

**STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS DELIVERED BY THE PRESIDENT, NIGERIAN POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION, PROFESSOR ALOYSIUS-MICHAELS OKOLIE, AT THE 32<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE ASSOCIATION HELD AT UNIVERSITY OF CALABAR, CROSS RIVER STATE, ON MONDAY 22<sup>ND</sup> THROUGH 25<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2019**

**Protocols**

The executive and members of Nigerian Political Science Association (NPSA), heartily welcome everyone to the 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference of the Association. We are particularly elated that despite the great and deepening deluge of insecurity and tension associated with the build-up and actual conduct of the 2019 general elections, Nigeria once again managed to pull through, seemingly unscathed.

Distinguished audience, stakeholders and participants, permit me to begin this address by appreciating and commending the Vice Chancellor of the University of Calabar, **Professor Zana Akpagu** and his resourceful Management Team for accepting to host the **32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference** of the Association. We are particularly overwhelmed with the support, encouragement and rare hospitality extended to the participants since arriving this great city of Calabar – *The People's Paradise*. Indeed, your total support further testifies that our Vice Chancellor is conference hyper-sensitive and committed to promoting academic conversations aimed at germinating, nurturing and instigated human capacity development for social transmogrification. We equally appreciate in a most special way the host Department under the able, focused and committed leadership of a budding and seasoned academic, Dr. George Atelhe. Both the Head of Department and the Local Organizing Committee should be commended for taking up the challenge of hosting and hence activating the temperature of academic rejuvenation/networking within the Department. The NPSA family hereby congratulates the Department and the University of Calabar for this remarkable breakthrough.

Ladies and gentlemen permit me also to appreciate and welcome the fathers, grand fathers and great grandfathers of the Association to this annual family reunion. Particularly, we thank Professor Bolaji Akinyemi, Professor Adele Jinadu, Professor Okwudiba Nnoli, Professor Kimse Okoko, Professor A. D. Yahaya, Professor Attahiru Jega, Professor Ayo Dumoye, Professor OBC Nwolise, Professor Christopher Isike, Professor Eghosa Osaghae and other distinguished Professors here present for promoting and reliving the values of the Association. We welcome you to the 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference of the Association and hope that we shall share, suck and benefit from your fountain of knowledge and vast experience in our unique discipline.

Distinguished audience permit me to reiterate that the 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference of the Association, with the theme: **Governance, Security and Elections in Nigeria**, is apt, timely, pungent and hence touches on the critical survival fibers of the Nigerian state and as well captures the critical areas of national and global concerns. Presently Nigeria is at a crossroad infested by multivariate virus of insecurity, poverty, declining confidence level, economic imbecility, and entrapped in governance deficiency syndrome within the pervading contour of social dislocation and deleterious clash of values, norms and cultures. Each passing day presents a gloomy picture of bleak future characterized by seemingly institutionalized banditry, kidnapping, assassinations and other forms of bestial criminality. Thus, the public conversations now center around issues of ethnic discontent, mutual and deepening suspicion, intolerance and inflamed religious-ethnic sypher. Indeed, the most frightening aspect of the orgy scenario is that the political leaders appear helpless, hapless and hence recline to joining the fray of contestations among political gladiators and ethnic bigots. Therefore, the leadership mere watch and profit from the specter of the highly motivated/activated centrifugal ‘demonstrations.’

Ladies and gentlemen, on a flip side and as it concerns our Association, the EXCO appreciates that NPSA has done very little in joining the national conversations and outcry on the unfolding debacle of **macabre dance leading to self-destruction** for the following reasons:

1. The leadership of NPSA was overwhelmed by the task of rebuilding, refocusing and institutionalizing the values of the Association with a view to deepening her foundation as the intellectual watchdog of the polity. The task has virtually been completed and henceforth, the Association shall be motivated to drive the process of social engineering and responsible governance project.
2. The weak and irregular financial base of the Association remains a limiting factor.
3. The tendency by the present government to rule without listening and to disregard constructive, especially contrary counsels from professional groups discourages effective engagements. Although the NPSA is graciously availed the website of the Secretary to the Government of Federation to communicate our views, nothing positive has been hand-marked.
4. The increasing cost of media briefing and publications also threaten our resolve to project and amplify the voice of the Association.

