

BEING TEXT OF SPEECH BY PASTOR ‘TUNDE BAKARE

AT THE STATE OF THE NATION BROADCAST

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VENUE: THE LATTER RAIN ASSEMBLY, END-TIME CHURCH,

PLOT 4, AKILO ROAD, OFF OBA AKRAN AVENUE,

OGBA, IKEJA, LAGOS, NIGERIA.

THEME: THE PROPHETIC PORTRAIT OF NIGERIA IN HER

LATTER DAYS.

PROTOCOLS:

Fellow Nigerians, the theme of this State of the Nation broadcast is: “The Prophetic Portrait of Nigeria in Her Latter Days.”

Let me begin by welcoming you into the Year 2019, a year that holds untold possibilities for our beloved nation.

In the past thirty years, we have stood on this platform at The Latter Rain Assembly, in line with our God-given mandate, to birth timely interventions towards the making of a great nation. I am aware that our engagements with the polity over the years have been keenly followed by many within and outside the shores of our nation. Some have followed with passionate faith and patriotic fervour and others have kept an eye with scepticism and cynicism. Nevertheless, our contributions to the polity from this platform over the last thirty years have been shaped not by changing public opinion but by an unrelenting commitment to the dominion mandate. Therefore, from

the priestly to the prophetic and the princely, we have held the fort as nation builders for whom Nigeria is the primary place of assignment.

From inception, we recognised the incontrovertible truth that Nigeria's greatest problem is a human resource problem and that nation builders are people builders. It is why, from this platform, in line with our priestly mandate, we have deployed God-given tools in raising a purposeful people of integrity, for whom excellence is a non-negotiable value; an assertive, confident and patriotic company of Nigerians in every sector of human endeavour; a people who are uncompromising nonconformists and a radical opposition to corruption.¹

Having laid the people-building foundation, we then progressed to the prophetic front where we marshalled the divine will against the forces of oppression. It was in the prophetic order that we foresaw and forewarned the major stakeholders in the June 12, 1993 transition saga.² It was in the prophetic order that we became God's battle-axe against the most brutal military dictatorship in Nigeria's history.³ It was in the prophetic order that we warned the nation regarding the pseudo-democratic transition that the military bequeathed to our nation in 1999.⁴ It was in the prophetic order that we confronted the so-called Third Term Agenda in 2006.⁵ It was in the prophetic order that we foretold the emergence of "the tender plant from the side of the North, afore prepared before the foundation of the earth to steer Nigeria into her prophetic destiny"⁶ and to pilot Nigeria into unprecedented economic growth and development far more

miraculous than those of Asian Tigers like Japan; a prophecy that is in the process of being fulfilled right now, in your hearing.⁷

Emerging from the prophetic, our engagement took on a princely dimension by the Year 2009 as we began active deployment of nation-building tools through direct intervention in the political landscape. Since then, it has been our manner of engagement to present State of the Nation addresses at the beginning of every year from this platform at The Latter Rain Assembly.

Indeed, our annual State of the Nation addresses have attracted a following from among the political class, the intelligentsia, the media, and many beloved citizens of our nation. However, we are not unmindful that there are some who query the potency of such addresses made not from the presidential seat in the statehouse in Aso Villa, nor from a rostrum on the parade grounds of Eagle Square, Abuja, but from this platform at The Latter Rain Assembly, Akilo, Ogba, in Lagos State. I am reminded of the words spoken to Jesus Christ by His brothers as recorded in **John 7:3 & 4 (NKJV)**:

³“...Depart from here and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may see the works that You are doing. ⁴For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world.”

Like my Master, Jesus, I have been so accosted by friends, particularly those in the political class, who do not understand why I

have not pitched my tent with the political aspirations of their respective candidates as we step into another election season. Moreover, in view of what has now become known as the twelfth prophecy of 2018 wherein I declared God's word to me that politics is not over for me yet,⁸ there are those who wonder why I did not step into the 2019 presidential race as a candidate, and why I have, instead, continued to engage the nation from this platform. I daresay that no other response is more fitting for such friends of mine than the response of my Master to the pressure put on Him by His brothers as recorded in **John 7:6-8 (NKJV)**:

⁶“...My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready. ⁷The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil. ⁸You go up to this feast. I am not yet going up to this feast, for My time has not yet fully come.”

