

# The Winds of Change

*"The wind of change is blowing through this continent, and whether we like it or not, this growth of national consciousness is a political fact."*

*—Harold Macmillan British Prime Minister 1957-1963*

On February 3rd 1960 the then British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan in a speech before the South African Parliament spoke the above words. On that occasion the words pertained to the strong and unassailing political desire of that era evident in many British colonies, for independence.

Today those winds of change blow strongly again, portending a similar change of era in the political life of one nation Nigeria hoping to ignite a new consciousness and many positive firsts across Africa and in the telling of a new African narrative. President Muhammadu Buhari alluded to this fact in his acceptance speech after Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) announced his victory when he stated that 'we have voted for a government that will serve and govern, but will never rule over you. CHANGE has come and a new day and a new Nigeria is upon us. The victory is yours and the glory is that of our nation, NIGERIA.'

Nigerians the world over on Friday 29th May 2015 welcomed President Muhammadu Buhari as he became the 7th elected President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, with his Vice President Professor Yemi Osinbajo SAN who both emerged from general elections acclaimed to be the freest and fairest in Nigeria's history, and also one characterised by an increased awareness and involvement of the general electorate who are becoming increasingly politically sophisticated.

Expectations are indeed high both at home and abroad as expected but one thing I must say is that President Buhari commands uncanny respect across the full spectrum of the country and that in itself is a solid foundation to build upon in a country riddled with corrupt and divisive regional leaders. His stance on corruption is well known as he aptly said in

his victory speech 'we shall strongly battle another form of evil that is even worse than terrorism—the evil of corruption. Corruption attacks and seeks to destroy our national institutions and character. By misdirecting into selfish hands funds intended for the public purpose, corruption distorts the economy and worsens income inequality. It creates a class of unjustly enriched people. Such an illegal yet powerful force soon comes to undermine democracy because its conspirators have amassed so much money that they believe they can buy government. We shall end this threat to our economic development and democratic survival. I repeat that corruption will not be tolerated by this administration; and it shall no longer be allowed to stand as if it is a respected monument in this nation.'

President Muhammadu Buhari's Inaugural speech following his swearing-in as President set out a powerful agenda for his government. He quite rightly and without much ado dealt with the issue of separation of powers declaring that 'to achieve our objectives we must consciously work the democratic system. The Federal Executive under my watch will not seek to encroach on the duties and functions of the Legislative and Judicial arms of government. For their part the legislative arm must keep to their brief of making laws, carrying out oversight functions and doing so expeditiously. It is only when the three arms act constitutionally that government will be enabled to serve the country optimally and avoid the confusion all too often bedeviling governance today.' Making laws expeditiously cannot be over emphasised as we look back at the Jonathan administration and observe that there were a good number of bills rushed through at the last minute by the National Assembly. Whilst President Jonathan signed six bills into law just 48 hours to the end of his tenure among which was the Nigerian Electricity Management Services Agency Act, the Administration of Criminal Justice Act, 2015 and the Cyber Crime (Prohibition and Prevention) Act, 2015 were only recently presented to the public. The game of politics beclouded the relationship between the Executive and the National Assembly to such an extent that to this day the Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB)

which has been at the National Assembly since 2008, never saw the light of day. It is hoped that with the coming of the next assembly it will not be business as usual but a sincere rise above the politics of the day for the greater good of the common man. 'The judicial system needs reform to cleanse itself from its immediate past' he so rightly said. The country now expects the judiciary to act with dispatch on all cases especially on corruption, serious financial crimes or abuse of office.

There was no song and dance about Mr. President's areas of focus namely, terrorism, insecurity, the return of the Chibok girls ending the Boko Haram insurgency and pervasive corruption as well as rebuilding and reforming the public service to become more effective and more serviceable. Education, medicare, unending and seemingly impossible fuel and power shortages are the immediate concerns he added. Unemployment notably among the youth which will be tackled frontally through the revival of agriculture, solid minerals mining as well as credits to small and medium size businesses. To further accelerate the revival and development of our railways, road and general infrastructure. On accountability amongst tiers of government he noted that 'the relations between Abuja and the States have to be clarified if we are to serve the country better. Constitutionally there are limits to powers of each of the three tiers of government but that should not mean the Federal Government should fold its arms and close its eyes to what is going on in the states and local governments. Not least the operations of the Local Government Joint Account. While the Federal Government cannot interfere in the details of its operations it will ensure that the gross corruption at the local level is checked. As far as the constitution allows me I will try to ensure that there is responsible and accountable governance at all levels of government in the country.'

All said and done there must be a conscious effort to review our laws, the bills for the amendment of our laws must be supported whole-heartedly. There is a dire need to reform the Nigerian Police and all other law enforcement agencies through reorientation and rehabilitation and appropriate compensation.



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The strict observance of fundamental human rights and the rule of law cannot be ignored. Anti corruption agencies such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Crimes Commission (ICPC) must be strengthened and made more efficient by granting them the genuine independence they require to tackle corruption. Lack of judicial independence has dragged the judiciary back over the years. The Constitution desperately needs to be amended and it must be done now. The National Conference Committee report must not be allowed to gather dust in the Senate where it was submitted in the final few hours of the Jonathan administration.

There is indeed a mood in the air of a new dispensation of democracy that will herald in strong political and economic reforms. Nigerians once more hope and pray for the leadership that will deliver on those promises. We surely can fix our problems and this might just be the time, so all hands on deck to make our dreams a reality.

I have not an iota of doubt that President Muhammadu Buhari as the strong leader that he is will rise to the challenges that lie ahead of him with the sincere support of the long-suffering good people of Nigeria.

