

LEAD DEBATE ON COMPULSORY DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AND PROJECT CONTINUITY BILL, 2021 (SB. 224).

Sponsor: Sen. Jibrin Barau (Kano North).

Mr. President, Distinguished Colleagues, permit me to lead the debate on this very important Bill which was read for the first time in this chamber on Thursday, 28th November, 2019.

The Bill seeks to make development planning compulsory for all tiers of government and to create coherent and measureable targets in developmental initiatives in support of the attainment of goals which among other things will place Nigeria among one of the largest economy in the world.

The Bill seeks to make comprehensive provisions for each of the governments of the Federation to establish and maintain project implementation plans for the implementation of projects within their jurisdiction from inception to conclusion to among other things:-

- Indicate the economic priorities of the particular tier of government;
- State the goal of the project and programme as a developmental initiative;
- List the specific projects and programmes to be executed within the time frame;
- Identify funding sources and implementation strategies;
- Indicate the financial sustainability of the programme or project;
- State the environmental impact assessment of the projects; and
- Indicate any other matter pertinent to the viability of the plan.

Mr. President, my respected Colleagues, all over the world, government is a continuum. Ideally, once the baton of leadership of a nation is handed over to a new government, the onus lie on the regime to embrace the projects, policies and programmes of the previous administration without recourse to any personal, party or primordial interests. However, one major identifiable draw-backs to social, economic and infrastructural development in Nigeria is lack of continuity of policies and programmes of government at the Federal, State and Local Government. State resources are poorly managed as some political leaders often embark on white elephant projects that cannot endure the test of time at the twilight of their tenures.

This unfortunate tradition has badly characterized governance and induced corruption since 1999. As at June, 2011, the Presidential Projects Assessment Committee led by Architect Ibrahim Bunu, a former Minister of the Federal Capital Territory had reported that there are 11,886 abandoned federal and state government projects dotting the nooks and crannies of Nigeria which will require N7.78 trillion to complete. The committee revealed that political and personal considerations outweighed national interest in the award of contracts. Majority of the contracts the committee said were procurement-driven rather than development driven. With this ugly political trend and worrisome disposition of some politicians, the nation is utterly consigned to retrogression if not urgently checked.

Mr. President, my highly respected Colleagues, this Bill provides sure remedy to the lack of seamless developmental plan for the nation. It rises above primordial sentiments and stands to quarantine any regional neglect or political vendetta. The proposed Bill professes enduring legacies and showcases excellent promises to Nigerians.

First, section four of it states that it shall be unlawful for a government of the Federation to have an abandoned project in any part of Nigeria. Second, it calls for the establishment of a registry of projects for all ongoing and completed projects detailing the location, cost and purpose of each project and means of identification, the project commencement date and the agreed or projected date of completion. Third, the register should also include information on budgetary and funding sources of the project; the contractor in-charge of the project; amounts disbursed and expended on the project; the estimated amount required for completion; and any other information or details pertaining to the implementation of the project. Section three makes formulation of development plan compulsory for all the three tiers of government in Nigeria.

Why have we habituated too long on this mount? This is because of the thinking that the credit and the glory will go to the previous administration if the new one continues with the projects it initiated. But governance is a continuous exercise and two administrations are bound to take credit for initiating, continuing and completing large-scale projects. The most important consideration should be National interest instead of personal credit or glory in the execution of government projects.

Mr. President my distinguished Colleagues, this is a Bill of immense societal benefit. Let us therefore give it an accelerated hearing and passage it deserves for the good of our nation-Nigeria.

Thank you