



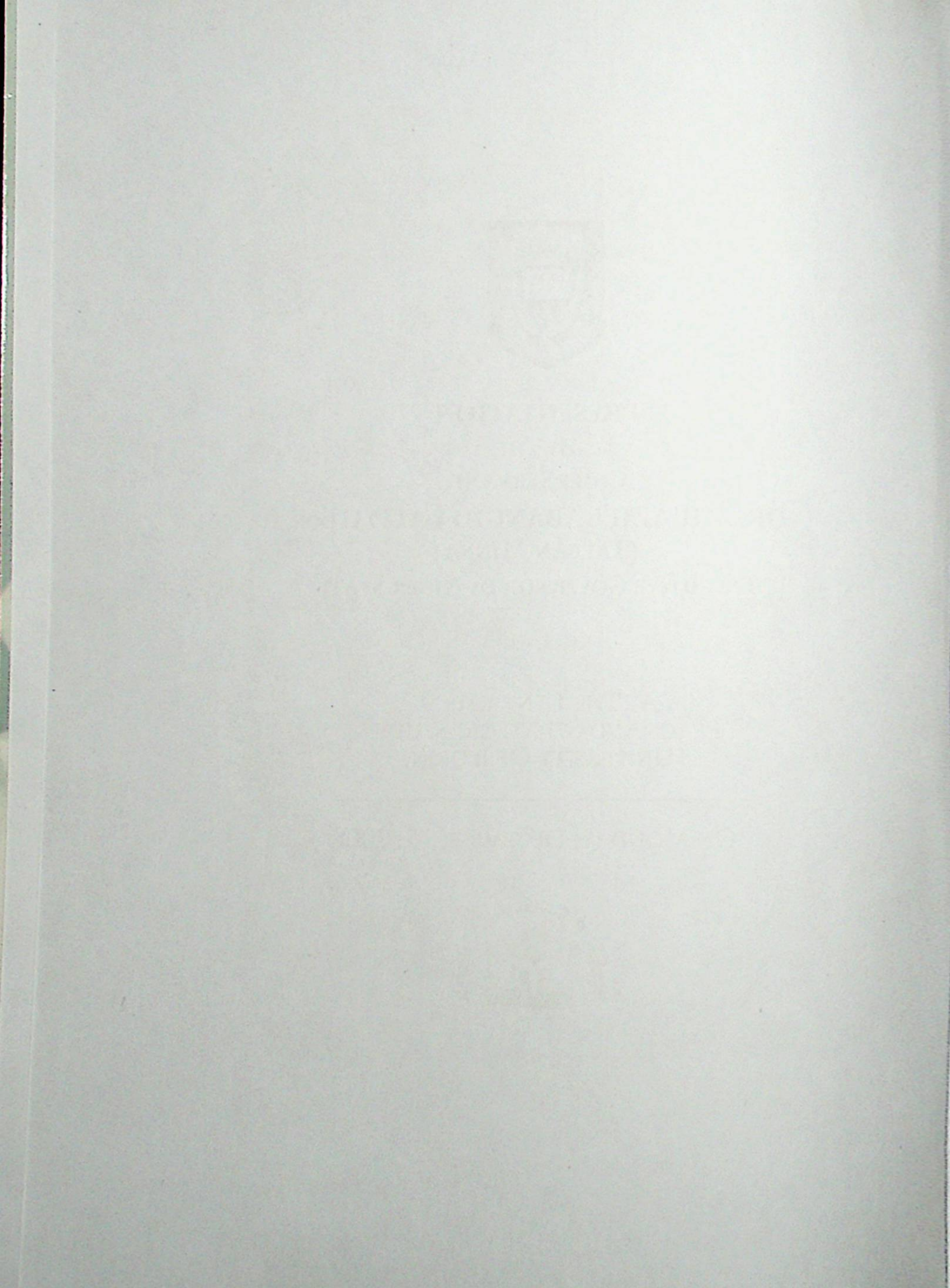
**PRESENTATION**  
**BY THE**  
**CHIEF SERVANT,**  
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**(TALBAN MINNA)**  
**EXECUTIVE GOVERNOR OF NIGER STATE**

