

From Poverty Central to Prosperity: How the Obiageli Ezekwesili Presidency will LIFT 80+ million Nigerians out of poverty

Today is an exciting day for this campaign as we will be sharing the most important issue in our ambitious plan for Nigeria that shows our readiness to govern from Day One. I will be telling you how we intend to lift 80 million Nigerians out of poverty.

We expect citizens to hold us to account for every word we say and every promise we make, not just on our innovative solutions for tackling poverty which I would be sharing today, but on our entire manifesto to be released to the public on Friday.

I will like to start today by reminding us of a fact which a lot of us have stopped believing.

It's a fact that was true in 1960 when our founders won the battle for Independence and took their destinies and the destinies of their children in their hands. It's a fact that remained true in the midst of the setbacks and traumas of seven military coups, a horrible civil war and decades of failed political leadership. It's a fact that did not change through seasons of economic recessions, structural adjustments and brutal dictatorships; it did not change when Abiola's hope was deferred or when Obasanjo transmuted from prison to president or, indeed, when President Muhammadu Buhari, got another chance in 2015 to lead this country. It has remained true up till this very moment as I stand today, challenging all of us to seize the opportunity for a new independence from our rapacious ruling class.

That fact is that Nigeria is a great country and Nigerians are great people. It's true. This isn't something that I feel obligated to say just because I am running for president. It is true – Nigeria is a great country.

Sometimes it is hard to believe Nigeria's greatness in the midst of our daily struggles, and as we watch our country repeat the same mistakes over and over again. It is hard to remember the contributions our country has made for freedom and peace across the African continent. We are blessed with fertile, arable land; the largest market in Africa; abundant natural resources. We are Africa's largest economy. Our music and movies and creative talents are the greatest soft power in Africa. We have the most innovative, talented and resourceful concentration of black people in the world. Nigeria is a great country.

I believe in Nigeria and the promise she holds – and that belief is what drives me every single day of this journey. I am an impatient optimist. I cannot stand it when we choose to accept mediocrity or resign ourselves to lowly standards. Nigeria can do much better. I care about Nigeria and Nigerians enough to know that the back-to-back failed leadership has held us back for far too long, and if we do not take a stand and take our country back, they would still be here in years to come, holding back our children and their children. God forbid

I have a dream of a new Nigeria that works for all, not just for a small clique who see politics as their means to stupendous wealth while the majority of those they govern are afflicted with poverty and misery.

I have a dream of an inclusive and prosperous country where there is equality of opportunity for all. Our country will be a great meritocracy where success in life is not determined by your background or tribe or gender or religion or family name but by your talents and hard work.

I have a dream of a strong, indivisible nation with a united purpose and shared national values.

I have a dream of a new Nigeria that finally manages her diversity effectively and draws on the benefits of our greater creativity, innovation and shared progress.

The Nigeria we would start building from 2019 would not trudge into the future with uncertainty like chickens when we have all it takes to soar with confidence like eagles. I want to reignite belief in Nigeria's greatness by leading a government that would make clear promises to citizens and deliver on them, not like the current leadership which spent its first year in office denying all the promises it made to get into that office. My mission is not just to change this APCPDP government, but more than that, we must disrupt the politics and governance of the status quo and quickly chart a new course for the future of our country. We have enough young people, many progressive men and women, who are signing up with our citizens' party, ACPN, to unleash the principles of disruptive technologies to our politics for good.

I believe that a blessed and great country like ours has all it takes to confront whatever challenges stand on our way, to beat them and to win! Like former US President Bill Clinton noted for his country, I too believe that there is nothing wrong with Nigeria that cannot be fixed with what is right in Nigeria. We have all it takes.

And right now, there are seven monstrous challenges that I see holding us down. To solve each of them would need bold, visionary leadership and hardwork from an intelligent government:

1. **Too little productivity and competitiveness of the Nigerian economy:** For a nation of our size and our potentials, our low real Gross Domestic Product of \$375.77 billion after 58 years of independence is terribly underwhelming. Unlike China which grew in double digits over almost three decades to become a \$14 trillion GDP economy, Nigeria's growth has been trapped in cycles of boom and bust in the classic evidence of oil price volatility and effects of Dutch Disease. We need a bold economic vision to define a pathway of double-digit inclusive economic growth over the next decade. That is exactly what an ACPN administration will ensure.
2. **Too much poverty and inequality:** Extreme poverty in Nigeria is increasing by nearly 6 people every minute. In the time it will take me to deliver my speech today, about 250 Nigerians would have become extremely poor. Think about that for a second. But that is not even the worst part. According to the World Poverty Clock, if the current trends continue – or to put it another way, if we continue to elect this poverty-bringing APCPDP leadership, the number of people living in extreme poverty in Nigeria would

