

COMMUNIQUE OF 2ND FORUM OF NNOM LAUREATES, 2008

The Second Forum of the Nigerian National Merit Award (NNMA) was organized for Laureates of the Nigerian National Order of Merit (NNOM) on 2nd and 3rd December, 2008, at the Transcorp Hilton Hotel, Abuja. The theme of the Forum was “Developing a Roadmap for the Rapid Technological and Industrial Development of Nigeria”. Participants included NNOM Laureates, Representatives of the 5 Academies and other distinguished personalities from both the public and private sectors. Resource persons included NNOM Laureates, industry players and other eminent Nigerians.

2. The objectives of the Forum were, among others, to provide yet another platform for the NNOM Laureates to network and generate ideas that could enable the country achieve her objective of becoming one of the twenty (20) most developed nations of the world by 2020.

3. In his welcome address the Chairman of NNMA Governing Board, Prof. O. S. Adegoke, NNOM, recalled thankfully the organization of the 1st Forum last year (2007). Since then the budget of the Board was increased by 300%. Government also approved the Forum to be an Annual event. A Committee was set up to actualize the Science and Technology Research Fund with strong leadership participation of the NNMA. This recommendation is ready for presentation to the Secretary to the Government of the Federation.

4. The 2nd Annual Forum was declared open by the President, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; Umaru Musa Yar’Adua, GCFR, who was represented by the Honourable Minister for Science and Technology, Chief(Mrs) Grace Ekpihwre, mni, JP.

The President remarked with satisfaction that the Governing Board of the NNMA has been able to address most of the issues raised during the 1st Forum held in 2007.

5. The Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), who was the Chief Host, commended the Governing Board of the NNMA for observing strictly the principles of fair play and transparency in the rigorous process of selecting winners of the Nigerian National Order of Merit. He further challenged the Forum to serve as “Think-Tank” to Government through generating ideas which are capable of assisting it in its policy formulation and programme implementation. The Forum was also urged to come up with implementable recommendations on how best to tackle the inhibitions working against our quest for revamping some of our decaying infrastructure.

6. The Honourable Minister for Special Duties in his remarks at the Forum, charged all the Laureates to use the Forum to proffer solutions to problems that pose as deterrent to achieving our national objectives.

7. The papers presented at the Forum ranged from those identifying roles of culture and psyche of Nigerians towards attaining rapid technological and industrial development to the roles of the Governors and the governed towards improved accountability for achieving good development performance.

Issues related to the ever dilapidating socio-economic infrastructure needed for Nigerian development were also discussed.

8. The Forum deliberated on a Road Map Towards the Technological and industrial transformation for Vision 20-2020 and also accepted the challenge by the Secretary to the Government of the Federation that it should deliberate on how Ajaokuta Steel Industry can be revived and how Agro-Allied industries can be set up tapping from our natural resources.

9. After exhaustive deliberations, the Forum identified the importance of culture and psyche of Nigerians in the transformation of the country. The overwhelming culprit for the

country's woes was identified as corruption, lack of patriotism, lack of proper planning and little commitment in working towards technological and industrial transformation.

10. To this end, the Forum discussed how the attributes of Nigerians impact on the needed transformation. These attributes such as honesty, punctuality, yardstick, excellence, patriotism and love for the country should be systematically inculcated in all Nigerians starting from the nursery, primary, secondary and tertiary institutions including the military, civil service and foreign missions as a means of achieving attitudinal change, propagating and inculcating a Nigerian psyche or Nigerian ideology. The Forum therefore recommends the establishment of an effective and purposeful national orientation body to ensure that fundamental Nigerian values are upheld in the conduct of public and private business.

11. The Laureates recommended that value should be added in the oil and gas sector and that there is need to invest in Nigerian experts for capacity building, economic planning and overall performance of all segments of the oil and gas economy.

12. The Forum observed with dismay that after 50 years of oil exploration and exploitation we do not have functional refineries to meet the needs of Nigerians.

