**NATIONAL SECURITY AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES**

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**OPENING REMARKS**

I would like, first of all, to express sincere gratitude to the **Honourable Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning**, for inviting me to share my perspectives on “**National Security and Sustainable Economic Development in Nigeria: Prospects and Challenges”,** within the broader theme: **Public Sector Finance Management in the New Normal (Post COVID-19)**.”

2. I would also like to commend the **Federation Account Allocation Committee** and all those who contributed to the success of today’s event.

3. The COVID-19 virus, which nations - big and small, developed and developing - are grappling with since it was declared a pandemic in March 2020 by the World Health Organisation (WHO), has caused over five (5) million deaths globally, and left long-lasting repercussions on the health, travel, agriculture, commerce and education sectors.

4. Only responsive, efficient, and policy consistent nations that are sensitive to the *new global normal or paradigm*, will navigate out of the economic turmoil generated by the pandemic, successfully. I, therefore, view this platform as an opportunity to coalesce views, in order to foster a common understanding and accelerate positive actions towards protecting and advancing Nigeria’s national interests.

5. My presentation will evaluate the interconnection between **National Security and Sustainable Economic Development in Nigeria**. I will proceed by discussing the key concepts, clarifying the linkages between them, and contextualising the significance of the linkages to Nigeria’s national interests.

**CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK - NATIONAL SECURITY**

6. Security, in an objective sense, is measured by the absence of threat, anxiety, or danger (Booth,1991). National Security is, however, a broader concept, which attracts the highest interest within national security echelons. **Amos Jordan, William Taylor and Lawrence Korb** stresses that "national security has more extensive meaning than protection from physical harm. It implies protection, through a variety of means, of vital economic and political interests, the loss of which could threaten the fundamental values and vitality of the state". **Commassie (1998)** defined National Security as "the protection of a nation from all types of external aggression, espionage, hostile reconnaissance, sabotage, subversion, annoyance and other inimical influences*."*

7. Primarily, these viewpoints suggest that National Security covers a range of traditional internal and external threats to a nation, which emerge mainly from state and non-state actors. Today, however, national security also covers natural threats that belong to neither category, such as *natural disasters, climate change, epidemics, and environmental degradation*.

8. National security policies are, therefore, designed to protect a nation from all types of internal and external aggression, as well as natural threats (Holmes, 2015). Ultimately, it aims to create a safe and secure environment for the pursuit of peace, personal wellbeing, prosperity and national development. This multi-sectoral national endeavour deploys an array of economic, diplomatic, law enforcement, military, intelligence and counter-intelligence capabilities to protect national objectives and interests.

**National Security Strategy**

9. Alert to its primary constitutional responsibility to ensure the safety and security of lives and property, the current administration attaches great importance to National Security. This obligation influenced Mr. President’s directive that the 2014 **National Security Strategy** (**NSS**) be reviewed. The document that emerged from the 2019 exercise addressed emerging and widening security threats, including fake news and hate speech, environmental, and economic challenges. Beyond being a theoretical framework, the NSS exemplifies the shift from state-centric security concerns to the wider human security issues (NSS 2019).

10. The NSS identified two critical areas – **National Security Interest** and **Threats to National Security**. The former consists of the security and welfare of Nigerians; the preservation of the country’s sovereignty and defence of its territorial integrity; peace; democracy; economic growth; and social justice. On the other hand, *threats to National Security* are classified into **Internal and External**. The most potent threats to Nigeria’s internal security are, however, associated with transnational threats such as terrorism, proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs), financial crimes and cyber-related threats. Others are kidnapping, public health challenges, climate change, communal and ethno-religious conflicts, secessionist agitations, hate speech and widening educational and economic gaps.

**NIGERIA’S NATIONAL SECURITY ENVIRONMENT**

11. In more practical and precise terms, Nigeria faces enormous threats within the four layers of its national security environment: **internal/domestic, contiguous, regional, and global**. At the domestic level, other than terrorism, our national security environment is characterised by kidnappings for ransom, farmer-herder clashes, maritime piracy and militancy, sectarian violence, drug abuse, secessionist agitations, and youth restiveness, illustrated by the 2020 EndSARS’s protests. Projections on Nigeria’s population growth trajectory that it could become the world’s third most populous country with over four hundred million (400m) citizens by 2040 also presents cause for internal security concern. While there are inherent opportunities, the development could pose a threat if national socio-economic growth fails to match aspirations.

