



**ADDRESS BY MUHAMMADU BUHARI, PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL
REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA IN COMMEMORATION OF
THE 2018 DEMOCRACY DAY CELEBRATION,
TUESDAY, 29TH MAY, 2018**

My Dear Nigerians!

Today marks the 19th year of our nascent democracy and the 3rd Anniversary of this administration. I am thankful to Almighty God for bringing us thus far. This administration came at a time that Nigerians needed Change, the Change we promised and the Change we continue to deliver. We have faced a lot of challenges on this journey and Nigerians have stood by us in achieving the three cardinal points of this administration namely; Security, Corruption and the Economy.

2. The commemoration of this year's Democracy Day is a celebration of freedom, a salute to the resilience and determination of Nigerians and a recommitment by Government to keep its promise to lead Nigeria into a new era of justice and prosperity.

3. Public safety and security remains the primary duty of this Government. Before this Administration came into being 3 years ago, Boko Haram held large areas of land spanning several Local Governments in the North East.

4. Today, the capacity of the insurgents has been degraded leading to the re-establishment of authority of government and the release of captives including, happily, 106 Chibok and 104 Dapchi girls, and over 16,000 other persons held by the Boko Haram.

5. In order to minimize the impact of the insurgency on Internally Displaced Persons, Government has established secure IDP Camps and has improved the mechanism for the distribution of basic aid, foods and essential commodities using various strategies in collaboration with local and international Organizations.

6. Efforts are in process for resettlement of IDPs in their home communities by providing schools, hospitals, clinics, water and sanitation to facilitate a quick return to economic activities. Government is similarly implementing de-radicalization and rehabilitation programmes to facilitate sustainable peace and development.

7. The unfortunate incidences of kidnappings, herdsmen and farmers clashes in several communities which have led to high number of fatalities and loss of properties across the country is being addressed and the identified culprits and

their sponsors shall be made to face the full wrath of the law. All the three tiers of Government are presently engaged with communities and religious organizations to restore peaceful co-existence among Nigerians.

8. I want to commend members of the Multinational Joint Task Force drawn from Niger, Benin, Chad, Cameroon and our own country in collaboration with the International Community who are assisting in the fight against insurgency in the North East. I also commend the gallantry of members of our Armed Forces and other security agencies that have continued to provide security for lives and properties across the country. State and Local traditional authorities are helping with much needed intelligence in this fight against insurgency.

9. This administration is pained over the grievous loss of lives and properties occasioned by the carnage of insurgency and other forms of criminality in the country. I wish to assure Nigerians that we will not rest until all criminal elements and their sponsors are brought to justice. Government is boosting the capacity of our security agencies through recruitment of more personnel, training and procurement of modern equipment, enhancement of intelligence gathering as well as boosting their morale in the face of daunting challenges.

10. The Niger Delta Region has enjoyed relative peace through social inclusiveness and cooperation of the Elders and the good people of the region. Government is committed to implementing the comprehensive peace, security

and development plan for the region. The environmental clean-up of the region which commenced with the launch in Bodo, Ogoni in June, 2016 is progressing satisfactorily. Furthermore farming assets are being revived and investors in cocoa and palm oil plantations are showing serious interest.

11. The second primary object of this Administration is to fight corruption headlong. Like I have always said, if we don't kill corruption, corruption will destroy the country. Three years into this Administration, Nigerians and the international community have begun to applaud our policies and determination to fight corruption. We are more than ever before determined to win this war, however hard the road is. I therefore appeal to all well-meaning Nigerians to continue to support us in this fight.

