



ISSUES IN MODERN PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY IN NIGERIA:

Making the Civil Service Work Better

KEYNOTE SPEECH

By The
Chief Servant
DR. MUAZU BABANGIDA ALIYU, OON
(Talban Minna)
The Governor of Niger State

at a **NATIONAL SEMINAR & RE-LAUNCH** of the
**NIGERIAN ASSOCIATION FOR
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
AND MANAGEMENT
(N A P A M)**

At The Public Service Institute, Kubwa-abuja
On Monday, June 1, 2009



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PROTOCOL:

2. I am honored to be here today. I would like to start by thanking the office of the Head of Service of the Federation (HOSF) for inviting me and for giving me the privilege to address this all important seminar for distinguished leaders of the Nigerian Public Service. I should also congratulate the HOSF for her courage and vision in trying to reposition the Nigerian Public Service to meet the emerging challenges of the public service of the 21st century.

3. This seminar is indeed very important, not only for creating the atmosphere for

exchanging ideas on the best ways to make the Public Service work better, but especially for doubling as the occasion for the re-launch of the Nigerian Association of Public Administration and Management (NAPAM) – the erudite association, which should be the flagship for promoting excellence in good governance and service delivery, as well as building a more responsive and dynamic public service in Nigeria.

4. Distinguished colleagues, I believe I am still a part and parcel of this association, for I owe a lot to the Nigerian Public Service, which I had the privilege to serve, as many of us may be aware, at the highest level as Permanent Secretary, during which I had a very exciting career. Like I often say, I cannot afford to fail in my present responsibility/assignment as the Chief Servant of Niger State, because to do so would have been failing the entire public service of this country. I am also very happy that many

prominent people, by way of compliment ask me how we can get more civil servants into politics and leadership position.

5. While I appreciate the aptness of the theme of this seminar: "Making the Public Service Work Better" in analyzing the requirements for a more effective and efficient public service, I would like us to focus on the following issues:

- i) has the objective/purpose/role of the civil service changed from the period of our political independence to-date?
- ii) how do we motivate the individual civil servant to give his best? Is his best good enough for the time? Are these motivational factors a function of salary and emoluments, equipment and environment, training and competence?
- iii) how do we balance our greed, real needs and what society can offer? In other words, is corruption in the public

service a function of greed or needs?
and

iv) Did the Nigerian civil service learn anything from the so-called reforms of 2003-2007? Which is the best way of reforming the service – internally generated or externally induced?

6. In brief, what are the challenges that the public service face in Nigeria today. The first major challenge, to my mind, is probably the lack of courage by public servants in the service of others, including the inability to resist the often overbearing influence of the political authorities, even in the face of flagrant abuse of rules and regulations. This is a most unfortunate situation that most public servants have degenerated to, either to secure their jobs or for material benefits and rewards or both, or indeed out of sheer ignorance. It is for this reason that some of us become susceptible to the manipulations of

the political class, sometimes jettisoning merit, competence and performance in recruitment and retention in the public service.

7. In Niger State for instance, I inherited a moribund civil service that was neglected, despised and intimidated to the extent that many Directors and some Permanent Secretaries were not aware of the Public Service Rules and Financial Regulations/Instructions; a civil service with too many people having nothing to do and indeed a civil service with many ghost workers. We therefore had to embark on a strategic reinvigoration of the state civil service to bring it out of the deep mess it found itself; by ensuring that civil servants had pride and sense of value in themselves. We organized retreats for different cadre of the public service, starting with the Directors/permanent secretaries and then Commissioners and other political

appointees; increased salaries and allowances and ensuring prompt payment of such as at when due; cleared all outstanding arrears of gratuities and ensuring prompt payment of pensions to retirees; introduced compulsory computer training programme to make all civil servants e-compliant and computer acquisition scheme at 50% discount; embarked on Biometric data exercise to ascertain the actual size of the workforce; and the introduction of continuous education and training as prerequisites for promotion and progression in service, amongst others.