However, for the sake of inquisitive fellow citizens who sincerely question the relevance of our engagement with the nation from this platform rather than from the partisan political arena, I will begin with a panoramic rundown of our God-enabled princely engagements from this platform within the past decade.

Lest we forget, at the beginning of the Year 2010, when our nation was in the iron grip of a power-hijacking cabal, it was from this platform that we began to defreeze social mobility and to mobilise Nigerians in defence of constitutionalism. When our march on the

streets of Abuja and Lagos sent shock waves through the polity, it was on this platform that we defended our course of action on Sunday, January 17, 2010⁹ as we refused to cower to the impostors who held our nation to ransom.

In 2011, when the government of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan prevaricated over crucial national reforms, particularly the restructuring of our polity, despite the fact that he had benefitted from our march for constitutionalism in 2010, it was from this platform that we awakened a slumbering electorate. We did so on Sunday, January 2, 2011 when we insisted on “Doing Politics God’s Way” as we declared that year “The Year of the Voter” and made a strong case for the wise use of the VOTE – the Voice Of The Electorate.¹⁰ Incidentally, contrary to our intention and motivation, and despite my initial hesitation, that same year, our engagement from this platform ushered us into partisan politics as I became running mate to then General Muhammadu Buhari on the platform of the now defunct Congress for Progressive Change (CPC).

One year later, when our nation gasped for breath under the stranglehold of a fraudulent subsidy regime, it was from this platform that we enlightened the Nigerian people on Sunday, January 15, 2012, simplifying an opaque patronage system masquerading as petroleum subsidy,¹¹ an unfortunate malady the nation continues to suffer from up till now.

In 2013, when our beloved nation remained submerged in the cesspool of organised corruption while the perpetrators of unlimited kleptocracy were left unpunished, it was from this platform that we blew the trumpet for the rescue of the soul of a drowning nation at the State of the Nation broadcast of Sunday, January 13, 2013.¹²

The following year, 2014, a year in which Nigeria marked the centenary anniversary of her existence as an amalgamated entity, our princely engagement in the polity from this platform once again ushered us into more direct intervention in the affairs of our nation. From being the keynote speaker at the “Nigeria at Centenary” lecture held in honour of my late boss Chief Gani Fawehinmi on January 15, 2014,¹³ to being a delegate to the 2014 National Conference, our engagement from the pulpit to the podium that year further turned the spotlight on the New Nigeria narrative.

In 2015, when our nation placed the cart before the horse as we set sail towards elections in the midst of a gathering storm and avoidable Euroclydon,¹⁴ it was from this platform on Sunday, January 4, 2015 that we warned against the disastrous trajectory of a presumptuous political class. Four years later, Nigeria is still reeling from the consequences of rejecting wise counsel.

In 2016, when our national economy staggered under the weight of a recession¹⁵ and suffered a severe shortfall in foreign exchange, even as the promised change was fast becoming a short-change, it was from this platform that we challenged the Central Bank of Nigeria

(CBN) to improve currency management as we presented a “Roadmap to Successful Change” at the State of the Nation broadcast of Sunday, January 10, 2016.¹⁶

In 2017, when the lingering economic downturn pushed Nigerians to the brink of despair and the citizenry became increasingly impatient with the government of President Muhammadu Buhari, it was from this platform that we guided the nation on Sunday, January 8, 2017 when we pointed to the future with the eyes of faith and began to unveil the detailed imperatives of restructuring.¹⁷ In October of the same year, when restructuring became the buzzword on everyone’s lips and Nigerians were torn in different directions regarding the imperatives of restructuring, it was from this platform that we separated the noise from the voice as we profiled ten schools of thought on restructuring, and unveiled, for the first time, “Pragmatic Steps Towards Restructuring Nigeria.”¹⁸

