

## THE CHALLENGE OF RESPONSIBLE GOVERNANCE: HOW CAN THIS GENERATION DO BETTER?

First let me thank the organizers of this event for the resilience with which they ensured that we not only got this on my swampy agenda in the first place but that it did manage to remain on it after they rescheduled the original date! The capacity of Adebola and Chude to relentlessly pursue their “target” until captured is one hard lesson that I have learned in the six years since I was Minister of Education and was persuaded by their vision to celebrate the excellence of youthfulness in our nation. I do want to publicly applaud these two young men and the rest many of you who have over the years been associated with the Future Award for the lofty work of creating a platform that showcases the greatness that is exists within our population’s youthful segment. I of course thank all the partners collaborating to host this epic Leadership Symposium for the opportunity of addressing this impressive array of the nation’s inspiring young ones full of energy and creativity. By your individual accomplishments and service you all personify the age old maxim that that the young are almost always the conscience of any nation and the drivers of social change. I am very delighted to share the platform with your other speakers all distinguished. However, let me particularly pay my respect to Governors Rotimi Amechi of Rivers State who is also Chairman of the Governor’s Forum and Dr. Kayode Fayemi of Ekiti State. They are both very close friends of mine and I am proud to publicly acknowledge that they are giving their best shot in public service at a time that citizens’ appetite for results in governance is huge.

Having shared all the pleasantries, let me now declare that I was quietly on my own when you successfully needled me to accept to speak as your Headliner. By that singular risky act, you gave me permission to provoke and dare you. You gave me the permission to tell you that you are not quite as great as you have pampered yourselves to believe. You gave me permission to be my usual super candid friend of the young- sufficiently young at heart to be your kindred spirit on

all matters open to debate and dialogue but old enough to admonish on the basis of modest wisdom acquired from experience both good and bad over the years. No matter how much our position on some of the issues may differ, one thing I guarantee is that the only thing you will hear from me shall be the TRUTH as I know it to be backed by facts.

I like to believe that as is the case with my three young sons, I am the elder you can count on who understands the bursting energy of youth that many of you today wear like clothing. In fact, I find it sometimes find pretty uncannily you bear resemblance of the passion that friends like Pat Utomi, Governor Kayode Fayemi and I carried at great cost at your similar age range campaigning for democracy and good governance in the late 80s and 90s.

Hence when I read an article by David Wraight which I shall return to again later in my speech, I simply could relate. He posits that there is a globalized generation of youth – often referred to as the *Millennial Generation* – while I call their Nigerian variant the Turning Point Generation. “They believe that they can change the world for the better, but they are unsure what they should change the world to; so they search for an ideology or system of belief to use as a foundation for the change they seek. They are actually searching for something worth living for and dying for.”

“They are optimistic and idealistic with a deep desire to make their mark in the world. They dream of what can be, and follow their dreams with passion and perseverance. They are no longer prepared to be spectators watching the world go by, but want to be ‘players’, to get their hands dirty, to make a difference. They are knowledgeable about the affairs of the world and very mobile, travelling as much as resources and opportunity allow.” As globalization and modern technology continue to shrink our world people are connecting worldwide as never before – particularly young people – overcoming cultural, geographical, language and ethnic barriers with ease. For the first time in human history we are seeing the emergence of a *global youth culture* with common values, dreams and desires.

The theme of your Symposium at its original incarnation was centered on the legendary issue of leadership and especially anchored on the very exciting topic of emerging leadership among your millennial generation of those born between 1981 and now. Following the events of January and the remaining agenda between the citizens and those that govern, you have brought the governance and leadership issues into sharper focus by asking me to speak on the “Challenges of Responsible Governance: How can this Generation do Better”. Your topic is eloquent even if it feigned diplomacy in delivering a not so charitable assessment of generations that have gone ahead of yours as not having attained your high marks in the business of responsible governance. Indeed, your topic does little to mask your pained frustration at the performance of those in my generation and others before mine in not having succeeded in tackling the challenges of responsible governance.

