

# **NIGERIA LABOUR CONGRESS POLICY DOCUMENT**



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## **Introduction to the Policy Document**

The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) continues to be confronted with a complex multiplicity of challenges in the fulfillment of its mandate as a workers' and popular organization. These challenges are defined increasingly by the constellation of economic, technological and political changes, which have radically re-configured the world under the growing hegemony of capital.

The dynamics of the emergent international political economy has had a profound effect on the Nigerian context. The country is locked more and more in the vice-grip of international finance capital, unleashing a political and policy regime that elevates the interests of capital over the interests of the people.

Under the overwhelming influence of neo-liberal theory, the Nigerian State is retreating rapidly from productive activities and the social sectors. This has led to massive loss of jobs and worsening of the human development situation, especially poverty and inequality. Although Nigeria has always been under capitalist rule, what distinguishes the current new liberal offensive from previous liberal strategies is its dramatic re-definition of the role of the state and the legitimation of the market and private capital as the exclusive driver of development.

This is the objective condition that has given impetus to the ascendancy of the anti-worker and anti-union managerial ethos that creates a race to the bottom of labour standards.

For the Nigerian Labour Congress [NLC], the challenges are clear—we must continue to re-build and re-tool our organization to operate effectively as a traditional defender of workers, working family and the working people.

The: NLC naturally prides itself as one of the most representative federations in the world. It organizes blue and white collar workers, the professionals, pensioners, workers in informal and informal employment and the public and private sectors. Therefore, as an authentic working peoples' organization, it must necessarily be capable of addressing the full diversity of the interests, rights and concern of the entirety of the working people. Today, NLC is also unarguably the most influential non-State actor in Nigeria. It must continue to sustain the capacity to articulate and defend national interests in relation to the onslaught of reactionary forces and their international patrons.

The *Policy Document* is prepared to lend greater clarity and consistency to the work of NLC as a workers' organization concerned about improvements in the world of work, as a federation of the working people and as a major player in the Nigerian polity, economy and society.

The *Policy Document* encapsulates the challenges that confront organized labour in the area of socio-economic transformation, labour and politics, trade union democracy, ethics and leadership, industrial relations and organizing, collective bargaining and social dialogue, gender equity, education and international solidarity.

The idea is to ensure that the worker gets value for his/her membership and that the Congress and affiliates develop the skills, democratic inclusiveness and overall effectiveness necessary for defending workers and intervening effectively in wider democratic struggles.

The *Policy Document* emerged from a long process of debates, consultations and planning predicated on a collective yearning to break new grounds, to improve on current gains and to avoid mistakes of the past. This process involved affiliates and state councils of the Congress and brought on board all levels of their leadership.

The main strength of the *Policy Document* is its simplicity and the rather detailed exposition on what is to be done, why it must be done and how it must be done.

Naturally, the inclusive nature of the preparatory process has meant that the emergent Document had been wordy and perhaps stylistically incoherent in some respects. We could have avoided this by contracting the text to consultants or editors. However, we have refrained from this because we wanted a *Policy Document* of our own making.

The 8th Delegates Conference has adopted the *Policy Document* in this form to guide the work of the Congress and its constituents.

We remain convinced that it would make our movement grow in relevance, effectiveness, ideological depth and ethical re-armament.

**John E Odah, mni**  
General Secretary  
Nigeria Labour Congress  
February 5<sup>th</sup> 2007

## **VISION AND MISSION OF THE NIIGERIA LABOUR CONGRESS**

### **1.1 Introduction**

The Nigerian economy, polity and society have been locked in a protracted crisis. The crisis poses a number of development challenges, which are pressing and urgent.

The characteristics of this crisis are mass unemployment, low living standards, poor state of infrastructures, poor industrial base, political instability, weakness of institutions of democratic governance, resurgence of ethnic chauvinism, religious bigotry and violence and collapse of public institutions in health, education, water, electricity and agriculture.

The crisis is essentially a product of the domination of Nigeria by global capitalism with its ideology of the rule of market forces, liberalisation, globalisation and the rule of international finance institutions. Successive Nigerian regimes including the present civilian government have subscribed to this ideology.

This crisis is so deep and self-regenerative that it has imposed a feeling of hopelessness and despair on the people.

### **1.2 Situation Analysis**

A combination of poor economic management characterized by looting of national resources, exploitation, and absence of a purposeful and patriotic leadership accounts for the rapid collapse of the national economy. These have resulted in colossal and pervasive waste of resources and the inability of the Nigerian state to translate opportunities into national development, with the damaging effect of very high incidences of poverty, conflicts, leading to destructions of lives, property and underdevelopment.

For instance, although the revenue profile of government indicated rising trends, the United Nations Human Development Index listed Nigeria at the bottom. For instance, based on GNP per capita assessment of nations of the world, Nigeria was 187<sup>th</sup> in 2001

The Federal Office of Statistics (FOS) projected that poverty has risen to over 70% in 2000. implying that about 80 million Nigerians out of the country's estimated 125 million live below \$1per day. As a result of rising poverty levels, the UNDP Human Development assessment reported that:

- a. Infant mortality per 1000 live births was as high as 112.
- b. Life expectancy was 50.1 year
- c. 43% of Nigerians lack access to safe drinking water.
- d. 37% of Nigerians lack access to sanitation.
- e. 40% lack access to public health.
- f. Gross enrolment ratio for combined primary, secondary and tertiary education was 43%, 37% for females and 48% for males.

Politically, the crisis deepened and degenerated into an acute state of instability, with various forms of dictatorship emerging. "Dictatorship" here means the absence of popular choice and participation in governance, subversion of the constitution and rule of law. the reign of arbitrariness and lack of responsiveness to the needs of Nigerians.

This is further compounded by the predominance of military rule in the political life of the country. So far, military rule has accounted for 31 years of our independent life as a nation. This has entrenched an authoritarian culture, which influences all levels of human and organisational behaviour, including the trade unions.

Perhaps, worse than anything else, is the attendant social decay in the country. The social decay has led to the collapse of cultural and moral values, rising levels of crime and chronic institutional decay.

The crisis has impacted negatively on Nigeria workers at all levels. A combination of prohibitive inflation rate and declining value of the Naira has brought down wages to starvation level with the attendant consequences of general erosion in the standard of living of Nigerians. Further, the increasing power of capital as engendered by the ideology of global capitalism and the market has eroded job security for all categories of workers and the self-employed.

This situation was made worse by sustained attacks on workers' organisations and co-optation of some trade union leaders. As a result, the trade union movement was forced into a crisis of confidence and relevance.

State policy on trade unions under the military was based on the principles of "guided democracy" and "limited intervention". Consequently, most trade union-related decrees eroded the rights of trade unions and workers.

The installation of civilian rule under a constitution imposed by the military and the return of the political servants of the military regimes to power, have prevented the enthronement of genuine democracy which provides for popular choice and participation, true multiparty system and response by the state to the basic needs of our people.

At a time when the challenge before the nation calls for re-birth and renewal, Nigerian trade unions must initiate a programme of self-purification to prepare them for social redemption.

## **VISION OF THE NLC**

NLC's vision of Nigeria is that of a nation in which all workers, irrespective of gender, ethnicity or religion would be guaranteed a just and fair living wage, security of job and greater opportunities for career advancement and fulfillment. It should be a future in which national economic policies shall be geared towards job creation, steady improvement of the general well being of the citizens, and equal participation of women in the economy. Above all, it is a future in which there would be work place and industrial democracy

and where collective bargaining would be the main mechanism for determining working conditions and wages in the country.

Essential to this is the ending of workplace discrimination, especially against women, and the enthronement of equal pay for equal jobs as well as equal opportunities and advancement.

Such a future entails the establishment and deepening of genuine rather than symbolic structures and institutions at all levels of society. This entails the building of effective structures such as political parties, trade unions and non-governmental organisations that will create political awareness as a basis of strong economic foundation that should counter the absolute power of multinationals, whose grip on the economies of many nation-states is increasing with the intensification of globalisation.

The NLC envisions a secular Nigerian state and an egalitarian modern industrial society that will be free, democratic, united and just.

Pursuit of this vision requires that the NLC itself be transformed into a well-focused, goal-oriented and pro-active organisation. Its defining qualities should be internal democracy, genuine representation, transparent interaction and accountability. It must build its fighting capacity and power and those of its affiliate members.

The envisioned NLC must be one that would rise above narrow industrial interests, promote and protect our national independence and integrity, and have the credibility to mobilise and lead civil society in seeking to establish a democratic, just and egalitarian order in Nigeria and the world in general.

