

**ADDRESS BY NATIONAL PRESIDENT
AMALGAMATED UNION OF PUBLIC CORPORATION, CIVIL
SERVICE TECHNICAL AND RECREATIONAL SERVICES EMPLOYEES
(AUPCTRE) COMRADE BENJAMIN ANTHONY TO THE 23RD PLENARY
SESSION OF THE NATIONAL GOVERNING COUNCIL (NGC)
HOLDING AT CALABAR, CROSS RIVERS STATE ON THURSDAY 17TH
AND FRIDAY 18TH OCTOBER, 2019**

PROTOCOLS

May I, on behalf of the National Executive Council (NEC) of our great union, the Amalgamated Union of Public Corporation, Civil Service Technical and Recreational Services Employees (AUPCTRE), warmly welcome Your Excellency, distinguished invited Guests and Comrade Delegates to the Opening Ceremony of the 23rd Plenary Session of the National Governing Council (NGC) of our Union holding today and tomorrow at the historical City of Calabar in Cross River State.

2. The composition of National Governing Council (NGC) of our Union is very unique as it draws its membership from the National Executive Council (NEC), Zonal Councils, National Coordinating Committee (NCC), National Women Commission, (NWC), and from the Chairpersons and Secretaries of all the States Councils of the Union in the Federation including Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and Federal Organ Lagos. The NGC is charged with the responsibility of acting in-between the Quadrennial National Delegates Conference (NDC) to review policies and performing oversight functions on all lower Organs of the Union in accordance with the Union Constitution.

3. Distinguished invitees and Comrades, it is noteworthy to comment that this NGC is holding at a historical moment in Nigeria history where new Ministers have just been appointed to various Ministries. While we commend the Federal Government for this achievement thus far, the Union urges the newly appointed Ministers to rise to the challenges of their various Ministries where there is high decadence in Public Policies and implementation. The appointment should not be

seen as a ploy to enrich individuals but rather as a call to Service of the Nation. All hands must be on deck to move Nigeria to an envisage position where it can favorably compete with International Communities in view of our endowed human and natural resources.

4. Fellow Comrades, we must realise at this meeting that our teeming members who are not opportune to attend this NGC expect from us decisions and resolutions that would impact positively on their welfare as well as the working class and their allies. We must also realise that as servants and leaders of the workers, we owe it a responsibility to critically analyses our activities and come up with the right conclusions that would strengthen the union and chart the way forward for a virile, responsive and democratic Trade Union institution that will make the Union continue to be relevant to the membership and the society at large.

5. As Leaders of this Union, we have as at today instituted a programme of Training of Trainers (TOT) and a continuous educational system for Union leaders and all members of the Union. One of our cardinal objectives is to indulge in committing much resources of the Union to educate its teeming members because we know that the more we are educated, the better for the Union and Nigeria society at large. We have therefore, uniquely programmed two full days dedicated towards educating all NGC members. You are therefore called upon to avail yourself this unique opportunity to take home as much knowledge as you can and impact same to our members in the branches where the golden egg is laid.

6. Distinguished invited guest and fellow Comrades, occasions like this provides us with opportunity to comment on pertinent issues that is of importance not only to our Union and the trade Union movement but also to the nation at large. In doing so, the intention is to add our voice with a view to effect changes in concepts and practices we consider not in the best interest of workers and people of this Country. This fall in line with our vision of being a proactive Trade Union that will remain responsive and relevant to our teeming members.

7. The Union expresses grave concern over the current state of the nation where the political class seems not to learn from history. The few privileged individuals in government rather than entrenching good governance prefers to

promote primordial sentiments to advance their selfish or parochial interests at the expense of the larger society that put them in position.

8. In the estimation of the Union, majority of those in the corridors of Power today appears to be clueless; they neither have direction nor bearing. The implication of this is that majority of the citizenry are wallowing in abject poverty. Moreso, as a result of their callous actions, the nation is forced to sacrifice its hitherto disciplined, well-structured and highly productive Public Service. Unfortunately today, the public services have been reduced to near nothingness while political decisions have taken precedence over and above the laid down Public Service rules and regulations.

