



**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE HEAD OF THE
CIVIL SERVICE OF THE FEDERATION,
DR. FOLASADE YEMI-ESAN, AT THE NATIONAL
POLICY DIALOGUE ON ENTRENCHING
TRANSPARENCY IN PUBLIC SERVICE
RECRUITMENT IN NIGERIA HELD AT THE ICPC
HEADQUARTERS ON TUESDAY 5TH APRIL, 2022**

PROTOCOL

I join previous speakers in welcoming all stakeholders to this National Policy Dialogue organised under the auspices of the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) through its Anti-Corruption Academy of Nigeria (ACAN) which has also given me the honour of chairing the Session and to give a keynote address.

2. To begin with, permit me to commend the ICPC under the able leadership of the Chairman, Prof. Bolaji Owasanoye, SAN for demonstrating unfettered capacity and creativity in its approach towards curbing corruption.

3. Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, the world over, employment is one of the most topical socio-economic issues which has been of great concern to policy makers who have the daunting and complex task of formulating policies to tackle the challenge. In addition to this, is the complexity of quantifying the rate of unemployment due to the fundamental difficulties of determining who is unemployed, employed or underemployed.

4. It is worth noting that substantial effort has been made to gather, analyse and publish Nigeria's employment statistics. Notwithstanding the usual concerns over the accuracy of available data with regard to unemployment figures, what is also of essence is that we recognise that, just as other nations have their own unemployment peculiarities to deal with, Nigeria continues to explore all possible means to close the unemployment gap.

5. The Administration of His Excellency, President Muhammadu Buhari is therefore committed to addressing these challenges through a multipronged and crosscutting approach, especially through the various social safety net programmes which drives the government's ambition to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to lift more than 100 million Nigerians out of poverty in the next 10 years. It is needless to state that the attainment of this target is crucial especially in view of the United Nations

forecast that the country is expected to be the world's third most-populous country by 2050, with an over 300 million population.

NIGERIA PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYMENT FIGURES

6. Indeed, the country's unemployment problem has left job seekers at the mercy of unscrupulous elements who extort and defraud them by exploiting their very desperate conditions, and it should be emphasised that no sector is spared from the antics of the perpetrators. This brings to the fore, the theme of this National Policy Dialogue which is “**Entrenching Transparency in Public Service Recruitment in Nigeria**”. Transparency in Public Service Recruitment is a matter that constantly arouses great interest perhaps in the light that, the public sector for some widely believed reasons, is the preferred employer of labour, but by no means the highest. According to the Labour Force Survey Quarter 3 report as provided by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Agriculture, Trade and Manufacturing Sectors stand as the highest employers of labour in the country.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

7. Ladies and Gentlemen, it is widely believed that overtime, recruitments in the public sector have plunged to a dimension where socio-cultural factors or affiliations and other influences mainly determine appointments into the public service. A situation

wherein due process, meritocracy and manpower needs are said to be jettisoned, causing a massive influx of unemployable/unqualified individuals who are engaged to carry out the jobs for which they lack requisite capacities.

8. A report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, averred that 32 percent of Nigerians gave bribes to enable them secure employment into the public service in 2019. What is also important to note from the report, which perhaps is fundamental to understanding how corruption thrives in recruitment processes is that an increasing number of the job seekers were in contact with public officials or possibly other entities. Hence, the trend underscores the importance of putting in place systems to reduce, to the possible minimum, any form of human contact.

9. It would be recalled that in March last year, the Office informed of the detection of fake letters of employment presented in some Ministries. For instance, in the past year, in one Ministry alone, over 1,000 individuals bearing fake letters of appointment were detected.

10. According to Monday and Noe (2005) "recruitment is a process of attracting individuals on a timely basis, in sufficient numbers and with appropriate qualifications. Also, Dr. Maidoki B. Peter in

his paper titled, “**A Critical Examination of Recruitment Strategy in India and Nigeria**” published in 2013, postulates that the Indian civil service is more efficient and effective in recruiting more qualified staff. This is so because the country's system of recruitment is based on qualification and merit.

11. On the other hand, he points out that the recruitment policy in Nigeria is highly controversial and complex in nature as emphasis is laid on quota system also known as Federal Character Principles. This he says has encouraged recruitment based on ethnicity, religious background, regionalism and other forms of unprofessional conducts witnessed during recruitment process.