In the effort to mobilise and lead other civil society groups, NLC will be guided by the policy of active political intervention through strategies such as alliance building, networking and party formation

#### **1.4 VISION STATEMENT**

Arising from the above, the vision statement of the NLC is as follows:

*Congress envisions a people-driven, people-centred and people-owned process of national economic management pursued through an activist, developmental and popularly controlled state.*

*Congress envisions an end to systemic oppression, the crudity of capitalist exploitation and the rule of a bankrupt and predatory national elite, which has not demonstrated the capacity to address development challenges.*

*We want to create in Nigeria a just and democratic society where there is no exploitation of any kind;*

*We believe that the trade union movement is best placed to provide leadership in building a just society and sustainable democracy in Nigeria,'*

*We see the Nigeria Labour Congress as the model of solidarity, independence, dedication, and a progressive, class-conscious organisation of workers;*

*The Nigeria Labour Congress seeks to be an organisation that is trusted and respected by Nigerian workers, other exploited classes in Nigeria and the international 'working class.*

#### **THE MISSION OF THE NLC**

Nigeria trade unions have drawn up a programme of self purification in the spirit of A New Beginning. The programme, which was launched on May 1, 1999, has the broad objective of building the capacity of trade unions to promote the interests of workers, working people and the nation. Deriving from its vision, the NLC shall be committed to:

- Protect, defend and promote the rights, well-being and the interests of all workers, pensioners, self-employed, working people and the masses in general.
- Promote and defend a Nigerian nation that would be just, democratic, united, secular and prosperous.
- Enhance the quality of life and improve the income and other working conditions of workers
- Promote and sustain the unity of Nigerian trade unions, ensure total unionisation of all workers in both formal and informal sectors, irrespective of their creed, state of origin, gender and their political beliefs
- Promote and defend trade union and human rights, the rule of law and democratic governance
- Promote and defend democracy, probity and transparency in the trade unions and in civil governance.
- Work for the industrialisation and prosperity of the Nigerian nation and ensure protection of jobs, full employment and humane working environment
- Strive to influence legislation and public and corporate policies, in the interest of workers, disadvantaged social groups and trade unions
- Promote and sustain positive industrial relations practice in Nigeria by strengthening collective bargaining in all sectors of the economy and internalising appropriate work culture among workers.
- Promote workers education, principally for developing trade union, political and class-consciousness for empowerment of workers in the Nigerian society.
- Co-operate with other organisations with which the trade unions may share common ideological and other commitment.
- Establish international relationship and co-operation with international labour movement.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

*Arising from the above:*

*The mission of the Nigeria Labour Congress is to organise, unionise and mobilize all categories of Nigerian workers; defend and advance the political, economic, social and cultural rights of Nigerian workers; emancipate and unite Nigerian workers and people from all forms of exploitation and discrimination; achieve gender justice in the work place and in NLC; strengthen and deepen the ties and connections between Nigerian workers and the mutual/natural allies in and outside Nigeria and; lead the struggle for the transformation of Nigeria into a just, humane and democratic society.*

## **2 POLICY ON COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**

### **2.1 Introduction**

- (a) Collective bargaining is the process of negotiation on a whole range of issues bordering on the regulation of the terms and conditions of employment between workers and employers or government, aimed at collective agreement.
- (b) Collective bargaining is seen as the most rational process of determining and reviewing the terms and conditions of employment. The process manifests the power relationship between the employers and the trade unions.
- (c) Collective bargaining goes beyond the process of negotiation between unions and employers on issues directly affecting conditions of employment. It is also a means of limiting unilateral decisions and actions by employers and governments.
- (d) Strong, stable, well focused and democratically run unions expand the scope of collective bargaining and thereby strengthen industrial democracy.
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The role of the NLC in collective bargaining shall be as follows:

- Providing support data for negotiations through research.
- Continually reviewing the national minimum wage and ensuring that its negotiation involves broader consultations with all stake holders.
- Influencing labour legislation.

- Ensuring acceptance of collective agreement in all sectors of the economy
- Intervening in industrial disputes with the aim of strengthening its affiliates
- Enhancing the bargaining capacity of affiliates
- Ensuring adequate protection for negotiators against possible victimization
- Ensuring that collective bargaining is gender sensitive and serve to enhance the interest of women.
- Ensuring that collective bargaining take into account the need to protect industry and work organisation.

## **2.2 Situation Analysis**

(a) A large number of Nigerians in the wage sector are still ununionised. This may be due to the following factors:

- Hostility on the part of employers (as in the cases of the new generation financial institutions; domestic airlines/road transport operators and most indigenous entrepreneurs engaged in various pursuits).
- \* Legal restrictions (prohibition of some employees civil establishments unionisation).
- \* Inability of some unions to effectively unionise their potential members.

(b) A large number of unionised workers particularly in the public sector are not covered by formal and well structured bargaining machinery, which often lead to ad-hoc negotiations, occasioned by industrial crisis.

c) Many government parastatals do not have collective bargaining machinery; nor do unions negotiate with their management. Yet, the legislation, which established these parastatals, empowered their Boards to independently review conditions of service. Most of these Boards were not considering the period of prolonged military rule. Some Administrators were appointed to take charge of these Boards.

d) In the core civil service, the age-long negotiating machinery became dormant in the 1990s, and was only resorted to during severe industrial crisis.

e). In the private sector, with the exception of the petroleum and print media industries, there exists an industry-wide joint negotiating council for each sector. The Joint negotiating Councils have functioned relatively well except that collective agreements freely entered into are subject to ministerial approval by the Federal Ministry of Employment, Labour and

## **Productivity.**

**f). Although the Nigerian government has ratified ILO Convention 98, which guarantees the right to organise and to bargain collectively, the government is yet to ratify Convention 151 on labour relations (public Service, 1978), which makes it obligatory to institute collective bargaining machinery in the public sector**

**g) Dispute settlement in Nigeria provides for mediation, conciliation and compulsory adjudication through the Industrial Arbitration Panel (IAP) and National Industrial Court (NIC). Over the years, however, the quality of conciliation and mediation, which are functions of Labour administration, have greatly declined. The processes for access to both the IAP and NIC are largely through the Minister of Labour. In addition, awards are not made directly to the parties but through the Minister, who has the right to refer parties back to the Panel.**

**h) The problem of collective bargaining in Nigeria in terms of its restricted nature, and the relative large number of workers outside its coverage, emanate from developments in the national polity.**

**i) The development and practice of collective bargaining are dependent on trade union consciousness, the attitude of the public towards the trade unions and the level of respect for human rights and industrial democracy by the Nigerian government.**

**j. Prolonged military rule in Nigeria led to the enactment of the twin policies of limited intervention and guided democracy” in government/labour relations in 1975. The policies led to the enactment of numerous trade union laws which undermined trade union rights, tended to co-opt the unions while also creating situations of fear, uncertainty and direct interference.**

**k) Prolonged military rule and abuse in governance have created and perpetuated economic crisis and the attendant massive unemployment insecurity of employment, factory closures, inflation and general social dislocation.**

**l) These developments have led to the systematic elimination of the middle class in Nigeria society and the emergence of a vast army of depressed, working class, on the one hand, and a tiny super riche class on the other hand. This tiny super rich accumulates and reproduces through access and state funds.**

**m) This impacted negatively on trade unions thus:**

- Weakened their organization**
- Disoriented and disempowered the workers.**

**n) The factors that weaken collective bargaining also include:**

- Victimisation/intimidation by government and employers
- Divide and rule strategy of employers
- Lack of awareness of negotiation objectives and techniques by workers because of ineffective communication between bargainers and members and poor skills
- Requirement for ministerial approvals of agreements reached
- Ethical problems
- Narrow composition of public service negotiating councils
- Decentralise collective bargaining in the public sector
- Failure of Government at all levels to respect collective agreements

In the above circumstances, it is inconceivable for collective bargaining to thrive.

### **2.3 NLC'S Goals in Collective Bargaining**

- a) Given the importance of collective bargaining as the most effective process for winning improvements in working conditions;
- b) Given the fact that collective bargaining moderates the arbitrariness of employers and that it is an imperative for achieving and sustaining the primary purposes for which workers join unions;
- c) Given the need to achieve social, political and economic transformation through increased productivity, job security, motivation and involvement in union activities;
- (d) Given the need to raise workers awareness, build and strengthen trust for unions and to broaden participation of workers and trade unions in policy formulation and implementation;
- e) Given the need to prevent the negative impact of globalisation;
- f) Given the need to ensure speedy resolution of conflicts;

***Congress shall be committed to strengthening the collective bargaining machinery and social dialogue ensuring its acceptance in all sectors of the economy without exception.***

### **2.4 Programme of Action**

- a) In order to ensure that collective bargaining is accepted and strengthened in all sectors of the economy, Congress shall take the under listed actions:
- b) Initiate the setting up of a Tripartite Committee of Government, NECA

and NLC to constantly recommend the review of the existing national minimum wage, labour laws and the practice of industrial relations.

c) Ensure the reconstitution of the National Wages Commission, which should reflect a tripartite structure made up of Government, NECA and NLC.

d) The Congress shall ensure that the automatic recognition of unions also carries with it the right of members to belong to unions and to collective bargaining.

e) Congress shall co-ordinate its affiliates to extend union coverage to new sectors and new forms of work, including informal employment across all sectors.

f) Congress shall strive to entrench the principles of broader consultations in the process of bargaining and continually keep a tab on the bargaining activities of affiliates and agreements reached in the process

g) The Congress shall organise an annual conference on Collective Bargaining as part of the means of identifying, and formulating responses to industrial relations challenges.

h) The NLC shall conduct relevant research and disseminate the results of such research to the trade unions in order to make them more effective in all aspects of their work. Towards this end, the NLC shall establish a semi-autonomous research unit which shall cooperate with other agencies as well as make its services available to Congress and its affiliates.

i) The NLC shall work towards the listing of the National Industrial Court NIC and Industrial Arbitration Panel (IAP) as courts of superior record in the Nigerian Constitution as well as ensure that their composition reflects sufficient trade union representation.

j) The Congress shall also continually campaign for improvements in the administration of labour law to guarantee speedy arbitration, with premium on ease of access, affordable cost and consistency and legitimacy of awards/outcome.

k) The Congress shall continually work to strengthen the Public Service Negotiating Council and strive to establish bargaining machinery in other spheres of the public sector where they are required.

l) The NLC shall also ensure that institutions in the public sector which mandate impact on the terms and conditions of employment include representatives of trade unions.