Like a number of you, I am an eternally curious soul who also delights in analysis and diagnostics. I like to be persuaded by evidence and not mere anecdotes in matters of performance or argumentation. Thus, it would help if we started off by doing three things.

First is to define and agree the concept of “Responsible or Good Governance” as well as “Better Performance as alluded” by first establishing that there is a correlation between Good Governance and economic, socio political performance among nation states.

Second would be to at least define some universally agreed benchmarks on the basis of which we can establish what we are measuring and whether evidence is indeed persuasive that all generations of leadership until yours have been bedeviled and challenged by “Responsible Governance” or the more globally used “Good Governance”.

Finally, is that once we established on the basis of facts that we, your forebears have failed you and the nation in the manner of the dismal results or performance of decades of poor governance, we can then move on to the second part of your topic. That is the aspect that is forward looking and seeks a pathway for you that are fundamentally different from the status quo ante. Certainly, everyone

including generations that you seem to suggest evidence would indict for the failure of governance would be relieved to see your resolve to lead differently. A recent global survey showed that your generation around the world stands out as the most connected to the developments in international affairs. So, most of you will assuredly be aware that not just in our nation but that everywhere else world over, people are seeking for those who can solve the Big Problems in their respective nations. Surely, should we establish that our own Big Problem is the one you have posed as your Symposium theme, and then nothing would more give hope than to know that you seek to also be our Solution?

What then would be the critical factors that would help guarantee the higher probability of success and a break with the past should you remain determined to pay the cost of actions necessary for the new path? If by the end of your Symposium our people - both leaders and followers - became confident through your actions that you are all truly ready to lead us out of the undignified trajectory and legacy of failure great indeed shall be our collective rejoicing. I make bold to say that majority of your compatriots would at this point be persuaded by whatever you can do to positively produce something different – a fundamental positive outcome that becomes our new norm.

So what is Responsible or Good Governance and what does empirical research reveal on the long drawn and continuing debate on the relationship between “good governance and better economic performance”?

Broadly speaking, the term governance is all encompassing word that defines how a country is governed. “It is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective, efficient, equitable, and inclusive and follows the rule of law. At a minimum, good governance requires fair legal frameworks that are enforced impartially by an independent judiciary and its decisions and enforcement are transparent or carried out in a manner that follows established rules and regulations. Since accountability cannot be enforced without transparency and the rule of law, accountability is a key requirement of good governance. Not only governmental institutions, but also private sector and civil

society organizations must be accountable to the public and to their institutional stakeholders.”

On our second point, extensive empirical evidence does suggest that there is a correlation between strong economic performance and good governance. For example, Kaufman and Kraay tracked the quality of governance from 1996 to 2003 in some two hundred countries.<sup>4</sup> The quality of governance is divided into six categories aimed at capturing how governments are selected, monitored, and replaced; a government’s capacity to formulate and implement sound policies; and the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern them. The six measured indicators are: (a) voice and accountability; (b) political stability and lack of violence; (c) government effectiveness; (d) regulatory quality; (e) rule of law; and (f) control of corruption. The authors conclude that good governance is not only critical to development but also that it is the most important factor in determining whether a country has the capacity to use resources effectively to promote economic growth and reduce poverty.

The character of weak states is of course that the institutions are fragile, and act arbitrarily, weak protection of civil liberties, and inadequate regulatory and legal framework to guarantee property rights, enforce contracts, and reduce the transaction costs-deprive these countries of needed productive investment and economic growth. How important is good governance for economic growth? Can economic growth be sustained without good governance? “The answer is best captured in the oft-cited aphorism that good governance promotes growth and that growth further improves governance.” Mauro notes “a consensus seems to have emerged that corruption and other aspects of poor governance and weak institutions have substantial, adverse effects on economic growth. No country has been more widely seen around the world as the poster country for great destiny corroded by cancerous corruption like our country Nigeria. In its pernicious malignancy, systemic corruption has gnawed away at our collective dreams and aspirations for a nation on which many bet for the greatness many decades ago.

