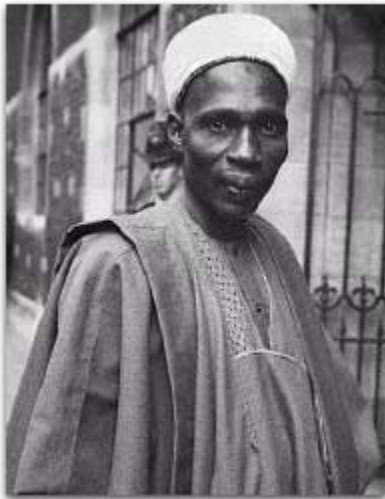


# Nigeria's Great Speeches in History



## **The Speech Declaring Nigeria's Independence by Nigeria's First Prime Minister Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa – October 1, 1960**

Today is Independence Day. The first of October 1960 is a date to which for two years, Nigeria has been eagerly looking forward. At last, our great day has arrived, and Nigeria is now indeed an independent Sovereign nation.

Words cannot adequately express my joy and pride at being the Nigerian citizen privileged to accept from Her Royal Highness these Constitutional Instruments which are the symbols of Nigeria's Independence. It is a unique privilege which I shall remember forever, and it gives me strength and courage as I dedicate my life to the service of our country. This is a wonderful day, and it is all the more wonderful because we have awaited it with increasing impatience, compelled to watch one country after another overtaking us on the road when we had so nearly reached our goal. But now, we have acquired our rightful status, and I feel sure that history will show that the building of our nation proceeded at the wisest pace: it has been thorough, and Nigeria now stands well-built upon firm foundations.

Today's ceremony marks the culmination of a process which began fifteen years ago and has now reached a happy and successful conclusion. It is with justifiable pride that we claim the achievement of our Independence to be unparalleled in the annals of history. Each step of our constitutional advance has been purposefully and peacefully planned with full and open consultation, not only between representatives of all the various interests in Nigeria but in

harmonious cooperation with the administering power which has today relinquished its authority. At the time when our constitutional development entered upon its final phase, the emphasis was largely upon self-government: We, the elected representatives of the people of Nigeria, concentrated on proving that we were fully capable of managing our own affairs both internally and as a nation. However, we were not to be allowed the selfish luxury of focusing our interest on our own homes.

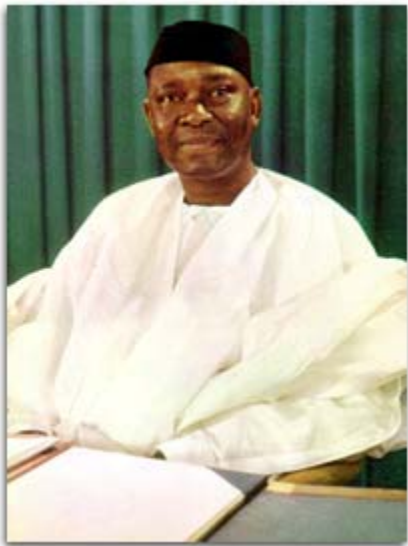
In these days of rapid communications, we cannot live in isolation, apart from the rest of the world, even if we wished to do so. All too soon it has become evident that for us, independence implies a great deal more than self-government. This great country, which has now emerged without bitterness or bloodshed, finds that she must at once be ready to deal with grave international issues. This fact has of recent months been unhappily emphasised by the startling events which have occurred in this continent. I shall not belabour the point but it would be unrealistic not to draw attention first to the awe-inspiring task confronting us at the very start of our nationhood. When this day in October 1960 was chosen for our Independence, it seemed that we were destined to move with quiet dignity to our place on the world stage. Recent events have changed the scene beyond recognition, so that we find ourselves today being tested to the utmost. We are called upon immediately to show that our claims to responsible government are well-founded, and having been accepted as an independent state, we must at once play an active part in maintaining the peace of the world and in preserving civilisation.

I promise you, we shall not fall for want of determination. And we come to this task better-equipped than many. For this, I pay tribute to the manner in which successive British governments have gradually transferred the burden of responsibility to our shoulders. The assistance and unfailing encouragement which we received from each Secretary of State for the Colonies and their intense personal interest in our development has immeasurably lightened that burden. All our friends in the Colonial Office must today be proud of their handiwork and in the knowledge that they have helped to lay the foundations of a lasting friendship between our two nations. I have indeed every confidence that, based on the happy experience of a successful partnership, our future relations with the United Kingdom will be more cordial than ever, bound together, as we shall be in the Commonwealth, by a common allegiance to Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth, whom today we proudly acclaim as Queen of Nigeria and Head of the Commonwealth. Time will not permit the individual mention of all those friends, many of them Nigerians, whose selfless labours have contributed to our Independence. Some have not lived to see the fulfilment of their hopes – on them be peace – but nevertheless they are remembered here, and the names of buildings and streets and roads and bridges throughout the country recall to our minds their achievements, some of them on a national scale. Others confined, perhaps, to a small area in one Division, are more humble but of equal value in the sum-total.

Today, we have with us representatives of those who have made Nigeria: Representatives of the Regional Governments, of former Central Governments, of the Missionary Societies, and of the Banking and Commercial enterprises, and members, both past and present, of the Public Service. We welcome you, and we rejoice that you have been able to come and share in our celebrations. We wish that it could have been possible for all of those whom you represent to be here today. Many, I know, will be disappointed to be absent, but if they are listening to me now, I say to them: ‘Thank you on behalf of my countrymen. Thank you for your devoted service which

helped to build up Nigeria into a nation. Today, we are reaping the harvest which you sowed, and the quality of the harvest is equalled only by our gratitude to you. May God bless you all. This is an occasion when our hearts are filled with conflicting emotions: we are, indeed, proud to have achieved our independence, and proud that our efforts should have contributed to this happy event. But do not mistake our pride for arrogance. It is tempered by feelings of sincere gratitude to all who have shored in the task of developing Nigeria politically, socially and economically.

We are grateful to the British officers whom we have known, first as masters, and then as leaders, and finally as partners, but always as friends. And there have been countless missionaries who have laboured unceasingly in the cause of education and to whom we owe many of our medical services. We are grateful also to those who have brought modern methods of banking and of commerce, and new industries. I wish to pay tribute to all of these people and to declare our everlasting admiration of their devotion to duty. And finally, I must express our gratitude to Her Royal Highness, the Princess Alexandra for personally bringing to us these symbols of our freedom and especially for delivering the gracious message from Her Majesty, The Queen. And so, with the words 'God Save Our Queen', I open a new chapter in the history of Nigeria and of the Commonwealth, and indeed, of the world.



### **PRESIDENT NNAMDI AZIKIWE'S REACTION TO NIGERIA'S FIRST MILITARY COUP – JANUARY 1966.**

Violence has never been an instrument used by us, as founding fathers of the Nigerian Republic, to solve political problems. In the British tradition, we talked the Colonial Office into accepting our challenges for the demerits and merits of our case for self-government. After six constitutional conferences in 1953, 1954, 1957, 1958, 1959, and 1960, Great Britain conceded to us the right to assert our political independence as from October 1, 1960. None of the Nigerian political parties ever adopted violent means to gain our political freedom and we are happy to claim that not a drop of British or Nigerian blood was shed in the course of our national struggle for our place in the sun. This historical fact enabled me to state publicly in Nigeria that Her Majesty's Government has presented self-government to us on a platter of gold. Of course, my

contemporaries scorned at me, but the facts of history are irrefutable. I consider it most unfortunate that our 'Young Turks' decided to introduce the element of violent revolution into Nigerian politics. No matter how they and our general public might have been provoked by obstinate and perhaps grasping politicians, it is an unwise policy. I have contacted General Aguiyi-Ironsi, General Officer Commanding the Nigerian armed forces, who I understand, has now assumed the reins of the Federal Government. I offered my services for any peace overtures to stop further bloodshed, to placate the mutinous officers, and to restore law and order. As soon as I hear from him, I shall make arrangements to return home. As far as I am concerned, I regard the killings of our political and military leaders as a national calamity.



**Radio broadcast by Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu – announcing Nigeria's first military coup on Radio Nigeria, Kaduna on January 15, 1966.**

In the name of the Supreme Council of the Revolution of the Nigerian Armed Forces, I declare martial law over the Northern Provinces of Nigeria. The Constitution is suspended and the regional government and elected assemblies are hereby dissolved. All political, cultural, tribal and trade union activities, together with all demonstrations and unauthorised gatherings, excluding religious worship, are banned until further notice.

The aim of the Revolutionary Council is to establish a strong united and prosperous nation, free from corruption and internal strife. Our method of achieving this is strictly military but we have no doubt that every Nigerian will give us maximum cooperation by assisting the regime and not disturbing the peace during the slight changes that are taking place. I am to assure all foreigners living and working in this part of Nigeria that their rights will continue to be respected. All treaty obligations previously entered into with any foreign nation will be respected and we hope that such nations will respect our country's territorial integrity and will avoid taking sides with enemies of the revolution and enemies of the people.

My dear countrymen, you will hear, and probably see a lot being done by certain bodies charged by the Supreme Council with the duties of national integration, supreme justice, general security and property recovery. As an interim measure all permanent secretaries, corporation chairmen and senior heads of departments are allowed to make decisions until the new organs are functioning, so long as such decisions are not contrary to the aims and wishes of the Supreme Council. No Minister or Parliamentary Secretary possesses administrative or other forms of control over any Ministry, even if they are not considered too dangerous to be arrested.

This is not a time for long speech-making and so let me acquaint you with ten proclamations in the Extraordinary Orders of the Day which the Supreme Council has promulgated. These will be modified as the situation improves.

You are hereby warned that looting, arson, homosexuality, rape, embezzlement, bribery or corruption, obstruction of the revolution, sabotage, subversion, false alarms and assistance to foreign invaders, are all offences punishable by death sentence. Demonstrations and unauthorised assembly, non-cooperation with revolutionary troops are punishable in grave manner up to death. Refusal or neglect to perform normal duties or any task that may of necessity be ordered by local military commanders in support of the change will be punishable by a sentence imposed by the local military commander. Spying, harmful or injurious publications, and broadcasts of troop movements or actions, will be punished by any suitable sentence deemed fit by the local military commander. Shouting of slogans, loitering and rowdy behavior will be rectified by any sentence of incarceration, or any more severe punishment deemed fit by the local military commander. Doubtful loyalty will be penalised by imprisonment or any more severe sentence. Illegal possession or carrying of firearms, smuggling or trying to escape with documents, valuables, including money or other assets vital to the running of any establishment will be punished by death sentence. Wavering or sitting on the fence and failing to declare open loyalty with the revolution will be regarded as an act of hostility punishable by any sentence deemed suitable by the local military commander. Tearing down an order of the day or proclamation or other authorized notices will be penalised by death.

This is the end of the Extraordinary Order of the Day which you will soon begin to see displayed in public. My dear countrymen, no citizen should have anything to fear, so long as that citizen is law abiding and if that citizen has religiously obeyed the native laws of the country and those set down in every heart and conscience since 1st October, 1960.

Our enemies are the political profiteers, the swindlers, the men in high and low places that seek bribes and demand 10 percent; those that seek to keep the country divided permanently so that they can remain in office as ministers or VIPs at least, the tribalists, the nepotists, those that make the country look big for nothing before international circles, those that have corrupted our society and put the Nigerian political calendar back by their words and deeds.

Like good soldiers we are not promising anything miraculous or spectacular. But what we do promise every law abiding citizen is freedom from fear and all forms of oppression, freedom from general inefficiency and freedom to live and strive in every field of human endeavour, both nationally and internationally. We promise that you will no more be ashamed to say that you are a Nigerian.

I leave you with a message of good wishes and ask for your support at all times, so that our land, watered by the Niger and Benue, between the sandy wastes and gulf of guinea, washed in salt by the mighty Atlantic, shall not detract Nigeria from gaining sway in any great aspect of international endeavour. My dear countrymen, this is the end of this speech. I wish you all good luck and I hope you will cooperate to the fullest in this job which we have set for ourselves of establishing a prosperous nation and achieving solidarity.



**Speech by Major-General Yakubu Gowon Declaring a Twelve State Structure for Nigeria – May 1967**

Countrymen, as you are all aware Nigeria has been immersed in an extremely grave crisis for almost eighteen months. We have now reached a most critical phase where what is at stake is the very survival of Nigeria as one political and economic unit. We must rise to the challenge and what we do in the next few days will be decisive. The whole world is witness to the continued defiance of federal authority by the Government of the Eastern Region, the disruption of the Railway, the Coal Corporation, the normal operations of the Nigerian Ports Authority, the interference with the flight schedules of the Nigeria Airways and other illegal acts by the Eastern Region Government culminating in the edicts promulgated last month by that Government purporting to seize all Federal Statutory Corporations and Federal revenues collected in the East. The consequence of these illegal sets has been the increasing deterioration of the Nigerian economy. It has also produce uncertainty and insecurity generally and pushed the country with increasing tempo towards total disintegration and possible civil war and bloodshed on massive scale. In the face of all these, I have shown great restraint, hoping that through peaceful negotiations a solution acceptable to all sections of the country can be found. Unfortunately, the hopes of myself and my other colleagues on the Supreme Military council have been

disappointed by the ever increasing campaign of hate by the Governor of the Eastern Region. Lt. Col Ojukwu has continuously increased his demands as soon as some are met in order to perpetuate the crisis and lead the Eastern Region out of Nigeria. We know very well the tragic consequences of such a misguided step. Not only will the regions themselves disintegrate further, but before then, pushed by foreign powers and mercenaries who will interfere, this dear country will be turned into a bloody stage for chaotic and wasteful civil war. When the tragic events of 15th January, 1966 occurred, the country acquiesced in the installation of a Military Regime only because it desired that order and discipline should be restored in the conduct of the affairs of this country, that swift reforms will be introduced to produce just and honest Government, to usher in stability and ensure fair treatment of all citizens in every part of the country. The citizens of this country have not given the Military Regime any mandate to divide up the country into sovereign states and to plunge them into bloody disaster. As I have warned before, my duty is clear-faced with this final choice between action to save Nigeria and acquiescence in secession and disintegration. I am therefore proclaiming a State of Emergency throughout Nigeria with immediate effect. I have assumed full powers as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces and Head of the Federal Military Government for the short period necessary to carry through the measures which are now urgently required. In this period of emergency, no political statements in the Press, on the Radio and Television and all publicity media or any other political activity, will be tolerated. The Military and Police are empowered to deal summarily with any offenders. Newspaper editors are particularly urged to co-operate with the authorities to ensure the success of these measures. I have referred earlier to some illegal acts of the Eastern Region Government. You all know that about one third of the entire rolling stock of the Nigerian Railways, including 115 oil-tankers, have been detained and that the services on the Eastern District of the Nigerian railways have been completely disrupted for many months. You are also aware of the fact that they have disrupted the direct movement of oil products from the refinery near Port Harcourt to the Northern Region. They have hindered the transit of goods to neighbouring countries and have even seized goods belonging to foreign countries. These acts have flagrantly violated normal international practice and disturbed friendly relations with our neighbours. That refinery is owned jointly by the Federal Government and Regional governments. Illegally, since last year, the Authorities at Enugu have interfered with the flight routes of the Nigeria Airways. Only recently they committed the barbaric crime of hijacking a plane bound for Lagos from Benin. They have placed a ban on the residence of non-Easterners in the Eastern Region—an action which is against the Constitution and the fundamental provisions of our laws. They have continuously on the Press and radio incited the people of eastern Region to hatred of other Nigerian peoples and they have indulged in the crudest abuse of members of the Supreme Military Council, especially myself. Despite all these, I have spared no effort to conciliate the East in recognition of their understandable grievances and fears since the tragic incidents of 1966. To this end I agreed with my other colleagues on the Supreme Military Council to the promulgation of the Decree No. 8 which completely decentralized the government of this country and even went further than the Republican Constitution as it existed before 15th January, 1966. But what has been the response of the Eastern Region Government? Complete rejection of Decree No. 8 and insistence on its separate existence as a sovereign unit. Only recently, a group of distinguished citizens formed themselves into the National Conciliation Committee. They submitted recommendations aimed at reducing tension. These included the reciprocal abrogation of economic measures taken by the Federal Military government and the seizure of Federal Statutory Corporations and Federal revenue by the Eastern Government. These reciprocal actions