At the beginning of last year, 2018, when the nation was thrown into mourning by the heinous activities of herdsmen which left the Benue towns of Logo and Goma devastated, it was from this platform that we warned a complacent government of complicity by deliberate sinful silence. Indeed, it was from this platform during the Sunday, January 14, 2018 State of the Nation broadcast that we demanded a renegotiation of our union and inspired the Nigerian people with the possibilities of a great nation while reaffirming our destined role in the emergence of the New Nigeria.¹⁹ Ten months later, on October 7, 2018, from this platform, we became even more explicit in our case

for a New Nigeria as we unveiled “Sixteen Pragmatic Steps Towards Restructuring Nigeria.”²⁰

We can therefore confidently state that, over the past thirty years, we have faithfully executed our God-given mandate to the nation from this platform. Over the past thirty years, we have deployed appropriate tools for appropriate occasions, from prophetic declarations to confrontational advocacy and from political activism to propositional policy advisory. Over the past thirty years, we have done this consistently, sometimes at the risk of being misunderstood by friends and foes alike. We have been motivated not by wavering opinions of men but by our unshakeable faith in our national destiny and an unalloyed commitment to seeing that destiny fulfilled. From the priestly to the prophetic to the princely, our message has been the same: it has been the making of a great nation where righteousness and justice reign; a prosperous nation whose leaders are motivated by service to the people and not just seeking power for self. Fellow citizens of our great nation, we shall not stop until we see the emergence of the Nigeria of our dreams.

Therefore, as a decade winds up in 2019, which, incidentally, is a crucial election year for our nation, I bring you the last January State of the Nation address from this platform in Akilo Road, Ogba, Lagos. It is the last from this platform because of the major transition that we are about to experience within our community this year as we proceed to our new location, The Citadel. I am confident that our relocation at The Latter Rain Assembly is symbolic of the possibilities that await

Nigeria, the possibilities of relocation from the old to a New Nigeria, a nation that will set the pace in good governance, responsible citizenship, economic transformation, and city infrastructural development.

Salute to the Nigerian Soldier

Having laid the background, it is pertinent at this juncture to state that this address comes a few days after Armed Forces Day. As a fellow soldier, albeit of a heavenly army with an earthly mission, let me use this opportunity to pay a heartfelt tribute to the Nigerian soldiers who have continued to hold the fort with courage and self-sacrifice in the face of an asymmetric confrontation with Boko Haram and other armed enemies of the Nigerian state. I salute the courage of these heroes who have put their lives on the line in active service to the fatherland. Our condolences go to the families of the soldiers who have lost their lives in battle, from the five airmen who died in the helicopter crash in Damasak at the beginning of this year,²¹ to those who were killed in the attacks on the military bases in Jilli, Yobe State²² and in Garunda,²³ Metele²⁴ and Baga,²⁵ Borno State. Let us now stand as we observe a minute of silence in honour of these fallen heroes. (May the souls of our departed soldiers rest in peace. Amen.)

The reported odds faced by the soldiers fighting for our beloved country is a cause for serious concern. While the allegations that our soldiers are forced to confront terrorists with inferior weapons have been denied by the Nigerian Army,²⁶ these claims must still be

thoroughly investigated and acted upon rather than merely dismissed. Recent news of the loss of territories to Boko Haram²⁷ and recent videos of our soldiers being massacred by terrorists²⁸ are more potent in the consciousness of the average Nigerian than any denial the military officials can muster. Our military must prove that it is fully equipped to prosecute this war not just by attempting to win the propaganda war, but by winning on the actual warfront. That is the only way to justify our defence spending over the past decade.

Between 2008 and 2018, N6 trillion has been allocated to the Federal Ministry of Defence.²⁹ Between 2012 and 2014, it received a whopping 19.9% of the total budget on average.³⁰ Under the current administration, defence has received a significant percentage of the annual budget. In 2016, for instance, the ministry was allocated N443 billion³¹ out of N6.06 trillion;³² in 2017, N469.8 billion out of N7.44 trillion;³³ and in 2018, N576.4 billion out of N9.12 trillion.³⁴ In 2017, N6.8 billion³⁵ was budgeted for defence equipment, while Operation Lafiya Dole “and other operations of the armed forces” received N78 billion.³⁶ With these relatively huge allocations, even with average budget performance,³⁷ the allegations that our soldiers fight under poor conditions³⁸ are intolerable.

