



**'Promoting Transparency and Accountability through
the Open Government Partnership'**

Keynote Address

By

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At the

National Open Government Partnership (OGP) Retreat,
Kaduna State

Protocol

Introduction

1. We are privileged today to have in our midst the Vice President of Federal Republic of Nigeria in this maiden OGP National Retreat. It is a clear confirmation of the level of seriousness and commitment the present administration attaches to the issues of transparency and accountability.

2. Let me also thank our host, Mallam Nasir Ahmed El-Rufai, the Executive Governor of Kaduna State. When we were considering the venue to host this retreat, we eventually settled for Kaduna for many reasons including the fact that the Governor has made significant efforts in engaging with the citizens and in the publication of budget information as well as his desire to fast track the development of open government partnership principles in Kaduna State. It is my hope that Kaduna State can become a pilot state for the purpose of implementing OGP principles at the sub-national level.

3. I am also aware that the Governor of Edo State is represented in this meeting and that they are contemplating adopting some of the core principles of OGP. We thank them for coming and for expressing their support to this program.

4. Permit me to welcome the my colleagues, Ministers/members of the Federal Executive Council, heads of government agencies, heads of diplomatic missions, representatives of international development organizations, civil society organizations and businesses here present, as well as the Chief Executive Officer of the OGP international secretariat Mr. Sanjay Pradhan and his colleagues for all their support.

5. Corruption remains one of the biggest impediments to national development. It is illegal and illegitimate. It concerns actions that are often clandestine and practices that those who perpetrate it always try to conceal. Numerous scholars insist that many of the political, social and especially economic problems we face in Nigeria is still traceable to the problem of corruption.

6. His Excellency, President Muhammadu Buhari has left no one in doubt that he is irreversibly committed to making governance in Nigeria more open, accountable and responsive to citizens.

7. In May, 2016, the President attended the international Anti-Corruption Summit organised by the government of the United Kingdom where he reaffirmed his commitment to strengthen anti-corruption reforms **through implementing programs aimed at:**

a) Exposing Corruption

b) Punishing the corrupt and providing support to victims who have suffered from corruption

c) Driving out the culture of corruption

8. Flowing from these commitments, the federal government sought to deepen institutional and policy reforms and this led to Nigeria joining the **Open Government Partnership (OGP)** in July, 2016.

9. The Open Government Partnership is a multi-stakeholder initiative focused on **improving transparency, accountability, citizen participation and responsiveness to citizens through technology and innovation.** OGP was formally launched in 2011 when the eight (8) founding governments (Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico, Norway, the Philippines, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States) endorsed the Open Government Declaration, and announced their country action plans. Nigeria formally joined the initiative in July, 2016 as the 70th country and many civil

society organisations across the world are members of the initiative, representing about one third of the world population.

10. President Muhammadu Buhari has recently approved **the OGP National Steering Committee** – most of whom are gathered in this room, with the Federal Ministry of Justice as the coordinating Ministry. As shown in the attached document, this Committee is made up of representatives of government Ministries, Agencies, Departments (MDAs) as well as civil society organizations, organized private sector and professional associations who are already working together **co-create a two-year National Action Plan (NAP) to mainstream transparency mechanisms in the management of public funds across all sectors and citizen engagement.**

11. Let me reiterate that the FGN will continue to pursue reform programs on transparency and accountability through targeted measures based on the commitments that we have made to promote **fiscal transparency, open procurement, open contracting, access to information, asset disclosure, citizen engagement and empowerment.**

12. What we have accomplished so far:

- (a) Under this administration our national budget process has improved considerably to allow for increased public participation, and timely publication of expenditure. This is to ensure that our national resources are spent in an effective and result oriented manner and to ensure value for money.
- (b) The implementation and enforcement of the Treasury Single Account (TSA) as well as the Government Integrated Financial Management Information System (GIFMIS) have streamlined government revenue collection and expenditure that have saved the country billions of naira in the last one year.
- (c) We have also strengthened the Freedom of Information (FOI) unit in the Federal Ministry of Justice (FMOJ) to provide timely information to the public and relevant policy feedback in compliance with our Freedom of Information Act. The Bureau for Public Service Reform (BPSR) has adopted a unique electronic FOI platform on its website that gives real-time information to citizens and also encourages voluntary disclosure.
- (d) Additionally, the Bureau for Public Procurement (BPP) is working to implement and improve transparent and competitive procurement process in line with global open

contracting principles. It is the objective of this government to pursue the automation of public procurement processes in all government agencies before 2019. Already the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) has adopted the open contracting standards in its operations and is one of the first agencies of government to do so.

