

INAUGURAL SPEECH

DELIVERED BY

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ON 24TH OF FEBRUARY 2017

***ON THE OCCASION OF HIS INAUGURATION AS THE 6TH CIVILIAN GOVERNOR OF
ONDO STATE.***

JOURNEY TO REDEMPTION

Humbled by the uncommon kindness of the Almighty God and an unequivocal expression of preference by the good people of Ondo State, exemplified by the victory of our great party at the last gubernatorial election, I am extremely delighted to share with you all the joy of this day of glory. We are grateful to Almighty God for granting this state such a beautiful day and a beautiful moment like this.

I thank the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and leader of our great party, President Muhammadu Buhari GCFR, for his leadership and unwavering stance to support what is just and noble. Today's celebration would, perhaps, have been impossible without his steely disposition to always stand against all acts not in consonance with decency, probity and justice.

I thank the President of Senate, Dr. Bukola Saraki and the Speaker of the House of Representatives Hon. Yakubu Dogara. I thank all APC Governors who stood to be counted with us in our hour of need and other eminent Nigerians too numerous to mention.

An especial reverence must be reserved for our indefatigable party chairman, Chief John Odigie Oyegun, whose strict adherence to lofty principles and doggedness laid the foundation for our resounding victory at the polls. This exemplary leader behaved like a true elder, whose sagely presence in the village square not only professed rectitude but acted it, resolutely, affirming nobility of the human spirit. Our party benefitted, tremendously, from his vast experience in public service. We are eternally grateful. The verdict of history shall be kind to him.

We express our profound appreciation to all the leaders of the party, at the national, state, local government, ward and unit levels, for their untiring and selfless efforts during the election.

May I also use this opportunity to pay tribute to those who have served this state in this capacity, both living and departed, for their invaluable contributions to the development of the state. On behalf of our State, I pay tribute to Governor Olusegun Abdulraman Mimiko for his several years of service to Ondo State.

I thank all our guests and friends both far and near who have taken it upon themselves to be here or sent words. I thank all citizens of Ondo state, particularly our resilient youths and women.

I come to you this day, with a message of hope, a clear agenda of prosperity and a vision of life abundant. I believe the greatest expression of faith in our ability is to be strong enough to look upon our imperfections and decide that it is in our power to remake our society to align with our highest ideals.

We can rise out of this dust and build a new Ondo state where honesty, prosperity and confidence can once again be our self-identity. We can pull ourselves by the bootstraps and shake off our current frustrations and disappointments. We must recognise the need for a cohesive platform, indispensable to an effective and efficient implementation of policies and programmes of both government and party, respectively.

Divergence of opinions is integral to party politics. We are bound to disagree as politicians but we must cast aside bitter recriminations and destructive predilections. Democracy thrives on infinite multiplicity of ideas. Popular participation is one of its fundamental norms. The subordination of individual preferences for the collective will is essential if we are to avoid anarchy. Party supremacy should be respected at all times. This should not be difficult for us to accept if we are truly desirous of bringing about positive change in the lives of our people.

We listened to the voices of our people in the course of our campaigns to all the nooks and crannies of the state. We heard them loud and clear through their votes. We witnessed, first hand, the deplorable conditions under which they exist. To those who cast their ballots in favour of our programmes, your trust is not misplaced. We are determined to make the difference with the specific mandate of redemption liberally handed over to us. Those who expressed other preferences are no less patriotic. Before long their anxieties will be addressed, realistically. All of us will be involved in the reconstruction project. The collective interest of the state must be our paramount focus. Consequently, we stand before you to pledge, with the guidance of God and our resolve not to renege on our promise, that your welfare shall form the basis of all our activities.

To achieve this, the main mission of our administration is therefore to lead a patriotic, highly inspired and competent team to rescue the ship of our state. We intend to help rebuild our economy, resuscitate damaged infrastructure, restore hope and return our state to a prosperous land. We are determined as an administration to break down the barriers that have made stagnation possible. We will break down the barriers to honest leadership, to comprehensive development, to physical growth and social security. These we intend to do through the promotion of transparent leadership, rule of law, extensive consultation, quality and accessible public utilities and social security; all in a sustainable manner.

We acknowledge the enormous challenges faced by the state and the severely limited resources available to meet these ever-increasing and compelling demands. In readiness for this enormous task ahead, I have two months ago inaugurated a **Strategic Development and Policy Implementation Committee** comprising of eminent and very knowledgeable Nigerians to produce and articulate a compressive change policy and programme blueprint. They have since submitted their preliminary report.

