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Savannah Centre for  
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# “Reclaiming Nigeria: A Pathway”

by

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## PROTOCOLS

### I. Introduction

1. I would like to commence by expressing my profound appreciation to the Management and the entire team at *Leadership* Newspaper for kindly providing the platform for me to share my thoughts on the very topical and thought-provoking topic, *Reclaiming Nigeria: A Pathway*, with the distinguished guests gathered here today.
2. It is my hope that, at the conclusion of this speech, we would have sufficiently rigorously interrogated the essence of the first half of the theme: “**Reclaiming Nigeria**”, but also point to the “**Pathway**” to democratic consolidation, economic regeneration, and enduring peace and stability in our Fatherland. To a large extent, I shall be drawing on the stock of experience gained in my national service to Nigeria and also as an international civil servant promoting our common humanity. Furthermore, the topic of this address, tempts me to throw up some questions: *Reclaiming Nigeria, from Whom? Reclaiming Nigeria, for Whom? Reclaiming Nigeria, for What? A Pathway to where...?* I am hoping that this may be an interactive session which provide shared perceptive and consensus outcome as my job would have been done.

3. The word, RECLAIM, in its ordinary dictionary meaning implies *to bring back to a preferable manner of living, sound principles, ideas, etc; to recall from wrong or improper conduct; to rescue from an undesirable state; to restore to a previous natural state*. The question therefore is to determine and define that which Nigeria has lost and which needs RECLAIMING. I am sure that every member of this distinguished audience would agree with me that our nation is a long way away from the glorious place which our enormous human and natural resource endowment qualifies us for. Fifty five years after independence, Nigeria is definitely not where she should or can be.
4. To holistically interrogate this topic, we must attempt to provide answers to the questions I raised earlier. "WHO" must we reclaim Nigeria from if we are to actualize the Nigeria of our founding fathers' dreams? In a paper I presented in Washington DC some years ago, which has turned out to be prescient, I talked about *The Nigerian State and its Enemies*...The inspiration for this came from the famous book by the Australian-British Philosopher, late Professor Karl Popper, titled *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. Ladies and Gentlemen, these *enemies* are the ones we have to reclaim Nigeria from. Who are they?

## II. The Nigerian State and Its Enemies

5. The *enemies* of the Nigerian State are not necessarily individuals. I use the term to encompass those groups characterized by certain negative

tendencies, phenomena and traits, which, taken together, constitute serious impediments to the growth, development, corporate existence and efficient functioning of the Nigerian State which serves the interest of the many rather than the few. In other words, they critically undermine the emergence of a strong, united, vibrant, prosperous and just nation. While the enemies of the Nigerian state, which are identified and discussed here, are by no means exhaustive, they constitute, in my view, severally and collectively, some of the most vicious agents at work to either tear Nigeria apart or at least blunt the full realization of the great potentials, which our nation possesses. It is for these reasons that I now proceed to discuss some of these “enemies” of the Nigerian state.

6. Of all the vices, which have reared their ugly heads in enmity against the Nigerian state, it seems to me, that ethnicity or rather the wrong use of ethnicity, ranks as one of the most dangerous. In my view, no measure can blunt ethnic jingoism and advance the cause of national unity more than a determined, honest and manifestly fair effort to treat all Nigerians, irrespective of their ethnic origin, equally before the law as well as the promotion of, and respect for, the human rights of all Nigerians. Writing two centuries ago, Uthman Dan Fodio, a great reformer and leader, had this message for us: “One of the swiftest ways of destroying a kingdom (or State) is to give preference to one particularly tribe over another, or to show favour to one group of people rather than another”. As Abraham Lincoln puts it succinctly, “a house divided against itself cannot stand.

Justice and respect for the diversity of our nation are the prerequisites for a Republic that is at peace with itself and consolidates its unity and its democracy.

7. Any meaningful analysis of the enemies of the Nigerian state is bound to identify national indiscipline and elite greed as factors at work against our society. Indiscipline manifests itself in a general unwillingness to abide by laws and regulations designed to achieve a smooth functioning of society as well as the failure to observe the minimum requirements of etiquette and ethics in official and unofficial interaction. It is said jokingly, but with some justification, that one of the distinguishing features of Nigerians is that we readily devise at least ten ways of circumventing every new law or regulation that is passed. National indiscipline prevents the orderly achievement of national goals as an inordinate amount of time is spent on trying to get people to display the minimum orderly behavior, without which civil society can only degenerate into an animal kingdom, with only the strongest surviving.
8. Elite greed is a phenomenon, which manifests itself in the inordinate ambition to illegally amass wealth in breach of public trust, abuse of public office, bribery and corruption and the lack of a capacity to distinguish public from private wealth. Greed among the elite has tended to transform competition for public office into a "do or die" affair, in which the winner must take all. Public office is increasingly seen, not as a call to service and public trust, but as an opportunity to despoil the "Commonwealth".