If we further consider the fact that recurrent expenditure has been fully performed as overhead costs are covered,³⁹ then it becomes inconceivable that any soldier risking his or her life for the Nigerian state should be owed a dime of his or her allowance.⁴⁰ Even more disturbing is the 2017 investigative report that soldiers in the theatre

of war lack basic necessities such as food, uniforms and footwear despite the fact that a portion of their wages is questionably deducted as feeding allowance.⁴¹ These reports, in addition to the 2018 protests⁴² by soldiers deployed in the theatre of war, give cause for concern especially against the backdrop of the recent resurgence of the terrorists.

The President, the National Security Council, the Ministry of Defence, the Army Headquarters, and the National Assembly Committees on Defence must re-examine the defence architecture, especially the human resource factor, and address every anomaly in the interest of the vulnerable rather than the powerful. Failure to do this could undo the gains of the war on terror.

The soldiers, on their part, must approach the call of duty with civility and courage; with civility because the reports and allegations of human rights violations by the military are repugnant and unbecoming⁴³ of the distinguished profession. Their code of conduct must be influenced by the words of **Proverbs 14:31 (MSG)**:

You insult your Maker when you exploit the powerless;
when you're kind to the poor, you honor God.

In addition, we enjoin them to continue to act with courage, because, in the words of General George S. Patton: “Wars may be fought with weapons, but they are won by men.”⁴⁴ To our soldiers in the theatre of war, you carry the weight of the hopes of a generation on your

shoulders. May God replenish your resolve and reward your courageous resilience.

For those who have died in combat, we owe these heroic patriots the eternal duty of ensuring that they did not die in vain. Not only does the government owe their families adequate welfare packages and the assurance of a decent future, we, the people of Nigeria, for whose sake they laid down their lives, must become soldiers in our own right; we must become soldiers for good governance. At crucial moments such as the coming elections, responsible choices must become our weapons in the theatre of citizen engagement, and credible leadership must become our banner of victory. We owe the memories of these soldiers a well-governed nation, a nation that is worth their sacrifice, because good governance is the soil upon which patriotism is nurtured, and a nation that is worth dying for must be worth living in.

A Nation Worth Dying For

It was Herbert Hoover who said:

“Older men declare war. But it is youth that must fight and die. And it is youth who must inherit the tribulation, the sorrow, and the triumphs that are the aftermath of war.”⁴⁵

I am of the considered opinion that the apathy of our war-weary soldiers⁴⁶ transcends matters of conditions of service or the question of whose weapon is superior between the army and the terrorists. I

believe that, more than any other factor, patriotic zeal, backed by transformational leadership, is the missing element in our nation-building experience. It is why, for instance, the underdog army led by George Washington defeated the established British Army in the American War of Independence.⁴⁷ Therefore, the real problem is the absence of a compelling enough reason to lay down one's life for one's country. The pertinent question is: What kind of nation will the Nigerian soldier be willing to pay the ultimate price for, if need be, and what kind of nation do the Nigerian people deserve to live in?

A nation worth dying for must have sacrificial, inspirational leaders. When our country's lawmakers earn close to \$40,000 per month⁴⁸ in a nation where 152 million Nigerians live on less than \$2 per day,⁴⁹ when government officials claim over N241 billion⁵⁰ annually as unaccounted for security votes in a nation that has become the "poverty capital of the world,"⁵¹ when the minimum wage is far from meeting minimal needs and the nation's workers appear to strike for a living;⁵² when a people cannot look to their leaders, or listen to them, or watch them live their lives, and find a reason to look to the future irrespective of the difficulties of today, I highly doubt our young people will consider such a nation worth dying for.

A nation worth dying for must value human capital development. When a nation's tertiary education system is shut down for months such that students who enter for a four-year course invariably make plans for extra years; when our public universities are inundated with dilapidated facilities and antiquated study materials; when doctorate

degree holders queue up to be interviewed as truck drivers;⁵³ when 13.2 million of our young citizens are categorised as “out of school,”⁵⁴ it is unlikely that our young people will consider such a nation worth dying for.

