

SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY RT. HON. AMINU WAZIRI TAMBUNWAL, THE EXECUTIVE GOVERNOR OF SOKOTO STATE AND CHAIRMAN NIGERIA GOVERNORS' FORUM, AT THE INDUCTION PROGRAMME ORGANISED BY NIGERIA GOVERNORS' FORUM FOR NEW AND RETURNING GOVERNORS IN THE FEDERATION, HELD TODAY MONDAY 15TH MAY 2023, AT THE BANQUET HALL, PRESIDENTIAL VILLA, ASO ROCK ABUJA.

1. Let me start by welcoming in our midst His Excellency, the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR, at this special induction programme, organised by the Nigeria Governors' Forum for new and returning governors of the 36 states of the federation.
2. The Governors' Forum has organised this event to support the new governors in developing the essential skills for democratic governance for the implementation of pre-elections blueprints.
3. To kickstart this post-election democratic process, we have invited governance experts, bureaucrats, and entrepreneurs within and outside the shores of this country, to share their expertise on democratic governance in a diverse political economy with unique peculiarities in modern governance framework. I am pleased to acknowledge in our midst the presence of democratic leaders from Africa, United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States of America who have obliged to share their vast experience with us.
4. Your Excellency, we have had a robust and fruitful engagements with you as a listening father for the past 8 years of your administration. In the National Economic Council

(NEC), Chaired by Mr Vice President, members of the Governors' Forum interfaced with your administration on national political economy issues and adopt measures for economic development and sustainability. We are grateful to have you in our midst today.

5. I am also using this opportunity to thank my colleagues, Your Excellencies, for the golden opportunity and support bestowed on me to serve you and steer the affairs of the Forum for the past 6 months. I have gained remarkable knowledge and experience on issues of governance, subnational cooperation, and intergovernmental relations on a wider spectrum. These have helped us to establish cordial and harmonious relationship with the federal government with seamless collaboration for federalist consolidation.
6. On behalf of the Governors' Forum, I want to particularly thank Mr President for his immense support to the states and coming to their rescue in times of difficult financial and infrastructural challenges. His recognition of the states as critical stakeholders in a constitutionally defined independent, co-equal and inter-dependent federalist composition has been legendary. His numerous interventions have helped in rescuing the states and the nation on several occasions from economic recession and sustained the federation on the path of socio-economic stability and political consolidation.
7. Mr. President has engineered the execution of critical infrastructures in all the states of the federation without recourse to party affiliations, religion, or region.

8. Most recently, Mr President accented to some constitutional alteration bills into law. Electricity, Railways, and Correctional Services are now in the Concurrent Legislative List. States have been empowered constitutionally to generate, transmit, and distribute electricity in areas covered by the national grid. We now have financial independence of State Houses of Assembly and State Judiciary. Presidents and Governors are expected to submit the names of persons nominated as Ministers and Commissioners within 60 days of taking oath of office for confirmation by the Senate or State House of Assembly. These, among others, are landmark constitutional reforms.

9. Full diversification of the economy entails shifting away from reliance on export of commodity like oil, gold, and agricultural produce to industrialisation for genuine development and sustainable growth of our economy. Rearticulation of our national industrialisation policy, improved power supply and human capital development are critical in our quest for industrialisation for poverty alleviation and employment generation. This is a task the incoming administration must take seriously for national socio-economic reinvigoration.

10. Distinguished Colleagues, ladies, and gentlemen, as some of us are exiting as helmsmen of our respective states, the new and incoming governors are reminded of the task ahead. We have made giant strides in our various states within limited resources at our disposal in the areas of infrastructural development and provision of social services. We faced the most difficulty times in economic management of our states during the COVID 19 pandemic. We exited recessions and the economy is now on the pathway for sustainable growth. You now face the important task of putting viable strategies in

place, assembling a competent team, and collaborating with the federal government to move the nation forward and provide relieve to the teeming populace whose mandate you are going to exercise in the next four years. You must work hand in hand with the federal government as members of the National Economic Council, to boost the economy in tandem with the global best practices.

11. The management of state economies that are totally dependent on accruals from the federation account is not an easy task. For most of the states, Internally Generated Revenues (IGR) are improving with some investment reform measures put in place. The mandate you have is accompanied with high expectations. Consolidating democratic dividends through good governance and service delivery are critical in meeting the people's expectations.
12. Borrowing to finance socio-economic challenges is not a reliable alternative. This is the position of the National Economic Council (NEC) chaired by Mr Vice President with the Governors as members. Subnational governments should work hard to multiply revenue generation bases to generate more revenues for the betterment of the people. Revenue generation agencies of government at the federal and state governments should partner more to generate revenues through taxation to meet fiscal responsibilities. Prompt payments of taxes by citizens will shore up revenue base and provide subnational governments the resources to meet up with their statutory responsibilities to the people. There is the need to collaborate with agencies of the federal government in this regard to avoid double taxation and boost the ability of the states to generate funds through taxation.

13. Unemployment, poverty, and insecurity are difficult tasks incoming administration are expected to face in their respective states. Building strong and viable institutions in the polity will help in tackling unemployment, reducing poverty, and ensuring the provision of security of lives and property. This is a worthy legacy to be bequeathed to our children and generations to come.

14. At this juncture, I wish to acknowledge the passion and steadfastness of the international community, particularly countries with well-developed political systems and democracies, for their support in the development of strong political system and democracy in Nigeria. We have had 24 years of uninterrupted democratic experience. This is still a nascent democratic journey compared to advanced democracies. We need to nourish and nurture it for strong consolidation and service delivery at the subnational level. We need to strengthen our institutions to perform and ensure sustainability in the provision of democratic dividends. These are the critical elements that sustained advanced democracies with institutional capacity and human capital development.

15. Political corruption is inimical to economic development. It is a financial crime against the nation and humanity because of its negative impacts on the living conditions of the people and the concentration of wealth in the hands of a privileged few. We should collectively address corruption at all levels of governance. There is the urgent need for proactiveness in our approach to the menace of corruption. We should eliminate incentives to corruption by waging the war through a bottom-

top approach. Loopholes that incentivise corruption should be blocked on all strata of the society. Politicians, civil servants, and corporate bodies should be severely punished, and the economic system sanitised to serve as deterrence to others. There should be no sacred cow in the fight against corruption.

16. Therefore, it is my fervent hope and wish that as we gather here today to brainstorm on key governance and management skills for national socio-economic development of our nation and people, incoming governors are expected to utilise these skills in the transition from electoral promises during campaigns to policy blueprints in government and governance process. I am optimistic that your sheer determination will ultimately reflect on your engagement in the democratic business of governance through policy formulation and implementation for the good of our people.
17. Finally, I welcome, once again, Mr President, our distinguished guests, new and returning governors, eminent resource persons and invited guests both within and outside Nigeria to this historic event. I wish you fruitful interactions that will benefit your states and Nigeria as a whole. I pray that Almighty Allah will be your source of strength in consolidating democracy and sustaining development to greater heights in your respective states and the nation.
18. Thank you and God bless.
19. God bless the 36 states of the federation.
20. God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.