Now going on to some universally agreed benchmarks I shall use some of the slides I have generated to tell the story. You will find such indicators like the GDP,

GDP par capita/ Income par capita, global competitiveness ranking, the Doing Business Ranking, Human Development Index, Global Logistics Index and such like. I shall also use domestic performance indicators such as the slide that I shall put on regarding the quality of our education system. In many instances as I take you through the slide explanations please bear in mind that these sets of data should enable any rational and discerning person build a substantial analytical basis for concluding on whether your fundamental premise for this topic is faulty and that you should find other issues other than Good Governance to engage your restless minds. The counter factual is that by the time I am through with the slides you all began to shake your heads in absolute awe as to how everything you assumed was wrong by mere anecdotes turns out actually much worse than originally assumed. So off we go to the slides:

First the education slide to use in showcasing the state of education and the manifestation of those “challenges of responsible government” in the sector that most matters for our youthful population.

Second use the slides on relative lower size of the Nigerian economy when compared with the most inane of sizes of random things operating on a global scale to address the criticality of a more prudent, less showy attitude of leadership and followership.

Third, we use the slide on relative country performance to better understand when exactly if ever we fell of the comparability sheet and what lesson we learn from the better performing countries as we plan the take a new direction based on the proof of applicability once the conditions are right.

Well, distinguished Nigerian community of the young, all things considered it is obvious that overwhelming evidence does indeed suggest that so much more would have been necessary on the part of your forebears for us to have conquered the demons of poor governance which has thus far eluded us all.

- Are the basis of these failures structural, systemic, organic and hence requiring root and branch fundamental change of approach or are they merely normal derivatives of cyclical pattern of challenges which ultimately

normalize as a matter of course? Well, I do not know your individual take but for me, I think that our country is neck deep in a state of structural dysfunction occasioned by a multiple of political, sociological, historical and economic bad choices that both citizens and leaders at all levels of our society have made over the years. You do not solve a structural problem with Demographics , Productivity slowdown, Innovation slowdown Resource depletion

So now what can you offer that is any different considering that the apple does not fall far from the tree! Why should your generation be any different from the rest? Four things which have been major roadblocks to the attainment of greatness by the old you of which you are not encumbered – colonialism, military adventurism, blown out war, underperformance. None of these variables has any hold as an albatross on you all both as individuals and as a collective group of citizens determined to drive positive change. Conversely, they had profound adverse impact on the many generations before yours in multi dimensional socio-psycho, pathological way in stultifying the performance long hoped for from Nigeria as a nation of great potentials.

What you in fact possess is a world view much more global and multinational with you being high wired through social media to be connoisseurs of the best that technology can offer in your change agent role.

However, do you really have the legitimacy to represent the teeming population of your generation in its 70% majority of Nigeria? Is every young person in our country like you? Do they really care for the issues that assail you whether in its altruism or for personal gain? Of course not! The demographics clearly caution that as our economic fortune leaves many more behind in sharing the benefits of growth, your breed is thinning out more and more especially as the nation underperforms in offering quality public education to the teeming poor to support their break out from the dynastic legacy of poverty. The scariest data on this is captured in a study “The Next Generation Nigerians” conducted by the British Council which reveals that . Gunnar Heinsohn, a social scientist at the University of Bremen (Germany) writes that when 15–29-year-olds make up more

than 30% of the population — violence occurs. Today, there are 67 countries where a “youth bulge” exists. (That is populations where more than 30% are young adults or kids.) 60 of those countries are presently in civil war or are experiencing mass killings and our beloved nation is now placed among these. Does this ring a bell? Tragically sad!

