

**ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY, MUHAMMADU BUHARI, PRESIDENT
OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA AT THE 3RD NATIONAL
SUMMIT ON DIMINISHING CORRUPTION IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR
STATE HOUSE CONFERENCE CENTRE, STATE HOUSE, ABUJA
30TH NOVEMBER, 2021**

Protocoles:

It is well known that Nigeria has immense potential but her potential has been handicapped by corruption, an imbalanced economy, and insecurity.

2. Since 2015, the focus of this administration has been on Security, Economy and fight against Corruption. We recognized early in our administration that good governance is the solution to fulfilling our potential.

3. Our first plan to entrench good governance and accountable management of government resources was the Strategic Implementation Plan for the 2016 budget.

4. This plan focused on attending to problems of dwindling revenues following the massive reduction in the global price of crude oil and the attendant negative impact on national revenue projections.

5. This massive reduction in government revenue contrasted with the bumper years of 2011-2015. We followed up the 2016 FSIP with a medium-term framework captured in the *Economic Recovery and Growth Plan 2017-2020* which was designed to stimulate economic growth and advance the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

6. To maintain consistency, the ERGP was supplemented by policy documents such as the *Delivering on Government's Priorities 2019-2023* which set performance targets for MDAs.

7. About one month ago, I approved a ministerial retreat that reviewed the performance of ministers and directed closure of performance gaps in all critical sectors of governance.

8. The ERGP, due to expire in December 2021, has been succeeded by the 5-Year **National Development Plan 2021 - 2025**. This new development plan revolves around key concepts namely, infrastructure, public administration, human capital development, social development and regional development.

9. The theme of ICPC's 3rd National Summit on Diminishing Corruption in the Public Sector focuses on the cost of governance.

Our Plan for Good Governance with NDP 2021 – 2025

10. Government's vision for good governance first in the ERGP and now in the National Development Plan includes fighting corruption in the public and private sectors to improve transparency in the use of public resources; reinforcement of security by fighting terrorism and insecurity; reforming the public service by reducing the cost of governance and raising productivity across all Federal Government agencies, particularly the public procurement system.

11. Reform will be intensified to ensure value for money in the procurement process and strengthening sub-national coordination.

12. I signed and assented to the Companies and Allied Matters Act 2020. This Act has introduced a beneficial ownership disclosure scheme for the first time in company ownership in Nigeria.

13. This has the potential to prevent corrupt persons from hiding ill-gotten wealth behind the veil of companies. It is also a tool to assist anti-corruption agencies in the difficult task of investigating cases where public officers use their companies to bid for government contracts or to hide assets.

14. Under my watch, Nigeria joined the Open Government Partnership in 2016 and has taken sustained measures to improve the Ease of Doing Business in Nigeria.

15. Following the full implementation of several resource saving and anti-corruption measures such as the Treasury Single Account to ensure that all government revenue is held by the Central Bank of Nigeria, and retained prevention measures to promote transparency and minimize laundering of the proceeds of crimes, we need to intensify cost saving measures.

16. Frameworks such as Government Integrated Financial Management Information System, Integrated Personnel and Payroll Information System, Bank Verification Number, mandatory National Identity Number must all be integrated and deployed to fight corruption and manage the cost of governance.

17. For the first time in the history of Nigeria, NNPC is operating as a business due to the recently passed Petroleum Industry Act. This accords with global best practices.

18. Other major reforms and transparency initiatives in the oil industry introduced by the Petroleum Industry Act, which I signed into law this year,

will ensure sustainability and ensure that Nigeria meets a core obligation under the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative.

19. I am also confident that host communities will benefit more from the PIA than the old framework which allowed a few individuals to enrich themselves at the expense of their communities.

20. The rising cost of governance at the Federal, State and Local Government Levels is of serious concern. It has been attributed to many factors not the least of which is that, our federal system of government lays down the number of Ministers for the Federal cabinet.

21. That number may rise if new states are created with all the implications for further pressure on government's resources. Ministers must have aides with further consequent cost on government purse.

22. The Constitution also prescribes the composition of the National Assembly and the Judiciary. With the judiciary there are useful recommendations to improve the number, infrastructure and funding. These are worthy considerations but with potential for increasing cost of governance.

23. Over the years, government has created many Departments and Agencies with the aim of achieving the socio-economic objectives prescribed by the Constitution. The unintended consequences of the creation of new MDAs is widening workforce, duplication of roles and bureaucracy with the attendant increase in cost of governance.

24. Reforms are needed but every reform has inherent costs and pains. Government will strike a balance to maintain social equilibrium, mitigate the pains of reforms and at the same time reduce the cost of governance.

25. Nevertheless, those who illegally bring in personnel into the public workforce by illegal recruitment, those who pad their personnel payroll, those who retain ghost workers must be and will be severely punished.

26. The COVID-19 pandemic has created a strain on resources globally. Nigeria has felt the impact more than some other countries because of our dependency on oil for much of our revenue.

27. This government unprecedentedly managed to exit two recessions within six years, the most recent being the COVID-19 pandemic induced recession through prudent management of our very lean resources.

28. While we need to look critically at cost of governance, we cannot ignore critical investment in infrastructure and other investments that will enhance growth, development and security.

29. We reduced the cost of governance by maintaining our promise to complete abandoned or ongoing projects commenced by previous administrations and have ensured that MDAs do not put forward new capital projects at the expense of ongoing projects.

30. Government has however noted from the activities of the ICPC that some MDAs have devised the fraudulent practice of presenting new projects as ongoing projects.

31. Necessary action and sanctions will continue against the heads of such errant MDAs. I am confident that ICPC will continue to maintain the vigilance required of her by the ICPC Act in this regard.

32. This summit is auspicious because it reminds us of the negative impacts of unnecessary cost of governance and offers an opportunity for critical stakeholders to offer suggestions on ways to further reduce the cost of governance and promote transparency and accountability in government expenditure.

33. I am delighted that the Legislative and Judicial arms of government are also under focus on managing the cost of governance because government is a collective and is not the business of the Executive Branch alone.

34. On 19th August 2020, the Federal Executive Council adopted the National Ethics and Integrity Policy which I launched on 25th September 2020. I am delighted that some public officers continue not only to demonstrate the core values of ethics, integrity and patriotism but have been identified for their sterling anti-corruption disposition in their workplace.

35. Just like I did in 2019 and 2020, I am pleased to recognize and to present the **2021 Public Service Integrity Awards** to **Muhammed Tukur Ahmad (Asst. Commander of Narcotics, NDLEA)** for being a man of integrity and worthy fighter against narcotics; and **Mr. Nelson Orji Okoronkwo** of the Federal Ministry of Information and Culture for consistent display of integrity.

36. I am also happy to note the ICPC special award to **Ikenna Steve Nweke, a Nigerian Ph.D student from Imo State studying in Japan**. He has done Nigeria proud in far-away Japan by displaying traditional Nigerian values of honesty and integrity and returning a wallet containing a very large sum of money and other valuable to the police. He also declined 10% of the money found as reward offered to him.

37. I join the ICPC in declaring him **ICPC CITIZENS ANTI-CORRUPTION VOLUNTEER GROUP ICON**. He is indeed an icon and a beacon for our youths. I also congratulate all those to be awarded the ICPC Certificate of Integrity through their agencies.

38. Government looks forward to the outcome statement of this summit and further measures to rein in rising cost of governance.

39. I am pleased to declare the Summit open, as I wish you fruitful deliberations.