

PEACE, DEVELOPMENT AND WORK AGENDA FOR A NEW NIGERIA:

- By Dr. Obadiah Mailafia

Presidential Candidate of the African Democratic Congress (ADC)

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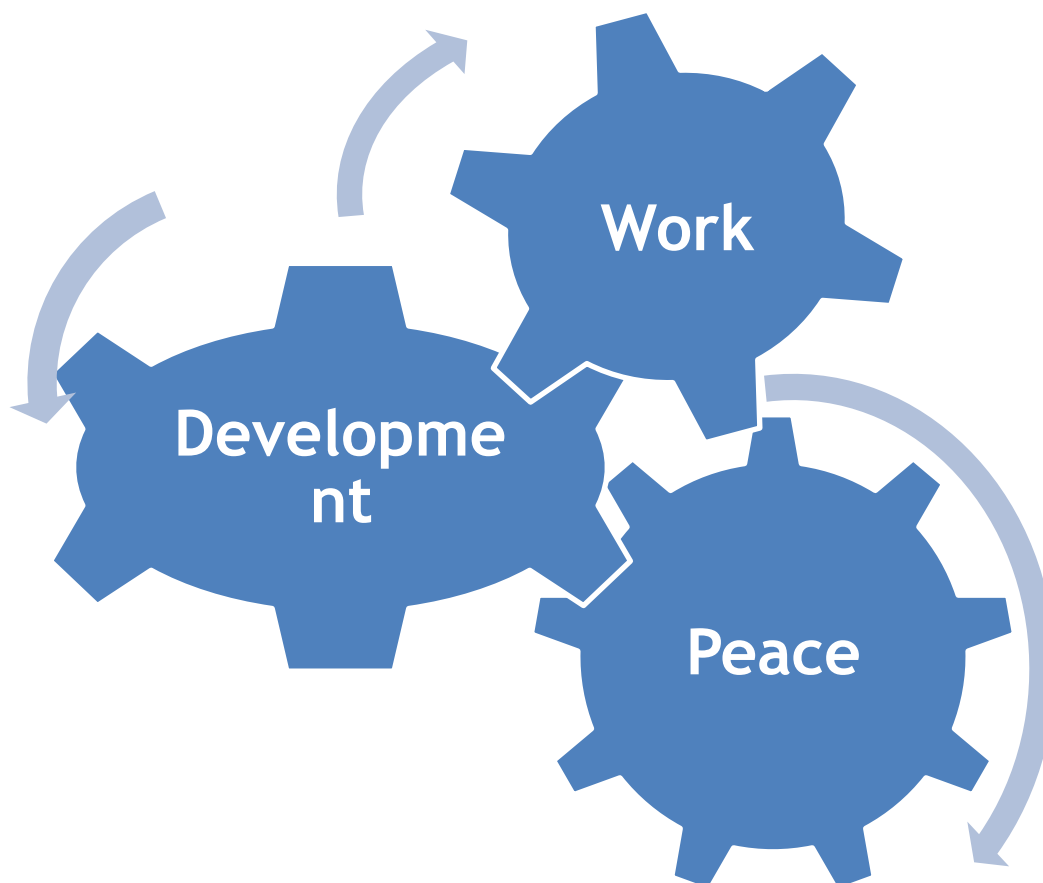
Context

Never before have the Nigerian people become as divided as we are today, with possible exception of the crises of the First Republic and the war years 1966-1970. Nigerians have become deeply divided along ethnic, religious and regional fault lines. The Boko Haram insurgency crisis and armed rural militias have exacerbated our deepest national divisions. Thousands have been killed and well over 3 million defenceless people and families are concentrated in rag-tag internally displaced persons (IDP) camps within and outside our borders. Insecurity has undermined food security across the country. It has driven out investors and has destroyed the prospects of long-term development. Our country has become a vicious vortex of poverty and despair rather than virtuous haven of peace, solidarity and prosperity.

We believe that the acts of genocidal violence committed by various armed bandits have the backing of local power and business elites. There are also shadowy international vultures hovering above the skies, waiting to eat up the dead bodies of our people and to gain access to our abundant natural resources. Nigeria's size and untold potential does not sit well with many of the enemies of our people who would do anything to truncate our s manifest destiny as the leader of Africa and one of the leading nations of the twenty-first century.

It is in this context that we launch this project for a New Nigeria. We believe in Nigeria's manifest destiny as a great nation under God. The entire destiny of the oppressed and humiliated 2 billion black peoples throughout Africa, the Americas, Europe, Asia and the far-flung islands of the seas. But we are also persuaded that our life-chances and our survival as a corporate political community cannot be guaranteed under the current structure of our federation, with its nearly bankrupt states and non-functioning, egregious local government areas. Our country will survive and flourish only when we are at peace within our homeland – with institutions that are anchored on integrity, justice and the genuine will of the people.

Figure 1: The 3 Pillars of a New Nigeria



Our vision of a New Nigeria is therefore anchored on the three interacting pillars of peace, development and work.

The spirit of our federalism derives from the reality that our diverse peoples wish to remain together as one country while enjoying relative autonomy and self-determination within their various nationalities and ethno-religious communities. Today, unfortunately, we have a government based on an illegitimate constitutional arrangement and a regime that is more nepotistic than any other in the history of our federal republic. We have allowed foreign armed bandits to invade our country and we have given them untrammelled licence to maim and kill, pillage and destroy defenceless communities in the villages and in the towns and cities especially in the Middle Belt region of our country.

We have been fed a diet of broken promises. The economy has been run aground. There is poverty and suffering everywhere. The youth have lost faith in the future and are desperate to cross the Sahara and to reach the risky overcrowded boats in the Mediterranean where, in all probability, they will perish. The future has become truly bleak for the vast majority of our people.

We therefore have a bounden duty imposed by history not only to vote out bad and incompetent government; it is imperative that we have an alternative leadership that will restore hope come 2019 -- leaders that will pursue the agenda of reform and restructuring to ensure a renewed federation that satisfies the deepest aspirations of our people to live in peace and to see the future of their children go forward. Our mandate and vision is anchored on 3 foundational pillars: peace, development and work. This is the commitment and social contract we intend to broker with the people of Nigeria.

I. The Pillar of Peace

Without peace there can be no social progress. Peace is everything. We must therefore actively pursue it. Peace in our context is constituted by four elements: tackling insecurity, restructuring and nation building and wrestling down the monster of corruption.

We are committed to pursuing the agenda of nation building that will give all Nigerians a sense collective belonging. The great Swiss historian Jacob Burkhart, in his epochal studies of the early modern state in renaissance Italy, famously described the political state as “a work of art”. The metaphor is very apt. It captures the understanding that nation states do not evolve by sheer chance or sheer historical accident. They are created and nurtured by statesmen. A state, like a piece of art, must be built with vision, creativity, patience and dexterity. Franz Fanon also declared that the task of every generation is to discover its mission and to fulfil or betray it. The mission of our generation is to re-imagine and reinvent Nigeria as a country that is both forward-looking and democratic; a progressive country anchored on the foundations of the peace, positive science, the rule of law, freedom and social justice.

