

SETTING THE DIRECTION OF THE

**6th QUADRENNIAL NATIONAL DELEGATES'
CONFERENCE (NDC)**

OF

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

BY THE

**GENERAL SECRETARY
COMRADE SIKIRU WAHEED**

**HOLDING AT CRISPAN SUITES AND
EVENT CENTER, JOS, PLATEAU STATE**

24TH and 25th MARCH, 2022

PROTOCOLS

I join the National President to heartily welcome Your Excellences, other distinguished Guests and Delegates to this epoch making event of the 6th National Delegates' Conference holding at the ancient city of Jos, Plateau State, the State of Peace and Tourism. The Union is delighted to have you all present at this auspicious occasion.

2. CONFERENCE THEME

The Conference Theme today is ***“Building a new Nigeria: The role of the working class in advancing decent work agenda and National Transformation in the era of new Normal”***. The choice of this theme was a conscious decision by the Leadership of the Union aimed at re-awakening the consciousness of Labour Leaders with a view to reviving and building strong Trade Unions that will promote internal democracy and an inclusive Trade Union Administration.

Your Excellences, distinguished Guests and delegates, it is obvious that the Trade Unions in Nigeria are currently going through unusual times and challenges in the history of our movement. This cannot be separated from the decadence that has pervaded the national polity. Today, it is not uncommon to see Trade Union Leaders imbibing the bourgeois culture of capitalism at the expense of the working class ideology of socialism. This is manifested in the way Trade Union Leaders join the political class in acquisition of extreme affluence, promotion of ethnic, regional, religious and other primordial cleavages to hang on to power.

It is in the light of the above that the Union is strongly advocating for an appropriate Trade Union culture that will promote internal democracy,

transparency and accountability, judicious management of Union resources and above all, Union Leadership that is inclusive and rejection of the culture of personalizing leadership and its twin brother of proprietor mentality.

These cherished culture remains the pre-requisite for stability, growth and development of any Union that strives to sustain its relevance.

3. SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic ushered in a new phase of national socio-economic crises. According to the ILO Monitor Report on COVID-19 and the World of Work released in January 2021, “the share of workers living in countries with COVID-19-related restrictions has remained high, with 93% of the world’s workers residing in countries with some form of workplace closure measures in place in early 2020”. The Report also indicates that within countries, more geographically targeted and sector-specific measures have gradually become the norm over the course of the pandemic, and these were still affecting 77% of workers at the start of 2021.

A recent research conducted by a cluster of Nigerian scholars estimated that during the COVID-19 inspired lockdown in many States in Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), about 27 million Nigerians fell headlong into poverty ballooning the community of the working poor in Nigeria. This figure translates to a 14-point percentage increase in the poverty headcount rate in Nigeria as a result of COVID-19.

Therefore, the relevance of work and the role of workers in sustaining humanity is best exemplified by the response of the

working class population in confronting the challenges of Covid-19 which has ravaged the planet for the past two years.

The Union remains grateful to all the hardworking men and women in Nigeria and the world over for their doggedness in keeping the wheels of productivity and life going. We celebrate our frontline workers who sacrificed personal comfort, safety and in many case their own lives just to be of service to humanity and to keep the rest of the population safe from the scourge of Covid-19 pandemic. The lessons we learned from the pandemic is that Government must make it a duty in the area of training and retraining of its personnel most especially in the areas of medicine and ICT.

4. SCALE OF WIDESPREAD CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

From records, between 1960 and 2021 more than \$30trillion dollars has been stolen from the national treasury by public office holders.

This confirms the assertion of the Union that the level of poverty and inequality in Nigeria are not due to lack of resources but the mismanagement and allocation of resources.

While the gap between the rich and the poor may be a global phenomenon, the scale of inequality in Nigeria is extreme due largely to the rate of corruption in the economy. Today, the middle class which has been the bridge between the rich and the poor has completely been wiped out, in which case, it is either one is excessively rich through questionable sources or extremely poor living below poverty line of less than \$1 dollar a day. The implication of this is that rather than engaging in decent venture that will generate gainful employment and wealth for the good of the society, people prefer to join

other treasury looters to wreak havoc on the Nigerian common wealth. The consequences of this include but not limited to poor work culture, unemployment, high crime rate, insecurity and other social vices that have retarded the growth and development of the national economy.

While several efforts have been made by successive governments in the recent past to curb corruption, these efforts have however not yielded the desired result. In the opinion of the Union, there is a need for a paradigm shift in the fight against corruption. In this circumstance, the State must evolve a more pragmatic, non-partisan, scientific and globally acceptable approach to fight this menace.

5. PUBLIC SERVICE REFORMS

On several occasions, the Union has consistently offered alternative ideas to the reform policy of government.

The Union believes that any form of reform of the public service should address the challenges of refocusing, re-orientation and modernization of the public service to promote efficiency, productivity and reward system. However, the general perception of those in governance has strongly been influenced by neo-liberal economic doctrine which diminished the role of the state in building society in favour of the market and the private sector.

The above has led governments at all levels to believe very much in privatization, commercialization, concessioning and general deregulation of the economy thereby abdicating the responsibility of evolving policies that will assist in creating jobs in the society.

The end result of this is that, the public sector has become an endangered species which has resulted to job losses/insecurity, rationalization under the guise of rightsizing, contracting out jobs, inadequate funding of social services and utilities such as water and sanitation, education, healthcare delivery etc. Most painfully is the fact that remuneration and reward system in the public service has been eroded. These in turn have affected the relevance and the future of trade unions in the public sector.

The way forward therefore is for the National Joint Public Service Negotiating Council to rise to the occasion and provide the needed Leadership with a view to reposition and strengthening the public service institutions.

6. CONFERENCE AGENDA/DIRECTION

This NDC being the highest decision making organ of the Union will be expected to take stock of its activities between the last NDC and now, consider the effects given to the implementation of policies, decisions and programmes. More importantly, chart a new course that will drive the Union's policies, programmes and activities for the next four years. This will centre majorly on:

- Effect of Covid-19 pandemic on workers.
- Privatization/ Concessioning.
- Optimal Utilization of Personnel in the Public Services.
- Emerging trends in the World of Work.
- Union's Administration and viability.
- Over Dependence on Check-off Dues and Need for Diversification.
- Demand for Legal Living Minimum Wage.
- Collective Bargaining in the Public Services.

- Silver jubilee of the Union.
- History of our great Union.
- Organizing/Industrial Relations Practices.
- Education, training and Gender issues, etc.

The Conference will also deliberate on motions and above all elect new leadership that would pilot the affairs of the Union for the next four years to the 7th National Quadrennial Delegates' Conference.

These issues will form the resolutions that will be expected to be adopted at the end of the Conference. It is therefore important that this Conference will be business-like devoid of any rancor and acrimony.

7. CONCLUSION

May I seize this opportunity to remind Guests and delegates that this Conference serves as a golden opportunity for us to discuss and take critical decisions that will be beneficial not only to our teaming membership that we are privileged to represent here but also to the Nigeria Trade Union Movement, the Nigerian masses and the global working class in general. It is our considered hope that all hands will be on deck towards achieving this onerous goal.

Once again, let me appreciate Your Excellences, Distinguished Guests, Delegates, Gentlemen of the Press and every one of you that has honoured us with your presence.

I wish you all the very best and journey mercies back to your various destinations.

Long live AUPCTRE!

Long live NLC!

Long live Federal Republic of Nigeria!

Long live Workers' Solidarity!