increase from about 88 million today to 120 million in 2030. That means that in the next 12 years, over 30 million more Nigerians will join the infamous number of extremely poor people who live on less than N700 per day. When a country has a GINI coefficient above 35 percent, it means the income inequality in that country is very high. Nigeria's GINI coefficient is between 46 and 60 percent. Such levels of extreme inequality has all sorts of destabilizing implications for the country. Tackling the inequality and lifting 80 million Nigerians out of poverty will be the mission of my presidency. We need to start the deliberate hard work of pulling ourselves, our friends and our families and our communities from this destructive poverty tsunami sweeping through our nation. Time is not on our side.

3. **Too much insecurity and conflicts:** Nigeria is now the 14th most fragile nation in the world on the Fragile States Index, and the 16th most dangerous country to live in the world, according to the Global Peace Index. The country faces at least 14 major security threats across different regions, from terrorism to herders-farmers clashes, from kidnappings to organized crime and trafficking. Our young girls go to school in the morning to pursue dreams of a better life, but end up at night in terrorists' dens, raped and traumatised. Entire communities and even local government areas in this country have been driven into hunger and poverty, as their sources of livelihoods are completely wiped out due to insecurity. The value of a Nigerian life has been devalued and cheapened.
4. **Too much illiteracy:** 13.5 million children and counting are out-of-school. That is more than the entire population of Benin Republic. Even those who have the 'privilege' of attending our schools these days receive an education that is unfit for purpose and unfit for the competitive and productive country we intend to build. Education will be the number one priority of my government. As Bill Gates, the founder of one of the most innovative companies in the world, said, "Education is like a master switch that opens up all sorts of opportunities for individuals and societies." I intend to fully turn up that switch if elected your president.
5. **Too much health and wellbeing challenges:** The World Health Organization (WHO) ranks the Nigerian healthcare system as 187th out of 190 healthcare systems in the world. Just last month, the World Bank released its first ever Human Capital Index, and Nigeria was in the bottom 6 out of 157 countries ranked. My position on health is that it is a fundamental human right. Nigeria loses too much when its human capital do not live healthy lives. Health is central to lifting our people out of poverty; it is central to ensuring that we have a competitive and productive economy. And in my government, it will occupy a central place.
6. **Too much infrastructural deficit:** Our country has become notorious for its horrible infrastructure – roads that are simply death traps, epileptic electricity supply,

insufficient broadband connectivity, underwhelming rail and ports development. There is little physical links and connectivity for development due to infrastructure deficit in both urban and rural centres. We must heed the Chinese lesson from their well-known mantra that “if you want to improve the lives of your people, connect them to markets by giving them roads.”

7. **Too much structural faults:** Our current federal structure simply does not work. The structure of a federation is its skeleton. A functional structure gives shape, support, and aids the movement of the federation. No wonder Nigeria is handicapped under this dysfunctional structure. There was a time when the APC agreed on the need to restructure the federation and devolve more powers to the regions and states. The party campaigned in 2015 on a manifesto that propagated the doctrine of restructuring. President Buhari went along with it every step of the way because it is all about getting into power for him. He won and then began to renege on his promises, including on restructuring. He suddenly remembered all the reasons why “structure is not the problem” with Nigeria.

Today I am releasing my platform’s proposal on how we would lift 80 million Nigerians out of poverty. My plan proposes a better future for Nigerians. It is a blueprint of possibilities and a pledge to Nigerians of what an ACPN government can achieve. Our program will provide hope, progress and prosperity for everyone. We will be radical but responsible. We will think big while living within our means. The overriding vision of an ACPN presidency shall be to build a new Nigeria that is prosperous, stable and harmonious.

Let me highlight the economic philosophy of my government; the fundamental principles and concepts that will guide our governance:

1. A strong belief in the dominant economic role of the private sector and a commitment of our government to launch vigorous market economy reforms. Through policy, effective regulation and catalytic public investment in the provision of basic services for

people and businesses, we will accelerate and expand the sources of growth in the economy.