The phenomenon of elite greed is, however, not confined to the public domain, as the elite in the private sector have also developed an insatiable taste to acquire wealth far in excess of their legitimate capacity. The Nigerian state is the worse for it, and the Nigerian people the worst hit, as scarce resources that should otherwise have been used for development are expropriated by a greedy few.

9. The menace of Boko Haram, which represents one of the greatest threats to the Nigerian state and National security. This is because it represents the ill use of religion and uses sectarian violence to undermine the unity, sovereignty, territorial integrity of our country.

10. FOR WHOM: *first, for the steadily incapacitated and impoverished middle class; as well as the hapless majority of our people.* Next question, BY WHOM: *here, I dare say, first the middle class who must of necessity be in the vanguard of any meaningful sustainable "reclamation process", then the multitude of the followership who must be equipped and encouraged to imbue a sense of responsibility for their manifest destinies, and perhaps above all, the youths of our country where up to 62% of the population is under 24 and the median age is 18.2 years.* Their energy, resourcefulness and creativity have the real potential to be harnessed to help lift Nigeria towards increasing socio-economic development. Then, FOR WHAT: *engendering a vibrant united nation which leverages on our diversities as sources of inner strength, vibrancy and the maximization of our creative and productive potentials through the erection and*

*sustenance of durable governance institutions and structures; mobilizing the citizenry for patriotic commitment to the national ethos and faith in what the national flag represents.*

11. When on October 1, 1960, the Prime Minister, Alhaji Tafawa Balewa vowed to “dedicate his life to the services” of our new nation, he did so hoping that he would have entrenched in all of us, the spirit and value of self-less dedication and commitment to the new Nigerian project. As the first constitutional leader, the Prime Minister went further to envisage a great nation, which time had come “to acquire our rightful status”. Unfortunately, the hope and prayer for Nigeria of “standing well-built upon firm foundation” seems increasingly furlong with shaky foundations.

### III. THE PATHWAY TO RECLAIMING NIGERIA

#### Reclaiming Nigeria and the Pathway Through State and Non-State

##### Actors:

12. Against the foregoing background, no dispassionate observer of the Nigerian social, political, and economic scene would ever doubt that the country is really at a crossroad for which we must quickly arrive at a consensus on a nationally sustainable and enduring pathway to reclaiming it. Essentially, this must include elaborate nationwide discussions of the under listed national issues:-

- i) Discussing the idea of Reclaiming Nigeria and the Pathway with State and Non-State Actors;
- ii) Mobilizing the Nigerian Citizenry for an Ethical Revolution or Transformation;
- iii) Re-strengthening and consolidating all the national structures, processes, agencies and institutions for efficiency and enhanced performance output levels;
- iv) Frontally addressing the challenges of insecurity and violent extremism.

Here, I recommend three differentiated but interrelated strategies;

- a. The use of overwhelming force to degrade the military capacity of the terrorist group.
- b. The mobilization of neighboring countries and the west African sub-region to collectively act to fight the scourge and
- c. To drain the swamp-which is to embark not only on massive programme for the relief of the victims but on socio-economic recovery and reconstruction of the areas of our country that have been devastated by the activities of the terrorist group. Furthermore, youth unemployment has to be tackled head-on so that extremist groups would not be able to recruit from a pool of unemployed youths for violent extremist actions. It is difficult to exaggerate the fact that Nigeria needs intensified efforts at peacebuilding in various parts of the country. Hence, public policy must respond to and apply effective peacebuilding strategies to existing and emerging areas of crises in the country. An effective peacebuilding



strategy is one that is not only holistic but carefully targeted in addressing structural causes of conflict and fragility.

- v) Frontally addressing the primacy of State Capability to project National Economic Power for strategic domestic and international ends by urgently addressing the twin-problems of corruption and national leadership questions.