**AT THE CENTRE FOR**  
**PEACE AND STRATEGIC STUDIES,**  
**UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN,**

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**ON MONDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2008**





**NATIONAL INTEGRATION AS A TOOL  
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:  
ISSUES FOR PEACE AND  
STRATEGIC STUDIES**

**PROTOCOL:**

2. I am very pleased to be here and to be part of this historic occasion in a unique and serene environment. I am particularly glad to be with you today because this invitation affords me the opportunity to be back in a community, a University, which I have always cherished for its perpetuating influence in charting the course for the development of society. Like I said recently in a presentation at the University of Ibadan, the more we have something like a revolving door system where political actors in the 'town' come over to the academia, 'the gown' and vice versa, from time to time, to interact and exchange ideas, the better it is for us in appreciating the vital contributions that each can make in the challenging task of nation building.
3. I should specifically thank the Vice Chancellor, Professor Is-Haq Oloyede for the warm

reception and courtesy accorded me and my entourage on our arrival to this campus, and Dr. Isaac Albert for considering me worthy to speak at this occasion. I am very humbled by the invitation to be the first speaker at the Distinguished Personality Lecture of the Centre for Peace and Strategic Studies of this University.

4. Undoubtedly, issues of National Integration and Strategic Studies are always exciting for me to discuss, because I do believe that our ability to tolerate one another and to co-exist is a major litmus test by our Creator who has brought us together as a nation in His own wisdom, as reflected in the Quran where Allah (SWT) stated "O people, we created you from the same male and female and rendered you distinct people and tribes, that you may recognize one another. The best among you in the sight of God, is the most righteous. God is the omniscient, cognisant" (Q:49:13). I am also very pleased because the discourse is taking place today in a University that is a leading centre of excellence not only in Strategic Studies but in setting the standard for sustainable development initiatives in this

country. I therefore congratulate the Vice Chancellor, the Management and all those who are directly or indirectly involved in the excellent work taking place in this institution.

5. Permit me, ladies and gentlemen to use this opportunity to underscore the importance of education as the foundation of real development of any society. Events like this are important to us, for they enable us to situate education properly and to appreciate the fact that education, especially at the tertiary level, must relate to the common needs of our society. It must aim at a higher sense of value of our society and assist in finding solutions to the myriad of problems afflicting our nation today. This is essentially why the topic of this discourse "*National Integration as a Tool for Sustainable Development: Issues for Peace and Strategic Studies*" is very apt.

## 6. **CONTEXTUAL CLARIFICATIONS**

It is necessary to clarify the main operative terms in this presentation: 'national integration' and 'sustainable development', so that, when our discussion raise issues of practical realities, they will be issues that should encourage

scholars to engage in more research and bring out more solutions to the problems that are confronting us.

7. 'National integration' presupposes deliberate steps to create an integrated whole from probably disparate and heterogeneous entities. This is further strengthened going by the definition of a nation as a community of people who feel that they belong together and that they share deeply significant elements of common heritage, such as language, religion, history, culture, and to some extent geographical boundary, and that they have a common destiny and common aspirations for the future.

## 8. **THE PEACE NATIONAL INTEGRATION SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT NEXUS**

It may be pertinent to explore the nexus between peace, national integration and sustainable development. It has been argued often that there is a link between the three concepts. Peace is a critical factor for national integration and sustainable development. Johann Galtung, an eminent scholar of Peace Studies illustrates this in his conceptualization of

peace. Galtung differentiated between "negative peace", which is the absence of direct violence, war, fear and conflict at the individual, national, regional and international levels, and "positive peace", which is also seen as the absence of unjust structures, unequal relationships and injustice, as well as "inner peace" at the individual level.

9. Drawing insight from his conceptualization of peace, the prevalence of unjust structures and policies which alienate the citizenry from developing their full potentials as human beings is inimical to sustainable development. Furthermore, the "unjust structures' and policies" are the "root causes" of national disintegration, which manifests itself in conflicts particularly in Africa and its changing nature, whereby intra-state conflicts dominate with attendant consequences on sustainable development, national integration and security. These conflicts have in fact led to a paradigm shift in the conceptualization of development or sustainable development. This is in view of the fact that the violent wars and conflicts exacerbate the problems of under-development, as exemplified by the post-

conflict situations in a number of African countries. A number of countries in Africa, Asia, Middle East and Europe have been faced with these challenges.