1) Tackling Insecurity

The greatest challenge facing our country today is security. If it is not Boko Haram, it is armed rural herdsmen militias; and if it is not armed robbery it is kidnappers. Nigeria has become the kidnap capital of the world. We are not only a society where banks and bullion vans are waylaid by daredevil armed robbers; rural banditry has become so rampant that life in our agrarian countryside has become, in the words of the English political philosopher Thomas Hobbes, “*nasty, brutish and short*”. Most Nigerian families sleep at night with at least one eye open. Nobody is safe. On top of that we have the unenviable record of being the country with the worst road carnage in the world. It is estimated that over 20,000 Nigerians lose their lives to automobile accidents each year.

Underpinning these problems is the challenge of human security. We believe that the first duty of civil government is to secure the commonwealth. This has been the first

dictum of public administration since Aristotle and Plato. A government that cannot secure the lives and properties of its citizens has failed in its most elementary duties. We on our part are staunchly committed to securing the common peace by tackling the insurgency and demobilising the armed bandits to ensure that our people live in peace and without fear.

To enhance the security of our people we must modernise the police service in Nigeria; giving them better equipment and enhanced training in detecting, countering and prosecuting crime. We must dig deep into the roots and causes of crime. We are particularly committed to the model that has worked so well in Tunisia, where greater emphasis is blessed on intelligence gathering to nip crime in the bud before it rears its ugly head.

We are also committed to building a virile and modern army. We see the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) as a model some of whose elements can be applied to our situation. We need a better trained, more disciplined and better equipped military that will defend our people and secure our sovereign territorial integrity as a nation. We need to create a military-industrial complex whereby the armed forces work with industry in developing our defence capability and doing research and innovation that brings value-added not only to the task of national defence but also to our technological development and capability as a country.

We also committed to building a new security architecture for our country. We shall create a new Ministry for National Security headed by a senior ranking minister. Agencies such as State Security Services (SSS), Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA), National Intelligence Agency (NIA) and the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) will be streamlined and rationalised to ensure that they work in concert and in a coordinated fashion rather than in their current anarchic and rivalrous manner. We also intend to decentralise the police to ensure that law-enforcement officers can leverage on local knowledge and local social capital to develop effective tools of policing at the local level. In addition, we shall create a new force of Forest Guards, to be largely recruited from local communities. Their role will be to patrol rural communities and ensure that rural bandits are apprehended and brought to justice. We shall patrol our borders more actively to ensure that criminal armed bandits will not gain untrammelled access across our borders.

2) Restructuring and Nation Building

Nation building entails mobilising all the youth and people of this country – men and women, rich and poor. We need a new coalition of Nigerians who genuinely believe in democracy and social justice. We must fight to take our country back. Nation building entails symbolic as well as substantive commitments to ensuring that the country is governed in a fair and representative manner. The government and leadership must reflect our diversity while the task of economic development must embrace every region and every section of our country; giving people a sense of belonging and hope.

Our ultimate commitment is to ensure the restructuring of our federation in a manner that allows genuine federalism to flourish. We need not only a strong union; we need

a strong union that allows our diverse peoples and regions to enjoy autonomy, self-determination and internal government. We have nothing to fear except fear itself.

Those who fear restructuring are mainly those who have enjoyed unjustified privileges as a result of the illegitimate military-inspired constitution that has given them financial and other privileges at the expense of the rest of our country. Despite all this, the North remains the most impoverished region in our country. The incidence of poverty is as high as 92 percent in Zamfara, compared to 35 percent in Lagos State. Youth unemployment is as high as 70 percent in Sokoto State as compared to 10 percent in Ogun State. Disease, illiteracy and youth drug addiction define the anatomy of poverty in Northern Nigeria. Redesigning the structure of our federation is not to punish and worsen the social conditions of our Northern brethren. We must be committed to assisting them overcome poverty, disease, illiteracy and destitution. We must reinvent Nigeria as a conscionable and compassionate country that is genuinely committed to progress and happiness of all its citizens.

3) Wrestling Down the Monster of Corruption

Former World Bank President Paul Wolfensohn famously likened it to a cancer that literally consumes the soul of nations: “Corruption is the largest impediment to investment. And it is not just a theoretical concept...It becomes clear when people die from being given bad drugs, because good drugs have been sold under the table. It becomes clear when farmers are robbed of their livelihoods.”

It is well-known that corruption retards human development. When public officials steal funds targeted at social programmes such as education and health, they rob ordinary people of the opportunity to improve their life-chances. Where there is corruption there you will also find poverty, income inequality, illiteracy and poor health. And where corruption is at a minimum, there you will find improved livelihoods, knowledge, better health and improved well-being.

According to the World Economic Forum, there is an inverse correlation between corruption and national competitiveness. By national competitiveness we are referring to the set of institutions, policies and factors that determine a country's level of productivity. It seems clear that national competitiveness and corruption do not make easy bedfellows. One has to give way for the other.

There is empirical evidence that corruption undermines the efficiency of the free market economy. In an ideal world, markets working with undistorted price signals enable individuals to choose the products and services that best satisfy their needs. This is the working of Adam Smith's ‘invisible hand’. Corruption is a disease that cripples the free workings of the invisible hand. Those who believe that corruption is to be accepted in developing countries if it oils an otherwise creaking system will have to think again.

Corruption undermines democracy, distorts markets, increases risk in commercial dealings, scares investors and erodes societal trust while undermining the upward redistribution of wealth from poor to rich. Like cancer, it moves from organ to organ,

eventually affecting every institution of government. Corruption distorts the equitable allocation of wealth in society in a situation where public policies are made not in view of the public good but for the advancement of the narrow selfish interests of ruling elites. Corruption affects everything from services delivery to law and order, environmental degradation and the sanctity of age-old societal norms.

Grand corruption can also threaten long-term economic stability. It slows growth, weakens institutional capacity, distorts budget allocation and erodes the legitimacy of government. A government without legitimacy will soon lack the moral right to be obeyed. Once the social contract that binds government to the governed is undermined, the society is likely to become unstable economically as well as politically.

Corruption has also been found to be a 'push factor' for immigration, especially among the youths. It has been estimated that thousands of African youths, many of them Nigerians, die every year on the perilous journey across the Sahara in a desperate bid to reach the illusory Eldorado of Europe. Corruption has undermined their hopes of a better life at home. So they deem it worth the risk of death to cross the Mediterranean into Europe in search of a better future. Among the immigrants fleeing our land are young professionals such as engineers and doctors, in whom our state has invested so much. The brain drain robs our country of much needed human capital that could contribute so much to our national development. But it is clear that our young people will only be persuaded to remain at home when we offer them the opportunities and hope of a better life.

Apart from the economic and social consequences that we have mentioned, corruption corrodes the very soul of society while undermining its moral virtues; sapping the energy of the people and discouraging integrity and honest effort. When young people see that only thieves and robbers are making it, they will be discouraged from honest work and will seek to make it by hook or by crook. We would then have become a land of scoundrels where, according to the Greek historian Thucydides, the "powerful take what they can while the weak grant what they must".

Some of the methods used by the current administration in their anticorruption drive may look rather clumsy. But what matters, as far as I am concerned, is that they achieve results. Some of the actions have borne positive fruit. Trillions of naira have been recovered from corrupt officials back into the national treasury. The Treasury Single Account (TSA) promises to reduce fraudulent behaviour that has often taken place with the collusion of bankers. Public expenditure can be better monitored and controlled. What is important is that, in everything, we must respect the constitutional rights of the accused, including respect for the rule of law and for due process.