### **Role of State and Non-State Actors**

13. In referring to the idea of "**Reclaiming Nigeria: A Pathway**", there is the strategic and primary need for the coming together of like-minded Nigerian elites and patriots preferably from the Civil Society Organizations to discuss the modalities for such a reclamation with State and Non-State Actors. This could be modeled on the Savannah Centre for Diplomacy, Democracy and Development (SCDDD), whose interlocutors in this regard would be nominated on the basis of one publicly acclaimed Nigerian patriot from each of the six zones of the Federation and jointly called "**The National Patriots**". This nominated group would first jointly discuss and articulate the patriotic idea of reclamation, utilizing the voluminous works already done and contained in Vision 20-20, political reform and of late, National Conference and thereafter mobilize the political actors in order to buy into the reclamation idea by incorporating the patriots' aggregated summations of requisite actions-plans into their respective party

manifestoes or actions-programmes for implementations by whichever party that wins the national elections.

### **Citizens Mobilization**

14. Second, steering the course of our embattled nation should as propounded by Mazi Kanu Oji in **Nigeria's Ethical Revolution 1981-2000** and the report of the Political Bureau of Nigeria 1987 involve re-mobilizing the Nigerian citizenry to renewing faith in the assumptions and beliefs of the Founding Fathers of modern Nigeria. The objective of the proposed ethical revolution should mean the deliberate and fundamental change of a long - term decisive impact, to move this nation steadily and irreversibly in a discernible new direction of self-reliance and dedication to excellence in leadership, in discipline, in orderliness, in hard work, in honesty, in morality, in mutual respect and tolerance, along with the submission of our citizenry to God in national affairs and personal pursuits.
  
15. The anticipated behavioural innovation and change should be devoid of fast cosmetic dress-up efforts, a palliative remedy, make-shift change rooted adventitiously in the hopes for quick results. Rather, it should seek a revolution or transformation that is well planned and backed by a deliberate national consensus that unleashes an irreversible movement; a movement which will transcend partisanship and administrations and be a truly worthy legacy to be left by the present generation, and which will in time gather enough momentum and effective

motive force to land this nation by 2023 upon the solid and respectable platform of world leadership, internal order, qualitative vocational education, mass material empowerment and stable national prosperity.

### **Restructuring of MDAs for Optimal Performance**

16. Third, and as a catalyst for the foregoing policy prescriptions is the imperative of strengthening all national institutions instead of the political and bureaucratic actors. The age-long questions of the poor performance output levels of many Nigerian national institutions have been traced to the slow and disturbing pace of implementing national integration; cohesion and unity in diversity programmes and projects nation-wide. Instances which include the perverse and vexatious citizenship/indigeneity dichotomy have been at the fore of explaining the challenge.
17. Similarly and according to **Acemoglu Daron et-al in Why Nations Fail, (2012)**, “nations fail today because their extractive economic institutions do not create the incentives needed for people to save, invest and innovate. Extractive political institutions support these economic institutions by cementing the power of those who benefit from the extraction. Extractive political and economic institutions, though their details vary under different circumstances, are always at the root of this failure”. We need to build strong institutions which provide checks and balances in the political system in order to address impunity.

## Addressing Corruption and the National Leadership Capability

### Questions:

18. Fourth, numerous studies have indeed indicted many successive Nigerian national leaders either for being inept at combating corruption or out rightly corrupt themselves. It is a paradox that Nigeria, the world's eighth largest exporter of crude oil, a country endowed with many precious resources, still has more than seventy percent of its population living below the poverty line. National and governmental attitude and approach towards the scourge has not been sustainable nor effective because over time, the scourge has been waxing from strength to strength. The issue of consistently cognitive national leadership capabilities therefore constitutes a major challenge that the Nigerian electorates at the 2015 national elections must carefully reflect upon, of course alongside other equally contending qualities on the subject. For clarity and the avoidance of doubt in the reclamation process of the country, the ideal National Leader of Nigeria in a secular or multi-religious country like ours must possess the following major personal qualities:

- **Profess absolute faith in a Federal, secular, sovereign and independent Nigeria, but must be personally or privately religious, God or Allah fearing and accommodating to rival peaceful religious orthodoxies, dogmas, ideologies or belief systems;**

- Possess the virtues of honesty, truth, decency and zero tolerance for corruption in all its ramifications;
- Possess the highest level of disposition to the defence and promotion of the Constitution and the laws of the Federation;
- Possess consistent cognitive leadership capabilities especially in strategic policy formulation, understanding and implementations and thus relying less on Aides and other Special Assistants;
- Be always benevolent on strategic national issues and less dictatorial or authoritarian in his/her leadership styles;
- Must be transparently de-tribalized to be a true father of the Nation and not of his/her ethnic stock or part of the country he comes from;
- Possess very good command of the art, ethics and strategies of statecraft and international diplomacy.