Regardless of how anyone else responds though I think your focus is to trigger the necessary dialogue on how you would prepare yourselves to be the change drivers for a failing society. So I dare to offer you a few options:

1. Define your objective with clarity and keep the message simple. “Corruption is our common bad -tax and we are tired of paying it”. “Ready to usher in the new Nigeria”. “I believe in a market economy and want to see Budgets work as the important policy tools to change the extractive structure of the Nigerian economy. I believe in absolute power of individual choice, incentives and sanctions to promote the thriving society of people with diverse gifts and talents and will advocate against any action that represses these. Do not crowd out your agenda with too many things. Pick three.
2. Being a social change driver is not meant to take the place of a real job. Avoid any mix up and watch your credibility endure. Create a job when you cannot find one. Get Big for big is the new way for private enterprises.
3. It does not matter how lowly, misguided persons may consider your job. There is great dignity in labor. How about simple messages like this one- It is the age of your idea that matters and not the age of your birth! Get rid of those with the mentality of the generation that have persistently failed before they ruin you. Poverty derives no comfort in its ethnicity, religion, gender or other persuasion. Jobless in Lagos is as bad as jobless in Kano. Poor in Lokoja is as bad as poor in Nnewi. Binging on rent from the soil-living to enjoy the time bound spoils of extractive sector rather than identifying new opportunities in human capital is dated, old and not an idea for the now and future. Living on corruption motivated public contracts as a day’s job puts you below the one who being an entrepreneur thrives, makes effort, fails, fails, fails and then ultimately succeeds.

4. It is those who are prepared to pay the price of change that the Now and the Future belong to. How many among you are prepared to defer your gratification- adulation, office, money, celebrity activist? Regulate your motivation.... Avoid the over drive. Kill your hubris before it kills you.
5. The era of adversarial engagement with those we disagree with is over. We can disagree but collaborate to solve our common problems. The poor cannot afford the luxury of elite squabbles. The language of contest of ideas is civil. You cannot build a New Nigeria speaking like them old types. I will absolutely disagree without being obnoxious.
6. Your tools for solving today's problems are multiple. They multiply further depending on your willingness to build effective coalitions. The era of the single person activist is completely over. No wonder Crowd sourcing.
7. No anecdotal rhetoric will benefit the public debate of important public policy issues. Get issue oriented. Get empirical. Get analytical. Invest in and make proper use of data to demand for accountability and to set agenda for both the government, the private sector, the society at large and yourselves. Bridge the gap between you and the rest of your generation that consider you part of the oppressors. You cannot change the land without their consent. Information is power has become more than a cliché. Build multi sectoral /multi ethnic, multi task teams even as you break up the narrow jingoists. Who is tracking? Who is following up? Who is defining results from public spending? Scrutiny makes the treasurer uncomfortable but who is watching daily? Where is your own structure and governance that works? Insist that the governments go back to policy analysis, prioritization, evaluation, results and feedback.
8. Make our society follow public policy debate rigorously. Work with the mainstream media in addition to twitter and others to keep the debate on policy choices vibrant. It ultimately works for us all.
9. Acting your Talk is the epitome of credible advocacy. What you are doing is so loud; I cannot hear what you are saying. What you are doing is so loud; I am absolutely convinced about what you are saying. Have you considered the grass root level mobilization as a prototype for replication? Think local, act national. Do your neighbors know why they must be as effectively angry

as you? What is their incentive for bordering to join you in the demand for good governance, accountability and anti corruption? Never ever lose your Voice. I said Voice not Noise. There is substance in Voice but Noise has but mere fluff and no one really cares for it.

I read and gained a highly interesting insight on the four very distinct responses anyone of us could have to the agitation of your generation to make a difference and impact your world. David Wraight states that there can be four possible responses to you all when you ask for a better here and now and future: the institutional response, the organizational/programmatic response, the abandonment response and finally the empowerment response.