8. We had to approach our situation from that direction because we believed that the only way to get the service to achieve desired objectives was by having public servants with the awareness and knowledge of what the service entails and the requirements of their jobs. Only in such situation should we expect our public servants to stand on our feet to

protect the image and integrity of the public service; only then should we also expect public servants to be decisive and professional in their approach to issues, including the ability to differentiate between what was right or wrong and to be able to politely say 'No' to their political superiors, when the need arises. We must not allow politicians or any god-fathers to use the apparatus of government to reward their constituents or party loyalists/supporters, who have no business in public service. We must continuously defend the integrity of the public service, by offering sound and objective advice and recommendations in the course of our official duties; and we must be committed to people-centred service delivery, which is the cornerstone of modern public administration and management.

9. Another important issue in relation to this discussion is that of 'Trust'. It is indeed sad to note that many citizens in this country,

- ◆ Through *Pragmatism* we should ensure that no policy, idea or assumption is beyond critical examination and that the effectiveness or otherwise of policies should be judged primarily by outcomes and not by ideological purity; and finally
- ◆ By emphasizing *Integrity* we should ensure that the design of any public service reform and change programme should be motivated by the needs of the nation and not hampered by vested narrow personal or group interests.

14. I would also like us to look at the issue of reforms in the public service. Here, we might ask the question: what are we reforming? Like we asked earlier, have the objectives, purpose, roles and procedures of the service changed any significantly since our independence? Or have our values, ethics and attitudes changed to so adversely affect the service? I believe the theme of this

seminar suggests that all is not the same with the public service that we used to have: a service that once gave people a sense of fulfillment, contentment and security; and indeed a service that was the pride and joy of all. While there appears to be a justification for reforms in the Service, the major concerns driving the reforms should be 'value for money' and the three e's of Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness. Economy here refers to cutting costs; efficiency meaning getting a better ratio of output-value to input-costs; and effectiveness referring to not doing work that can be better done by others or unnecessary work.

15. In order to make the public service work better and for public service reforms to be successful and acceptable to all, we must take deliberate steps to promote a mind set for reforms in the public servants, while emphasizing on the needs for results and

efficiency as the prime objectives of the reforms. Anything short of this would be counterproductive and would not get the buy-in of the public servants.

16. At this juncture, I must applaud the dynamic leadership of the HOSF in re-launching the Nigerian Association of Public Service Administration and Management (NAPAM) for fostering the practice of public administration and management in Nigeria and creating the enabling environment for Heads of the Civil Service of the 36 States to meet quarterly to peer-review, share experiences of best practices and to complement one another. This forum would also be a veritable platform for all the Heads of the Civil Service to take uniform positions on the challenges hampering the delivery of services and for setting minimum standards, especially consistency in policy areas and procedures in relation to human resources management in the public service. The forum

also provides an avenue for discussion of democracy, federalism and federation.

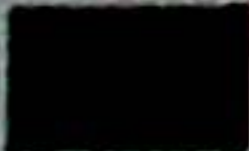
17. Indeed, NAPAM should serve as the umbrella professional association for all civil servants, whose membership should be statutorily mandatory and properly funded to be able to regulate the activities and behavior of civil servants and to ensure their compliance with public service ethical codes, as well as their competence both at the entry and disengagement points. I benefitted tremendously from the membership; I travelled to Kenya, Botswana, Ghana, Seychelles and Singapore. I participated in the activities of AAPAM and CAPAM.

18. Before we leave here, it might be of immense benefit if we are clear in my minds on where we want the Nigerian Public Service to be by the year 2020; what individual and collective roles we should play to make the public service truly better in its

outcomes; and on what we want to be remembered for when we have moved on from the service or from earth.

19. I have no doubt that given our collective determination and commitment; we shall build a responsive and progressive public service that would effectively facilitate the attainment of Vision 20:2020 and the realization of the 7-Point agenda of the federal government. We must take responsibility built on courage, sincerity and honesty of purpose. Nigeria has all it takes for the public service to work better. We can and we must. We ought to harvest our enormous human capital potentials and natural resources for the good of all, our nation and humanity.

20. I thank you all for listening and May Allah (SWT) continue to bless us all. Amen.



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