10. This therefore implies that "sustainable development in action" is the concerted efforts at various levels of governance to 'uproot' the 'causes' of conflicts, wars, dissatisfaction and national integration by initiating policies and programmes that would ensure equity, social justice and unity in a nation like ours.
11. The question then is how do we harmonise these various characteristics to really have a Nigerian nation that looks at things the same way, that appreciates the essence of unity in diversity, that does things in unison and where the citizens are proud of their national identity first and foremost, before they remember their ethnic backgrounds, religion and states of origin. Why do we have citizens who, at the slightest provocation or misunderstanding challenge the whole existence of our nation? Why do we allow primordial identity to superimpose itself on the national identity? I believe we have lessons to learn from the



patriotic zeal and national pride of people from other parts of the world, for instance the Americans, the Indians and Canadians, in depicting the feeling of nationhood. We really have to create a national identity that stimulates us to think and act as members of one indivisible entity anytime the word 'Nigerian' is heard, rather than see ourselves first as either Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Kanuri, or Ibibio, etc. Indeed, there is also a lesson to learn from the recent break of the Communist Russia, where the Bolshevik ideology of 70 years could not hold the entity together, and it broke into different nationalities.

12. Similarly, underpinning the philosophy of national integration is the high probability that we would have sustainable development because the citizens are thinking alike; they have shared values and aspirations, a common mission and vision of where they really want to be, how and when they want to get there, and they will be totally committed to protecting and advancing the course of their national interest at all times. Given this feeling, the people will never bring their nation into disrepute through their actions or inactions and will be prepared

to lay their lives and pay the supreme price for the nation, if the need arises. Now, let us ask ourselves: have we been paying conscious attention to the symbols of our nation and their significance to national integration the National Flag, the Coat of Arms, the National Anthem, the National Pledge, and indeed, our motto: Unity, Peace and Progress. Have we internalized our National Anthem and National Pledge in such a manner that they become our credo and part of our daily devotion? When we sing the National Anthem, do we get the deeper meaning of the wordings and innermost conviction as well as the spiritual and emotional feelings that they should evoke? How many of us even here, in the University, have read the Nigerian Constitution and appreciate the Institutional arrangement in the attempt to evolve an equitable society and entrench Democracy in our polity, which has been bastardised by the military interruption into governance.

### **13. ISSUES FOR PEACE AND STRATEGIC STUDIES**

This therefore leads us to examine the issues for peace and strategic studies. From the

foregoing postulation, we can infer that to the extent that a people with national integration have a shared vision they would resolve to work assiduously together as a united group of people towards the realization of their vision and to present a strong front, militarily speaking, to repudiate any attempt from any quarters (internal or external) to scuttle the attainment of their vision. Indeed, as an integrated group of people you can project your powers not only to your neighbours but also defend yourselves because as the saying goes 'united you stand, divided you fall'. The time has come when we ought to move beyond passive sentiments, when we must vow to uphold the values of our national heritage for our country to be further united as one people, with one destiny. There is nothing wrong in retaining or maintaining our immediate identity as long as we are able to rise above it when a national issue arises. In such a situation, we, as a group, will not allow some few individuals to use such identity for selfish ends.

14. Similarly, other threats of hunger, poverty, and deprivation would have been addressed in the process of national integration, because there

is a conscious effort at sustainable development, as is the case in President Umaru Musa Yar'adua's Seven Point Agenda and Vision 20:2020. We must give credit to the President for clearly identifying some of the issues for Peace and Strategic Studies that would accelerate the attainment of national integration as a basis for sustainable development. What we need to do further is to study, research and operationalise the Seven-Point Agenda and the Vision 20:2020 to serve as a guide for Action Plan and also as yardstick for measuring the success or failure of the government in an empirical way. Indeed, the cardinal elements of the Seven-Point Agenda should be subscribed to by all Nigerians for their intrinsic values for achieving sustainable development and national integration. Take for instance each of the Seven Point agenda:

