

**Building a New Nigeria –**

**An Agenda for Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu**

**By**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In a few days' time, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu will be inaugurated as the President of Nigeria, a country that has been plagued with numerous challenges for decades. Over the years, these challenges have worsened. The closely fought presidential election has not helped matters. Those who lost, particularly from a section of the country, are threatening fire and brimstone.

The incoming Bola Ahmed Tinubu government will have to tackle these challenges head-on if they hope to make any significant progress in addressing them otherwise posterity will judge him, like others before him, harshly.

In this paper, I analyze, *vide infra*, some of the critical challenges Nigeria faces and humbly offer an agenda for the incoming administration.

The Asiwaju victory and mandate to preside over Nigeria requires it to proceed to reverse previous undesirable trends,

set the nation back on track to sustainable progress and undertake such activities that would uplift the many indices of national life with no one left behind. When the government performs creditably well, the naysayers will be convinced that the long-awaited Messiah cometh.

There are numerous issues at play for consideration and it spans the entire breadth of our national and natural existence; therefore, the task is very huge and burdensome, and every effort must be made to achieve the much-needed sustainable progress.

Some of the bigger issues include the historical and foundational aspects that still impinge on us being “peoples of different ethnic nationalities” under one nation; there are economic issues of poverty and want in the midst of abundant opportunities, social issues of insecurity and re-engineering of the Nigerian society against corruption and vice, and also inclining it more towards a patriotic belief in Nigeria, political issues of government and governance, as well inequality, corruption, education, and terrorism.

History is a good repository of information and experience; it provides us, through the benefit of hindsight, with information and knowledge, and stimulates new ideas that we can employ to build on or chart a way forward with creativity, innovation and adaptation. Indubitably, the current situation in our country demands a large dose of sound and pragmatic initiatives, a fair measure of risk-taking and capacity to engender rapid development to uplift our nation from the rot it has found itself in. It is therefore my objective to x-ray the current challenges and humbly proffer some practical solutions for the way forward.

## **2. SOME QUESTIONS THAT COME TO MIND.**

- i. Why has Nigeria not been able to adequately feed Nigerians?
- ii. Why are Nigerians leaving the country in droves to seek greener pastures abroad when the country is bountifully blessed in all ramifications?
- iii. Why has so much insecurity and discord permeated every strata of our society?

- iv. Why has the quality of education dropped and remained so low at every level in Nigeria?
- v. Why has Nigeria not been able to grow its economy as her Asian contemporaries?
- vi. Why can't Nigerians enjoy adequate power supply to make life more meaningful?
- vii. Why has nature's opportunity for many been converted to "heaven-on-earth" for a few?
- viii. Why is there massive unemployment?
- ix. Why do we still embark on medical tourism when Nigeria is exporting doctors?
- x. Why has Nigeria not been able to establish and maintain one world-class hospital?
- xi. Why is it that our doctors and other professionals are poorly motivated at home but excel and become stars abroad?

There are many more questions that need urgent answers, but it is also more important to seek and work out pragmatic solutions.

There is a great need to recognize, reorganize and redirect our strengths and opportunities which abound within to propel positive growth in the country while providing the necessary means for stability and sustainability for citizens. We have to work hard now to eliminate, or at the least minimize, the increasing dangers posed by the growing threats of unemployment, poverty, insecurity, and hunger throughout Nigeria, otherwise the country is doomed.

### **3. WHERE WE ARE**

As mentioned earlier, Nigeria is bountifully blessed by nature. It has a wonderful climate and vast arable land. Hundreds of species of cash and food crops could be grown here. Some large swathes of it are suitable for large scale animal husbandry and aquaculture. Additionally, nearly every mineral on earth is to be found in some quantity within its territorial boundaries.

Furthermore, at least until date, save for seasonal flooding which affects several States, Nigeria is safe from hurricanes, tornadoes, monsoon rains with landslides, flash flooding,

earthquakes and other large scale natural disasters that visit severe economic damages in some other parts of the world almost annually. And Nigerians are renowned to be very enterprising. The big question is, 'why is Nigeria so naturally blessed, with enterprising citizens, yet real growth and sustainable development have eluded her?'

The history of development seems to have eluded those who drive policy articulation and implementation in government. Yes, there have been several development plans, but to what extent have they brought real growth and sustainable development? Indubitably, Nigerians owe allegiance to their ethnic origins rather than the country. There has been poor leadership and mediocrity, corruption, insecurity and other vices have also blossomed. Other progressive countries are not without challenges. They have grown in spite of them. Consequently, Nigeria can sustainably grow in spite of the challenges facing her. All that is needed is a leader that is visionary, pragmatic, firm and fair, attributes that Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu possesses in large doses that propelled him to turn around the fortunes of Lagos State.



Given our present state of development, it is safe to aver that Nigeria's Development Plans appear not to have taken advantages of the strategic opportunities that exist. Our produce that we export in the raw form, feed the industries in Europe, America, China, etc. In turn, we import the finished products at a great cost to our economy.

It is ironical to note that Malaysia got oil palm seedlings from Nigeria in the early 60's. Currently, Nigeria doesn't produce enough crude palm oil to meet both domestic and industrial needs of her citizens. As a result, she imports the shortfall of crude palm oil and its refined products, ironically, from Malaysia and other Far East Asian Countries.

At Independence, Nigeria was at par with Singapore and the other Asian Tigers in terms of development. But all have transformed from relatively underdeveloped colonial outposts and backwaters, with no natural resources into a gleaming and glittering 'first world' in one generation, leaving Nigeria behind in the woods.