## **2.6 Private Sector**

**In the Private Sector Congress is committed to:**

**Promoting and strengthening free collective bargaining in all industries in the private sector. In this regard, Congress shall take the following actions:**

- **Establish industry-wide collective bargaining machinery for the print media**
- **Ensure that collective bargaining machinery exists throughout all industries. In other words, the goal shall be one industry, one union, one collective bargaining machinery.**

## **2.7 Legal Framework**

**Congress shall be committed to**

- **A review of all legislation which subject collective agreements freely entered into by unions and management to the approval of the Minister of Labour**
- **Review of the IAP and NIC legislations to ensure:**
  - **Direct access by parties**
  - **Direct awards to the parties**
  - **Review all legislation that artificially categorise workers into junior and senior staff**

### **3. POLICY ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Being a National Trade Union Centre in an African country. the Nigeria Labour Congress must play an active role in the transformation of the society. We want to see an end to industrial backwardness, mass poverty, illiteracy, the collapse of health and social services and institutions, foreign economic dependency. gross exploitation of labour, and political dictatorship and instability.

The thrust of NLC policy on socio-economic strategies, therefore, would underline the need to ensure that economic and social policy target wealth generation aimed at meeting basic and broader needs of citizens, promote common prosperity, entrench culture of social solidarity, redistribute wealth, income, assets and power for the benefits of all.

We shall work towards a planned and performing economy. Nigerian economy once had growth rate that averaged six per cent (6%) during the first decade of our independent life as a nation (1960 - 1970). Congress shall contribute to efforts towards returning Nigeria back to the path of consistent job-driven economic growth. development and national planning, which was abandoned in the wake of the IMF and World Bank sponsored Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in the mid 1980s.

We envision an economy founded on twin-pillars of state-led industrialisation and agricultural development within the context of wholistic national development plans. In the most recent past, on account of national planning, manufacturing activities transformed major industrial centres such as Lagos, Kano, Ibadan, Kaduna, Port Harcourt and Benin

Congress socio-economic strategies, therefore, would take into account the growing need to adopt a more participatory approach, which will involve identification of specific policies that should be pushed by representatives of Congress in dealing with government, employers and other social, economic and political actors. Participatory strategies mean processes of consultation that involve convening appropriate organs where specific discussions of policy matters are identified and decided.

### **3.2 Policy Framework**

We envision an economy that is composed of state, private and social sectors. The state must play a leading role in encouraging investment through appropriate macro-economic policies and provision of infrastructure. In addition, through appropriate fiscal and monetary policies, good governance and transparency, the state should exert a tremendous influence on the economy. Property relations must be transformed as to favour working men and women, entrepreneurs and genuine investors as distinct from the existing rentier, compradoral, corrupt and parasitic class. To this extent, key socio-economic strategic sectors must remain in public hands. These sectors are:

- Education
- Health
- Energy
- Communication
- Land/Water
- Social Security
- Road Development
- Security

In achieving these, our socio-economic policy framework would, therefore, have the goal of:

- Empowering trade unions to participate actively in policy formulation and implementation through assertive social dialogue on socio-economic matters
- Demanding appropriate economic policies to speedily and effectively arrest the current economic crisis facing the nation
- Enthroning an activist agenda that is people-driven, that will focus on key macro-economic policies on employment creation and protection, guarantee a living wage, strengthen the nation's currency, eradicate poverty, ensure price stability, skill acquisition, and motivate the workforce for improved productivity.
- Empowering relevant sections of civil society to play active roles in all existing productive platforms hitherto dominated by the public sector

The thrust of NLC policy will also be to:

- Support full and timely implementation of relevant projects

- Ensure the engagement of well qualified personnel and organisations in the execution of government projects
- Ensure that development goals are driven by patriotic objectives
- Ensure that government control key sectors of the economy
- Monitor development objectives
- Advocate against wastage.

Based on the recognition that the primary mandate of Congress is to uplift the working and living conditions of workers, the mechanisms for the realization of the above stated goals shall include:

**1. I. Monitoring Key Economic Indicators**

Congress shall, through its research unit, monitor key economic indicators. These economic indicators shall cover cost of living indices, exchange rates, employment levels, income distribution, sectoral performances, etc. Also, macro-economic aggregates related to fiscal policy, industrial policy, international trade, etc., shall be monitored. Independent findings of Congress shall provide the background for yearly budgetary proposals and wider negotiations on policy directions of the economy.

**ii. Specific Sectoral Monitoring**

To boost the negotiating power of Congress and its affiliates, Congress shall undertake a comprehensive survey of all sectors of the economy on a periodic basis. In this regard, Congress shall provide base capacity for affiliates to meet their sectoral survey needs for the purpose of collective bargaining.

**iii. Establishment of Statutory Tripartite Negotiating Body**

Congress shall seek to institute an annual statutory tripartite body towards the formulation and implementation of broad macro-economic policy. This body, comprising all the stakeholders mainly government, employers and labour, may be referred to as the National Advisory Council on the Economy.

**iv. Active Participation in all Statutory Bodies**

Congress shall actively participate in all statutory national, sectoral or ad hoc bodies with a clear mandate and a proper report back mechanism.

## **v. Strengthening International Solidarity for Economic Development**

International solidarity shall be pursued in order to meet increasing challenges associated with globalisation. In this context, international solidarity shall serve to build capacity of Congress and its affiliates to match the increasing sophistication of capital and managerial skills through intensive training for union members and officials at all levels.

### **3.3 Some Specific Policy Direction**

The position and policy direction of the Congress with respect to key issues in the economy and society are as follows:

#### **1. Employment**

Congress believes that the people must remain both the means and ends of economic development. In that context, national development priorities must focus on the protection and creation of employment. National economic performance should be assessed in the context of the provision of viable employment for Nigerians; it should not be just a question of monetary index of growth assessment. Viable employment will mean expansion of employment, productivity and wages. The Congress, through advocacy, shall insist on key macro-economic policies, which will ensure employment creation and retention. Economic policies should:

- Ensure that the parameters of fiscal policy are consistent with employment creation and retention strategies, Government will be encouraged to avoid imposing rigid and rapid deficit reduction targets, which limit public expenditure and infrastructural development that in turn lead to public sector job losses and job rationalization. The task of rebuilding Nigerian economy and social infrastructural (education, health etc) calls for greater employment creation and retention and NOT retrenchment and job rationalization.
- Maintain and expand demand for domestically produced goods and services, which will generate employment.
- Meet increased demand through an expansion of the productive capacity of the economy, which in turn would generate new jobs.
- Stimulate demand by lowering interest rates, pursuing redistributive fiscal policies and developing effective

strategies to boost exports.

- Create an environment conducive to boosting productive capacity of the economy. Increase state investment to ensure that increased demand can be met through domestic production, and not through importation of goods.

## **II Social Security**

The Social Security policy of Congress for Nigerian workers shall cover issues of pensions and general welfare programmes. In the case of pensions, Congress policy shall be based on the principle that the minimum shall not be less than the existing national minimum wage. Moreover, Congress shall advocate a Universal Social Security Agency catering for contributors and non-contributors such as the sick, the under-aged, the aged and the unemployed.

The NLC shall campaign for social security policy to cover the welfare of the unemployed, the under-aged and the aged.

## **III Education, Health and Housing**

In the immediate post-colonial decades, Nigeria's social indicators were generally promising. There were systematic efforts to increase the level of school enrolment, increased budgetary allocation to education, which in early 1960s averaged 50% of the then regional budgets. It is tragic that this earlier social development effort was reversed and abandoned. Today, half of the Nigerian population is illiterate compared to 40% in Ghana, 33% in Zimbabwe, 23% in Indonesia and less than 20% in Brazil and Mexico. Over 20% of children between ages 6 and 11 are today not enrolled in schools.

The health service is extremely poor. Public hospitals are barely functional. Private healthcare, is out of the reach of most Nigerians. This is largely because the direction of state policies has not been towards using Nigeria wealth for the welfare of workers and other exploited classes of Nigerians. In the area of housing, there is no coherent housing policy in the country. Workers have been forced to pay into the Federal Housing Fund, which gives them nothing in return. The state governments have not provided affordable houses for the people.

From the welfarist approach of the immediate post independence days, the Nigerian state has moved to an anti-welfarist ideology dictated by the World Bank and the IMF.

