

**LIFE AFTER RETIREMENT ON  
COMPLETION OF TENURE AS EXECUTIVE  
GOVERNOR**

**TEXT OF A PAPER**

**PRESENTED BY**

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**TO THE**

**GOVERNORS' FORUM**

## **LIFE AFTER RETIREMENT ON COMPLETION OF TENURE AS EXECUTIVE GOVERNOR**

### **1. Protocols**

### **2. Introduction**

Let me start by expressing my deep appreciation to the Leadership of this august body as well as the organizers of this interaction. Indeed I feel highly honored to be considered for this paper presentation even though I am among the junior retirees, having left office in 2019.

This presentation is therefore going to be based on my experience and perspective as a two-term Governor as well as a candidate for election to the Senate of the Federal Republic, where I emerged a second-time-lucky candidate and yours sincerely is now a Senator-elect.

Since the return to democratic rule in 1999, a number of deserving citizens have vied for the office of Governor in all the thirty-six States of the Federation. At the last count, there are over one hundred such persons who have successfully served and retired. While some have succeeded in serving the maximum two terms allowed by our Constitution, others served for only one term. Nonetheless, the experience of holding the office of

Governor, however long or short, is pregnant with a lot of stories to tell. While some have gone ahead to vie for other political offices, others have ventured into other spheres of life but have remained relevant to the political establishment at their States and/or the National level.

As we very well know, a Governor has executive powers of a State vested in him by virtue of Section 5 (2) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) which states that;

'Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, the executive powers of a State –

- a) Shall be vested in the Governor of that State and may, Subject as aforesaid and to the provisions of any Law made by a House of Assembly, be exercised by him either directly or through the Deputy Governor and Commissioners of the Government of that State or officers in the public service of the State; and
- b) Shall extend to the execution and maintenance of this Constitution, all laws made by the House of Assembly of the State and to all matters with respect to which the House of Assembly has for the time being power to make laws'.

However, in order to do justice to the topic under review, one needs to recap the processes leading to the ascension to the

office of Governor, beginning from when the flame and desire for contest was lit, to pre-campaign, primary elections, campaign tours, winning elections, taking over and forming a Government, running the Government and all the challenges inherent leading up to the end of tenure and finally, retirement.

3. **Background Work on Selection, Primaries, Campaign and Elections.**

You will probably agree with me that like any other serious undertaking, running for political office requires contemplation, consultation and a cache of campaign cash.

Prior to the Primaries, the aspirant rides on the back of existing and newly-formed interest groups (with whom he holds regular meetings) to promote his candidature. In my own case, a powerful movement known as the *Dawo-Dawo* emerged, urging me to heed the communal call to serve my people. It goes without saying that virtually all of you here had similar outfits that served the same purpose. Once the decision to run is made official, one begins to make overtures to political and Community leaders. Here again, sagacity requires the aspirant to strike a fine balance between the need to concentrate resources on delegates and other Party stakeholders on one hand, and the need to garner widespread popularity on the other hand, without running

out of steam. Once an aspirant emerges as the successful candidate of his Party, he spares no effort in pacifying those who contested against him.

Going forward, the candidate's attention turns to matters that pertain to general elections. Here he works closely with, and invariably collapses his structure into the Party machinery.

An itinerary is drawn up for touring the State. It is not unusual to identify Wards adjudged as difficult, for more intensive campaign down to Polling Unit Level. Of course a Budget is meticulously prepared for this.

The tours are big affairs accompanied by drumming and dancing aimed at attracting mammoth crowds. The candidate's entourage invariably includes the Party's political vanguards, some of whom would want to wield sticks and machetes. I firmly discouraged this behaviour during my campaign tours.

#### 4. **Office of Governor**

##### ***a) Taking Over:***

The formal processes of handing and taking over are standardized across the States, and I shall not bore you with details of those. Suffice it to say, where the out-going and in-coming Governors are from the same Party, several

informal briefings are held, and the whole process is relatively smooth. In such cases the handing-over and taking-power committees work in tandem. Even here however friction could arise between the Governor-elect and an over-bearing predecessor as was the case over my inaugural speech.