EXAMPLE OF GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES IN PUBLIC SERVICE RECRUITMENT

12. Coincidentally, I visited India recently, and had an interaction with the Chairman, United Public Service Commission of the country. The discussions were centred on the system put in place for the recruitment of officers into the civil service which is one of the best in the world and involves a decentralised examination aimed at selecting the best candidates. I was further informed that the process is void of any form of external interference. In addition, India conducts its

recruitment once a year through a well-recognised merit-based system.

ROLES OF OHCSF & FCSC IN RECRUITMENTS

13. The 1999 Constitution (as amended) vests on the Federal Civil Service Commission the power to appoint/promote persons to offices in the Federal Civil Service; and dismiss and exercise disciplinary control over persons holding such offices. In general, the Commission has delegated these functions as they concern the junior cadre (SGL 03 – 06) to the MDAs, while the MDAs are expected to report outcomes to the FCSC. However, the Commission retains full responsibility for the recruitment of the Senior Cadre (SGL 07 – 17).

14. Hence, in fulfilling this obligation, the Federal Civil Service Commission works with the Office of the Head of Service of the Federation and MDAs.

15. In performing its functions, the Commission issues and periodically reviews guidelines on appointment, promotion and discipline to guide its conduct. So, for the avoidance of doubt, the Office of the Head of Civil Service of the Federation is not a recruiting agency. In addition, appointment/ recruitment into Federal Public Service is not subjected to the whims and caprices of any official. It must conform to processes and procedures as contained in the Office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation

circular, Ref. No. 59814/ S.7/ C.8/ IV/T7/140 of 11th August, 2021.

FG INITIATIVES FOR A TRANSPARENT RECRUITMENT PROCESS

16. In the light of the aforementioned, it is disheartening to point out that the office recently received a report from the Federal Civil Service Commission forwarding the names of over 500 persons in various MDAs in possession of fake letters of appointment and which are to be delisted from the IPPIS Platform. Similarly, following the outcome of the Service-Wide Verification Exercise for officers recruited from 2013 – 2020, the Federal Civil Service Commission has also requested the suspension of the salaries of over 3,000 officers across the MDAs who failed to appear for the exercise pending further clearance.

17. The Administration, through the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, has taken decisive steps to nip in the bud the alarming sharp practices and acts of impunity being perpetrated on the IPPIS, as well as to purge the system of all infiltrations.

18. You may be aware that at inception, the Integrated Personnel and Payroll Information System (IPPIS) focused mainly on Payroll in view of

Government's desire to block financial leakages from high personnel cost caused by ghost workers. This however created a gap leading to series of implementation issues. As at March 2022, over 390,000 officers are on the IPPIS payroll being 66,000 and 320,000 for core and non-core MDAs respectively. This figure is without prejudice to the military, paramilitary and universities.

19. Accordingly, the office commenced activities towards the implementation of the Human Resource (HR) Module of IPPIS with a view to bridging some of the identified gaps. Following the successful completion of the verification exercise in the core MDAs, officers who failed to get verified have had their salaries suspended. However, the office is carrying out a mop-up exercise in the core-MDAs for those who were not verified. As part of our control mechanisms, we are presently conducting I.P.P.I.S Human Resource (HR) Verification Exercise for the Employees of Non-Core Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAS) in batches, starting with Abuja after extending our earlier deadline for the closure of the IPPIS HR Verification Portal. The entire exercise which will also cover MDAs in all the Geo-political zones of the country is expected to end with a Mop-up Verification Exercise across the non-core MDAs in September, this year (2022). Thus, this would enable the office derive a verified list of officers on IPPIS.

20. At this juncture, I wish to acknowledge and sincerely appreciate the support and commitment demonstrated by Mr. President, His Excellency, Muhammadu Buhari towards the successful implementation of the HR module of the IPPIS. Thus, we will not relent our efforts, determination and commitment to the maintenance of a transparent, accountable and uncompromised IPPIS platform that will rid the system of ghost workers, reduce personnel cost and enhance economic planning among other benefits.

OTHER MECHANISMS PUT IN PLACE

21. Ladies and Gentlemen, for avoidance of doubt, you may wish to note that the established procedure for the recruiting of officers entails the following:

- i. Granting of a 'Waiver' by the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation;
- ii. 'Financial Clearance' by the Budget Office of the Federation (BoF); and
- iii. issuance of 'Compliance Certificate' by the Federal Character Commission (FCC) where applicable.