The reasons for Nigeria's stagnation are not far-fetched. Robert Mugabe made a diagnosis of the parlous state of Africa's economy, including Nigeria's, in an economic summit in South Africa, when he said, that "despite the rich endowment of our natural resources, about 70% of our people live below the poverty line. By exporting materials in their raw form, we can only earn marginal benefit. Just as we were our own liberators from colonial bondage and oppression, we have to find resources to free ourselves from economic bondage."

And nearer home, Dr. Uduaghan corroborated this position in a lecture at the University of Ibadan when he noted that, "At independence, in 1960 much of sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria emerged from colonial rule with rural economy though we were relatively wealthier than South East Asian economies. Between 1960 and now South East Asian economies grew by 6% while sub-Saharan Africa by 3.5%. South East Asia achieved great progress by diversifying their economies from export of primary commodities into manufacturing, agro-processing, value addition and subsequently, they moved up in the value chain of the global economy. Sub-Saharan Africa remained exporters of primary commodities and mineral extraction. In

Nigeria, oil export accounts for 90% of export proceeds and 70% of public expenditure. The narrow revenue base is responsible for high unemployment; low income levels and is simply not economically sustainable."

Our extant economic policy appears to have adopted and retained the pre-independence economic model which was fashioned by the colonial masters to keep our economy commodity-export dependent and remain perpetually in economic bondage. If Nigeria is to experience real growth and sustainable development, there is great need to rejig her economic model to create a paradigm shift. Nigeria under Asiwaju Tinubu needs to take the gauntlet to free her from economic bondage.

The current mono-product economy has left Nigeria weak and vulnerable. It is time government took a critical look at the current exclusive legislative list of the Federal Government and consider a review that would allow States to partake in creating value from resources within their territories. This is key to making a clear difference from the past. The

Federal Government has too many mundane responsibilities. Some of these must be shifted to other tiers of government.

This will make the States become income-generating and more viable. And they will be required to pay taxes to the Centre, as against a situation today where solid mineral resources that can be freed up to contribute to Nigeria beyond oil pool, are trapped by the inability of the Federal Government to effectively drive their mining.

To make sustainable advancement, we must begin to diversify the economy. The government must find ways to promote economic growth, expand trade opportunities and facilitate job creation. Nigeria need not replicate the industrial infrastructure of high-income countries; rather she should identify industries with growth potential in line with the economy's comparative advantage.

#### **4. Some other Major Factors That Contribute to Nigeria's Under-Development that needs to be tackled.**

- i. Endemic corruption

- ii. Unacceptably Poor Power Supply which has crippled the economy
- iii. High Cost of Governance
- iv. Wiely Federal Government
- v. Low Quality Education

## **5. ELECTRICITY GENERATION, TRANSMISSION & DISTRIBUTION**

The world over, electricity power is the common factor that drives national development. It enhances industrial production and makes life easier and worth living. Nigeria is still struggling to generate and maintain **3,500 MW** of power out of the **50,000 to 65,000 MW** minimum needed for her over 200 million citizens.

As a result of the very poor power supply, there has been progressive deindustrialization in the past three decades leading to closure of many industries and/or emigration to other African countries. This has resulted in unacceptably high levels of unemployment. The country need not generate all the 50000 to 65,000MW of power which it needs before it can power relevant sectors or industrial clusters. Like in war time

when critical sectors of the economy are tended, the country can aim to supply uninterrupted power to industrial clusters (as identified below) for economic growth and development.

The industrial clusters should be established in areas where Nigeria has economic and strategic advantage. Lagos State under Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu set worthy examples in this regards with Industry or Social Service-specific IPPs. This model needs to be replicated at the Federal level to drive industrialization in clusters.

In addition, the government should explore and invest in renewable energy sources like the wind, sun and bio-energy sources. International companies that specialize in these areas should be encouraged with incentives to set up factories in Nigeria. For too long we have relied on non-renewable sources of energy like coal and gas.

## **6. ENDEMIC CORRUPTION**

Corruption is one of the most significant challenges Nigeria faces. The country has consistently been ranked as one of the

most corrupt nations in the world. Indeed, it is Nigeria's number one challenge.

Corruption can have devastating effects on a country, both socially and economically. "Corruption" as defined by Dieter Frisch," is the abuse of public power for personal ends". In plain language, it is stealing from the public till. On the ethical plane, it is moral pervasion, debauchery and depravity in its worst form. Because it is endemic in Nigeria, it is one of the major hindrances to sustainable development. It causes and sustains underdevelopment and poverty. It stunts sustainable advancement and sentences a people to live subhuman existence since it kills off the spirit of competition and development.

Corruption is a global phenomenon but its scope and intensity in Nigeria is mind-boggling. It is so evident and pervasive in Nigeria that it needs to be seriously tackled if the country is to make appreciable and sustainable progress. It is widespread and runs deep involving the public and private sectors, individuals and the system meaning that arms of government like budgeting, inspection, audit and monitoring, etc that are

supposed to check and prevent corruption have over the years become tainted. For example, no public official can steal without the connivance or acquiescence of the audit department.

It is therefore not hard to understand why Nigeria's growth is stunted and remains one of the poorest nations on earth in spite of the abundant natural wealth and petrodollars. The Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu incoming government must prioritize the fight against corruption by strengthening existing anti-corruption agencies, enforcing laws, and implementing policies that promote transparency and accountability in government.

While a leader committed to fighting corruption need be brave, it takes more than courage to achieve success in anti-corruption fight because it is akin to organized crime. President Tinubu must be politically shrewd and apply ingenious strategies including mobilizing and coordinating civil society watch dogs and government employees. Besides there should be a provision for whistle blowers who should be generously compensated and protected.