This blueprint is anchored on five cardinal programmes, which are popularly known as our Platforms for Change (JMPPR). These are:

- 1. Job creation through Agriculture, Entrepreneurship and Industrialisation.**
- 2. Massive Infrastructural development and maintenance.**
- 3. Provision of functional Education and Technological growth.**
- 4. Provision of Accessible and Qualitative Health care and social service delivery.**
- 5. Rural Development and Community Extension services.**

This platform for Change is erected on strong pillars, which consist of the core sectors of government activities that our blueprint lays emphasis on. These are **Finance and Management of state resources, Health and Social Services, Infrastructure and Public utilities, Agriculture and Natural resources, Commerce and Industrial development, Education and Technology, Land, Housing and Environment, Women Affairs and Social Development, Youth and Sports development, Culture and Tourism as well as Information, Civic orientation and Mobilisation** among others.

Our blueprint when unveiled shall explain in details our philosophy, vision, sectoral policies and comprehensive Programmes of action clearly calendared over a period of a tenure of four years. With

this document our pact with the people will be clear, our path well defined and expectations clearly understood.

In building the structure to deliver on our campaign promises, I come to you with a clear mind and an honest heart, to serve and give the very best of my ability to restore Hope and Happiness to our people. I urge you to see hope the way I see it. I see hope with limitless boundaries for endless opportunities for all of us. I see hope for progress, stability and prosperity for all people of goodwill who are willing to contribute their quota to developing our state to a land of honourable, contented, smart, honest, diligent and patriotic people. I see hope for self-confidence, job security and increased commerce and economic production. I see hope for redemption and renewal of our broken infrastructure, and social values.

But make no mistake about it; our journey to redemption will not be without stress and undulating curves. There are mountains before us to climb. As we climb up these steep mountains. Sometimes we may trip or slip, we will get back up. We will focus on the journey. We will never stop. We will never stop. We will never stop. In the end we will reach our goal, which is to bring back jobs to our youths, food to families, safety, confidence and prosperity to this land.

For all these to happen, I am humbly going to ask ONLY one thing from you, good people of Ondo state. What I ask for is Attitude. We need to come with an attitude of belief and transformation. Indeed, in all successful cultures and societies, attitude is the spirit and driver of victory.

Ladies and gentlemen, for us to see the change we all desire, we must be ready to constitute ourselves into change evangelists with exceptional missionary zeal to succeed. We must know that the man in the mirror is you and I. We need to have faith and find courage in the words of the good scripture that says, **“Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not be faint.”**

I believe if we combine these abilities with the force of Providence, a lot of great deeds will happen.

We shall not subject ourselves to any specious and unproductive stereotypes, which find expression in the usual egregious celebration of the passage of time spent in office as achievement. We will be too busy to notice the pace of the itinerary of the administration.

Our state is particularly lucky. We have men and women of quality. We set the pace for others in the not too distant past. The country depended, to a very great extent, on our resourcefulness. We contributed, immensely, to the GDP of the country at a time when agriculture was the mainstay of the country's

economy. Our people were exemplars in virtually all fields of human endeavour. The story is, painfully, different today. The fault, as the saying goes, is not in our stars but in ourselves that our fortunes have dwindled, considerably, and we have become underlings. We have transited, regrettably, from a producing economy to a basically consumptive society, which depends, almost solely, on handouts to survive. The resultant effect of this unproductive attitude is grinding poverty, desperation and hopelessness among our people.

It is a cruel irony that a state, richly endowed in material and human resources, wallows in inexplicable privation. Our unproductive taste has sustained the dichotomy between the rural areas and the urban centres. All attempts at improving infrastructural deficits seem concentrated at the capital of the state. Government intervention, where available, has been grossly inadequate in addressing the socio-economic challenges faced by the masses. Our administration shall, decidedly, try to close the gap between the hinterland and urban centres. Real development can only be actualized and accentuated through an active symbiosis between the two, an understanding predicated on collaboration and co-existence designed for amity and progress. Our people will be encouraged to participate in the massive reconstruction contemplated by our administration in this regard.

Any honest indigene of the state must be disturbed by the crisis in the educational sector at present. The philosophy of education, conceived on the idea of functionality for improved living by our forbears, has been reduced to a routine certification ritual, the culmination of which is the award of certificates, diplomas and degrees to graduates who are left more confused than when they enrolled in school. The unemployment crisis, apart from being a global socio-economic phenomenon, is self-inflicted.

If education is the nurturing, training and mobilization of those who live in a society to confront the challenges of development, faced, primarily, by the people in that environment, the current situation confirms that we have since departed from that well-trodden path for a very long time now. It is a big shame that a state, which was a clear leader in education in the country, now lags behind. It appears that our curricula at all levels of training have failed to produce experts whose contributions to the growth of the economy are needed. Our administration will strive to reverse this unfortunate trend by promoting functional education aimed at real development. We shall also revisit the issue of vocational training with a view to improving the skills of our artisans.

We recognize that the issue of unemployment is endemic. We equally understand that the greatest employer of labour, at a time such as this challenging period, is the private sector. The government will ensure that the environment remains peaceful and conducive for economic activities. In addition, we

shall deploy considerable energy into agriculture. Through this, we hope to generate employment for the teeming youths. This administration will do everything possible to encourage investment in agriculture. Our youths must be ready for training necessary to kick-start this mission.