Going forward, it must be made clear that fighting corruption is necessary, but it is not in itself an economic policy. It can only compliment a coherent development strategy to re-boot growth and ensure long-term sustainable development.

I also think that the fire-fighting approach is not quite sustainable. Tackling endemic corruption requires much more than dawn raids by intelligence service officers. It requires that the anticorruption agencies map out a strategy and roadmap for their

efforts. It requires research, painstaking analysis and high level intelligence information gathering skills.

In addition, I believe that the proposed anticorruption court needs to be set up as soon as possible. It may well require integrating the EFCC with ICPC into a super-organisation headed by an anticorruption Tsar. The new organisation should be given judicial powers to arrest, prosecute and sentence.

A few countries in Africa and the emerging world have made considerable progress in anticorruption. We can learn a lot from such countries as Ethiopia, Botswana, Namibia, Uganda and Rwanda. These countries have created strong national supreme audit institutions that have served as a bulwark against corrupt behaviour. In addition, they have put in place instruments for monitoring and evaluation of government programmes in a manner that ensures accountability for results and impact. Some of these countries have also enshrined the principles of judicial review in their administrative laws so as to ensure that all actions of public officials can be subject to judicial scrutiny. We need to imbibe those lessons in redesigning a more comprehensive and more strategic approach to fighting corruption.

Finally, it is estimated that Nigerian nationals have assets in excess of US\$200 billion, most of it stolen and stashed away in foreign bank vaults. We have no hope of ever recovering our stolen patrimony because of the intricate laws underpinning property rights, in addition to the self-interests of the host states. Our best hope is to declare a two-year amnesty by which those who have stolen our wealth would be free to repatriate back to our country. No questions would be asked. However, after the expiration of the amnesty major steps will be taken to prosecute and imprison such people until they take steps to forcibly return the funds. Just 50% of such stolen funds could be an untold boon if invested in our economy. We need an approach that is both wise and pragmatic.

II) Battling Underdevelopment and Poverty

Battling poverty and underdevelopment requires that we focus majorly on the economy. Economic management is the key to our common prosperity. This cannot happen in a vacuum. What we drive our prosperity is a new ethos of leadership anchored on development and social progress. We are committed to reinventing the state as a developmental institution that promotes poverty-alleviation and ensures long-term prosperity. The battle for development will be focused in four main areas: creating a developmental state, revamping our power and infrastructures, boosting agribusiness and food security, and implementing an industrial revolution.

1. Building a Developmental State

For a long time, economists, in my opinion, had never given enough attention to the role of the state in economic development. The neoclassical orthodoxy and its stepchild the so-called 'Washington Consensus' which dominated the eighties and nineties tended to assume away the role of government; concentrating, instead on the role of markets and prices as the key to the transformation of national economies. The work of the new institutional economists -- in particular Douglass

North, Ronald Coase and Elinor Ostrom – has brought back attention to the critical role of government and institutions in the making of the prosperity of nations.

In our day and age, not only do institutions matter; the role of the state is critical and, indeed, central to economic development and structural transformation. The key functions of the state as understood in our twenty-first century requires, the following key elements: the presence of the rule of law; monopoly of the use of violence; effective administrative control; sound management of public finances; massive investment in human capital, including education, health, knowledge, training and skills; enhancement of citizenship rights through expanded opportunities for participation and ensuring reciprocal rights and obligations to all citizens; development of a competitive and forward-looking market economy.

The effective exercise of state authority in a manner that promotes economic growth while ensuring political stability requires not only high quality visionary leadership; it requires a sound and professionalized bureaucracy. Public policies must be suffused with social justice, inclusive growth and what the philosopher John Rawls termed the idea of ‘public reason’.

What is crucial, in my view, is a common vision and commitment of all the political and economic elites to the creation of a developmental state that would accelerate the process of economic growth and wealth-creation. In contemporary development economics discourse, when scholars use the term ‘the developmental state’, they are generally referring to a country where the government has assumed the driver’s seat in propelling the course of economic growth and social transformation. According to the American scholar Peter Lewis, developmental states are those that have “successfully provided the collective goods for high growth and competitiveness”.

A key feature of the developmental state is commitment to property rights, strong markets and the sanctity of contracts. This provides clear signals for foreign investors who also enjoy tax holidays and other incentives. Most developmental states have also invested heavily in human capital development. They have given priority to ensuring universal compulsory education, expansion of higher education, especially in technical and engineering fields, and in the training and acquisition of industrial skills by its workers.

Developmental states tend to insulate their technocratic elites from societal pressures by giving them the autonomy to develop and implement policies for rapid growth and structural transformation. They have done this through the reform of the civil service and the creation of a merit-based bureaucracy, with functionaries that are well-paid and possess a vision of national destiny and purpose. The technocrats enjoy the power to issue orders and to guide markets and impose discipline on the private sector. The state guides the markets, with strict controls over investment flows.

Reinventing government in countries such as ours requires four other elements: (i) public sector reforms, (ii) administrative decentralisation, (iii) instituting the entrepreneurial state and (iv) structural diversification of the economy.

We in Africa need a civil service that is based on merit and professionalism. This is because, no matter how exalted the vision of the statesman, if he does not have the right civil servants to implement that vision, it would come to nought. China has never pretended to be a democracy. But it is a meritocracy. Since medieval times the Chinese have instituted merit as the foundation of their national system. And the system has delivered. We in Africa need a reformed public service that is not only cost effective but also re-engineers progress and prosperity. To my utter disappointment, the New Public Management (NPM) philosophy that swept through much of the world in the last two decades bypassed our continent. The NPM has been anchored on reforming civil service systems by making them performance-oriented and focused on delivery of quality, with measurable benchmarks, transparency and accountability. Better late than never!

Linked to this is the need for administrative decentralisation. An over-centralised state has been the bane of development in Africa. Over-centralisation has tended to go hand-in-hand with corruption and tyranny. Countries such as Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, and Namibia have made significant progress in terms of decentralisation. But countries such as ours are far behind by a long shot. We need to restore hope to our people by strengthening local government and local self-determination. People must be empowered to take responsibility for their own future. The state must cease from being an overbearing Leviathan that sucks the blood of the people instead of being their servant.

Thirdly, we need an entrepreneurial state – a smart state that supports innovation and generates critical public goods that support creativity and higher level productivity. Mariana Mazzucato, an economist at the University of Sussex, has done original work on the role of government in high technology innovation. Her book, *The Entrepreneurial State* (Anthem Books 2014) has made some waves among economists and policy scientists with regard to the old debate about industrial policy. Mazzucato shows that, ironically, at a time when America was pushing the ideology of deregulation and privatisation in developing countries through the World Bank and the IMF, their government was doing the very opposite by intervening in strategic high technology industries. She provides evidence of crucial government support for ICT in Silicon Valley which made those industries world leaders. What is advocated is not government setting up companies; rather, it is about the state investing in building a sound business environment and incentive systems that drive innovation. If it is good for America it has to be good for Africa.

Fourthly, we need to diversify the economy. For centuries, Africa has been nothing but a supplier of slave labour and raw materials. The lessons of world development make it abundantly clear that if all of us are producing the same raw materials we will reap the whirlwind through terms of trade loss and the ‘fallacy of composition’. We would be fools to listen to them.

