
Protocol

1. It feels unbelievable that it is already 46 years since the untimely passing of one of the most revered and admired heads of the post-independence Nigerian state, His Excellency, the late General Murtala Ramat Muhammed. As a young but aware 11 year old school boy at the time of his assassination in the attempted coup led by the late Colonel Bukar Sukar Dimka, I still recall with some vividness, the shock and pain that greeted the news of his death as it spread across our country and the rest of the world. For my generation of Nigerians, the late General Muhammad was not only a charismatic leader whose decisive, no-nonsense, business unusual style captured our youthful imagination, he has also over the years remained an uncommon example of public service through the uncompromising commitment he displayed to the pursuit of the common good. As with most other Nigerians, the deep regret which we felt was that he did not rule long enough to personally complete the task of national rebirth which he and his colleagues had defined for themselves at the time he came to power. Still, he earned his place in our hearts and in the pantheon of our national heroes.
2. Murtala Muhammad's life may have been cut short prematurely on 13 February 1976 and his tenure in office as head of state did not last more than six months, nevertheless, for the time he served at the helm of the ship of state, he embodied the lesson which all public office holders must always be reminded of, namely that it is not so much how many years a leader spends in the corridors of power but the success with which he or she captures the imagination of the people as to spur them to commit to a shared project of national transformation that really matters. Murtala Muhammad successfully re-ignited hope in a post-civil war Nigeria that we can as a people aspire to new and greater heights to occupy our rightful place in dignity as a leader in the comity of nations. Such was the impact

he had in so short a period of time that memory of his time with us remains so fresh and evergreen. May his soul continue to Rest In Peace, Amen.

3. The impact and legacy of Murtala Muhammad have been upheld and carried forward at different critical moments by a broad cross section of Nigerians as a shared heritage that inspires and empowers according to the demands of the times. However, please allow me from the outset to pay deserving tribute to the leadership of the Foundation created posthumously in his honour and memory for the valiant work that has been done year after year to keep the flame of what he meant for us burning bright. This is the 44th anniversary memorial that is being held in remembrance of the late General Muhammad. Thank you Mrs. Aisha Muhammed-Oyebode for the work you do not only as a worthy daughter of her late father alongside your siblings but also as the Chief Executive Officer of the Foundation.
4. I will also like to specially salute the Chair of this occasion, our esteemed former head of state and president whom we all fondly call Baba, His Excellency, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo. Your Excellency, there is something of an historical justice about your being here to chair this lecture, as you have had occasion to do in the past. Your presence here is not only a testimony to the strong bonds of friendship and collegiality you shared with late General Muhammed, but also a testament to your own personal quality as an uncommon Samaritan who dutifully took over the baton to diligently finish the race that you and your colleagues started with him. That you have prioritised being present here today amidst your numerous national, pan-African, and global assignments speaks volumes about your person and what you have meant to humanity. God bless you Sir.
5. Standing before this august audience today, you will understand the multiple sense of honour which I feel delivering a lecture in memory of a great leader, in the presence of another great statesman and double head of state, and before an assemblage of august Nigerians. This honour is also simultaneously humbling for me. I draw encouragement from the fact that for most, if not all of us assembled here, the late General Muhammed

remains an iconic figure whom we can freely celebrate in our different ways with the primary goal of drawing inspiration for our collective future.

6. Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, it is no longer news that for some time now, and across various administrations, our beloved country has been grappling with multiple challenges of insecurity that have continued to take a huge and unacceptable toll in human life, in addition to creating various dislocations in economy, society, and the national psyche. Putting the challenges in a historical perspective, I would like to suggest for starters that over the years, especially since the end of the civil war that ran from 1967 to 1970, there has been a mutation in the nature, dimension, and severity of the insecurity that has wracked the country.
7. In the immediate aftermath of the civil war, perhaps unsurprisingly, armed robbery constituted one of the most important sources of insecurity that Nigerians experienced. Ironically, the violent robbery crimes that caused many Nigerian households sleepless nights took place also amidst the emergence of an oil boom in the economy, and amidst a post-civil war national reconstruction and reconciliation effort. Challenges associated with and arising from that effort played a role in the change of government that led to the emergence of the Muhammed-Obasanjo administration and its stated objective of re-directing the ship of state.
8. Although the problem of armed robbery endured for many years, and occasional episodes of radical extremism were witnessed in the challenges posed by the Maitatsine Uprising (1980 to 1985) and the Bulumkutu crisis of 1984, among others, the country only seriously entered a new phase of insecurity following the outbreak of violent militancy in the Niger Delta area. Activism in the Niger Delta began as a legitimate claim for much greater inclusivity and a campaign against a reckless despoliation of the environment emanating from frequent and untreated oil spillages that also took a toll on citizen health and riverine livelihoods. The late Ken Saro-Wiwa who was the symbolic leader of the campaign never lost an

opportunity to underscore the determined but peaceful nature of the Niger Delta struggle when it started.

9. However, as the cries of the Niger Delta people gathered momentum and won attention both at home and abroad, it also at a point in time, began to assume violent and even criminal dimensions that impinged on the security of local communities and the wider country. From the deployment of lethal violence to press their claims and the bursting of oil pipelines to widespread acts of kidnapping for ransom and orchestrated attacks on officers and institutions of the state, the impact of the activities of the militants were felt across the country directly or indirectly, including in the volume of oil exports that got routinely disrupted to the detriment of the national treasury.
10. Many may have been tempted to assume that the challenge posed by militancy in the Niger Delta to the post-colonial Nigerian nation-state project was the worst possible such manifestation of discontent that could have been imagined. This is in spite of the fact that widespread discontent with the operation of an ossified federal system which Niger Delta militancy embodied had triggered claims across the country for a return to "true" federalism and even spurred the emergence of other ethno-regional radicalisms and militancy across the length and breadth of the country, including militia activity and vigilantism. But alas, worse was to come in terms of national insecurity as Nigerians found themselves taken into unfamiliar and unbelievable territory even as national leadership efforts to mollify the Niger Delta started to yield positive results.
11. Your Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, despite what we may, in retrospect, consider to be the warning signs that were on the horizon, not much prepared most Nigerians for the new phase of insecurity that was signaled by the emergence of the radical extremist group popularly known as **Boko Haram** and the devastating campaign of terror it has waged for over a decade now. After all, notwithstanding all our internal disagreements and vociferous quarrels, we as a people also were, in the final analysis, still always our brother's - and sister's- keepers. That

unspoken assumption about our national political order was rudely broken by the mass violence indiscriminately unleashed on civilian populations and all symbols of state authority in the northeastern Nigerian epicentre of its operations. Nigeria had been dragged into a new phase of national insecurity.

12. The Boko Haram movement proclaimed itself from the outset as a radical extremist challenge built on a peculiar doctrine of religion that aimed to supplant the secular nation-state project with a parochialist theocratic version. To press its case, the insurgent movement considered all the means at its disposal to be fair in the "holy" war it launched. Bombings, arson, and kidnappings combined with looting, rape, and vandalism were among the scorched earth tools which Boko Haram deployed as it sought to claim and occupy territory, exact tribute, impose its version of a religious administration, exploit local difference and contradictions to win over volunteers, forcibly conscript and indoctrinate disciples, and extend its reach. For Boko Haram, everyone has been a fair game - including the abduction of school girls and boys - and nothing has been out of bounds - including the bombing of worshippers in churches and mosques. It has also levied taxes on individuals and communities. The methods employed by Boko Haram marked a new and unaccustomed way for a group of unhappy Nigerians to fight a claim against the state or fellow citizens.

