

LECTURE DELIVERED BY THE GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF OSUN, OGBENI RAUF AREGBESOLA, AT THE INDEPENDENT CORRUPT PRACTICES AND OTHER RELATED OFFENCES COMMISSION'S (ICPC) GOOD GOVERNANCE FORUM, HELD AT ICPC AUDITORIUM, ABUJA, ON TUESDAY MARCH 11, 2014

Protocols,

**'GOVERNANCE, ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSFORMATION'**

This is a momentous period in the political evolution of our country; and as a people we are at a historic crossroads with regard to the kind of society we are running vis-a-vis the sort of society we should be running. This is particularly more important for those of us in leadership positions in the country.

Therefore, I am as sober as I am optimistic about the present situation and the future of our dear country. May I express my profound gratitude to the Board of the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) for inviting me to deliver the 2014 first quarter ICPC Good Governance Forum Lecture.

In addition to its primary and popular brief as an institution established to investigate, apprehend and prosecute people who indulge in corrupt practices in the country, this is a most welcome platform provided by the ICPC for addressing the hydra-headed problems confronting our country, especially those relating to the issue of crisis of governance.

It is a widely acknowledged fact that corruption has become a national albatross that has made government irrelevant to the existence of the people and therefore defeated the purpose of governance in the country. Even the very establishment of the ICPC itself is an eloquent statement on the entrenchment of corrupt practices in the nation's public and private life.

This makes the topic of this lecture – 'Governance, Accountability and Transformation' – most germane to our socio-political situation. A very good point of take-off is for us to further enlighten one another on the meaning and the purpose of governance in order to better appreciate the need for accountability in governance and how this would enhance the process of societal transformation for the betterment of all.

We may therefore ask ourselves why humans found it necessary to establish society and institute government. A persuasive reason for establishing society and instituting government is put forward by the Social Contract theorists; and it is to escape from the State of Nature. This is because the State of Nature was fraught with certain realities that were less than desirable for and conducive to human existence, progress and development.

According to one of its powerful proponents, English philosopher, Thomas Hobbes, human nature is essentially self-centred, self-interested and self-focused. This in the State of Nature interacted with power in such a manner that power was used only to advance the appetitive interests of one individual at the expense of all other individuals. In such a situation that was devoid of social cooperation and organisation, human existence was defined by constant strife, insecurity and uncertainty. Thus, for Hobbes, the life of man in that state was 'solitary, brutish, poor, nasty and short'. This was so because power was unorganised and its use unchecked by any form of restraint be it moral or physical.

But since humans are rational and have aversion for death, especially avoidable death, they found a way out of the State of Nature by creating a civil society, which effectively is a product of social contract to organise power and vest it in a person or body of persons. Therefore, in Hobbes' view, a paramount aim of government and governance is the security of limb and arm from harm, the protection of property from theft and destruction, and the enforcement of the rules of civilised conduct.

For Jean Jacques Rousseau, another famous Social Contract theorist, human existence was a transition from the State of Nature to civil society. In Rousseau's State of Nature, there was peace and bliss and people lived simple and solitary lives. The needs of man were minimal and easily met in the relative abundance of nature.

Hence, the State of Nature was devoid of the negative values such as greed and competition. In any case, people lived in relative isolation of one another. But with population growth and human progress, people began to live in small families and communities. This condition of existence witnessed the introduction of division of labour;

and along with inventions and discoveries came easier life which facilitated comparison and the development of negative values such as jealousy and pride.

For Rousseau, the introduction of private property was a defining moment in the evolution of human existence, which brought in its wake serious value crises involving competition, greed, inequality, inequity and numerous other vices. Perceiving threat to their acquisition, private property owners sought the formation of government to protect themselves from losing their property to the have-nots. In other words, government was established to sustain the inequity of social inequality.