Nevertheless, we are determined to break the ice. Henceforth the Association shall interface with other proactive civil society organizations to project the values of good and responsive governance in Nigeria and beyond. We are however glad to report that the NPSA has been readmitted into the International Political Science Association (IPSA) family and we shall use the platform to re-launch

her global outreach and networks. On this note, may I crave your indulgence to appreciate the drive, tenacity and encouragement of the Vice President of IPSA, Professor Christopher Isike who made the dream possible and who is physically present here to support NPSA, conduct human capacity training for members and present a keynote address. NPSA also extends her appreciation to the IPSA President, Professor Marianne Kneuer and Executive Committee of IPSA for providing the Association with soft-landing and hence readmitting her into the exalted **IPSA family**. We affirm that this time our great Association shall play critical and consistent roles in the affairs of IPSA.

At this juncture Ladies and gentlemen, permit me to highlight a few of the achievements the EXCO has recorded within the past one year. These include:

1. Driving the process of readmitting the Association into the IPSA family.
2. Opening of a robust and interactive website.
3. Registration of the NPSA with the Corporate Affairs Commission.
4. Designing of NPSA Secretariat at Abuja.
5. Sustenance and expansion of NPSA publications.
6. Subscription for land at the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.
7. Initiating on-going discussions with global indexing publishing firms on modalities for collaborating or taking over the NPSA Journal publications.
8. Initiating the process of making SIPAS an international indexed journal(s).
9. Instituting effective and mutually beneficial research and advocacy collaborations with Research Institutes, Civil Societies and Critical Institutions
10. Opening areas of dialogue and collaborations with the Galilee Institute on human capacity training and development.
11. Streamlining contents of conferencing in line with global best practices.

Ladies and gentlemen, given the damp political climate and deleterious economic conditions in Nigeria, may I humbly request you to permit me to comment on a few issues plaguing our nationhood.

### **(1) Insecurity**

The primary goal of government is to safeguard lives and properties. In a neoliberal framework where the state has divested herself of other critical responsibilities, it is expected that the leadership will concentrate on providing hi-tech security that will be people driven. However, the spate of killings, banditry, ethno-regional rifts, armed robbery, extra-judicial killings, crop farmers-nomadic herders recycled conflicts, Boko Haram invasion, and other forms of insecurity are resoundingly escalating and reaching intolerable elastic limit. Although the present leadership in Nigeria made security one of their critical agenda, over the years, insecurity has become the norm as the country has now transited from Boko Haram menace to Nomadic Herders-Crop Farmers genocidal project. Our roads are now

infested with killer-squads who menacingly wield assault rifles and other dangerous weapons with impunity. The Nigerian borders more than ever appear unmanned and hence provide unfettered access to infiltration of small arms and light weapons as well provide fluid gate way for international bandits that are recruited for the destabilization assignment. Again, more disturbing is the concern recently projected by the Chief of Army Staff that some of the military personnel lack motivation to fight and that few of them sabotage military operations.

Again, the Nigerian Police Force appear to have concentrated their attention to recording painful extra-judicial killings and collection of tolls at ‘authorized and unauthorized check or toll points’. Moreover, information sharing among the security agencies is politicized thereby emplacing disparate and uncoordinated security architecture.

Therefore, the NPSA joins concerned Nigerians and friends of the country in condemning in very strong terms the following:

- Increasing spate of insecurity and repeated failures by the leadership to articulate and advance proactive measures to stem the tide;
- The seemingly insufficient funding of the security agencies.
- The seeming romantization with *ad-hoc* and ineffectual strategies and hence recycling of strategic failures in tackling the menace of insecurity.
- The seemingly non-neutrality in dealing with security challenges by some political leaders.
- The lack of synergy among political office holders in dealing with security threats.
- The politicization of security and securitization of politics syndrome leading to serial governance deficits and total desecration of governance values across the country.

The Association therefore enjoins the President of Nigeria, His Excellency, Muhammadu Buhari to demonstrate greater resolve to deal with the spate of insecurity by adopting the following steps:

- (1) Organizing a **security summit** made up of the Government functionaries, Service Chiefs, traditional rulers, former Heads of State, former Senate Presidents, former Speakers of the House of Representatives/Assemblies, leadership or representatives of Professional associations including NPSA, Captains of Industry, leadership of economic groups, opinion leaders and other critical stakeholders. The summit should be mandated with developing a blueprint and roadmap for dealing with insecurity and related vices. The outcome of the **Summit Must** be given legal teeth and expeditious applications in all facets of the society.
- (2) The idea of instituting a State police is long overdue. However, State police should fossilize through gradual and steady transmutation of the community policing framework. The NPSA is preparing a concept note on this and therefore expect to collaborate with Defense and Force

Headquarters to organize a workshop/Summit/Roundtable to further the idea and provide acceptable operational frameworks for its immediate implementation.