Understudying Presidents Andres Pastrana, Vincente Fox, Enrique Bolanos and Mikheil Saakashvili of Columbia, Mexico, Nicaragua and Georgia respectively, who battled institutionalized corruption in their countries and significantly tamed the menace, is humbly recommended.

Additionally, the advice of Robert Klitgaard of Claremont Graduate University may be handy. He, in a lecture delivered in December 2004 entitled 'Leadership under Systemic Corruption', posited that, *"Leaders (who fight corruption), begin by sending a strong signal of change to their institutions and citizens. They publicize their intent to attack corruption. But in corrupt societies, words count for little. People have heard plenty of rhetoric about corruption and now don't believe it. The culture of corruption contains the idea that big fish will swim free, that the powerful enjoy impunity. Successful leaders change this idea through impressive action, not just words. One step is to fry a big fish (or two) ..."*

According to a survey on corruption by NOIPolls, a leading country-specific polling services firm in the West African region,

the Nigeria Police and Ministries, Departments and Agencies of government are the most corrupt institutions in Nigeria. So Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu should know where to start the 'spring cleaning' from.

## **7. THE NIGERIA POLICE**

The Nigeria Police is steep in corruption and needs complete overhaul. It is a national disgrace and embarrassment in its present state. As a civil law enforcement agency, a cleansed and incorruptible police, where bail is truly free, will set the tone for a corruption-free Nigeria.

If a Commissioner of Police, for instance, insists on no returns from his officers and men, none will have the audacity to extort money from motorists and other citizens. It is shameful that even though it is boldly written in police stations that bail is free, the police still collect mindboggling sums of money from hapless citizens for bail. This must stop. Additionally, police brutality over which the youths organized a destructive and violent END SARS protests across Nigeria still subsists. This must stop.

As currently constituted, the Nigeria Police is wieldy, ineffective and ineffectual in combatting crime. The Nigeria Police must be overhauled and repositioned to fight crime. State and community policing is the long-term antidote to crime.

Former President Mikheil Saakashvili of Georgia started his anti-corruption war with the Police. He fired the entire police and replaced it with a new one in an effort to root out corruption. And it worked. While the same measure is not recommended, the Nigeria Police needs a complete overhaul to stamp out corruption.

Additionally, it is no news that the NNPC, NPA, FIRS, Customs & Excise, NIMASA and indeed, the entire civil service are cesspools of corruption. Some of the richest Nigerians are undoubtedly, civil servants. It is by them and through them that corruption stands boldly on the way of rapid and sustainable development.

## **8. HIGH COST OF GOVERNANCE**

The cost of governance - Local, State and Federal Governments – is too high so much so that very little is left for capital development. Some years back, the newspapers papers were awash with the news that Governor Yuguda of Bauchi State sacked about 2,000 of his aides. That was a small figure compared Governor Okowa of Delta State's over 4,000 SSAs, SAs, and EAs. You can imagine the strain of maintaining over 4000 aides on the treasury of the State. Furthermore there are too many idle hands in the civil service, not to mention too many MDAs.

At the last count by Thisday Newspaper in 2021, the Federal Government of Nigeria has 943 MDAs and 541 State-owned corporations. These are a huge drain on the nation's fragile economy. For sustainable progress, these must be pruned down or merged to a manageable level as suggested in the Steve Oronsaye Committee Report in 2012.

In Nigeria's annual budgets, about 88% is for recurrent expenditure and only about 12% for capital expenditure. Of this 12%, a significant part of it goes for over-inflated projects

that do not generate sustainable value. For sustainable growth and development, capital expenditure must be pushed up.

Additionally, there is poor quality output that calls for works to be redone after a short period of time. Furthermore, there are projects for which monies are collected and not executed leading to a loss of over 50% value that could have been generated. As a result of all the above, essentially over 60% of the capital budget generates no real value for the masses.

Under the massive and over-bloated recurrent expenditure, significant waste is incurred in services that are also inflated or rendered to poor quality. There is also procurement of goods and services which are of no importance to the sustainability to the system, but are undertaken just so that money can be expended to enable those at the top skim of their share. There is also purchase of high-tech or top grade products which we don't even have the capacity to maintain. These lose value in a short while only for them to be repurchased. These loopholes need to be blocked.

In addition, about 1% of the total yearly budget is spent on sponsoring pilgrimages to Mecca and Jerusalem. And guess who are those sponsored – the elite who feed fat on the system. It is humbly suggested that State sponsorship of pilgrimages should be scrapped by the progressive government of Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu. Nigeria can no longer afford such luxury.

## **9. FUEL SCARCITY/SUBSIDY**

Nigeria is a leading oil-producing country, yet the country experiences frequent fuel scarcity. This is due in part to the government's inability to maintain existing refineries and build new ones. The incoming government must prioritize investment in the oil and gas sector by rehabilitating existing refineries and building new ones. Additionally, the government must remove fuel subsidies gradually, which will help to attract private investment into the sector. The burden of fuel subsidy which is weighing down the country has been the broth from which some fat cats have continued to enrich themselves.

The inauguration of the Dangote refinery will assist to ease the importation of fuel. However, the government must act on its refineries in spite of it.