Thus, the freedom and equality that man enjoyed in the State of Nature became compromised. This must have informed the opening line of Rousseau's *The Social Contract*, that 'Man was born free, and he is everywhere in chains'. The way out of this situation was the General Will, which is a contract of all by all.

From this covenant is born a new sovereign whose sole objective is the service of the common interests of the people. That is, Rousseau is of the view that the purpose of government is to be directed towards the good of all.

John Locke's version of the contract theory has had the most influence on modern democratic society and its institutions. In his opinion, the State of Nature was far from being a state of war. Rather, it was a condition that offered the freedom to conduct one's affairs without interference from others.

Even though it was pre-political in the sense that it had no government, it was a peaceful condition that was governed by the law of nature which stipulated that no man shall harm another or deprive him of his possessions. This was the governing moral code in that condition.

However, for Locke, the State of Nature degenerates into a state of war when there was a breach of the moral code by an attempt to dispossess someone of their lives or deprive them of their property or freedom. Consequently, once a war ensues, there is hardly any way to stop it because there is no government.

Thus, as rational beings, it only makes sense to opt for a contract to create a civil government. This is a collective agreement to leave the State of Nature to form a political society under a common government with powers to make laws, to adjudicate

and to enforce them. In effect, the resulting commonwealth is aimed at protecting lives, property, liberty; and promoting the general well-being of all its members.

For Locke, therefore, the only justification for the existence of government is the protection of the interests of the people, failure of which the people have a right, and in fact a duty, to dissolve such government and create a new one. This is the fundamental basis upon which a democratic society was founded – the right to vote a government into power and vote out a non-performing one. It is also the basis of the American Revolution of 1776 that removed the British colonial government and replaced it with a democratically elected government which has endured till today and is the paradigm of democratic government for all nations.

If there are purposes for which government was established, it then means these purposes are to be the object of governance. It is therefore in order for us to inform ourselves on the notion of governance.

In his 2013 Working Paper 314 for Centre for Global Development, titled, *What is Governance?* The Japanese-American scholar, Francis Fukuyama, defines ‘governance as a government's ability to make and enforce rules, and to deliver services, regardless of whether that government is democratic or not’. This is essentially a value-neutral concept of governance which means governance may be used to serve the purpose of government; and it may not. This is particularly instructive in that it holds any government accountable, irrespective of its democratic credentials.

In this case, it also means that the goodness of governance is not a ‘given’. However, as a committed democrat, I would rather prefer to impute democratic value to the notion of governance. This is because I believe that the instrumentalities of governance should necessarily be used to serve the interests of the people and this can best be realised within democracy. This brings to the fore the related concept of good governance. And in this usage I would not be alone.

Therefore, if, according to Fukuyama in the same piece, ‘governance is about the performance of agents’ [in this case those who govern] ‘in carrying out the wishes of principals’ [in this case the governed], then democracy becomes a key element in

assessing the purpose of governance and how this purpose is fulfilled in relation to the people who are supposed to be the benefactors.

In other words, democracy connects the fulfilment of the purpose of governance to the rendering of account to the people who are supposedly the targets and the paramount consideration in the determination and the execution of this purpose. This is accountability and it empowers the people in the governance of their own affairs.

This is one of the strongest points of the democratic form of government. In this regard, *The Social Science Encyclopedia* (1996, Second Edition by Routledge) has an interesting notion of governance in its democratic manifestation. According to the encyclopaedia, political scientists use the concept of governance to refer

‘to the process of political management which embraces the normative basis of political authority, the style in which public affairs are conducted, and the management of public resources’.

To underscore the intricate relation of the concept with democracy, it explains further that,

‘Three terms are central to most definitions of governance: accountability, which denotes the effectiveness with which the governed can exercise influence over their governors; legitimacy, which is concerned with the right of the state to exercise power over its citizens, and the extent to which those powers are perceived to be rightly exercised; and transparency, which is founded on the existence of mechanisms for ensuring public access to decision making’.