- (3) The decision of mopping up **Small Arms and Light Weapons** should be comprehensive in content and depoliticized. Any meaningful, successful and total demobilization must be backed by increasing exhibition of trust on the part of the government, improved legitimacy mantra and sincerity of purpose. More importantly, the people must appreciate and be convinced that the government is acting in the general interest; and that every citizen is seen to be equal and protected under the genuine laws that recognize and respect heterogeneity; and hence promote pluralism.

## 2. The Rural Gracing Area (RUGA) Project

The NPSA is disturbed at the alarming rate of conflicts between the nomadic herders and crop farmers. We must state that the investments on food security will remain unassailable if the basis of contestations between the herdsmen and farmers are left unresolved and/ or politicized, as presently the case. The Association joins the concerned Nigerians in commiserating with families that are victims of these nefarious and criminal attacks. NPSA also joins Nigerians in appreciating the timely and rational action of the Federal Government in ‘Stepping Down’ the implementation of the RUGA project. Perhaps the project was conceived to tackle the spate of nomadic herders-crop farmers crises. However, it appears that the major stakeholders were not carried along; and hence the seemingly unilateral policy presented the Federal Government as an *uncommanded commander* determined to suppress and appropriate ancestral lands. It is therefore the reasoned opinion of NPSA that the settlement policy must not be imposed on unwilling State governments. We therefore recommend as follows:

- (1) The Federal Government should organize an **All Nigerian Summit** to address the issue of settlement pattern and co-habitation among various nationalities.
- (2) That the RUGA project must have a component of providing support Funds/compensations to farmers whose crops were destroyed.
- (3) The RUGA project will only succeed when the government is seen to be neutral from the contestations and when taints of imposition are suppressed in favor of collegiality, good conscience and collective sense of purpose rooted on improving the legitimacy matrix.
- (4) The speed with which the project was to be implemented across the country which represents a direct departure from the chameleonic speed at which other public policies are being implemented raised matters of suspicion and concern.
- (5) RUGA project should not be entirely driven by taxpayers’ money to avoid further agitations from other economic groups demanding for similar and/or commensurate treatment.

## 3. Economic Transformation

The Association is distraught about the increasing spate of prostrate and beleaguered economy with no remarkable policy to instigate great limp out of the woods. Presently the official statistics put it that unemployment level in 2019 is 23.1 percent of the work force in the third quarter, up from 18.1 percent in 2018, poverty level as at June 5 2019 was 46.5 percent of Nigeria's population which is approximated at 197,686,877; HDI value for 2017 was 0.532; it was 0.530 in 2016; life expectancy was put at 53.9 years. Again, a new report by the *The World Poverty Clock* shows that Nigeria has overtaken India as the country with the most extreme poor people in the World. The report indicated that 86.9 million Nigerians are living in extreme poverty. No doubt Nigeria has been ingloriously tagged the World headquarters for the poor. Efforts of the government to diversify and jumpstart the economy have yielded meagre returns as unemployment, underemployment, poverty, malnutrition and malnourishment have persisted amid increasing insecurity of this *miserable life*. **Nigerians have been condemned to live in constant tribulation and affliction in ever deepening murky waters of hopelessness.**

The NPSA therefore canvasses the following:

- (1) That the task of economic rejuvenation must be comprehensive ranging from micro to macro responses. Development is largely a human activity driven by research, industry, and enterprise. Investment in human capital development must be stepped up and monitored and critical stakeholders must be involved in the articulation and implementation of the agenda.
- (2) Professional Associations such as the NPSA, Captains of Industry, farmers, Herders, State and local governments and relevant institutions must be involved in the process.
- (3) The framework/infrastructures for advancing developments such as energy, roads, hospitals, functional academic institutions etc must be positioned to provide support base for sustainable development. Relying on received development **handouts and monographs** to address the challenges may be counterproductive. Development must be indigenized and advanced through autochthonous initiatives and foreign strategies that cohere with domestic conditions, practices and praxis.
- (4) Ensuring immediate implementation of living wages for the workers in the private and public sectors.
- (5) Funding of research and implementations of critical findings should be encouraged, and higher institutions must be funded and mandated to provide direction for innovation, creativity and drive.
- (6) The task of diversifying our income and promoting exploitation of solid minerals and other agricultural products remain desideratum for further action. Mobilization of internal human and material resources remain the critical key.
- (7) Mobilizing the State and Local Governments on the need to evolve and implement poverty alleviation programmes that will address the root causes of poverty and underdevelopment.

Again, enabling legislations should be initiated to facilitate the permanent re-settlement of IDPs and particularly Nigerians displaced from the Bakassi Peninsula.