2. A massive program of deregulation of the Nigerian economy to unleash the depth of competition and efficiencies necessary for higher and deeper economic growth and expansion of the economy. The division and rebalancing of roles between business and government will reduce opportunities of corruption and bottlenecks that limit the competitiveness of the Nigerian economy.
3. A commitment to pursuing growth that is inclusive which is a necessity for lifting the poor to an improved state of well-being. Research has shown us that the poor are uplifted faster in a market economy cushioned by relevant safety nets.
4. A dedication to improving the Productivity and Competitiveness of Nigeria and Nigerians in every sector of economic activity by removing barriers and providing a menu of sound policy measures.
5. A deliberateness in easing the Doing Business environment not just for major businesses in Nigeria but for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, which are the lifeblood of our economy.

The main way out of poverty is for people to earn incomes. The main way for people to earn incomes is by having profitable work to do. Social safety nets like cash transfers to the poor are good, but they must only be a side component to a private-sector driven jobs strategy. When people have profitable work to do, it leads to inclusive growth and productivity of our economy. Clearly, there is a link joining it all together: Our growth and productivity can only happen when our people have lots of jobs and when they earn incomes that pull them out of poverty.

Right now, people simply do not have jobs. The entire population of Togo is about 8 million people. That is the number of people who became unemployed in just 20 months, between January 2016 and September 2017, under President Buhari, according to the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (NBS). 8 MILLION!!! Again, think about that for a second. Those are not just numbers – they are humans. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 million humans. They have families. They have people who depend on them. More are entering the job market and many are losing their jobs. We all know someone who has

lost a job in this economy. You may even be one of them. We all have families and friends who call us on the phone, pleading for any change we could spare at all to help them survive one more day. How long can we continue like this?

But the thing is that the government does not have the resources or the capacity to provide these much-needed jobs. That is a settled truth, no matter what any politician says to you. Therefore, in building our new Nigeria, the private sector will be the engine of economic growth and development. Our philosophy for tackling the challenges we face will be market-based, private sector driven and government supported.

Government has a role to play in enhancing the market, not undermining it. When I am president, we will embrace that role. We will set the vision; we will lead on policy; we will ensure smarter, better and clearer regulations; we will help correct important market failures; and we will, of course, invest in critical areas like developing the human capital to power our 21st century economy and leading the way on big-ticket infrastructure.

Now, let us talk about some of our programs; some of the ways we intend to lift 80 million Nigerians out of poverty and propel this country and its great people to their rightful place in the world.

1. Human Development shall be our New Economy.

Education and skills development of healthy Nigerian people shall be our Number One priority.

No matter what we do, we would never win the war on poverty without investing massively in human capital development. That is why in our ACPN government, education will be the new oil. Education will be the new economy. My vision for education is one that will nourish the mind and create a progressive society that

competes globally. If our current and future human capital are not educated, they will most likely end up in poverty and our economy will lose the productivity that they would have added.

We shall launch a root and branch reform of all the levels and phases of education. Early Childcare Education, Basic Education, Secondary Education, Special Needs Education and Adult/Informal Education will all be systemically reformed to achieve universal access to quality and relevant education by all Nigerians. Education, training and skills development remain the most potent tools of economic and social mobility in all progressive societies. Breaking the vicious circle of poor education is crucial for promoting inclusive economic growth and decent jobs for all.

Just look at the numbers of children out of school in Nigeria: 13.2 million children. That is a time bomb, and it is already exploding all around us. 22 percent of the total number of Out-Of-School children in the whole world are our Nigerian children. My government will reverse that. Starting from next year, we would quickly move to improve access. **My government would reduce the number of Out-Of-School children by 20 percent annually.** That will bring it down from the current 13.2 million to about 5.4 million by 2023. And by then, we would have put structures and policies in place to ensure that the progress is irreversible and Education-For-All will be achieved well before 2030. You can hold me to this. Do you know how I know that it can be done? Because I have done it before. I served as education minister for 10 months – which is one academic session. From the year 2000 till today – that is a period of 18 years – the only time that the number of Out-Of-School children in this country reduced was when I was education minister. This is fact – the records are there. In just 10 months, we dropped the number by almost half a million, but the moment I left the ministry of education in 2007, the number immediately jacked up by almost two million. And it has never dropped again since then. So trust me when I say it is possible. We did it before, and we would do it again.