## **10. UNEMPLOYMENT**

Unemployment is a significant challenge that Nigeria has been facing for years. KPMG has stated that the Nigerian unemployment rate had increased to 37.7per cent in 2022 and will further rise to 40.6per cent, due to the continuing inflow of job seekers into the job market. “Unemployment is expected to continue to be a major challenge in 2023 due to the limited investment by the private sector, low industrialization and slower than required economic growth and consequently the inability of the economy to absorb the 4-5 million new entrants into the Nigerian job market every year. Although the National Bureau of Statistics recorded an increase in the national unemployment rate from 23.1per cent in 2018 to 33.3per cent in 2020. We estimate that this rate has increased to 37.7per cent in 2022 and will rise further to 40.6 per cent in 2023.”

The incoming government must prioritize job creation by implementing policies that promote investment in key sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and technology. Additionally, the government must prioritize skills development by investing in education and vocational training programs. The ease of doing business must be addressed along with incentives for investors.

## **11. EDUCATION**

The education system in Nigeria is in bad shape. Education in Nigeria suffers from several challenges, including poor funding, inadequate classrooms, and teaching aids, a "paucity of quality teachers, and a poor/polluted learning environment" (Odia and Omofonmwan, 2007). These shortcomings yield poor educational achievement and limited employability choices.

More emphasis is placed on University education while neglecting technical skills that are needed to run and build a country. Consequently, the pyramid is inverted - more graduates are at the top. This is a major cause of



unemployment - too many graduates chasing few available jobs.

The incoming government should promote technical education and halt the establishment of new universities. The existing ones need to be expanded to take in more students. It is gladdening that the incoming President has promised to institute student loans. This would enable the universities to charge appropriate fees and improve the quality of education.

Above all, universities ought to be autonomous to be at their best in producing manpower needed to grow Nigeria. Even if the government was in a position on its own to meet all of the universities financial requirements, it is desirable that every effort be made to reduce such contribution in the interest of university autonomy.

## **12. POOR HEALTHCARE SERVICES**

There is a toxic mix of problems in the health care sector in Nigeria including corruption, poor health infrastructure, fake

drugs, insufficient financial investment and lately, brain drain amongst others.

Nigeria's healthcare system is in dire need of reform. The country experiences brain drain in the health sector due to poor working conditions and low wages. The incoming government must prioritize healthcare reform by investing in infrastructure, equipment, and personnel. Additionally, the government must prioritize incentives for healthcare professionals to reduce brain drain. Nigeria must also develop at least one world-class hospital to stem the medical tourism that is hemorrhaging scarce resources.

According to Price WaterHouse Coopers, Nigerians spend an average of \$1.6b annually on medical tourism, 60% of which is spent on oncology, nephrology, cardiology and orthopedics. India has successfully reversed their medical tourism. Now India is a major medical tourism destination. Nigeria can do the same under the Presidency of Asiwaju Tinubu.

Through PPP, the government should set up a world-class hospital as a matter of priority. It is not for the government to run like the National Hospital which is a shadow of itself. With

the benefit of hindsight from the COVID-19 pandemic when China set up 1000-bed hospitals in a matter of weeks, the government can do so as a matter of priority.

### **13. RELIGIOUS & ETHNIC INTOLERANCE**

Nigeria is a religiously and ethnically diverse country, and religious/ethnic intolerance is a significant challenge that the country faces. The incoming government must prioritize policies that promote religious and ethnic tolerance and harmony by implementing dialogue and conflict resolution initiatives.

Additionally, the entire country is the constituency of the President. Irrespective of the “nattering nabobs of negativism” and vociferous opposition from a section of the country to his emergence as the president, he must enact and implement policies that include all parts and religions and unite the country. No one should be left behind.

## **14. TRUE FEDERALISM & STEVE ORONSAYE REPORT**

The Federal Government of Nigeria is Federal in name but Unitary in practice. True federalism and fiscal decentralization speeds up growth since it reduces planning and administrative costs, engenders competition among States, etc. The President should set in motion the machinery to return Nigeria to a true federal state.

In addition to returning Nigeria to true Federalism, the incoming government should graciously consider and implement the Steve Oronsaye Committee Report that has been gathering dust since 2012 when it was submitted. This will drastically reduce the cost of governance and free up resources for development.

## **15. RESUSCITATION OF THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR**

The Nigeria Economic Summit Group states that Nigeria's weak manufacturing is a major factor fuelling shortage of foreign exchange in the country. Dr. Wilson Erumebor, in a recent paper published by Foresights Africa, titled, "Nigeria in 2023: Bridging the productivity gap and building

economic resilience,” stated that the last seven years for the country had been plagued with hardship especially after battling two economic recessions.

He said: “In the last seven years, there have been a shift of economic activity towards agriculture and a slowdown of the manufacturing sector. Part of the problem facing the economy is the neglect of the manufacturing sector. “Essentially, Nigeria is not producing enough, for both local consumption and export. The consequences of having a weak manufacturing base for a country with such a large population are evident in its foreign exchange shortages, limited number of jobs created to accommodate workforce entrants, and an import bill that can hardly be met (nor sustained) by current export earnings.”

If the new administration must create jobs and make the Naira stronger, concerted efforts must be made to resuscitate the manufacturing sector of the country. The textile mills spread across the country that employed hundreds of thousands come to mind. They should be resuscitated.

## **16. ASSESSMENT OF COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGES**

The country needs a comprehensive assessment of her comparative advantages and focus on the production of those goods for which it has the comparative and not absolute advantage. During the industrial revolution, for example, Britain provided support for comparative advantage by essentially outsourcing its food growth - importing grains, meat, cheese, wine, etc - and focusing on manufacturing goods for export.

