

**AN ADDRESS BY MUHAMMADU BUHARI, PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL
REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA ON THE OCASSION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
OPEN WEEK ON MONDAY 16TH JULY, 2018**

Protocols,

It gives me pleasure to address this gathering and declare open this very important week-long event today. I would like to thank the leadership of the National Assembly, particularly the Senate President and the Speaker of the House of Representatives for organizing this event. I also want to thank all the Distinguished Senators and Honourable Members of the National Assembly for their unwavering support for our nascent democracy.

2. The primary objective of Government, as enshrined in our Constitution, is the security and welfare of the people. However, this objective can only be achieved when all arms collaborate and work together. I therefore commend the role you have continued to play to bring the desired Change Nigerians need. This programme could not have come at a better time than now as I believe that it will create the enabling environment for the legislature and key stakeholders to chart a course for the development of our country.

3. This administration has a firm belief in Democracy and is working towards entrenching good governance in the affairs of the nation. Most developed countries

have invested heavily in developing the infrastructure and institutions for good and open governance. It is the determination of this government to be in that league and to lay a foundation for its sustainability.

4. The Senate President, Mr. Speaker and members of the National Assembly, this administration has introduced some Bills and policies to achieve good and open governance. Such policies include:

- the Whistle Blowers Bill which I believe will be passed in record time for my assent.;
- The Open Budget Survey which was introduced since 2006 but was only given the desired attention in 2015 and its objectives include promoting fiscal transparency, access to budget Information, anti-Corruption and Citizen Engagement across the entire budget cycle. As a government, through the anti-corruption drive, we have engaged and promoted multi-sectorial reforms including the enforcement of the Treasury Single Account (TSA); strict implementation of the Bank Verification Number (BVN) policy; the Voluntary Asset and Income Declaration Scheme (VAIDS); signing the Open Government Partnership (OGP); and strengthening of our anti -corruption institutions among others.

According to the OGP Action Plan, governments are expected to consult widely with citizens when drafting and implementing country commitments. It therefore gladdens my heart that the National Assembly has put together this OPEN WEEK which I believe will be sustained and would consolidate the Executive- Legislature relationship.

5. By 2016, the economy of our dear country had gone into recession. Again, my administration swung into action with your support, by coming up, first with the Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP) for the 2016 Budget and by 2017, with Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) to serve as the medium term economic plan of the country from 2017-2020. The ERGP is not only a homegrown initiative with input from all Stakeholders including the National Assembly, but also as clear link with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To provide a longer-term perspective plan for the Nigerian economy, my administration has also set in motion a process to prepare a blue-print for 2020 – 2050.

6. In the spirit of the open week of interaction for good governance, let me address the important issue of recognizing the budget as a tool for economic development. As I reiterated in my speech during the signing of the 2018 Appropriation Bill into Law, I had hoped that the usual Legislative review process

will be quick when I submitted the proposal in November, 2017 in order to return to a predictable January to December Financial Year. While my desire was premised on the need to bring about better development outcomes in 2018 using the budget, it was regrettable that the required Executive-Legislative collaboration was not reflected in the time it took to pass the Bill.

7. I must also mention that government has noted the detailed response to the issues raised at the signing ceremony of the 2018 Appropriation Bill. The point to underscore firmly is that, a stronger and more cordial Executive-Legislative relationship must exist in the interest of the nation and the people that elected us into office. It must be a win-win situation for all Nigerians.

8. The importance of oversight activities of the Legislature to ensure efficient, equitable and the judicious use of resources to bring about delivery of service by the Executive cannot be overemphasized. Operationally, this involves visits by members of the relevant Committees to the project sites of the MDAs under their purview and in addition may involve holding public hearings in order to deepen understanding, appreciate the opportunities and challenges and subsequently agree on areas requiring legislative intervention and other forms of support/advocacy by the legislature. It is the expectation of this administration that the processes of over

sight would be given adequate time for discussion during the week in order to fine tune it.

9. The Nigerian Constitution has clearly enshrined the principles of separation of powers. I wish to state that since my assumption in office in May 2015, I have maintained a position that favors and supports the true independence of the various arms of government, including National Assembly, perhaps, more than any administration in this country. You are all aware of my open commitment to working with any set of leadership of the National Assembly that emerges, and I have remained true to it. This commitment is expected to take us beyond politics when dealing with the wellbeing of our citizens. We must continue to demonstrate our resolve to work harmoniously, while respecting the principles of separation of powers.

10. It is my expectation that this open week will facilitate deeper reflection on issues that I have raised and others I have not mentioned in order to achieve a more harmonious working relationship between the Executive and the Legislature in order to deliver peace, security, and sustainable development to all Nigerians. I also hope that adequate time will be devoted to discussions on the issues of security in particular.

11. Distinguished participants and invited guests, before I conclude, let me refresh the commitment of my administration to bringing corruption to a total stop in Nigeria. There is indeed nothing to celebrate about corruption and nothing to commend about those who are corrupt. Glorious days of our dear country have been rolled back due to corruption. Let us therefore, collectively stand to ensure that corruption does not deny us the bright future ahead.

12. I am sure you will remain committed to advancing our Change Agenda, through sustained and effective legislative practices and processes.

13. I thank you all for listening and may God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.