Therefore, the NLC will:

- Advocate and lead the struggle for qualitative and free education at all levels for Nigerian children,
- The NLC shall press government to provide adequate funding for education at the elementary, secondary and tertiary levels.
- The NLC shall struggle to remove class barriers from the accessibility to education to Nigerians.
- The NLC shall strive to ensure that the content of education is in accordance with the needs of Nigeria. Education shall not be controlled by the interest of International Capital Organisation
- NLC shall campaign against the privatization of education, as this will drive the children of workers and the poor out of the education system.

In the area of health, the NLC shall pursue the following policy objectives:

- NLC shall press for the provision of qualitative and affordable healthcare for citizens.
- NLC shall advocate for adequate funding for health
- NLC shall call for an entire revamping of the healthcare system on welfarist basis.
- NLC will advocate strong emphasis on preventive care.
- The health insurance of workers shall be pursued. Every Nigerian child and adult must be kept healthy.

NLC shall pursue the following policy objectives in the area of housing:

- NLC shall press for the building of affordable houses for workers by both federal, states and local governments.
- NLC shall push for equitable loans system for workers to build houses

#### **IV. Inflation**

The problem of inflation is endemic. Government programmes targeted at reducing inflation level have consistently failed. Fiscal

indiscipline on the part of government has been identified as one of the factors responsible for failure of policy measures to reduce inflation. Congress will campaign to enthrone fiscal discipline through active participation in budget formulation, monitoring and evaluation.

#### **V. Income Policy**

Nigeria is a classic case of wealth without hard work or entrepreneurship. This has implications for good governance, transparency, political stability and the evolution of a just and fair incomes policy. While Nigerian workers and the poor pay taxes, rich pay either very little or no taxes. Congress shall pursue a policy that guarantees wealth through hard work and entrepreneurship while also ensuring that direct stealing of national resources is eliminated. Congress will also pursue income policy that shall lead to a regime of socially defensible income differentials in the economy. Also, Congress shall insist on appropriate policy measures that will target the elimination of unearned income in the economy, particularly those associated with graft, crime and currency speculation.

#### **VI. Wages**

The policy of Congress on wages shall focus on engendering a just and fair living wage for all Nigerian workers. The initial stage shall be to raise the real value of wages of each worker to a level that will ensure that Nigerian workers live a decent life. Thereafter, a wage policy that enhances the standard of living of each Nigerian worker and indexed on inflation.

#### **VII. Prices**

Price level in Nigeria today are more a function of speculative activities by market actors rather than costs related to productive activities. This has resulted in varying degrees of distortions in national income accounting. It also encourages the current inflationary trend in the economy, which depreciates incomes, particularly wages. Congress' policy on prices shall therefore be targeted at eliminating the speculative activities of marketers, which now dominates the economy.

Congress shall oppose the current orthodox *laissez faire* approach to prices based on a domineering market economy. Congress shall fight for strict mediation by the state as a strategy for stabilizing prices.

#### **VIII. Exchange Rate**

The devaluation of the nation's currency in relation to other international currencies is unacceptable. Congress shall, therefore, press for an exchange rate regime that will guarantee both comparative advantages for

local industries as well as protect income levels of Nigerians. Specifically, Congress shall press for an exchange rate that is based on the principle of purchasing power parity of currencies.

#### **IX. Protection of Local Industries**

The current wave of trade liberalization, is ruining local industries and marginalize the country in the global economy. Being the largest market in the sub-region, necessarily attracts international competitors, which, if not checked, will undermine local industries. Congress policy in this regard shall be to enthrone policy measures that will protect local industries through appropriate fiscal measures

#### **X Agriculture**

The importance of agriculture in national development lies in the vital need of the nation to feed its people. The development of agriculture must be based on the following principles:

- Agricultural production must be organized to meet the needs of the people and imperative of food security
- Agricultural production must be encouraged in all parts of the country
- The integration of agricultural production must be promoted
- Agricultural production shall not be dominated by few.
- The interests of farmers and farm workers must be protected.

To achieve these principles, the NLC shall undertake the following actions:

- The NLC shall link up with the various groups involved in agriculture to protect the interests of Nigeria's development
- Congress shall campaign for active state intervention in agriculture through subsidies etc
- The NLC shall unionise all workers in the agriculture sector
- The NLC shall struggle to prevent a situation where Nigerian workers produce agricultural goods that Nigerians cannot afford.

#### **XI. Poverty Eradication**

In the immediate past, government and its organizations have proclaimed

commitment to poverty alleviation. Notwithstanding the rhetoric, the the poverty situation has worsened. Congress is committed, however, not just to poverty alleviation but mainly to poverty eradication. The policy of Congress on poverty eradication shall be linked to the ILO framework of creating income-earning opportunities to citizens.

## **XII. Debt Crises**

Congress' approach to the debt crisis is premised on the need to first verify the current level of indebtedness. It is sad that Nigeria pays huge amounts by way of debt servicing without verifying the authenticity or otherwise of these debts. As a policy framework, Congress shall insist that all future debts servicing must target verified debts.

Also, given the gravity of the debt problem, which makes economic recovery impossible, Congress supports the global coalition, under Jubilee 2000 initiative, for the cancellation of all African debts.

## **XIII. Recovery of Looted Funds**

Congress shall campaign for the recovery of looted funds and play an active role in combating corruption.

## **XIV. Deregulation and Privatisation**

The current civilian government is committed to market oriented and private sector-led development. This commitment to a market driven economy has translated to such policies as privatization of public enterprises and attempted deregulation in the petroleum sector. These have had adverse implications for employment, prices and public welfare.

Congress has registered its opposition to deregulation of petroleum products through mass actions and protests. Congress insists that deregulation only serves the insatiable desire of oil monopolies for profits, while it will accentuate poverty and increase inflation.

Congress maintains that there shall be no divestiture in the strategic economic and social sectors. Where privatization proves inevitable, the process must be transparent, participatory and accountable with the emphasis on the need to protect jobs and benefits of the workers in the affected enterprises.

## **XV. Globalisation**

Globalisation has been characterized by bigger and more powerful multinationals with more clout than national governments. Globalization has produced such negative effect as major players, casualisation, mass-

retrenchment of labour, elimination of local industries in the developing countries, trade liberalization and the economic, political and cultural domination of the “Third World” countries. For the workers and the poor in general, it intensifies hardship and deeper levels of poverty. Congress, in its efforts to mitigate the negative effects of globalization, shall among other things:

Counter globalization from below through:

- Building solidarity with progressive groups, environmentalists, human rights and other civil society organizations across the globe for the purpose of curtailing the powers of multinational companies;
- Action and policy initiatives that expose the dangers of the programmes of global finance capitalist institutions such as the IMF, World Bank and World Trade Organisation;
- Action and policy initiatives that enhance the capacity of Nigerian workers in particular and the Nigeria people in general to resist and defeat policies of Bretton Wood Institutions (IMF, World Bank and World Trade Organisation)
- Mobilising, training and re-training workers to enable them meet the challenges of modern technology and globalization;
- Fighting for wage parity between Nigerian workers and their counter-parts in the same industries in the advanced countries;
- Campaigning for an industrial policy that would enhance Nigeria’s economic comparative advantage:
- Working for an urgent programme of universal computer literacy to enable the country take advantage of information and communication technology. In this connection, Congress shall urge government to invest heavily in the computer and communication industry so as to make internet and telephone services available and affordable to a vast majority of Nigerians;
- Actively defending the right of each Nigerian to full employment, qualitative and comprehensive education, health care, water, electricity, adequate housing, good roads, a comprehensive rail network and provision of essential infrastructures;

#### **3.4 Trade and Industrial Policy**

- Congress considers the creation of quality jobs and mass

employment as a preeminent challenge and objective of industrial policy.

- Congress shall campaign for the protection of labour-intensive industries namely agro-allied, furniture, construction, textile, food, public works and service sectors.
- Congress shall campaign for trade policies that enhance, rather than undermine local production. Congress will campaign for the review of Nigeria's membership of WTO, which has adversely affected domestic industries leading to mass job losses through dumping of relatively cheaper goods without corresponding market access by Nigerian goods.

#### **4. POLICY ON GENDER EQUITY**

Nigeria is still characterized by patriarchal despotism. Which permeates all modern public and private institutions in the country. This has been the result of both the traditional system and the logic of capitalist exploitation. Gender discrimination, sexual exploitation and the denials of life's opportunities to women and being presented as part of this culture that should be preserved. Gender inequality is the result of unjust economic, political and social relations.

Women are educated to believe in and accept an inferior social status. In most Nigerian communities, they have no right to land, inheritance of family property and equal opportunity to education. In modern employment, they are marginalised to the lower cadre of the public and private establishments and the care and nurturing departments and sectors. In most sectors, it is unofficially understood that women cannot attain certain leadership positions. In addition, women receive lower pay for equal work. Generally, there are various forms of discrimination against the child e.g. denial of child education, child labour and early marriage.

Other various forms of gender abuses against women include, violence and negative widowhood practices that diminish the status and well being of women. In summary, there are social, cultural and religious beliefs and practices, which do not enable women to realise their full potentials. In the trade unions, the gap between men and women is a reflection of the beliefs and practices in the wider society. Although, trade unions are supposed to be democratic and empowering organisations, there is, ironically, a lack of awareness of gender issues amongst members.' Consequently, negative gender practices are common, these negative gender practices are well entrenched. Women have little representation at the leadership level

and decision-making bodies; where they manage to feature, they are elected or appointed into the "women's socially expected roles of welfare officers or treasurers". Issues sensitive to women do not get the required attention.