1. *The Institutional Response* – most likely to perceive young people as ‘leaders of the future’ rather than leaders for today until tested and proven. Millennials do not think of themselves in terms of ‘earning a place in the future’. They are ready to make a difference now, and will reject any individual, system or organization that tells them that they aren’t old enough, qualified enough or experienced enough to lead today. The institutional response will inevitably drive young people away to places where they feel free to operate as agents of change.
2. *The Organizational/Programmatic Response* – Organizations are far more accommodating of young people than institutions and will often provide them with opportunity to lead. However, in many cases organizations are defined by programs and practices that must be followed without deviation or interpretation. Today’s young person will not respond well to prescriptive programming that squashes their creativity and limits their capacity to change lives and positively impact the world.
3. *The Abandonment Response* – With their enthusiasm for adaptation and change, Millennials are often viewed as a threat and a problem to veteran leaders. From their perspective these young people are naïve, pushy and disrespectful with a very limited understanding of the world. Unfortunately, when young people are given an opportunity to lead a common response from long-term leaders is to abandon them – to say to them, “So you want

to lead? Go ahead, give it your best shot, I've done my time, I'm out of here – you're on your own". Veteran leader abandonment of emerging young leaders is fuelled by a misunderstanding of who these young people are. Unlike generations of youth before them, rather than dismissing 'older' people as being irrelevant, Millennials are seeking intergenerational relationships. They are looking for sages and mentors who will believe in them and encourage them as they pursue their vision for changing the world. They long for someone with whom they can share their dreams, a wise guide who will walk beside them, affirming them in their calling and providing them with a place of safety to explore and test ideas and plans.

4. *The Empowerment Response* – I believe the most appropriate response to this globally-connected generation of world changers is to convey to them that we trust them enough to let them lead us – to invite them to share their dreams, affirm them in their desire to bring about change for good, validate them as leaders for today, and equip, resource and free them to lead. We need to be their 'armour bearers', their champions, advocating for them as they step out into their vision and calling, defending them from the attacks that will surely come, believing in them when others don't and empowering them to be all that God has designed them to be.

In closing, I copiously quote from one of my previous pieces on Governance. For this youthful population, I wish to leave them with the knowledge that poverty in any part of our country leaves its victims with exactly the same devalued and depreciated human value regardless of the ethnicity of the non performing leaders who through egregious abuse of the public space consign their citizens to subhuman existentialism. It will take a nation state that has quality political and public sector leadership for the stage to be set for much needed stellar improvements in Nigeria's productivity and competitiveness performance. It is such improvements that will begin to secure improved quality of life for our people majority of whom are in their prime of youth today and guarantee them a future. Without doubt, it is the rot in the quality of leadership across the spectrum of our nation's public space that has trapped our citizens in pernicious poverty. The common enemy of the poor should therefore be anyone who though

possessing the power in the public space to change the course of the poor blatantly chooses to do otherwise. Some that walked that space including yours sincerely tried but their best was not enough. The massiveness of our nation's problems requires much more than the episodic flicker of light in the tunnel that we have occasionally experienced since when I was born three years after our independence.

The kind of sustained and irreversible change that Nigerians urgently deserve is inconsistent with incremental, marginal change in the cumulative leadership quotient of our public space from its current lowest base. To take the nation out of the deep rot it currently finds itself direly requires a tidal wave tipping point that is triggered by collective forcefulness of vision, deep intellectually grounded competency, uncompromising strength of character, and indomitability of the capacity of every of our public leadership at all levels of government- local, state, federal as well as executive, legislative and judiciary. Your generation has a historical opportunity at a season like this. As I recently posted on my Face Book page to my friends, "when stuck @ a low equilibrium level of performance, the same-same solution will not work. You need a shocker to rupture the stagnation. Find the shocker and go for it"!

*The greatest lessons in life, if we would but stoop and humble ourselves, we would learn not from grown-up learned men, but from the so-called ignorant children. – Mahatma Gandhi*

*Our youth are not failing the system; the system is failing our youth. Ironically, the very youth who are being treated the worst are the young people who are going to lead us out of this nightmare. - Rachel Jackson*