

"How Best to Empower Nigerians to Free Themselves from Bad Governance, to Reshape Nigeria and Nigerians"

Keynote Speech/Address

by

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The future is bright: We are currently going through a period of great significance and opportunity for our great country Nigeria. Many changes and plans are being put in place to transform our nation. This event is remarkably important as it is taking place on the cusp of Independence Day celebrations.

Our country turns 52 on Monday, and so there is no better moment to look forward. We need to transform Nigeria into a leadership nation which is looked up to by others. The leadership which we require in this instance is one which will set aside its personal and short term vested interests and work for the nation, for public interest and for the public good.

There is a wise African saying that 'a leader is he who tells his people what they must hear, not what they want to hear.' Good governance in Nigeria should be based on best long term and sustainable policies, not short termist political gimmicks that hardly live beyond an administration's span. Democracy should be based on debate about policies and how to do the best thing, however difficult, including how to provide the rights, freedom, opportunities, services and prosperity for the people.

Everyone is a leader:- If as we have discussed, to achieve timely success in the goal of transforming our country, we need good leadership, the next question must surely be, who is a leader. We must note here that governance is collective therefore each and every one of us is a leader. We must therefore naturally display pockets and attributes of the qualities discussed above. It is an overwhelming dose of these pockets of good behaviour that add up to determine which country is great and prosperous, and which is dysfunctional- it is known as

citizen leadership. The Rotary Club International (RI) has been at the vanguard of 'citizen leadership'. Citizen leadership is a self regulatory exercise, involving habitual and recurrent good behaviour. There is no better KPI for monitoring self regulated good behaviour than the Rotary 4 way test of the things we think, say or do;

- i. Is it the truth?
- ii. Is it fair to all concerned?
- iii. Will it build goodwill and better friendship?
- iv. Will it be beneficial to all concerned?

This Herbert J. Taylor's 1932 classic code of human ethics have guided many nations to greatness, by shaping the individual. I remember as a student, the efforts of the Rotaract club at positively engineering the mindset of youths, who were to be the future leaders of the nation. I salute this club for its vision and tireless mission.

Following from 'citizen leadership', we can now deduce that freeing ourselves from bad governance, entails freeing ourselves from our individual bad behaviours. We as citizens need to change from apathy to enthusiasm. We need to ensure that our voices are heard and that we are concerned with what happens to this nation. It is only when we take on this responsibility that we can truly reshape the governance of Nigeria. The Rotary Club of Abuja must continue

to show by their behaviour their laudable intent to rid the nation's capital, and by implication, the nation at large of bad governance.

Scaling up citizen leadership; At macro levels or collective stages, citizen leadership transcends into getting our democratic values and processes right. Part of that is the process inside each party to choose candidates for the Presidency, National Assembly and Governorship, state Assembly, local Government chairmen and councillors. This is what is called internal democracy. Party primaries should be transparent and democratic, bringing forward credible candidates.

The new leadership of the Rotary Club of Abuja must instil good governance practices in their club. You can start small within this body and the good governance practices you imbibe within this organisation can serve as an example to the wider society.

Good governance also necessitates that in the arena of elections and voting, a fair and honest process in which every vote counts is developed. It requires the police to give impartial and good security for all candidates and for all voters. It means making sure the results of voting are published at the polling stations. It means transmitting the results honestly up the chain, with no defrauding of results by local and State government authorities on the way. So, good leadership and governance at all levels of government is essential. In summary it means ensuring that the people who are supposed to vote do vote; that their votes are counted honestly, rather than tampered with; and that the final result is the true one and

comes from the bottom up, not the top down.

Are all the politicians at all the levels willing to promise that only the true result will be respected? Civil society should hold them to that. And civil society needs to be objective too, working for the national interest.

I use this medium to encourage the leadership and members of this time-tested, noble club to do things right. The importance of good governance cannot be overstated. It permeates all aspects of our relationship with each other and with our international friends and partners.

Nigeria must start being demanding on politicians to show good leadership in the interest of Nigeria's future. Good actions and performance, not just talk, are essential. If there is an attitude of 'business as usual', if there is poor performance instead of working for and implementing international standards in the governance process, that would be very unfortunate for Nigeria, for its standing and for its influence in Africa and the wider international community.