From the decade of the eighties up to the early nineties Nigeria embarked up a series of structural reforms under the tutelage of the Bretton Woods Institutions. These reforms were predicated on privatisation of state enterprises, liberalisation of key sectors of the economy to ensure that the market rather than the state becomes the key driver of the economy. These reforms had, at best, limited impact. For one thing, the fact that they were largely imposed from outside robbed them of the necessary legitimacy among the Nigerian people. They were also implemented

without conviction because of the absence of trust by the bureaucracy and key decision-makers.

The second wave of reforms came from 1999, with the inception of the Third Republic under President Olusegun Obasanjo. The new administration sought to restore Nigeria's credibility among the nations by ensuring a sounder basis for political and economic governance. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) was established to fight corruption and rent-seeking behaviour that had become rampant in the public sector. The external sector was opened up and foreign investors were encouraged to bring in their capital, both through portfolio and foreign direct investments. State-owned institutions such as NEPA and NITEL were unbundled. The results were particularly impactful in terms of mobile telephony. In a situation where people with access to the telephone were no more than 300,000; today, access to mobile telephony is over 100 million. The power sector reforms were less successful. Despite investments of more than US\$20 billion of public funds, electricity generation has never quite exceeded the 5,000 MW mark. Part of the problem has been the mix of incentives that would encourage the power distribution companies (DISCOs) to plough back their profits into further investments in the sector. There has also been little or no investment in power distribution, leading to a situation whereby excess power generation has had no outlet for distribution to consumers.

The launching of such economic programmes as the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) aimed to empower the people, generate jobs and ensure accelerated growth. As part of these reforms, the CBN took the lead in the banking consolidation reforms that led to the transformation of our banking and finance sector. Even at that, these reforms did not prevent the subsequent crisis in the banking sector that led to the scenario of bad loans which necessitated the creation of the Asset Management Corporation of Nigeria (AMCON), the so-called bad loans' bank. Some efforts were made to privatize Ajaokuta Steel and the 5 government-owned refineries. But these were done under rather shady conditions. Those sectors remain comatose. In the case of the refineries, the sharks that control diesel and refined petroleum importation have colluded to ensure the refineries never work so that they can continue to exploit the Nigerian people through the extortionate payments of highly questionable annual subsidies exceeding N1.4 trillion. The Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB) has largely been killed by collusive action between petroleum/diesel importers and the oil majors that have resisted every efforts to allow our people take full control of their most important national patrimony.

Now is the time for our country to enter its third phase of economic and structural reforms. The focus this time around has to be on the public sector, which employs more than 3 million people across the three tiers of government. There was a time when the Nigerian civil service was one of the best in the entire Commonwealth of Nations. Today, we face a sorry state of affairs. Corruption, rent-seeking and sloth are rife; wages remain abysmally low; nepotism has become the norm; professionalism virtually non-existent. The new phase of public sector and institutional reforms must be anchored on restoring merit, discipline and professionalism in the civil service.

We understand that the Federal Government recently inaugurated the Project Management Teams for the implementation of the 2017-2020 Federal Civil Service Strategy and Implementation Plan developed by the Office of the Head of Civil Service of the Federation, Winifred Oyo-Ita. Without prejudice to what they are doing, we do not believe the approach is the right one. Just as doctors cannot heal themselves, we do not believe that civil servants are the people best placed to initiate their own institutional reforms. We will need to create a new commission with a limited mandate to review and oversee the reform process. In so doing we will need to revisit the recommendations of the Steve Orosanye Committee on the rationalisation of Ministries, Departments and Agencies of government (MDAs) to ensure greater coordination while minimising waste and duplication of functions. We do not believe that this institutional repositioning will of necessity involve the mass retrenchment of civil servants. That will be contrary to the spirit of our proposed reforms. What we intend to achieve is greater professionalism, effectiveness and greater accountability for results. We need nothing less than a new civil service for a New Nigeria.

The third phase of the structural reforms will entail that the government keeps out of the business of business, beyond ensuring fair competition, guidance and enforcement of the rules of the game. We need a strong and effective government, not necessarily a large and domineering one. We believe that markets are the best instruments for delivering collective welfare and the Good Life. But markets often suffer from institutional imperfections, oligopolistic behaviour and information asymmetries. The role of the state is therefore to ensure that markets work and that they deliver growth and prosperity in terms of the greatest good to the greatest number.

2. Tackling the Power Conundrum

Among the binding constraints to national development is power and infrastructures. Since the unbundling of the national Power Holding Company, electricity supply has deteriorated. The so-called privatised Distribution Companies (DISCOs) have had no incentive to invest and expand their services. The flat charges that they were allowed to impose on consumers by the National Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) has meant that the DISCOs have become a cash cow for their shareholders because whether they provide adequate services or not they are guaranteed a regular cash flow. Although we are told that Nigeria currently has attained 7,000 MW in terms of power generation, the power sector is hampered by weak transmission networks, to the extent that an excess of 2,000 MW currently goes to waste. We need to revisit the sector. We need a due diligence on the activities of the DISCOs such that those that fall below expectations in terms of performance can be re-sold those who are prepared to invest in and revitalise them for optimal performance.

We are also committed to investing heavily in power transmission systems by making deals with foreign investors to come in build power transmission equipment within our country. We will intensify the building of transmission lines and ensure that distribution networks reach all our communities, rural as well as urban. At the same time we will hasten the completion of the various power projects. In addition, we will begin discussions with Russia or Ukraine on development of nuclear power. We

believe this to be the long-term answer to our critical shortfalls in electricity. We are committed to providing electricity for all. It is for the necessary foundation for building a technological-industrial state and to generate millions of jobs for our young people.

3. *Rebuilding our Infrastructures*

Rebuilding our parlous physical infrastructures are necessary to securing a more prosperous future for our people. We are committed to expanding and modernising our ports and harbours, building bigger and more modern airports. We are committed to launching a ship building industry in our country to ensure we valorise our vast sea-faring potentials.

Equally important is our commitment to development of a robust rail network. It is a shame that our railways have virtually disappeared, until recent times. Since colonial times the railways were not only a vehicle for economic development; they served as instruments of nation building. Nigerians of all hues lived and worked on the railways. Both Nnamdi Azikiwe and Ikemba Odimegwu Ojukwu were born in Zungeru, in current Niger state. Both their fathers worked in the railways. Hausa became their first language of communication until they went back to Igbo land as teenagers. When the railways flourished Nigerians travelled easily from one corner of the country to the other. When the railways disappeared we became strangers to one another. We are therefore committed to revitalising our railways. But we are opposed to the current old traditional gauge system. We are committed to developing twenty-first century fast trains that will provide cheap, safe and reliable transportation for the majority of our people.

We are particularly impressed by what Ethiopia has done recently. They have reached a deal with the Chinese whereby they have moved their engineers and designers to Ethiopia. They are assembling the coaches and engines of the trains in Ethiopia; at the same time training Ethiopian engineers and technicians in rail technology. We need to bring the best experts and investors to come to our country and build the rail engines and coaches within our country. We need to revitalise our iron and steel and machine tools precision-engineering technology so that all the most important components are produced in Nigeria.

We have a vision of fast trains linking Abuja, Kano, Maiduguri and Port Harcourt. Linked to this is the need to develop a network of trams and light rails in our urban cities. The heavy traffic jams that continue to increase in our major urban cities are likely to worsen with the current rate of urbanisation and demographics. The long-term solution is to build trams and light rails to ease the transportation nightmare. It is possible if we commit our hearts and minds to it.