Lately, things have started to change. There is a growing awareness about women's rights and the need for affirmative action. The trade unions have been drawn into the growing debates and activities on these issues and must provide leadership in the struggle for gender equity and justice.

#### **4.2 Policy Focus**

Policy issues arising from the need to address the above problems can be broadly categorised into the following main themes

- Constitutional review to include the gender perspective
- A framework of Action.
- Human Resources Development.
- Equal Employment Opportunities
- Building Bridges of co-operation
- Redressing imbalances in staffing of NLC and affiliates

#### **4.3 Adoption of a Gender Clause**

A strategy for the greater inclusion of women within the NLC shall begin with an amendment of the constitution of the NLC and all existing trade unions in the country to include a definite gender clause. The basis for this is founded on a genuine desire to mainstream women and ensure their participation at all levels of the NLC. This principle of the gender clause shall permeate all actions, policies and activities of empowerment within the NLC. The content of the Gender Clause shall also be reflected in the NLC Mission Statement.

#### **4.4 The Gender Clause**

*The NLC affirms its belief and respect for equal opportunities for all Nigerians regardless of gender. The NLC recognises the peculiar nature of women's roles as affecting their ability or inability to participate effectively in the public sphere. Empowerment of women should, therefore, begin from a re-examination of the place of women within Nigerian Society. The NLC is, therefore, committed to building a world where gender justice reigns, which recognises that change for women within the labour movement demands an internal restructuring; complemented by external working partnerships. Gender justice, as a cardinal principle of Congress, shall mean equal access to employment opportunities, absence of discriminatory practices against both genders and recognition of the productive and reproductive roles of each gender.*

#### **4.5 Internal Restructuring**

The framework for achieving gender justice in the work place and in the NLC through internal structuring shall be based on the committed and detailed implementation of the following Plan of Action.

a. The NLC and each of its affiliates shall urgently review their constitutions to ensure that the language and provisions of the constitutions provide for and promote gender justice at the highest level.

b. The NLC shall implement its decision on the establishment and role of a Women's Commission at the national level as a matter of urgency. The Commission shall not be a parallel structure to those currently existing in the NLC, and its goals shall include promoting awareness among women.

c. The NLC shall, from time to time, facilitate national conferences, research and surveys on women. The conferences shall bring together government officials, employers, organized under the Nigerian Employers Consultative Association (NECA), Trade Unions, organized under the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Senior Staff Consultative Association (SESCAN), Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Progressive Women's Organisations and the National Association of Nigeria Students (NANS).

d. The national conference shall scrutinize employment practices in Nigeria, assess gender profiles in work organisations and identify supportive instruments that serve to entrench discriminatory practices against women. The conference shall also recommend appropriate measures aimed at guaranteeing equal access to opportunities for all genders as well as explore the possibility of instituting machinery for monitoring progress made in this regard.

e. The National Conferences, research and surveys shall promote inputs for national policies on women

f. The NLC shall encourage formal and informal networking among its women across unions

g. NLC shall advocate for budgetary allocation for the empowerment of women by Government business establishment, trade Union and civil organisations

h. For the furtherance of the gender programme, the NLC shall engage in all round advocacies for equal opportunities for women and set targets for their realization

i. The NLC shall work for legislation that protect widowhood rights, the right of girls to education and marriage related rights

#### **4.6. Human Resource Development**

NLC's plan of action for achieving gender equity shall be:

- The NLC shall engage in leadership training for its women members towards creating a vanguard of articulate and informed women representatives. The training shall include workshops, exchange programmes, short courses, and participation at national and international women and labour fora
- The NLC shall also engage in a phased process of broad-based gender training for its membership. There shall be put in place a mechanism to ensure that new knowledge on gender attitudes are cultivated and sustained at all levels of the Nigerian Trade Union Movement
- 
- The NLC shall reserve positions (at least 30%) of its leadership at all levels for women. Also the NLC shall champion the process of ensuring that all trade unions in the country reserve at least 30% of leadership positions for women.
- To encourage greater women participation in leadership, the NLC shall adopt a women leadership development programme. Young women shall be identified through outreach programmes and equipped with the necessary technical, advocacy, information technology and political skills.

#### **4.7. Equal Employment Opportunities**

The framework for achieving gender justice in the work place and in the NLC through equal employment opportunities shall be based on the commitment and detailed implementation of the following Plan of Action.

- The NLC shall embark on a periodic gender audit at the state and national levels, which will cover both profile and demography while encouraging industrial unions to do the same.
- The NLC shall insist on, at least 30% employment ratio in every sector of the economy for women. Collective bargaining scope shall be broadened to include the above demands.
- Employers shall be prevailed upon to submit a biannual gender profile of their organisations.
- The NLC shall offer protection to any employee discriminated against on the basis of gender. Any employer who discriminates on the basis of gender will be identified and Congress will initiate necessary sanctions against such an employer

- NLC will prevail on all establishments to have genders sensitive regulations and supportive facilities, such as comprehensive healthcare coverage, including Obstetrics and Gynaecology, humane maternity regime, crèches, and day care centres to reduce the pressure on parents in employment. The Unions shall lead the way by ensuring that crèches and day care centres are established in their secretariats

#### **4.8. External Partnerships**

The framework for achieving gender justice in the work place and in the NLC through external partnerships shall be based on the commitment and detailed implementation of the following Plan of Action.

##### ***4.8.1 .Building Bridges of Co-operation with Civil Society***

- The NLC shall encourage original initiatives by women's NGOs and other civil society groups aimed at forging working partnerships between elite and non-elite women in the areas of education, politics, economy and socio-cultural transformation.
- The NLC shall work with the media towards encouraging positive media portrayal of gender issues.
- The NLC shall foster research links with the academia towards supporting research for the development of a database on the conditions of Nigerian women.
- The NLC shall encourage the establishment of a gender forum at sectoral levels towards a regular monitoring of governmental policies on women and employment.

##### **4.8.2 Governmental Relationship**

- The NLC shall set up a machinery to monitor and analyse all national policies and legislations from a gender perspective.
- NLC shall promote respect for gender sensitive policies and legislations as well as international statutes.

## **5. POLICY ON BUILDING INTERNAL DEMOCRACY**

### **5.1. Introduction**

For Congress to achieve its various objectives, guarantee unity, organizational vibrancy and become a force in the socio-economic development of the country, it requires good internal governance based on internal democracy. This will mean encouraging the promotion of the culture of active participation by members, transparent and accountable leadership, commitment to working class value and respect for union constitution and all tenets of democracy.

Internal democracy in NLC and many unions is weakened and compounded by gaps between constitutional provisions, ethical expectations and mandate of leadership on the one hand and actual practices on the other.

Some tendencies thrown up by this gap often include indiscipline, accountability and transparency deficits and subversion of democratic principles. These impair the capacity of leadership to deliver and undermine the mandate of the unions.

Despite determined efforts at deepening internal democracy in all segments of the movement, the challenge of continually revisiting the democratic tradition and ethics of the movement remains obvious.

## **5.2 Goals**

To achieve internal democracy, Congress has set for itself the following goals:

To build a participatory, functional and democratic trade union movement founded on free and fair elections, collective leadership and commitment to the promotion of the welfare and rights of the working people, irrespective of sex, class, ethnicity or religion.

To build a virile and dynamic organization that is capable of defending the rights and interests of the working people in Nigeria

To build an organization that will facilitate the development of working class consciousness, education, unity and solidarity among Nigeria workers and Nigerian's working people in general.

NLC and the affiliate unions shall commit resources for membership education as a strategy of re-awakening working class consciousness among workers.

Congress shall promote the principle of internal self-sufficiency.

## **5.3 Situation Analysis**

Internal operations of the trade union movement in Nigeria give cause for great concern. Military rule and the attendant might-is-right ethos have impacted on civil society, including unions, occasioning some acute imitative militarism. Some of the worse manifestations in the movement can be seen in an officership culture that is not founded on principles of democracy and union rules and values.

Major decisions on policies are occasionally adopted without broad consultations or debates within the union and its various organs.

Harmony and synergy between union leadership and membership have in some cases been subverted by poor officership, involving no consultation and legitimacy. Thus, the membership is not able to own the union and its decisions in some cases but prefer to be lukewarm.

Observed lapses and sharp practices in relation to finances do occur in various forms and exact a heavy toll on resources and funds, with the attendant consequences of weakened capacity.

Internal communication would need to continually benefit from re-tooling to ensure that the observed democratic deficits are addressed.

#### **5.4 Plan of Action**

To eliminate the above problems, the Nigeria Labour Congress shall:

Regularly review its constitution to provide internal democracy through accountability, transparency, debate, consultation and commitment to workers welfare

Strive to make membership education a priority and ensure that the constitution provides for adequate funding of education programmes.

Apply strict sanctions in cases of violation of the constitution and Code of Conduct.

