**AFRICA DEVELOPMENT AND THE CRISIS OF**

**INEQUALITY: THE ROLE OF ORGANIZED LABOUR**

**By**

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**Protocol**

Let me appreciate my brother and friend, the Governor of this great State, an accomplished banker, a man who is capable of translating Italian, French, Greek languages to Igbo Language. I want to thank you so much for very warm reception you have extended to all of us. Let me of course appreciate the wife of our Late Zik of the world who is professor in her own right, an accomplished academic - Prof. (Mrs) Uche Azikiwe.

I do not like this protocol business. It is one of the things I will like to abolish if I have the power. The young man who spoke on entrepreneurship will understand what it takes to spend more time preparing the grounds for madness. But, then we do not have sufficient time to practice the madness. But I cannot but appreciate my leader, a very polished gentleman; I do not know how he is able to make it in politics, because politics and truth are like parallel lines causal. If you are too gentle, you tend not to win election. I appreciate you Senator Ben Obi for your initiative which has brought all of us together. I appreciate our very highly respected Chairman of this August occasion in the month of November, former adviser and a complete scientist in his own right, Dr. Egboga and of course, the Vice Chancellor of this Great University.

Let me appreciate my comrade from Uganda. I had a course mate at Rosten University from Uganda, his name is Emerula. In trying to understand the differences in culture, he told me how the Uganda man expresses love to his wife. He told me that one way to show that you love your wife is that when she prepares food for you and brings the food; she will have the honour of kneeling down to present the food and remaining on her knees while you enjoy the food. And if you are very angry with her, once she puts the food, you ask her to leave and then she will go and start crying because you deny her the right to show love by being on her knees while you enjoy what she prepared for you.

Let me also appreciate the Father of the day, the traditional ruler of Awka. Sometimes when people talk of traditional rulers, some people used to think that the fact of being traditional means you cannot even speak English. But, I listened to His Royal Majesty, Obi Gibson Nwosu, a member of the Order of Niger (OON), Eze-Uzu the second of Awka. We thank you for being father to all of us and for the

way you celebrated the kolanut.

When Senator Ben Obi called me weeks back and said there was a letter inviting me to this occasion and explained to me what the occasion was about, of course coming from him, as a worker, I have always known the consequences of insubordination. When the oga says you must go to Awka and talk, you rather go, because it will be cheaper than arguing, because in the end, as it is said in my tradition: *if you want to remain on your knees for a long time, argue with the oga.* So, I had no difficulty agreeing, I said sir, I will be there even before I knew all the other details. But when he went on to inform me that the past speakers here include Wole Soyinka, the author of the Merchant, then I held my breath. Then he said, Jerry Rawlings or Junior Jesus of Ghana, former president and perhaps, one of the most radical African leaders in recent past, I did not see how someone like me can fit in. And you can see the way the motivational speaker described himself, in his attempt to lead evidence to support his notion that he comes from a humble or otherwise poor family. He reminds us that his father was a tailor, which means tailors are poor. And if you listen to the citation, 'I was not just a tailor, I am organizing tailors. So, how can a man like me now, share the same platform that Wole Soyinka, Jerry Rawlings and now to compare with me, a very classy, handsome, energetic motivational speaker? Oh well, the speaker said something: *Just have confidence in yourself. Do not allow yourself to be defeated. Just go and engage, as if you are the master of the game.* That is the only reason I am still going to try to say anything. But I really do want to thank you for the honour.

As the chairman of the APC gubernatorial election committee council for Bayelsa state, where we are determined to sweep away PDP, so that APC can bring change, today is the flagging off of that campaign and as the chairman, I am supposed to be there. And so I asked myself, I had already consented to this, and this is about Zik, our own statesman, the father of founders of modem independent Nigeria, that is the man: The man who in my early days we had to gather in someone's house to listen to through a radio with very long antena that was hung on the tallest palm tree. I consider it to be an honour to speak on anything that is being done in his memory. How can I find anything more important than that? On the other hand, leaving my own commitment to ensure that Ben Obi's party does not cover any part of Nigeria, reaping them off an oil-rich Bayelsa state, where the immediate past President come from, how can I also be absent there? But you know, Sociologists will talk about role-conflicts, role-senders etcetera. I decided on this matter, either way I go, I will have a problem. But I hope that my party will understand that I could not for partisan reasons be absent, when I am given the honour to be here.

I mean there is nothing you ask me to say that professors in this University (those in the faculty of social sciences) cannot say even better. I understand the honour - that is the pride, but, I also understand that if Zik was to hear that in the name of partisan-politics, I was absent, then I do not deserve to benefit in a country that people like Zik fought so that people like us can come up. So, my being here, I have already resolved it and I will fix my consequences the way I have always done as a worker, when two bosses give me conflicting instructions at the same time.

The second one is that I told Senator Obi that I have to fly back to Abuja because I have some other matters there. But as soon as I noticed the way proceedings were going, I realized that there is no way I can now leave particularly when the chairman has decided, as if he knew what my escapable plans were. Because if I have had the privilege of speaking first, then I can at least say that I am going to ease myself, and if I don't come back, you might say I breached protocols, but I did not fail to appear here. When I look at everything, I just called him and said the way this thing is, I just have to disobey Abuja also. But, Ben, should I have problem, just pray for me that I can survive it.