were to be taken within one week, that is by 25th May, 1967. It is on record that I accepted the recommendations and issued instructions effective from Tuesday, May 23. Indeed I now understand that certain vehicles of the Posts and Telegraphs Department which went to the East in resumption of services have been illegally detained in the Region. The response of the east has been completely negative and they have continued their propaganda and stage-managed demonstrations for "independence." Fellow citizens, I recognize however that the problem of Nigeria extends beyond the present misguided actions of the Eastern Region Government. My duty is to all citizens. I propose to treat all sections of the country with equality. The main obstacle to future stability in this country is the present structural imbalance in the Nigerian Federation. Even Decree No. 8 or Confederation or Loose Association will never survive if any one section of the country is in a position to hold the others to ransom. This is why the item in the political and administrative programme adopted by the Supreme Military Council last month is the creation of states as a basis for stability. This must be done first so as to remove the fear of domination. Representatives drawn from the new states will be more able to work out the future constitution for this country which can contain provisions to protect the powers of the states to the fullest extent desired by the Nigerian people. As soon as these states are established, a new Revenue Allocation Commission consisting of international experts will be appointed to recommend an equitable formula for revenue allocation taking into account the desires of the states. I propose to act faithfully within the political and administrative programme adopted by the Supreme Military Council and published last month. The world will recognize in these proposals our desire for justice and fair play for all sections of this country and to accommodate all genuine aspirations of the diverse people of this great country. I have ordered the re-imposition of the economic measures designed to safeguard federal interests until such a time as the Eastern Military Government abrogates its illegal edicts on revenue collection and the administration of the Federal Statutory Corporations based in the East. The country has a long history of well articulated demands for states. The fears of minorities were explained in great detail and set out in the report of the Willink Commission appointed by the British in 1958. More recently there has been extensive discussion in Regional Consultative Committees and Leaders-of-Thought Conferences. Resolutions have been adopted demanding the creation of states in the North and in Lagos. Petitions from minority areas in the East which have been subjected to violent intimidation by the Eastern Military Government have been widely publicized. While the present circumstances regrettably do not allow for consultations through plebiscites, I am satisfied that the creation of new states as the only possible basis for stability and equality is the overwhelming desire of vast majority of Nigerians. To ensure justice, these states are being created simultaneously. To this end, therefore, I am promulgating a Decree which will divide the Federal Republic into Twelve States. The twelve states will be six in the present Northern Region, three in the present Eastern Region, the Mid-West will remain as it is, the Colony Province of the Western Region and Lagos will form a new Lagos State and the Western Region will otherwise remain as it is. I must emphasize at once that the Decree will provide for a States Delimitation Commission which will ensure that any divisions or towns not satisfied with the states in which they are initially grouped will obtain redress. But in this moment of serious National Emergency the co-operation of all concerned is absolutely essential in order to avoid any unpleasant consequences.

The twelve new states, subject to marginal boundary adjustments, will therefore be as follows: North-Western State comprising Sokoto and Niger Provinces. North-Central State comprising



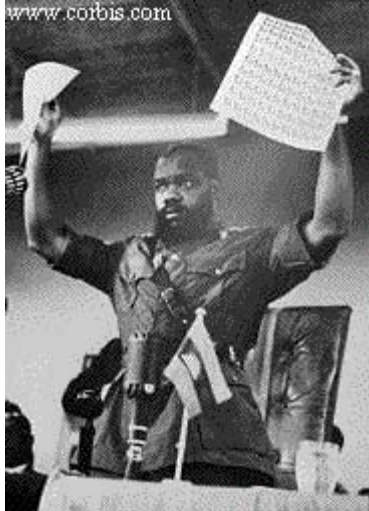
Katsina and Zaria. Kano State comprising the present Kano Province. North-Eastern State comprising Borno, Adamawa, Saruana and Bauchi Provinces. Benue/Plateau State comprising Benue and Plateau Provinces. Lagos State comprising the Colony Province and the Federal Territory of Lagos. Western State comprising the present Western Region but excluding the Colony Province. Mid-Western State comprising the present Mid-Western State. East-Central State comprising the present Eastern Region excluding Calabar, Ogoja and Rivers Provinces. South-Eastern State comprising Calabar and Ogoja Provinces. Rivers State comprising Ahoada, Brass, Degema, Ogoni and Port Harcourt Divisions. The states will be free to adopt any particular names they choose in the future.

The immediate administrative arrangements of the new states have been planned and the names of the Military Governors appointed to the new states will be gazetted shortly. The allocation of federally collected revenue to the new states on an interim basis for the first few months has also been planned. The successor states in each former region will share the revenue until a more permanent formula is recommended by the new Revenue Allocation Commission. It is my fervent hope that the existing regional Authorities will co-operate fully to ensure the smoothest possible establishment of the new states. It is also my hope that the need to use force to support any new state will not arise. I am, however, ready to protect any citizens of this country who are subject to intimidation or violence in the course of establishment of these new states.

My dear countrymen, the struggle ahead is for the well-being of the present and future generations of Nigerians. If it were possible for us to avoid chaos and civil war merely by drifting apart as some people claim that easy choice may have been taken. But we know that to take such a course will quickly lead to the disintegration of the existing regions in condition of chaos and to disastrous foreign interference. We now have to adopt the courageous course of facing the fundamental problem that has plagued this country since the early 50s. There should be no recrimination. We must all resolve to work together. It is my hope that those who disagreed in the past with the Federal Military Government through genuine misunderstanding and mistrust will now be convinced of our purpose and be willing to come back and let us plan and work together for the realization of the Political and Administrative programme of the Supreme Military Council, and for the early restoration of full civilian rule in circumstances which would enhance just and honest and patriotic government.

I appeal to the general public to continue to give their co-operation to the Federal Military Government; to go about their normal business peacefully; to maintain harmony with all communities wherever they live; to respect all the directives of the Government including directives restricting the movements of people while the emergency remains. Such directives are for their own protection and in their own interest. Let us therefore, march manfully together to alter the course of this nation once again for all and to place it on the path of progress, unity and equality. Let us so act that future generations of Nigerians will praise us for our resolution and courage in this critical stage of our country's history.

Long live the Federal Republic of Nigeria.



## **DECLARATION OF BIAFRA BY CHUKWUEMEKA ODUMEGWU OJUKWU, ON MAY 30, 1967**

Fellow countrymen and women, you, the people of Eastern Nigeria:

Conscious of the supreme authority of Almighty God over all mankind, of your duty to yourselves and prosperity;

Aware that you can no longer be protected in your lives and in your property by any Government based outside eastern Nigeria;

Believing that you are born free and have certain inalienable rights which can best be preserved by yourselves;

Unwilling to be unfree partners in any association of a political or economic nature; Rejecting the authority of any person or persons other than the Military Government of eastern Nigeria to make any imposition of whatever kind or nature upon you;

Determined to dissolve all political and other ties between you and the former Federal Republic of Nigeria; Prepared to enter into such association, treaty or alliance with any sovereign state within the former Federal Republic of Nigeria and elsewhere on such terms and conditions as best to subserve your common good;

Affirming your trust and confidence in me; Having mandated me to proclaim on your behalf, and in your name the Eastern Nigeria be a sovereign independent Republic. Now Therefore I, Lieutenant-Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu, Military Governor of Eastern Nigeria, by virtue of the authority, and pursuant to the principles recited above, do hereby solemnly proclaim that the territory and region known as and called Eastern Nigeria together with her continental shelf and territorial waters shall henceforth be an independent sovereign state of the name and title of The Republic of Biafra. And I Do Declare That:

(i) All political ties between us and the Federal Republic of Nigeria are hereby totally dissolved.

(ii) All subsisting contractual obligations entered into by the Government of the federal republic of Nigeria or by any person, authority, organization or government acting on its behalf, with any person, authority or organization operating, or relating to any matter or thing, within the Republic of Biafra, shall henceforth be deemed to be entered into with the Military Governor of the Republic of Biafra for and on behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Biafra, and the covenants thereof shall, subject to this Declaration, be performed by the parties according to their tenor;

(iii) All subsisting international treaties and obligations made on behalf of Eastern Nigeria by the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be honoured and respected;

(iv) Eastern Nigeria's due share of all subsisting international debts and obligations entered into by the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be honoured and respected;

(v) Steps will be taken to open discussions on the question of Eastern Nigeria's due share of the assets of the Federation of Nigeria and personal properties of the citizens of Biafra throughout the Federation of Nigeria.

(vi) The rights, privileges, pensions, etc., of all personnel of the Public Services, the Armed Forces and the Police now serving in any capacity within the Republic of Biafra are hereby guaranteed;

(vii) We shall keep the door open for association with, and would welcome, any sovereign unit or units in the former Federation of Nigeria or any other parts of Africa desirous of association with us for the purposes of running a common services organization and for the establishment of economic ties;

(viii) We shall protect the lives and property of all foreigners residing in Biafra, we shall extend the hand of friendship to those nations who respect our sovereignty, and shall repel any interference in our internal affairs;

(ix) We shall faithfully adhere to the charter of the Organization of African Unity and of the United Nations Organization;

(x) It is our intention to remain a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations in our right as a sovereign, independent nation. Long live the Republic of Biafra! And may God protect all those who live in her.



**The Civil War is Over. Broadcast by (Biafran) Major-General Phillip Effiong on Monday, January 12, 1970**

Fellow Countrymen, As you know, I was asked to be the officer administering the government of this Republic on the 10th of January, 1970. Since then, I know that some of you have been waiting to hear a statement from me. I have had extensive consultations with the leaders of the community, both military and civil, and I am now encouraged and hasten to make this statement to you by the mandate of the armed forces and the people of this country. I have assumed the leadership of the government.

Throughout history, injured people have had to resort to arms in their self-defense where peaceful negotiations fail. We are no exception. We took up arms because of the sense of insecurity generated in our people by the events of 1966. We have fought in defense of that cause. I take this opportunity to congratulate officers and men of our armed forces for their gallantry and bravery which had for them the admiration of the whole world. I thank the civil population for their steadfastness and courage in the face of overwhelming odds and starvation. I am convinced now that a stop must be put to the bloodshed which is going on as a result of war. I am also convinced that the suffering of our people must be brought to an immediate end. Our people are now disillusioned and those elements of the old government regime who have made negotiations and reconciliation impossible have voluntarily removed themselves from our midst.

I have therefore instructed an orderly disengagement of troops. I am dispatching emissaries to make contact with Nigeria's field commanders in places like Onitsha, Owerri, Awka, Enugu and Calabar with a view to arranging armistice. I urge General Gowon, in the name of humanity, to order his troops to pause while an armistice is negotiated in order to avoid the mass suffering caused by the movement of population. We have always believed that our differences with

Nigeria should be settled by peaceful negotiations. A delegation of our people is therefore ready to meet representatives of Nigeria federal government anywhere to negotiate a peaceful settlement on the basis of OAU resolutions.

The delegation will consist of the Chief Justice, Sir Louis Mbanefo as leader, Professor Eni Njoku, Mr. J. I. Emembolu, Chief A. E. Basse and Mr. E. Aguma. The delegation will have full authority to negotiate on our behalf. I have appointed a council to advise me on the government of the country. It consists of the Chief Justice, Sir Louis Mbanefo, Brigadier P. C. Amadi (Army), Brigadier C. A. Nwawo (Army), Captain W. A. Anuku (Navy), Wing Commander J. I. Ezeilo (Air Force), Inspector-General of Police, Chief P. I. Okeke, Mr. J. I. Emembolu (Attorney-General), Professor Eni Njoku, Dr. I. Eke, Chief A. E. Udofia, Chief Frank Opigo and Chief J. M. Echeruo. Any question of government in exile is repudiated by our people.

Civilian population are hereby advised to remain calm and cooperate with the armed forces and the police in the maintenance of law and order. They should remain in their homes and stop mass movements which have increased suffering and loss of lives.

On behalf of our people, I thank those foreign governments and friends who have steadfastly given us support in our cause. We shall continue to count on their continued help and counsel. I also thank His Holiness the Pope, the Joint Church Aid and other relief organizations, for the help they have given for the relief of suffering and starvation. I appeal to all governments to give urgent help for relief and to prevail on the Federal Military Government to order their troops to stop all military operations.

May God help us all.



**“The Dawn of National Reconciliation” – Gowon’s Civil War Victory Message to the Nation, 15 January 1970**

Citizens of Nigeria,

It is with a heart full of gratitude to God that I announce to you that today marks the formal end of the civil war. This afternoon at Dodan Barracks, Lt. Col. Phillip Effiong, Lt. Col. David Ogunewe, Lt. Col. Patrick Anwunah, Lt. Col. Patrick Amadi and Commissioner of Police, Chief Patrick Okeke formally proclaimed the end of the attempt at secession and accepted the authority of the Federal Military Government of Nigeria. They also formally accepted the present political and administrative structure of the country. This ends thirty months of a grim struggle. Thirty months of sacrifice and national agony.

Exactly four years ago on January 15, 1966, a group of young army officers overthrew the Government of the country with violence. The country hoped, however, that the military regime which followed would quickly restore discipline and confidence in the army and introduce a just, honest, patriotic and progressive government. The country was disappointed in those hopes. There were further tragic incidents in the army leading to the death of many officers and men in July 1966.

I then assumed the leadership of the Federal Military Government. I gave a solemn pledge to work to reduce tension in the army and the country, to restore the Federal Constitution and to prepare the country for an orderly return to civilian rule as early as possible. Despite my efforts and to co-operation of all other members of the Supreme Military Council, the former Lt. Col. Ojukwu pushed us from one crisis to another. This intransigent defiance of Federal Government authority heightened tensions and led to the much regretted riots in September/October 1966. He subsequently exploited the situation to plunge the former Eastern Region into secession and the nation into a tragic war.

The world knows how hard we strove to avoid the civil war. Our objectives in fighting the war to crush Ojukwu’s rebellion were always clear. We desired to preserve the territorial integrity and unity of Nigeria. For as one country we would be able to maintain lasting peace amongst our various communities; achieve rapid economic development to improve the lot of our people; guarantee a dignified future and respect in the world for our prosperity and contribute to African unity and modernization. On the other hand, the small successor states in a disintegrated Nigeria would be victims of perpetual war and misery and neo-colonialism. Our duty was clear. And we are, today, vindicated.

