



REMARKS

BY

**AMBASSADOR GEOFFREY I. TENEILABE,
AMB/CONSUL-GENERAL OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA,
ATLANTA, GEORGIA**

ON THE

**OCCASION OF THE 55TH INDEPENDENCE ANNIVERSARY
CELEBRATION OF NIGERIA, ATLANTA**

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2015

Protocol

I thank you for your generous presence in this hall this evening, on the occasion marking Nigeria's 55th Independence Anniversary celebration as a sovereign nation.

2. With the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern protectorates by the British in 1914, Nigeria attained its status as a country and became independent in October 1, 1960. The 55-year journey has been challenging but generally successful.

3. Today, Nigeria with a population of over 170 million people is the most populous country in Africa. Nigeria is also Africa's biggest economy with a Gross Domestic Product of well over \$510 billion. The country has equally made remarkable strides in socio-economic development in all facets of human endeavour, while it boasts of human and material resources as potentials for its greatness.

4. Multi-party democracy has been thriving in the country since 1999 and the last general election of March 28, this year in which an opposition party defeated a sitting government, with consequential dignified hand-over of power was an eloquent testimony of the maturity of Nigeria's democracy, which presents itself as worthy example to the world.

5. From the government of Transformation Agenda to the new Government of Change, a change of baton is now in place.

6. The Change Agenda of the current administration is predicated on a tripod, namely: Security; Anti-corruption and inclusive economic growth, with emphasis on job creation.

7. From the economic perspective, though a new economic team has not been put in place, the Nigerian government takes the issues of privatization, trade and investment drive seriously, particularly, in the areas of infrastructure, agriculture, mining, power reforms, manufacturing as a panacea for job creation and the growth of the national economy. Government also wants to prevent predatory tendencies as well as protect the value of the national currency. Consequently, electricity and gas supplies have been improving.
8. Security, as the second plank of government policy is also being addressed. The multi-national task force of 7,500 comprising troops from Chad, Niger, Cameroon, Nigeria and Benin Republic under the auspices of the regional framework of the Lake Chad Basin Commission is being put in place. The operational Headquarters of the Nigerian Army has also been moved to Maiduguri, the hot bed of the war against Boko Haram. Similarly, Boko Haram insurgents are being bombarded daily with the consequences of many surrendering to the Nigerian Army, although suicide bombing still remain a challenge. Efforts are also on to secure the freedom of the 219 kidnapped Chibok girls.
9. With regard to issues on anti-corruption, reforms of the oil and gas sector, the main source of Nigeria's revenue, has commenced, while other measures are being taken to engender more transparency, accountability, prudence and reduction in the cost of governance. The Nigerian President has also appealed to the international community to assist in the prevention of the lodging of inappropriately acquired funds overseas and the return of such funds to Nigeria.
10. I, therefore, urge my fellow compatriot and all friends of Nigeria to join hands with the Nigerian government in carrying out the

aforementioned Policy Agenda for the development of our great country.

11. I also call on them to join hands with the Consulate and other Diplomatic Missions and see themselves as unofficial ambassadors of our country to address our challenges, rather than form the habit of unjustified criticism of the country.

12. The good image and name of our country is a collective responsibility of all of us, which will derive from our actions and good behaviour. Nigerians should also avoid, particularly on the internet and other media platforms, the bad habit of bitter in-fightings and rivalries in organizations bringing them together for a common goal. When we pull together, join together, discuss together and agree on ways forward, our strength is immense so also will be our respect amongst our hosts.

13. The greatness of Nigeria depends on the positive action of everyone of us and we should not expect the other person alone to build, while we sit on the sidelines to criticize the pitfalls.

14. I thank you for your kind attention and wish you a Happy 55th Independence Anniversary celebration.

**Consulate General of Nigeria
Atlanta**