We must begin to deemphasize white-collar jobs. The era of unproductive civil service is winding to a close, gradually. The current economic realities make the deployment of the unemployed to other sectors, other than agriculture and rural development, unsustainable. We must train our youths to acquire entrepreneurial skills as a corollary to our programme on agriculture.

The health care delivery system currently operating in the state will be sustained and improved upon. We shall adopt a deliberate policy to ensure that our people have access to health care regardless of their social status. We intend, within the available resources, to provide qualitative primary health care delivery system to the rural populace. Health care centres in the rural areas will be accessible and functional.

Our policy on massive infrastructural development will seek to open up the hinterland through our roads and waterways. Our state has the longest coastline in the country. It is unthinkable that all economic activities are restricted to land while our waterways are abandoned. Opening up the hinterland will reduce, drastically, the perennial rural-urban drift and encourage our sons and daughters who live outside the state to consider returning home to contribute their own quota. The economic propensities of such a venture will be, unimaginably, exponential.

We are all witnesses to the negative impact that our local economy has been subjected to as a result of over-reliance on federally allocated funds for even the most basic recurrent expenditure items. It is high time that we looked inwards and come up with a solution that ensures we are sustainable and viable as a collective entity.

We shall develop a comprehensive Development Plan that focuses on leveraging our collective resources and areas of comparative advantage for the benefit of our people. The plan will detail our philosophy and response to surviving in this harsh economic climate. In addition to this, it will also take a medium term view to our economic development on an overall basis, and more importantly ensure that we remain consistently above board during economic booms and bursts.

We will adopt a collaborative approach to get this done by ensuring that we engage with the other segments of the public sector, as well as the private sector in developing and implementing our ideas of transforming the economy of our great State within the shortest possible period.

All these lofty aspirations will remain a mirage if those saddled with the responsibility of implementing the decisions of the government do not support with dedication, honesty and patriotism.

I acknowledge the very important role that the Civil Service has played, and continues to play in the development of our beloved State. I understand the challenges, and these are quite apparent to those within and outside the system. We will work towards addressing these challenges in delivering on our mandate to our people. We particularly seek the support and cooperation of the Civil Service and all organs of labour. We will drive efficiency through capacity building and training needs assessment targeted at retooling our civil servants. Be rest assured that your welfare, training, capacity building and the overall interests of our people will be one of the highest pillars of our mandate.

We acknowledge the constraints that our current financial situation will place on our ability to deliver on our mandate. We however, believe that an adequate focus on transforming the current socio-economic status of our State will lead to substantial internally generated revenue for our State. We believe that Ondo State has the required resources – human and material to ensure our sustainability in the short, medium and long term.

We are looking at building on our existing relationships with local and international development partners. Many of them have been there for us in the time past, and we reach out to them, especially at the new dawn in the administration of our State. I am therefore using this opportunity to reach out to businesses, manufacturers, private investors as well as potential international partners. You are welcome to Ondo State. We commit to partner with you in developing the economic potentials of our State for the benefit of all our stakeholders.

The collective deployment of our resources, combined with those of our neighboring and sister States cannot be over-emphasized. Our administration believes that we can achieve a lot more if we work with a number of our sister State Governments to ensure that certain development efforts (infrastructure or otherwise) are channeled in such a way as to deliver maximum benefits for the participating States. We believe we don't have to build or develop everything ourselves. There is a lot we can gain if we harmonise efforts and resources to build enduring assets that can cater for the needs of every one of us.

Security of lives and property shall be guaranteed. Our administration will protect all and sundry. We will act in the interest of everyone. We will be there for all. All those who will add value to governance in the state shall be engaged. We believe that the inputs and participation of every stakeholder is required for us to succeed and deliver our mandate. We will provide numerous avenues for direct engagement with our people. Whether you are civil servants, market women, students, vulnerable groups, artisans,

professionals, we will have specific means of reaching out to you to feel your pulse, and more importantly to seek inputs into programs and policies that will directly impact your lives.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is indeed a brand new day! With the assistance of the Almighty God and the good people of Ondo State, we hope to take the state out of the morass of privation, hopelessness and desperation. The welfare of our people shall be the fundamental objective and directive principle of governance in Ondo State.

Your Excellencies, My lords, ladies and gentlemen and my good people of Ondo state, the hour is here and our **Journey to Redemption** commences now. And to God Almighty, the creator of heaven and earth, the author and finisher of all things perfect and excellent I say:

**“Forth in thy name oh Lord I go,
my daily labour to pursue,
thee only thee resolved to know,
in all I think or speak or do.**

**The task thy wisdom has assigned
o’ let me cheerfully fulfil
in all my works thy presence find
and prove thy acceptable will”.**

Long live Ondo State,

Long Federal Republic of Nigeria.

I thank you very much for listening. God bless.