13. Boko Haram's dastardly actions were bad enough and the impact they registered in different facets of the polity and our national life have been deeply dislocating. From communities that were sacked, citizens forced into a situation of internal displacement, children orphaned and women widowed, and the countless lives that were lost to livelihoods that were broken, infrastructure deliberately destroyed beyond repair, and a deep-rooted fear planted in society, the extremist movement has carried out a reign of terror that has tried the Nigerian state to the maximum, stretched the security services, and tested the resilience of the people to its elastic limit. But that has not been all for the northeast and the country as Boko

Haram came to be joined in its violent extremism by rival and competing groups such as Islamic State of West Africa Province and Ansar Dine. Both groups were proven to be no less vicious than Boko Haram with which they also came to be locked in intermittent battles for supremacy and control.

14. The boundaries of contemporary national insecurity have been further enlarged by the emergence and expansion of an industry in kidnapping that has overwhelmed an important swathe of northwestern Nigeria and graduated into the status of a national pandemic. At the same time, we have found ourselves still grappling with an old herder-farmer conflict which, in the context of the security crises of the times, has provided openings for criminal marauders to carry out orgies of killings, maimings, and looting. Not surprisingly, in no time, insecurity rose to become the topmost concern of all Nigerians. Boko Haram has become both the embodiment and symbol of the security crises confronting the country. Taming it has been one of the key priorities of government over the last few years.

15. The national discourses around the Boko Haram menace have been varied and diverse. They range from the serious, carefully considered, and probing to the flippant, tendentious and conspiratorial. What is not in dispute, however, is that what is unanimously seen as the severest test of national security since the civil war is the product of a complex amalgam of factors built up over the years across different administrations and time horizons.

At the heart of this amalgam of factors is a deep-rooted crisis of human security which, especially - but not only in the northeast of the country, has manifested itself in the form of grinding poverty, deep and worsening inequality, shockingly low levels of literacy, alarming health indicators, and an abysmal average life expectancy. The area has also been characterised by high levels of unemployment exacerbated by a welter of factors,

including a crisis of climate change that has wreaked havoc with the Lake Chad basin.

16. I have presented a graphic and highly condensed picture of the dire conditions of human security that has festered in the northeast of Nigeria over the years as to serve as fertile ground for the emergence, flowering, and consolidation of various extremist, insurgent, and criminal networks. However, I also hasten to add that although that part of Nigeria may have presented some of the worst socio-economic indicators in the country, the situation was by no means exceptional insofar as across the length and breadth of the country, we have had to grapple with deteriorating social livelihoods amidst a rapid population growth, a largely stagnant productive base, and an overstretched state capacity. It is little wonder then that although the Lake Chad basin became the primary hub of insurgent radical extremism, no part of the country has really been spared the fall out from a diminished national social-economic context which has equally stymied the hopes of many for a better life.
17. Extreme socio-economic conditions measured by various indicators of human development leave an immediate and negative imprint on the lives of the most vulnerable and marginalised among us. Allowed to spread and ossify over a prolonged period, they begin to generate collateral consequences which in our context is manifested by the efflorescence of all the negative things that we would consider to be detrimental to our hopes of building a virile nation united in justice, equity, and a shared sense of destiny. Thus it is that radical extremist violence symbolised by Boko Haram has been followed by organised, large scale, frequent, and recurrent banditry, kidnapping, and, latterly, cultism and in a lot of ways, they have become inextricably intertwined. We should also not forget the epidemic of drug abuse that is ravaging our youth, the unfortunate regression into parochial ethno-regional irredentism and militancy, and the resurgence of militant demands for the dismemberment of the country as a solution to the prolonged season of anomie we have traversed for a while now.