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in the small pamphlet, *What is Good Governance?* informs us that good governance has the following major characteristics.

‘It is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law. It assures that corruption is minimized, the views of minorities are taken into account and that the voices of

the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making. It is also responsive to the present and future needs of society’.

The point must be made very clear that democracy only guarantees the people choice – in determining their rulers and in policy making. It, however, does not guarantee good governance. It is a system to be operated by citizens acting from the motive of promoting public interest. It is like a weapon which can be used for defence or offence. Democracy has the inherent risk of the tyranny of the majority or a tiny few manipulating the majority to pursue particularistic interests, instead of the general will of the majority. However, the people will make a choice and live with the consequences of their choice, at least for a period, after which they can correct whatever mistake of choice they have made.

The point must also be made that of all forms of government, in spite of its imperfection, democracy offers the highest assurance of a very high probability of good governance. This is because it is only in a democracy that the rulers can be most accountable to the people. It therefore follows that when governance is accountable and transparent, it would bring about positive transformation in the lives of the people, which ultimately is the end of government and governance.

This is why in human social evolution, democracy has displaced other forms of government – theocracy, monarchism, feudalism, fascism and military autocracy – to emerge the preferred bride. It is why I am also optimistic that in spite of the problems of nationhood we are facing as a nation, we will come out triumphant in the end if we remain steadfast on the democratic path.

We have had the democracy-governance nexus practically demonstrated in the State of Osun where I preside as governor and several other states where progressives are in control. Indeed, while the governance situation in the country generally fills me with a sense of sobriety; what we have achieved in Osun gives me a sense of optimism that, with accountability and transparency in leadership, the machinery of governance can be used effectively to overcome our national malaise; to cage the monster of corruption; and to transform the fortunes of our nation and our people.

Mr Chairman, to make the nexus between democracy and governance to be stronger, I would wish that the socio-economic development of the people be made a constitutional imperative. Their provision should not just be an inspirational reference in the constitution; they should be made compulsory and justiciable. That the government must provide job opportunities, education, healthcare services, public infrastructure and so on should be made compulsory in the constitution. This will not only put the leaders under the burden of governance delivery, it will also minimise corruption since there can never be enough money to deliver on all requirements.

I will draw still from my state. I have ongoing projects worth at least ₦60 billion and yet my allocation from the Federation Account fell by 40 per cent. We have had to commit the last kobo in our coffers into paying salaries and fulfilling our obligations to our contractors such that we cannot even afford frivolities and indulgence of corruption.

When we came in a little more than three years ago, we knew we had to provide jobs immediately for our teeming youths. We had to discard the neo-orthodoxy economics that frowns on public sector employment and adopt the position of Lord John Maynard Keynes, the influential 20th Century British economist, who advocated for the creation of public sector jobs as the panacea for the great depression and the unemployment brought about by two world wars. That was what saved Europe and America from economic collapse at the period.

We immediately employed 20,000 youths in less than 100 days of our administration on the platform of Osun Youth Empowerment Scheme (OYES). After two years, we gave them soft landing into formal employment and self employment in different vocations. This programme to a large extent informed the conceptualization of the (Youth Empowerment Social Support Operation (YESSO) by the World Bank, which is now replicated in 18 States in Nigeria.

We have since employed another set of 20,000, driving unemployment to its nadir and giving Osun the status of the state with the lowest unemployment figure, according to the National Bureau of Statistics and other credible agencies.

Our other area of high impact is in education. Education, for us, is not just a social gathering after which a bland certificate will be issued. We were indeed alarmed after

our inauguration that less than five per cent of secondary school leavers in Osun had the requisite pass for matriculation into tertiary institutions. Teachers were demoralised, the school environment was unfit for animals and the pupils and students were growing wild. We immediately held a summit on education under the chairmanship of Prof Wole Soyinka.

