

ACADEMIC STAFF UNION OF UNIVERSITIES (ASUU)

BAUCHI ZONE



A COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF "NIGERIA: THE STATE OF THE NATION" SUMMIT OF THE ACADEMIC STAFF UNION OF UNIVERSITIES (ASUU), BAUCHI ZONE, HELD AT ABUBAKAR TAFAWA BALEWA UNIVERSITY (ATBU), BAUCHI ON THURSDAY, 28TH OCTOBER, 2021.

Preambles

Compatriots,
Members of the Press,
Distinguished ladies and Gentlemen,

It will be an understatement to say our country, Nigeria, is in economic, social and cultural crisis. The deepening crisis exists in spite of the continuing faith, hard work, and patriotism of our people across the country. The crisis festers in spite the massive actual and potential man- power and natural resources endowments, not to mention the incredible advantages of geographical and cultural diversity of Nigeria.

The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), since its inception and in accordance with ASUU Constitution and Code of Practice to advance the interest of Nigeria and our peoples, has taken time to periodically reflect on **The State of the Nation** with a view to assessing the prospects and problems of the country in all their ramifications. The reflections are/were done routinely at NEC and NDC meetings of ASUU while more exhaustive assessments were carried out at State of the Nation Conferences and Summits.

The first substantive State of the Nation Conference took place at the University Benin (Benin City) in April 1984—four months after a military dictatorship seized our country and started the foundations of the IMF/World Bank Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) whose basic prescriptions, as this Summit highlights below, still underlie the economic and social crisis of Nigeria today. ASUU's *How to Save Nigeria*, the Communique of the 1984 [Benin] State of the Nation Conference was as prophetic as its recommendations were patriotic!

Summit noted, sadly, that in spite of the struggles of ASUU, the Nigerian labour movement, the students' movement and the youths generally, peasants and farmers, professionals (lawyers, doctors etc.), the civil society generally, policies of very of harsh economic conditions were imposed by the governments. The policies increased poverty, inequality, hopelessness and violence among our people; at the same time a tiny percentage of Nigerians representing largely foreign economic and financial interests, became richer and richer as poverty, insecurity and collapse of infrastructures threatened the very existence of our country.

Summit observed that as the crisis imposed on the Nigerian people by the overarching IMF/World Bank market-forces and derived government policies matured especially in Nigeria, the system that drives the system has weakened the traditional working-peoples' and youths' resistance that held the siege at bay since the late 1970s. Consequently, ASUU could not repeat the 1984. Conference for a full decade until the one at the University of Lagos in 1994; and the last one, twenty years ago, was at the National Universities Commission (NUC), Abuja in 2001!

Acknowledging the Participants and the Significance of this ASUU (Bauchi Zone) Initiative on Critical Matters of the Moment in Nigeria.

Summit acknowledges the ground-breaking, patriotic and timely initiative of the leadership (Zonal Coordinator, Chairpersons) and the ASUU rank-and-file of the Bauchi Zone of ASUU in kick-starting the patriotic and timely initiative of this dialogue among the masses of Nigerian people towards popular ownership of the program of repositioning Nigeria for the service of the masses of our people across Nigeria.

Summit gratefully acknowledges the support of the Vice-Chancellor and the entire community of ATBU in hosting this Summit. In these regards summit appreciates especially the presence, support, and goodwill message of the Vice-Chancellor of Bauchi State University (BASU), Professor Anwalu Uba. Summit appreciates the solidarity of the Bauchi State Council of the Nigeria Labour Congress, the presence and solidarity of the trade unions and associations of workers in the education sector and, especially, the attendance and full participation of the students' movement (Nigeria's future workers and intellectuals).

The President of ASUU (Comrade Professor Victor Emmanuel Osodeke) and The Chief Host of the Summit, is acknowledged for his presence and his insightful interventions, during the Summit, on the underlying patriotism of ASUU's struggle.

On the theme of the Summit—Nigeria: The State of the Nation.

Summit noted the appropriateness and timeliness of the theme of the Summit. It observed the interconnectedness of the three sub-themes, namely: *State of the Nation in Relation to the Security Crisis*, *The State of Education in Nigeria Today*, and *A Political Economy of the State of the Nation*—anchored by Comrade Etanibi Alemika (University of Jos), Comrade Theresa Ohi Odumuh (University of Abuja), and Comrade Genyi George Akwaya (Federal University, Lafia), respectively. The Keynote Address by Comrade Owei Lakemfa (Former General Secretary of the Nigeria Labour Congress, and Former General Secretary of Organisation of African Trade Unions—OATU), *The Desperate Search for What Is Not Missing*, summarises the situation in which the victims of the current economic and social policies have always rejected and resisted the policies while the successive regimes, aided by IMF and the World Bank, kept renovating and enforcing the same policies; both the tormentors and the tormented, thus, always knew the problem! Freedom for the victims!