A nation worth dying for must have people-centric governmental structures. When large bureaucracies based in Abuja and far removed from the people gulp the lion’s share of the country’s expenses; when the tiers of government that are closest to the people cannot deliver basic goods; when the state government lacks the constitutional powers to provide security for its endangered populace, or to generate income from its resources to improve the lot of its impoverished people; when the local government office in the neighbourhood is nothing but a redundant administrative appendage of distant political forces, rather than a facilitator of community development, I doubt that the people will consider such a nation worth dying for.

A nation worth dying for must have critical infrastructure. When citizens lack basic amenities such as electricity and clean water; and when a nation’s roads, railways and airports require a unique brand of long-suffering; when the cities of other nations provide much higher standards of living than one’s own country, it is very likely that the people of that nation would be more concerned with relocating because they “cannot come and go and die.”

A nation worth dying for must place a premium on the health of its citizens. When a nation’s healthcare system is failing and its hospitals

are poorly equipped, such that its hospitals are some of the most dangerous places in the world to give birth⁵⁵ and children die during childbirth at an alarming rate,⁵⁶ when government officials and others who can afford it would rather seek treatment abroad than in the local hospitals, then you can take it to the bank that the people of that nation would scarcely want to die for a country they can hardly bear to give birth in.

A nation worth dying for must prioritise the interests of its people. “America First” is how President Donald Trump puts it.⁵⁷ The late Senator John McCain took it a step further: “We are Americans first, Americans last, Americans always.”⁵⁸ When a country is quick to give away its territory to look good before the world rather than staunchly defend its land and people;⁵⁹ when a country exports some of its brightest brains and imports the bare necessities⁶⁰; when a nation cannot stand up to other countries but makes excuses when its citizens are being massacred by xenophobic mobs,⁶¹ it is unlikely that the citizens of that country will consider it an honour to put their lives on the line to defend her unity and uphold her honour and glory.

A nation worth dying for must be bound by a strong political ethos that confers on that nation a unifying and integrated identity. When the fabric of a nation is torn apart by the politics of division such that violent clashes, political murders and character assassination are what dominates election periods while issues are relegated to the background; when banditry becomes the synonym for the politics of a nation such that the only factor that unites politicians is the greedy

feasting on the so-called national cake; when the political arena is ideologically distorted, such that there is no robust debate on diversity of strategies to improve the lives of the ordinary people; when corruption and falsehood dominate the political space, with politicians quick to make promises they do not intend to keep, it is most unlikely that the people of that nation would want to lay down their lives for their country.

This is the situation of our nation today. Far beyond the sophistication of our weaponry, as to whether they are inferior or superior to that of the enemy, the underlying issue behind the spate of soldiers losing ground to the enemy is that the Nigerian soldier, like the ordinary Nigerian people, has not inherited a nation worth living or dying for. This is perhaps a fate even worse than death itself. It is the reason our people, peasants and professionals⁶² alike, are looking for the next exit route away from our country, whether via the violent waves of the Mediterranean⁶³ or armed with a one-way ticket to Canada;⁶⁴ it is the reason our people are quick to break the law or discountenance the public interest just to achieve a private end; it is the reason our people are quick to sell their votes⁶⁵ to the highest bidding politician rather than committing to the rigorous but necessary work of scrutinising candidates and making the best choice based on competence and character prerequisites. People resort to quick fixes when they have no stake in the community; they are unwilling to pay the price or make sacrifices when they cannot relate to the common interest. In

other words, they simply have no compelling motivation to lay down their lives for the public good.

Fellow Nigerians, I want you to know that there is much more to our country than this; more to live for, more to hope for, more to work towards; more to leave as an inheritance for our children's children. Together, as a people, we can build a great nation of which posterity will be proud; the kind of nation that will give every Nigerian the confidence to declare, "I am Nigerian!" As I conclude, let me paint a picture of that nation.

It is a nation of servant leaders, where Nigerians at home and abroad, male and female, old and young, the best of the North and the best of the South, from across political parties, can come together in one political family, to provide effective and transformational leadership that will birth the Nigeria of our dreams.

It is a nation in which government is big enough to protect you and small enough to serve you; expansive enough to reach you, and close enough to know you, to touch you, to feel your pulse, to know where the shoe pinches, and to bring solutions straight to your doorstep.