While our biggest emphasis will be on the railways we will not forget our roads and highways. Our commitment is first of all, to fill up all the pot holes on our dilapidated roads. This will save so many lives. Having done that, we shall rebuild the principal highways throughout our country. We shall enter a deal with foreign investors to exploit the vast bitumen that exists in Ondo State. We shall employ 3 million of our youths in highway development. We are also committed to linking most of our towns

and villages with viable road networks to provide a boost for distribution of agricultural produce from the local farms.

4. *Agribusiness and Food Security*

The French statesman Napoleon Bonaparte famously declared that “an army marches on its stomach”. By this he meant that the strength of a nation lies in its food and agricultural self-sufficiency. Nigeria has been one of the leading agricultural nations in the developing world. More than 70 percent of our population work in the rural-agrarian sector. Much of our food production system relies on peasant agriculture, with all the constraints and limitations that this entails.

At the time of independence Nigeria was a leader in such agricultural and raw material products as cocoa, palm oil, cocoa and groundnuts. The famous groundnut pyramids of Kano became major landmarks defining our economy and culture. With the discovery of oil, agriculture declined precipitously. A major part of the problem derived from the nature of the petrodollar political economy anchored, as it is, on capital-intensive offshore production by multinational oil companies. The sector employed few people. Dependence on collection of oil rents from the oil majors meant that succeeding governments owed no loyalty to the citizens of our country. The citizens on, their part, felt they were in no position to demand accountability from their rulers. The social contract between the government and the governed disappeared. From the viewpoint of the economy, the availability of cheap dollars encouraged massive importation of food and other items, leading to an artificially high exchange. High exchange rates made local agricultural produce to be expensive while imports became cheaper. Local farmers became discouraged.

Today, Nigeria is a major food-deficit country. According to a recent study, between 1990 and 2011 our average annual food imports of N1.923 trillion. This translates into a daily import bill of N1 billion or US\$9.28 million. In the year 2010 alone, our country spent N635 billion on importation of wheat, N356 billion on rice, some N217 billion on sugar and N97 billion on fish in spite our considerable endowments in marine resources, rivers, lakes and creeks. According to the Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria (ARCON), in 2017 the country spent a whopping N1 trillion on importation of rice, wheat, sugar and fish alone. Today, Nigeria is the largest importer of American wheat, with a N635 billion import bill annually. We are also the world’s number two importer of rice at N356bn while we spend N217 billion on sugar and N97bn on fish imports annually. Countries such as Thailand and India saw our country as the dumping ground for their surplus rice. We understand that the Indians used to export to us rice that had spent more than a decade in their storage facilities. There has at least been one incident of “plastic rice” that was allegedly imported from China.

Massive expenditure on food imports has not only discouraged local farm production; it has put additional pressure on external reserves, which in turn have forced the central bank to shore up the exchange rate by further depleting the reserves by its regular interventions in the foreign exchange market. A country that depends on foreign imports to feed its people, in spite of having abundant and fertile agricultural lands and rivers can only be undermining its own future.

We need to re-launch a massive agricultural-agrarian revolution in this country. Food security and food self-sufficiency must be placed at the heart of these efforts. Part of the tragedy of recent public policy with regards to rural agriculture is to downplay the smallholder peasant in favour of large foreign multinational companies. We forget that the so-called Green Revolution in Asia was anchored on the peasant farmer, accompanied with subsidies on vital inputs and development of massive networks of agricultural extension workers. Whilst there can be a place for foreign companies, we worry about the use of artificial and genetically modified seed varieties that may pose a long-term danger not only to the health of our populace but also to the survival of indigenous seed varieties that our forefathers have developed since time immemorial. We need to empower our researchers and scientists to work on our indigenous seeds and to develop them into highly improved varieties that will bring optimal yields while enhancing the nutritional quality of the food intakes of our population. Nutrition does matter and so does the quality of the food intake. Today, obesity is on the increase, and, with it, associated diseases such as diabetes, cancer and heart diseases. The solution is to improve the nutritional quality of our food system and to ensure that our people have a healthier diet intake.

While we acknowledge that the Anchor Borrowers' Programme by the CBN has led to some improvements in local production of rice and other food items, we believe that the cost does not tally with the outcomes. These interventions are highly costly and we suspect that the apex bank does not have an adequate mechanism to monitor the programme and to ensure accountability for impact and results. Secondly, we do not believe that, in the best of all possible worlds, it is the duty of a central bank to engage in such massive fiscal expenditures. When a central bank tries to do all manner of things outside its core mandate it will eventually disperse its energy and undermine its own long-term institutional effectiveness in the area of price stability, monetary soundness and growing the economy while generating jobs and welfare. Therefore, these interventions must have inbuilt mechanisms to ensure not only sustainability but prudent use of public funds and rigorous accountability for impact and results.

5. *Industrialisation*

We are committed to making our country a first-rate industrial-technological nation. To achieve this we will do all it takes to re-launch our industrial revolution. We will invest in our people; develop our talents and revitalise our steel industry, without which industrialisation cannot be achieved. The steel industry is particularly strategic, given the role of precision-engineering and machine-tools industry to building car and rail engines and other high engineering works. Our strategy is to ensure that an agrarian revolution produces enough food not only for our domestic needs but also for regional and international markets. We shall invest in agro-based processing SMEs as a cornerstone to launching an industrial revolution.

To attain accelerated industrialisation, we would need to overcome the key bottlenecks to enhancing productivity in the manufacturing/industrial sector.

First, there is the question of low level technology and poor technology choice. While new processes and procedures have revolutionised the manufacturing industry in the

industrialized nations, industries in Nigeria, especially textiles, cement, bakery, leather, paper manufacturing and many others are producing with 1970s machinery, giving rise to frequent breakdown and reduction in capacity utilization rates. Low technology is responsible for the inability of local industry to produce capital goods such as raw materials, spare parts and machinery, the bulk of which are imported. Equally vital is the imperative of building a viable machine tools and precision engineering sector. This, in turn, requires a viable iron and steel sector, which, in our case, has remained in the doldrums for decades, after frittering away over US\$18 billion on Ajaokuta.

Related to the foregoing is the problem of low capacity utilization in the manufacturing sector. Capacity utilization, which has been in path-dependent decline since the 1980s, stands at between 30 and 40 per cent. This has been blamed on frequent power outages, lack of funds to procure inputs, falling demand for manufactures and frequent strikes and lockouts by workers and their employers.

Thirdly, lack of funding is an acute handicap. We are aware of efforts by CBN and development finance institutions to make credit available to the real sector. Not only are these not enough; they are having the perverse effect of crowding-out the commercial banks. The latter, on their part, have been reluctant to lend to the real sector; preferring to deploy excess funds into the stock market and treasury bonds that pay more with less risk.

Fourthly, there is also the fact of high operating costs related to poor infrastructures, lack of adequate electricity and other structural bottlenecks. Nigeria is the largest generator-importing nation in the world. The EU envoy in Nigeria recently estimated that Nigerians spend over US\$46 million on imported petrol/diesel to fuel their private generators. When individual businesses have to use diesel –fuelled generators, it adds a huge cost to their businesses and renders them uncompetitive, quite apart from the inevitable long-term environmental costs. Increased cost, traced largely to poor performing infrastructural facilities, high interest and exchange rates and diseconomies of scale, have resulted into increased unit price of manufactures, low effective demand for goods, liquidity squeeze and fallen capacity utilization rates.