Summit observed that the current economic policies have their foundations in the wholesale neoliberal prescriptions of the withdrawal of government from public provisioning of basic social services (education, health, housing, etc.) and basic utilities (drinking water, environment sanitation), removal of subsidies for agricultural inputs, withdrawal of government support for local industries (such as textiles, manufacture, assembly plants etc.), reduction of employment in the public sector, increased public borrowing and debt accumulation, devaluation of the Naira and auctioning of public property (privatisation).

The foregoing policies are dictated and supervised by foreign economic and financial interests led by IMF, the World Bank, African Development Bank, World Trade Organisation, and the hegemonic states that dominate those organisations. The policies are the roots of unemployment, low wages, denial of the rights of workers to organise as trade unions, closure of industries, land hunger, urban violence, decay and breakdown of infrastructures (power supply, roads, public schools and hospitals), inflation, etc. These are the roots of violence, crimes, insurgences and banditry.

Summit notes that a tiny ruling class and the political elite that formulate and implement these anti-people policies are also the beneficiaries of the policies. We see all these in the increased wealth of the ruling class and widening gap between the rich and the masses of the poor. To maintain this massive inequality in our society, the ruling class, those who own Nigeria, those who occupy political offices, those who "buy" or *actually seize* the public assets they auctioned (Electricity Distribution Companies, Banks, public houses and estates, etc.) and their friends are united in spite of belonging to different organizations called political parties. The ease with which they move from party to party, the multiplying crises in the so called parties, shows that *what they parties are ruling class factions for sharing of political power and public resources.*

Summit observed that the main preoccupation of the Nigerian ruling class and the political elites generally is the accumulation of wealth. The wealth thus accumulated is used to acquire and retain political power which further enhances accumulation of private wealth. This monopoly of economic and political power by the ruling class creates both unity and conflict inside the class on one hand, and sharp antagonism against the masses of the victims of the economic policies we identified above.

While the Nigerian ruling class is united in wealth accumulation, it deploys two main weapons for keeping the masses down. The development of divide and rule tactics manipulating ethnics, regional or geopolitical (North, South, Middle Belt, South-South, East-West) and religious issues. The other weapon is the constant deployment of anti-people legislations and policies, and the deployment of the so called law enforcement agencies. It is thus the increasing burdens of ruling class economic and social policies that increased the brutality and impunity of the so called law enforcement agencies on one hand, and the increasing ethnic religious prejudice among our people. Summit notes these connections need to be understood by the masses who are the victims!

Observations on the State of Education

Summit observed that the policies on enhanced quality, full government provisioning, access, and affordability of education at all levels, captured and clearly envisioned in the *National Policy on Education—NPE—(1976)*, had been systematically abandoned by successive ruling class governments (military and civilian) since the late 1970s when our “rulers” surrendered the sovereignty of our country to IMF and the World Bank. So did they abandon the vision of the *Second National Development Plan* on which the 1976 NPE was pivoted! This systematic subversion of the possibilities of the said vision also underlies the equivocations and non-justiciability of the Right to Education and other Social Welfare Rights codified in 1999 *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*.

Summit noted the definitive, sad, and systematic decay of the facilities in our educational facilities and the deliberate and progressive decline in the annual budgetary allocations to education in the last two decades or so! Summit abhors the clearly subversive policy of privatisation and commercialization of the education sector. The combined effect of reduced funding of public educational institutions on one hand, and the commercialization and privatization of education on the other, had impacted negatively on the conditions of service of all categories of workers in the education sector especially in private schools and universities where workers are receiving slave wages. Summit therefore calls on Workers, Unions and Organizations to intensify collaborative efforts towards protecting and improving both their conditions of service and improved public funding of the sector.

On the Security Crises Segment of the State of the Nation

Summit noted that the generally narrowed definition of “insecurity” as threat against or actual attacks on lives and property, deprives us as individuals, collectivities and as a nation, of the need to internalise the deficit of social security as the foundation ethnic and religious conflicts on one hand, and straightforward and general criminal acts, such as banditry, armed robbery, cultism, kidnapping, insurgencies, etc., on the other.

