



THE NIGERIAN YOUTH PARLIAMENT

Federal republic of Nigeria

HB 44 HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
National Assembly complex, three Arm Zone, Abuja

TEXT OF PRESS BRIEFING BY THE HONOURABLE SPEAKER OF THE NIGERIAN YOUTH PARLIAMENT, HON. OMOFIOK LUKE AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE SECOND SESSION OF THE PIONEER YOUTH PARLIAMENT ON FRIDAY 21ST AUGUST, 2009 AT THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES WING OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY.

Gentlemen of the press,

Today marks the end of the second sitting of the foremost youth parliament in Nigeria. A sitting where the 109 youth parliamentarians came with a bag full of intellectually sound, time tested and ingenious solutions to many of the nation's teething problems. During the weeklong sittings which were held at the House of Representatives wing of the National Assembly, various motions were sponsored, resulting in 11 resolutions touching on crucial areas of national development like the imperative of resumption of negotiation between ASUU and FG, Desirability and inevitability of power sector reforms, electoral reforms, Almajiri education reforms, increased employment opportunities and sanitization of the banking sector with a view to reassuring investors' confidence.

These motions enjoyed robust debates and adhered to all known and established parliamentary ethics and processes. By every standard of judgments, I am sure you will agree with me that the just concluded second sitting is a huge success. Let me provide you with cogent and verifiable promises leading to the above conclusion.

As soon as the house was properly convened, the impasse between the Academic Staff Union of Nigeria Universities and the Federal Government was introduced as a matter of urgent public importance. Youth Parliamentarians used the opportunity to bring to the fore the feelings of the youths of their various constituencies. At the end of a most heated debate the Parliament resolved that the Federal Government should return to the negotiation table and ASUU should be flexible in their demand in the interest of Nigerian students who, akin to the proverbial grass, suffer when two elephants fight.

The power sector reform motion also generated a lot of powerful debates resulting in the resolution of the parliament to the effect that since power plays a crucial role in the development of any nation, for our dear

country Nigeria to attain its paramount vision of joining the prestigious group of 20 most developed economies by 2020, the power sector must witness crucial, sincere and sustainable reforms that can guarantee constant power generation, distribution and availability. The parliament further noted that the availability of constant power alone will bring down the cost of production of several goods and services, considering that the current prices were a reflection of the cost of production made high mostly due to the cost of using alternative power generation systems by producers. The parliament called on the relevant authorities to ensure the attainment of the 600 megawatts by December as promised by Mr. President.

Up for discussion was the security situation in the Country.

Speaking under this motion, honourable members relayed the obvious but unhealthy reality that the premium of life in Nigeria was so low, to the extent that scores of people are being killed for very flimsy reasons by various groups of persons. The parliament particularly frowned at the rampant kidnappings in the Niger Delta, the Boko Haram saga and the general insecurity in all parts of the country. The parliament resolved that security agencies must sit up. Nigerians were urged to desist from engaging in violent crimes. I say this with particular emphasis because of the lasting implications of violent crime and unrests resulting to loss of lives. Boiling hot in the contemporary global news space is the mounting protest against the release on compassionate grounds of the convicted bomber of the Lockerbie bombings of 21 years ago, Al Magrahi yesterday. This reaction alone is a pointer to the indelible pain inflicted on the families who lose their one ones during religious or political crises. To all those who have lost their loved one in such gruesome circumstances, our hear go out to them.

Obviously, the motion on the need for electoral reform offered a medium for parliamentarians to contribute ideas designed at achieving an acceptable electoral reform. The parliament resolved inter alia that the Mohammed Uwais recommendations be implemented and prayed the National Assembly to expedite action on the amendment of the constitution so as to address the challenges posed by the electoral process.

Worried by the lack of a legislation backing up the Nigerian youth and children's parliament and its non mention in the Nigerian youth policy, the parliament prayed the National Assembly to enact a legislation giving legal backing to both parliaments, which currently exist as a programme in the Ministries of Youth Development AND Women Affairs and Social Development respectively. The parliament further called on state Governments to establish Youths and Children's Parliaments in their states.

There was this very crucial motion on the need to reform the Almajiri system. Parliament frowned at the existence of about seven million teenage beggars in the Northern part of Nigeria and consequently resolved that Government at all levels particularly those of Northern states, should organize a summit with view to addressing the Almajiri system and their participation in the Universal Basic Education programme. The Nigerian Immigration service was also advised ensured immigrant and their children are not allowed into the country.

Without any intention to bore you with details, I have only attempted to relay to you the crucial issues that were discussed in the hallowed chambers where the sittings took place and to announce to you that the 109 youths who came heavily loaded are returning home fulfilled. They are gratified because they have brought to the fore the feelings of their constituents, because according to Abraham Lincoln "No man is fit to lead another without his consent". We are happy that we have judiciously executed the mandate handed us by the youths we represent, nothing gives more joy and satisfaction than that. Ipso facto, the parliament resolved to graciously commend the president, Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar' Adua for pronouncing into existence the Nigeria Youth Parliament, The Honourable Minister of Youth Development, Senator Akinlabi Olasunkami for his dedication to the success of the Youth Parliament, The First Lady Hajia Turai Yar' Adua for her support to the parliament and the Executive Governors of Akwa Ibom and Bauchi states, Chief Godswil Obot Akpabio and Mallam Isa Yuguda, respectively for their support during the hosting of the first Youth Town Hall Meetings in their states.

Conclusively, as we round off this very eventful second session, I appeal to all who have a role to play in our current and previous resolutions to properly study our debates and recommendations and where need arises, invite us for further discussions, but most importantly, should act in ubberima fidea and patriotism. I call on the Government Ministries and Agencies involved to implement our recommendation as failure to heed our small voices is to the peril of the Nation. It has happened before, at the Uyo Town Hall Meeting, we called for Amnesty others criticized but Government heeded and today we are reaping the benefits of that demand by the youths. At Bauchi we called for the reform of the Almajiri System and a close watch on sects capable of fomenting trouble, this was not heeded and recently the nation woke up to the unpalatable Boko Haram experience. We must be proactive not reactionary. We lose more in cure than prevention.

I must sincerely commend the press community for being very supportive to the parliament via their reports and features. This has been very encouraging. This second sitting enjoyed huge publicity on both print and broadcast media. We are optimistic that this beautiful relationship will persist for long. I am desirous of this because this press briefing is taking place on the same day which an outnumbered British army using a 'thin red line infantry' defeated the French Army in the battle of Vimiero in 1808. I know that we can partner the press to become the contemporary thin red line to bring victory to justice over injustice, merit over mediocrity and patriotism over individualism. This is our story, this is our prayer, we hope you will oblige us this request.

Thank you and God bless Nigeria.

Hon. Onofiok Luke
Honourable Speaker
Nigeria Youth Parliament