

UNITED NATIONS  **NATIONS UNIES**

THE DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL

KEYNOTE REMARKS ON THE TASK OF NATION BUILDING

AT

**THE 2023 NIGERIA GOVERNOR'S FORUM INDUCTION FOR
NEW AND RETURNING GOVERNORS**

ABUJA, NIGERIA

15 May 2023

**Distinguished Governors, Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is truly an honour to be here today.

**Allow me to begin by congratulating our Executive
Governors-elect on their election or re-election.**

**I hope you will find value in this event and that you
will draw strength from it in the challenging days and years
ahead as you join hands in nation-building.**

Dear friends,

**We meet at a crucial moment – for your states, for our
country, and for the entire world.**

**A moment of great risks, but fortunately, of even
greater opportunities if we can grasp them.**

This is when we can stand up and be counted.

**A moment when the need for nation-building – in the
broadest sense of the term – has never been greater.**

**Within communities, across ethnic and religious
groupings, within countries and across the world, people
are losing trust in one another; intolerance is growing, and
we've lost a sense of solidarity and common purpose. Our
social fabric is tearing, and people question the social
contract between leaders and citizens.**

**In 2015, the world, including Nigeria, came together at
the United Nations to adopt the 2030 Agenda for
Sustainable Development, now known as the SDGs, a
roadmap to a better future for all.**

In September this year we will be halfway to 2030, sadly we are off-track, but we can rescue the SDGs

If we keep the status quo since 2015, it will take nearly 30 years to end the injustice and indignity of extreme poverty and 140 years before women have the same opportunities as men in politics and in business.

Maybe even more worrying is the fact that the slow pace of change by the world's largest economies means that we are reaching a point of no return, placing our climate target for a 1.5-degree world in jeopardy.

The lack of progress is not for a want of trying, and in the past three years alone, we've been hit by massive crises:

The deadly impacts of climate change, unprecedented disruption from COVID-19, and both a rising number of conflicts and the unthinkable war in Ukraine that has impacted the world beyond Europe.

And the harsh truth is that these crises have played out very differently in the global north and the global south.

Countries in Africa have borne much of the burden.

Between 2020 and 2022, staple food prices in sub-Saharan Africa rose by an average of 23.9 percent.

Africa remains home to 44% of the world's forcibly displaced persons.

And today, sadly, we have about 600 million people in the continent who lack access to electricity.

And between the socio-economic impact of the pandemic, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and soaring inflation, Africa's debt is at its highest level in over a decade, with 23 countries either bankrupt or at high risk of debt distress.

The impacts of these crises are being felt here in Nigeria too.

Economic growth in Nigeria dropped to 1.8% during the pandemic, and while it has since rebounded at over 3%, it is still far below the rate needed to drive inclusive development.

And all the while, terrorism has been taking a heavy toll – both human and financial.

One estimate from UNDP suggests that terrorism has cost Nigeria over US\$97 billion in ten years.

All of this has an impact on performance against the SDGs – with progress in Nigeria stalled on 14 of the 17 goals.

And behind this headline lies the lives and struggles of millions of Nigerians, especially our women and youth.

All of this affects what I see as the bottom line for politicians: social cohesion. When we fail to deliver for people on their rights and their futures, we erode their faith in power, in politics, and in the state.

And that results in a loss of trust, resentment between generations and towards elites, and in greater tensions between groups, cultures, ethnicities, and religions.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The only way to build a more cohesive nation and a more harmonious world is to deliver better for people:

Better services, better opportunities, better safety, better government, and a healthier environment.

And despite all the challenges, I believe that we have what we need to take a huge leap forward in these areas in the next few years.

Massive investment and political attention in a number of concrete areas will be key.

Allow me to focus on one specifically: energy.

Globally, we need to end our addiction to fossil fuels while building base load and expanding access to reliable, clean and affordable energy for everyone.

In Nigeria, we face a situation where 36 percent of households do not have access to the electricity grid and where we remain almost entirely dependent on fossil fuels for electricity generation.

Nigeria does have a well-defined energy transition plan. Our energy mix must change, and the international community must meet its investment pledges to support countries in this transition.

We know that the green and blue economy has a huge potential to unleash the next great wave of human development with women and youth as the beneficiaries.

Opening new frontiers in the economy where we need to both expand and rethink. How we deliver food systems and agriculture; how we rethink the transformation for education and the skillsets that will be needed for the

market that we want to engage with; digital connectivity; social protection and protecting our environment.

In each of these areas, we face great challenges, but if we can find the tools to breakthrough, the opportunities for Nigeria and indeed the world are immense. So we need to make sure that Nigeria does not get left behind and reassess its presence and leadership on the continent and world stage.

As you look to your Governor's mission, you must answer a key question: what do you need to accelerate these transformations in your state?

Now, of course, every state has a different starting point, different assets, challenges and different circumstances.

But I see four common areas where action and attention are urgently needed everywhere.

First, you will need institutional capacity.

The apparatus of the state must be strengthened – whether it's preparing civil and public servants; leveraging digital technologies and data systems; or empowering oversight bodies or local authorities.