It recommends locating and building of new refineries within the country and repair of dilapidated ones. Furthermore, the Laureates recommended that Government empowers Nigerians to explore oil and gas, to further encourage indigenisation of oil and gas exploration.

13. The devastation caused by environmental pollution especially in the Niger Delta, was recognised and the Forum recommends the setting up of a truly independent Environmental Protection Agency to help law enforcement as well as track down companies and individuals for breaches and apply commensurate sanctions and payment of compensation where necessary.

14. The Forum deliberated on industry and technology and recommended the establishment of entrepreneurial technology support infrastructure at various levels including post secondary and post-tertiary levels.

- ❖ In order to develop a knowledge based economy, it was further recommended that the people be equipped with an appropriate level of education and empowered to acquire new knowledge in science, engineering, technology, and innovation to apply knowledge in scientific, technological, industrial and economic development.

15. The Forum discussed the present status of the public sector iron and steel processing operations in Nigeria and recommended a change from the iron-making technology at Ajaokuta to that of a Direct Reduction process technology, such as the Midrex Process that obtains at the Delta Steel Plant. Such a change in technology involves some leakage but the forum is convinced that the current pursuit of blast furnace technology is uneconomical and unfeasible on the long term. On the other hand, the essential supply of gas, iron ore and electrical energy for the Direct Reduction Process are all available in Ajaokuta. There will be no need to depend on the importation of the major feedstock. What is needed now is a thorough consideration of a business plan based on this technology.

16. The Forum notes that the Delta Steel Company (DSC) was already in full operation before being sold to a private concern, the Forum recommends as follows:

- (i) The private sector is still the best mode of managing effectively and efficiently the Delta Steel Company for the benefit of Nigerians;
- (ii) Government should however, look at the terms and conditions of the sale of Delta Steel Company (DSC) to a private entity to ensure that adequate provisions are entrenched to guarantee the benefit derivable to Nigerians.

17. A Committee has been set up by the Forum of NNOM Laureates to work in greater detail and come up with more concrete and detailed recommendations on Ajaokuta Steel Company as well as establishment of sustainable Agro-Allied Industries.

- ❖ To promote Agro-Allied industries, the Forum recommends political will, sincerity of purpose in the country's leadership and total removal of corruption, to checkmate and eliminate those who benefit from failed projects. The Forum encourages Government to assemble resources to generate steady electricity needed for technological transformation.
- ❖ Communication was recognized as an important component in the socio-economic and industrial transformation of Nigeria, and the Forum recommends that Government should facilitate local production of ICT components from assemblage to manufacture.
- ❖ The private sector should also establish industries to produce different components - both hardware and software locally to make the country self-sufficient.
- ❖ Government should establish a Science Research Foundation to promote, fund and monitor all research efforts and coordinate them for advising the President on technological and industrial development.
- ❖ In this regard, the Forum recommends to Government to approve and Science and Technology Adviser to the President.

18. The Forum deliberated extensively on the health care needs of Nigerians and recommends that:

- (i) Government restore, competence and professionalism in the health service.
- (ii) Functional and modern infrastructure for clinical care be provided without delay.

- (iii) The conditions of service for health professionals and funding be made attractive to reduce brain drain.
- (iv) Primary health care, disease prevention and routine immunization be revamped, to reduce child and maternal mortality in Nigeria.
- (v). A Committee be set up to address issues of management and funding of Health Research.
- (vi) Emergency critical and intensive care facilities be available within reach of the average Nigerian.
- (vii). The regulatory bodies for health professionals be reviewed and more powers granted to them.
- (viii). Government should appoint a Health Adviser to Mr. President.
- (ix). Financial allocation to the Health Sector should be increased to 2-5% of GDP in line with World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations.

19. Finally, the Forum recommends that Government intensify efforts to ensure accountability, zero tolerance to corruption, fraud, including electoral fraud and the culture of impunity because only good governance can facilitate socio-economic, scientific and technological development that would lead Nigeria to Vision 20-2020.