- a. Critical Infrastructure: Power, Transportation, National Gas Distribution and Telecommunications
- b. Niger Delta: which faces a number of physical and geographical challenges, including environmental degradation;

pollution; oil spills; human, economic, social and political problems; and appropriate funding

- c. Food Security: which focuses on the production and development of the Agricultural sector through modern technology, financial support to agricultural research, and technology knowledge transfer to farmers
- d. Human Capital Development: through the provision of quality health, education and social protection for empowering the population to achieve sustainable national development
- e. Land Tenure and Home Ownership: which attempts to address the pressures of rural-urban migration through the provision of sufficient and affordable land for housing, commercialized farming and large scale businesses
- f. National Security: through the creation of central Directorate of Intelligence and neighborhood policing to curb the crime rate and facilitate the general improvement

in the welfare and conditions of service of men and women of the Nigeria Police, and

g. Wealth Creation: which is targeted at reducing poverty, through the creation of the enabling environment for economic growth, the development of skills for productivity and the facilitation of access to credit and self employment?

15. If we do not subscribe to the Seven Point Agenda and support the President, our situation would be different and the people would continue to be corrupt, selfish, indisciplined, and would lack cohesion of purpose to the extent of going back to brutish and chaotic ways of doing things for survival of the fittest, and they will also be willing to destroy everything along their way or even sell their fellow citizens in the face of any real or assumed provocation. Recent events and crisis in some parts of our nation clearly illustrate our fears and concerns about underlining the need for conscious efforts for national integration. For instance, the intractable Niger Delta crisis; with all the efforts being put in place in addressing the Niger Delta issue, things would

not have gone so bad if we had paid attention and made deliberate efforts at ensuring good governance at the very low levels and ensured equitable ways of doing things. Also, with good governance and national integration, the total decay of our public infrastructure and the deep-rooted poverty in the country would not have surfaced. Indeed, in a situation where governance is personalized, some people see themselves as emperors and feudal lords in a supposedly democratic environment, and this may negate all the excellent efforts of the few good people in governance. Indeed, even some of our current efforts at solving these problems would have been more courageous, sincere and altruistic such that we do not solve one problem today only to be confronted with more complex problems tomorrow, or even mortgage the future of the nation. We can assume that in an integrated community issues like derivation would not have become an issue, because people will be looking at themselves and would be more concerned with the quality of lives and equitable distribution of resources. When the elder statesman, our father and leader, Dr. Olusola Saraki mentioned recently that recently a State in the Niger Delta has Four

Hundred Billion Naira deposited in a bank account, I almost fainted because my State cannot boast of that amount in four years (2007-2001), whereas I have a population that is more than that State.

16. In the same vein, the recent Jos crisis is a classic example of how we have allowed primordial sentiments to override national interest and identity. The manner and regular occurrence of the Jos crisis in 1994, 2001, 2004 and 2008 represent the worst threat to national integration and sustainable development of our nation. We must all condemn what happened in Jos and make sure that such carnage and barbarism never happens in any part of the country again. Perhaps, it is time for the federal government to take decisive action in putting an end to such incidents. I believe Nigerians are looking up to the federal government to take over the investigation into the crisis from the Plateau State government in the interest of national harmony, peace and stability. We must note that what happened in Jos recently, in which, according to official figures, over 500 innocent Nigerians were killed in the wake of Local Government poll



results, was only a manifestation of the deep-rooted resentments and the non-integrative posture of many communities in Nigeria today. Take for instance, a typical National University where, for whatever sentiments, some people may not have a chance to become the Vice Chancellor or Head of Department because of their state of origin. In some cases, some national universities are usually left on their own, often without receiving support from the State Government, simply because they are federal institutions. This is, in fact not ideal for national integration.