Where the Governor and the Governor-elect are from rival parties however, there is little or no informal briefing. Often times, the two camps are quick to run to press with opposing narratives on policies and programmes, as is being witnessed in one of the States in the North.

My own experience in this regard is in connection to the state-of-the-art International Conference Centre. Probably misguided by over-zealous aides, my successor, without bothering to enter the premises, kept lambasting my administration over the project. He condemned it as a waste of public resources and said the only use he could contemplate was turn it into a scanning centre for pregnant women. In fairness to him, the moment he inspected the Centre, he changed his view. Today, it has become the destination of choice for meetings of Governors of the North East.

## **b) Forming Government**

From day one Party stakeholders and other interest groups bring pressure to bear on the new Governor with requests, recommendations and even near-directives as to who to appoint to top political offices. Whether you succumb to pressure or listen to your inner self, you make a few appointments you come to regret.

It is mandatory for every section of the State to be adequately represented in appointments.

## **c) Running a Government:**

It is strongly advised to have clearly thought out implementable policies and programmes well ahead of time.

In my own case, we were determined to run an inclusive Government whose programmes and policies would be based on the genuine needs and aspirations of the people. The first thing we did was to form committees of experts of Gombe State origin, to examine all sectors of Government, make wide consultations and proffer recommendations on the way forward. Their Reports were distilled into an Action Plan that guided our policies and programmes and gave us the focus to accomplish a lot.

In the Education Sector for example, the far-reaching intervention made enabled us to reduce the teacher/student ratio for Mathematics and English from 1:2590 and 1:727 to 1:146 and 1:149 respectively. Number of students per class was also reduced, from 1:100 to 1:40. Our administration also established a University of Science and Technology, a State Polytechnic, a School of Nursing and Midwifery, a College of Education, and a College of Legal and Islamic Studies.

It may interest you to note that half-way through our tenure, we presented a Score-Card to Members of the Sectoral Committees at a well-attended ceremony. At the end of the presentation they gave the Government very high marks for the achievements recorded.

#### ***d) Politics, Meetings and Managing Expectations***

Wikipedia defines Politics as “ the set of activities that are associated with making decision in groups, or other forms of power relations among individuals, such as the distribution of resources or status”.

Harold Lasswell has also defined Politics as “who gets what, when, how?” From the above definitions, Politics is all about meetings and managing expectations.



It is only in Politics that you have meetings before meetings and meetings after meetings. With the advent of zoom meetings, Politics is virtually an unending cycle of meetings. There are regular and scheduled meetings of the State Executive Council, as well as with Security agencies, with Traditional and Religious Leaders, various interest groups, etc. While the above meetings are usually held during the day, political meetings easily continue into the wee hours. It is indispensable that these meetings are the lifeblood of the machinery of governance, even though they could be stressful and time consuming for the Governor.

There is this true story of the wife of the Deputy Governor of one of my predecessors, who came down into the main Living Room at 3:00 o'clock in the morning, to rhetorically ask those sitting with him, if they themselves did not have wives waiting for them at home. Of course they immediately scampered out.

From the outside, the powers of the Governor could seem unlimited. As already mentioned in Section 4 (b), upon assumption of office the Governor is inundated by Party stakeholders for patronage (contracts, political appointments, etc).

Constituents and other interest groups also expect the Governor to fulfill the litany of promises contained in his Manifesto, as well as those made by him during campaign tours.

As would be expected the Governor's interaction with his nuclear and extended family, as well as close friends, changes as he has less and less time.

### ***e) Preparing for Retirement***

In the twilight of your tenure, it is conceivable that you will identify a preferred successor and commit your resources and time towards his success. This is likely to take a toll on you if not financially, at least mentally and physically.

All MDAs will prepare elaborate Handing-over notes that contain the administrative and financial situation of Government.