Provide for a well spelt out rules that guarantee checks and balances and structure the powers and functions of organs and officers of the Congress. This will be done in such a way that the rules project the integrity and proper workings of the Congress.

Enshrine accountability and transparency in financial dealings so as to ensure that all resources due to the Congress are remitted as and when due and are expended in accordance with the state objectives of the Congress.

Create a conflict resolution mechanism for prompt intervention in intra-and inter-union disputes. This shall include the establishment of a Standing Committee for conflict management and resolution

Congress shall ensure the sanctioning of erring officers and motivate honest and dedicated members.

Congress shall promote financial discipline through a policy of annual bugeting, approved by the CWC and NEC which should serve as a model to industrial unions.

### **3.5 Feedback Mechanisms**

As part of its efforts to achieve, sustain and promote internal democracy, the NLC shall adopt feedback mechanisms for its affiliates, members and the general public. These feedback mechanisms shall include:

- Annual Reports (for example, the General Secretary)
- Periodic Newsletters
- Departmental Reports
- Reports to meetings of organs of Congress (NAC, CWC, NEC and Delegates Conference)
- Progress report on assignments and programmes
- Press Conference

The NLC shall also cultivate the use of internal communication to promote democratic decision-making processes, through:

- Internal Memoranda to ensure that all officials are aware of all activities
- Dialogue/consultation to ensure that issues are informally and formally discussed before officials decisions are taken

### **5.6 Core Values**

- Congress shall adopt and inculcate in all its officers and members a set of core values. These values shall be:
- Honesty – being truthful with union members and workers at all times
- Accountability – conducting the business of the union with integrity based on a sense of responsibility and being answerable to the membership.
- Justice – ensuring fairness in the treatment of all issues and people irrespective of gender, religion and ethnicity of those involved
- Class consciousness – being aware of and being motivated by the need to defend, protect and enhance the historical and current interests of workers as members of the working class.
- Courage – confidence and boldness in pursuing the interests and agenda for the union
- Commitment to labour principles
- Democracy – recognizing and respecting the rights of the members as the owners of the union and whose interests and needs shall provide the basis of all union action; including the right to elect, recall or remove any officer in the service of the union

## **6. POLICY ON NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY**

### **6.1 Introduction**

Solidarity means support and commitment to one another irrespective of industrial geographical and other forms of boundaries. In the context of trade unions, this implies strengthening the JOINT capacity of workers and their unions across industrial and geographical boundaries to engage employers and government with the objective of eliminating/minimizing exploitation and repression.

### **6.2 Forms of Solidarity**

The Congress policy on solidarity shall focus on both the national and international contexts.

#### **6.2 National Context**

Within the national context, solidarity shall be dictated by the overall objective of the union to defend the rights and interests of workers, as well as, to strive to expand such rights and interests as a condition for enhancing the livelihood of the Nigerian people. This will require networking activities with individuals and organizations who have a commitment to the cause of the working people or who are at least friendly (non-antagonistic) to the cause of workers.

##### **6.3.1 Situation Analysis**

- Nigeria workers have been at the receiving end of governmental policies. The consequence is general erosion of the rights and privileges of workers resulting in a state of virtual destitution for the average worker.
- From a situation where the union movement was the arrowhead for the struggle against injustice, as was the case with the NLC of the late 1970s and mid 1980s, the union movement was reduced to a very marginal Non-State actor. So many factors accounted for this.
- There was the subversive generosity of the state directed towards undermining the militant disposition of the NLC. Collaboration with the state delinked the NLC from its traditional allies. There was the repressive dimension which considerably undermined organizations such as National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS), Academic Staff Union of Universities, (ASUU), etc that were considered the traditional allies of the NLC.
- All these factors negatively affected the capacity of trade unions to engage in solidarity work. This meant that unions

were unable to substantially offer or receive solidarity assistance within the national setting.

### **6.3.2 Programme of Action**

Congress shall aggressively initiate actions to put the union movement in the forefront of the struggle for social justice, equity and democracy. This shall be done through:

Strengthened engagement with civil society organizations through networking activities. Networking activities would be broadened to cover socio-economic, political and cultural issues and would primarily focus on empowerment of the working people in particular and the mass of the Nigerian people in general.

Activities related to solidarity work would include collaboration such as meetings, educational engagement, advocacy and mass actions .e.g agitation, protests, rallies, etc

## **VISION AND MISSION OF THE NIGERIA LABOUR CONGRESS**

### **6.4 International Context**

- \* We live in a global setting where there is a greater integration of the world economy. Information and communication technology has made interaction easier, faster and cheaper experiences and aspiration among peoples and social groups with common histories and backgrounds. The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) as the leading organization of the working people of Nigeria cannot afford to be alienated from this process.
- \* Congress is therefore committed to participate actively and positively in this global reality in furtherance of the interests of Nigeria workers. Congress, however, shall resist the domination of Nigerian worker under any global arrangement

#### **6.4.1 Goals**

International solidarity should strengthen the capacity of Congress and its affiliates to deal with the challenges of globalization.

Congress would use international solidarity to protect the rights and gains of the Nigerian working people.

Congress would use international solidarity to strengthen trade union organizations in the sub-region, continentally and at the wider international level.

International solidarity would be used to promote the exchange of educational, cultural and vocational experiences between trade unions.

**International solidarity would be used to encourage the development of information technology and its application in the movement.**

**Congress shall use international solidarity to check activities of multinational corporations.**

#### **6.4.2. Situation Analysis**

**The globalization of the world economy and the information and communication revolution have set in motion the following currents:**

- \* Mergers and acquisitions by multinational companies, creating conglomerates whose resources and influence go beyond those of the nation-state.**
- \* Advances in robotic technology, the casualisation of labour, sub-contracting, out-sourcing, individual contracts and telework have contributed to the weakening of trade unions and their influence.**
- \* One of the key consequences of globalization is weakening the State and reducing its sphere of action. Consequently, there has been a collapse of social and economic infrastructure e.g. education, health, road network etc.**
- \* Liberalisation of trade has destroyed national industries and led to the disintegration of grassroots communities. The collapse of national communities has led to an explosion of ethno-religious conflicts, international crimes and wars.**

#### **6.4.3 Programme of Action forward**

- \* Congress shall consolidate its global alliances, foster new ones and expand bilateral relations with progressive trade union centres within and beyond African continent.**
- \* Congress shall enhance its capacity to participate in a multiplicity of alliances and platforms to agitate and advocate on various issues that affect workers and the Nigerian people.**
- \* Congress shall encourage information and communication technology among its affiliates and members so that Nigerian workers can have a say and participate in the new global discourse.**
- \* Congress shall seek to strengthen the participation of affiliates in the international trade union movement in general and the global union federations in particular.**
- \* Congress and its affiliates shall commit themselves to the exchange of information and campaigns in respect of unions and individual**

trade unionists whose rights are threatened or violate by governments and/or employers.

- \* Congress and its affiliates shall work towards the institution of an international solidarity fund for educational and other forms of solidarity assistance to trade unions that are in need.
- \* International solidarity shall be taught and incorporated in Congress and industrial union educational programmes.

## **7. POLICY ON NLC AND UNIONISM**

### **7.1 Introduction**

The Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) is a federation of unions across all sectors, all cadres, covering both white and blue collar workers as well as pensioners. It is a symbol of unity and strength of the country's trade union movement.

The behaviour and responses of the Congress to issues impacts positively or otherwise on the entire trade union movement. This explains why most Nigerians including some workers do not see any difference between the roles of the NLC and that of its affiliates.

NLC speaks and acts on behalf of workers and working people generally for the pursuit and attainment of economic, social and political interest.

Given the vanguard role that NLC is expected to play, it cannot adopt an indifferent attitude towards the growth and development of its affiliates.

### **7.2 Situation Analysis**

An objective appraisal of organized labour in Nigeria reveals the following:

- With a population of over 110 million, the wage labour force in the formal sector is less than four million.
- The informal sector, which is rapidly expanding, is largely not unionized.
- Some indigenous employers and some foreigners are hostile towards unions.
- The existing trade union law prohibits some segments of civil employees from unionisation.
- Generally, some unions are not viable due to:

- \* **Dwindling membership**
- \* **Very low check-off rates in the public sector due to relatively depressed wages, inefficient administration and declining membership.**
- \* **Leadership deficiency resulting from prolonged military rule, departure from the ideals of the trade union movement and the decay afflicting the wider society.**
- \* **Membership apathy in most unions caused By:**
  - **Inadequate response of unions to needs of members**
  - **Massive unemployment/insecurity of jobs.**
  - **Severe social and economic dislocation of workers.**
  - **Internal administrative and organizational deficiency.**

With the enactment of the Trade Union Act, 2005, the stage is now set for the full application of the Principle of voluntarism. This means a worker is at liberty to join any union he/she likes while unions are free in affiliating to any federation or form new ones if they meet the requirements. The challenge for affiliates and congress are serious, bordering mainly on the need to continue to justify their existence by delivering on their mandate credibly. The worker will be more conscious and aggressive in demanding value for his/her membership of the union, which goes also for the NLC.