The so-called “Rising Sun of Biafra” is set for ever. It will be a great disservice for anyone to continue to use the word Biafra to refer to any part of the East Central State of Nigeria. The tragic chapter of violence is just ended. We are the dawn of national reconciliation. Once again, we have an opportunity to build a new nation.

My dear compatriots, we must pay homage to the fallen. To the heroes, who have made the supreme sacrifice that we may be able to build a nation great in justice, fair play, and industry. They will be mourned for ever by a grateful nation. There are also the innocent men, women, and

children who perished, not in battle but as a result of the conflict. We also honour their memory. We honour the fallen of both sides of this tragic fratricidal conflict. Let it be our resolution that all those dead shall have not died in vain. Let the greater nation we shall build be their proud monument forever.

Now, my dear countrymen, we must recommence at once in greater earnest, the task of healing the nation's wounds. We have at various times repeated our desire for reconciliation in full equality, once the secessionist regime abandoned secession. I solemnly repeat our guarantees of a general amnesty for those misled into rebellion. We guarantee the security of life and property of all citizens in every part of Nigeria and equality in political rights. We also guarantee the right of every Nigerian to reside and work wherever he chooses in the Federation, as equal citizens of one united country. It is only right that we should all henceforth respect each other. We should all exercise civic restraint and use our freedom, taking into full account the legitimate right and needs of the other man. There is no question of second class citizenship in Nigeria.

On our side, we fought the war with great caution, not in anger or hatred, but always in the hope that common sense would prevail. Many times we sought a negotiated settlement, not out of weakness, but in order to minimize the problems of reintegration, reconciliation, and reconstruction. We knew that however the war ended, in the battlefield, or in the conference room, our brothers fighting under other colours must rejoin us and that we must together rebuild the nation anew.

Those now freed from the terror and misery of the secessionist enclave are therefore doubly welcome. The nation is relieved. All energies will now be bent to the task of reintegration and reconciliation. They will find, contrary to the civil [thus in press release; but probably 'evil?'] propaganda with which they were fed, that thousands and thousands of Ibos have lived and worked in peace with other ethnic groups in Lagos and elsewhere in the Federation throughout the dark days of the civil war. There is, therefore, no cause for humiliation on the part of any group of the people of this country. The task of reconciliation is truly begun.

The nation will be proud of the fact that the ceremony today at Dodan Barracks of reunion under the banner of the Federal Republic of Nigeria was arranged and conducted by Nigerians amongst ourselves alone. No foreign good offices was involved. That is what we always prayed for. We always prayed that we should resolve our problems ourselves, free from foreign mentors and go-betweens however well intentioned. Thus, our nation is come of age. And the meaning of today's event must be enshrined in the nation's memory for ever.

There is an urgent task to be done. The Federal Government has mounted a massive relief operation to alleviate the suffering of the people in the newly liberated areas. I have as announced, assigned special responsibility for this to a member of the Federal Executive Council. We are mobilizing adequate resources from the Federal Government to provide food, shelter, and medicines for the affected population. Rehabilitation and reconstruction will follow simultaneously to restore electricity, transport and communications. We must, as a matter of urgency, resettle firms and reopen factories to ensure that normal economic life is resumed by everyone as soon as possible. Special attention will be given to the rehabilitation of women and children in particular, so long denied the comfort of homes, the blessing of education and the

assurance of a future by Ojukwu's wicked tyranny and falsehood. We must restore at once to them hope and purpose in life.

Federal troops have a special charge to give emergency relief to the people in the areas they have liberated before civilian help can come. They must continue and intensify their splendid work in this regard. The state administrations are giving emergency relief the first priority. The Rehabilitation Commissions and the Voluntary Agencies are extending their efforts. The appropriate agencies of Federal Government will soon make further announcements about additional relief measures.

My Government has directed that former civil servants and public corporation officials should be promptly reinstated as they come out of hiding. Detailed arrangements for this exercise have been published. Plans for the rehabilitation of self-employed people will also be announced shortly. The problem of emergency relief is a challenge for the whole nation. We must prove ourselves equal to the task. Our resources, which have enabled us to prosecute the war successfully and without obligations to anyone, are considerable. I appeal to the nation for volunteers to help in the emergency relief operations in the newly liberated areas. Doctors, nurses, engineers, technicians, builders, plumbers, mechanics, and administrators – all skilled hands willing to help are urgently required. The detailed arrangements for recruitment will soon be announced. I am sure that there will be a prompt and good response to this call.

You will have heard that my Government may seek the assistance of friendly foreign governments and bodies, especially in the provision of equipment to supplement our national effort. There are, however, a number of foreign governments and organizations whose so-called assistance will not be welcome. These are the governments and organizations which sustained the rebellion. They are thus guilty of the blood of thousands who perished because of prolongation of the futile rebel assistance. They did not act out of love for humanity. Their purpose was to disintegrate Nigeria and Africa and impose their will on us. They may still harbour their evil intentions. We shall therefore not allow them to divide and estrange us again from one another with their dubious and insulting gifts and their false humanitarianism.

Regarding the future, we shall maintain our purpose to work for stability with the existing political structure of a minimum of twelve states. The collision of three giant regions with pretensions to sovereignty created distrust and fear and to the tragic conflict now ending. The multi-state structure will therefore be retained with the minimum of the present twelve states. Immediate post-war planning and reconstruction will continue on this basis. Any new constitution will be the result of discussion by the representatives of all the people of Nigeria.

I am happy that despite the war, Nigeria has maintained a strong and expanding economy. Plans are also far advanced for faster economic modernization. Our enormous material resources and our large dynamic population will make this possible. We are pledged to ensure rapid development for the benefit of the Nigerian people themselves. It will be much easier to achieve reconciliation and reintegration in increasing prosperity.

Fellow countrymen, the civil war is truly over. We thank God. But the state of national emergency and emergency regulations remain. Discipline and sacrifice are essential if we are to



achieve our goals in the immediate post-war period and lay sound foundations for the future. I demand of you patience, resolution, and continued dedication. I demand of the workers and employers continued restraint in industrial relations in keeping with the recent decree. A decree on price control will soon be promulgated. We shall soon review wages and salaries to improve the lot of the ordinary man. The immediate economic problems are challenging and we must behave accordingly.

On this occasion, I wish to place on record the nation's gratitude to the Organization of African Unity for its splendid diplomatic and moral support for the Federal cause. I thank particularly the Chairman of the Consultative Committee on Nigeria, His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I and the other members of the committee. I also thank the President of the OAU General Assembly, Presidents Mobutu, Boumedienne, and Ahidjo, who presided over OAU summit discussions of the Nigerian crisis. The enemies of Africa were restrained by the demonstration of such solid support. I thank the Secretary General of the United Nations, U Thant, for his understanding attitude towards our country's crisis and the specialized agencies for their assistance. I also thank the friendly governments who gave us moral and material support in the darkest hour of our need. The nation will remember them as true friends. It is the desire of my Government that our relations with them should grow stronger.

Consistent with our basic policy, we shall maintain correct relations with all foreign governments notwithstanding the anxieties they may have caused us. As we emerge from our greatest trial we shall endeavour to work for peace in the world and for a better economic deal for the less developed countries of the world.

The Armed Forces deserve the greatest praise for their valour in battle, their loyalty and dedication and for their resourcefulness in overcoming the formidable obstacles placed in our way. I praise them for observing strictly the code of conduct issued to them at the beginning of the operations. It is necessary now more than ever when the rebellion is ended for them to maintain the high standard they have attained. The letter and spirit of the code must be obeyed. Their first duty is to protect the lives and property of all surrendering troops and civilians and to give them humane treatment. Stern disciplinary measures will be taken against any who violate the code. I know, however, that I can continue to count on your loyalty and discipline.

I also praise the civilian population everywhere in the country for their patience, sacrifice, loyalty, and steadfast support for the fighting troops and for One Nigeria. We must all be justly proud. All Nigerians share the victory of today. The victory for national unity, victory for hopes of Africans and black people everywhere. We must thank God for his mercies. We mourn the dead heroes. We thank God for sparing us to see his glorious dawn of national reconciliation. We have ordered that Friday, Saturday, and Sunday be national days of prayer. We must his guidance to do our duty to contribute our quota to the building of a great nation, founded on the concerted efforts of all its people and on justice and equality. A nation never to return to the fractious, sterile and selfish debates that led to the tragic conflict just ending. We have overcome a lot over the past four years. I have therefore every confidence that ours will become a great nation. So help us God.

Long Live the Federal Republic of Nigeria.



**Statement at Dodan Barracks on January 15, 1970 by Major-General Phillip Efiog  
(Officer Administering the Republic of Biafra)**

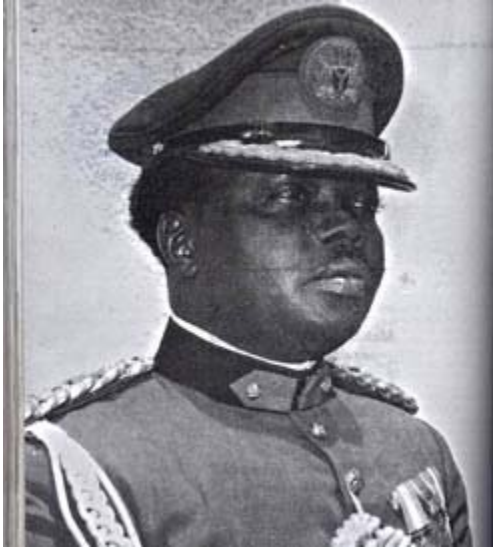
I, Major-General Phillip Efiog, Officer Administering the Government of the Republic of Biafra, now wish to make the following declaration:

That we affirm that we are loyal Nigerian citizens and accept the authority of the Federal Military Government of Nigeria.

That we accept the existing administrative and political structure of the Federation of Nigeria.

That any future constitutional arrangement will be worked out by representatives of the people of Nigeria.

That the Republic of Biafra hereby ceases to exist.



**General Gowon is Overthrown: Maiden Speech of Brigadier Murtala Ramat Muhammed, July 29, 1975**

Fellow Nigerians, events of the past few years have indicated that despite our great human and material resources, the Government has not been able to fulfill the legitimate expectations of our people. Nigeria has been left to drift. This situation, if not arrested, would inevitably have resulted in chaos and even bloodshed. In the endeavour to build a strong, united and virile nation, Nigerians have shed much blood. The thought of further bloodshed, for whatever reasons must, I am sure, be revolting to our people. The Armed Forces, having examined the situation, came to the conclusion that certain changes were inevitable. After the civil war, the affairs of state, hitherto a collective responsibility, became characterized by lack of consultation, indecision, indiscipline and even neglect. Indeed, the public at large became disillusioned and disappointed by these developments. This trend was clearly incompatible with the philosophy and image of a corrective regime. Unknown to the general public, the feeling of disillusionment was also evident among members of the armed forces whose administration was neglected but who, out of sheer loyalty to the Nation, and in the hope that there would be a change, continued to suffer in silence. Things got to a stage where the head of administration became virtually inaccessible even to official advisers; and when advice was tendered, it was often ignored. Responsible opinion, including advice by eminent Nigerians, traditional rulers, intellectuals, et cetera, was similarly discarded. The leadership, either by design or default, had become too insensitive to the true feelings and yearnings of the people. The nation was thus plunged inexorably into chaos. It was obvious that matters could not, and should not, be allowed in this manner, and in order to give the nation a new lease of life, and sense of direction, the following decisions were taken: 1. The removal of General Yakubu Gowon as Head of the Federal Military Government and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces. 2. The retirement of General Yakubu Gowon from the Armed Forces in his present rank of General with full benefits, in recognition of his past services to the nation. 3. General Gowon will be free to return to the country as soon as conditions permit; he will be free to pursue any legitimate undertakings of his choice in any part of the country. His personal safety and freedom and those of his family will be guaranteed. 4. The following members of the Armed Forces are retired with immediate effect: Vice Admiral JEA Wey – Chief of Staff, Supreme HQ, Major-General Hassan Katsina – Deputy Chief of Staff, Supreme HQ,

Major-General David Ejoor – Chief of Staff (Army), Rear Admiral Nelson Soroh – Chief of Naval Staff, Brigadier EE Ikwue – Chief of Air Staff, and all other officers of the rank of major general (or equivalent) and above. Alhaji Kam Salem – Inspector General of Police, Chief TA Fagbola – Deputy Inspector General of Police<sup>5</sup>. Also with immediate effect, all the present Military Governors, and the Administrator of East Central State, have been relieved of their appointments and retired.<sup>6</sup> As you are already aware, new appointments have been made as follows: Brigadier TY Danjuma – Chief of Army Staff, Colonel John Yisa Doko – Chief of Air Staff, Commodore Michael Adelanwa – Chief of Naval Staff, Mr. MD Yusuf – Inspector General of Police

New Military Governors have also been appointed for the States as follows:

1. Lt. Col. Muhammed Buhari, North East
2. Colonel George Innih, Midwest
3. Lt. Col. Sani Bello, Kano
  
4. Captain Adekunle Lawal (Navy), Lagos
  
5. Lt. Col. Paul Omu, South East
  
6. Colonel Ibrahim Taiwo, Kwara
  
7. Captain Akin Aduwo, (Navy), West
  
8. Col. Anthony Ochefu, East Central
  
9. Lt. Col. Usman Jibrin, North central
  
10. Col. Abdullahi Mohammed, Benue-Plateau
  
11. Lt. Col. Umaru Mohammed, North West
  
12. Lt. Col. Zamani Lekwot, Rivers

The Structure of Government has been reorganized. There will now be three organs of government at the federal level namely,

- (i) The Supreme Military Council (ii) The National Council of States (iii) The Federal Executive Council

There will of course continue to be Executive Councils at the State level. The reconstituted Supreme Military Council will comprise the following:

The Head of State and C-in-C of the Armed Forces

Brigadier Olusegun Obasanjo – Chief of Staff, SHQ

Brigadier TY Danjuma – Chief of Army Staff

Commodore Michael Adelanwa – Chief of Naval Staff

Col. John Yisa Doko – Chief of Air Staff

Mr. MD Yusuf – IG of Police

GOCs -

1st Division, Brigadier Julius Akinrinade

2nd Division, Brigadier Martin Adamu

3rd Division, Brigadier Emmanuel Abisoye

L.G.O., Brigadier John Obada

Colonel Joseph Garba

Lt. Col Shehu YarAdua

Brigadier James Oluleye

Brigadier Iliya Bisalla

Colonel Ibrahim Babangida

Lt. Col Muktar Muhammed

Colonel Dan Suleiman

Captain Olufemi Olumide (NN)

Captain H Husaini Abdullahi (NN)

Mr. Adamu Suleman, Commissioner of Police

Lt. Col. Alfred Aduloju

Lt. Commander Godwin Kanu (NN)

All the civil commissioners in the Federal Executive Council are relieved of their appointments with immediate effect. The composition of the new Executive Council will be announced shortly.

## Political Programme

We will review the political programme and make an announcement in due course. In the meantime, a panel will be set up to advise on the question of new states. A panel will also be set up to advise on the question of the federal capital.