Let me start by saying that when I received this invitation and the topic, I had issues even with the theme: ***AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT AND THE CRISIS OF* *INEQUALITY.***And my question is: who is complaining? Is it a problem? Inequality! Who is complaining? Because to use the word crisis of inequality, is to assume that inequality is buying itself and has even reached perhaps the crisis level. I think this might be a mistake because even in this hall, I am not sure that inequality is a problem that is unconcern to everyone; certainly not those who benefit from inequality. You want the VC to be equal to the Graduate Assistant whether in ranking and in remuneration because their needs are the same? Although by the laws of priority (and you have more scientists here), young people have better appetite than old people. But my courage to raise this issue was confirmed by one of the quotations which Sen. Ben Obi read to us from the work of the Great Zik. I think he read something like: *God so love the poor that they are more in numbers.* So if being poor God loves us, and that's why He produced more poor people, and because He hates the rich, they are fewer, how is that a problem? They have a problem with God or with absolute wisdom? I think we should problematize this assumption about inequality, whether it is good or bad, we should take it as a devil that it is bad, we need to discuss it.

I do not want to spend time discussing Zik, because we have said that in more elegant language. I do not want to discuss that. What Zik represents, why he is called the Zik of Africa, the battle that Zik and other fellow African statesmen fought was basically defined by colour, not really judging in terms of who gets what. They said: *why should a white man assume superiority over the black man?* And so, everything is about the African, African, African. And as you can see, Zik was convinced that his mission was done, when he became the first Head of State of the most populous black nation in the world. And he said what more, what is left for me? And I think he was right. And for the Union it was the same - the white man was not just the one in government in the colonial days, in a typical workplace, the white man was the general manager - the MD, supervisor, line manager etc. while the black man was the man that blow the whistle and does all the dirty part of the job. He (the white man) pockets salaries, and he uses that word even at the level of describing compensation. He reserves the word salaries for the white man and then wages for the black people. But, they mean the same thing really. But everything must be - he should not use one word to describe the privileges of the rich or what they are visa-a-vise what the poor are. But, even today we have it. Even here in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, I guess you have senior staff lobby, and we workers are being taken to the canteen. And you also look at the way the tables are ordered between the canteen and the senior staff lobby; typically the worker has fewer minutes to quickly grab his food and return to work, but the other guy has enough time to engage in conversation while eating slowly.

The issue of inequality I also believe was at the heart of the struggle of our founding fathers - a world in which people's privileges were not to be defined by colours, our rights as a people to govern ourselves. And I think his ply in that struggle was that when the black governs the black, he is much more likely to be fair than when the white man comes purely to exploit. Well, as you can see, the issue as at today is not about colour. It is true that the White came here to exploit and they are still exploiting and by the way the world economy is structured, manipulated and controlled, it is still a white man's world. Yes, we have our independence, we pay the salaries of our President, Ministers and everything, but we still do not have as much control as we assume we have in the management of our economies. And therefore, the characters of the economy are who gets what and who suffers what in the systems I think for me, let me say that the lesson for all of us here this afternoon is to recognize that we will be remembered not so much on the account of how much we accumulate while we are here, whether as chief operators of state governments, managing and having access to government resources or as private entrepreneurs (how much we accumulate in the name of profit). What appears to be more important touching lives (because Zik is being celebrated not because he was one of the millionaires in Nigeria), but on the account of his vision, commitment to public good, and his readiness to sacrifice and take all the risks that he took in the struggle for an independent nation state.

Aside the teaching of my comrade from Uganda (please do not despite that), I think we must also recognize that none of us can find satisfaction from our individual accomplishment, if we do not spare some times to spare some thoughts about the way our country is managed or mismanaged. And that no one of us can be smart enough to create sustainable comfort for him/herself, if he/she does not pay attention to the overall wellbeing of our great Nation. So, I feel for me therefore, the main lesson is that we who occupy political leadership (Willie and I in this hall), must strengthen the bridge of unity. If the Zik of Africa fought so hard

for a united Nigeria with a clear vision of the infinite possibilities that the country offers her people, our responsibility as later day leaders must not be to destroy those bridges. Today, when I look at the language of political discourse, and you compare it with the language in the sixties, I see a level of recklessness in the way current political class make pronouncement on issues that have to do with the viability of our great Country.

For me, this is the greatest country on the planet and no country will ever be greater than this one with her problems. This is the only country where no matter how big, tall, handsome you are, you cannot refuse me to stay in Nigeria. You can put me in prison in Nigeria, but you cannot take me out of this country. Any other place my status might be different, I will have to fill forms longer than the one Etham filled to get a VISA. Therefore, we must do everything to preserve the dream because we should not celebrate the Zik of Africa and undermine the project that he had the honour of presiding over.