I believe, and there is enough evidence to back me up, that the most important thing that transforms education in any society is the quality of teachers. We have a serious challenge with teacher quality in this country. In one particular state, only 0.03 percent of teachers were fully competent to teach Mathematics and English language at primary level. The noble teaching profession has been so rubbished that it now only attracts those who do not have alternatives. That is a disaster. Upon getting into office, **my government would immediately launch a Teachers Top Talent (TTT) Initiative.** The aim of the program would be to attract top talents into teaching because we really have no option. Teaching has to become the first thing that an academically accomplished and problem solving individual thinks about. We would provide sweeteners to encourage the brightest and best into the teaching profession. **One such initiative would be the Housing All Teachers (HAT) program which would ensure that a top talent who chooses to go into teaching would have an immediate chance to become a homeowner.** We would provide seed money, state governments would provide the land and we would get developers to come on board. Home ownership is one of the fastest ways of reducing poverty. When a top talent realises that she has a cheaper opportunity to own her own home rather than she would have while renting in another profession, it would spark interest in teaching.

Of course, the other positive of the HAT program is the number of jobs it would create. Just imagine the number of houses that need to be built to house the hundreds of thousands of teachers across the country..

Still on the issue of teachers, **another initiative that we would be launching is the Teachers Prestige; Teachers Pride.** This initiative would include **In-Service programs** in which teachers would be sponsored on professional trainings and staff development modules where they meet their peers, discuss methods and caseloads. **It would also include giving a bite to the Teachers Regulatory Council (TRC) to implement adherence to certain milestones which teachers must reach to be rewarded.** If other professions like Accounting, Medicine and Law are so thoroughly regulated, there is no reason why the very important teaching profession should not be

similarly regulated. **The Teachers Prestige; Teachers Pride initiative would also partner with the teachers' union, state governments, and other stakeholders to look at the payment package of our teachers** in order to agree on the scale of rewards and opportunities needed to attract top talents.

Permit me to spend some more time on education. Like I said earlier, it is absolutely crucial to our anti-poverty agenda. Our entire wealth, growth and poverty reduction strategy is hinged on getting education and human capital development right. **Our government will upgrade the curriculum in our schools to align with 21st century needs.** We are still stuck in the past as things stand. Our university curriculum, for instance, needs to be directly linked to the labour market so that as we notice sources of present and future growth of the economy, we immediately think of the kinds of skills that must be deployed.

My administration would also prioritise early childcare for those at the bottom of the pyramid. **We will innovate with public and community funded schemes to enable the children of the poor have solid early child care** and pre-school education.

One of our signature programs when we get elected next year would be TwentyToTheRanking which targets the transformation of 20 Nigerian universities to ensure that they feature in the rankings of the top universities in the world in seven years.

Our government will grant full autonomy to public universities. This cowardly control of universities does us no good. **We would continue to fund our public universities with grants that will be linked to performance, results and accountability.**

As the universities begin to be innovative with how they raise money, **the federal government under my leadership would develop a solid financing model to**

support students that will be a combination of financial aids, scholarships and student loans.

My administration would also integrate accomplished Diaspora Nigerians who would serve on the faculties of our local universities. They do not have to leave their current employment. But we would enter into partnership programs with their institutions abroad such that they could teach in several Nigerian universities at once with the help of multimedia and teaching assistants.

Human capital development does not revolve around acquiring a university degree alone. Not everyone can or will attend universities, but every single Nigerian can get a skill. That's why **our ACPN government would be launching a massive national skills program called Get-A-Skill (GAS).** The target of GAS is to train at least 900,000 Nigerians annually in diverse skills. In my time as Minister of Education between 2006 and 2007, I was already extremely worried about the mismatch between youth burgeoning, unemployability and limited economic opportunities, such that our team designed a major skills development program that introduced a new level of certification to our education system. We designed and added Vocational Enterprise Institutions and Innovation Enterprise Institutions as national certifications accredited and regulated by the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE). There are currently over 200 Vocational Enterprise Institutions (VEIs) and Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEIs) which are imparting skills in areas as diverse as cosmetology, welding, fashion design, electrical installation, paralegal studies, film & TV production, hospitality, among others. However, 200 VEIs and IEIs are not nearly enough for a country as large as ours, especially as it has become so difficult to get skilled hands to drive important areas of our economy. The government has to be more actively interested and invested in training and skills. Whereas in 2007, our goal was to produce a minimum of 300,000 such market-sensitive skills annually, we shall be bolder in pushing an agenda to triple that number to 900,000. My government will push the GAS program in partnership with the private sector to ensure more such institutions come on board. We need more schools to meet the needs of the construction sector; we need

more technical schools to meet the needs of the telecoms sector; Science, technology and IT, we need more schools to meet the needs of the agriculture sector; oil and gas, financial services, trade and logistics, and many others.

