



OPENING REMARKS BY HIS EMINENCE, MUHAMMAD SA'AD ABUBAKAR, III, CFR, mni, THE SULTAN OF SOKOTO AND CHAIRMAN OF AANI HERITAGE COUNCIL AT A TOWN HALL MEETING/POLICY DIALOGUE FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE ORGANISED BY THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE (AANI) IN COLLABORATION WITH THE FEDERAL MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND CULTURE HELD AT SHEHU MUSA YAR'ADUA CENTRE, ABUJA ON TUESDAY AUGUST 9<sup>TH</sup>, 2016

His Excellency, The Vice President, Federal Republic of Nigeria, **Professor Yemi Osinbajo, GCON,**

The President, Alumni Association of the National Institute, AANI, **Major General (Rtd) Lawrence Anebi Onoja, CFR, mni, Ph.D,**

Members AANI Executive Council,

Distinguished Members of the AANI Heritage Council and Board of Patrons here present,

The Honourable Minister of Information and Culture, **Alhaji Lai Mohammed** and other distinguished Honourable Ministers here present,

The Ag. Director General, National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), **Jonathan M. Juma, mni,**

Respected Members of the Alumni Association of the National Institute,

Former Presidents and Secretary Generals of AANI,

Chairmen of AANI State Chapters,

Distinguished Invited Guests and Friends of AANI,

Members of the press,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Aslama Alkum

## **CONGRAGULATIONS**

We must congratulate the National Executive Council of AANI for their initiative and foresight, in organizing this policy engagement with the Federal Government with specific focus on the implementation of 2016 budget which is the sixth in the series of the Town Hall Meetings. On behalf of the Heritage Council of our Association, we join the President of AANI to commend the Honourable Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Muhammed for giving practical meaning to consultation and accountability in

governance through the town hall engagement with the citizens.

Caliph Muhammad Bello once defined "Leadership as Accountability". According to him, "..... one of the most serious misfortunes that may befall a servant (of Allah) is to be a leader for the consequences of having to render a full account of the office. Normally every individual servant is accountable for his speeches, his actions and his circumstances. If he is made a leader, he shall, in addition to his personal responsibilities, be held accountable for his subjects".

## **MANAGING CHANGE**

The benefits of the Town Hall meetings cannot be overemphasized. This engagement is even important for the government which came to power on the mantra of change. Expectations on the part of the mass of Nigerians are legitimately high. However we must emphasize that changes as desirable are often difficult to realise. At times changes also come with difficulties and challenges. We urge that both the governed and the governments must come with clean hands as Allah has enjoined all of us that after hardship, there will always be ease for those who persevere. We commend the Federal government for its commitment to combat the menace of insurgency in the North East. Here we

have seen a change from wholesale insecurity to relative peace as the nation's armed forces have commendably degraded the capacity of the insurgents. Today commendably no local government in the North East is under the heel of the insurgents unlike in the past. But there is still more work to be done in the area of insecurity given the heightened militant assaults on national assets in the Niger Delta, rampant cases of kidnappings, robberies, assassinations and armed banditry attacks against communities and even against armed soldiers doing their legitimate security work.

This special Town Hall meeting offers opportunities for the citizens to listen to the Honourable Ministers who are the real official change agents while in turn the citizens have the singular privilege to speak directly and frankly to those in power.

Let me however hasten to say that the burden is on the part of those in authority to appreciate that they hold power in trust for the common people of the country. Those in government must be open minded, flexible and receptive to new ideas as government is all about the people. If the mass of people are groaning and saying they are suffering economic deprivations, those in authority must listen and prepare to initiate policy changes for the betterment of all. In managing change

government must be open to suggestions and even prepare to do a policy review for the security and welfare of all. Even change is constant in a change process!

## **NIPSS/AANI AND STRATEGY FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The country we all know is never short of robust policy measures including the ones contained in 2016 federal budget. The challenging and overreaching issue is policy implementation. No better institution is better positioned to assist the government in policy implementation than NIPSS and AANI. NIPSS was set up in 1979 by the Federal Government to serve as a high level centre for reflection, research, and policy dialogue. Today, the National Institute has graduated over 1500 participants. No topic of national importance that has not been researched upon whether in public finance, mining and minerals development, industrial development, power sector reforms, housing and road construction among others. Its time government is committed to effectively utilize the huge enormous knowledge resources available at NIPSS.

We are confident that this policy dialogue can share from the wealth of experience of AANI members with respect to implementation strategies for 2016 budget.

We suggest that all the resolutions at the end of this historic Town Hall meeting should be forwarded to the office of the Vice President to assist in the realization of the laudable objectives of the 2016 budget.

Lastly we will like to emphasize that the effectiveness of this Town Hall meeting rests on its impact on the welfare of the citizens. According to the 1999 constitution, the primary objective of governance in the current democratic dispensation is welfare and security of the citizens. Shaykh Abdullahi Ibn Foduye, 1807, defined "Leadership as Service to the People." According to him "Seeing to the welfare of people is more effective than the use of force. It has been said that the crown of a leader is his integrity, his stronghold is his impartiality and his wealth is the welfare of his people". Therefore all hands must be on deck to ensure that government delivers on its mandate for better life for the citizens.