12. Various policy measures already put in place to stem the tide of corrupt practices are yielding remarkable results. Some of these key reform policies include:

- i. The Treasury Single Account (TSA) has realized Billions of Naira being saved from maintenance fee payable to banks. N200 Billion has also been saved from elimination of ghost workers in public service;
- ii. The Whistle-Blowing Policy has helped to recover over N500 Billion;
- iii. The Presidential Initiative on Continuous Audit set up with a mandate to validate controls, assess risks, prune personnel costs, ensure compliance with Public Financial Management reforms has helped to identify and

remove over 52,000 ghost workers from the Federal Government MDAs Payroll;

- iv. The Voluntary Asset and Income Declaration Scheme (VAIDS) aimed at expanding tax education and awareness has offered the opportunity for tax defaulters to regularise their status in order to enjoy the amnesty of forgiveness on overdue interest, penalties and the assurance of non-prosecution or subject to tax investigations; and
- v. The Sovereign Wealth Fund project portfolio has been expanded with an injection of US\$650 million so as to strengthen its investment in local infrastructure, power, health, re-construction of Abuja-Kano road, Lagos-Ibadan Expressway, East West Road (Section V) and the Mambilla Hydro-electric Power project as well as the construction of the 2nd Niger Bridge.

13. The fight against corruption through the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission has resulted in recoveries of Billions of Naira, as well as forfeiture of various forms of assets. This alongside other efforts has improved Nigeria's international image and regional cooperation.

14. We have retained the services of one of the world's leading assets tracing firms to investigate and trace assets globally. This is in addition to the exploitation of provisions of existing Treaties, Conventions as well as Bilateral Agreements

with Multilateral bodies and Nations. Nigeria has also signed Mutual Legal Assistance Agreements to ensure that there is no hiding place for fugitives.

15. This Administration has therefore focused on revamping the ailing economy it inherited in 2015. In 2016, Government executed an expansionary budget and developed the Strategic Implementation Plan. For the first time, 30% of the budget was earmarked for capital expenditure which represents an upward review when compared with the 2015 budget. The SIP was followed by the development of a comprehensive medium-term plan – the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan 2017 – 2020.

16. The broad strategic objectives of the ERGP were to; Restore and sustain economic growth; Build a globally competitive economy; and Invest in our people. The implementation of the ERGP has started yielding results. The National Bureau of Statistics reports that the economy grew by 1.95% in 1st quarter 2018, which is a good performance when viewed against -0.91 in 1st quarter 2017 and -0.67% in 1st quarter 2016 respectively.

17. Our foreign reserve has improved significantly to 47.5 billion USD as of May, 2018 as against 29.6 billion USD in 2015. The inflationary rate has consistently declined every month since January, 2017.

18. Recently, Government conducted Focus Labs in three key sectors of the Economy namely, Agriculture & Transport, Manufacturing and Processing as well as Power and Gas. These have yielded significant prospects for investments and Job creation to the tune of US\$ 22.5 billion with a potential for creating more than 500,000 jobs by 2020. These investment generation initiatives are expected to increase capital inflows in the form of foreign direct investment. There is a high prospect that the cumulative investments from this first phase of the Labs will hit US\$39.2 billion by 2025.

19. Under agriculture, Nigeria continues to pursue a strategic food security programme built around self-sufficiency and minimization of import dependency. As a result, rice importation from other countries has been cut down by 90% which has a direct impact on foreign reserves.

20. The Social Investment Programmes (SIP) has been created as a means to graduating our citizens from poverty through capacity building, investment and direct support. The major strategic objective is to restore livelihood, economic opportunities and sustenance for the poor across the country. The SIP programmes and projects include:

- i. Home Grown School Feeding Programme - About 8.2 million pupils are currently being fed from 24 States of the Federation with over 75,000 Catering Staff engaged under the programme;

- ii. The Conditional Cash Transfer has so far recorded over 297,000 caregivers and being trained by 2,495 Community Facilitators in 21 states. Less privileged Nigerians are now being paid N5,000 monthly stipend in 9 pilot States of Bauchi, Borno, Cross River, Ekiti, Kwara, Kogi, Niger, Osun and Oyo. Eventually the scheme will cover all the 36 states of the federation including the FCT;
- iii. Under the Government Enterprise Empowerment Programme - About 264,269 loans had been disbursed to 4,822 societies in the 36 States and FCT, while another 370,635 are awaiting release of funds; and
- iv. N-Power Job creation Scheme - is targeted at providing jobs for unemployed young graduates and has so far recruited 200,000 youths while the next batch of 300,000 have been selected, verified and would soon be deployed across the 36 States and the FCT. Furthermore, 20,000 non-graduate volunteers have also been selected to kick off the N-Build programme in collaboration with the National Automotive Design and Development Council and the Council of Registered Builders of Nigeria.