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18. Your Excellencies, Distinguished Audience, Looking beyond Boko Haram, the clarion call to us as Nigerians is clear: In the face of a broken socio-economic fabric that has generated so much anguish, despair, and distrust among us, we must step back and summon that Nigerian genius that is innate in us in order to reimagine our country and reinvent our vision of oneness. To do this, it is evident to me that the time has come, and it cannot be postponed, for a new compact to be forged between state and society whose centerpiece must be an inclusive and expansive project of human security in our land. From massive investments in public health, nutrition, and education to the promotion of partnerships for affordable housing, household food security, and efficient means of mass mobility, the supply of potable water and electrical power in our cities, towns, and villages, and the creation of enabling conditions for any and every citizen to acquire the civics and skills necessary for navigating life in dignity, there has to be renewed drive to ensure that there is a concrete and meaningful bargain in being a Nigerian. Clearly, the leadership in the most affected state in the North East, Borno - has been up to the task in terms of its response to forging a new compact between state and society. Yet, in spite of the best efforts of my brother, Governor Babagana Zulum and his government following in the footsteps of former Governor Kashim Shettima, it's clear that what is required is a comprehensive national response, not an isolated state strategy. And I believe this must also include a whole of country sensitization programme that understands and subliminally internalises the problem as one that will consume all if not addressed and not a challenge that is exclusively Borno or Kanuri-centric.
19. The reflections which I have had over the period since I made a transition from the academy and the civil society arena into active politics and governance, and the modest experiments in social policy reform which I have endeavored to carry out in Ekiti State, have reinforced my belief that we cannot meaningfully speak of citizenship in our country today without underpinning it with a comprehensive social compact on the basis of which a civic culture and identity can be built and expanded. The social policy content of the compact must by definition and as a matter of deliberate

strategy be universal, non-discriminatory, and pan-territorial. Successfully executed, the new social compact will by itself revamp the content and nature of our national discourses, foster a sense of national identity and belonging, empower citizens, encourage the active engagement of the populace with public affairs, and nurture a system reciprocal accountability between state and society.

20. No social compact endures which is not accompanied with deliberate public policies to grow and expand the economy on a sustained basis. In this connection, we will have to carry forward and further, our efforts at retooling the civil service as a powerhouse of policy design and implantation that is responsive to the needs of the present times and anticipatory of the demands of tomorrow. Armed with an effective and capable civil service, we stand a good chance of creating the policy environment that will allow us to accelerate the expansion of the productive base of the national economy, including the rebuilding of our local manufacturing capacity, the diversification of our domestic revenue streams, the promotion of local value addition, and the expansion of our exports. A capable civil service functioning as the heartbeat of the state is a sine qua non for any social compact that is developed to be workable, sustainable, and vibrant.
21. If an all-encompassing social compact has become an urgent imperative in our quest to look beyond Boko Haram towards an all-round national rebirth, it must go without saying that we have to pay special attention to employment creation on a mass scale so that our bid for socio-economic progress can stand a chance of being achieved. I am here particularly concerned as you about the role which employment can play in helping the burgeoning army of young Nigerians to build character, enhance personal dignity, eschew crime, lead innovation, and sustain hope for a better future whilst contributing productively to the development of the nation. For the government, the private sector, and non-governmental associations, the shared responsibility to tame unemployment must be

addressed as a prime order of business in the overall effort to rebuild a basis for citizenship through a revamped social compact. This is what I meant when, at a Mambayya House anniversary lecture in Kano in December 2021, I suggested that on a pan- Nigerian scale, we need a new **Sawaba Declaration**.

22. It is a settled matter among students of security studies that human security provides a better all-encompassing framework for assessing the state of health of a nation. To build a new social compact anchored on it assumes that in fulfilling its side of the bargain, the state will also be able to secure the citizenry with credibility. This requires a constant honing of the capability of the security services to prevent, deter, and overcome threats to the territorial integrity of the country and the lives and property of citizens. In this connection, ongoing efforts to equip, train, and motivate the armed forces and other agencies of national security to enhance their readiness to deal with conventional and unconventional threats will need to be sustained as an important piece of the goal of national rebirth. Although the military is gearing up to its responsibilities in this regard, it is clear that more needs to be done.
23. The quest to advance the project of our state and nation-building through a new social compact and associated policies may sound easy but, in reality, it will call for an uncommon display of vision and courage. Fortunately, in the life of the late General Muhammed and his example in leadership, we saw the difference which courage, underpinned with conviction, can make in a short space of time. When this is combined with the zero tolerance which his government exhibited towards corruption, indolence, and maladministration in public affairs, we know that it is within us, if we wish, to build a coalition of citizens united by a resolve to clean up and modernize the governance system and project a vision of transformation that can set us on the path towards claiming our greatness as a people and a country.