Consequent upon this, Britain became the workshop of the world and her economy grew in leaps and bounds. Nigeria cannot compete with the more technologically advanced world in producing technological goods, finished cars, heavy machinery, ships, etc but it sure has the comparative advantage in the production of car components (because of the abundance of iron ore and other raw materials) and adding value to agricultural products before they are exported.

Why do we, in the 21st century, still export cocoa in its raw form? Is the production of chocolate or pea-nut butter from cocoa and groundnuts respectively, rocket science?

Setting up industrial clusters to add value to agricultural products will enhance real economic growth and create hundreds of thousands of jobs. While exportation of raw materials could continue in the short term, major exporters must be given a time limit within which they must set up conversion plants to turn the raw materials to factory-based outputs. Manufacturing sets up value-added chain and creates more and more jobs.

## **17. MANAGEMENT OF RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROCESS OF VALUE-ADDITION TO RAW MATERIALS.**

For every major policy decision like the one we envisage here, there are associated risks. Therefore, there is need to plan for and manage the associated risks by their identification, assessment and prioritization.

## **18. INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT**

The leadership in Nigeria has been embarrassingly poor because of selfishness and lack of vision. This has resulted in poor infrastructural facilities in all spheres of life – power generation, transmission and distribution, educational facilities, health, roads, etc.

It is impossible to take on all at once because of limited resources. The government will do well to pick areas of critical infrastructure, and develop them to international standards in a staggered fashion. For example, electricity power drives modern development. This should be critically tackled before modernization of or building new airports, for instance.

The sustainable development of electricity that ensures round the clock supply would create more jobs, save costs in hard currency of generator importation as well as cost of maintenance.



## 19. RAILWAYS

“More than any other technical design or social institution, the railway stands for modernity. No competing form of transport, no subsequent technological innovation, no other industry has wrought or facilitated change on the scale that has been brought about by the invention and adoption of the railway.”

Roads last longer when the railways are functional. Haulage of goods is cheaper, safer and faster with railways than by road. Even the inter-city mass movement of passengers is cheaper, faster and safer with train. Yet subsequent Nigerian governments have paid little attention to the sustainable development of our railways, until recently when the PMB government completed and commissioned the Lagos-Ibadan, Abuja –Kaduna and Warri-Itakpe railways. This is in spite of the developed world boasting of high speed trains.

The government should embark on large scale modernization of the railways by investing heavily on High Speed Rails. The economy of Nigeria would rest on high speed rail so it should be the most ambitious infrastructure project of the century.

High Speed Rails translate to high-tech and numerous other jobs, big construction, real estate development, manufacturing, tourism and speedy efficient transportation for all. This would create hundreds of thousands of jobs both directly and indirectly.

The future is now, and it is in high speed rail. Constructing High Speed Rails from Kano - Lagos, Calabar - Port-Harcourt –Warri - Lagos, Kano-Kaduna-Abuja-Benin- Warri, Maiduguri-Bauchi-Jos-Enugu-Port-Harcourt, etc, would be a great boost to the economy to no end.

To reduce the burden on the government, these could be on Built, Operate and Transfer basis. This would create more confidence in the economy and encourage more Foreign Direct Investment.

## **20. MANAGING THE ECONOMY AS A BUSINESS**

The government of Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu should aim to run the economy as a business, while treating social responsibility as though it was corporate social responsibility of

a company. In managing the economy going forward, people with high commercial sense, not just receive-and-spend mentality but value creation, should be engaged. This is what successful economies including the Asian tigers and South Africa do. They run the economy as business. The national budget should therefore be run as a company budget. This involves the government acting as a facilitator by creating an enabling environment or involved in PPP.

For example in China, the government goes into areas with comparative advantages but private entities run the enterprise as a business not as social service. Nigeria could leapfrog on China's example where state involvement in industrial development is a catalyst. The companies make returns on the investments to the national treasury for development in other areas of strategic advantage.

Government investments cannot generate enough to sustain themselves because of corruption, nepotism and favoritism. Experience has shown that government companies in Nigeria are run like charities. This has resulted in the deaths of big

corporations like NITEL, NNSL, Nigeria Airways, etc. America has no national carrier, but it created the enabling environment that led to the emergence of several carriers. This should be the case in Nigeria. Government should completely divest from directly running commercial enterprises.

## **21. BUDGETS**

It has been observed with utmost dismay that Nigerian budgets - Federal, State, and Local - are created off-the-cuff with sentimental inclinations and quasi-political considerations, whereas budgets should be justified bottom-up and have a clear basis for such allocation. These are some of the reasons why in spite of the tons of millions of dollars spent annually for capital expenditure, the budgets leave no tangible and sustainable effect. The Federal Government should set the example in making budgets that are free of sentimental inclinations and quasi-political considerations.

There should be periodic review to evaluate whether intentions of the budget are being achieved. There are so

many instances in which budgets (Federal, State, and Local Governments) are created just for the sake of documentation. The effects of the significant expenditure are not felt. Perhaps an example may suffice. In the Niger Delta, over N20b has been spent by Federal Government agencies, State and Local Governments and legislators in providing solar streets lights. It is laughably painful that because the provision of this amenity has no long-term planning in view, almost all the solar streets lights are dead. If a solar light manufacturer from, say China, was contracted to set up a manufacturing plant, build, install and maintain solar lights, the street lights will still be functional. Setting up a manufacturing plant would make the provision of solar lights sustainable in addition to creating jobs, acquisition of skills and ensuring standardization of the product.