However, at the heart of the crisis we face today which many of us in the political class will tell you push around is that Nigeria produces all the paragon, and when the people are about to close on us, they will find one language to play one poor against another poor, so that the real perpetrators who are responsible for the growing incidence of inequality and poverty can escape.

Today, it's so ambiguous to make critical pronouncement on National issues, particularly if you want to be detailed enough to identify who is responsible for what. Before you know it, the real issue on the table is changed and the matter is reduced to all kinds of sentiments. The very victims of the system are the ones who will first attack you. I just shared an example with you (referring to Dr. Willie) from Edo state, because as it is at the national level, it also prevails at the state level. Willie and I are very privileged to be entrusted with presiding over the affairs of our states, but, it is a huge challenge - people see the money, they hardly see the burden.

When the oil was flowing, maybe it was very easy, just collect the cheque and pay what you want to pay and then do whatever you like with the rest. But now, things are tough and we in Edo decided to introduce property tax - talking of inequality. And the tax is restricted to those properties. We even classify the property, not to include property owned by the poor in crowded so-called high density areas, but property located in low density, which we called in Edo QRA and you call GRA. And the children of the poor are mobilized with one hundred thousand each to go and fight this. On the subject of development, traditional economists, that focuse on economic roles and incomes as indicators of development. The assumption is that economic roles will decrease per capita income and there will be what some economists described as Jiko-die-effect.

Overtime, some other economists have sought to define development in a broader and multidimensional sense. They have posited that development must be judged by its impact on the people, not only by change in GDP, but more generally, in terms of what happens to the threesome challenges of inequality, poverty and unemployment. Essentially, development is therefore about how these are improved overtime and not just simply the abridge of a society. And I think the first speaker spoke on them a bit - problem of inequality, problem of poverty, how many people are unemployed, how can we get the young people employed and even gave some statistics on the level of unemployment in the continent.

Nigeria has enjoyed sustained economic growth - it may be higher in some years than in some other years. And sometimes, we are also assured that this growth is in non-oil sector, which means it is not just the result of good luck that we have so much of crude oil on our soil; it is the result of our progress in the area of agriculture, in the manufacturing sector etcetera, etcetera. Of course, a couple of years back, our statisticians went back to work, they calculated our GDP under a program they called Basic Economy. By the time they were done, we were assured (and I am sure we all felt good) that our country was the largest economy in Africa, and a couple of bottles of Moet, Dopreyo and other assorted drinks were toasted - we all clapped that we were truly the greatest. So when the speaker was saying what we have to do to truly be the leader, we already believe that we are truly the leader of the continent, because we are the largest economy, and end of discussion.

But try to really look at the crisis that we face. When you look at some of the turnover of some private multinational companies and compare them to the GDP of some African Countries, it tells you how far and how much we need to do to fight and defeat poverty in Africa. The revenue that accrues to VISA, for those of us who use VISA cards, some years ago was about 8.1 billion dollars. But for Zimbabwe, the entire GDP is reported at 7.5billion dollars. So, one American Company or one multinational's income is worth more than that of Zimbabwe. Well, you might say that this is the fault of Mugabe, still leading too long and maybe like every person who has overstayed his welcome, his productivity is declining and his country is paying for it.

An online book companies that sell books online was reported to have annual revenue of about 34.2 billion dollars and Kenya as a country had their total GDP for the same period as 32.2 billion dollars. So, just one American Company or one multinational has much more. Ford Motors, a popular motor company had revenue

of about a hundred and twenty-nine billion dollars, and Morocco had about GDP that totaled one hundred and three billion dollars. Belgium, a small country and their neighbour Netherlands with a population of just twenty-seven million people, has a GDP of 1.4 trillion, where the whole of Africa with about a billion people population has a GDP slightly lower than that of Belgium. So, in terms of inequality between nations, it is clear that large countries in the continent lag far behind smaller countries in Europe and America.

But the good news is that in the 2020s, we are told by our economists, people in the ministry of finance and national planning that the six world's fastest growing economies are in Africa. According to IMF in their 2013/2014 report, economic growth in Africa is expected to exceed that of all the other regions except developing Asia and other smaller countries. We are even assured that Ghana is growing faster than China, while democratic republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Mozambique are growing faster than Brazil and Russia. So, if you look at this statistics, you will agree that we are not doing too badly. Africa has also experienced some inflow of investments, including investments from new partners such as China, India, and the Golf states.

Just last week, we heard that Virgin Atlantic has pulled out of Nigeria. I am not sure how much value they were arguing in the first instance, but that was carelessly reported. But, we can also state that while it was pulling out, ArikAir is there to fill the point. And Dangote has taken cement beyond the boundaries of Nigeria to Cameroon, (they are not yet in Uganda) but they are in Zambia, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Senegal amongst others.