It is a cutting-edge nation with viable federating units that have global relevance and local impact. I am talking about a nation where a strong anti-corruption value system permeates every cadre of leadership, from the federal government to the local governments, and where zero tolerance for corruption is transmitted from the leadership to the people; a nation where there are clear consequences for actions, where

lawlessness and disorderliness are met with preventive and punitive measures, and where people are rewarded for honesty and integrity.

The Nigeria of our dreams is a nation of unprecedented economic growth and development, built on geo-economic parameters through regionally focussed fiscal policy and targeted monetary policy; where resources, including agriculture, water resources, solid minerals, oil, and gas are harnessed within six geo-economic zones for national development; a nation where the manufacturing sector is propelled by the fulcrum of maximising regional strengths and where banks and financial institutions are committed to growing local enterprise for global impact.

The Nigeria of our dreams is a nation that prioritises human capital development; a nation that brings the highest quality healthcare close to the people and ensures that healthcare policy is closely linked with the education and innovation thrust at every level of government. It is a nation that competitively educates for its needs; a nation where the zonal and local governments are allowed to create unique educational experiences and opportunities for their own people so as to harness local opportunities; it is a nation where subnational governments are allowed to use the resources in those areas to fund their unique educational objectives and to attract the best brains from around the nation, Africa, and the rest of the world to achieve those developmental objectives.

The Nigeria of our dreams is a nation of massive infrastructural development, where government at all levels – the federal, zonal and local – works with the private sector to provide uninterrupted power supply by broadening the national energy mix to include solar, hydro, nuclear, thermal, chemical, oil, natural gas, biomass, wind and other energy sources, based on zonally coordinated policies and comparative advantage; a nation where every part is limitlessly powered even without connecting to the national grid, affording the federal government the opportunity to export excess electricity to other African countries; a nation with an interconnected network of multimodal transportation systems, laid out to facilitate the enterprising Nigerian spirit.

The Nigeria of our dreams is a land where no one is above the law; where the law applies equally to the rich and the poor; to the president and the petty trader; to the Senator and the janitor; and, I dare say, to the Chief Justice of the Federation and the gateman in a magistrate court. It is a land where public officials understand that impunity is criminality; where the custodians of the law are held to a higher standard of responsibility and accountability, accepting that an oversight does not neutralise culpability, because those who sit to judge others have a solemn responsibility to model the law that they hold others accountable to.

It is in this regard that I enjoin every Nigerian to put Nigeria first and approach the current matter involving the highest judicial officer of the

land without bias, in the interest of justice and accountability, with the objective of institution building and in the spirit of the New Nigeria. Note, in addition, that the prosecutors must themselves operate in accordance with due process, with utmost respect for the independence of the judiciary, and in compliance with constitutional provisions on both substantive and procedural matters, knowing that two wrongs, no matter how seemingly well-intentioned, cannot make a right. This ethos of regard for due process, respect for the rule of law, and reverence for justice over politics, is the spirit of the Nigeria of our dreams.

Furthermore, the New Nigeria is a nation that asserts Nigerian leadership on the African continent; one that is respected across the world; a strong nation that defends the dignity of every individual that carries the Nigerian passport; a powerful nation that protects the interest of every organisation that is incorporated in Nigeria and does business legally anywhere in the world; a nation whose individual and corporate citizens no nation would dare ill-treat; a hospitable nation that relates to the rest of the world on the basis of mutual respect.

Fellow citizens, the New Nigeria is a nation that gets the national defence and security questions right; a nation that better integrates its diverse military, paramilitary and intelligence agencies into one coordinated unbeatable defence and security machinery; a nation with enhanced intelligence gathering on par with, if not surpassing, the anticipatory precision of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), MI6 and Mossad; a nation with an effective zonal and local security

apparatus, with the zonal and local government empowered to truly enforce laws; a nation where a governor will be the chief security officer of his or her jurisdiction -- not just in word, but also indeed with the requisite constitutional powers.