17. We can also draw lessons about national integration for sustainable economic development from the Jews and the Asian Tigers of China, Japan, Taiwan and Malaysia who have attained astonishing economic growth and development because of integration and unity of purpose, to the extent that, no matter what happens, they have reached a standard where they may not fall below. Before the Jews settled in their present location in the Middle East in 1948, they had always identified themselves as belonging to the same nation in spite of the fact that they

were found in all the four corners of the globe. As the joke goes, in any corner of the world, you will find Coca-Cola and a Jew! Is it not amazing that the Jews see themselves as a common people, with a common heritage and a common destiny regardless of whether they found themselves in the Middle East, America, Germany, Russia, China or even in Ethiopia (Africa)? Is it simply because of their common historical experience of persecution? Or is it because they have something of immense value which they must hold on to even for their survival? Indeed, finding a definition for what constitutes the Middle East is highly contentious and emotive. Some scholars extend Middle East as far-flung as Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan in Europe and Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia in Africa, often because of the similarities of looks, religion and cultural practices. Similarly, all the nomadic Fulanis in spite of their dispersal across the West Coast of Africa also rightly lay claim to constitute a nation.

18. The underlying factors are that all these social groupings have the same historical backgrounds, common heredity attributes,

physically and psychologically, and share common vision, aspirations and destiny. This cements their bond and ensures solidarity, which puts national allegiance far and above mere geographic considerations or primordial loyalties.

## 19. **ILLS OF NON-INTEGRATION**

Lets us now briefly look at the ills that will be brought about by non-integration. As we have examined earlier, a society that is not integrated for nationhood would neither attain greatness nor sustainable development, and will suffer the ills of indiscipline, corruption, nepotism, tribalism, selfish cries of marginalisation, and various forms of socio-cultural, religious and political feuds like the recent Jos crisis and the ones before it, in other parts of the country. I am sure many of us do recall the notorious *Maitatsina* crisis in Kano, the Bulunkutu crisis in Maiduguri, the Ife-Modakeke crisis in Osun State, and the Afonja-Fulani crisis in Ilorin, among others. We need to understand that the underlying force behind all these crises is the struggle for the control of the limited economic resources of the nation for social security, including the fear of poverty. That is

why the country, Nigeria, like many others with the plurality of ethnic groups, religions, cultures and diverse social orientations, strives to create political structures that promote unity, internal cohesion and forge loyalty above and beyond geo-political divides. Indeed, it is still to be seen whether the current six geo-political zones recommended by the Political Reform Conference of 1994/95, is the best thing to do in our quest for national integration.

20. However, other countries face the same challenges like Nigeria. For instance, India, a country with a population almost ten times of Nigeria's, has similar problems, but somehow they are able to rise above it and overcome despite their internal ethnic crisis, because of adherence to the principles of national integration, transparent and accountable ways of doing things. The recent Mumbai attacks in India (Taj Mahal Hotel), which left at least 172 people dead and wreaked havoc on its most famous landmarks, presents a good example of how leaders with conscience ought to behave when a cabinet member resigned his appointment because of his failure to provide effective leadership.

## 21. **NIGER STATE EXPERIENCE**

At this juncture, I will like to share our experiment in promoting national integration with you. First, in Niger State we are appropriating all federal Institutions located in the State; we believe that we must own them, support them and integrate them because they are in Niger State in order to add value to our people by the services they render and because we understand the critical nature and significance of integrating them to our developmental efforts.

22. With a Vision to transform Niger State into one of the top three most developed States in Nigeria by the year 2020, we noticed that our dream would not be realized unless we achieve a great level of integration among all residents of the state, whether indigenes or non-indigenes. We are promoting this unity and harmonious co-existence by being our brother's keeper. For instance, our Free Education Programme covers everybody in the public schools. We are paying the examination fees for NECO, WAEC, and NBTE for all students, irrespective of their states of origin. Our thinking is that anyone who found Niger state

habitable, who lives, works, produces, and pays his or her taxes to the State, should be entitled to such benefits as free primary and secondary education, free health care for children under five and for pregnant women, as well as for the aged above 70 years.

23. We have also abolished the contract appointment system which discriminates against citizens hitherto considered to be non-indigenes. Any Nigerian who is suitable for appointment is entitled to permanent and pensionable appointment. We believe that this will engender more commitment and greater productivity among hitherto contract workers. It will also attract more skilled workers who otherwise would not have considered coming to Niger state to work.
24. In order to give all Nigerlites, and here I am referring to all residents of the state - a sense of belonging, we have appointed people from other parts of the country into some of the Boards of our Agencies and Commissions. When it comes to giving out appointments or engaging people to add value to our State, we are of the view that competence, performance

and capacity to deliver should be the primary considerations. As parts of efforts to promote national integration, we have instituted the Niger State Productivity and Honours Awards, which will recognize all Nigerians who contribute to the growth and development of Niger State. The maiden edition of the awards conferment will take place on December 21, 2008.