12. Added to these are threats emanating from the **contiguous environment,** especially the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs), trafficking in wildlife, humans and drugs, humanitarian crises, as well as insurgencies and violent secessionist activities in neighbouring countries. The **regional** environment is characterised by hubs of insecurity in the Lake Chad and Sahel regions, with a noticeable southward drift of jihadists towards littoral countries in West Africa. With a growing nexus between drug trafficking and terrorism financing, the region has also turned into a favoured hub for trans-national drug cartels. At the same time, imbibing democracy and rule of law has been challenging, with leaders regularly abusing constitutions to perpetuate their rule alongside an increasing spate of coups d’état in the region.

13. Globally, the COVID-19 pandemic has taken a toll on the Nigerian health sector, economy, and security. However, even during the pandemic, the threats of global terrorism, ethnic nationalism, illicit financial flows, illegal trades in wildlife, and drug and human trafficking have persisted. These have been accompanied by a marked increase in cybercrimes, political instability and effects of climate change, which all combine to threaten national and international security. Another issue of security concern is the rise in humanitarian crises across the globe, with Africa accounting for more than seventy percent (70%). With about two-point-three million (2.3m) displaced persons in the North-East and the Lake Chad Basin, the issues of Internally Displaced Persons and climate change are indeed key security concerns for Nigeria.

14. The increasing re-ordering of the world in terms of the emergence of new centres of economic and military powers, upsurge in irregular immigration, and persisting stalemate in the Middle East over the Palestine question are issues that also impact Nigeria’s national security environment.

**Actors and Institutions**

15. To combat these threats, the NSS’s implementation relies on the effectiveness of sectoral strategies such as the *National Defence Policy, the National Counter-Terrorism Strategy, National Cyber Security Strategy, and the National Policy on Public Safety and Security*. Following the winding down of the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) in 2020, the Federal government unveiled the successor Nigeria Economic Sustainability Plan (NESP) as the extant economic blueprint.

16. It also relies on a number of individuals and institutions to play key roles in helping the government achieve peace, protection and safety. Considered as custodians of a country's defence architecture and security, they include the *Military, Police/law Enforcement Officers, Security/Intelligence Operatives, Diplomats, the Media and Civil Servants*. In practical terms, all of us seated here and the institutions we represent are actors in the national security environment.

17. The diversity of stakeholders in these strategies underpin the relevance of both kinetic and non-kinetic measures for the attainment of National Security. It also demonstrates that individual national agencies are part of a larger whole, which collectively strives to attain societal resilience and sustain national preparedness towards an array of continuously widening and hybrid threats.

18. It is also important to underline that most of the threats to national security are transnational in character. Their planning, perpetuation and consequences cut across several countries. Given that they challenge the security strategies and policies of several countries, they also require regional and trans-continental collaboration to effectively address.

**NEXUS: NATIONAL SECURITY AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

19. Economic development may be viewed as a manifestation of a country’s social and economic progress. This concept is broader than economic growth, which largely focuses on progression of a country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Ideally, economic development requires economic growth but a nation can grow economically and yet retard developmentally, posting weak indicators in its Human Development Index (HDI) (UNGA, 1969). Growth, however, is not a guarantee for development, which is assessed through a range of indicators, including per capita income, life expectancy, education, and the extent of poverty. As a result, sustainable economic development aims to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It addresses poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice.

20. The process for attaining sustainable economic development occurs mainly through deliberate action by policy makers. Amply demonstrating this are the National Economic Empowerment & Development Strategy (NEEDS), the ERGP and the NESP; laudable development plans, which were deliberately conceptualised by the current administration. But even deliberate and well-intended government policies and plans must recognize the impact other factors and external developments could have on their implementation.

21. National Security and sustainable economic development are intractably linked (Gaines, 2006). Without security there can be no economic development and without economic development there can be no national security (UNGA, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development). Given the all-embracing nature of national security, sustainable economic development features as a subset of measures and policies enacted to ensure the furtherance of national interest and objectives. Indeed, from the security viewpoint, the extent to which a country can be safe and secure depends, considerably, on the extent of its economic development. Sustainable economic development is, thus, a critical long-term element of national security and national wellbeing. The NSS categorically states that security is the foundation on which initiatives and strategies geared towards sustainable economic development emanate. (NSS 2019).

22. To further contextualize the connection, an economically deprived populace and a health pandemic can threaten national security. In Nigeria, insecurity threats have been linked to socio-economic factors, some of which include the farmer/herders crises connected to the jostling for limited land and water resources; Niger Delta Militancy due to perceived economic marginalisation and environmental degradation; irregular migration motivated by limited economic opportunities; and the spread and mutation of COVID-19 due to globalization and travel.