We all know that an unhealthy populace is a poor populace. Therefore no anti-poverty agenda can stand without a solid health strategy. **The key planks of our health agenda is to reverse the negative trend of maternal and infant mortality, child mortality, needless deaths in non-communicable diseases and reversing the trend of medical tourism** which has President Muhammadu Buhari as grand patron.

We would also support research and development for vaccines. We would champion engagement with international pharmaceutical companies on cost-effective vaccines and medicines that will effectively tackle disease burdens especially malaria and other tropical diseases that hit us disproportionately.

Our government will broaden the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) to ensure universal coverage in a decade. Every Nigerian has to be in the system, starting with those currently earning an income.

We would also attract at least three top-quality global health providers linked to the NHIS in each subregion.

At the level of primary health care, we intend to provide incentives that would make primary healthcare a market-based system. It makes no sense for the governments to set up primary health centres in communities and then leave them without doctors or nurses or other health professionals. We would adopt a PPP model that would outsource the management of these primary health centres to private providers, where the payment to these providers would be linked to performance. We will target subsidies to the poor in our rural communities such that only a tiny social fee needs to be paid while the federal and state governments shoulder the cost. Under the ACPN government, we would run a results-based health system.

2. **We will pursue a Produce More, Earn More vision** that will result in higher productivity, greater competitiveness, higher income, more diversified export earnings from wider sources of economic growth in the economy. While Nigeria's productivity stands at less than \$3/hour, countries like Brazil, Russia and Turkey have productivities at \$10.7/hour, \$24/hour and \$28.9/hour respectively. Under our Produce More, Earn More initiative, **our government will partner with Private Sector to identify critical measures necessary to increase Nigeria's Productivity to at least \$10/hour over the next four years.** By introducing a range of policy measures, cutting a wide variety of bureaucratic and regulatory bottlenecks in all sectors, providing the right mix of critical infrastructure and relevant training, skills and capacities for the business sector, we shall unleash higher labor productivity and consequently, improve the income growth for individuals, households, businesses and government.

Through the Productivity and Competitiveness initiative, we shall seek to achieve **sectoral economic structural transformation**. What this means is that we will identify the industries that are of strategic value to our economy and support and promote them through sound policies on trade, tax, infrastructure, skills, training, and research and development. This is how it is done in every major economy of the world, and that is how we would do it to ensure inclusive growth.

We expect productivity boosts and expansion in new opportunities that create jobs from some key sectors like Agriculture, Fisheries, Livestock and agribusiness where more than two-thirds of Nigeria's active labor population is found, light manufacturing industries, construction, housing and public works, renewable solutions, services including trade, telecom and technology, domestic tourism, and creative industries.

A majority of those operating in the economy are in the informal, low productivity sectors. People like the barber in Bori, the cobbler in Dutse, the petty trader in Onitsha or the tea seller in Kano. At the end of each day, by the time their business costs are

removed, they make – maybe – N200 or N250. How do we ensure that that figure is jacked to at least N1000 daily for a start? **The ACPN government would take away the barriers to the productivity of our citizens in the informal sector.** We are committed to providing the critical infrastructure, training, access to finance, connectivity to the market and to use policies and targeted public investments to ease the Doing Business environment for both the formal and informal sector firms. We would also provide the incentives that would move them from informality to formality, and enhance their productivity and competitiveness.

MSMEs play a key role in our economy. Right now, based on NBS data, they account for almost half of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employ over 80 percent of the labour force. If they are doing poorly, then our economy and our people will do poorly. Yet, the government punishes them and makes everything so difficult for them. The government has turned these honest, hardworking citizens into suffer-heads. You must have heard that when the World Bank released its Ease of Doing Business rankings last month, Nigeria dropped in rank to 146th out of 190 countries. My administration will do better for our MSMEs. **Within our first 100 days in office, we will launch a Suffer-Head Challenge.** We will choose one of our priority sectors every few weeks and publicly publish every single rule and regulation in that sector. We would then throw it open to the general public to tell us the things that are not working, the enemies of their progress, the things that are too complicated, and the things that must go. And then after all the feedback has been received from business people, stakeholders, and the general public, my cabinet will have three months to go through them. If a minister wants to keep any regulation, he must defend it and explain why it is useful to keep it. If there is no defence or if the defence is weak, then such a regulation must go. It's as simple as that.