#### **4. The 2019 General Elections**

Opinions are divided on the outcome of the process. While some groups commended the INEC for conducting relatively free, fair and credible elections, others including some CLOs, Election Monitors and politicians equated the exercise as a national disgrace. The NPSA considers the issue very critical and hence shall organize a special roundtable later this morning to appraise the exercise with a view to availing areas of strengths and weaknesses of the Election Management Body, political parties, civil societies, the voters and law enforcement agencies. The participants are therefore invited to join the conversations with a view to consolidating democracy and electoral process in Nigeria. It is the considered view of NPSA that political parties and political actors remain critical in deepening democracy in Nigeria. However, the tendency for most political parties to promote dictatorship and by undermining democratic values in the selection of party candidates and fossilizing trend of acting within the beehive of the ruling party for **bread and butter reasons** fundamentally erode, desecrate and reverse democratic values. Party structures and practices should be institutionalized and democratized for open contestations.

#### **5. Restructuring of the Nigerian Political Economy**

In view of the seemingly overwhelming eclipse of centripetal by the centrifugal forces, the media is awash with calls for restructuring. Incidentally, these calls and conversations on the problematic differ in content, orientation, substance and applications. To resolve the debate and present coordinated and dispassionate intellectual assessment of the issue, the Association, in collaboration with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Foundation shall be organizing a plenary on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> July 2019 at 10am to interrogate the issue. We therefore invite your participation and inputs to enable the leadership of the country adopt appropriate template for political action.

#### **6. Continuous Incarceration of Chibok Girls and Leah Sharibu**

The NPSA commends the Federal Government for midwifing the release of some of the captured/abducted secondary school girls at Chibok, Borno state and Dapchi, Yobe state. However, the Association is concerned that several years after these dastard abductions, some of the girls are still in captivity and under the over lordship of Boko Haram terrorists. The fate of these girls and especially Leah Sharibu is still shrouded in utmost secrecy. NPSA therefore calls on the Federal

Government to expedite action on the release of the remaining girls. We also request the federal government to initiate judicial probe on the circumstances that led to the abductions with a view to determining and unmasking high level complicity in the matter.

## 7. Separatist and Secessionist Agitations

The Association views with concern the level and intensity of separatist and ethnic agitations in Nigeria. Currently newspapers and electronic media are littered with attacks and vituperations coming from ethno-regional champions, statesmen, the intelligentsia, stakeholders and opinion molders etc on various ‘vexing’ issues bordering on governance deficits and actions of the political leadership. The situation degenerated between 2016 and 2018 when there were obvious ethnic confrontations that nearly dismembered our country. Presently, the intolerance, hate speeches, hate actions and organized ethnic dissents are rife, continuing unabated and threatening national security. NPSA therefore advises the President of Nigeria to step up action towards addressing the issue of perceived and obvious exclusion in **conscious and unconscious** governance project that ensures that **“most of the king’s men are his kinsmen”**. When the scenario is sustained over time, the legitimacy matrix of governance shall continue to be decimated as the embers of ethno-regional intolerance, dissent and aggressive behavior are fanned to point of precipice. Effective and sincere **change Must begin with the organs of government**. Therefore, the Federal and State/Local governments must take the following steps:

- The Federal government must be more proactive in dealing with national issues and must be seen to be neutral and decisive in the act of governance
- All the levels of government must be averse to promoting ethnic and regional agenda. The resultant effect is growing dissent and emerging civil disobedience and growing sense of self-help. All court decisions with respect to incarcerated people should be obeyed and seen to be obeyed.
- The rule of law must be obeyed and projected by all levels of government. The use of the apparatus of the state to intimidate and harass the opposition must be anachronistic and rather regenerate **motion without movement**.
- Again, leadership of ethnic nationalities must appreciate the gains of heterogeneity and hence promote macro-nationalism through their respective utterances and actions.