22. To further ensure that the aforementioned system is enforced, the Office inaugurated a committee comprising seasoned professionals on the 1st of March, 2021 to scrutinize the process to ensure proper checks

and control. Therefore, the committee was given the following Terms of Reference (ToR):

- i. Identify the challenges/problems associated with the old process to guide the new process;
- ii. Examine the new processes of enrolling newly recruited officers on the IPPIS Platform;
- iii. Identify the benefits that might be derived from the new process including cost savings where possible; and
- iv. Initiate the process of enrolling new employees on the IPPIS Platform guided by the new procedure;

Other Terms of Reference (ToR) are to:

- v. Ensure that the enrolment of new employees on IPPIS is based on the approved waivers from the OHCSF;
- vi. Treat and capture all backlogs of newly recruited Officers based on the new procedure, subject to authentication of appointment letters, approved waivers; financial clearance and Federal Character Commission Compliance Certificate where applicable;
- vii. Recommend appropriate sanctions on defaulting MDAs, and individuals identified to have abused, breached or manipulated the process;

In addition, the Committee is to:

- viii. Ensure no further enrolment of newly recruited Officers on the IPPIS Platform is done without the approval of the committee;
- ix. Liaise with major IPPIS Control Offices especially the OHCSF, OAGF, FCSC and other relevant MDAs for necessary information that would facilitate the seamless conduct of the committee's assignments;
- x. Identify and remove all officers illegally enrolled into the IPPIS Platform including savings made, where possible;
- xi. Submit monthly report on the number of staff captured or suspended on the IPPIS Platform; and
- xii. Any other activity/role deemed necessary to enable the Committee achieve its mandate.

INSTITUTIONALIZING MERITOCRACY IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

23. In our continued drive to emplace a merit-based system of appointment in the service, we have adopted a top-bottom approach. The Office has been able to put in place a rigorous process for the appointment of Federal Permanent Secretaries. The selection process entails a thorough accreditation exercise where the age, qualifications and other necessary information on the candidates are

scrutinized. In addition, the intending perm-secs are subjected to three levels of tests which are a written examination, ICT Proficiency Test and Oral Interview.

24. What is also important to point out is that the entire process has the full participation of the private sector as well as security and anti-graft agencies. This is with the objective of ensuring the credibility of the selection process.

25. At this juncture, I wish to recognise and appreciate the sustained support and collaboration of the ICPC which the Office of the Head of Service enjoys, specifically in the conduct of the process for the selection of Federal Permanent Secretaries. It is on record that overtime, the very professional participation of the Commission in the process has made a huge difference in producing the best candidates for the position.

26. In turn, I wish to pledge the preparedness of the Office to sustain and strengthen the existing collaboration with the Commission in curbing all forms of corruption that impede the development of a world class workforce.

RECOMMENDATIONS

27. Public Service recruiting entities are enjoined to be more open in their recruitment processes. To

achieve this, there is the need to encourage the following:

- i. Professional HR bodies could be engaged to recruit credible candidates based on their capabilities, as this would help curb the prevalence of nepotism and favouritism in appointments;
- ii. There should also be equitable distribution of vacant positions while not compromising on meritocracy;
- iii. Traditional methods of recruiting should be complimented with e-recruitment solutions for transparency;
- iv. Increased sensitization of public institutions on the benefits of involving private sector/stakeholders in recruitment policy formulation;
- v. Government institutions responsible for appointment should be shielded from all forms of external interference; and
- vi. The total elimination of human contact with applicants or its reduction to the possible barest minimum etc

CONCLUSION

28. Distinguished Stakeholders, Ladies and Gentlemen, as I conclude, I wish to reiterate that by the grace of God our vision towards evolving a “Civil Service of Our Dreams” is well on course. We are indeed committed to reducing the unemployment rate in the country and changing the current narrative that recruitments into the civil service are done on a “**Who Knows Who**” basis. However, the creed of Meritocracy remains sacrosanct in our desire of raising a crop of officers who are passionate about the service and can drive our national goals to fulfilment.

29. In this light, the legendary Steve Jobs once said “Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven’t found it yet, keep looking. Don’t settle. As with all matters of the heart, you will know when you find it.”

30. I sincerely thank you all for this opportunity to speak and I wish us all very fruitful deliberations and a successful dialogue.