Fifth, we need massive railway networks. It is simply unthinkable that a country of almost 200 million people should not have a network of high-speed trains linking our major cities and towns. Railways are still the cheapest means of transport anywhere. The dependence on road haulage and trucking adds enormous costs to production and logistics services. It also explains why our highways have the worst carnage record in the world. In Britain the steam engine was central to the development of the rail system and to the industrial revolution that began in those isles, sweeping through France and the rest of the continent. The massive trans-continental railway in the United States and the great trans-Canadian Railway were central elements in the industrialisation of North America. Railways are necessary not only for industrialisation but also for nation building. Railway workers in early modern Nigeria lived and worked together. People travelled easily and cheaply. When the railways were killed by a combination of governmental incompetence and the trucking cartels, transportation costs soared and industrialisation was gravely impeded.

Sixth, there is also the fact of low skills. In spite of the availability of surplus labour, the education system churns out young people with poor technical skills. The

humanities have tended to be more popular than the technical and engineering disciplines. Due to strikes by university teachers and poor government funding, standards have fallen. Many of our graduates are barely literate. The solution lies in launching an educational revolution that is anchored on science, technology, engineering and mathematics – the so-called STEM disciplines.

Seventh, it is evident that our business culture is more focused on trading rather than industrial production. There is quite simply the absence of an industrial manufacturing tradition, unlike Germany, for example, where small and medium-scale family owned *Mittelstand* firms have been at the heart of its manufacturing prowess. Only few Nigerians are ready to take the kind of entrepreneurial risk in industrial investments that will make Nigeria an industrial-technological state. This is not only due to the poor business environment but also due to the absence of a robust industrial tradition.

Eighth, lack of policy consistency and absence of effective institutional supports by government has continued to be a major challenge. In countries such as South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia, government is committed to nurturing industries and small businesses, providing knowledge, skills and a robust environment in which they can thrive. Such supports, unfortunately, are virtually non-existent in Nigeria. Those countries also design their industrial development plans covering decades while we ourselves were foolishly persuaded to jettison planning altogether.

Ninth, there is also the challenge posed by the WTO's liberal international trading regime by which developing countries like ours can no longer invoke the 'infant industry argument' to justify some form of limited protectionism. The ECOWAS Common External Tariff (CET) took off a couple of years ago. The CET is considered a major step towards signing the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the EU. Several contentious issues have forced Nigeria not to sign the agreement, a fact that has angered the Europeans. The latter have started off some kind of low-intensity trade war against us as a consequence. While the EPA has some potential for trade-creation, we have legitimate fears about trade dumping by highly subsidised European farmers, with many critics arguing that it would result in a massive influx of cheap goods from Europe to the detriment of local industries and jobs.

We will need to confront these demons if we are to have an industrial/manufacturing future. There is also the challenge posed by the new African Continental Free Trade Area (ACFTA) that Nigeria has refused to subscribe to. We need to use our influence on the continent to remove the offending clauses and to ensure the free trade area accords with our long-term strategic national interests.

Finally, there is the challenge of China. The Chinese are now our biggest trading partners and investors. Beijing has strong interests in our oil and natural gas, solid minerals and infrastructures sectors. However, we cannot overlook the problem of trade dumping, as substandard Chinese goods flood our market. Managing China will be central to our industrial future. We must engage with them to bring their capital and technology to invest in our country and to build our domestic industrial capacity rather than remain their backyard and dumping-ground.

III. Work, Job-Creation and Human Capital

The third pillar of our New Nigeria vision is anchored on work, job creation and human capital development. In our twenty-first century digital industrial civilisation, people are the new wealth of nations. A country that invests in the education, training and health of its people will be at a more competitive edge than those who do not. Unfortunately, we in Nigeria have continued to pursue a policy that downgrades human capital. The youth have been left out of much of our economic development programmes. They justifiably feel abandoned.

1) *Youth and Women Empowerment*

Nigeria's demographic population currently stands at an estimated 200 million people. Out of this population, young people are the overwhelming majority. Some 70 percent of our population comprises of those within the age of 1 to 24.

Nigeria's life-expectancy is currently estimated at 53 years. It is a tragic figure, because the average life-expectancy in the Japanese island of Okinawa is 100. Most advanced countries life-expectancy hovers above 80 years. In Nigeria, by contrast, life is the way the English political philosopher Thomas Hobbes characterised the state of nature – nasty, brutish and short. This state of nature affects our youth more than most other segments of the population. They are the ones that suffer violence, unemployment, poverty, disempowerment and marginalisation.

School enrolment in Nigeria is still a low 57.6 percent. However, the good side of the story is that youth literacy in our country is a relatively high 75.6 percent, well above the national adult literacy rate of 51.1 percent.

According to the UN, Nigeria's Youth Development Index, a measure of the youth benefitting from social development interventions, is at a mere 0.41, placing us at 140 out of 170 countries.

The youth of our country face enormous challenges. For one thing, our system offers them little hope and little opportunities. The youth, by definition, are endowed with tremendous energy. That energy, psychologists tell us, must find an outlet one way or the other. If it cannot find outlet in creativity, it will find it in destructiveness. But find an outlet, it must.

This is the crux of the problem. Our youths of today have no pride in their country whatsoever. Most are scheming how to leave the country for so-called "greener pastures". They have been brainwashed into believing that the streets of Europe and North America are paved with gold. Those of us who have lived abroad never tell them the other side of the story – the story of racism, fascism, Nazism and violent discrimination in the advanced industrial nations. We shield the fact of Global Apartheid from their consciousness.

Another challenge afflicting our youth is drugs and narcotics. It is estimated that up to 30 percent are into one form of substance abuse or the other. Over 20 percent of northern youth, for example, are into codeine, Benylin, Emzolyn, Drohpnoyl,

Tramadol and other drugs. Some months ago, a BBC documentary by Ruona Meyer, titled, 'Secrets of Nigeria's illicit codeine trade revealed', brought the Nigerian epidemic to the forefront of world attention. It is a national tragedy. In the northern part of our country, it is affecting young families and undermining the moral and spiritual fabric of society.

Drugs and narcotics often go hand-in-hand with other societal vices such as crime, prostitution, fraud and other forms of deviant behaviour. Denied opportunities and jobs, and taking succour in drugs, some of our youth have turned to prostitution, sexual immorality and crime. Cultism has become a way of life, not least in our universities. The ideals that inspire the youth of long ago are no longer the ideals that inspire the youth of today. You will never catch the youth of today discussing Plato or Aristotle. You will catch them, more often than not, discussing Man U, Barca and Real Madrid. Other obsessions are centred on Nollywood and Kannywood.

Lest we are misunderstood: Some of the creative industries are driven by youths. I was astonished to find that youths in the Caribbean, South Africa, Kenya, Uganda, and even as far as the islands of the southern seas are wild about film stars such as Omotola Jelade and Genevieve Nnaji and musical artistes such as Tiwa Savage and Tu-Face. They are a form of soft power for Nigeria. They have boosted our image as a creative and can-do nation. We need to encourage that spirit of creativity.

A major challenge facing our young people is unemployment. Much of this derives from low educational opportunities and the mismatch between jobs and educational curricula. I have heard that some of young "graduates" have difficulty filling the relevant forms for the NYSC scheme. There is so much rot in our universities that a student can matriculate, leave some considerable sums to the dean and return four years later to consider his or her degree certificate. They do not have to sit in any lectures. When such "graduates" leave the university and complete their obligatory national service, they are thrown into a job market with no skills and the barest literacy and numeracy competencies.