However, we can also find consolation in saying that if Virgin Atlantic withdraws, we also have some national airlines, Ethiopia airlines is there, South African Airline is there and so on. But in a continent of fifty-five nations, these kinds of examples are increasingly fewer and fewer. Some good news from Rwanda, the country that went through serious civil war, where over a million people were killed, but they managed to recover from that. They now have a leader that they are proud of. The last time I met a young man from Rwanda, I asked him whether he was Hutus or Tutsis and he told me that he does not understand what I am asking. He knows that he is from Rwanda - that's it. That's how far their constellation has gone. They just realized that they are just Rwanda. I just hope that we realize that we are just Nigerians – full stop. So that we start to rebuild the country that will offer hope to everyone as our first National anthem says: *even though our tribes may differ, in brotherhood we shall stand.*

Now, let me abandon a lot of this poor attempt at making an academic presentation and discuss what I think you and really falls into this lecture.

The statistics we see do suggest that we are not really making progress. We do more talking but by the result, we are not working at all and we actually celebrate false figures. You know, Willie and I as governors when we commission public toilet, we are quick to tell the people that this is the dividend of democracy. And it is across the country. When the tractor breaks down for some five years due to the neglect of the civil servant (the ministry of works) and the governor goes there, puts some new second-hand tyres, starts it and puts the ribbon round it, and then cuts it before them. The news will be that his Excellency has commissioned a number of tractors, we are ready for agricultural revolution as part of what we called dividend of democracy. But, the statistics that I see appear lie to all of the claims.

Democracy is not delivery of prosperity, it is reducing inequality and making space for popular participation. Like I used to say when I was in the NLC when we resolved to certain tactics, and were accused of undermining peace and stability, and conducting ourselves in a way that is likely to lead breakdown of law and order, and police are busy trying to arraign us before magistrate court: I always said that if you have the right to oppress and to cheat, and to materially deprive me, you cannot have the power of choosing for me how I react to the oppressive environment. The oppressor cannot detect to the oppressed how the oppressed should express his rejection of his particular condition.

Now look at these numbers - a study by African Development Bank, (this is owned by state, not individual mischief makers) found that people who are earning more than twenty dollars a day, constitute less than five percent (5%) of the population of sub-Saharan Africa and they account for about nineteen percent (19%) of all the income. Conversely, the poorest segments that earn less than two dollars a day (it's about five hundred naira now - courtesy of devaluation), constitute about sixty-six percent (66%) of the population and they account for about thirty-six percent (36%) of national income. The middle-class which comprised those earning between four and ten dollars (that is the lower middle class), and the upper middle class which earn between ten dollars and twenty dollars constitute about thirteen percent (13%) of the population and they account for about twenty-one percent of our income.

As I was coming here trying to look at my four-figure table (in our time, we were not allowed to use calculator), I looked at the salary of a professor. (Professors are the oppressors in the University, they are at the top. I do not want to talk about the lower level, senior lecturers, lecturers, and graduate assistants). And before you become a professor in Nigeria, you must have put in several, several years - Most professors 'if they are lucky' are in their early forties, very few are likely to make it before thirty. Some are in their early fifties. If as a professor, you earn about five hundred thousand naira a month, and the month used to be thirty-one days. And you divide your five hundred thousand naira by thirty-one days, and then, you divide it by eight hours a day, you will find out that the hourly wage of a Nigerian professor is like the minimum wage of the least paid people in part of the United States. So, if you use dollar as a basis of measuring our poverty situation, there is so much poverty even within the seemingly top echelon of the upper-middle class.

But there are also other interesting statistics that for me gets the story more clearly. In Nigeria, as you know, our economy has been rebased, and we are now the largest economy in Africa with the GDP weighing over five-hundred billion dollars. And we are even projected to be among the world's twentieth largest economies by the year 2030.You know, we change our goal-posts all the time. I was a very proud member of vision 2000 under Abacha and then we were supposed to ensure houses for all by the year 2000, education for all by the year 2000. When it came, we were asked to manipulate our system to go with the new digital reality and then we shift the goal-post to 2010. I was a member of vision 2010, with all the big players in the private sectors, government ministers, I was there as a labour man to spy on them. We were sure that by 2010, we would be one of the world's largest economies, but then ten years looked far. By the time we were approaching 2010, somebody decreed that it is now 2020 and now the new forecast is that by 2030, we will be among the world's twentieth largest economies. So we were like a debtor who thinks tomorrow is far. But the figure I see here (they are not my making) are very worrisome. It says that, firstly, in the last sixteen years official statistics show that Nigerian economy has enjoyed sustained growth of between five to seven percent (5-7%), sometimes it was higher and we are also proud that we have a population of a hundred and eighty million people, some say a hundred and seventy million, but you know, it depends on what we want to achieve. If Willie and I are to make submission to the next population people, we will say that our population has grown, that women are more fertile, so that our revenue allocation will increase. So, I guess this number will always be an estimate for a very long, longtime.

But, we are a hundred and eighty million people, (that is a huge market), and a lot of these hundred and eighty people are very young resourceful people. But yet, even as we celebrate our being the largest, absolute poverty in Nigeria from recent statistics are extremely worrisome. It suggests that those who are earning or living on less than one dollar a day (one dollar is now two hundred naira or one hundred and ninety-eight naira officially) is about fifty-five percent (55%) of our population. No, it has increased from fifty-five percent (55%) to sixty-one percent (61%) by 2014, I do not know what the figures are now. But, during the same period, the Fortune Magazine reports that Nigeria has about sixteen thousand millionaires and forty-four percent (44%) emerged over the past six years. The number is likely to increase to about twenty-three thousand by 2017. The Magazine also insists that about nine thousand five hundred of these millionaires live in Lagos. But that does not mean that they are Lagosians anyway.