Most SMEs are operating without business plans, most are unaware of available tools that can make them more productive, many are swamped with paperwork and most are so uncompetitive that they cannot export. The contribution of MSMEs to Nigeria's exports is less than 10 percent. **Our ACPN government will launch BizLift, which**

would be an online portal and national telephone helpline that would offer guidance and advisory services to SMEs employing between 10 and 199 people. We will also support MSMEs to improve their access to markets. A crucial way we intend to do that is through massive road construction and rehabilitation. **We intend to increase the paved road network from 65,000km to 120,000km.**

I want to run an honest government, so I would be the first to tell you that the government budget will not be sufficient to meet our infrastructural demands from roads to rails to power to schools. That is why our emphasis on partnership with the private sector is so crucial. For instance, on the issue of increasing our paved road network to ease access to markets for MSMEs, we intend to collaborate with states, businesses, communities and other stakeholders to agree on new financing models, how they would be paid for and the accountability that goes with non-performance. **If the ACPN government introduces tolling on roads or any other initiative that has potential to raise rates on citizens, we promise to sign binding Service Level Agreements (SLAs) promising to refund monies back to the Nigerian people if standards are not maintained or we do not meet agreed expectations.** We would use biometrics and e-ticketing to target customers who made payments for those services, and if we fail to fulfil our own end of the bargain, refunds will be made.

3. **We will pursue a Six Growth Poles strategy**, which will be at the heart of our diversification agenda. We will focus on optimizing the economic performance and expanding the economies of the six geopolitical regions. The federal government will work with the regions and the private sector to produce and implement robust regional economic strategies that will foster sustainable growth.

– In the North East, we will invest in the reconstruction and the reclamation of the Chad Basin for economic expansion. We will also restore communities and livelihoods.

- In the North Central we will restore law and order while optimizing agriculture productivity.
- In the South South, we will implement a regeneration agenda for land, communities and people for a Niger Delta beyond oil.
- In the South East, we will undertake reconstruction for innovation, enterprise and trade development.
- In the South West, we will place emphasis on optimizing and positioning the region as a magnet for global talents with the aim of becoming a hub for manufacturing and services.
- In the North West, we shall reignite the competitiveness of value-added leather and textile clustering by attracting light manufacturing industries to the comparative advantages of sources of raw materials for production.

Across board, we would pursue an economy of agglomeration, whereby similar economic activities are clustered together to ensure that businesses and cities can scale and have good connectivity.

Our focus on regional development is strategic. The conversation for political restructuring has to begin with fiscal restructuring. **We would actively lead the national conversation on restructuring and devolution of powers which must be had if we are to make progress.** Over-centralisation only favors the most powerful. Our governance philosophy will be one that favors the many, not just a powerful clique. We cannot abide this excessively powerful centre that overwhelms and reduces the regions with paternalistic ties to Abuja evident in the frequency of begging bowls and bail-out funds to states. The excessive powers of the federal government is

partially responsible for the stunted growth and poverty of the states and regions. We shall lead an economic-based dialogue for correcting the structural imbalance that has hobbled the regions and states and created the failure of our fiscal federalism in practice.

Another component of our growth pole strategy is what we have called the **12 Cities Project**. In the 21st century, cities across the world compete with each other to attract investments, and to attract the brightest and the best talents. But how many Nigerian cities are even competing? How many Nigerian cities meet the standard of a global city? What we have are just mega-slums. We must fix that. Over the next decade, we will transform 12 Nigerian cities into global standard cities with a mix of well-planned infrastructure, proper positioning as magnets for top talents and a technology-based modernization agenda. We would identify cities with the potential to massively contribute towards economic growth and become homes to millions of new jobs. We would deliberately build those cities to provide the physical conditions for workers to be productive, because only productivity can pull people out of poverty and lead to prosperity.

4. The failure in power sector is the clearest proof of what can happen when the federal government refuses to let go of its controls on the economy. This failure is responsible for the situation where 190 million Nigerians manage about 3500MW of power, whereas South Africa with 50 million people generates in excess of 50,000MW. How can a nation be productive without access to energy? I was a part of the team that contributed in articulating the processes and policies that became the Power Sector Reform Act. That law contained everything needed to ensure transformation of the power sector and catalysing a similar level of competition that happened in the telecommunications sector. But the Federal Government continues to covet control. We need complete private sector leadership in the power sector. **As I mentioned earlier, our campaign possesses a strong belief in the dominant economic role of the private sector**

and we would completely express that belief in the power sector by updating and completely implementing the Power Sector Reform Act. We would consider innovative business models to transform our energy systems and the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) would be empowered with a strengthened regulatory framework. And then just watch and see as that sector becomes unlocked to provide opportunities and ensure productivity for businesses and the poor. Our government will also catalyse a national shift to other renewable sources of energy including solar, wind and even biomass.