## 8. Nigeria’s External Relations

Distinguished audience, NPSA is irked by the haphazard way in which the leadership conducts her external relations. In a highly shrinking global order characterized by competition, creativity and driven by economic goals, nation-states and global actors must adjust their actions to maximize the global benefits. Therefore, the orientation of the policy must be



adjusted in consonance with the demands of openness, liberalization and values of global capitalism without losing sight of micro-indigenous conditions and drives. Thus, Political Leadership in Nigeria must take the following steps:

1. Adjust Nigeria's foreign Policy orientation from being conservative, reactive, *ad hoc* and centered around projecting self-serving parochial goals to promoting national development agenda.
2. Ensure that experts with sound minds are appointed into institutions and agencies that formulate robust foreign policy agenda for Nigeria. This also involves engaging and tapping into the experiences of critical actors in this domain.
3. Relevant institutions must engage the South African Government to curb the spate of xenophobic attacks on Nigerians and other Africans residing in South Africa.
4. Nigeria's external relations must pursue the singular goal of advancing the welfare and well-being of Nigerians so that the incidence of global trotting in search of the needs of the stomach can be minimized.
5. Nigeria-Africa relations must reflect economic development of Nigerians and have the potency of improving security, political stability and democratic consolidation of the country. **The orientation of dash-dash politics** should be discouraged. Real Politik demands Real appreciation of what is and mobilizing the needed resources to **project internal development agenda** that will form the plank of external engagements.
6. Nigeria's relations with the **big global powers** must be driven by experts, seasoned diplomats and authorities who can maximize the country's potentials in dealing with their far-flung '**benevolent capitalism**' and **development pills** which essentially reproduce need-saddled citizens amid plenty.

Ladies and gentlemen, in concluding the Presidential address, I must, in a special way thank and appreciate all that contributed variously in making the 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference a reality and success. We are proud and shall continue to partner with you in the onerous task of advancing research, scholarship and collegiality. I specially thank the members of the NPSA for the trust, confidence and support we have received from you within the past one year. The Exco is glad to report that we have not misused these trusts. While relying on this framework, we approved on your behalf the amended Constitution which shall be presented for further action at the Business Meeting.

However, while standing on your continued trust and understanding and in view of the exigency of the office, we deployed specific portion of the amended Constitution to further advance the corporate image of the Association. On this note we have initiated a **Fellow of the Academy of Politics** to be conferred on distinguished founding fathers of the Association and demonstrated friends of the Association. We affirm that the process of the award/investiture will not be abused. No affiliate Association has the mandate to confer fellows in any disguise. However, all the names and

contributions of potential beneficiaries shall be forwarded to the Exco to process and confirm; and such award must be done by the National Executive of the Association.

The Exco therefore plead for your understanding and support in this regard. To this end, the following eminent scholars/personalities shall receive the maiden investiture of **Fellow of the Academy of Politics**:

1. **His Excellency, Professor Bolaji Akinyemi, CFR**
2. **Professor Adele Jinadu**
3. **Professor Okwudiba Nnoli**
4. **Professor Ali Danlami Yahaya, OFR**
5. **Professor Jonah Isawa Elaigwu**
6. **Professor Kimse Amamebi Biye Okoko**
7. **Professor Aloysius-Michaels Okolie**
8. **Professor Hassan A. Saliu**
9. **Professor Shuaibu A. Ibrahim**

Again, the EXCO nominated and approved the following Personalities for investiture as **Honorary Fellow of the Academy of Politics** for their outstanding support to the Association:

1. **His Excellency, Chief Engr David Nweze Umahi, the Executive Governor of Ebonyi State.**
2. **Mr Ephraim Akparawa Inyangeyen, Commissioner for Works, Akwa Ibom State Government.**

The EXCO and members congratulate the nominees. We do hope that the investees shall, by this recognition and investiture, work more closely with the Association to re-establish our corporate and critical image in Nigeria and beyond. This remains a task that requires your constant interventions.

Ladies and gentlemen, please be informed that in the persisting daunting challenges in Nigeria, the Association has not lost hope in the Nigerian Project. We therefore seize the medium to enjoin all Nigerians and good friends of the country to close ranks and support the political leaders to steer the country out of the murky waters of despondency, governance deficits and raging insecurity. The NPSA shall continue to extend hands of fellowship to the Political Leaders in the onerous task of re-building the fledgling foundation of the Nigerian State.

Finally, NPSA formally welcome participants, especially our special guests, the Cross River State government, the leadership and members of the South-South Chapter of the Association, Vice Chancellor of the University of Calabar, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Head, staff and students of the Department of Political Science and sponsors of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference. The Association specially appreciates the **Independent National Electoral Commission** and **Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Foundation** for sponsoring the roundtables on Elections in Nigeria and Political Restructuring respectively. NPSA appreciates all of us and invite you to partake in the banquet of enriching academic harvests.

Long live the University of Calabar

Long live the Department of Political Science, UNICAL  
Long live the South-South Political Science Association  
Long live the Nigeria Political Science Association  
Long live the International Political Science Association  
Long live Nigeria

**Thanks and Welcome to *The People's Paradise***

**Professor Aloysius-Michaels Okolie  
President, NPSA**