In some other countries, you could use taxation. Like when I was in the Union, this was something that was of primary interest to me. To try to understand how for example we can describe the developed countries like Sweden. They have a very robust social system and the level of inequality is so skewed, compared to the rest of Europe. Yet, the same literature tells you that only about eight families own most of the big companies in Sweden. So, how can few people own the means of production, producing Volvo and all the other high-class product, and therefore dominating the economy, yet they achieved that degree of almost equality through the instrument of taxation. So, go and make the money in the name of Volvo, but you will drop a lot of that to the state. And the state uses that to create a robust social system. But, when you have an environment in which from Edo state to Anambra state, Enugu state, Lagos state, with headquarters in Abuja, people showing you their jets, but they have no business addresses if they have anybody they employed, they are the ones they usually call PA's and SA's, one to carry Nokia Phone, the other one MTN, the other one GSM or GLO.

So for me, the issue of inequality in Nigeria is so problematic. Academicians can manage it by trying to look at number, but, always remember that those are numbers based on what can be disclosed. Unfortunately, if you cannot measure what cannot be disclosed, you are far from the answer. And when what is not disclosed is much more than what is disclosed, then, the situation is completely a futile exercise to try to understand the real nature of inequality in our country.

I have seen a young man who was a tailor like me, just few years back. But, within the same period that is covered here (under four years) he now has two beautiful jets - whether they are Bombardier or Challenger. And how does he describe it, because he cannot even pronounce the name of the Aircraft. He tells his PA to tell the pilot of the shorter aircraft (because he has two, one is shorter, one is large) *na that one 1 wan use this evening,* so *go tell the pilot. But, when I return, the other longer one na him I go use when I will go Uganda.* But for the professor here, if your salaries have been paid, and if it was paid before the end of this month, it cannot be true. The ones in Benin were not paid before the end of the month. So, on one hand, there is so much poverty everybody can feel, on the other hand, we have so much on-hand income everywhere.

**What is the role of the unions in dealing with this?**

Again, for me there are no easy answers. When I was the President of the NLC, I fought battles with the president who had a lot of will and guts. I won't be able to mention his name because I do not remember the name. But, actually it is a matter of courage. And we fought over for example issues of subsidy and I do remember very well the numbers were 20 billion, 30 billion, 40 billion, I think the worst year was probably about 60 billion naira. And he argues without merit, why should we not spend this money building roads? And we just go and give it to people to fuel their big cars, their SUV, drive around town, why should we be doing that? So, I am going to withdraw this. I am going to increase the price and withdraw the subsidy and put this money into every other thing. When my business as a Union man is to strive to understand and trouble the oppressor. And I said look, you have the Economists who are your advisers, you can only talk of subsidy when you relate price to cost. When your price is higher than your cost, no subsidy exists. So, if it costs us about four to eight (4-8) dollars to produce a barrel of crude, you can sell at the international market at fifty or sixty dollars. And if your cost of production is under twenty dollars, if you sell it at thirty dollars a litre, translating to less than maybe 25 dollars a barrel, you cannot talk of subsidy. Because the reason the right-quick Economist does not believe in subsidy was that he argues correctly that it's not suitable because somebody will have to look for money to keep paying for it when you are selling below your cost. But, when you are selling above your cost, you cannot talk of subsidy. And therefore, I do not believe there is a subsidy. And I also argue that it makes some sense in my village setting that when the family produces ten tubers of yam, he does not tell the children that look, because the value of this tuber of yam is high in the market, therefore you will not eat it at home. You will eat, if you have something left, you go and sell. But, you do not sell and come home and starve the people.

My final argument was. No, you have the capacity to mop up revenue, but you do not have capacity to deploy the revenue you have mopped up in a way that will deliver relief to every villager that constitute the forgotten majority in our country. You are going buy some buses for mass transit. Even the cost of living is not the cost of going to work and returning from work - that is simplifying complex matters. In my village, you cannot help my people with mass transit because the bus cannot go to my father's farm. The typical car he uses is the old 404, with a terrible carburetor and it consumes more gasoline than the fuel injector that you find in the Honda car that they typically drive in the city. So, giving me mass transit does not address my challenges. And when you look at my spending pattern, a lot of it goes for food. So, if the cost of moving that food from village to the market goes up and then you give me a relief through transport to work, you have not solved half of my problem. Of course, he was not persuaded and we had to fight him. I cannot remember how many times, but we fought him hard enough that he made a national broadcast and said exactly the way in Zambia, Dawda told Chidoba that the word president is really reserved for the president of Zambia -President Dawda. And so, the Zambia trade union president was called Chairman general, because the word president is reserved for Dawda alone. But look at what has happened and try to understand. You know unions fight for something, which in the short run appear to be a solution, but in the long run, the ruling class turns it around, and converts it to a vehicle for very primitive and dirty accumulation.