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24. Cleaning up the national stable is a task that must be accepted as an ongoing exercise. It was central to the task of national reset that the Murtala-Obasanjo administration committed itself to pursuing. The overarching goal of rebuilding a strong, united, and virile nation living at peace with itself and in dignity in the comity of nations was a constant refrain in the various public declarations made by General Muhammed during his time at the helm. The esteemed Chair for this anniversary occasion was to expound on this theme in the famous Jaji Declaration which he pronounced in 1977 and which lit up the imagination of a generation of Nigerians about the manifest destiny that awaits us if we organise ourselves with purpose to build a country of which all Nigerians can be proud.
 25. Rediscovering our innate national genius in order to fire our imagination and will for a new social compact will not only be beneficial to us as a nation and a people but also the entire African continent and the black world which scholars nowadays refer to as global Africa. In this regard, let us recall and be inspired by the famous "Africa Has Come of Age" speech which the late General Muhammed delivered with aplomb and conviction at the Addis Ababa extraordinary summit of the defunct Organisation of African Unity held in July 1975 to determine an African continent position at a most decisive moment in the Angolan struggle for independence. General Muhammed boldly told his colleagues and the world of Nigeria's decision to cast its lot with the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) led by the late Augustinho Neto. In doing so, he declared: "Africa has come of age. It is no longer under the orbit of any extra continental power.... The fortunes of Africa are in our hands to make or mar". The Africa Hall venue of the summit was electrified, the African continent was mesmerised, the African world glowed with pride.
 26. What General Muhammed successfully triggered in most Nigerians at home, he also inspired abroad, across Africa and the entire world. A determined effort at a domestic national reset was refracted effortlessly into the country's foreign policy posture. In Murtala Muhammed, we had a

leader we could trust. In the Muhammed-Obasanjo administration we had a government we could believe in. We lived a moment of pride and dignity as Nigerians convinced that together, as one people, we can surmount our differences and overcome our weaknesses to march forward and onward in the journey of forging our national greatness. Boko Haram and all it symbolises may have brought out in sharp and painful relief, the many discontents that have accompanied our state and nation-building effort. However, like the generation of General Muhammed, our duty is to reorganise in order, like Phoenix, to rise from the ashes stronger and better.

27. It will be an historic betrayal to succumb to pressures and sentiments of division and dismemberment on account of the many difficulties that we have had to grapple associated with the Boko Haram. This is the time when the many Murtalas among us, that army of committed citizens who refuse to give up on the Nigerian idea and ideal so ably embodied by the late General, must stand up and raise their voices in counterweight to the Boko Haram mentality of dismemberment and in defence of a Nigerian agenda built on a new and updated social compact.
28. Our esteemed Chairman, yourself a celebrated embodiment of the pan-Nigerian spirit, Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish on this day, and on this auspicious occasion, to publicly restate my own unalloyed commitment to that Nigerian Agenda which must now blossom as we strive to forge a new phase in our national history. When it mattered, Murtala Muhammed stood up, along with his many colleagues to be counted. 46 years after he left us, history presents all Nigerians of good faith an opportunity to take a stand too and become part of the detachment of the bearers of a new national agenda who must come together to move us beyond the Boko Haram menace and restore popular faith in our unfinished march to greatness.
29. Long may the memory of Murtala Muhammed abide with us. Long may his spirit inspire us. And long live the Murtala Muhammed Foundation. God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria. I thank you for your kind attention.

Dr. Kayode Fayemi, *CON*
Governor