Packing out from the Government House has its own challenges. Packing personal effects and memorabilia gathered over a period of 4 or 8 years and scattered across the official Residence, Office and several Liaison offices can be quite an undertaking, especially when you factor in Civil

Servants and Public Servants who are eager to get a head start with the new administration.

### ***f) Retirement***

*“The number of phone calls began to drop. By May, 29, my phones had stopped ringing as they used to. They more or less became museum pieces; their silence reminding me of the four years of my life that proved momentous. On one occasion, after a whole day of silence, I had to check if the phones were damaged; As it were a cynical public relates to you not as a person, but as the office you occupy; the moment you leave office, the people move on; erasing every memory, they throw you into yesterday’s dustbin. Opportunism is the driver of the public’s relationship with public officials”*

- Ruben Abati, former Special Adviser on Media and Publicity to President Jonathan, July, 2015.

The above quotation clearly describes the situation of a person who held a high public office and retires or loses the position. It also adequately captures the attitude of ‘friends of office’.

Retiring from such a powerful, exalted and highly demanding Office therefore, comes along with a lot of changes, adjustments and experiences that on a general level apply to such persons but are essentially unique to each individual depending on a number of factors. Such changes may include among others; family life, daily routine, circle of ‘friends`, relationship with diverse people

and communities, politics, National institutions (EFCC, ICPC, NFIU, Police etc) and even our creator, the Almighty God.

It was Abe Lemons who said, "the trouble with retirement is that you never get a day off". Most perks associated with the office disappear. The sirens that accompanied you to the handing over grounds will not return you home. Over time, the retinue of security personnel detailed to you will be re-assigned. Mundane things like your travel and upkeep, hitherto handled by aides, will revert to you as personal expenses.

The immunity that you enjoyed will begin to take its true meaning and as the ICPC, NFIU, EFCC and Police come knocking, you realize that it only gave you a long rope to hang yourself.

It may amuse you to note, now that I am a Senator-elect, the phones have started ringing again, after a four year silence!

## **5. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, I would like to leave you with the following pieces of advice:

- i) As much as possible follow your vision and mission as encapsulated in your Manifesto and Action Plan to ensure timely delivery of projects and programmes and to avoid distraction from "friends of office" and saboteurs.

- ii) Always be prepared for unforeseen developments and circumstances. For example those in the North East Sub region did not contend with the emergence of the Boko Haram insurgency which necessitated the diversion of huge resources to fight the insecurity and to secure our people as well as handle the influx of internally displaced citizens.
- iii) Establish a robust feedback mechanism on all programmes and projects executed whatever the sources of their financing.
- iv) Reward loyalty and dedication to duty to ensure sustained focus on achieving targets.
- v) As soon as you are sworn-in, begin to prepare for your exit by planning your re-election if you are a first term Governor, or retirement if you served the constitutionally-allowed two terms.
- vi) Ensure meticulous record keeping of major decisions and policies especially proceedings of the Executive Council.
- vii) Be prepared to face any challenges from National Institutions such as EFCC, ICPC, NFIU etc who may have questions that require answers.

- viii) Be realistic. The endless gifts (rams, cows etc.) were being given with ulterior motives and will dry up. Top-level meetings such as Council of State will continue to be held without you. The funfare that used to greet your arrival, and even the pride of place at your State political Party meetings, will now be accorded to your successor.
- ix) As much as possible, avoid meddling in the affairs of the new Government.
- x) Know that if you entrust large sums of money to your friends or business partners for safe keeping, retrieving it when you are out of office could be tricky as they are likely to betray you. So look before you leap.
- xi) Be prepared and expect backbiting and criticism from virtually all segments of society by persons whose expectations and desires have not been met during your tenure. Avoid a sense of 'entitlement' in your relationship with people generally.
- xii) As M.K. Soni pointed out, you retired from work, not from life. Therefore Move on. Get yourself engaged in activities and ventures that will fill the new void and the change in daily routine.

- xiii) As you get older, your health cannot be taken for granted.  
Eat healthy meals.
- xiv) Engage in moderate physical exercise, preferably walking.

Thank you for your attention.

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