9. The consequence of all these behavior is the erosion of good governance, diminishing social services, entrenchment of inequality opportunities for all and the concentration of the wealth of the nation in the hands of a very infinitesimal percentage of Nigeria whose life styles does not justify or portray the reality of our ailing economy.

10. The Union's worry on the above assertion is further heightened by the just exposed allegation of N3 billion fraud level against the current Head of Civil Service of the Federation, Mrs. Winifred Ekanem Oyo-Ita by the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC). It looks funny that when the anti-graft agency reported grilled her for four days over alleged abuse of duty tour allowances, money laundering and stealing of Government funds, she ended up checking into a hospital for claim of medical body imbalance after being granted administrative bail.

11. On the strength of the above, AUPCTRE calls on the government who has so much profess zero tolerance for corruption and corrupt practices to thoroughly investigate the matters surrounding this big scam with hope of uncovering the mask behind the scam. Nigerians are waiting patiently to see the outcome.

12. However, the Union wishes to commend the ongoing review of Public Service Rules (PSR) which is obsolete and not in tune with current reality. It is hoped that the ongoing grilling of the Head of Civil Service will not jeopardize the good effort to review the PSR in the interest of Nigeria workers and industrial harmony.

13. MINIMUM WAGE ISSUES

Distinguished invitees and fellow Comrades, you will all agree with me that the current minimum wage in Nigeria today is a slave wage considering the hyper-inflation in the national economy. On the 18th April, 2019 President Muhamadu Buhari accented to the Minimum Wage Repeal and Enactment Act. 2019. This Act makes it compulsory for all employers of labour in Nigeria to pay to their workers the sum of N30,000 minimum salary to the lowest paid officer. Alas! Nigeria workers were happy for this development, but their happiness was cut short in view of the technicalities introduced to its implementation by the government in setting up what it calls “Consequential Adjustment Committee” to look into the implementation strategy of the new minimum wage. The Committee seems to have opened a new device for negotiation on relativities and percentage increases within the salary grade levels especially as it affect senior officers.

14. Nigerians must first appreciate the fact that the labour movement has been transparent in its operations and has fought for the rights of workers in this direction. The percentage increase in the minimum wage of N18,000 to N30,000 is 66% which would have ordinarily be imputed across the ladder, but labour realizing the consequential inflationary trend that may follow and prune down to demand for only 30% increase for workers on grade levels 7 to 14 and 25% for those on grade level 15 to 17. This demand does not bring to half the increment of grade levels 1 to 6 which stands at 66% to maintain the level of relativity. The computation based on percentage which government had given to labour is 9.5% for level 7 to 14 and 5.5% increase for those on level 15 to 17. This in our opinion does not conform to the current realities of our economic system. The road to negotiation table is not close. The Union expects the new Minister of Labour and Employment to beef up effort to end this controversy on minimum wage.

15. Let me use this unique opportunity to commend our National Leadership of Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and National Joint Public Service Negotiating Council (NJPSNC) for their steadfastness towards realization of a living minimum wage for Nigerian workers. They must continually intensify efforts in ensuring that Nigerian workers enjoy a new lease of life.

16. **ECONOMIC INDICES**

The World Bank record has continually reported that the economy of Nigeria has continued to grow gradually from 2013 at the rate of 7.3%. Unfortunately, this growth has not translated into much improvement in the lives of the working people. On the contrary, poverty has been on the increase, the rate of people living below poverty line has increased as it is estimated that more than 100 million Nigerians representing 67% of the population are living on less than \$1 per day.

17. Nigerian is no doubt a blessed country judging from our topography, favorable weather and rich natural resources with vast land favorable for Agricultural exploit. The challenges caused by the harsh economic system in the Country has no doubt place the burden on Trade Unions and patriotic Nigerians to equally engage government on the dangers posed in the areas listed below:

- ✓ High rate of kidnapping;
- ✓ High rate of suicide mission;
- ✓ High inflation rate;
- ✓ High mortality rate;
- ✓ Medical Tourism;
- ✓ Corruption and Armed Robbery;
- ✓ Mass Unemployment;
- ✓ General insecurity;
- ✓ Non-payment of public workers salaries, pension and gratuity;
- ✓ Impunity;
- ✓ Brain drain.