The New Nigeria is a nation that our soldiers will be proud to fight for and to defend with the last drop of blood in them; it is a nation of unmatched patriotism, whose armed forces will attract the best, the brightest, and the fittest, whose soldiers will wear their uniforms with utmost pride, engaging the enemy with civility and courage, willing to put themselves in the line of fire, if need be, just to rescue the Nigerian flag, not to talk of a Nigerian citizen in danger; a nation where no wounded soldier is left behind on the battlefield and no citizen is left behind in the war against poverty; a nation worth dying for because it is worth living in. That is the kind of nation we must work for in 2019 and beyond.

As we approach the elections, 73 candidates⁶⁶ are gunning for the presidency, a seat reserved for only one person. The most prominent candidates have come out with promises as regards how they intend to take our nation to the desired destination. We have heard promises on security, economic reforms, job creation for our teeming youth population, healthcare delivery, infrastructure, social welfare, arts and entertainment, and so on.

We have seen President Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress (APC) defend his scorecard on security, anti-corruption, job

creation, infrastructure and social investments. The economic team led by the vice president, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo, has reiterated the government's gains; we have seen them project the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) as the instrument that can take the country to what they call the "Next Level."⁶⁷ We have heard the incumbent insist that Nigeria's current problems were created within the sixteen years of the previous administration and that, little by little, they are working to rewrite the narrative.⁶⁸

On the other hand, we have heard the "Atikulated" side of the contest argue that the sixteen years argument is now stale news.⁶⁹ We have seen former vice president, Atiku Abubakar, and his running mate, Peter Obi, of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) downplay the achievements of the current government.⁷⁰ We have read the so-called "Atiku Plan,"⁷¹ spanning a competitive and open economic system, public institution reform, reduction of infrastructure deficit, economic diversification, and human capital development. We have also heard Atiku Abubakar's promise to restructure the polity with a focus on the devolution of powers.⁷²

In addition, we have seen a new generation challenging the old order and insisting that Nigerians do not have to choose between six and half a dozen. We have seen Kingsley Moghalu of the Young Progressive Party (YPP) project his experience in economic management at national and international levels as he promises better economic management and a geo-economic restructuring of Nigeria.⁷³ Meanwhile, Fela Durotoye of the Alliance for New Nigeria (ANN)

has eloquently promised a New Nigeria where the cost of living is reduced, power, security and healthcare are guaranteed, jobs are created, and law and order are maintained.⁷⁴ In addition, we have seen the likes of Omoyele Sowore of African Action Congress (AAC) crisscross the nation, mobilising the young, especially students, in his drive to take our country back.⁷⁵

However, of the new breed seeking to disrupt the political space, none gives me as much hope for the near future as does my sister, Obiageli ‘Oby’ Ezekwesili, of Allied Congress Party of Nigeria (ACPN), whose candidacy I shared publicly several days before her official announcement. Her brilliance, experience, sacrificial service to our nation, antecedents at championing and executing pro-people and pro-good governance reforms, compassionate yet dogged belief in the Nigerian potential, and her faith in the God-ordained plan for Nigeria, are unmatched by any of the other new breed candidates. I salute her for jumping into the fray despite her seemingly limited chances and, as I have said to her in times past, come what may, one day, and that day will come soon, we will fix this nation. One thing is very clear in my mind: with her candidacy, no Nigerian can reasonably say after the election that there was no credible alternative to the status quo in 2019.

Fellow Nigerians, I understand that many are wondering if I am endorsing any candidate. I understand that there are those listening carefully to decipher where I stand. Ladies and gentlemen, I have never minced words as to where I stand. In my address to the nation

on Sunday, October 7, 2018 titled “The Road to 2019: Quo Vadis Nigeria?,”⁷⁶ I charged you to choose nationhood. I said to you on that occasion:

A choice for nationhood has nothing to do...with any political party or the political interest of any of the candidates. To choose nationhood is to put the interest of Nigeria at the heart of our actions and decisions in 2019 and beyond.⁷⁷

Fellow Nigerians, what we need is a political family, a team of patriotic Nigerians committed to one agenda, the restructuring of a united Nigeria, so that we can begin to build the Nigeria of our dreams. In that same speech, I laid out the pathway to achieving this in the “Sixteen Pragmatic Steps towards Restructuring Nigeria.”⁷⁸ I maintain that it is a roadmap that will lead us to our promised land.