## **22. ROADS AND OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE**

According to engineering plans, roads are designed to last for 15-25 years of service. It is shameful that even though Nigeria has some of the most brilliant minds in engineering, roads in Nigeria hardly last more than three years before they are

washed away. Due to a combination of factors, including corruption, a COREN- certified engineer approves a poorly constructed road and issues a certificate of completion. As a result, failure occurs and money is wasted. The contractor skims profit away without adding value.

As a result of poor construction, Nigeria's re-spent expenditure on road and other infrastructure is extremely high. COREN and NSE need to be tasked in this regard.

Because of the terrain, particularly in the Southern region and Niger Delta area, roads in Nigeria need a concrete base and sub-base before the asphalt layer which is supposed to be 2-3 inches thick. This may be expensive in the short term, but Nigeria needs to generate sustainable value for government expenditure as such roads will last not less than 25 years, during which time others will be constructed to the same high specifications.

In a generation, all roads in the country would have been properly macadamized. Like Gen Eisenhower is credited with building standard interstate roads in the US that paid for

themselves, President Tinubu should start a road revolution in Nigeria using private companies in a Built Operate and Transfer scheme.

### **23. ARTICULATED VEHICLES PARKS AND REST AREAS**

Our roads have no aesthetic value. Traveling by road is severe punishment. Trailers, articulated vehicles and tankers are parked haphazardly along intercity roads where shanty towns grow.

The government of Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu should put a stop to this dangerous practice by building along intercity roads, at specific distances, trailers, tankers and other vehicles parks with rest rooms, lodging facilities and food courts that run 24/7. These are to be concessioned to reputable private companies to ensure maintenance.

### **24. ECONOMIC OR BUSINESS CLUSTERS**

Nigeria needs to develop economic or business clusters to speed her economic growth and create hundreds of thousands of jobs. Economic or business clusters are known to increase

productivity of the companies, drive innovation in the sector and stimulate new businesses in the field. These enable the companies to compete nationally and globally. To achieve this, the government needs to;

- i. Identify economic or business clusters
- ii. Set up sector-driven bodies (not elaborate, maybe 3-5 man teams) that collates and drives each sector's progress. E.g. Business Cluster for cocoa to produce chocolate value chain, Business Cluster for groundnut to pea-nut butter value chain, Business Cluster for rubber to car tyres value chain, Business Cluster for hardwood to finished furniture value chain, etc
- iii. Provide round the clock power to the clusters

For example, a business cluster for furniture manufacturing should be sited in or around Benin City. The area is famous for hardwood. Currently, Nigeria exports hardwood to China and Italy. These countries produce furniture with the wood which we import at exorbitant cost.



Additionally for the hardwood business cluster, a school for furniture making should be established. The graduates of such school would gain enough expertise to produce high quality furniture for both the local and international market.

Enough studies have been done which identified the various raw materials available and their respective locations throughout Nigeria.

## **25. INSECURITY**

Insecurity is another significant challenge that Nigeria faces. The country has been plagued with banditry, kidnapping, and terrorism for years. The incoming government must prioritize security by allowing community policing including State Police, recruiting more security personnel, training existing ones, and providing them with the necessary equipment to carry out their duties effectively. Additionally, the government must implement policies that address the root causes of insecurity, such as poverty and unemployment.

Peace is a sine qua non for development. No sustainable development takes place in strife torn regions. Inequality in the system and lack of opportunities breed discontent and strife.

### **What to do**

- i. Manage strife. The government needs to invest money into the security architecture to maintain peace and order. Peace is not the absence of strife. Continuously managing strife isn't sustainable in our growth model.
- ii. In the long-term, the government should aim at creating opportunities in education, jobs and social relief which come with economic growth.

## **26. THE MEDIA**

Although this paper is directed mainly at the incoming government, it is necessary to bring to the fore the role of the media in the citizens' behavior change communication for good. Newspapers and the electronic media focus too much on political opportunities that politics provide instead of

focusing on the economic opportunities that the economy provide. There is too much focus on who gets power and less on how that political power is used.

There is hardly, if any, a mention by the media of how much waste is going on at the Local Government, State and Federal levels. National, Regional and Local newspapers should delve more into challenging the process of resource generation and value creation at every level of government.

Our news begins and ends with top government officials- president, ministers, governors, commissioners, etc. For instance, there's too much focus on the President as a change agent instead of each and every Local Government Chairman and Governor or Ministers as agents of value creation.

## **27. SOLID MINERAL RESOURCES**

As mentioned earlier, Nigeria is bountifully blessed with a variety of solid mineral resources. Almost all known minerals are found in Nigeria. Yet, Nigeria has neither developed her

agriculture nor her mineral resources other than oil. But Botswana, Ghana and Zimbabwe have proved that a country with a strong minerals industry and cheap energy source can aspire to positive and sustainable economic growth, depending on the life of the resource and changes in demand. It can also provide the necessary catalyst for the development of other sectors.

For Nigeria to grow out of its development stagnation a new development agenda must be forged with emphasis on the exploration, development and exploitation, and rational management of its mineral and energy resources for sustainable economic growth. If there has been rational management of Nigeria's petrodollars, she would have had the opportunity to drive the exploitation and development of other natural resources. The time is now in the face of declining earnings from oil. This necessitates diversification to solid minerals and other natural resources. Again, these resources shouldn't be exported in their raw form in the long term. Value must be added before exportation to increase the earnings and create jobs.