18. Distinguished guests, this NGC is holding at a critical period of our economic history which have adversely affected the activities of Labour movement as can be seen in the situations listed above, hence the choice of the theme of this 23rd NGC **“STRENGTHENING THE TRADE UNION TOWARDS**

MEETING THE CHALLENGES IN THE 21ST CENTURY”

19. POLITICAL INDICES

The Union welcomes the development of the inauguration of the 9th National Assembly under the leadership of Senator Ahmad Lawan. The Union is worried that the events in the past over endless legislative and executive face-off is not good for the Country. The frostily relationship between the Executive and Legislative arms of government since inauguration in June 2015 has Constituted a barrier towards entrenchment of good governance, smooth running of government and ridiculing the nation’s democracy.

20. The implication of the above on the performance of the 8th Assembly was that the political intolerance amongst members of political class became endemic to the extent that the hard earned democracy is being threatened by political merchants and godfatherism syndrome which then increase political tension and thuggery.

21. The Union believes that our political class must have learnt their lesson and we therefore call on the 9th Assembly to legislate on progressive laws that will transcend individual interest and put the interest of Nigeria to bear. This we believe will end the siege and move Nigerian to greater height.

22. Privatization / Corporatization / Concessioning

Distinguished invitees and fellow Comrades, privatization has been the bane of social services in Nigeria and world over. All Public Utilities and enterprises that have been unbundled in the name of Privatization, Concessioning or Corporatization by Nigerian government Such as NEPA, NITEL, NNPC, and WATER are either at the verge of extinction or not providing the services expected from that process. The Services that were privatized are dwindling and the drive now is to grab the very basic of life, the privatization of water and even the whole ecosystems through land sky grabbing.

23. The World Bank had been, arguably, one of the biggest drivers of water privatization over the past decade, pushing governments to privatization by enticing them with Aids and grants, in spite of evidences that it had failed to

provide access to water in places where it flagrance was tested. One of the egregious things about the World Bank is that it has a financial interest in privatization and they have reinvented privatization as Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) to deceive the public. Our Union canvass for Public-Public-Partnership (PuP) which is more viable to build an economy that will provide social and economic need of the people better than PPP that is meant for private gains and profit.

24. On this note the Union advice the government of Plateau and Bauchi States not to be carried away by the aids granted by USAID on Water to shy away from the services of providing good water system for their people. It must be noted that, “Water is Life”.

25. Fellow Comrades, with complete submission to the will of Almighty God, we announce to you the demise of our one time National Treasurer and Vice President of Federal Zone, Comrade Zira Njida. He died after a brief illness in his house at Abuja. May we please rise for a minute of silent in honour of our departed Comrade. May God grant him eternal rest Amin.

- James Koba - HOD ICT
- Henry Oqua - Chairperson Cross River, Calabar

26. **APPRECIATION**

May I seize this singular opportunity to express my most sincere appreciation to our past Union leaders and our Union veterans who have nurtured the Union to see to its growth and development up to the present point we are: May God, in his infinite mercy, continue to bless you all.

27. Fellow Comrades, let me also express my profound gratitude to all members of National Board of Trustees (NBOT), National Executive Council (NEC), National Governing Council (NGC), and the staff of the Union for your understanding, encouragement and support in the preparation for this meeting. Honestly, it is as a result of your commitments to the fundamental ideals of this Union that have helped us thus far.

28. Your Excellency, Distinguished guests, we thank you so much for honouring our invitation with your presence despite your tight schedule. We assure you of our support towards achieving your mandate for the workers and people of Cross River State.

29. My thanks also goes to the Cross Rivers State Council of our Union for the wonderful reception we received here. We equally thank the leadership of the South-South Zonal council of our Union for its unflinching support.

30. It is my prayer that Almighty God will take each and every one of us back to our various destinations safely. Amen.

Thank You.

Long Live AUPCTRE!

Long Live Nigeria Labour Congress!!

Long Live Cross River State!!!

Long Live Federal Republic of Nigeria!!!!

Solidarity forever.