In the course of engaging the former president, he set up a committee, the guy from Lagos, retired now 'it does not matter', he was the first chairman of the PPRA. It is the outcome of our conversation that the president agreed that he is going to set up a Petroleum Price Regulatory Agency, to ensure that there is some regulation. Because, we said that if you leave the people at the mercy of the market, the market is like a beast, if you do not tame it, it can consume everybody around it and feed only few owners. And PPRA was set up but what has happened? That same PPRA which was the outcome of our robust engagement (we and government) on the need to protect local consumers in the effect of high price of petroleum products, the same vehicle became the tool for massive looting, such that everybody became a subsidy player. There is no state in the federation including Edo, including Anambra that does not have beneficiaries. There is no need to be afraid to say it because you all know it is true. People now make money, courtesy of the same PPRA. And there is no way the statisticians can capture that. But when you talk of minimum wage, even professors want to benefit. That is not really the logic of minimum wage in the market economy. The minimum wage just address an attempt to protect those who are the lowest on the ladder and who might be working on sweat-shops and who do not have the number and the power of trade unions to engage in collective bargaining to redistribute the fruits of their labour. But for some reasons in Nigeria, when you jack up the minimum wage, everybody says they want their own. But I think part of the reasons is that what is happening now, you adjust the minimum wage, you increase everybody's salaries from level one to level seventeen (1-17) and then you wait for ten years, and everybody gets angry, everybody is counting his loses, and everybody is going through all kinds of pain, and then you come back one night and one day you want to increase the minimum wage, everybody will say look, I want consequential adjustments either in relative terms or in absolute terms. Otherwise, in other times you will adjust minimum wage, and the other levels of income are a function of negotiation between the employer and employees. I then find that what organized people seem to be doing has been to try to respond to the crisis by saying okay, people are taking so much, but you also increase our own. Unfortunately, this can produce negative outcome even for the working people. When you succeed in pushing up the bottom, and everybody else gets increased share of the national cake, leading to huge increase in personnel cost for the private sector business, there are challenges. You can't increase your profit. It's almost impossible, except you operate in a sector in which you have complete monopoly. But, in a comparative sector, competition compounded by the fact that you are not just competing with businesses located here, you are also competing with businesses located in China, and under the ECOWAS monocle. You are also competing with businesses that may not be existing in our neighbouring countries, but they just have the market shop where they ship goods, change the label to make them look like they are produced in West Africa, and then you ship them to Nigeria without paying the requisite duties.

So, the conventional truth of trade union to redistribute wealth in the Nigerian environment right now in my view is not enough. Because, it is not able to deal with the undeclared income, and unless you can deal with that, you will not go anywhere.

**Now, how do we deal with the undeclared income?**

Everybody understands and everybody talks about how much the system is breeding and we can even see the beneficiaries of that breeding. I have talked about those two hundred people who have private jets, who have no business addresses. In my view, the unions can insist, and they should insist that if you have a private jet, to start, you must produce your tax clearance, which must indicate how much you had, to explain how you are able to buy the jet. You do not even have to go through the code of conduct because that one is limited to those who agree to do government suffer-head jobs. But, if you are not just a civil servant and you agree to be a post paster, you do not need to go through those codes. So, if you ask each of the owners of those jets, you publish their tax receipts to see how much tax they pay because people do not pay tax on what collect under the table, you will be able to see that you do not need to go through rocket-slides to understand how few people loot the economy. There are several lecturers here lecturing every day, your total income put together; one subsidy boy will pocket it by doing his conversation through a cell phone (coded one) with somebody in PPRA and somebody in petroleum resources.

Another is the issue that our Guess Speaker was trying to address. Too many of our young people right now believe that, because we know from social science that the human being is rational, and the behaviour of one person can influence the thinking and the orientation of another. So, if you come from a small village like mine, where everybody knows everybody, everybody knows everybody's great grandfather and everybody's history and the young man who refused to go to school, or could not even pass primary school, but he managed to climb Mooluo and he got to Abuja and he ended up in Abuja. And you managed to know that while in Abuja, he was not really doing anything, he probably started by doing PP work, organizing and identifying people and connecting them between University of Abuja and Asokoro and Maitama and before you know it, the man is packing a jet at Enugu Airport. And then he comes home (apology, your royal majesty), the Traditional Ruler gives him a title, and if the title does not exist in history, he creates it. And then there is a big ceremony to celebrate the confinement of this title, network advertorial, full page newspapers, and congratulatory messages. Couple of persons has called me couple of times to ask that I should allow my name to be used for a congratulatory message. And I said, what comfort does that offer you? They said: *ooh, if they said, comrade is congratulating on the confinement of a chieftaincy title, it shows that he has big friends.* And of course the media go round to tell you that such and such a person is going to be given chieftaincy title, congratulate him. And they go collecting those adverts, and so much money goes under.

So for me, the crisis of dealing with inequality in our Country requires that we have a more structured conversation on some of the fundamentals. And these conversations should cut across political class, across political parties. Moreso, you can be PDP today, tomorrow you are APC, next tomorrow you are CAN. So, we must go beyond partisan platform to really try and find solution.