With due regard to the 1973 population census, it is now clear that whatever results are announced will not command general acceptance throughout the country. It has, therefore, been decided to cancel the 1973 population census. Accordingly, for planning purposes, the 1963 census figures shall continue to be used.

A panel will be set up to advise on the future of the Interim Common Services Agency (ICSA) and the Eastern States Interim Assets and Liability Agency (ESIALA).

The Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture is postponed in view of the obvious difficulties in providing all the necessary facilities. Consultations will be held with other participating countries with a view to fixing a new date.

Finally, we reaffirm this country's friendship with all countries. Foreign nationals living in Nigeria will be protected. Foreign investments will also be protected. The government will honour all obligations entered into by the previous Governments of the Federation. We will also give continued support to the Organization of African Unity, the United Nations Organization, and the Commonwealth.

Fellow Countrymen, the task ahead of us calls for sacrifice and self discipline at all levels of our society. This government will not tolerate indiscipline. The Government will not condone abuse of office.

I appeal to you all to cooperate with the Government in our endeavour to give this nation a new lease of life. This change of Government has been accomplished without shedding any blood; and we intend to keep it so.

Long live the Federal Republic of Nigeria.



**Speech by Head of State Lt-General Olusegun Obasanjo after the Execution of the Officers that Carried out the Abortive Dimka Coup of February 1976 (Speech Delivered May 1976)**

The Supreme Military Council has been meeting to consider, among other things the conclusions of the Military Tribunal appointed by the Federal Military Government to try those involved in the abortive coup of February 13. The Council has confirmed the sentences passed by the Tribunal. Those condemned to death by firing squad have been executed today. These include Lt-Col B.S. Dimka and Mr J.D. Gomwalk, two of the principal actors of the abortive coup.

With these executions and the other sentences confirmed we have now substantially disposed of the major issues arising from the coup attempt. Let me assure the nation that throughout the investigations, scrupulous efforts were made to ensure that all those accused were fully heard and given a fair trial. Indeed it was because of our desire to be meticulous in the pursuit of justice that it took this long to put the issues resulting from the abortive coup behind us.

Regarding Yakubu Gowon, you are aware of the effort being made to get him back to Nigeria and answer the serious allegations on his complicity in the abortive coup. He has continued to resolutely refuse to come despite the guarantees for his safety and fair trial which the Federal Military Government has given him. In spite of this refusal, we have resisted the expediency of trying him in absentia because of our belief that he should be given a chance to be fully heard and fairly tried. We have similarly assured the British Government of Yakubu Gowon's safety and justice. These assurances were personally conveyed by the Commissioner for External Affairs. Believing in the strength of the relationship that existed between our two countries and peoples, we had requested the British Government to facilitate Yakubu Gowon's return to Nigeria. The British Prime Minister through a message brought by his Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, has now informed us of the decisions of his government not to grant this

request. We have made it clear to the British Government that any country which harbours Yakubu Gowon, or for that matter, Dauda Usman and Clement Yildar, is committing an unfriendly act towards the government and people of Nigeria.

In the meantime the Supreme Military Council has decided to dismiss Yakubu Gowon from the Nigerian Army. He will from now be treated as a wanted person to face the allegations against him any time he sets foot on Nigerian soil. Dauda Usman and Clement Yildar have also been dismissed from the army.

February 13, 1976 as a tragic day for all of us. No one should be in doubt about the unmitigated disaster and unparalleled bloodshed which would have ensued had the coup of February succeeded. We mourned the death of our late dear Head of State, General Murtala Ramat Muhammed, and those who were murdered with him, in as befitting a way as our energies and sorrows allowed. With the tragedies behind us, we should now pursue with determination and vigour, our declared policies and programme of action. We have all learnt valuable lessons from the sad experience which we must never forget. Our purpose is to instill a new sense of public morality among all classes of Nigerians. Let me therefore, here and now serve notice that we shall now allow inefficiency or improper conduct on the part of any public officer.

This administration will not be diverted from its chosen course. Ours is a responsible administration. Those who have genuine grievances or complaints should use the established channels to secure redresses. But anyone who takes the law into his hands will henceforth have himself to blame.

The Federal Military Government will continue to ensure the smooth running of all our essential services. This is a time for sacrifice not intransigence. We have not allow selfish elements or those who appear bent on breaching the solidarity between the government and the people of this our great country to unleash industrial, student, economic and other forms of unrest.

We shall be severe in our dealing with foreign and Nigerian profiteers who try to stand in the way of our policy to free our economy and improve the lot of the ordinary and deprived citizenry of this country. I expect every public officer indeed, every Nigerian to measure up to a high degree of efficiency, integrity and moral rectitude. The purge of the public service of undesirable elements was undertaken to revitalize the service.

This objective has not been fully achieved. Those that are diligent and honest in their work need not fear. Indeed they would be rewarded. But those who continue to be indolent, inefficient or corrupt will be removed. These standards are set not only for public servants but for all Nigerians.

Our Nigerians so far has shown the need to heighten our sense of civic responsibility and vigilance. This is your nation; it belongs to all of us. If we allow it to be ruined, each one of us will be ruined.

This administration believes in the capacity of Nigerians to make her a great country where social and economic justice, political freedom and the rule of law prevail. We are dedicated to



the pursuit of this goal/. I am therefore calling on every one of you to rise to the challenge. Good night.



### **INAUGURAL SPEECH OF PRESIDENT SHEHU SHAGARI ON OCTOBER 1, 1979**

Fellow Nigerians, we have witnessed today the birth of the Second Republic of Nigeria. With the swearing-in-ceremony this morning, I have formally assumed office as your first executive president. I want to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your patience, and support throughout the period of transition. The Second Republic has come after almost 14 years of military rule in the course of which we went through a civil war. Today, our new constitution comes into effect; a constitution carefully drawn up by ourselves for ourselves. We are assuming office as a result of a free, democratic and peaceful election. We must be proud of this, and we must be grateful to God and to all those who have worked so hard to make it possible. This is an occasion which calls for sober reflection on the problems of the First Republic in order to appreciate the magnitude of the tasks ahead. The problems of creating a national government, a viable economic base and the integration of the various ethnic groups in Nigeria in fairness and without acrimony, overwhelmed the First Republic. These problems are still with us. And, it is our determination to do our utmost to contribute to their solution. This Second Republic is a great challenge and a new opportunity for all of us. This administration is determined that the slogan of "One Nation, One Destiny" shall be translated into reality. We are not so naive as to think that nationalism is a natural phenomenon, which comes about automatically, as we grow. It has not been so in any part of the world. National integration requires hard work. There is need for a dedicated leadership and citizenry imbued with faith to cultivate a wide-spread national feeling for "One Nigeria." I am convinced that these goals are attainable because we are at this time operating in more auspicious circumstances. Surely, we have learnt great lessons from the past and we have no need to permit divisive factors to continue to undermine our national well-being. I urge all Nigerians to join me in working with resolution for the attainment of these goals. The first thing is for all those who have participated in the recent elections to work together, whether they won or lost. Now that the elections are over, we must act as good sportsmen, set aside differences and harness our energies to the task of nation-building. I would like to enjoin all our state governors to bear in mind that regardless of their party affiliations, the interest of the nation is supreme. The state which each of them governs is simply a part of Nigeria and a part cannot indeed be greater than a whole. I congratulate them in their new position and sincerely urge them as well as every other citizen of this great country to join hands with me in facing the great task ahead. For my part, I assure you all that the Federal Government will give equal treatment to each state of the Federation regardless of the party in power in that state. Fellow citizens, great challenges and opportunities are before us. While noticeable achievements have been made, the problems of our economy have become even more

complicated. There has been a steep rise in the rate of inflation in Nigeria as is the case all over the world. Nevertheless, we are dedicated to building a viable economy by fostering broad mass participation and the utilization of local resources. This way, we shall enhance our economic independence. Our key domestic programmes are in the sectors of Agriculture, Housing, Education, Health, Industry and the new Federal Capital. Our first great challenge is agriculture. Throughout the election campaigns, our party, the National Party of Nigeria, made strong commitments to the people of this country to rapidly develop and improve agriculture. For centuries, generations of Nigerian farmers have struggled with technologies invented by our ancestors to meet the demands of a long gone age and to wrest a living from a weary and exhausted soil. I personally spoke many times on our policy for a Green Revolution. There is need to provide adequate food for every family. There is need to stop the current drain of foreign exchange on the importation of foodstuff. We are determined to transform Nigeria's agriculture to the point where Nigeria will be self-sufficient in food production and ensure that the money is more effectively utilized. We shall devote more manpower and technological resources to increase our agricultural productivity and expand our agro-based industries. We shall immediately map out strategies to encourage Nigerians to engage in fruitful agricultural activities. In addition, we shall encourage joint ventures with foreign partners to establish farming as commercial and profitable enterprises to produce food as well as raw materials. New emphasis will be placed on modern methods of food storage, distribution and processing. Because of the importance we attach to housing, we shall establish a Ministry of Housing and Environment. Good shelter is recognised by our government as the right of every Nigerian. There is no doubt that to meet acceptable human standards, Nigeria will require millions of additional housing units in the urban, as well as in the rural areas. Our current resources and industrial base cannot immediately produce enough housing units to meet our current demand. However, we will vigorously attack the problem of housing. In the urban areas, we will immediately create new layouts to be serviced by adequate drainage systems, roads and other infrastructure. Through an improved financing system, urban dwellers will have more credit to build their own houses. In rural areas and small towns, the establishment of Rural Housing Co-operatives will be encouraged. Financial institutions will be encouraged to make loans available to needy low-income families who wish to build or rebuild their own houses. A primary objective is to create the right atmosphere for a rapid increase in home ownership. We strongly believe that home ownership will lead to family pride and healthy surroundings in every Nigerian community. Since the cost of building a house is directly related to the cost of building materials, our government will encourage the local production of building materials. Continuous research will be undertaken and factories will be established for the local manufacture of durable and low-cost building materials. Education is our next priority programme.

Fellow citizens, know that the elections are over and October 1 is here, the realities of the problem of education stare us boldly in the face. This government accepts the responsibility for free education at all levels as has been provided for in the Constitution. The main problem, however, is how to make education accessible to all even the current financial constraints and inadequacy of teachers and educational facilities. We need more schools, more teachers, more laboratories, more books more desks more playing fields and numerous other supplies and equipment all of which are involved with the increase in enrolment. These cannot be found overnight. My administration is irrevocably committed to making education a priority. We shall immediately expand education infrastructure in order to cope with the demand at all levels of our

educational system. We also plan to make education more qualitative and functional with a sound moral content. To this end, we shall improve the quality of teachers and conditions of service in order to attract them in the right number and quality. We shall encourage individuals and Voluntary Agencies to open schools as long as they meet government guidelines. The need for technical manpower and the rapid development of technology, demand that we maximise the use of all technical and vocational institutions in the country and establish many more. In this connection, we shall establish a Ministry of Science and Technology, which shall develop policies to be reflected throughout our educational system. I like to emphasize that our overall policy seeks to provide education that will equip all recipients with the necessary attitude, knowledge and skill to contribute to national development.

Directly related to these priority programmes both at home and abroad, is the need to create a more suitable economic environment. There is need to transform our under-developed country into a modern industrialized society. To achieve this objective requires the energy of all of us. Our government is determined to release the creative energies of enterprising Nigerians and encourage them to help develop the economy for the good of all. I particularly call on the Labour Movement to rise up to the challenges of our time. I am aware of the constraints under which Nigerian workers have had to live in the immediate past. The wage freeze in an era of biting inflation has had to be maintained in view of the resource constraints of our developing economy; but there are certainly limits beyond which no democratic government will wish to demand sacrifices from workers. The wage freeze issue, the question of car loans, the question of labour independence and the restoration of the free collective bargaining rank as priorities in the labour policy of my government. Arrangements are on hand for a dialogue between government and the leaders of organised labour: issues will be reviewed. Thereafter, I will take necessary action to effect remedies in the interests of the nation, and of the nation's workers. This administration stands committed to ameliorate the conditions of Nigerian workers through appropriate measures including consultation and legislation. However, we must all be determined to see that higher wages and better conditions of service are matched by higher productivity in the interest of national development. As we develop our economy, we shall be in a better position to provide the needed services and amenities for all our citizens. We shall then be better equipped to improve our health and other social services programmes for the nation.

In the area of foreign policy, as your president, I will continue to advance and defend the cause of our great country before the world comity of nations. It is our national will that Africa shall remain the cornerstone of our foreign policy. Also it is our national will that Africa shall be free, free of racial bigotry, free of oppression, and free from the vestiges of colonialism. My government is determined to see the cause of justice and human decency prevail in Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. We shall continue to support all forces of progress and oppose all forces of oppression in Africa and elsewhere. I hereby re-affirm our faith and support for the charter of the United Nations and the universal declaration of human rights, the charter of the Organisation of African Unity, the Economic Community of West African States, and the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries. Our watchword shall always be the advancement of mankind and the enhancement of the cause of peace, prosperity and progress through mutual respect and co-operation between nations.

I wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to members of our Armed Forces and to our immediate predecessors in office. They have successfully guided the destiny of our nation through trying conditions. Their discipline, devotion to duty and loyalty to the country have been tested and proved beyond doubt. I trust they will keep it up. You all remember when the Government of General Murtala Mohammed and General Obasanjo came to power, it gave a pledge to return this nation to civil rule on October 1, 1979. They have kept their word as true men of honour and today, the country has been duly handed over to a democratically elected government. History will indelibly record this nation's gratitude to their exemplary leadership, dedication, statesmanship and courage.

I want to conclude this address by greeting all Nigerians of all walks of life on this historic day. I salute our law enforcement agencies including the Police and all those working in the public and private sectors. I salute all our traditional rulers, fathers of our communities and custodians of our cultural heritage. I also salute our religious leaders, custodians of faith and morals. My fellow citizens, the task ahead is enormous and it is a task for all of us. Our government is committed to building a united, stable and prosperous nation, I need your contribution, co-operation and support. Nigeria can and must become a great and modern nation. Let us with true conscience and determination join hands and re-dedicate ourselves to the service of this great country so that it will be a place we can and shall all be proud of. We cannot afford to fail in this task and by the grace of God, we shall succeed.

May God bless our country and may God bless you all.



### **PRESIDENT SHAGARI IS OVERTHROWN: SPEECH OF BRIGADIER SANI ABACHA, DECEMBER 1, 1984 – RETURN OF MILITARY RULE**

Fellow countrymen and women, I, Brigadier Sani Abacha, of the Nigerian army address you this morning on behalf of the Nigerian armed forces.

You are all living witnesses to the great economic predicament and uncertainty, which an inept and corrupt leadership has imposed on our beloved nation for the past four years. I am referring to the harsh, intolerable conditions under which we are now living. Our economy has been hopelessly mismanaged. We have become a debtor and beggar nation. There is inadequacy of food at reasonable prices for our people who are now fed up with endless announcements of importation of foodstuffs. Health services are in shambles as our hospitals are reduced to mere consulting clinics without drugs, water and equipment. Our educational system is deteriorating at an alarming rate. Unemployment figures including the undergraduates have reached embarrassing and unacceptable proportions. In some states, workers are being owed salary arrears of eight to twelve months and in others there are threats of salary cuts.

