

SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE, DISTINGUISHED SENATOR AHMAD IBRAHIM LAWAN, PhD, CON, AT SENATE RESUMPTION, SENATE CHAMBER, NATIONAL ASSEMBLY COMPLEX, THREE ARMS ZONE, ASO ROCK, ABUJA, SEPTEMBER 20TH, 2022.

PROTOCOL

Distinguished Colleagues, let me start by welcoming us back from our Annual Summer Recess. I am sure it was an opportunity for us to spend some quality time with our families, and engage with our constituents.

I am aware that even during our recess some of our committees continued to engage with Ministries, Departments and Agencies of Government, like the Committee on Finance and some Committees also embarked on oversight visits. I commend this sense of duty and patriotism.

Distinguished Colleagues, we have resumed today to continue with the very good work that we have done in the last three years. As we all know, this resumption marks the final session of our tenure. The Ninth Senate has nine months to conclude its tenure.

Like the last three years, we are prepared to make the remaining period very productive and successful. No doubt that, the Ninth Senate has performed creditably and will end very well. We scored so many feats and broke many jinxes through various legislative interventions. I must commend all of us for the commitment, dedication and patriotism and sense of duty.

Distinguished Colleagues in the next three months our focus will largely be on the Confirmation of the Chief Justice of Nigeria, work on Medium Term Expenditure Framework / Fiscal Strategic Paper (MTEF/FSP) 2023 – 2025, Budget 2023, working to support our defense and security forces, amongst others. The Acting Chief Justice of Nigeria will be screened tomorrow, Wednesday 21st September, 2022. Also, we are expecting Mr President Commander – in – Chief of the Armed Forces to present the Budget estimates in the first week of October. The ninth Senate has established the practice of processing the annual Appropriation Bill of each year between October and December. I commend distinguished Senators for this achievement and a legacy that has changed the annual budgetary cycle of the Federal government.

Distinguished Colleagues, just before we embarked on our recess the Senate showed serious concerns on the Security situation in the country. We had intimate discussions on the security challenges across the country. Consequently, the Leadership of the senate had two engagements with the Office of the National Security Adviser, Chief of Defense Staff, Service Chiefs, Inspector General of Police, Director General of Department of State Services, Director General of Nigerian Intelligence Agency and other heads of other security agencies precisely on the 5th of August and 12th September, 2022 to ensure that our defense and Security Agencies improve on their operational strategies to secure citizens and indeed our country. From the assessment of the prevailing situation our security agencies are recording more successes and the situation seems to be improving.

Nonetheless, the Senate will continue to engage with the defense and security agencies through its appropriate Committees, to ensure that the engagements are sustained. I commend our defense and security agencies for stepping up their operations. The Senate and indeed the National Assembly have always been supportive and will remain so.

Distinguished Colleagues, the year 2023 is a momentous period for Nigeria, as elections will be held, across the Country. Nigerians are expected to exercise their franchise. Therefore, the Senate, indeed the National Assembly will work with Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to ensure very successful, transparent and credible elections. We are ready to support INEC in all possible ways as a Legislature. Already the timely amendment of the Electoral Act 2022 has provided very important innovations in ensuring better electoral climate.

Distinguished Colleagues, the Economy of our Country is still challenged. The Senate working with the House of Representatives and the Executive needs to continually seek for better responses to the economic situation. Generation and collection of revenues have remained major challenges. Also, the massive loss of revenue through oil theft is debilitating and threatening to throw the economy into a coma. Revelations about the scale of oil theft shows that, until Government takes decisive actions, Nigeria could soon loose any revenue from that sector. We must therefore work to ensure that everything is done to curtail this theft.

Distinguished Colleagues, our focus must remain on ensuring a secured and safe country and an economy that works for all citizens. In the next nine months, our attention and devotion should bring improvement to the current situations. This Senate is a senate that will continue to work for all Nigerians at all times.

Distinguished Colleagues, as we can all see, we are holding this session in a temporary chamber. There are renovation activities going on in our chamber. The ninth National Assembly has insisted that this complex be renovated and remodeled to bring in line with universal standard of good and suitable parliamentary environments. This again is going to be another legacy of the ninth National Assembly. We will be here for a few months before our chamber can be ready.

Finally, once again, I welcome us back from our recess and I wish us a very successful session.

God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Thank you for your kind attention.