I think as it is today, we all can see how the young people are reacting. Their method might be good, it might be senseless, and it might even be one that will compound their problems. But, sociology tells us that people will react to their situations on the basis of how they define it, not how you define it. And so, we are going to be able to understand in the long run, how we are going to tame the problem of kidnapping, bokoharam and all the other protests. I have seen my brother 'Willie' sometimes (I testify that I believe when I hear people say hardworking governor) working so hard that you carry a bulldozer to bring down a very beautiful storey building, not because it offends the right of way, or that it was built without government permission, but I have read from papers and I believe what I read (if it is not true, blame the editors), that the house was used by kidnappers. How many houses are we going to pull down? How many prisons are we going to build?

Day before yesterday, people were trying to understand: *if advanced countries are facing these kind of terrorist attacks and* so *on, what* is *the hope for us as Nigerians who are already having this bokoharam?* But what one of the panelists was saying made a lot of sense to me, and he said: *how do we give the average Nigerian (the forgotten rural majority) some incentive not to find dying as ending his pain.* Because right now, there are really a lot of Nigerians who believe that death can only bring an end to their pain. And he spoke to the condition in which many of our brothers died and why poor people are ready to offer cover. And he argued and I agree absolutely that we have to revisit how we apply our public funds in the area of education.

The speaker talked to us about the opportunity that exists. He talked about the brain. The brain can be as useful or as useless, depending on the amount of investment and the nature of investment we have made to develop that brain. Now, when you have a young population whose brain is not even properly developed, that also pose serious crisis. Or you have an educational system that is actually de-skilling young people – I used the word de-skilling because when you go to school or University, you are supposed to acquire skills. The former speaker gave some examples, and it is real that you can have a Masters degree in business administration without ever managing a tomato factory, I mean even where you sell kolanut. It's a fact and we are going to produce more of that this year even in this University. It is the truth. They are going to produce the same in the University of Benin, so it is not something peculiar to you. It's also happening in Edo state. So, we have to agree that this is where we are. Because, if we do not appreciate that this is where we are, and that where we are is not where we should be, we are never going to think of how to get out of where we are.

So, I think that now that CHANGE is here; I am not talking because I belong to APC. I am not afraid and I am not shy in saying that, what we have suffered in sixteen years was not the promise of democracy, and the statistics I have shared with you shows that democracy has not worked for the ordinary man, if more people are getting poorer. We are having children who are being taught under the tree, even in the South. I have seen classroom that I will not put a pig in Southern Nigeria, not to talk of any other parts. Let me talk of our part. When I got to Edo state, I found classrooms with no roof, potholes inside the classroom and in some, trees growing there. The Edo child sitting on the floor and we were now producing miracle centres. You know we have to interrogate WAEC and NECO and I have fought them because of the statistics they are giving. So we do not end up celebrating what is not real. We were given second position this year by the way. So we are doing very well, I mean if that is it. So, I am not talking, I mean, we took third position year before the second, and I said we will take first. But, to be honest, we need to revisit the basics. How can you put in the twenty-first century, in African largest economy, you still have our children sitting on concrete floor, using black board? In Edo we are phasing out blackboard and replacing them with white board because the world is using marker not chalk anymore and the child grows up feeling inferior.

Somebody says that I believe that it does not matter when you wake up, even the concept of you are late is weighable. If you were to start work at 8am, and somehow you got drunk and you woke up at 10am and you are determined to do 8hours work, you still can do it. When the man who woke by 8am and started working at 8am goes by 4pm, you who started by 10am should be ready to close at 6pm. Each of us can still add eight hours. So for me, we do not have to be detained by our failed past, but we must learn correct lesson from that failed past, so that we can stabilize today and start to rebuild from tomorrow. All of us must fight against the attempt by the political class to use ethnicity to play one section of the poor, against another section of the poor.

What difference does it make to an Igbo poor man, if the man who is stealing the money is an Igbo man and does not share the money with him? My state has produced two former vice presidents as military; has it banished poverty from Edo? While they were there, I got to Edo that produced those two vice presidents, and the Edo child was on the floor. We had a situation where you have some people to the left - primary one and primary two to the right in the same enclave and the teachers alternate. And parents resorted to miracle centres because they want their children to come to Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, but to get admission you must have certain number of credits. Since they were not taught and the poor want their children to become doctors, engineers, sociologists, motivational speakers, the only way they can get admission is to fool the admission system by showing a paper that says you met the requirement, you need miracle centres. This is not miracle centres manned by pastors, this is just manned by very smart guys who developed some systems that connect WAEC or NECO with parents, PIA, and then with a centre designated for that purpose. But, the good news is that we have chased the guys out of town. We have replaced those dirty pig houses they call schools with modern classroom. And I insist that the beginning of a people to have the confidence they need to engage is that we must make sure that we do not create conditions that will make the children of the poor to feel inferior from birth; because when you trace the source of inequality, you will find out that just by being born by a professor, you are already in a professorial class. By the same logic, by being born by a stranded motor boy in Onitsha market, you are already a motor boy until you bail yourself out of that class. So, inequality starts from birth. And so, if we do not create a platform that will enable those who have the talents to take advantage of education, develop their brain and compete, the poor, the labourer will give birth to another labourer, to another labourer, to another labourer, which will lead to the dynasty of the poor. And that is the condition that prevails in many of our states.