Yet our leaders revel in squandermania, corruption and indiscipline, and continue to proliferate public appointments in complete disregard of our stark economic realities. After due consultations over these deplorable conditions, I and my colleagues in the armed forces have in the discharge of our national role as promoters and protectors of our national interest decided to effect a change in the leadership of the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and form a Federal Military Government. This task has just been completed.

The Federal Military Government hereby decrees the suspension of the provisions of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1979 relating to all elective and appointive offices and representative institutions including the office of the President, state governors, federal and state executive councils, special advisers, special assistants, the establishment of the National Assembly and the Houses of Assembly including the formation of political parties. Accordingly, Alhaji Shehu Usman Shagari ceases forthwith to be the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Nigeria. All the incumbents of the above named offices shall, if they have not already done so, vacate their formal official residences, surrender all government property in their possession and report to the nearest police station in their constituencies within seven days. The clerk of the National Assembly, the President of the Senate and Speaker of the House of Representatives shall, within two weeks, render account of all the properties of the National Assembly. All the political parties are banned; the bank account of FEDECO and all the political parties are frozen with immediate effect.

All foreigners living in any part of the country are assured of their safety and will be adequately protected. Henceforth, workers not on essential duties are advised to keep off the streets. All categories of workers on essential duties will, however, report at their places of work immediately. With effect from today, a dusk to dawn curfew will be imposed between 7pm and 6am each day until further notice. All airways flights have been suspended forthwith and all airports, seaports, and border posts closed. External communications have been cut. The Customs and Excise, Immigration and the Police will maintain vigilance and ensure watertight security at the borders. The area administrators or commanders will have themselves to blame if any of the wanted people escape.

Fellow countrymen and women, the change in government has been a bloodless and painstaking operation and we do not want anyone to lose his or her life. People are warned in their own interest to be law abiding and to give the Federal Military Government maximum cooperation. Anyone caught disturbing public order will be summarily dealt with. For avoidance of doubt,

you are forewarned that we shall not hesitate to declare martial law in any area or state of the federation in which disturbances occur. Fellow countrymen and women and comrades at arms, I will like to assure you that the Armed Forces of Nigeria is ready to lay its life for our dear nation but not for the present irresponsible leadership of the past civilian administration. You are to await further announcements. Good morning.



### **Maiden Speech of Major-General Muhammadu Buhari. January 1, 1984.**

In pursuance of the primary objective of saving our great nation from total collapse, I, Major-General Muhammadu Buhari of the Nigerian army have, after due consultation amongst the services of the armed forces, been formally invested with the authority of the Head of the Federal Military Government and the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It is with humility and a deep sense of responsibility that I accept this challenge and call to national duty.

As you must have heard in the previous announcement, the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1979) has been suspended, except those sections of it which are exempted in the constitution. The change became necessary in order to put an end to the serious economic predicament and the crisis of confidence now afflicting our nation. Consequently, the Nigerian armed forces have constituted themselves into a Federal Military Government comprising of a Supreme Military Council, a National Council of States, a Federal Executive Council at the centre and State Executive Councils to be presided over by military governors in each of the states of the federation. Members of these councils will be announced soon. The last Federal Military Government drew up a programme with the aim of handing over political power to the civilians in 1979. This programme as you all know, was implemented to the letter. The 1979 constitution was promulgated. However, little did the military realise that the political leadership of the second republic will circumvent most of the checks and balances in the constitution and

bring the present state of general insecurity. The premium on political power became so exceedingly high that political contestants regarded victory at elections as a matter of life and death struggle and were determined to capture or retain power by all means.

It is true that there is a worldwide economic recession. However, in the case of Nigeria, its impact was aggravated by mismanagement. We believe the appropriate government agencies have good advice but the leadership disregarded their advice. The situation could have been avoided if the legislators were alive to their constitutional responsibilities; Instead, the legislators were preoccupied with determining their salary scales, fringe benefit and unnecessary foreign travels, et al, which took no account of the state of the economy and the welfare of the people they represented. As a result of our inability to cultivate financial discipline and prudent management of the economy, we have come to depend largely on internal and external borrowing to execute government projects with attendant domestic pressure and soaring external debts, thus aggravating the propensity of the outgoing civilian administration to mismanage our financial resources. Nigeria was already condemned perpetually with the twin problem of heavy budget deficits and weak balance of payments position, with the prospect of building a virile and viable economy.

The last general election was anything but free and fair. The only political parties that could complain of election rigging are those parties that lacked the resources to rig. There is ample evidence that rigging and thuggery were relative to the resources available to the parties. This conclusively proved to us that the parties have not developed confidence in the presidential system of government on which the nation invested so much material and human resources. While corruption and indiscipline have been associated with our state of underdevelopment, these two evils in our body politic have attained unprecedented height in the past few years. The corrupt, inept and insensitive leadership in the last four years has been the source of immorality and impropriety in our society. Since what happens in any society is largely a reflection of the leadership of that society, we deplore corruption in all its facets. This government will not tolerate kick-backs, inflation of contracts and over-invoicing of imports etc. Nor will it condone forgery, fraud, embezzlement, misuse and abuse of office and illegal dealings in foreign exchange and smuggling.

Arson has been used to cover up fraudulent acts in public institutions. I am referring to the fire incidents that gutted the P&T buildings in Lagos, the Anambra State Broadcasting Corporation, the Republic Building at Marina, the Federal Ministry of Education, the Federal Capital Development Authority Accounts at Abuja and the NET Building. Most of these fire incidents occurred at a time when Nigerians were being apprehensive of the frequency of fraud scandals and the government incapacity to deal with them. Corruption has become so pervasive and intractable that a whole ministry has been created to stem it. Fellow Nigerians, this indeed is the moment of truth. My colleagues and I – the Supreme Military Council, must be frank enough to acknowledge the fact that at the moment, an accurate picture of the financial position is yet to be determined. We have no doubt that the situation is bad enough. In spite of all this, every effort will be made to ensure that the difficult and degrading conditions under which we are living are eliminated. Let no one however be deceived that workers who have not received their salaries in the past eight or so months will receive such salaries within today or tomorrow or that hospitals which have been without drugs for months will be provided with enough immediately. We are

determined that with the help of God we shall do our best to settle genuine payments to which government is committed, including backlog of workers' salaries after scrutiny. We are confident and we assure you that even in the face of the global recession, and the seemingly gloomy financial future, given prudent management of Nigeria's existing financial resources and our determination to substantially reduce and eventually nail down rises in budgetary deficits and weak balance of payments position. The Federal Military Government will reappraise policies with a view to paying greater attention to the following areas:

- The economy will be given a new impetus and better sense of direction.
- Corrupt officials and their agents will be brought to book.
- In view of the drought that affected most parts of the country, the federal government will, with the available resources, import food stuffs to supplement the shortfalls suffered in the last harvest.

Our foreign policy will both be dynamic and realistic. Africa will of course continue to be the centre piece of our foreign policy. The morale and combat readiness of the armed forces will be given high priority. Officers and men with high personal and professional integrity will have nothing to fear.

The Chief Justice of Nigeria and all other holders of judiciary appointments within the federation can continue in their appointments and the judiciary shall continue to function under existing laws subject to such exceptions as may be decreed from time to time by the Federal Military Government. All holders of appointments in the civil service, the police and the National Security Organisation shall continue to exercise their functions in the normal way subject to changes that may be introduced by the Federal Military Government. All those chairmen and members of statutory corporations, parastatals and other executive departments are hereby relieved of their appointments with immediate effect.

The Federal Military Government will maintain and strengthen existing diplomatic relations with other states and with international organisations and institutions such as the Organisation of African Unity, the United Nations and its organs, Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries, ECOWAS and the Commonwealth etc. The Federal Military Government will honour and respect all treaties and obligations entered into by the previous government and we hope that such nations and bodies will reciprocate this gesture by respecting our country's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Fellow Nigerians, finally, we have dutifully intervened to save this nation from imminent collapse. We therefore expect all Nigerians, including those who participated directly or indirectly in bringing the nation to this present predicament, to cooperate with us. This generation of Nigerians, and indeed future generations, have no country other than Nigeria. We shall remain here and salvage it together.

May God bless us all. Good morning.





### **Maiden Speech of Major-General Ibrahim Babangida – August 27 , 1985**

Fellow Nigerians, When in December 1983, the former military leadership, headed by Major-General Muhammadu Buhari, assumed the reins of government, its accession was heralded in the history of this country. With the nation at the mercy of political misdirection and on the brink of economic collapse, a new sense of hope was created in the minds of every Nigerian.

Since January 1984, however, we have witnessed a systematic denigration of that hope. It was stated then that mismanagement of political leadership and a general deterioration in the standard of living, which had subjected the common man to intolerable suffering, were the reasons for the intervention.

Nigerians have since then been under a regime that continued with those trends. Events today indicate that most of the reasons which justified the military takeover of government from the civilians still persist.

The initial objectives were betrayed and fundamental changes do not appear on the horizon. Because the present state of uncertainty, suppression and stagnation resulted from the perpetration of a small group, the Nigerian Armed Forces could not as a part of that government be unfairly committed to take responsibility for failure. Our dedication to the cause of ensuring that our nation remains a united entity worthy of respect and capable of functioning as a viable and credible part of the international community dictated the need to arrest the situation.

Let me at this point attempt to make you understand the premise upon which it became necessary to change the leadership. The principles of discussions, consultation and co-operation which should have guided decision-making process of the Supreme Military Council and the Federal Executive Council were disregarded soon after the government settled down in 1984. Where some of us thought it appropriate to give a little more time, anticipating a conducive atmosphere

that would develop, in which affairs of state could be attended to with greater sense of responsibility, it became increasingly clear that such expectations could not be fulfilled.

Regrettably, it turned out that Major-General Muhammadu Buhari was too rigid and uncompromising in his attitudes to issues of national significance. Efforts to make him understand that a diverse polity like Nigeria required recognition and appreciation of differences in both cultural and individual perceptions, only served to aggravate these attitudes.

Major-General Tunde Idiagbon was similarly inclined in that respect. As Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters, he failed to exhibit the appropriate disposition demanded by his position. He arrogated to himself absolute knowledge of problems and solutions, and acted in accordance with what was convenient to him, using the machinery of government as his tool.

A combination of these characteristics in the two most important persons holding the nation's vital offices became impossible to content with. The situation was made worse by a number of other government functionaries and organisations, chief among which is the Nigerian Security Organisation (NSO). In fact, this body will be overhauled and re-organized.

And so it came to be that the same government which received the tumultuous welcome now became alienated from the people. To prevent a complete erosion of our given mandate therefore, we had to act so that hope may be rebuilt.

Let me now address your attention to the major issues that confront us, so that we may, as one people, chart a future direction for our dear country. We do not pretend to have all the answers to the questions which our present problems have put before our nation. We have come with the strongest determination to create an atmosphere in which positive efforts shall be given the necessary support for lasting solutions.

For matters of the moment which require immediate resolutions, we intend to pursue a determined programme of action. Major issues falling into this category have been identified and decisions taken on what should be done.

Firstly, the issue of political detainees or convicts of special military tribunals. The history of our nation had never recorded the degree of indiscipline and corruption as in the period between October 1979 and December 1983.

While this government recognises the bitterness created by the irresponsible excesses of the politicians, we consider it unfortunate that methods of such nature as to cause more bitterness were applied to deal with past misdeeds. We must never allow ourselves to lose our sense of natural justice. The innocent cannot suffer the crimes of the guilty. The guilty should be punished only as a lesson for the future. In line with this government's intention to uphold fundamental human rights, the issue of detainees will be looked into with despatch.

As we do not intend to lead a country where individuals are under the fear of expressing themselves, the Public Officers Protection Against False Accusation Decree 4 of 1984 is hereby repealed. And finally, those who have been in detention under this decree are hereby

unconditionally released. The responsibility of the media to disseminate information shall be exercised without undue hindrance. In that process, those responsible are expected to be forthright and to have the nation's interest as their primary consideration.

The issue of decrees has generated a lot of controversies. It is the intention of this government to review all other decrees.

The last twenty months have not witnessed any significant changes in the national economy. Contrary to expectations, we have so far been subjected to a steady deterioration in the general standard of living; and intolerable suffering by the ordinary Nigerians have risen higher, scarcity of commodities has increased, hospitals still remain mere consulting clinics, while educational institutions are on the brink of decay. Unemployment has stretched to critical dimensions.

Due to the stalemate, which arose in negotiation with the International Monetary Fund, the former government embarked on a series of counter-trade agreements. Under the counter-trade agreements, Nigerians were forced to buy goods and commodities at higher prices than obtained in the international market. The government intends to review the whole issue of counter-trade.

A lot has been said and heard about our position with the International Monetary Fund. Although we formally applied to the fund in April 1983, no progress has as yet been made in the negotiation and a stalemate has existed for the last two years.

We shall break the deadlock that frustrated the negotiations with a view to evaluating more objectively both the negative and positive implications of reaching a mutual agreement with the Fund. At all times in the course of discussions, our representatives will be guided by the feelings and aspirations of the Nigerian people.

It is the view of this government that austerity without structural adjustment is not the solution to our economic predicament. The present situation whereby 44 per cent of our revenue earning is utilised to service debts is not realistic. To protect the danger this poses to the poor and the needy in our society, steps will be taken to ensure comprehensive strategy of economic reforms.

The crux of our economic problems has been identified to centre around four fundamental issues:

1. A decrease of our domestic production, while our population continues to increase.
2. Dependence on import for both consumer goods and raw materials for our industries.
3. A grossly unequal gap between the rich and the poor.
4. The large role played by the public sector in economic activity with hardly any concrete results to justify such a role.

These are the problems we must confront.

**ON FOREIGN POLICY:**

Nigeria's foreign policy in the last 20 months has been characterised by inconsistency and incoherence. It has lacked the clarity to make us know where we stood on matters of international concern to enable other countries relate to us with seriousness. Our role as Africa's spokesman has diminished because we have been unable to maintain the respect of African countries.

The ousted military government conducted our external relations by a policy of retaliatory reactions. Nigeria became a country that has reacted to given situations, rather than taking the initiative as it should and always been done. More so, vengeful considerations must not be the basis of our diplomacy. African problems and their solutions should constitute the premise of our foreign policy.

The realisation of the Organisation of African Unity of the Lagos Plan of Action for self-sufficiency and constructive co-operation in Africa shall be our primary pursuit.

The Economic Community of West African States must be reborn with the view to achieving the objective of regional integration. The problems of drought-stricken areas of Africa will be given more attention and sympathy, and our best efforts will be made to assist in their rehabilitation within the limits of our resources. Our membership of the United Nations Organisation will be made more practical and meaningful. The call for a new International Economic Order which lost its momentum in the face of the debt crisis will be made once again.

Nigeria hereby makes a renewed request to the Non-Aligned Movement to regroup and reinvigorate its determination to restructure the global economic system, while we appeal to the industrialized nations to positively consider the debt plight of the developing countries and assist in dealing with the dangers that face us. We shall remain members of the various multilateral institutions and inter-governmental organisations which we belong to and do what must be done to enhance the membership and participation within them.

