

6th QUADRENNIAL NATIONAL DELEGATES CONFERENCE (NDC) 2022

WELCOME ADDRESS PRESENTED BY:

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OF

AMALGAMATED UNION OF PUBLIC CORPORATIONS,
CIVIL SERVICE TECHNICAL AND RECREATIONAL
SERVICES EMPLOYEES (AUPCTRE)

TO THE

6TH QUADRENNIAL
NATIONAL DELEGATES CONFERENCE (NDC)
HOLDING AT CRISPAN SUITES AND EVENT
CENTER, JOS, PLATEAU STATE

ON 24TH and 25th MARCH 2022

PROTOCOL

On behalf of the National Governing Council (NGC) of our great Union AUPCTRE, I welcome you to the opening session of the 6th Quadrennial National Delegates Conference (QNDC) holding in this great Tin city and home of peace and tourism, Jos, Plateau State.

I want to specifically use this unique opportunity to warmly welcome His Excellency, the Executive Governor of Plateau State, Rt. Honourable Simon Bako Lalong and his entourage, Honourable distinguished Minister, Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment, distinguished invited Guests, Labour Associates, members of the Fourth Estate of the realm and Comrade Delegates to this great occasion.

The Union is highly honoured by the esteemed presence of the President of Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Comrade Ayuba Wabba mni, other erudite labour leaders and our great partner, the Corporate Accountability and Public Participation Africa (CAPPA).

I am also highly delighted to welcome to this Conference, the founding fathers and veterans of this Union who have spent the greater part of their time working assiduously to advance the interest of the Union and the up-liftment of Nigeria workers at large. I remain grateful for your untiring efforts

I must specially recognize the presence of our International distinguished invitees who inspite of the scourging COVID-19 pandemic find it expedient to grace this auspicious occasion with their presence. Of note; is the representative from the Public Services International (PSI) global office in France as well as the Africa/Arabic Regional Office in Lome, Togo.

Similar gesture is also extended to Organization of Trade Union of West Africa (OTUWA), Public Services Workers Union of Ghana Trade Union Congress as well as other esteemed International guests.

Your Excellency, distinguished invitees, this Conference is holding at a critical time of world history where Nigeria and indeed the entire world is faced with a pandemic health challenge occasioned by Corona Virus disease otherwise referred to as COVID-19. The effect of COVID-19 pandemic has caused massive changes in our daily lives, changes that have often happened rapidly and abruptly. Life adjustments often come with a wide range of experiences and emotions. Before we know it, we have reluctantly let go of our old normal and now settling into what seems to be a “**new normal**”. Even when society starts up again, there could still be restrictions as we are facing fundamental shift in our ways of life.

The advent of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Nigeria has revealed the reality of the dilapidation or poor funding of our institutions particularly the educational and health sectors. Although, Federal Government took a proactive measure to set a Presidential Committee on control of Covid-19, it is on record that so many frontline health workers were adversely affected at its early stage and many paid the ultimate price. Schools were closed; hospitals and all social life were shut down for fear of transmission of the disease. Nigeria workers were forced to work from home and later certain grade levels were asked to resume work.

Nonetheless, the Union commends the Government of Nigeria for the measures taken to manage and contain the outbreak and further spread of the new surges by procuring vaccine to mitigate the spread of the virus. It is advisable that everyone should take advantage of the free vaccine

available and get vaccinated. This will build up the capacity and mechanism for emergency respond and building of immunity for the disease. The Government and individuals need to take further actions to mitigate risk and minimize transmission while maintaining social and economic activities by obeying COVID-19 protocol of social and physical distancing, regularly washing and sanitizing our hands.

Your Excellency, distinguished invited guest and fellow Comrades, the National Delegates Conference of this nature provide us with opportunity to review our activities over the last four years and chart a new course ahead for the greater development of this Union. This Conference has 250 delegates spanning from all States of the Federation. It is coming at one of the momentous stage in our country and the most challenging security threat in the annals of our land where million innocent souls has fallen to the evils of Boko Haram and the monumental kidnapping that has occupied the social and physical space of Nigeria.

Inspite of lots of challenges and some official attempts from the last Conference in Ibadan in 2017 to date by some unscrupulous individuals and groups to bring down the Union through intrigues, legislation and count processes, I am happy to inform this Conference that AUPCTRE has continued to wax stronger. And we have overcome all animosities in view of our determination to work for the common interest of the workers who elected us to serve. We shall continue in this determination to ensure that Union leave up to the vision of our founding fathers. Our activities has earn us a recognition of the most representative Trade Union in Nigeria as we shall continue in our bid to organize all employees in Federal and State Civil Services classified as technical as

well as Corporations, Parastatals and Agencies. We have no doubt that AUPCTRE family will continue to grow bigger by the day.