23. This nexus forces policymakers to continuously make trade-offs and engage in balancing acts. A leading example are the COP26 discussions in Glasgow, where world leaders are opting to sacrifice the use of easily accessible and much-needed fossil fuels to prevent catastrophic damage to the planet caused by industrialisation-led development efforts.

24. Globalization has further deepened the nexus, expanding the influences on local economies and national security. As such, we must remain vigilant, to boost our resilience against the associated risks of a globalized world. Part of our responsibilities as stakeholders in the National Security architecture is to ensure that actions by one partner reinforce those of others. In doing so, we can collectively exploit economic opportunities and challenges, while pursuing effective national security.

**PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES**

25. Undeniably, Nigeria’s national security challenges are real and may constitute a major burden for sustainable development. Nevertheless, there may not be a better time for us as a nation to begin to examine the unique opportunities our circumstances provide us than now.

26. As daunting as the challenges facing us, Nigeria’s internal and external prospects are good. Our economy is rebounding, our democracy is sturdy, and our people are resilient. With oil prices rising past the level from which they plunged a year ago, and expectations of further rises, the predicted increase in earnings will grant Government greater capacity to implement its domestic and foreign agendas.

27. Over the years, Nigeria’s security establishments, including the NIA, have delivered on their mandate. They have responded well to changes that have taken place in the realm of national and international security, including the emergence of terrorist groups and non-state actors, rising profile of cyber-espionage, and Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs). In pursuit of our national security goals, we have embraced modern technology, forged international strategic partnerships, and prioritised intelligence sharing and collaboration.

**Distinguished Participants,**

28. To combat terrorist threats, Nigeria alongside Benin Republic, Cameroon, Chad and Niger, established the **Multinational Joint Task Force** (**MNJTF**), a multilateral platform where Nigeria spearheads the countermeasures aimed at degrading insurgent activities in the Lake Chad Region. Furthermore, a reinvigorated collaboration between Nigeria and her contiguous neighbours – Chad, Cameroon, Niger, and Benin – led to the establishment of the Abuja-based **Regional Intelligence Fusion Unit** (**RIFU**), a mechanism which enables participating intelligence services to share timely intelligence pertinent to counter-terrorism operational requirements.

29. Recognising the consequences of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG), in 2019, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, 1982 (UNCLOS), Nigeria updated its maritime laws through the enactment of the Suppression of Piracy and Other Maritime Offences Act, 2019 (SPOMO Act). The enforcement of the law has led to the conviction of several suspected pirates operating in the Gulf of Guinea.

30. To further enhance security and incident preparedness, Nigeria also launched the **Integrated National Security and Waterways Protection Infrastructure**, also known as the **Deep Blue** Project, an initiative aimed at securing waterways and a substantial part of the Gulf of Guinea. Nigeria and other member countries in the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) have complemented such efforts with multilateral defence partnerships and training exercises, most recent of which was **Exercise Grand African NEMO**, carried out in Rivers State in November 2021. Following national and regional efforts, the Gulf of Guinea and the Nigeria’s territorial waters have recorded a significant drop in piracy when compared to the last three (3) years.

31. Given the dynamic nature of cybercrimes, Nigeria reviewed its National Cybersecurity Policy and Strategy (NCPS, 2014), and developed the NCPS (2021). The update reflects Government’s evolving policy responses in dealing with emerging cybersecurity threats. This has enabled effective protection of critical national information infrastructure and its implementation has recorded considerable progress due to improved synergy and inter-agency collaboration amongst implementing Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and the international community, including the **International Criminal Police Organisation** (**INTERPOL**).

32. In response to Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs), Nigeria regulated cryptocurrency trading and subsequently launched the eNaira, Africa’s first digital currency. Asides from boosting the GDP and fighting inflation, Nigeria is also tackling black-market trading of foreign currencies with a view to increasing transparency in the financial sector. To further strengthen Nigeria’s anti-corruption drive, Nigeria not only allotted Nigerians National Identification Numbers (NIN) but also linked the unique number to holder’s existing bank accounts, mobile numbers and other databases.

33. Climate change presents the most serious challenge to sustainable economic development due to its immediate and long-term impacts on economic prosperity. Variable rainfall, flooding, loss of biodiversity and desertification have become commonplace, deepening the potency of some drivers of insecurity, including scarcity of natural resources, displacement of persons, disrupted subsistence farming, and loss of lives and property.