5. Moving on, there is a particular law in Nigeria which has plunged millions of citizens into terrible poverty. During the campaigns eight years ago, the PDP promised to amend it. It won and failed to amend it. Four years ago, the APC promised to amend it. It won and has also failed to amend it or even make an attempt. You see why I say the APCPDP are one and the same party? That poverty inducing law which the ACPN government will amend once and for all when we get into power is the Land Use Act. Replacing that bad law has massive positive implications for agriculture, mortgage, real estate and wealth generation in general. There is hardly any other law right now that the government can pass with as much power to unlock wealth as a land reforms law. It is time for us to end this arbitrary approach to land tenure administration and the use of land as a political weapon by governors and local government chairmen. Because of the arbitrary nature of the law, the poor cannot represent their property and get capital. There is hardly any efficient city in the world today without an active land market with clarity on titling. **Our government will therefore embark on a land reform agenda that begins with the amendment of the Land Use Act in order to facilitate the creation of an active land market and free transfer of titles.** I am excited about the prospects that this reform holds for our country.

6. **Another difficult reform which we are committed to implementing is the oil sector reform.** When I read somewhere that the minister of state for petroleum resources, Ibe Kachikwu, disclosed that the federal government spends about N1.3 trillion annually on under-recovery, which is the new name that this government has given to fuel subsidy, I was shaken. N1.3 trillion! N1.3 trillion! Let me put that figure in context for you. The former minister of finance told us some months ago that the total amount the federal government released for capital expenditure in 2017 was N1.3

trillion. Can you imagine that? The total amount of money this government spent on subsidising fuel is about the same amount that it spent constructing roads and stocking hospitals with medicines and funding our universities and working on power, and all other infrastructure and capital expenditure needs put together. What sort of corrupt callousness is that? The same fuel that ends up in neighboring countries. The same fuel that the poorest among us in several states across the country pay substantially more for. Some people are feeding fat and buying private jets on our commonwealth. That is why this unwholesome fuel subsidy must go. It is stagnating our economy and impoverishing our people. Just imagine for a second how much good an ACPN government can do with an extra N1.3 trillion to spend on our mission to pull out citizens from poverty. It is not enough for the fuel subsidy to go: **Our government will also deregulate the entire oil sector, including the NNPC, and ensure it is subjected to the competition and discipline of the market.** I have no interest in becoming the president of the NNPC when there are more important things begging for attention. Countries are moving away from oil. In fact in less than 20 years, there are convincing projections that most of the oil would have dried up, so how can a reasonable government be so bothered with signing oil licenses when there is fire on the mountain? President Buhari is so invested in grabbing powers and keeping it for himself that he has even refused to sign the Petroleum Industry Governance Bill (PIGB) which was in the works for several years. That is the danger of the small thinking of the APCPDP. Oil will come and go, the Nigerian people will remain. Oil will not build this country, it is the Nigerian people that would build it. That is why the Nigerian people would always be the priority of the ACPN government.

7. When subsidies are removed, **we would set up a \$1.5 billion Infrastructure Fund for which we would give annual reports to the Nigerian people and also sign binding Service Level Agreements (SLAs) on performance and accountability. We would also set up a \$1 billion Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Fund** to ensure that science, technology and innovation become the enabler for socioeconomic development and structural transformation. Our target is to set in motion the work of becoming Africa's number one innovation and knowledge economy and stand up to be counted in the world. We already know that the problem is not our people. Nigerians are among the most gifted and accomplished people in almost every country in the world. So if it is not working here, it is because we have allowed the worst of us to lead the rest of us for far too long. The STI fund will support building a robust national innovation system, carry out reforms and reorganization of existing

institutions, fund scale up of SMEs and startups in the technology space, research and development, knowledge transfer, among others. The fund will be a partnership between the government and the private sector.