21. In the area of power generation, Nigerians from all parts of the country continue to report better power supply and less use of generators. This underscores the effectiveness of the methodical plan to deliver incremental and uninterrupted power supply to our homes, markets, offices and factories.

22. The country achieved 5, 222.3 MW representing the highest peak of power generated onto the national grid and delivered to customers in December, 2017. With new facilities, repairs and rehabilitations by Government and private investors, generation capability now exceeds 7,500 MW.

23. This Administration is committed to lawful interventions to ensure the operators of the distribution business live up to expectations especially in the areas of distribution capacity, service delivery, collection efficiency, and metering to eliminate contentious estimated billing.

24. The Transportation Sector continues to undergo a series of reforms in order to sustain the international best practices and ensure safety and security. The nation's major airports have witnessed reconstruction of runways, installation of navigational equipment and new international terminals due for commissioning in Abuja, Lagos, Kano and Enugu. Bilateral Air Services Agreements between Nigeria and the Governments of other countries will significantly open up new flight routes.

25. As a result of strict regulatory and compliance policies, Nigeria retained her Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Category 1 status, after a routine international audit. Recently, a new Maintenance Repair and Overhaul facility with capacity for aircraft C-checks and other comprehensive levels of maintenance

was established in Lagos. This would save the country an estimated \$90m annually.

26. Giant strides have been recorded over the past three years to improve road transport infrastructure in all geopolitical zones of the country.

27. The Railway Sector has also received tremendous attention as this Administration is committed to the goal of linking all State capitals in the Federation by rail network to ease the movement of goods and passengers.

28. The Education Sector especially at tertiary level has continued to witness expansion in order to improve access to higher education by millions of youths in Nigeria. Over the last three years, Government has approved the establishment of 1 new Federal Polytechnic, granted licenses for the establishment of 4 State and 14 private-owned Universities as well as 12 private Polytechnics.

29. Government has also continued to support the implementation of various initiatives aimed at improving the quality of Basic Education delivery. Thus, it has ensured proper funding at the Basic Education level with the disbursement of N42.2 billion UBE Matching Grant to 26 States and the FCT, N851.5 million Special Education Grant disbursed to 23 States and private providers of Special Education and N2.2 billion Teachers Professional Development Fund to 33 States and the FCT.

30. The Federal Government has continued to support fiscal sustainability at the sub-national governments through the implementation of the Budget Support Facility which was accompanied by the 22- point Fiscal Sustainability Plan. Thus, bailouts funds were made available to States to ease their fiscal challenges and other obligations including payment of salaries.

31. In addition, a total of 73 Ecological Fund projects for the control of gully erosion in different communities across all geopolitical zones have been completed in the last three years and are undergoing commissioning while 53 other projects are ongoing. The execution of these projects has generated 357 skilled jobs and 1,350 unskilled jobs during this period.

32. It is pertinent to also make mention of the immeasurable contributions of the Nigerian woman to national development and advancement of democracy, over the last three years. The government and people appreciate you all as mothers of our great country.

33. My dear country men and women, as we all celebrate our democratic experience, let us resolve to avoid hatred and intolerance; we can only achieve our objectives in an atmosphere of harmony and peaceful co-existence.

34. Finally, the up-coming months will usher us into another season of general elections. Let me use this opportunity to urge us all to conduct ourselves, our wards and our constituencies with the utmost sense of fairness, justice and

peaceful co-existence such that we will have not only hitch free elections but also a credible and violence free process.

35. In few days to come, I will be joined by many promising young Nigerians to sign into law the “Not Too Young to Run” Bill

36. I thank you for your attention.

37. God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.