34. In response, prior to the 26th edition of the Conference of Parties (COP26), in July 2021, Nigeria submitted its updated National Determined Contribution (NDC) document to the United Nations (UN) Framework Convention on Climate Change. The document sets ambitious targets to reduce Green House Gas (GHG) emissions by 2030. The document also puts Nigeria at the forefront of climate action, by taking into account the emissions from previously overlooked sectors like waste management, incorporates more accurate data and rolls out commitments to readapt agricultural policies towards increased sustainability.

35. As part of efforts to tackle the proliferation of **Small Arms and Lights Weapons** (**SALWs**), Government in May, 2021 approved the creation of a **National Centre for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons** (**NCCSALW**), domiciled in the **Office of the National Security Adviser** (**ONSA**). The Centre is aimed at identifying disrupt emerging methods used by arms traffickers as well as enhancing regional mechanisms for the control, prevention and regulation of SALWs. This goal fulfils the UN **Plan of Action** (**PoA**) to prevent, combat, and eradicate the illicit trade in SALWs.

36. As part of measures to address security challenges posed by irredentist and secessionist groups, the Nigerian Government has continued to consult and engage with different stakeholders, including respected traditional leaders, religious leaders and political leaders from various regions, with a view to addressing the root causes of such agenda. Nigeria has also signed a bilateral agreement with Cameroon to jointly fight armed separatists operating along our shared borders, mitigating the threat of transnational alliances between secessionist groups.

37. Under the aegis of ECOWAS and the African Union (AU), Nigeria has moved to tackle heightening political instability on the continent, prompted by a flurry of unconstitutional changes of government in Africa. In doing so, Nigeria has continuously condemned coup plotters and demanded a swift return to civilian rule. Nigeria has also leveraged its regional influence and large economy to force interim governments to stick with slated transition timetables by upholding various economic and political sanctions placed on juntas by ECOWAS and AU.

38. Nigeria’s population, with majority of persons below the age of 35, is often touted as a burden. Indeed, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) estimates youth unemployment rate at 42.5%, a situation that could create serious national security risks. However, our youthful population and Nigerians in the Diaspora offer the country myriad opportunities in the short and long-terms. Astutely managed, Nigeria’s growing population would be an asset towards sustainable economic development.

39. To maximise Government’s clear agenda of exploiting the free movement of persons and goods within Africa, Nigeria, on 5th December, 2020, deposited its instrument of ratification of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA). AfCFTA provides the opportunity for the continent to create the world's largest free trade area, with the potential to unite more than one-point-two billion (1.2bn) people in a two-point-five trillion dollar (US$2.5tn) economic bloc. (ATPC, 2019) We must, therefore, work together to ensure that our national strategies for the AfCFTA’s implementation are conceptualized and deployed to protect our national interests.

40. At the same time, if we fail to fix our export platforms and simplify export processes, we risk worsening our trade deficits, as better-prepared African countries with easier import channels will take economic advantage of our market size. We will also stifle the ability of our industries and huge human resource to compete in the continental market. Moreover, we must ingeniously seek out and appropriately communicate the opportunities the AfCFTA holds for Nigerian youths. It is important for them to have a better understanding of the market entry criteria in the continental markets that permit the free access to commodities, goods, and services across the continent.

**Distinguished Participants**

41. Given its vast human and natural resources, Nigeria need not struggle to sustain its economic development. We must, therefore, do more to deal with the soft ingredients of National Security within our own control, such as policy inconsistency, the lack of optimal institutional coordination, and the absence of political consensus, which, combined, constitute the bane of Nigeria’s sustained economic development.

42. Also, regardless of the enormous prospects that lie in wait for our nation, economic renaissance and evolution from our existing threats means that we must desperately embark on a value and behavioural reset. It is important to bear in mind that intangible factors, such as law and order, good governance, safety and societal resilience, send clear signals to potential investors on the one hand and criminal enterprises on the other.

**Distinguished Participants**

43. The tough reforms that have been implemented in recent years, such as the massive programme on harmonisation of citizens’ data and the gradual removal of fuel and electricity subsidies, are sufficient reasons for us to be optimistic. These reforms portend great prospects for National Security as their sustained implementation will go a long way in addressing security and economic concerns. While economic development remains an essential part of National security policy, lessons teach that the collaboration and buy-in of stakeholders, including State Governments and Trade/Labour Unions, is crucial for successful and sustainable reforms.

44. I thank you.