8. **We will also design and implement policies that will ensure the increase of technology start-ups in the country by at least 40 percent in four years.** We will provide tax waivers to incentivise investment in technology. Part of our curriculum review in our schools will see the incorporation of coding and entrepreneurship into the education system. My government will also provide the legal framework to support alternative investment sources like crowd-funding. We would also create an office for a Chief Innovation Officer to manage all innovation initiatives of the government and a Chief Data Officer to manage all data initiatives to make government smarter and boost innovation in Nigeria

I have said it before and I will say it again: My government will prioritise support to our young people to unleash their creativity in the fields of new, smart, disruptive technologies from Artificial Intelligence to Quantum Computing to Big Data and the Internet of Things. The future is here already and we believe that technology holds the key to solving our poverty crisis, environmental disasters, low level of productivity and competitiveness, healthcare crisis, infrastructure decay, and even the corruption affliction.

9. We have big plans for housing development that includes a **national housing program to reduce the cost of a starter home for families.** In partnership with the private sector, we will reduce cost of these homes by 50% while increasing quality. Within my first 100 days, **I would launch a Naija Home Competition that will call for the design of a standard, affordable Nigerian home design which will include two bedrooms, a living room, a bathroom and toilet, and a kitchen.** At least 80 percent of the homes we will build will be low-cost housing whereby allocation

is based on income. The recipients will be selected from a pool of qualified applicants through lottery.

The Basic Nigerian Home will also allow us lay the foundation for a functional mortgage market that will expand property ownership to millions of Nigerians. Additionally, it will allow Nigeria to launch a dynamic local real estate and housing industry with firms active throughout the value chain from production of construction materials, building, sales to mortgages. It will be a massive boost to the economy, facilitate socioeconomic development and create jobs. You can see again, how everything we do links back to our central ambition to lift 80 million Nigerians out of poverty.

10. In agriculture, we want to achieve food security in our country. **We will launch our One Product Per State initiative which will partner with states and the private sector to support farmers in states with a product in which they have comparative advantage.** We would link it to our Manufacturing Value Added agenda to ensure that productivity of farmers is enhanced and they move up the value chain.

We will create an enabling environment for agricultural growth by prioritizing the enactment and implementation of streamlined and consistent policies that affect key value chains such as rice, cassava, maize, poultry and dairy. We will also promote knowledge, capacity and innovation to build a highly productive and competitive Agribusiness Landscape. We will foster data collection and collation at state and regional levels through public-private partnerships. We will also do the smaller things that that can make all the difference, like partnering with states to provide websites with accurate data on their farmers, the location of these farmers and the output/produce they generate. This will ensure the provision of more effective support

services and linkages to off-takers and processors who struggle to find sustainable sources of produce.

Needless to say, every other area in our comprehensive manifesto, including our anti-corruption, sports, foreign policy, security agenda, and every other program of our platform will be evaluated on three questions: How much wealth is it going to generate? How many jobs is it going to create? And how many people it will get out of poverty?

We will measure our economic success as a government, not by the number of private jets parked at our airports, but by the number of Nigerians we lift out of poverty who go on to live richer lives. We man business.

This Friday, we will again be back here, unveiling the full manifesto beyond just this cornerstone of our plans to end poverty in Nigeria – and as with this, we will respect and honour Nigerians with the data-driven, evidence-based Big Idea solutions to issues that have destroyed our competitiveness, productivity and access to opportunity.

When I make these promises, I do them with the realization that you are tired of broken promises. The broken promises of the #APCPDP are still fresh in your memories and it has tainted the way you look at politics. That is why as a principle, our campaign will only promise what we can deliver, and will deliver what we promise. Our politics is the promise of a new, honest start to rebuild and renew our country. Our direction is clear; our destination is also clear. When we deliver, we would rebuild the crucial bonds of trust between the people and their government without which a democracy cannot flourish.

This election is the most important of our lifetime. I believe that the next four years could determine the next 40. If we fail to get it right, what would we tell our children? What manner of consequences would befall us? What would another four years of #BuTiku's presidency mean for you and I? More poverty. More divisions. More

corruption. More debt. More insecurity. More disregard for human rights. More and more of the same.

We are calling out the other candidates in the 2019 elections to not retreat into hiding this time; come out and let us have a debate on our plans for the future of this great country and let the people decide for themselves.

Nigerians deserve this debate. Nigerians deserve to hear the solutions and the roadmaps.

This campaign is too important, and the ACPN ticket has now shown the courage, the intelligence, the sincerity and a plan ambitious enough to unleash the greatness of our country and make it a case study of what a people can achieve together with the right leadership – moving Nigeria from Poverty Central to Prosperity Central.

In the famous words of America's New Deal President, Franklin Roosevelt, We will do what we must, with what we have, from where we are. And to that I say Amen and Amen.

God bless you all. And thank you for your audience.