As we have premised, good leadership, governing well in any organisation or country is a broad responsibility. We have a tremendously diverse and dynamic country and derive unity and strength from such diversity. Diversity of ethnicity, diversity of religion, language, geography and cultural tradition is what makes us who we are. We are lucky, and yet we have failed to make the most of the potential that lies in diversity.

Wise leadership at all levels is needed in the country, whereby leaders are servants of all the people, irrespective of individual background or ethnicity or religion; where the rule of law and fair play is extended to all; and where dialogue and mutual respect are the basic values.

Just like democracy itself, peace has to be maintained and constantly worked for. The moment we collectively 'take our eyes off the ball' and focus on divisive factors is the moment manipulation and mistrust ensue. I would urge all Nigerian leaders, starting with the 2012/2013 Rotary District 9125 President, to reach out proactively to fellow Nigerians so that common ground and mutual interest is found and trust is built. Continual dialogue between Nigeria's diverse groups, together with a free and fair electoral process, will help Nigerians move forward together.

As it currently stands, legitimate and selfless participation in government is low because the citizens perceive it as irrelevant to their lives. In the absence of the support of the civil society, the effective power of government is eroded. Patron-client relationships take the primacy over the formal aspects of politics such as the rule of law, well-functioning political parties, and a credible electoral system. There are two major governance issues that have proven to be debilitating impediments to development. One is the lack of participation and consensus – building, that is the lack of a sense of national community. Meaningful development and political stability require the collective identity of the citizenry. Where this is lacking, well-meaning development projects are regarded with

suspicion, indifference or even hostility and at best, as an exploitative resource, something to be taken advantage of rather than something to be committed to.

Secondly and closely related to this, is a gaping lack of accountability and transparency. This has a grave effect on development, as corruption and inefficiency are concealed; as observed with the spate of cost inflated, but often abandoned projects.

These governance issues have produced a baneful structure in an environment that engenders instability in the political system as the people yearn for the elusive dividends of good governance.

People might assume that only politicians in government are corrupt. Most often, bureaucrats provide the templates for perfected corruption. In fact, most corrupt practices are only exposed by bureaucrats when they are excluded from sharing in the proceeds. Thus, corruption in government cannot be a unilateral action. Therefore, corruption manifests in all facets of governmental activities - contracts, the allocation of benefits, collection of public revenues, and judicial pronouncements. Officials involved in performing these duties partake at one stage or the other, in the abuse of the processes.

The main factors that engender corruption are value of wages and salaries, presence of strong opportunities and awareness of how to perpetrate corruption, weak measures against accountability, population, natural resources wealth, lack of political will and indecisive pressure and assistance from the global community. These corruption- enhancing factors vary from one culture to the other and from one political system to the other. One key point to note, however, is that it is

possible to identify an act of corruption when it is perpetrated irrespective of cultural or political background.

Good governance could be accomplished when the operation of government is in line with the prevailing legal and ethical principles of the political community. When this is the situation, system effect will be high, and the people would collectively aspire to participate in the activities of the state, knowing that adherence to the rules and procedures would serve the interest of the greatest number of the population. Deprivation of benefits and selective justice would not be encouraged, as individuals' rights would be protected within the ambit of the law. Political leaders would hold dear the watchwords: transparency and accountability in governance.

Politically, people may disagree about the best means of achieving good governance, but they quite agree that good governance is absolutely imperative for social and economic progress.

Good governance, as a concept, is applicable to all sections of the society such as; the government, legislature, judiciary, media, private sector, corporate sector, trade unions and lastly non-government organisations (NGOs).

Public accountability and transparency are as relevant for the one as for the other. It is only when all these and various other sections of society conduct their affairs in a socially responsible manner that the objective of achieving larger good of the largest number of people in society can be achieved. This is what we all need to individually strive toward; it is called 'citizen leadership.' Kindly, the

Rotary club has provided us a KPI for measuring our evolution towards this ideal state of being- the timeless 4 four way test.

Finally, I am very pleased to be a guest of the Abuja chapter of this great club. You are a key body and your presence here in this city is strategic, important and significant. I wish you well.

Thank you.

Dr. Sam Amadi.

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