**The Primacy of State Capabilities to project National Economic Power  
for Strategic International Ends**

19. Fifth, it is most unfortunate that in our 21<sup>st</sup> century globalized world driven by economy, trade/commerce, science, technology, gross domestic power/national income, conventional military/nuclear power, internal democratic culture and structures, diplomacy/alliance systems, population and climate/environment many Nigerians still cannot delineate in descending order of strategic importance the elements of national or world power. Most Nigerians still largely look at Nigeria's

population/demography and her recent GDP re-basing profile as the major determinants of her power capability in the comity.

20. The reality however is that contrary to popular thinking, Nigeria is still a relatively poor country. Any mobilization of the people of Nigeria for the country's greater relevance in the determination or shaping of our contemporary economic and financial world must begin with inscrutable sense of internal self-audit to enable a more realistic evaluation of our Nation's standing. This self-audit must necessarily include:-

- Where we are now
- Where we want to be and
- How we shall be and where we want to be.

### Current Insecurity in the Country

21. Sixth, political leadership in a reclaimed Nigeria must be able to squarely address the current spate of insecurity across the nation, particularly the Boko- Haram insurgency in the North - East corner of Nigeria. The imperativeness of political leadership liberating every inch of Nigerian territory currently occupied by Boko- haram insurgents lies in the fact that Nigerian's sovereignty and territorial integrity has been breached and compromised and no effort at reversing this will be too much for the most populous black nation in our contemporary world. We cannot lay claim to a permanent seat at an enlarged United Nation's Security

Council, when the Nigerian Armed forces have not been able to demonstrate exemplary capability in the defence of our territorial integrity. More importantly is the economic implication of continued terrorism and insurgency in the North - East corner for Nigeria's International economic relations as security is a critical demand of any rational investor, local or foreign. In pursuit of these policy suggestions, the Nigeria Armed Forces must as a matter of priority be reprofesionalised in terms of new recruitment guidelines, training, orientation and most importantly in terms of Nigeria's military doctrines, as well as armament production and acquisitions.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

22. It is nationally worrisome and traumatic that after a centenary of the amalgamation of the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria with the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria to establish modern day Nigeria and fifty-four (54) years after independence, the country is still beset with tremendous challenges of State-Making and Nation-Building. These constraints among others, consist of – political fragility, political volatility, ethnic and religious mistrusts, intolerance and violent extremism, the miscellaneous legacies of the thirty months of bloody civil-war, organized militancy and kidnapping in the Niger-Delta and neighbouring States of the South-East, organized terrorism and insurgency threats and trends in the North-East corner and the surrounding States, and threats of Nigeria's impending implosion after the forthcoming 2015 National elections following

unprecedented level of religious and politically motivated divisiveness. As if these were not enough, recently the international market price of the crude-oil dominated mono-economy of the beleaguered Federation nose-dived; thereby further compounding the fate of a country evidently at the crossroad.

23. In the words of Lenin, what is to be done? It is ostensibly against this background that some segments of the society – the coalition of patriotic forces, eminent and well respected Nigerians, and some Non-Governmental stakeholders have gathered at the Leadership newspaper's Annual Conference/Awards lecture, on this very topical subject of **"Reclaiming Nigeria: A Pathway"**.

24. In conclusion, that Nigeria has the potential and possibility of being a great nation as well as significant player in the comity of Nations is fairly obvious. However, the realization of that noble objective would continue to elude us so long as these enemies of the Nigeria state hold sway. Even much more than an individual, every serious nation must harbor and vigorously pursue a national ambition. A deliberate process of working towards it can only achieve such an ambition. Nigeria, as the preeminent black and African nation, must not only fashion a grand design, but also the appropriate strategy of achieving that design. Neither complacency nor wishful thinking or, for that matter, mere verbalization of our ambition, can lead us to our cherished goal.



25. It is my firm belief that Nigeria is endowed with enviable physical and mineral resources, that we have citizens imbued with sufficient patriotism to achieve our national objective. However, to enable such people step forward, a conducive atmosphere must be created, which makes public service a noble calling to which only the best and brightest aspire. It would indeed be regrettable if our nation, bustling with great promise, is hindered from fulfilling its manifest destiny to Africa and the world because of the activities of the enemies of state. My own hope is that in the same way as the Open Society now appears to have triumphed over its enemies, which were identified by the late Karl Popper, the Nigerian State, in its role as the custodian and implementer of the hopes and aspirations of the majority of our people, would triumph over its enemies. But to actualize this, all well-meaning citizens of Nigeria must reason together and work together to help the state, and thwart the hidden agenda of the few who try to keep our nation down or even tear it apart. The time to render such assistance is now, because as the famous saying goes, if it is not now when? And if it is not by us collectively, who? "

26. I thank you for listening.