## **28. ASIWAJU BOLA AHMED TINUBU PLEASE STOP NIGERIA'S OIL WOES – THE IMPORTATION OF FUEL MUST BE DISCONTINUED**

It is disgustingly shameful that over 50 years after the discovery of oil in Nigeria, she remains the only oil producing country that exports crude petroleum and imports refined petroleum products. Nigeria relies on imports of about 85% for its domestic consumption because it lacks the refining capacity. The importation of refined petroleum products has created many problems including but not limited to:

- i. Erratic supply of the products and loss of man-hours in the drudgery to buy the products
- ii. Huge wastage and/or scam in form of subsidy payments.
- iii. A petroleum cabal that blackmail and holds the government to ransom.
- iv. Loss of jobs that could have been created by refining the products in the country.

Again, refining petroleum is not rocket science. To ensure an uninterrupted supply of petroleum products and stem the scam of subsidy payments to a few individuals who have

become richer than the country, the government must have the political will to remove petrol subsidy, once and for all, in the interim.

But the government must set a timeline, of say, 6-12 months to totally stop the importation. The existing refineries must be fixed within this period to function at installed capacity. And the licenses to own and operate modular refineries must be liberalized; all to meet and even surpass Nigeria's daily needs of refined products. Good enough that Dangote refinery has been inaugurated. This will help to stop the importation before long. Once the refineries (government-owned and the privately-owned Dangote and modular refineries) come on-stream with full capacity to meet the daily consumption of Nigeria, the price of the products should be reviewed downwards because local refining will reduce the pump price of the refined products.

## **29. POPULATION CONTROL**

The population of Nigeria is estimated to be about 200 million and has one of the fastest growing rates in the world.

According to Alex Proud, "You don't need to be a 'greenius' to know that our numbers are growing too fast for planet earth". This statement is very applicable to Nigeria.

Due to improved nutrition, health services, water and sanitation, death rates have dropped in Nigeria like in other least economically developed countries; while the birth rates continue to be high. The population has thus exploded.

Uncontrolled population growth brings with it many pressures. This uncontrolled population growth could lead to a range of problems, including:

- i. Urban areas will become increasingly overcrowded. Shanty towns will continue to grow, and people living there will do so in very poor sanitary conditions, which may well cause outbreaks of devastating diseases.
- ii. The increasing numbers of people in the cities will also cause more pollution and traffic congestion, leading to environmental problems and possibly diseases.
- iii. More people will be in need of jobs, and so the problem of massive unemployment will occur. This could lead to

more people being forced to live in poverty or turn to a life of crime.

- iv. Federal, States and local governments may come under increasing pressure to provide adequate services to the increasing population. This may be beyond the current capability of the country and may result in borrowing more money from richer countries, thus increasing the debt problems.

In summary, uncontrolled population growth puts pressure on available social services. The country can ill-afford this scenario. The first step to population control will be an accurate census and the identification of each individual. These create multiple benefits going forward. A single data base - accurate population, accurate voting strength, population distribution, etc will aid both long and short term planning and the provision of social services.

Population growth control should not be decreed, but should be a conditioning process like the Singaporeans did under Lee Kuan Yew.



### **30. THE LEE KUAN YEW EXAMPLE**

We have heard so much about the economic miracle of Singapore under Lee Kuan Yew, whom the distinguished former Nigerian Ambassador Ignatius Ollisemeka described as a 'benevolent democratic autocrat'. In a single generation, he transformed Singapore from a relatively underdeveloped colonial outpost with no natural resources to an Asian Tiger economy. He did this by a system of meritocratic, corruption-free and highly efficient government and civil service.

Writing under the caption "Singapore Leads the Good Life under a Benevolent Dictator," Donella Meadows succinctly captured the 'economic miracle' of Lee Kuan Yew in a few sentences. She wrote, "Singapore has achieved the American dream, but not in the American way. It is a prosperous, clean city, with imposing skyscrapers and glittering shopping centers...The highways are lined with tropical flowers and crowded with BMWs. And at the head of this thriving free-market state is a clever, socialist dictator.

"Just forty years ago Singapore was a war-battered British port on an island off the southern tip of Malaysia. It had a rapidly growing, poor, uneducated population living mostly in slums and houseboats. Singapore struggled along until 1965, when it became an independent nation with Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew in firm control.

"In the next twenty years Singapore's economy grew eightfold. Average income per capita rose more than fourfold. The percentage of families living in poverty dropped to 0.3% (in the U.S. it is near 20%). Singaporeans' average life expectancy is now 71 years. No one is homeless. Population has stabilized. Virtually everyone has a job. The place runs like a Swiss watch.

"Lee Kuan Yew would appreciate that analogy. Switzerland is his model. Singapore Airlines aims to outdo Swissair. Singapore likes to list its statistics alongside Switzerland's (its divorce rate is one-third that of Switzerland, its per capita calorie supply is equal, its movie attendance rate is six times higher). Lee's chief economic goal is to reach the per capita GNP of Switzerland, which will happen in one more economic doubling — about 10 years, if past growth rates continue.

“To produce his economic miracle, Lee Kuan Yew has interfered with every aspect of Singaporean life. To control population growth he set up free family planning clinics. Then he mounted education campaigns (“Plan your family small”) and decreed that women having third-or-more babies would get shorter maternity leave, higher hospital charges, and less income tax relief. There is a \$5000 reward for mothers who agree to be sterilized after their second child. Sterilized parents get top priority for public housing, and their children get into desirable schools. Singaporeans now accept that two is the right number of children. In fact the birth rate has fallen so low among highly-educated women.”

The Lee Kuan Yew model is highly recommended for Nigeria under Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, like the highly regarded Ambassador Olisemeka did in his seminal essay, “The Buhari of my personal experience”.