- (e) The Code of Conduct Bureau is now able to implement its mandate of ensuring that public officers declare their assets promptly and such assets are verified and recorded in accordance with the law.
- (f) As you all know, the enforcement of Bank Verification Number (BVN) scheme has reduced fraudulent practices by dubious individuals to protect law abiding customers and restore confidence in our banking industry, thus making it possible to follow the trail of money.
- (g) The Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) is developing a register of beneficial owners of all companies operating in the Nigerian extractive industry and would soon make it public in line with global standards.
- (h) The Corporate Affairs Commission is reviewing its laws to make it possible to disclose beneficial owners and would

soon create a public register of beneficial owners of all public companies.

- (i) Just last month, an Electoral Reform Committee was set up to review the electoral environment, review all the laws and experiences of the last elections and make recommendations to government. The overarching goal of this particular effort is to continue to improve political participation, promote cleaner elections and generally deepen the democratic culture of citizens.
- (j) With dwindling oil revenue, government is desirous to continue to provide an enabling environment to attract foreign investors in order to diversify the economy. President Buhari has made it clear that Nigeria is open for business and has assured the world that illicit finance will have no hiding place in our country. In the coming weeks, the President will sign an Executive order on '**Promoting Transparency and Efficiency for the Creation of an Enabling Business Environment**' in Nigeria that will mandate all Ministries, Agencies and Departments (MDAs) to adopt openness in contracting procedures and publishing of contracts.

13. Let me admit that despite all the achievements recorded so far, there is still so much work to be done to rebrand Nigeria by improving our performance in the World Bank's Ease of Doing

business ranking, as well as our ranking in service delivery, citizen engagement, participation and rule of law.

14. It is my belief that our participation in the OGP process will provide that requisite hub of coordination, information sharing, innovation and cross-fertilization of ideas within government and our global partners that will potentially lead to better service delivery that our citizens yearn for. I consider it a platform for learning in terms of knowledge and experience sharing among participating countries especially those facing similar challenges. As a country, we look forward to contributing to and benefiting from these relationships.

15. The presence of all stakeholders in the OGP process in Nigeria including civil society organizations, professional associations, development partners as well as the organised private sector in this National Consultative Retreat today is an eloquent testimony of your willingness to be part of this unique partnership.

16. It is my expectation that you will have frank discussions in designing OGP National Action Plan. It is a collective project with shared ownership and shared responsibilities. I am delighted that our approach to the National Action Plan is as robust and inclusive as possible and I expect that the final draft

of the National Action Plan will be both practical, easy to implement and incorporate the views of relevant stakeholders.

17. Finally let me inform you that as a government, we shall remain focused, bold and result oriented in delivering on the promises President Muhammadu Buhari made to **provide good governance to the Nigerian people and deliver on the commitments made during the anti-corruption summit in London earlier this year.**

18. To this end, we will establish a functional OGP Secretariat, specifically designed to foster partnership and collaboration with stakeholders.

19. Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, our country is on a journey to change- a transition from the former ways of doing things to a new one. It is a journey that will take us from transparency and openness to national prosperity. The road may be initially bumpy, we may sometimes stumble and make mistakes but we will get to our destination of shared prosperity. The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is one important opportunity for all of us gathered in this room to become part of the change agenda. Let us make the best use of it. With the political leadership already provided by the President, if we learn to work together and plan together, I can

say with optimism and confidence that we would be able to overcome most of our challenges as a country.

Thank you for your kind attention.

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