Until we have a country where the governor's child can go to public school, let no one pretend that we have arrived; because, in the days of Azikiwe, ministers’ children were in government schools, University of Ibadan, University of Nigeria Nsukka and so on. Today, if a minister has his child here it means his ministry is not so juicy, otherwise, he will not put his child here. Even we the labour leaders, when we can escape, we send our children out. I feel we must agree that Nigeria has to go into serious reflection, restore integrity to public school, give the child of the poor exactly the same opportunity as the child of the rich.

Last year during the last independent anniversary, we organized a debate between children from so-called high profile school and children from Edo state owned government school. And I was proud to see that those ones from government schools did better and they won. What of if..We have free education? If you give me free lunch and when I open the plate, it's just marshy something, I look at the second plate called soup, it's just something coloured - the key nutritional things are not there, and you tell me it's free that I should eat it. You can compare the prison to the former. As a free born, if you give me food it should have all the ingredients and the nutritional value that food should contain. But, what is going on around the country is not exactly that. We are building a dangerously class society and everybody resorts to private escape route. If the national carrier is dead, everybody buys his private jet. If the roads are bad, we find a way to escape.

So, I want to say that in the spirit of Zik, who wanted equality, who wanted the black man (Nigerians) to preside over the affairs of Nigeria, and expressed high level of fearless concern for the deprived segments of society, we must wake up. Nigeria can do better than we are doing. As I was coming here, I engaged the guy that was sitting next to me in discussion and said: if you look at the statistics we make here, what are they now that many states cannot pay salaries. In Edo we are paying because for me, you know, salaries is not what you pay because the Oga is kind, even the Bible says that the labourer is entitled to his wages, he who work should feed. But the Bible also says that he who does not work has no right to food. So, Government cannot accept, I mean it is unacceptable that our crisis get to a level where it has become a way of life. That for months, a labourer who is paid forty thousand naira or an assistant director earning three hundred thousand naira or a professor comes home to tell the children why they cannot eat or tell the landlord he has to wait for next month. But landlord's one is good because they do not have much choice. When nobody is paid, if he gives you quit notice, there is nobody that is going to park into the house because the other guy too is also being owed. So that is fine. But, you cannot go to the tomato market and tell the tomato seller that as condition be give me some tomato free. And because Government is a huge employer, it must take the single largest employer of labour. The crisis in the public sector with regards to salary is a very dangerous viscous circle. If you do not pay the salaries, the worker cannot pay his rent, the widow whose husband left the house behind and who rented the apartments to survive is going to starve because tenants cannot pay, the market that is organized around those with small purchasing power is depressed because the real active people in the market are salary earners and because they are not paid they are not patronizing the market. You have a very dangerous viscous circle. The result is some of the increasing levels of crime and criminality and all kinds of questions that are dysfunctional.

But, in Edo we are not lamenting, we are engaging. We have issues. This week, you would have seen some battles that I am fighting with some powerful people. But for me, if the poor must survive, the rich must cry – I believe in that. To think that you are going to keep the rich comfortable, the poor will remain in pain. And all of us who have the privilege of staying in authority should use it more creatively, not only to put an end to corruption, but also to fundamentally reddress an economic system that produce very few billionaires and millionaires, and denying more and more people from thirty-four percent in the sixties (60s) to about

sixty-one percent (61%) in 2014. If that number continues, those who have something to live for become fewer and fewer and those who have nothing to live for keep on increasing - the Nigeria state cannot be stable even if you triple our armed forces.

I learnt from the DRO declaration in 1998 or something like that, that poverty anywhere is defect to prosperity everywhere. It is therefore the interest of the rich to rethink and the interest of we the political elite to re-strategize to give the poor a basis to remain royal to the Nigerian nation state. The reason I do not want to die is

that I have something to live for, if pain is all that the future promised me, the earlier I am cured of it, the better. So, if death is the only way to end our pain, how can anybody have security?

So, Obiano and I have the duty to engage our brothers in the other states and our big man in Abuja. Nigeria cannot continue the way it has been in the last sixteen years. It is not a political statement; it is a statement of reality. We must ensure that there is relationship between efforts and rewards. And the Nigeria state must offer hope and we must restore the ladder that made it possible for an orphan to become president. We have no right to destroy it. Those who are governing and who have presided over Nigeria were not products of private school. And therefore, it borders on ingratitude that the system that produced us no longer exists for people of my own background to rise to become a governor. Because if there is no public school, nobody from my village can be a governor again - may I not be the last man to be a governor from my village. And the way to do that is to start doing things differently from today.

I want to thank you for the privilege. I have cancelled my going to Abuja today and I think whatever we do in the name of Zik is worth doing because he was truly a great man.