It was the great nineteenth century British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli who described the youths as "the trustees of prosperity". Leaders who know their onions give close attention to the youth. The mobilisation of the youth is the key to effective nation building. It has to begin in the home by moulding children with the time tested verities of piety, virtue, loyalty, hard work, respect, cooperation, loyalty and patriotism. It then continues in the school system. Teachers exert a powerful and enduring legacy. The teaching of history and civics is particularly important in imbuing love for country and patriotism. I do not know those who advised the excision of history from our school curriculum. I consider it to be the original sin. I know for sure that those who removed the study of history from our school curriculum are among the veritable enemies of our people.

Nation building projects need to be incorporated into our various youth policies and social development interventions. While the NYSC scheme was a great success in its heydays, I am no longer convinced it is serving the original purpose. I would counsel us to borrow a leaf from Israel, where every young man and woman of 18 is called up to active military service. For boys it is two years while the girls have the option of serving for only a year. Those crucial years of military service give these young people a sense of patriotism, loyalty and commitment to service. When they

enter university nobody can deceive them to join a cult. They tend to be more focused in their studies. And the friendships formed during military service are often carried into the marketplace where they set up ICT companies. This is part of the reason why Israel is regarded worldwide as the “Start-up Nation”.

Linked to this is the big question of women empowerment. Women in Nigeria remain in a subordinate role both in economic development and governance. We score among the lowest in our continent in terms of affirmative action for women. Women participation in politics remains tragically marginal. We believe that this state of affairs must be reversed. We need to place women at the heart of development. We must also take bold action to place women in key positions in leadership for the sake of fairness and equity. The girl child in particular must be given special attention. Giving equal rights and opportunities to women and ensuring gender equity is vital to the creation of a just society and a flourishing democracy.

2) *The Imperative of Job-Creation*

Unemployment is soaring beyond acceptable proportions. While the national average has reduced from 24 percent to around 18 percent, youth unemployment in Nigeria stands at over 20 percent. In some of the most impoverished areas, particularly the north east, youth unemployment stands well above 60 percent. This largely explains why we have a social crisis of terrorism and insurgency in those areas. Every year, over a million young people are churned out of the school system. Most of them are unable to find gainful employment. Not too long ago a World Bank study characterised our economy as modelled on “jobless growth”. The irony is that graduates of tertiary institutions suffer a greater degree of unemployment (averaging 45 percent) as compared to secondary school leavers, averaging 16 percent. Basic technical, literacy and numeracy skills remain binding constraints to employability among our youth at all levels. It is

Today, Nigeria’s average life-expectancy stands at a low 54.5; as contrasted with poverty-stricken countries such as Yemen (65); Mozambique (57); and DRC (59). We are so far behind such countries as Japan, where life-expectancy averages 87 years; UK (81); and USA (79). Exacerbated by structural violence, insecurity and destitution, life in our country has become a Hobbesian nightmare. Malaria – a preventable disease – costs us over N300 billion annually in lost income; accounting for 11 percent of maternal mortality and 30 percent of child deaths. Nigeria has the third highest infant mortality rate in the world, at 9 percent (behind India (24%) and Pakistan (10%). Every single day, 2,300 precious under-five year olds and 145 women of child bearing age die due to preventable diseases.

The combined lessons of economic science and of world development in the last two decades make it abundantly clear that human capital is the driver of the wealth of nations. The new endogenous growth theories pioneered by economists such as Robert Lucas at Chicago and his student Paul Romer – both of them Nobel laureates – place emphasis on human capital, technology, innovation, knowledge and creativity as the critical factor in creating the society of abundance. The Paris-based OECD defines human capital as, *“knowledge, skills, competencies and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social and economic*

wellbeing". It has to do with the quality of the workforce, knowledge, intellectual skills and the institutional interrelations that reinforce innovation and creativity.

In the first decade after independence our pioneer universities were world-class. The Oxford chemist and Nobel laureate Dorothy Hodgkin once noted that the University of Lagos was one of the world centres of expertise in her field of crystallography. In the seventies, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria had the first world class computer centre on the continent. The University Ife also had a notable pool of expertise in nuclear physics. Our premier University of Ibadan was one of the leading centres of excellence in tropical medicine. We are told that the Saudi Royal family used to frequent Ibadan for medical treatment.

Today, unfortunately, the glory has departed. According to the Times Higher Education Rankings of World Universities for 2017, the University of Cape Town stands atop the African pantheon. It is the only institution that ranks among the top 200 worldwide. Uganda's Makerere also ranks among the top 500. Our premier university of Ibadan ranks 11th in Africa and 801 worldwide. Of the top 10 in the continent, 7 are from South Africa: Cape Town, Witwatersrand, Stellenbosch, KwaZulu-Natal, Johannesburg, Pretoria and Western Cape. Most of our universities are a mere shadow of their former glory.

According to a recent report, Federal and State governments had a cumulative expenditure of N43.5 trillion during the three years covering 2016 -- 2018, with only N3.34 trillion earmarked for education. And during 2018, the two tiers of government budgeted a total of N17.5 trillion, with only some N1.32 trillion (7.5 percent) devoted to the education. The bulk of the expenditure in the education sector is directed mainly at recurrent costs -- salaries, general administration and overheads. Although data on sectoral spending is uncertain, it is clear that capital expenditure for education remains considerably low.

Outside the formal education system, very little goes for adult literacy and for skills acquisition. As a consequence, the gains that were made in the past are being lost. Nigeria's adult literacy rate currently stands at 59.6 percent. We are faced by a situation of some 76 million of our countrymen and women who are locked in the dark night of ignorance and illiteracy.

Human capital theory also emphasise the importance of research, development and innovation for economic prosperity. A review of countries by R & D expenditure shows that there is a direct relationship between investment in knowledge and innovation and national prosperity. It is not for nothing that the most affluent countries are also those who invest heavily in research and innovation: USA (\$474 billion), China (\$409 billion), Japan (\$180 billion), Germany (\$109 billion), India (\$67 billion), South Korea (\$92 billion), France (\$60 billion), UK (\$45 billion), Russia (\$43 billion) Brazil (\$35.4 billion), Israel (\$13 billion) and Singapore (\$10 billion). Nigeria invests a paltry US\$300 million in this domain.

Historically, much of the research and scientific activity in our institutions of higher learning, research agencies and industrial firms brings little value because there is no enabling ecosystem and no proper framework for funding research, innovation and commercialisation activities. In rich as well as low-income countries, research is always a risky activity. The promise of success is not always guaranteed. This often

means that government has to play a catalytic role not only in promoting research but also in mitigating the inevitable risks while providing the institutional support for commercialisation activities.

When billionaire philanthropist Bill Gates bemoaned our lack of commitment to investing in our people, we went berserk with hand-wringing and lamentations. Instead of getting so worked up with what he said, we should have just humbled ourselves to learn from a man who has built up a US\$700 billion empire, with a net worth of US\$90 billion by nurturing talents and investing in the creativity of his workforce. Investing in people is ultimately about creating an eco-system where talents flourish. Our policymakers will need to reframe the paradigm underpinning all our national development efforts to focus on peoples, skills, intellectual capital and the knowledge economy. Education and health are the key to human capital development. An educated populace is also a healthy one. Research has shown that educated mothers are more likely to bring up healthy children who survive infancy. Maternal mortality is also less prevalent among literate women. Health is wealth. An educated and healthy workforce is the *sine qua non* of national prosperity.