Social security refers to gainful employment and access to sustainable means of maintaining life, good health and environment, raising family and maintaining cultural freedom, including freedom from state oppression and impunity, and arbitrariness of the state agents such as police and law enforcement agencies. A ruling class that concentrate all national resources in its own hand, contrary to the provisions of Sections 16 (1) and 16 (2) of the 1999 *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended)*, and abandon public purpose (education health, roads and public transport, public security, etc.), is a direct threat to social and general security.

It was further observed that the growing varieties and depth of insecurities of life and property arise directly from escalating social insecurity due to unemployment, inadequate or collapsing educational institutions, land grabbing and landlessness in rural locations, reduced agricultural and general rural productivity stemming from bad roads, lack of health facilities in rural locations and withdrawal or inadequacy of government support for extension services and agricultural inputs.

Summit emphasized the need for massive improvement in the conditions of service and living, training, and orientation of law enforcement personnel and security agencies generally. *A security agency with personnel that is hungry, badly housed, unpaid and under-equipped can only become a brutal parasite on the citizens.*

Summary of Summit's Program for a Peoples' Nigeria

All patriots and especially the victims of the various manifestations of the current crises of Nigeria, must organise to restore the sovereignty of the masses of Nigeria's working people—the sovereignty of our country Nigeria. Most of Nigeria's debilitating economic and social policies are dictated and enforced by international economic and financial forces like IMF, World Bank, AfDB and WTO, which are controlled by foreign powers in Europe, America and Asia.

Since the generalised poverty, killing of the public sector, and the collapse of public security and infrastructures, resulted from stealing of public funds by public officials, and concentration of national wealth in a few hands especially through auctioning of public assets, and abandonment of public purpose and welfare, the minimum conditions for restoring the primacy of planned economy, public purpose and welfare are: (i) re-nationalisation of the commanding heights of the Nigerian economy, (ii) take back of all stolen public resources and (iii) husbanding and investment of all public resources in public works and welfare programs *under popular democratic control* of Nigeria's working people.

The restoration of the various segments of public welfare must be carried through the restoration and enhancement of the public sector without prejudice to the possibilities of private sector inputs. The private sector cannot lead economic and social progress in an underdeveloped, unplanned and dependent economy. The current dominant role of privatisation and the private sector is responsible for the unending crisis of corruption and corrupt practices. The key evidence for this the growing resort by government to "bailing out" or take-over (by AMCON) of privatised assets using public funds!

Registration of political parties and political contest must be truly democratized and liberalised to include independent candidature in elections especially at

state and local government levels. Political parties must have clear and well publicised manifestoes which must also be accessible in the major Nigerian languages and the languages of the localities in local elections.

The continued strategic role of ASUU and the labour movement in the liberation of Nigeria and Solidarity of the masses of Nigerian People.

From some of the observations above, we re-iterate the imperative of the task of Nigeria's patriots and working people to rescue our country from the unending crisis imposed by the long-standing alliance of foreign economic and controlling interests and successive regimes of Nigeria's ruling class.

Summit apprehends the simultaneous deepening of Nigeria's economic crises and ethnic confessional, geopolitical and intercommunal crises and violence. Summit notes that while the ruling class is fuelling these conflicts at various levels for negotiations among themselves, the under privileged working people across Nigeria are the primary victims of ethnic religious intercommunal, and intra-communal conflicts.

Summit is fully persuaded that deepened democratisation of decision-making on economic and political policies and processes will increase economic and social well-being of our people and enable a people-based, consistent and bountiful harvest of the fruits of the geographical, resource and cultural diversity in our country. Consequently, **Summit is persuaded that under a political regime that puts economic resources and political power at the services of Nigeria's labouring masses, much more decision-making power can be more fully deployed to state and local government levels without the current disruptive ideologies of separatism, ethnic antagonisms, hate-peddling and violence.**

Summit, arising from the foregoing, charges the Academic Staff Union of Universities to continue to build and sustain enlightenment and awareness among Nigeria's labour movement, communities, geopolitical and cultural groups, and the youth.

Long live the Academic Staff Union of Universities!

Long live the Nigerian Labour Movement!

Long live the Federal Republic of Nigeria!



Oladimeji A. Lawal

**Convener, Local Organising Committee
Bauchi Zone**



Lawan G. Abubakar

Zonal Coordinator, ASUU-