Fellow Nigerians, this country has had since independence a history mixed with turbulence and fortune. We have witnessed our rise to greatness, followed with a decline to the state of a bewildered nation. Our human potentials have been neglected, our natural resources put to waste. A phenomenon of constant insecurity and overbearing uncertainty has become characteristic of our national existence.

My colleagues and I are determined to change the course of history. This government is determined to unite this country. We shall not allow anything to obstruct us. We recognise that a government, be it civilian or military, needs the consent of the people to govern if it is to reach its objective. We do not intend to rule by force. At the same time, we should not be expected to submit to unreasonable demands. Fundamental rights and civil liberties will be respected, but their exercise must not degenerate into irrational expression nor border on subversion.

The War Against Indiscipline will continue, but this time, in the minds and conduct of Nigerians, and not by way of symbolism or money-spending campaigns.

This government, on its part, will ensure that the leadership exhibits proper example. Criticisms of actions and decisions taken by us will be given necessary attention and where necessary changes made in accordance with what is expected of us.

Let me reiterate what we said in 1984: This generation of Nigerians and indeed future generations have no other country but Nigeria. We must all stay and salvage it together. This time it shall be pursued with deeper commitment and genuine sincerity.

There is a lot of work to be done by every single Nigerian. Let us all dedicate ourselves to the cause of building a strong, united and viable nation for the sake of our own lives and the benefits of posterity.

Finally, I wish to commend the members of the Armed Forces and the Nigeria Police for their mature conduct during the change.

I thank you all for your co-operation and understanding.

God bless Nigeria.



## **The June 12, 1993 Election is Annulled. Speech of General Ibrahim Babangida – June 26, 1993**

Fellow

Nigerians,

I address you today with a deep sense of world history and particularly of the history of our great country. In the aftermath of the recently annulled Presidential Election, I feel, as I believe you yourself feel, a profound sense of disappointment at the outcome of our last efforts at laying the foundation of a viable democratic system of government in Nigeria .

I therefore wish, on behalf of myself and members of the National Defence and Security Council and indeed of my entire administration, to feel with my fellow countrymen and women for the cancellation of the election. It was a rather disappointing experience in the course of carrying through the last election of the transition to civil rule programme.

Nigeria has come a long way since this administration assumed power and leadership about eight years ago. In the attempt to grapple with the critical and monumental problems and challenges of National existence and social progress, this administration inaugurated and pursued sound and justifiable policies and programmes of reform.

These policies and programmes have touched virtually all aspects of our national life – the economy, political process, social structures, external relations, bureaucracy and even the family system. I believe strongly that in understanding, conception, formulation and articulation, these policies and programmes are not only sound but also comparatively unassailable. I believe too that history, with the passage of time, would certainly score the administration high in its governance of our country.

Let me also express my deep conviction that the core strategy and structures of our reform policies and programmes, as enunciated in 1986/87 would, for a very long time, remain relevant and durable in the course of changing our country positively. I believe that at the exit of the Administration from power, we would leave behind for prosperity, a country with an economy, the structures of which have been turned around for good. The average Nigerian person has come to reconcile himself with the fact that his or her social progress remain essentially in his or her hands in collaboration with other fellow Nigerians and not merely relying on what government alone could provide for him or her. The days are gone for good, when men and women trooped to government establishments for employment and for benevolence.

This administration has built the foundation that would take Nigerians away from their previous colonially-induced motivations and the encumbrances of colonialism. We have laid the foundation for self-reliant economic development and social justice. We have established a new basis in our country in which economic liberalization would continue to flourish alongside democratic forces and deregulated power structure. In all these, the average Nigerian person has more than ever before this administration imbibed and assimilated the values of hard work, resilience and self-confidence.

It is true that in the course of implementing our reform policies and programmes and especially because of the visionary zeal with which we approached the assignment and responded to incidental pressures of governance, we engendered a number of social forces in the country.

This is so because we sought to challenge and transform extant social forces which had in the past impeded growth and development of our country. We also sought to deal with the new forces to which our programmes of action gave rise. Thus in dealing with the dynamics of both the old and new social forces, we ran into certain difficulties.

In particular, during the course of handling the interlocking relationships between the old and new political forces and institutions, some problems had arisen leading us into a number of difficulties and thereby necessitating our having to tamper with the rules and regulations laid down in the political programme. As a result, the administration unwittingly attracted enormous public suspicions of its intentions and objectives. Accordingly, we have experienced certain shortfalls and conflicting responses to the pulls and pushes of governance in the course of policy implementation.

I believe that areas of difficulties with the transition programme, especially from the last quarter of 1992 to the recent cancelled presidential election, derived primarily from the shortfalls in implementing the programmes of actions which, though objectively taken, may have caused a deviation from the original framework and structure of the programme.

Fellow Nigerians, it is true that by the cancelled presidential election, we all found the nation at a peculiar bar of history which was neither bargained for, nor was it envisaged in the reform programmes of transition as enunciated in 1986/87. In the circumstance, the administration had no option than to respond appropriately to the unfortunate experience of terminating the presidential election. Our actions are in full conformity with the original objectives of the transition to civil programme. It was also in conformity with the avowed commitment of the administration to advance the cause of national unity, stability, and democracy. In annulling the presidential election, this administration was keenly aware of its promise in November 1992 that it would disengage and institute a return to democracy on August 27, 1993. We are determined to keep the promise.

Since this transition, and indeed any transition, must have an end, I believe that our transition programme should and must come to an end, honestly and honourably.

History will bear witness that as an administration we have always striven, in all our policy decisions, to build the foundation of lasting democracy. Lasting democracy is not a temporary show of excitement and manipulation by an over-articulate section of the elite and its captive audience; lasting democracy is a permanent diet to nurture the soul of the whole nation and the political process.

Therefore, it is logical, as we have always insisted upon, that lasting democracy must be equated with political stability.

Informed by our sad experience of history, we require nothing short of a foundation for lasting democracy. As an administration, we cannot afford to leave Nigerian into a Third Republic with epileptic convulsions in its democratic health. Nigeria must therefore confront her own reality; she must solve her problems notwithstanding other existing models of democracy in other parts of the world.

In my address to the nation in October 1992, when the first presidential primaries were cancelled, I had cause to remind our country men and women that there is nowhere in the world in which the practice of democracy is the same, even if the principles are similar and even for countries sharing the same intellectual tradition and cultural foundation. The history of our country is not the history of any other country in the world which is either practicing advanced democracy or struggling to lay the foundation for democracy. Yet, in spite of the uniqueness and peculiarities of Nigeria, there are certain prerequisites which constitute an irreducible minimum for democracy. Such essential factors include:

- A. Free and fair elections;
- B. Uncoerced expression of voters preference in election;
- C. Respect for electorate as unfettered final arbiter on elections;
- D. Decorum and fairness on the part of the electoral umpires;
- E. Absolute respect for the rule of law.

Fellow Nigerians, you would recall that it was precisely because the presidential primaries of last year did not meet the basic requirements of free and fair election that the Armed Forces Ruling Council, the, had good reason to cancel those primaries. The recently annulled presidential election was similarly afflicted by these problems.

Even before the presidential elections, and indeed at the party conventions, we had full knowledge of the bad signals pertaining to the enormous breach of the rules and regulations of democracy elections. But because we were determined to keep faith with the deadline of 27th August 1993 for the return of civil rule, we overlooked the reported breaches. Unfortunately, these breaches continued into the presidential election of June 12, 1993, on an even greater proportion.

There were allegations of irregularities and other acts of bad conduct leveled against the presidential candidates but NEC went ahead and cleared them. There were proofs as well as documented evidence of widespread use of money during the party primaries as well as the presidential election. These were the same bad conduct for which the party presidential primaries of 1992 were cancelled.

Evidence available to government put the total amount of money spent by the presidential candidates as over two billion , one hundred million naira (N2.1 billion). The use of money was again the major source of undermining the electoral process.



Both these allegations and evidence were known to the National Defence and Security Council before the holding of the June 12, 1993 election, the National Defence and Security Council overlooked these areas of problems in its determination to fulfill the promise to hand over to an elected president on due date.

Apart from the tremendous negative use of money during the party primaries and presidential elections, there were moral issues which were also overlooked by the Defence and National Security Council. There were cases of documented and confirmed conflict of interest between the government and both presidential aspirants which would compromise their positions and responsibilities were they to become president. We believe that politics and government are not ends in themselves. Rather, service and effective amelioration of the condition of our people must remain the true purpose of politics.

It is true that the presidential election was generally seen to be free, fair and peaceful. However, there was in fact a huge array of election malpractices virtually in all the states of the federation before the actual voting began. There were authenticated reports of the election malpractices against party agents, officials of the National Electoral Commission and also some members of the electorate.

If all of these were clear violations of the electoral law there were proofs of manipulations through offer and acceptance of money and other forms of inducement against officials of the National Electoral Commission and members of the electorate. There were also evidence of conflict in the process of authentication and clearance of credentials of the presidential candidates. Indeed, up to the last few hours to the election, we continued in our earnest steadfastness with our transition deadline, to overlook vital facts.

For example, following the council's deliberation which followed the court injunction suspending the election, majority of members of the National Defence and Security Council supported postponement of the election by one week. This was to allow NEC enough time to reach all the voters, especially in the rural areas, about the postponement. But persuaded by NEC that it was capable of relaying the information to the entire electorate within the few hours left before the election, the council, unfortunately, dropped the idea of shifting the voting day. Now, we know better. The conduct of the election, the behaviour of the candidates and post-election responses continued to elicit signals which the nation can only ignore at its peril.

It is against the foregoing background that the administration became highly concerned when these political conflicts and breaches were carried to the court.

It must be acknowledged that the performance of the judiciary on this occasion was less than satisfactory. The judiciary has been the bastion of the hopes and liberties of our citizens.

Therefore, when it became clear that the courts had become intimidated and subjected to the manipulation of the political process, and vested interests then the entire political system was in clear dangers.

This administration could not continue to watch the various high courts carry on their long drawn out processes and contradictory decisions while the nation slides into chaos.

It was under this circumstance that the National Defence and Security Council decided that it is in the supreme interest of law and order, political stability and peace that the presidential election be annulled. As an administration, we have had special interest and concern not only for the immediate needs of our society, but also in laying the foundation for generations to come.

To continue action on the basis of the June 12, 1993 election, and to proclaim and swear in a president who encouraged a campaign of divide and rule among our ethnic groups would have been detrimental to the survival of the Third Republic. Our need is for peace, stability and continuity of politics in the interest of all our people.

Fellow countrymen and women, although the National Electoral Commission and the Centre for Democratic Studies officially invited foreign observers for the presidential elections, the administration also considered it as important as a democratic society, that our activities and electoral conduct must be open not only to the citizenry of our country but also to the rest of the world. In spite of this commitment, the administration did not and cannot accept that foreign countries should interfere in our internal affairs and undermine our sovereignty.

The presidential election was no an exercise imposed on Nigerians by the United Nations or by the wishes of some global policemen of democracy. It was a decision embarked upon independently by the government of our country and for the interest of our country. This is because, we believe, just like other countries, that democracy and democratization are primary values which Nigerians should cultivate, sustain and consolidate so as to enhance freedom, liberties and social development of the citizenry.

The actions of these foreign countries are most unfortunate and highly regrettable. There is nowhere in the history of our country or indeed of the third world where these countries can be said to love Nigeria or Nigerians any more that the love we have for ourselves and for our country. Neither can they claim to love Nigeria any more than this administration loves our country.

Accordingly, I wish to state that this administration will take necessary action against any interest groups that seek to interfere in our internal affairs. In this vein, I wish to place on record the appreciation of this administration for the patience and understanding of Nigerians, the French, the Germans, the Russians and Irish governments in the current situation. I appeal to our fellow countrymen and women and indeed our foreign detractors that they should cultivate proper understanding and appreciation of the peculiar historic circumstances in the development of our country and the determination not only of this administration but indeed of all Nigerians to resolve the current crises.

Fellow Nigerians, the National Security and Defence Council have met several times since the June 12, 1993 election. The council has fully deliberated not only on our avowed commitment but also to bequeathing to posterity, a sound economic and political base in our country and we shall do so with honour. In our deliberations, we have also taken note of several extensive

consultations with other members of this administration, with officers and men of the Armed Forces and will well-meaning Nigerian leaders of thought. We are committed to handing over power on 27th August 1993.

Accordingly, the National Defence and Security Council has decided that by the end of July 1993 the two political parties, under the supervision of a recomposed National Electoral Commission, will put in place the necessary process for the emergence of two presidential candidates.

This shall be conducted according to the rules and regulations governing the election of the president of the country. In this connection, government will in consultation with the two political parties and National Electoral Commission agree as to the best and quickest process of conducting the election.

In the light of our recent experience and, given the mood of the nation, the National Defence and Security Council has imposed additional conditions as a way of widening and deepening the base of electing the president and sanitizing the electoral process. Accordingly, the candidates for the coming election must:

- (1) Not be less than 50 years old.
- (2) Have not been convicted of any crime;
- (3) Believe, by act of faith and practice, in the corporate existence of Nigerians;
- (4) Posses records of personal, corporate and business interests which do not conflict with the national interests;
- (5) Have been registered members of either of the two political parties for at least one year to this election.

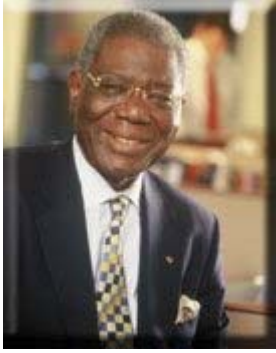
All those previously banned from participating in the transition process other than those with criminal records, are hereby unbanned. They can all henceforth participate in the electoral process. This is with a view to enriching the quality of candidature for the election and at the same time tap the leadership resources of our country to the fullest. The decree to this effect will be promulgated.

Fellow Nigerians, I wish to finally acknowledge the tremendous value of your patience and understanding, especially in the face of national provocation.

I urge you to keep faith with the commitment of this administration.

I enjoin you to keep faith with the unity, peace and stability of our country for this is the only country that you and I can call our own. Nowhere in the world, no matter the prompting and inducements of foreign countries, can Nigerians ever be regarded as first class citizens. Nigeria is the only country that we have. We must therefore renew our hope in Nigeria, and faith and confidence in ourselves for continued growth, development and progress.

Thank you all, and God bless you.



### **RESIGNATION SPEECH OF ERNEST SHONEKAN, WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 17, 1993.**

Fellow colleagues of the Interim National Government, I have summoned you this evening on an unusual occasion. Earlier today, I met with the secretary of defence in company of the Chief of Defence Staff and the Chief of Army Staff, and we discussed the state of the nation.

They expressed serious concern about the general uneasiness in the country and the apparent lack of stability over the past three months. They spoke about the restiveness of the rank and file in the military. You will recall that today is our eighty second day in office, having been sworn in on August 26, 1993. Needless to say that we have all worked together to the best of our ability, and as a coherent team. I want to put it on record that I have enjoyed the period we worked together in the Interim National Government. It is common knowledge that the ING is a child of circumstance. It was conceived in crisis and born in crisis.