**Lee Kuan Yew eschewed populist policies in favor of pragmatic long-term social and economic measures.** Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu must avoid populist policies that would

delay further Nigeria's sustainable development. Additionally, he should assume the role of a benevolent democratic autocrat to pull it from the brinks and rev up its rapid development.

To stir the spirit of self reliance, Pandit Nehru once declared that if India cannot clothe itself, her citizens should go naked. Within a few years, India achieved self-sufficiency in production of apparels. In like manner, **Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu should make such declaration in the provision of electricity, to the effect that if Nigerians cannot generate enough electricity on the national grid, the citizens should stay in darkness. This should be followed with a complete ban on the importation of generators.**

**Other areas where such declarations are necessary include health care, foreign training for government officials, importation of rice, chicken, etc.**

### **31. MASSIVE BEHAVIOR CHANGE COMMUNICATION**

It is obvious even to the unwary that Nigerians owe allegiance to their respective ethnic nationalities than the country. This has helped corruption and other social vices to thrive.

There should be massive education on the citizens' civic duties and on the philosophy of "republicanism" which emphasizes that the people as a whole are sovereign. Republicanism demands virtuous civic duty from all citizens. It vilifies corruption and greed, and rejects any aristocracy or any form of inherited political power. The massive education will promote the virtuous citizen as one who makes a commitment to resist and eradicate corruption and a strong defender of liberty, and someone who ignores any monetary compensation that undermines the state. The virtuous citizen will become the foundation of the "commonsense revolution" and this will become ingrained into the national psyche of the nation.

MAMSER, though shortlived, did a great deal to mobilize the citizenry for behavior change. The National Orientation Agency should be strengthened to carry out this role. The importance of this reorientation cannot be overemphasized. Without carrying every segment of the citizenry along, no policy however lofty could be successfully implemented.

### **32. MEDIOCRITY MUST BE TACKLED**

Mediocrity destroys the very fabric of a country as surely as war. Mediocrity is the mother of corruption, insecurity and other vices. It is a dangerous and highly contagious virus. It ushers in all sorts of banality, ineptitude, corruption and debauchery.

Countries that promote mediocrity create fertile grounds for criminals and other base elements to thrive. Countries enshrine mediocrity by silently assenting to the dismantling of systems of excellence because they do not immediately benefit one specific ethnic, political or special-interest group. This is the case in Nigeria.

We report to the Nigerian people and the President in particular, that Nigeria is in the throes of death by a rising tide of mediocrity in all aspects of human endeavor.

We agree no less with President Buhari as he noted on his verified Twitter handle on January 1, 2015 that **"A country defined by corruption, by mediocrity, by waste and insecurity cannot deliver the future that we desperately need"**.

Mediocrity is a virus and excellence is the anti-virus that eradicates it. The war against corruption, insecurity and other vices will be in vain if mediocrity, the root cause, is not adequately tackled.

### **33. PERRENIAL FLOODING**

Since 2012, several States in Nigeria including Adamawa, Benue, Kogi, Anambra, Edo, Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa-Ibom, Cross-River, etc, have experienced flooding that has never before occurred in the annals of Nigeria. That of 2022

as unprecedented. The damage that it did, including human lives that it took, is humongous.

It was in the news that the unprecedented flood was due the release of excess water from the Lagdo Dam in Cameroon. The excess water was supposed to be contained by a dam, the Dasin Hausa Dam in Adamawa State, north-east Nigeria. Regrettably, more than 40 years after the dam still isn't completed.

In addition to the uncompleted dam, many of the rivers in Nigeria are poorly managed and regulated. Siltation of major rivers such as the River Niger and Benue, as well as removal of vegetation from river banks and wetlands for agricultural purposes, are all outcomes of poor water resources management which have also contributed to flooding.

The most important consequences are socio-economic, health-related, ecological and cultural. Socio-economic consequences include the loss of lives, emotional and



psychological distress, and destruction of property, social amenities and infrastructure worth billions of naira.

For example, the 2022 flooding was reported to have claimed the lives of more than 500 people, destroyed more than 200,000 homes and left around 90,000 homes under water. It also displaced over 1.4 million people. The congregation of people in camps for the internally displaced and their separation from their ancestral homes and loved ones often causes emotional and psychological trauma. (theconversation.com)

### **What the Government Should Do.**

Tackling the flooding menace and minimizing its effect is through a multi-pronged approach.

First, a combination of hard infrastructural solutions and ecosystem-based adaptation should be pursued. Examples include the construction of dams and reservoirs to hold excess water, riverbank protection, construction of levees and spillways, appropriate drainage systems and storm water management regimes, and dredging of some of the

major rivers in Nigeria. Of particular interest is the completion of the Dasin Hausa Dam in Adamawa State.

Examples of ecosystem-based solutions could include reforestation in important river catchments, planting native vegetation on flood plains that have been claimed for cropping, etc. Each of these options would need to be carefully studied and implemented.

### **34. CONCLUSION**

The country is at the precipice. It is tottering from the weight of mediocrity, corruption, insecurity, and other vices. The work before Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu and his government is great and the hopes of the citizenry who believe in his capacity and capability are very high. Apart from the decaying and non-existent infrastructure, the Nigerian spirit is broken.

It is up to Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu to mend and resuscitate not just Nigeria's broken and collapsed infrastructure, but also the morale of Nigerians which is at its lowest ebb. He has a date with history. He cannot afford to fail himself and the

people. I would be glad that Nigeria will become more livable under Asiwaju Tinubu thereby catapulting him into the pantheon of world leaders who pulled their countries from the brink.

May God help Asiwaju Tinubu.

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