BUILDING A NEW NIGERIA

Your Excellency, distinguished invited guests and fellow Comrades, it is important at this time to make it clear that the dream of our nation's founding fathers have not been realized, the aspirations of the Nigerian people are still hanging in oblivion while the future of our children hangs in uncertainty. This is a summation of the State of our country today. This State, accounts for the theme of this National Delegates Conference (NDC) **Building a new Nigeria - the role of the working class in advancing decent work agenda and National transformation in the era of New Normal.**

As unionists, we are convinced that we can change our circumstances, and that, a new Nigeria is possible; a Nigerian of our dream where the basic needs of the citizenry are met and sovereignty truly belongs to the people; a Nigeria where the dividends of democracy are tangible and shared by all, where the people and not market forces count and Government is all inclusive, transparent, cost effective and people centered. To achieve all these, we must build a new Nigeria and be prepared to make the necessary sacrifices. Nigerians must strive and work for the transformation of the country and we believe that given the unique placement of workers in the economy, the confidence of the general citizenry in the labour movement and the consensus of the working class, workers can be the catalyst of the needed transformation.

The strong wind of transformation blowing through Africa and the crisis of the rebirth reverberating across the continent are felt and heard in Nigeria and if the ruling elites do not agree to fundamental changes,

then, our Country will not be spared the revolution that has swept through Tunisia and the Arab springs which is also threatening other societies built on inequality and social injustice. Our destiny is in our hands, we either make it or we mar it.

Fellow delegates, you will recall that barely a year, after the last NDC, the Nigeria economy entered a severe crisis which led to the national economy being enmeshed in crisis which ultimately resulted in recession. To worsen the situation, corporate governance in a number of banks and Public offices became characterized by corruption, graft and excessive abuses. The result of this economic depression has been the worsening unemployment situation, inflation and unprecedented depreciating exchange rate.

Comrades, it has been observed that periods of economic crisis have unfortunately been periods in which labour comes under severe stress. The period of this crisis is no exception in this regard. The unfavorable job market situation of the past four years has led to the loss of thousands of jobs as many industrial establishments have to close down. In some surviving establishments, anti-labour and anti-Union dispositions have heightened. Repressive Governments as exemplified by that of Kaduna State have used the opportunity to massively sack workers without paying them severance allowances to take care of their families and pick up their lives again. It is on this note that I wish to salute the courage and steadfastness of Kaduna State workers in the recent struggle against balkanization of workforce, sacking and dispersing workers at will. I wish to also congratulate the global President and President of Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Comrade Ayuba Wabba, for a well fought battle by leading the Nigerian workers to Kaduna State to protest the repression.

It must be noted that this was not just a fight in solidarity with our Comrades in Kaduna State; it was a fight for the very essence of our existence. There cannot be a business in Nigeria without employees to project it; the fundamental rights of association to work in a safe and secured environment cannot be compromised. We must continue to remain vigilant and determined to stand upright in the face of deprivation and oppression.

WAVE OF INSECURITY IN THE LAND

The state of insecurity has become so high that violent robberies no longer catch the headlines. Admissively, the rate of kidnapping has remains a scourge in Nigeria and a business venture linked to Fulani herdsmen. While the violence which characterized Niger Delta has reduced drastically, the core issues which led to it including underdevelopment, neglect of the populace, degradation of the environment and mass unemployment still remain a glaring and re-occurring decimal.

Despite all efforts put in place to technically defeat Boko Haram, the continuous attack of innocent civilians and ambush of our military still remains a major challenge. All hands must thereafter be on deck to expose the Boko Haram insurgence as well as their sponsors. Their continues operation has constituted menaces to peaceful leaving and reduce economic activities in the North East where it is worst heat.

The unfortunate and avoidable endless bloodbath that occurred in some part of Plateau, Nasarawa, Benue and Niger States is most worrisome and condemnable. While some were linked to Fulani/Farmers clash others were as a result of some fundamentalist that have occupied our forests with specialties in kidnapping school children, women and other

vulnerable individuals. This wanton killing arising from kidnapping for ransom must be condemned by all well-meaning individuals as their activities has created serious fear in the mind of the mass especially travellers by road. Most deadly now is Abuja/Kaduna express road which has been a den for kidnappers and men of underworld. The recent attack on train has further heightened the fears of the masses as to which mode of travelling is safe since the fare for air transport services has gone skyrocketed above the means of the poor. Government has a duty to deal firmly and decisively with these challenges and restore normalcy.

THE POLITY

As we gradually move towards the general election in 2023, we will continue to call on our youths not to allow themselves to be used as political thugs. All hands must be on deck to avoid political thuggery and wanton destruction of lives and properties arising from political activities. To curb this violence the Union insist that all sponsors of political violence must be fish out and brought to book.

We must all be mindful of having transitions without change; transitions and election that create virtually the same tiny clique who rotate power within their circle. This has been due mainly to lack of transparency in the electoral process, the rigging of elections and allowing electoral offenders and criminals to benefit from their misdeeds. We have indeed observed that rigging elections, electoral violence and the subversion of the will of the electorate are serious crimes against the people and therefore call for the establishment of an **Electoral Crimes Commission** to prosecute offenders. We must ensure a free and fair elections and must insist that the votes count to ensure that electoral offenders are punished and not rewarded.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC UTILITIES

Delegates may wish to recall that the issue of Privatization and deliberate abdicating of responsibility by government took a central stage in our last NDC.