If I may recount some of the achievements of the Interim National Government to which you have all been witnesses, we may not have recorded landmarks, but we have taken the first step. In the social sector, we have brought back normalcy in the institutions of higher learning. On human rights, our records are impeccable and perhaps, unbeatable in the annals of our country. We freed all jailed human rights activists, we pardoned all political offenders both dead and alive, allowed all politicians in exile to return home, and we have not restricted the free movement of any activist in and out of the country. We also took the appropriate steps de-proscribe the newspapers proscribed by sending the Bills to the National Assembly to be repealed.

On the political arena, we have continued to work ceaselessly towards full democratization of our dear country. We have extended our right hand of fellowship to the legislature and have put in place the machinery for local and presidential elections next February.

On the economic scene, we were able to put in place an Economic Action Agenda for the nation in conjunction with the private sector operators. Let me assure you that our seemingly tough policies have received commendation from far and beyond. Ordinarily, I would have wished that the Interim National Government would be saddled only with economic problems. This derives from my belief that our country faces more economic challenges than anything else. Although

we have not been able to implement some of our policies, nonetheless we have started out in the right direction by curbing frivolous expenditure and working closely with the private sector of the economy. I can only hope that the successor administration will take off from where we are leaving and continue courageously with the budgetary and other reforms we have adopted as well as our campaign for debt relief.

Distinguished colleagues, most importantly the Interim National Government has tried very hard to bring honour to government and has taken steps to campaign against the incidence of corruption and indiscipline in the society. Several times, I have publicly acknowledged the collective transparency and integrity of this cabinet. Let me say loud and clear that here that we have all made sacrifices for these past 82 days in the strong belief that our country deserves the best. I have an unshaken faith in the promise of Nigeria and I believe that the best is yet to come.

However, I regret to inform you that in the light of recent events and after due consideration of all the facts, I am left with no alternative but to take the most honourable and dignified step of resigning, with immediate effect, my appointment as Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Nigeria.

Once more, I thank you very much and hope that the fellowship we have shared in this past period will continue to be the basis of good memory for long.

May God bless and long live the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

### **Maiden Speech of General Sani Abacha – November 17, 1993**

Fellow Nigerians, sequel to the resignation of the former Head of the Interim National Government and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Chief Ernest Shonekan and my subsequent appointment as Head of State and Commander-in-Chief, I have had extensive consultations within the armed forces hierarchy and other well meaning Nigerians in a bid to find solutions to the various political, economic and social problems which have engulfed our beloved country, and which have made life most difficult to the ordinary citizen of this nation.

Chief Ernest Shonekan took over as Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces at a most trying time in the history of the country. Politically, economically, and socially, there were lots of uncertainties. Things appeared bleak and the atmosphere was heavy with uncertainties. However, driven by a belief in himself, his countrymen, and love for his country, he accepted to face the challenges of our time. I will, therefore, like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to him for his selfless service to the nation. He showed great courage at taking on the daunting task of heading the Interim National Government and even greater courage to know when to leave.

Many have expressed fears about the apparent return of the military. Many have talked about the concern of the international community. However, under the present circumstances the survival of our beloved country is far above any other consideration. Nigeria is the only country we have.

We must, therefore, solve our problems ourselves. We must lay a very solid foundation for the growth of democracy. We should avoid any ad hoc or temporary solutions. The problems must be addressed firmly, objectively, decisively and with all sincerity of purpose. Consequently, the following decisions come into immediate effect:

- The Interim National Government is hereby dissolved.
- The National and State Assemblies are also dissolved.
- The State Executive Councils are dissolved. The Brigade Commanders are to take over from the Governors in their States until Administrators are appointed. Where there are no Brigade Commanders, the Commissioners of Police in the State are to take over.
- All Local Governments stand dissolved. The Directors of Personnel are to take over the administration of the Local Governments until Administrators are appointed.
- All former Secretaries to Federal Ministries are to hand over to their Directors-General until Ministers are appointed.
- The two political parties are hereby dissolved.
- All processions, political meetings and associations of any type in any part of the country are hereby banned.
- Any consultative committee by whatever name called is hereby proscribed.
- Decree 61 of 1993 is hereby abrogated.

A Provisional Ruling Council (PRC), is hereby established. It will comprise:

- The Head of State, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the federal Republic of Nigeria as Chairman.
- The Chief of General Staff as Vice-Chairman
- The Honourable Minister of Defence
- The Chief of Defence Staff
- The Service Chiefs
- The Inspector General of Police
- The Attorney General and Minister of Justice
- The Internal Affairs Minister

- The Foreign Affairs Minister

Also, a Federal Executive Council will be put in place.

Our security system will be enhanced to ensure that lives of citizens, property of individuals are protected and preserved. Drug trafficking and other economic crimes such as 419 must be tackled and eliminated. On the current strike throughout the nation following the increase in the price of fuel, I appeal to all the trade unions to return to work immediately. We cannot afford further dislocation and destruction of our economy. On the closed media houses, government is hereby lifting the order of proscription with immediate effect. We, however, appeal to the media houses that in this spirit of national reconciliation, we should show more restraint and build a united and peaceful Nigeria.

Fellow Nigerians, the events of the past months, starting from the annulment of the June 12 presidential election, culminating in the appointment of the former Head of State, Chief Ernest Shonekan, who unfortunately resigned yesterday, are well known to you. The economic downturn has undoubtedly been aggravated by the ongoing political crisis.

We require well thought-out and permanent solutions to these problems if we are to emerge stronger for them. Consequently, a constitutional conference with full constituent powers will be established soon to determine the future constitutional structure of Nigeria. The constitutional conference will also recommend the method of forming parties, which will lead to the ultimate recognition of political parties formed by the people. While the conference is on, the reorganisation and reform of the following major institutions will be carried out:

- The Military
- The Police
- The Customs
- The Judiciary
- NITEL
- NNPC
- NEPA
- The Banking Industry
- Higher Educational Institutions

This regime will be firm, humane, and decisive. We will not condone nor tolerate any act of indiscipline. Any attempt to test our will be decisively dealt with. For the International Community, we ask that you suspend judgment while we grapple with the onerous task of nation

building, reconciliation and repairs. This government is a child of necessity with a strong determination to restore peace and stability to our country and on these foundations, enthrone a lasting and true democracy. Give us the chance to solve our problems in our own ways.

Long Live the Federal Republic of Nigeria.



### **SPEECH OF GENERAL ABDUSALAM ABUBAKAR AFTER THE DEATH OF MKO ABIOLA – JULY 8, 1998**

Fellow Nigerians, it is with a very heavy heart that I address you for the second time since destiny bestowed upon me the mantle of leadership of our beloved nation.

Exactly one month ago, we were shocked by the sudden passing-away of our late head of state, General Sani Abacha. As we conclude the official 30 days mourning of this great loss, we are now challenged by another national tragedy. The passing-away yesterday of Chief Moshood Abiola was as sudden as it was tragic, particularly as he died on the brink of his release from detention. For me personally, and for the nation at large, this must be one of the saddest moments of our lives. I never envisaged that I will be faced with such momentous tragedies within the space of one month.

When I accepted the burden of leadership on the 8th June, I was conscious of the fact that these are critical and trying times in the history of our nation. I was clearly aware of the imperatives of national reconciliation and restoration of democracy to our troubled nation in an atmosphere of peace and stability. I was also determined to re-establish the professional image and the integrity of the armed forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to enable them to play their traditional role in the coming democratic order. I have resolved to address these challenges in an organised, deliberate, and orderly fashion, always putting the highest national interest before all else. Chief Abiola would have contributed his own quota to this process.

It was in recognition of this inescapable fact that, after a series of consultations between Chief Abiola and government on the one hand, and between him and representatives of the international community, as well as members of his family, that a meeting with the Provisional Ruling Council was convened for today to decide on his release.



Alas, God willed otherwise, and today, we mourn his loss. The government has already ordered a full autopsy to establish the actual cause of his death. The autopsy is being undertaken in cooperation with Abiola's family and the participation of expert pathologists from the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada, as requested by his family. The government has noted the preliminary diagnosis of cardiac arrest as the cause of death, and the result of the autopsy will be made known.

In the meantime, I appeal to you all to remain calm despite your understandable grief. Our national grief cannot be assuaged by recourse to lawlessness, threat to lives, and the wanton destruction of innocent people's property. I personally knew Chief Abiola. We must all determine to give him a dignified burial in an atmosphere of appropriate solemnity and peace as he would have wished. In the coming critical weeks and months, we shall mourn and miss him.

On behalf of myself, government and people of Nigeria, I extend heart-felt condolences to the Abiola family, his numerous friends and associates, and to the many young men and women for whom he held out hope. As true believers, we must bow before the will of the Almighty.

Fellow Nigerians, I will address you on the general character of this administration in due course. Meanwhile, I pray for the peaceful repose of the gentle soul of Chief Moshood Abiola.

Amen!



#### **Inaugural Speech of President Olusegun Obasanjo, May 29, 1999**

Your excellencies, other former heads of state, my lords – spiritual and temporal – distinguished senators and honourable members of the House of Representatives, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, fellow Nigerians: We give praise and honour to God Almighty for this day specially appointed by God himself. Everything created by God has its destiny, and it is the destiny of all of us to see this day. Twelve months ago, no-one could have predicted the series of stunning events that made it possible for democratic elections to be held at the local government level, the state level, and culminating in the National Assembly elections. Thereafter, you the good people of Nigeria elected me, a man who had walked through the valley of the shadow of death, as your president as your president to head the democratic civilian administration. I believe that this is what God Almighty has ordained for me and for my beloved country, Nigeria, and its people. I accept this destiny in all humility and with the full belief that with the backing and support of our people, we shall not fail. I wish at this point to thank all you good Nigerians for the confidence reposed in me. I wish to pay tribute to the great and gallant Nigerians who lost their lives in the course of the struggle for liberty, democracy and good governance. They held the beacon of freedom and liberty high in the face of state terrorism and tyranny. We thank God that their sacrifice has not been in vain. We will surely always remember them.

Our thanks go also to the friends of Nigeria in many lands for the commitment and unrelenting support they gave throughout the dark ominous days of the struggle. Nigerians living in foreign

lands deserve special tribute for not forgetting their fatherland, and for making their voices heard persistently in defence of freedom; and I must commend you, my home-based fellow Nigerians for the way you bore unprecedented hardship, deprivation of every conceivable rights and privileges that were once taken for granted. I commend Gen Abdulsalami Abubakar and members of the Provisional Ruling Council, PRC, for the leadership they gave the country in the last 11 months, and for keeping meticulously to their announced time-table of handing over to a democratically elected government today. As officers and gentlemen, they have kept their word. The Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, also deserve the thanks of all of us. In the face of doubt and scepticism and great time constraints, the chairman and his commissioners conducted the elections, right from local government level to the presidential level. They acquitted themselves creditably and they deserve our gratitude.

Nigeria is wonderfully endowed by the Almighty with human and other resources. It does no credit either to us or the entire black race if we fail in managing our resources for quick improvement in the quality of life of our people. Instead of progress and development, which we are entitled to expect from those who govern us, we experienced in the last decade and half, and particularly in the last regime but one, persistent deterioration in the quality of our governance, leading to instability and the weakening of all public institutions. Good men were shunned and kept away from government while those who should be kept away were drawn near. Relations between men and women who had been friends for many decades and between communities that had lived together in peace for many generations became very bitter because of the actions or inaction of government. The citizens developed distrust in government, and because promises made for the improvement the conditions of the people were not kept, all statements by government met with cynicism. Government officials became progressively indifferent to propriety of conduct and showed little commitment to promoting the general welfare of the people and the public good. Government and all its agencies became thoroughly corrupt and reckless. Members of the public had to bribe their way through in ministries and parastatals to get attention and one government agency had to bribe another government agency to obtain the release of their statutory allocations of funds. The impact of official corruption is so rampant and has earned Nigeria a very bad image at home and abroad. Besides, it has destructed and retrogressed development. Our Infrastructures – NEPA , NITEL , roads, railways, education, housing and other social services were allowed to decay and collapse. Our country has thus been through one of its darkest periods. All these have brought the nation to a situation of chaos and near despair. This is the challenge before us. Fellow Nigerians, let us rise as one to face the task ahead and turn this daunting scene into opportunities in a new dawn. Let us make this the beginning of a genuine renaissance. Fellow Nigerians, the entire Nigerian scene is very bleak indeed; so, bleak people ask me: Where do we begin? I know what great things you expect of me at this new dawn. As I have said many times in my extensive travels in the country, I am not a miracle worker. It will be foolish to underrate the task ahead alone. You have been asked many times in the past to make sacrifices and to be patient. I am also going to ask you to make sacrifices and to exercise patience. The difference will be that in the past, sacrifices were made and patience exercised with little or no results. This time, however, the results of your sacrifice and patience will be clear and manifest for all to see. With God as our guide and with 120 million Nigerians working with me with commitment, sustained effort and determination we shall not fail. On my part, I will give the forthright, purposeful, committed, honest, and transparent leadership that the situation demands. I am determined, with your full cooperation to

make significant changes within a year of my administration. Together we shall take steps to halt the decline in the human development indices as they apply to Nigeria. All the impacts of bad governance on our people that are immediately removable will be removed while working for medium and long-term solutions. Corruption, the greatest single bane of our society today, will be tackled head-on at all levels. Corruption is incipient in all human societies and in most human activities, but it must not be condoned. This is why laws are made and enforced to check corruption so that society will survive and develop in an orderly, reasonable, and predictable way. No society can achieve anything near its full potential if it allows corruption to become the full-blown cancer it has become in Nigeria. One of the greatest tragedies of military rule in recent times is that corruption was allowed to grow unchallenged and unchecked even when it was glaring for everybody to see. Rules and regulations for doing official business were deliberately ignored, set aside, or by-passed to facilitate corrupt practices. Beneficiaries of corruption in all forms will fight back with all at their disposals. We shall be firm with them. There will be no sacred cows. Nobody, no matter who and where will be allowed to get away with the breach of the law or the perpetration of corruption and evil. Under this administration, therefore, all the rules and regulations designed to help honesty and transparency in dealing with government will be restored and enforced. Specifically, I will immediately reintroduce civil service rules and financial instructions and enforce compliance. Other regulations will be introduced to ensure transparency. The rampant corruption in the public service and the cynical contempt for integrity that pervades every level of the bureaucracy will be stamped out. The public officer must be encouraged to believe once again that integrity pays and self-respect must be restored and his work must be fairly rewarded through better pay and benefits – both while he is in service and in retirement. I am very aware of the widespread cynicism and total lack of confidence in government, arising from the bad faith, deceit and evil actions of recent administrations. Where official pronouncements are repeatedly made and not met by action, government forfeits the confidence of the people and their trust. One of the immediate acts of this administration will be to implement quickly and decisively measures that will restore confidence in governance. These measures will help to create the auspicious atmosphere necessary for the reforms and the difficult decisions and the hard work required to pull the country back on the path of development and growth.