If ours is a country that works, if ours is a country with transformational leaders ready to deploy their strengths and staff their weaknesses, if ours is a country that values capacity, competence and character, what we should be doing is creating platforms to harness the diverse strengths at our disposal, to begin to build a well-structured, well-governed and well-integrated Nigeria.

It is in this regard that I look forward to a Presidential Commission on National Reconciliation, Reintegration and Restructuring,⁷⁹ a team of incorruptible Nigerians of unquestionable integrity and bridge-building antecedents, endowed with wisdom and judgement, driven

by unshaken faith in the essence and possibilities of the Nigerian nation, who can work with the presidency and the National and State Assemblies towards restructuring a united Nigeria. I believe that, beyond the elections, the future of our nation and its greatness lie in the ability of the presidency to facilitate the emergence of this team that I call “Team Restructuring.”

For those who care to know, I belong to “Team Restructuring.” Convening such a team has been the nature of my contributions to our nation in the past decade. It was why, in 2009, I brought together a company of nobles, for what we then called “The Dialogue of the Nobles,” to begin to shape the future of our nation; it was why, in 2010, propelled by a God-given vision, I was privileged to convene a coalition of nation builders that became the Save Nigeria Group (SNG), a group that rose to the occasion at critical junctures and jolted this nation back to its senses; it was why, in 2010, my wife and I hosted in our home the likes of Dr. Oby Ezekwesili, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Mallam Nasir El-Rufai, Jimi Lawal, Donald Duke, Nuhu Ribadu, my dear friend Fola Adeola, Jimi Agbaje, Hon. Wale Oshun, and Yinka Odumakin, arrowheads we sought to position to begin to reshape Nigeria; it was why, after much hesitation, I accepted to be running mate to then General Muhammadu Buhari in the 2011 elections as we ran on the promise of a restructured Nigeria – the number one item in the CPC manifesto; it was why I accepted to be a delegate to the 2014 National Conference convened by President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, a conference at which we, by God’s grace,

sponsored the “Nigerian Charter for National Reconciliation and Integration⁸⁰” that was unanimously adopted by the 492 delegates from across the nation.

Fellow Nigerians, beyond the elections, this is what our nation needs: a uniting force that can rally our diverse strengths around a common narrative, towards a common objective, to achieve a common vision – The Nigeria of Our Dreams – and through a common strategy – the Sixteen Pragmatic Steps Towards Restructuring Nigeria. After all is said and done, may Nigeria win, no matter who wins or loses in this year’s elections.

After the elections, we have a nation to build together. I am reminded of the words of Anwar al-Sadat: “There can be hope only for a society which acts as one big family, not as many separate ones.”⁸¹ With our zero-sum game and winner-take-all-politics, we could be losing the ideas, the brilliance, the institutional memory, and all the strengths required to build a nation. But when, beyond the elections, the Buharis, the Atikus, the Moghalus, the Ezekwesilis, the Durotoyes, the Sowores and the like come together to minimise our weaknesses and maximise our strengths, as one political family, with one agenda – nationhood – we can shape a new nation beyond 2019. That is what Team Restructuring is all about and that is the climax of my message on this platform in this final state of the nation broadcast – The Can-Do spirit that accompanies Restructuring for a United Nigeria. This is a new kind of “can-do spirit.” It is the word “can” with two “n’s”: C-A-N-N. It is the call to **Create A New Nigeria (CANN)** and the

message is simple: “Divided we can’t, together, we CANN” –
Divided, we can’t, together, we **Create A New Nigeria**.

Fellow Nigerians, if you believe in the New Nigeria, if you believe that we can surmount the obstacles that face us as a nation and build a great nation, if you believe that we can rewrite the Nigerian story and create a great nation that will amaze humanity and inspire posterity, if you believe that we can Create a New Nigeria, one that our young people will be willing to live in, to live for, and, if need be, to die for, then stand with me on this day, as part of a new political family, a new breed without greed, a radical opposition to corruption, a people of excellence, bound by a common purpose, inspired by a common destiny, driven by a powerful creed: Together, We CANN.

Thank you for listening; God bless you, and God bless Nigeria.

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Convener, Save Nigeria Group (SNG).

Please visit www.tundebakare.com for past speeches.

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