25. To ensure that people at the grassroots feel the presence and impact of government in practical terms, the state government set up Ward Development Committees (WDCs) in all the 274 electoral wards in the state, which are being funded regularly for executing people-centred projects, without the interference from either the local or state government, except monitoring to ensure strict compliance. The integrative impact of this policy and its implementation can very well be imagined. Beyond imagination, however, it provides opportunity for governance, service delivery and participatory democracy.
26. The recent American political development which saw the emergence of Barack Obama,

the first American of African descent as the President-elect is a great lesson for our nation and all countries in socio-political circumstances similar to ours. It represents a complete paradigm shift as a result of deliberate efforts to integrate the people for sustainable development.

27. I dream of a time in the near future when any Nigerian can aspire to any political office in any part of the country where he/she resides, without hindrance, discrimination or being reminded of his/her ancestral origin. Let us see ourselves first as Nigerians before we consider our ethnic or regional loyalties. Such things happened during the First Republic where political parties sponsored so-called non-indigenes or resident from other places to represent constituencies other than their own. And it worked well.

## 28. **LEADERSHIP ROLE IN NATIONAL INTEGRATION**

It is imperative that we recognise the role of effective leadership for national integration in order to achieve sustainable development; a leadership that is purposeful, result-oriented,



sincere, transparent, accountable, and responsible; a leadership that is God-fearing, and that is committed to the progressive enhancement of the total well being of the people a visionary. Such leadership strives to create mechanisms for unity, internal cohesion, and engenders national loyalty across all sections of the country. Such leadership role is, in my view, the integrative leadership role, where the leader's first instinct will be 'service to the people' rather than 'personal survival'.

29. We do sincerely hope that with the recent Supreme Court judgement on the Presidential election, we shall have the excellent leadership qualities of President Umaru Musa Yar'adua who sees his role as a servant-leader. So far, he has displayed genuine concern for the well-being of Nigeria and Nigerians. We therefore see the President as an integrative leader, who needs our support and loyalties. Similarly, we hope and pray that Nigeria and Nigerians will not go back to the era in the past when some of our national leaders were more concerned about their survival, with their actions and inactions contributing more to disintegrating rather than uniting us.

30. Ladies and gentlemen, I believe we have seen how national integration influence sustainable development and the issues that can arise for peace and strategic studies in a nation state like Nigeria. Clearly, we have seen that the challenges posed to our nationhood are some of the factors responsible for our lack of development, which in turn raise issues and challenges for peace and strategic studies. These include issues of poverty, corruption, nepotism, tribalism, ethnicity, regional loyalty above national identity.
31. In the same vein, we should ask some of these pertinent questions: why is it that there is continued clamour for the creation of States and Local Governments in almost all parts of the country, even in places where such demands may not be justified? Do we really need a Ministry for Niger Delta? Will the Ministry supervise the activities for the development of that geo-political zone? Should our revenue allocation formula involve derivation? What is the rationale behind rotating or zoning political party offices? Does that signify that when it is the turn of a particular zone to present, say the President or Governor of a State, then that

zone gets more attention at the expense of the other zones? Why are our elections always questioned and become issues of contention and endless litigations? How do we ensure that our research efforts are relevant to the sustainable development efforts in Nigeria?

32. Finally, as I said earlier, scholars in the University should continue to ask the pertinent questions, challenge assumptions, develop hypothesis, validate empirical research and encourage participatory intellectual engagement, such as this opportunity, to provide the necessary platform for national integration. Indeed, the issue of national integration should not be seen as an end in itself, rather it should be an ingredient for achieving sustainable development.
33. May God keep Nigeria as one indivisible entity, for as the Bible says "Behold. How good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Psalm 133:1). I thank you for your attention.
34. May Allah bless us all; Ameen.

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