The issue of crime requires as much attention and seriousness as the issue of corruption. Although the police are in the forefront of fighting crimes and ensuring our security, it is our responsibility to help the police to be able to help us. The police will be made to do their job, all Nigerian citizens and residents in our midst are entitled to the protection of life and property. A determined effort will be made to cut down significantly the incidence of violent crimes. I believe that this administration must deal with the following issues even in these difficult times of near economic collapse: the crises in the oil-producing areas, food supply, food security, and agriculture, law and order with particular reference to armed robbery and cultism in our educational institutions, exploration and production of petroleum, education, macroeconomic policies, supply and distribution of petroleum products, the debt issue, corruption, drug, organized fraud called 419, and crimes leading to loss of lives, properties, and investment; infrastructure, water supply, energy, telecommunications, ports, airways, national shipping and Nigeria railway; resuscitation of the manufacturing industry, job creation, poverty alleviation, housing both for civilian population and barrack refurbishment and new constructions for the

armed forces and the Police; ECOMOG , health services, political and constitutional dialogue, women and youth empowerment.

In pursuit of these priorities, I have worked out measures which must be implemented within the first six months. Details of the focus and measures of this administration on these and other matters will be announced from time to time. I shall quickly ascertain the true state of our finances and the economy and shall let the nation know. In the light of resources available, I shall concentrate on those issues that can bring urgent beneficial relief to our people. I will need good men and women of proven integrity and record of good performance to help me in my cabinet. I appreciate that the quality and calibre of the members of my cabinet and top appointments will send a positive or negative signal to Nigerians and the international community as to the seriousness of the administration to make salutary changes. In a difficult and abnormal situation, great care and circumspection are called for in appointments to the cabinet and high public positions.

To be appointed a minister, or to any other public office is not a license to loot the treasury. It is a call to national service. It is one of the best ways of rendering dedicated service to humanity. In this administration, being a minister or holding any other public office will not deprive you of what you have before you come into office, but you will not be allowed to have conflict of interest, abuse of office, or illicit acquisitions. Service to be satisfying must entail certain amounts of sacrifice. A regular weekly meeting of cabinet will be reintroduced to enrich the quality of decisions of government through open discussions of memoranda in council. Before any issues are introduced to the cabinet, the time-tested procedure of inter-ministerial consultation will have been made.

The conclusion of council, circulated to all ministers and permanent secretaries, will, as used to be the practice in the past, be the authority for executive action and for incurring expenditure of public fund. This will help the cohesion of the government, ensure discipline, and hinder corrupt intentions since all major contracts must go to council for open consideration.

A code of conduct for ministers and other public officers will be introduced. Other measures for individual and collective self-control and self-discipline of ministers and other public officers will also be introduced. I am determined to stretch my hand of fellowship to all Nigerians, regardless of their political affiliations. I intend to reconcile all those who feel alienated by past political events and I will endeavour to heal divisions and to restore the harmony we used to know in this country. A bill will be forwarded within weeks of the inception of the administration to the National Assembly for a law providing for 13 per cent derivation in revenue allocation to be used for ecological rehabilitation, infrastructure, and other developments. A competent group will be set up immediately to prepare a comprehensive development plan for the Niger Delta area. Dialogue will be held at all levels with the real representatives of all sections of the oil-producing communities to improve communication and better mutual understanding. Responsibility and initiative for resolving the crisis in the Niger Delta rests with the government.

Nigeria has over the years played a very active role in the ECOMOG for the restoration of peace in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Our national interests require the establishment and maintenance of peace and stability in the West African sub-region. Specifically, in the case of Sierra Leone, we shall endeavour to ensure a quick resolution of the crisis by dialogue and diplomatic means, by increasing activity on the second track of peace and reconciliation. This will enable us reduce our

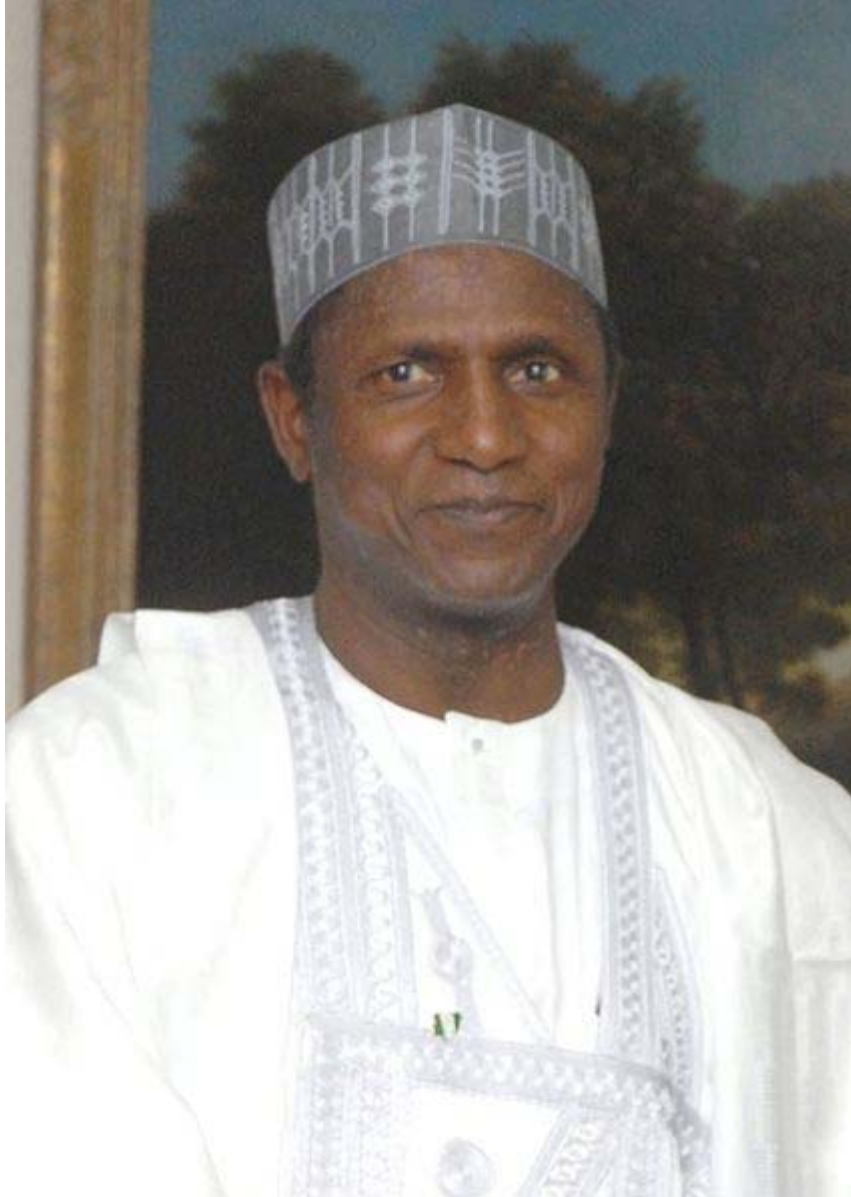
commitments in both theatres, but particularly in Sierra Leone. Nigeria, once a well-respected country and a key role player in international bodies, became a pariah nation. We shall pursue a dynamic foreign policy to promote friendly relations with all nations and will continue to play a constructive role in the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity, the Commonwealth, and other international bodies. We shall continue to honour existing agreements between Nigeria and other countries. It is our firm resolve to restore Nigeria fully to her previous prestigious position in the comity of nations.

Let me once again thank our international friends who fought for democracy alongside with us. Today, we are taking a decisive step on the path of democracy. We will leave no stone unturned to ensure sustenance of democracy because it is good for us, it is good for Africa, and it is good for the world. We call on the world, particularly the Western world, to help us sustain democracy by sharing with us the burden of debt which may be crushing and destructive to democracy in our land.

The incursion of the military into government has been a disaster for our country. The esprit de corps among military personnel has been destroyed. Professionalism has been lost. Most youths go into the military now not to pursue a noble career but with the sole intention of taking part in coups and to be appointed as military administrators of states and chairmen of task forces. As a retired officer, my heart bleeds to see the degradation in the proficiency of the military. A great deal of re-orientation has to be undertaken and a redefinition of roles, retraining, and re-education will have to be done to ensure that the military submits to civil authority and regains its pride, professionalism, and tradition . We shall restore military cooperation and exchanges with our traditional friends and we will help the military to help itself. It is my resolve to work harmoniously with the legislature and the judiciary to ensure that Nigeria enjoy good and civilized governance.

I am also determined to build a broad consensus amongst all parties to enhance national harmony and stability and, thus, ensure success in the long struggle ahead. Politicians have a duty in whatever capacity they may find themselves, whether as legislators or ministers, to be committed and be seen to be committed to the public good. Politicians must carefully examine the budget to ensure that public funds are judiciously spent. They must avoid damage to their own credibility and not vote for themselves special privileges. They must join in the campaign against corruption and help re-establish integrity in the conduct of public affairs. I assure you all that it is the policy of this government to ensure fair remuneration in service and in retirement to public servants, which includes legislators, civil servants, the police, and members of the armed forces, parastatals and public-owned educational institutions. I call on all Nigerians, but particularly our religious leaders, to pray for moral and spiritual revival and regeneration in our nation.

I shall end this address by stressing again that we must change our ways of governance and of doing business on this eve of the coming millennium. This, we must do to ensure progress, justice, harmony, and unity, and above all, to rekindle confidence amongst our people, confidence that their condition will rapidly improve and that Nigeria will be great and will become a major world player in the very near future. May the Almighty help us all.



**Inaugural Speech of President Umaru Yar'Adua. May 29, 2007**

His Excellency Vice President Goodluck Jonathan, President of the Senate, the Speaker House of Representatives, my Lord Chief Justice of Nigeria, President Olusegun Obasanjo, distinguished Presidents and Heads of Governments who have graciously honoured us with their presence today, leaders of our nation, guests from far and near, fellow citizens.

This is a historic day for our nation, for it marks an important milestone in our march towards a maturing democracy. For the first time since we cast off the shackles of colonialism almost a half-century ago, we have at last managed an orderly transition from one elected government to another. We acknowledge that our elections had some shortcomings. Thankfully, we have well-established legal avenues of redress, and I urge anyone aggrieved to pursue them. I also believe that our experiences represent an opportunity to learn from our mistakes. Accordingly, I will set

up a panel to examine the entire electoral process with a view to ensuring that we raise the quality and standard of our general elections, and thereby deepen our democracy. This occasion is historic also because it marks another kind of transitional generational shift when the children of independence assume the adult responsibility of running the country at the heart of Africa. My fellow citizens, I am humbled and honoured that you have elected me and Vice President Jonathan to represent that generation in the task of building a just and humane nation, where its people have a fair chance to attain their fullest potential. Luckily we are not starting from scratch. We are fortunate to have been led the past eight years by one of our nation's greatest patriots, President Obasanjo. On behalf of all our people, I salute you, Mr. President, for your vision, your courage and your boundless energy in creating the roadmap toward that united and economically thriving Nigeria that we seek. Many of us may find it hard to believe now, but before you assumed the presidency eight years ago, the national conversation was about whether Nigeria deserved to remain one country at all. Today we are talking about Nigeria's potential, to become one of the 20 largest economies in the world by the year 2020. That is a measure of how far we have come. And we thank you. The administration of President Obasanjo has laid the foundation upon which we can build our future prosperity.

Over the past eight years Nigerians have reached a national consensus in at least four areas: to deepen democracy and the rule of law; build an economy driven primarily by the private sector, not government; display zero tolerance for corruption in all its forms, and, finally, restructure and staff our government to ensure efficiency and good governance. I commit myself to these tasks. Our goal now is to build on the greatest accomplishments of the past few years. Relying on the 7-point agenda that formed the basis of our compact with voters during the recent campaigns, we will concentrate on rebuilding our physical infrastructure and human capital in order to take our country forward. We will focus on accelerating economic and other reforms in a way that makes a concrete and visible difference to ordinary people. Our economy already has been set on the path of growth. Now we must continue to do the necessary work to create more jobs, lower interest rates, reduce inflation, and maintain a stable exchange rate. All this will increase our chances for rapid growth and development.

Central to this is rebuilding our basic infrastructure. We already have comprehensive plans for mass transportation, especially railroad development. We will make these plans a reality. Equally important, we must devote our best efforts to overcoming the energy challenge. Over the next four years we will see dramatic improvements in power generation, transmission and distribution. These plans will mean little if we do not respect the rule of law. Our government is determined to strengthen the capacity of law enforcement agencies, especially the police. The state must fulfill its constitutional responsibility of protecting life and property.

The crisis in the Niger Delta commands our urgent attention. Ending it is a matter of strategic importance to our country. I will use every resource available to me, with your help, to address this crisis in a spirit of fairness, justice, and cooperation. We have a good starting point because our predecessor already launched a master plan that can serve as a basis for a comprehensive examination of all the issues. We will involve all stakeholders in working out a solution. As part of this effort, we will move quickly to ensure security of life and property, and to make investments safe. In the meantime, I appeal to all aggrieved communities, groups and individuals to immediately suspend all violent activities and respect the law. Let us allow the impending

dialogue to take place in a conducive atmosphere. We are all in this together, and we will find a way to achieve peace and justice.

As we work to resolve the challenges of the Niger Delta, so must we also tackle poverty throughout the country. By fighting poverty, we fight disease. We will make advances in public health, to control the scourge of HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases that hold back our population and limit our progress. We are determined to intensify the war against corruption, more so because corruption is itself central to the spread of poverty. Its corrosive effect is all too visible in all aspects of our national life. This is an area where we have made significant progress in recent years, and we will maintain the momentum. We also are committed to rebuilding our human capital, if we are to support a modern economy. We must revive education in order to create more equality, and citizens who can function more productively in today's world.

To our larger African family, you have our commitment to the goal of African integration. We will continue to collaborate with fellow African states to reduce conflict and free our people from the leg chains of poverty. To all our friends in the international community, we pledge our continuing fidelity to the goals of progress in Africa and peace in the world. Fellow citizens, I ask you all to march with me into the age of restoration. Let us work together to restore our time-honoured value of honesty, decency, generosity, modesty, selflessness, transparency, and accountability. These fundamental values determine societies that succeed or fail. We must choose to succeed.

I will set a worthy personal example as your President. No matter what obstacles confront us, I will set a worthy personal example as your President. I have confidence and faith in our ability to overcome them. After all, we are Nigerians! We are a resourceful and enterprising people, and we have it within us to make our country a better place. To that end I offer myself as a servant-leader. I will be a listener and doer, and serve with humility. To fulfil our ambitions, all our leaders at all levels whether a local government councillor or state governor, senator or cabinet minister must change our style and our attitude. We must act at all times with humility, courage, and forthrightness. I ask you, fellow citizens, to join me in rebuilding our Nigerian family, one that defines the success of one by the happiness of many. I ask you to set aside negative attitudes, and concentrate all our energies on getting to our common destination. All hands must be on deck.

Let us join together to ease the pains of today while working for the gains of tomorrow. Let us set aside cynicism, and strive for the good society that we know is within our reach. Let us discard the habit of low expectations of ourselves as well as of our leaders. Let us stop justifying every shortcoming with that unacceptable phrase, "the Nigerian factor," as if to be a Nigerian is to settle for less. Let us recapture the mood of optimism that defined us at the dawn of independence, that legendary can-do spirit that marked our Nigerianness. Let us join together, now, to build a society worthy of our children. We have the talent. We have the intelligence. We have the ability. The challenge is great. The goal is clear. The time is now. I thank you, and God bless you.