It is to say the least that this policy of subletting responsibilities to some private individual in the name of Public Private Partnership has left us at the mercy of some profiteering businessmen whose aim is to maximise profit at the expense of the people. Instead of Government finding means for revitalizing the ailing industries and resuscitating the closed ones, the preference shifted to Privatization and Commercialization of Public Agencies including utilities like Water. In the opinion of the Union this policy is a dangerous trend.

The Union in partnership with International Agencies and Civil Society groups like Public Service International (PSI) and Corporate Accountability and Public Participation Africa (CAPPA) has taken measures which include town hall meetings, Public Enlightenment, rallies, protests and follow-up actions to combat these disastrous trend of implementing neo-liberal policies masterminded by International Monetary Fund, Bretton Woods and World Bank. We call on all State Governments including, Plateau State who are nursing this unwholesome intension of privatization of Water to jettison the idea and note that “**Water is life**” that must be **affordable** and **available** to the people in its clean State.

The Intended regulation of Water by the Federal Government through a Legislative procedure in a bill tagged “**National Water Resources Bill**” is greeted with mixed feelings. The contents of the bill if it must be passed as portend by the Honorable Minister of Water Resources needed

to be revisited. The proposed taken over of Water sources from the people is against Natural justice and contradicts the Natural gift freely given by nature. It beats the union's imagination that, in spite of the general outcry against the passage of the bill, a government that is elected to represent the people is still hell bent to pass the bill against the will of the people.

The United Nations has declared that **“Water is Life”** and should be treated as such. The Union calls on all well-meaning Nigerian and international Community to work towards ensuring that the National Water Resources bill is not passed into law.

THE JOURNEY SO FAR

Your Excellency, Distinguished Guests and fellow Delegates, in fulfilment of the promises of the present National leadership in the last NDC held in Ibadan in 2017, we hereby lay bare our score card within the period of four Years as follows:

- We have been able to renovate and tastefully furnished the National Secretariat of our Union in Abuja to a world class labour Secretariat.
- We have put into use by renovating the National Secretariat Annex in Lagos which now accommodate the Federal Organ and Lagos State Council of the Union.
- We have fully renovated and rented out our 4 blocks of 3-bedroom flat and Boys quarters property at No5 Kalamine street, Wuse Zone 6, Abuja which now fetch the union about N10million per annum.

- We have also renovated the 2 units of 3 bedroom flats located at Lugbe in Abuja.
- We drastically reduced the backlog of gratuity payment from over N300million by half.
- The Union now occupy the position of the Internal Auditor of the Nigeria Labour Congress.
- The National President of the Union have been democratically elected as the National Chairman of the National Joint Public Service Negotiating Council (NJPSNC)
- The lead protest in rallies against Water Privatization in Lagos, Plateau, Bauchi and held several town Hall meetings against it.
- We inaugurate Union Investment Committee to diversify the overdependence on Union Dues.
- Enthronement of forensic auditing of our Anambra State garnishing money for accountability and probity.
- We resuscitate the monthly ideological class at the National Headquarters of the Union.
- Won Cases in National Industrial Court against the Management of Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC).

- Inaugurated a committee on sport development to come up with unified Condition of Service for all Sport Industry in Nigeria.
- Continuous Provide Secretariat for meeting of HND holders Association towards removal of BSC/ HND dichotomy.
- Resuscitation of Educational Programme of the Union in all States of the Federation.
- Payment of One hundred and eighty million naira N80,000,000 from over two hundred and ninety million naira (N290,000,000) debts handed over to us by our predecessor.

All these were few of the achievements within the last four years of our attainment of leadership of AUPCTRE.

CONDOLENCES

Comrade Delegates, ladies and gentlemen, between the last conference till now, the Union has lost some of our Comrades to the cold hand of death. These includes but not limited to:

1. J.C Kobah
2. Janet Onuohah
3. Onuaku Osita
4. Fajana G. A
5. Raji O.I
6. Wale Oduntan
7. Hajia Kulu
8. Eura Chukks

May we please observe a minutes of silence in remembrance of the death. May their souls continue to rest in perfect peace.

CONCLUSION

Your Excellency, distinguished guests and Comrades, this Conference-In-Session has a Constitutional obligation to fulfill, that is; all issues affecting our members Nationwide are deliberated upon and resolved.

One of the main functions of this Conference is to elect new leadership that will pilot the affairs of the Union for the next four years. Ensure the implementation of all the resolutions and decisions that would be taken by the Conference-In-Session and most importantly address positive challenges in the Public Services to sustain the Union's relevance.

It is on this note that I urge all to eschew individual differences and ensure that right candidates emerge to further take AUPCTRE to a higher height.

Your Excellency, distinguished guests, we wish to assure you all that we shall emerge from this Conference with resolutions that will strengthen the Union and Labour Movement in general.

Once more, I thank you all on behalf of the union for honouring us with your distinguish and dignified presence.

May Almighty God protect and guide you all.

Long live AUPCTRE!

Long live NLC!

Long live Nigeria Labour Movement!

Long live Federal Republic of Nigeria!

Viva, Workers' Solidarity!

Viva!.