### **7.3 NLC Goals**

The goals of the NLC towards the trade unions shall be:

- (i) **Organisational and conceptual transformation of the trade unions including the NLC from mere legal expressions to organisations founded and sustained on the strength of its membership and their relevance to the society.**
- (ii) **To ensure independence of trade unions.**

### **7.4 Programme of Action**

In a democratic dispensation as is the case, NLC will work towards ensuring that:

- (i) **Unions are structurally, organizationally, democratically and financially viable.**
- (ii) **All un-unionised workers in the formal and informal sectors are unionized.**
- (iii) **Existing labour legislation, which undermine voluntarism, rights of workers, unions and trade union independence are repealed.**

- (iv) Only one union exists in every industry irrespective to cover all categories of workers.
- (v) Affiliation to Congress is not restrictive but open to all types of trade unions; including of workers in informal employment.
- (vi) All unions promote broad participation in their affairs, practice the principles of collective leadership and allow the tenets of democratic governance.
- (vii) Nigerian workers are politically conscious and continually mobilized to defend democracy, influence public policy, identify with the oppressed and the disadvantaged and participate actively in the labour movement.
- (viii) Nigerian trade unions are appropriately equipped and technically efficient.
- (ix) Unions that do not honour their financial obligations to NLC shall be subjected to discriminatory practices.
- (x) The NLC shall ensure the enforcement of appropriate accounting system that enforce probity and eliminate fraud.

## **8. POLICY ON LABOUR AND POLITICS**

### **8.1 Introduction**

The primary goals of workers' involvement in politics, as an organized group, is to promote the radical restructuring of the unequal economic relations through deliberate actions aimed at changing the production system. This is because the working class, with its homogeneous values, rather than other social classes, having different and, at times contradictory interests, is best placed to provide leadership and direction for the radical transformation of the system of production.

Consciousness, implying the awareness of economic, social and political interests of both the leadership and membership, are fundamental in this respect. There are two types of consciousness, namely, trade union consciousness and working class consciousness. The difference between trade union consciousness and working class consciousness is central to addressing the issue of labour and politics. Trade union consciousness is the workers' awareness of their own economic interests in better wages, better conditions of work, the pursuit of which does not require the workers to challenge existing political order. This supports the dominant perception of politics as that of the survival and defense of existing economic relationships within a political structure that permits the few to hold onto power to the exclusion and on the basis of the increased exploitation of the working class.

On the other hand, working class consciousness requires that the members of the working class are able to tie their interests in, and their success in pursuing their goals to the distribution of state power among socio-economic classes. Working class consciousness is essentially political, involving class political interests. The individual worker who has considerable trade union consciousness may yet not connect this consciousness with class struggles and state power. But a working class person with considerable working class consciousness gives a political articulation and explanation of every turn, every trend in workers' economic struggles. Given such a situation, therefore, the goal of workers' involvement in politics must be to advance and deepen the essence and practice of democracy aimed at sustaining and advancing a democratic culture that promotes prosperity for all, equity and higher welfare levels for Nigerians.

## **8.2 Situation Analysis**

The Nigerian experience, like in other countries, has produced different approaches. In the first republic (1960-66), a section of the labour movement formed the Socialist Workers' and Farmers' Party (SWAFP) and the Nigerian Labour Party (NLP). The most advanced sections of the leadership of the working class formed both SWAFP and NLP.

Also, during the aborted Third Republic (1989-93), the NLC spearheaded another effort to form the Nigerian Labour Party (NLP). The labour party that emerged from this process, however, did so in the circumstances of adaptation to the dictatorship of General Ibrahim Babangida, the "politics of registration". The existence of various ideological groupings within the working class leadership, the opportunism of some of that leadership and, of course, the lack of organization "from below" and a low level of specific class consciousness, combined to ensure that the NLP in 1989 did not produce the much needed working class party. The two experiments although at different times in Nigeria's history showed that:

- (1) Nigerian workers desired their own party and
- (2) Workers could be organized to create and develop their own party.
- (3) The leadership of a worker's party must emerge from the ideologically most advanced, committed persons having their deep roots within the labour movement.
- (4) The party of the working class must have a program will depend upon the state of the political consciousness of workers, but, definitely, its content should be unambiguously socialist.

- (5) The party of workers should be based on working class membership and should be sustained by workers, not by assistance, or “alliance” with segments of the ruling class.
- (6) Ideological uniformity is not necessary for the party to take off and grow. The existence of ideological groupings will lead to a period of “self-purification” in the practice of the party.

Workers may also not have a political organisation – a party of their own. But at each turn, organized labour, or the politically more advanced section of the labour movement, articulates the interests of the workers in relation to the existing non-labour parties. This was the case when sections of the labour movement supported the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) and Peoples’ Redemption Party (PRP) during the second republic, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) during the aborted third republic and the Alliance for Democracy (AD) during 1999 elections. The support for these parties was informed by their stated commitments to programmes of minimum wage, social welfare, etc.

This type of approach collapses as soon as the parties begin to implement the dominant perception of democracy, which is to sustain existing economic relationships. This will mean the entrenchment of poverty and inequality among workers, and between workers and the economically – politically dominant class. The case of SDP governments embarking on policies of wage cuts as was the situation in Edo State in 1993 exemplifies this and are being retrenched in large numbers. It also collapses as soon as workers begin to make deep working class demands on the party as the minimum wage agitations in many states, including the AD states, where workers are locked in battle with their governments.

Workers, as individuals, or as an organized group, may support political parties that would serve their interest and promote workers’ freedom both in the short run and long run. This is because every political party, whether it so admits or not, expresses the objectives of some social class, and fulfils them in the long, if not in the short run.

It is also possible for workers to form their own party and the party does not articulate or present a political programme adequate to the political goals and interests of workers as a class. This is why, as some argue, the existence of a labour party (or a worker’s party) is not necessarily the existence of a working class in orientation depends on the character of its programme, the degree of class-consciousness of workers, and the level of political education and practical (class) struggles in the given society.

### **8.3 Which Option?**

The model of getting workers to support ruling class parties, which promise to or incorporate some workers' demands, is not promising in the present state of the Nigerian working class. Workers' support for or alliance with existing parties (e.g. SDP, AD) has failed to advance either worker's material interests or to enhance their class-consciousness. Subordinating workers' interests to such parties has produced ethno-religious consciousness, which has become an obstruction to working class unity and solidarity, subverting the political independence and legitimate aspirations of the working class.

The example of SWAFP is very attractive. But in the historical circumstances, there does not seem to be a good deal of promise on this line. First, SWAFP emerged within the context of a powerful group of Marxist-Leninists operating as a vanguard, not deeply connected with shop-floor workers. The party of workers needed today must be rooted in the working class.

Second, it is doubtful that a party started by a few outside the framework of the general organisation of the trade unions will be able to attract the vast majority of workers away from ruling class parties.

The experience of NLC's alliance with broad forces carries with it some dangers. Most often, in Nigeria, such alliances do not help the working class to sharpen its own class-consciousness. They subordinate their class-consciousness to the interests of some groups and individuals that do not share workers' interests in the political power. Besides, it is becoming more difficult to pick out such broad forces outside the NGOs, human rights groups etc. whose proliferation has had the consequence of blunting the edges of class-consciousness.

### **8.4 Which Option?**

The best, though difficult option is that the NLC once again attempts to sponsor the formation of a political party of the working class. The broad objectives will be:

- To seek to radically restructure production relations in Nigeria as a solution to problems of poverty and inequality.
- To end the monopoly of the political terrain by social and political interests, which are opposed to those of the working class.
- To return to the efforts of political organisation of the working class under new historical conditions.

- To open a new approach to the question of political power in Nigeria, particularly when specific working class interests have been pushed to irrelevance.
- To present to Nigeria the best way of overcoming the pervasive ethno-nationalism and religious politics that have obstructed and still obstruct working class unity and national consciousness.
- To provide leadership to the other exploited classes in Nigeria

However, within the context of challenges of today, NLC shall provide a political rallying point for workers' involvement in politics.

To achieve these, NLC shall engage the political terrain through organized activities such as alliance building, networking, political lobbying, protests, etc. The focus will be to raise working class consciousness.

Commitment to NLC policies by alliance and networking partners shall be a pre-condition for NLC's sustenance and commitment to alliances and networks.

Alliance building and networking will be based on clearly identified political objectives and will be integrated into the broader objective of opening up the political terrain for wider participation. The NLC's political alliances must be informed by working class interests and working class ideology.

NLC's engagement of the political process will target the enthronement of a national government based on the principles of guaranteeing broad participation of Nigerians in decision-making process.

## **ANNEXURE**

### **1. NLC Education Policy**

#### **General Principles**

- 1.1 NLC Education must seek to build political awareness among the working class and must be geared to attain social change that deepens democracy and build a more equal society.
- 1.2 NLC Education programmes must prepare unions to adapt to new challenges. It must in addition be a tool to build organizational capacity and a way of mobilizing members.
- 1.3 NLC Education programmes must provide workers with leadership training for trade union and societal responsibilities.
- 1.4 Education should promote internal democracy, transparency and accountability within union structures. Education events should be a forum in which members could freely express their opinions.

## **Affiliate Union Structures**

- 1.1 Affiliate unions must be encouraged to show a strong commitment to union education, provide a budget, staffing and clear structures to develop and implement educational programmes.