3) *Research and Innovation*

An Oxford don once surprised me by remarking that Nigerians are “the most brilliant people in the world”. Strangely enough, I felt more embarrassed than flattered at the compliment -- embarrassed because our reputed brilliance has little or no correlation with our collective performance on most of the indices of national development. I ask myself, “If we are so smart, how come we are such a mediocre country?”

British Nobel laureate Dorothy Hodgkin once noted that the University of Lagos was one of the world centres of expertise in her specialist field of chemical crystallography. Ahmadu Bello University Zaria had the first world class computer centre in Africa. The University Ife had a notable pool of expertise in nuclear physics. Our premier University of Ibadan had an international reputation as a leading centre of excellence in tropical medicine. We are told that the Saudi Royal family used to frequent UCH for medical treatment.

Life in contemporary Nigeria has become a nightmare for many of our middle-class professionals – doctors, pharmacists, architects, accountants and others. Not only is the regulatory environment weak; salaries are low and most clients do not believe professionals should be adequately compensated for their services.

Every day, many of our young professionals are scheming how to leave for so-called “greener pastures”. A recent report estimates that some 2,000 doctors leave our shores every year. They spend years preparing for the gruelling American professional certifications that will allow them practise in the United States and other advanced countries.

4) *Nigeria First Policy*

We are committed to repositioning our external relations in a manner that places our country and our national interests above all other considerations. In the 1960s Nigerian foreign policy was anchored on a conservative framework of Non-Alignment, multilateralism, equality, non-interference and respect for the territorial integrity of nations. We were also expressly committed to the notion of Africa as “the centrepiece” of our external relations.

The tragic civil war during 1967-70 was a turning point. Nigeria had become one of the leading petroleum countries, with new confidence in its ability to tow a more independent external policy. We joined OPEC while embarking on ambitious programmes for economic development. In 1975, under the short military reign of General Murtala Ramat Mohammed, Nigeria came to its own as Africa’s leading power. Nigeria’s pursued a more vigorous policy of support for liberation movements in Southern Africa.

There was a time that Nigeria had a rigorous and dynamic foreign policy. We were respected as a progressive nation that stood for international social justice, pan-Africanism, the liberation of our continent, the dignity of the Black Race and multilateral cooperation. That was a long time ago. Our economic diplomacy was equally robust. During the sixties and seventies we had trade missions in different parts and regions of the world. The Ministry of Trade was responsible for sending Trade Attachés who served in our different embassies and trade missions with responsibility for promoting our trade and international economic relations. Then as now, we had several bilateral agreements on trade and investments. Agencies such as Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) and the Nigerian Investment Promotion Council (NIPC) have as their mandate the promotion of exports in the case of the first, and the catalysing of inward investments in the case of the latter.

In the area of North-South cooperation, Nigeria was the leading nation in Africa in the multilateral trade negotiations in such forums as the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and also in negotiations between Europe and the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP). Unfortunately, Nigeria’s role in the multilateral trade negotiations relating to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and its successor the WTO was less impressive. Within the continent Nigeria has played invaluable roles in creation of regional bodies such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and in the design of key continental initiatives such as the creation of the African Development Bank Group, the Lagos Plan of Action and the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). But we have not exercised leadership in recent initiatives such as Economic Partnership (EPA) negotiations between Europe and ECOWAS and in the case of the more recent African Continental Free Trade Area (ACFTA).

During the long years of military rule from 1983-1999 Nigeria took an active role in peacekeeping efforts within and outside the continent. In West Africa our role was decisive in restoring peace to war-torn countries such as Sierra Leone and Liberia. We also created the Technical Aid Corps to provide assistance to countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. As part of our economic diplomacy we also provided petroleum at subsidised prices to several West African countries ranging from Benin to Ghana and Senegal. We also built roads and other infrastructural facilities in several of our neighbouring countries. Although these were never publicised, some

of our military rulers were also in the business of giving official as well as private “loans” to some of our neighbouring countries.

Nigeria has expended more than US\$50 billion in supporting various causes in our continent. Unfortunately, our influence has continued to diminish in the various African regional bodies as well as in international agencies. There was a time there was no single Nigerian Director in the Secretariat of the African Commission in Addis Ababa. Nigerian staff of ECOWAS have always complained of one form of marginalisation or the other, in an organisation in which 70 percent of its annual operating budget is underwritten by our Treasury. Until recently, anti-Nigerian sentiments ran deep in African Development Group, in spite of having 10 percent of the voting powers and in spite of the billions of dollars of concessional aid we have given through the Bank’s Nigeria Trust Fund (NTF).

It is foolhardy to say that Africa is the centrepiece of our foreign policy. It is time to end that delusion. Any country worth its salt should make its own defined national interests as the pillars of its international policy. Nigeria must therefore the centrepiece of Nigeria’s foreign policy. Part of our tragedy is that we have never defined what our national interests are. We believe that our fundamental national interests must be the following:

- i. Protection of the sovereign territorial integrity of our country
- ii. Preservation of our union as a united, strong and indivisible, secular and democratic country governed by constitutionalism and the rule of law
- iii. Safeguarding the commanding heights of our economy to ensure that our country remains both militarily strong and economically prosperous
- iv. Defence of our country against external forces that will want to sow the seeds of ethnic and sectarian mistrust, division and disintegration
- v. Protection of our borders against all forms of infiltration by illegal migrants, criminal elements, smugglers and irredentist forces
- vi. Tackling economic and political sabotage by external agents and their local collaborators
- vii. Ensuring stability in our West African neighbourhood and the Gulf of Guinea so that our borders and neighbourhood will be safe and secure

We do not imply by this *Nigeria First Policy* that we are disengaging from the continent. That would both be wrong and ill-advised. What is essential is that the vital interests of our country are placed at the very top. If we reinvent our country as a prosperous democracy our neighbours will benefit from the windfall. We cannot dissipate our energies where we are neither appreciated nor loved. *Our Nigeria First Policy* will focus on advancing our national power and wealth. We must be militarily strong. We must modernise and reform our armed forces to be at par with the best in the world. We must also create a military-industrial complex where the military, technology, science and research are combined to create technologically advanced armed forces that can confront any enemy of our country, be it internal or external.

We should call the bluff of those who prophesied that our country will disintegrate in the near future.

We will rationalise our foreign commitments to ensure value for money. We will seek new alliances with the emerging powers to advance our industrial and technological advancement. We will embark upon a long-term programme of boosting our trade, ensuring the integrity and international convertibility of the naira. Food security, financial self-sufficiency and diversification of the economy are the bulwarks of a free and prosperous democracy.

The ancient Chinese of the Qing Dynasty defined *fuqiang* – the pursuit of power and wealth – as the abiding purpose of the state. The task and vocation of a new generation of leadership in our country is to advance Nigerian power and prosperity in the context of an intensely competitive and dynamically changing twenty-first century world economy.

Our vision is that of a New Nigeria; a just, peaceful, prosperous and happy nation. We will foster an eco-system that unleashes the energy and creativity of our people. We will invest not only in physical infrastructures but equally in human capital – creating an educated, healthy and wealthy population linked to peace, social justice, freedom and economic opportunities for all.