We are not just redefining the learning environment, we are now redefining education as the development of the total man, spiritually, morally and intellectually; a man whose development must cohere with the development of his environment and fellow men. Therefore, we are building brand new 13 elementary schools, 14 middle schools and 12 high schools to which we have so far committed ₦14.4 billion.

We are also feeding our pupils in elementary schools (Primary 1-4), giving them nutritious meals every school day. We also pioneered the e-learning tablet, ***Opon Imo***, that contains all the textbooks for secondary school, tutorials, as well as past questions of WAEC, JAMB and NECO. This has never been done before anywhere in the whole world. To properly indigenise it, a factory has been setup in Ilesa for its manufacture. Our investment in education is already yielding good results. There is a 40 per cent increase in the number of candidates that passed in the last SSSCE conducted in Osun. We are not deterred by the antics of our detractors, who being mortally afraid of our success in this area, are raising storm in a tea-cup by shifting the focus of our reform, imputing religious motives and fictively inventing a religious crisis when they could not rouse one.

We are constructing roads, but not just for its sake. Roads are an integral part of our transportation infrastructure development. We target roads that impact more on the economic and social lives of the people. We have at the last count constructed over 600 kilometres of inter-city, intra-city and local government roads in three years, almost five times what the previous administration did in nearly eight years.

Our empowerment programme is not for the youth alone. We also have support and empowerment programmes for the weak and vulnerable like the handicapped, the aged, widows and single mothers. We have not left out lunatics and the vagrant.



One important area in which we have been outstanding is in agriculture. It is our philosophy that food constitutes an integral part of national security. A government that cannot feed its people has failed to provide an important aspect of their security. Through the agency of Osun Rural Enterprise and Agriculture Programme (OREAP), the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security and other agencies, we have been able to redirect the focus of our people to agriculture, especially food crop production.

Mr Chairman, one important aspect of governance that has been troublesome is finance. There can be no governance without financial capability. If the slogan of the American Revolution, as penned by James Otis is 'Taxation without representation is tyranny' then permit me to invert this into 'Representation without taxation is administrative emasculation'. When our administration came in, our internally generated revenue was a paltry ₦300 million. In less than one year, we doubled it to ₦600 million; by the grace of God today, it is ₦1.6 billion. Our target is to be able to earn ₦5 billion on our own every month.

Many of our governments, at all levels, lack imagination and zeal. We all wait for the monthly federal allocation which in most cases is barely sufficient to pay salaries. Also, because the federation account allocation is more of an unearned rent, it is spent as freebies and this is one of the impetuses of corruption. Every state, including the Federal Government, should strive for financial autonomy and self sufficiency. The federal allocation should not be used for paying salaries and running government. It should be tied to specific development projects.

Mr Chairman, distinguished guests, governance is not a mystery. There is a science and art to it and it can be mastered and we should begin to demystify it by rejecting the notion that we can only have good and qualitative governance in the next millennium. We can have it now and we should demand for it. We have heard of the successes of the Asian Tigers and the newly industrialised countries of South America. We don't have to reinvent the wheel. There is never a time when there will be no excuse for failure. The good thing about democracy is that it periodically provides opportunity for us to kick out a government that offers excuses all the time and blames others for its

failure. If we can take the science of governance and public administration, we can follow the path they took and have even more resounding success.

It has become a cliché that we need quality leadership. I am afraid that this is a necessary but not a sufficient condition. The corollary of it is that we also need good followership – a followership that consciously put the right leadership in place; that will make extraordinary demands from the leaders; and will hold leadership to account.

It is the combination of the two factors of good leadership and quality followership that will bring about the transformation that we so desire. I am therefore confident that given our trajectory as a nation and the progress we have made since 1999, we are going to arrive at the long desired destination. Of course, democracy anywhere is an unfinished business.

Let me once more thank the Board of the ICPC for the kind invitation to deliver this lecture and to be in the company of these decent people.

I thank you for your kind attention.