## **Funding and Cost Efficiency**

- 1.1 NLC affiliates must strive to run education programmes, which are sustainable financially and organizationally. In order to realize cost effectiveness in the funding of education, unions must use their own facilities as well as those available in friendly institutions.
- 1.2 To ensure sufficient funding for education, unions should be encouraged to set aside at least 10% of the union's budget for education annually.
- 1.3 Some percentage of resources will be committed to women's education, which will take into account the ratio of men to women.
- 1.4 The NLC education endowment fund will be re-launched.
- 1.5 All education programmes of NLC will be jointly funded with the affiliates.

## **Women and Gender**

- 1.1 Gender issues should be integrated in all educational programmes and activities.
- 1.2 Exclusive education programmes must be provided for women members.
- 1.3 Women should make up at least 30% of participation in all non women exclusive' education activities.

## **Methodology**

- 1.1 Education courses should be designed so that the learning process is centred on the experience of the learner as an important source of information and knowledge. Active Learning Methods should be encouraged.

## **Education**

- 1.1 The NLC will promote the development of a network of education within the union nationally and internationally.

## **Evaluation**

- 1.1. There must be a process of regular evaluation of education programmes by the Education Forum and reported to the Annual Education Conference.

## **2. Policy for the Revival of the NLC Education forum**

### **The Role and Activities of the NLC Educators Forum**

#### **Policies and Programmes**

- 2.1 To formulate proposals and provide advise to the National Administrative Council (NAC) of NLC on education policy for the NLC based on the needs of the affiliates
- 2.2 To assist the NLC and affiliate union executive structures when adopting policies on education.
- 2.3 To draw up a national education calendar as proposal to NAC
- 2.4 To advice on the development and assist in the implementation of an annual NLC Education Conference to evaluate the progress of union education and plan for the year ahead.
- 2.5 To advice on and assist in the organisation of massive worker education campaigns.

#### **Education Programmes**

- 2.1. To propose to NAC a functional trade union education curriculum that is gender sensitive and class biased.
- 2.2 To assist in the development of education courses and training materials

#### **Educators**

- 2.1 To assist in the training of union educators
- 2.2 To be a forum where educators share experiences and give each other support.

#### **Women**

- 2.1 To promote the use of education to encourage women's participation in the union at all levels

## **Affiliate Unions**

To help unions identify and determine their needs and make recommendations to unions on how they develop their programmes

- To assist industrial unions to set up functional education department
- To assist in updating union's knowledge of modern techniques
- To participate in unions seminars and workshop as resource persons
- To create and sustain awareness among leadership on the importance of education
- To assist unions to locate sources of funding.

## **Composition**

The forum will gather union educators and women educators

## **Meetings**

- 2.1 The forum will meet regularly according to need and practicality
- 2.2 In 2001 the forum will hold two evaluation and planning workshops.
- 2.3 A Second Educators Conference will be set up in the last quarter of 2001 to evaluate and progress made in policy, structure and education and training programmes by NLC and its affiliates as well as develop a proposal for 2002.

## **Co-ordination**

- 2.1 The NLC Education Department will co-ordinate the operation of the Forum and be the link to the formal structures of the NLC
- 2.2 Policy on Affiliate Education Structure
- 2.3 The NLC Educator's Forum will advise and assist affiliate unions to set up appropriate internal educational structures, which should include education departments and education committee.

## **2.4 Policy on Affiliate Education Structures**

**2.5** The NLC Educator's Forum will advise and assist affiliate unions to set up appropriate internal educational structures, which should include education departments and education committee

**2.6** The NLC educators forum will develop a set of guidelines suggesting how NLC and its affiliate unions could set up basic democratic education structures that will allow for popular participation. These guidelines should be proposed to the NLC and its affiliates for adoption.

## **4. Policy on Building Africa wide and international Linkages**

The NLC Educations Forum will through the appropriate channels provide the setting up of direct link with union educators, particularly, on the African continent, for the purpose of establishing joint training courses, sharing of education materials and experiences.

## **5. Policy on a Membership Education Project**

**5.1** The NLC Educators forum will assist in developing and disseminating basic information to union members. This information should include issues such as the policies, structures and operations of the NLC and its affiliates, what the rights of members are etc. The information should be presented in appropriate media such as pamphlets, posters, newsletters, information booklets, audio and video-tapes

**5.2** NLC Education Forum will assist affiliate unions to develop basic membership information material. These materials should include information on the policies, structures and operation of NLC and its affiliate unions as well as cover issues on the economy, the political situation and general social issues.

**5.3** Women and youths will be targeted as an important part of union membership

**5.4** In implementing all of the above, the work of affiliate unions must be taken into account.

**5.5** The NLC educator's forum will explore the possibility of setting up a mass membership education campaign in the preparation for the May 1 2001 celebration and advise accordingly.

**5.6** NLC education must assist and encourage members to acquire basic education skills.

## **6. Policy on a Shop Stewards Education Project**

- 6.1 The NLC educators Forum will advice on and assist in a shop stewards education project aimed at developing education programmes for workers representatives/shop stewards at the workplace level.
- 6.2 The forum should develop systematic basic education materials for the training of shop stewards.
- 6.3 The forum should train trainers/facilitators within affiliate unions who will be able to run shop stewards training course.
- 6.4 The forum should identify and encourage the development of a delivery strategy for shop stewards training courses.
- 6.5 The forum should encourage a systematic approach to shop stewards education and discourage ad-hoc approaches. The project should build on experiences of best practice in shop stewards training.

## **7. Policy on a State Level Leadership Education Project**

- 7.1 NLC Education Forum will advice on and assist in a project aimed at providing basic education for all SAC/SEC members and women's committee members of the NLC
- 7.2 This project should be seen as both delivering education for NLC state structures and also develop a model, which affiliate unions could use to build their own state level leadership.
- 7.3 The education programme should include the following topics in the 2000 – 2001 programme.

\* NLC's New Policy direction (after the completion of the agenda setting process)

## **8. Policy on a National Level Leadership Education Project**

National leadership of NLC as well as its affiliates requires information, education and training to support them in their leadership of the union and in the process of policy formulation.

- 8.1 The NLC Educators Forum will advice and assist in a series of "Leadership Retreats" aimed at giving leadership an opportunity to reflect on key policy and organizational issues and develop their understanding and skills in these areas.

- 8.2 NLC education should prepare regular information packs for leadership comprising of publications and other documents of relevance.

**9. Policy on Union Management and Staff Education Project**

Union Management refers to national senior appointed and elected officers who are responsible for decision making on issues such as administration, staff and the control of resources. While the training of union management is a specialist task, it should be located within the principles of union education.

- 9.1 The educators' forum will be involved in the design and monitoring of all activities on management development in NLC
- 9.2 The forum will identify the specific training needs of the two categories of management i.e. national full time and elected officers and advice accordingly.
- 9.3 The forum will assist so that courses in modern financial management, information technology, democratic management practices, personnel management etc. are integrated into the training programme.

**10. Policy on Union Organiser/Field Staff Education Project**

*Union organizer and field staff are full time employees who are responsible for building the structures of the union, developing strategies to resolve members problems and representing and negotiating on behalf of members. The training here is seen as being more intensive and at an advanced level as compared to other union education.*

- 10.1 The NLC educator's forum will advice on and assist in a systemic and intensive education and training programme for organizing/field staff of the NLC and its affiliates that will help them develop both practical organizational skills as well as theoretical perspectives.
- 10.2 This programme consist of intensive national courses and shorter regionally based workshop on specific issues.
- 10.3 A research project should be initiated to develop a detailed profile of current organizers and field staff and understand what their work related needs are to that an appropriate training programme could be designed?

- 10.4 The NLC Educators' forum will assist in the dissemination of regular publications to organizers and field staff to keep them informed of developments on political, socio-economic and trade union issues locally and internationally.

## **II Policy on a Educators Development Project**

The Training of educators involves both "classroom" work as well as fieldwork. It is envisaged that the training programmes will use the projects on membership, shop stewards, state level leadership as well as women activists, as areas for practice. The educators will be drawn from the NLC and affiliate unions. This project is a direct assistance to the development of affiliate union education.

- 11.1 The NLC Educators Forum will advice on and assist in an educator development project.
- 11.2 The project should be designed in such a way that it includes both "classroom" work as well as practice in the field.
- 11.3 At the national level, at least 3 persons from each union (one of whom must be a woman) should be trained in the designs of education materials, facilitation skills and in the planning and management of education programmes.
- 11.4 At the state level, at least 4 persons from each state (one of whom must be a women) should be trained in basic facilitation skills and the use of education materials.

## **12 Policy on Education Funding**

Noting that NLC and its affiliates have limited funds and are dependent on the support of external funders. In some cases, funders carry assumptions about what is needed, which does not relate to what NLC have identified as its needs. This policy requires that the NLC always take into account its own needs and education programmes when negotiating funding

- 12.1 The NLC must make strong efforts to mobilise local funds for education
- 12.2 The NLC will strive to ensure joint funding of educational programmes between the NLC and the affiliate unions
- 12.3 This conference has defined a programme for NLC education. The NLC should use this programme as the basis for negotiating funding for educational activities with funders.