021.

PROTOCOL

Distinguished Colleagues, Happy New Year 2021, I welcome us back from a well deserved Christmas and New Year break.

Let me remind us that before we embarked on our break last year, we passed the 2021 Appropriation Bill. This was pursuant to our Legislative Agenda of ensuring that the Federal Government operates a January to December Budget cycle. That is the second consecutive time that the Ninth National Assembly will pass the Budget in record time in December. I commend the resolve and high sense of duty and patriotism of the Senate, and indeed the National Assembly.

Distinguished Colleagues, this year, the Senate, and indeed the National Assembly has very crucial and critical Legislations that need equal commitments and dedication, as the Appropriation Bill 2021. The Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB) 2020, the Electoral Act 2016 Amendment, and the 1999 Constitution Amendment Bills amongst others.

Distinguished Colleagues, we are all aware that the PIB is a critical Legislation that our Country needs, to enhance transparency and accountability in the Nigerian Petroleum Industry. Equally important the legislation will make the Industry more competitive and therefore attract more investments.

There is no gain saying the fact that increase in investments will boost our revenues from oil and gas. The PIB is going to create an All-Winners environment. This will also bolster our economy for the benefit of all. The Senate Joint Committee working on the PIB has done so much work during the Recess. The Committee had organised a Retreat in Lagos and a Public Hearing in Abuja. I am optimistic that the Committee will conclude its interventions before the end of next month, March. It is our desire that the report of the Committee is considered before the end of April this year.

Distinguished Colleagues, the amendment to the Electoral Act 2016 is crucial to improving the integrity, transparency and confidence of citizens in our electoral processes. Our Committee on Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has been working assiduously with its counterpart in the House of Representatives to ensure that the Bill is giving the necessary scrutiny. We will endeavour to complete the Legislative process before the end of the second quarter of this year.

The Review of the 1999 Constitution is another legislative intervention that the Senate is equally committed to. There are many issues that Nigerians have built consensus on and require Constitutional amendments, in order to engender Unity of our people, and efficiency in governance. Our Judiciary also needs some legislative interventions to improve on its service to Nigerians. The Senate Committee on the Review of the Constitution has been working to ensure that the necessary legislative processes are completed very soon.

Distinguished Colleagues, our Country like many others is experiencing the Second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. We therefore need to continue to treat the situation as a National Emergency. The National Assembly made special provisions in the 2020 Budget, which runs up to 31st March, 2021, and the 2021 Budget as well. We need to ensure that the funds are properly utilized for the prevention and management of the pandemic.

It is equally important for the Senate to engage with Executive arm of Government on the selection, procurement, distribution and administration of the COVID-19 Vaccines. We must ensure that the selections of the Vaccine for our people follows the appropriate and due Scientific process, with National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) giving approval only after exhaustive tests before the final selection and approval. We must ensure that the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) responsible for this exercise develop verifiable processes and timelines on how Nigerians would be Vaccinated. I commend our Committees on Health and Primary Health Care for working hard, even during the period of the Recess.

There is no doubt that the issue of insecurity remains a major concern to all of us. Indeed, every Nigerian is concerned with pervasive Security challenges our Country faces. Insurgency, Banditry, Kidnapping and Militancy remain serious threats to a secured and safe Nigeria. We will continue to work with the Executive arm of government to mitigate and end these challenges.

Distinguished Colleagues, the very recent emergence of inter-ethnic and inter – tribal conflicts in some parts of our Country is worrisome. The Senate calls for calm. The situation also calls for leadership at all levels of government.

Leaders must unite to fight and defeat criminality in the Country. Leaders must also unite to fight any divisive and centrifugal sentiments, and tendencies. Political leaders are problem solvers. As parliamentarians we should search for possible legislations to address the issues that tend to create tensions amongst our people. We are going to consult and partner with all arms and tiers of governments, in our quest to finding lasting solutions to these ugly developments.

Let me take the opportunity to appeal to citizens to always use the Social Media for enhancing Unity and brotherhood amongst Nigerians. Surely, the Social Media platforms can play very positive roles of engendering understanding amongst our diverse people.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, our resolve and commitment to providing Legislative interventions, oversight the other arms of Government and representing our people will continue to be our main goals. As we race to achieve our Legislative Agenda, we will be guided by observance and adherence to due diligence at all times.

Once again, you are welcome back and Happy New Year.

God bless you all.

God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE, DISTINGUISHED SENATOR AHMAD IBRAHIM LAWAN, Ph.D.,
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