There is no substitute for inclusive, effective, and accountable public institutions.

Promoting effective international cooperation offers an unprecedented opportunity, as a driver of transformation, which Nigeria can show to the rest of the continent and the world. The question will be, are you ready to make that step up.

65 percent of the SDGs can be won or lost at the sub-national level. By 2050, 68 percent of the world's population will live in cities. These cities will garner wealth and become centres of innovation and progress. But at the same time, this can fuel greenhouse gases, waste, and spatial inequalities.

Therefore, strengthening planning in a coordinated all-of-government approach, within and between multiple levels of governance, will be pivotal to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and to equip coordinated responses to localize and better align efforts of national and local governments to achieve the SDGs.

Second, you will need trusted partnerships.

Partnerships with the central government, with the private sector, with civil society, academia and with international financial institutions and indeed with the United Nations, of which you are a big part.

Our Resident Coordinators and our UN Country Teams are here in Nigeria at your service but also across borders in the continent. And the new Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework between the United Nations and the Government of Nigeria, which is the bedrock of our collaboration and shared pursuit of the SDGs but also of the African Union's 2063 Agenda.

But beyond formal support for programming and policy work, we are also here to convene and to broker partnerships that are necessary to carry these priorities forward.

We have a unique convening power, and we are ready to deploy it wherever sustainable development progress is possible.

This brings me to the third point: financing, the means of implementation.

Since 2015, we've talked globally about moving from billions to trillions to support developing countries to drive their own national transformation. Global savings are at \$230trn, and the price tag for the SDGs is a mere \$ 7trn, so we know we have the resources globally to take this agenda forward.

That kind of shift still hasn't happened, and it's one of the biggest obstacles to advancing sustainable development.

The Secretary-General is leading a global push to reform the global financial architecture to right this wrong:

To deal with debt crises that are massively influenced by global crises; to ensure we deal with liquidity constraints and investment in developing countries by access to cheaper and longer-term finance.

The debt restructuring, it is about us, but we had not expected to see; a better use of that debt longer-term and cheaper.

The opportunities of the SDRs, which were the largest in history, from the IMF 650 billion. This means we can leverage more money that comes from the banks to leverage our investments

And speaking to investments, investments won't come today with the kind of risk profiles we have. While we have a lot to do to change that narrative. It will be one that we will have to change together with our colleagues in the international community.

On the domestic front, we must address the informal sectors we have heard about earlier; it does have disposable income. And we need to work with them to find ways that that disposable income can find ways to access the basic services that they need.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

And fourth and finally, the area that is most in your hands: leadership.

Committed leadership that can tap into these opportunities and guide the nation toward inclusive, sustainable development that leaves no one behind.

And for each one of your states, you need to see a mapping of the data that tells you exactly who those no-ones are. How many people are living under the poverty line, how many people are out of work, and how many don't have access to education or health services? And if they do, are they receiving quality services?

The first term goes very fast, and the second term even faster. Campaign promises made must be delivered, and that's hard. It requires an effective team, one that can deliver on those promises that have been made.

Resource constraints are very real. Prioritising, phasing and leveraging other partnerships will be key. Communicating and consulting creates fewer distractions and manages expectations. Perhaps the greatest challenge that you will have at the state level is how to change the mindsets.

Under the constitution of Nigeria, you have the authority and the responsibility to deliver on critical foundations of infrastructure and basic services and rights of people that can deliver on social and economic development.

But to do so, you must lead, whether it is from the front, the side or from the back. The word that runs across all is leadership.

You must inspire and shape a better future that includes everyone.

You must bring the population on this journey with you. Balancing the political economy for the benefit of all and not just a few.

You must take every opportunity to have women and youth not just at the table but empowered to make a meaningful contribution to the discourse.

You must also open up to your political adversaries and govern with vision, courage, tolerance and humility.

Your Excellencies,

With only 7 years to go to meet the promises of the 2030 Agenda, and even less in your first term. Time is not on our side.

Nigerians have high expectations, and the world is watching.

Remember that transformation will not happen in a vacuum or by chance. The context is tough.

Nigeria must prepare and be ready to make a quantum leap.

I urge you, both individually and collectively, to seize the moment of nation-building by leveraging on the efforts made and working hand in hand with each other first and with President-elect Tinubu's administration. And I am confident that you can steer our great nation towards renewal and transformation, and of course, the United Nations will ever be at your disposal.

Finally, as a Nigerian woman, let me also urge you to delegate to women's leadership. Many of you in this room have Deputy Governors that are women, but we need to see them in the cabinets and in decision-making roles.

We need to see them in business. So that the next businessperson that speaks at this podium will be co-chairing with Tony Elumelu, but it will be a woman. And in that way, we can see the equity in business because we for sure know that women have the expertise and the right to be part of our nation-building.

As a democracy in progress, lessons must be learned, especially over the last election. And the healing must occur if we are to deepen governance and meet the expectations of our people.

May the Almighty, give you the wisdom and the courage to lead this country to a new dawn.

Thank you.

[END].