

BEING A PAPER DELIVERED BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR OF LAGOS STATE, MR. BABATUNDE RAJI FASHOLA (SAN), AT THE NIGERIAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT (Chartered) 2011 ANNUAL NATIONAL MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE/50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION IN ABUJA ON MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2011.

PROTOCOLS

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to be here today. My delight derives principally from the topic of discussion at this gathering which, to my mind, seeks to bring to the fore an issue that has, perhaps, been the bane of good governance in the last five decades of our existence as a nation.

A discussion on "State Governance as an Enterprise" is, in my view, most apt today for several reasons. Even so, I will dwell on two of these reasons to save time for proper dissection of this issue.

One of the reasons is that, we have, for so long, failed to separate governance from politics. Secondly, and, perhaps deriving from the first reason, the branding of Politics as 'a dirty game' even by the players, has kept away professionals and technocrats who, by their profession and training, possess the ingredients that the nation requires for socio-economic and even political engineering.

This Conference, therefore, could not have come at a more appropriate time, a time when as a nation, we need a redefinition of the concept of governance. That the Nigerian Institute of Management has led the pack to bring this issue to the front burner of public discourse is a welcome sign that, indeed, a new dawn of hope has broken over our national firmament.

Let me start by giving a simple definition of Enterprise. According to Webster's New World Dictionary, an Enterprise is "an undertaking, especially, a big, bold and difficult one." And I will add here, perhaps for emphasis, that an enterprise is a risk-taking venture or initiative rooted in commitment to render service for the general good of the people. Taken from this perspective, an enterprise is a

business run essentially to serve the people. Every business, whether private, corporate or public, is rooted in service to the people. The only difference is, perhaps, in the returns on the business, for while the private or corporate business derives its returns in terms of profit, the returns on public 'business' is in terms of the extent of service rendered. However, these two meet at the point of service to the people.

Take, for example, a bank. When an investor decides to establish a bank, his primary purpose is to make a profit. Nevertheless, the margin of this profit will depend largely on the efficiency and effectiveness of the service, he offers to the general public. It is from this profit that he pays his staff, pays his taxes, takes care of his family and expands his business. It is, therefore, in his interest to run the bank effectively and efficiently. With this uppermost in his mind, he goes out to recruit efficient and capable hands in the banking profession. If the enterprise is a corporate one, the public which invests their money in it are the employers and are entitled to a share of the profits, and a say in the running of the enterprise. Hence, we hear of Annual General Meetings where the directors and managers give an account of their stewardship based on which they are either reappointed or thrown out.

As it is with the private or corporate organization, so it is, or should be, with the public enterprise which is the Government. While the individual or group invests its money, investment in governance is made with public money, revenue from taxes and public owned resources, both human and natural. All the people involved in running this big public enterprise are, therefore, staff or employees of the people while the people are the employers. The people are entitled to the share of the profit from the business of governance which we sometimes refer to as dividends of democracy. The Annual General Meeting, in the case of this big public enterprise is, of course, the general elections which come every four years.

Unfortunately, the public enterprise has not been able to come to terms with the reality of governance as a model concept of enterprise. Professionals have shied away from the responsibility of taking up challenges in the public arena and remain comfortable as critics while we lose momentum on the critical areas where expertise are most required. To this end, governance has largely rested in the hands of few willing citizens who out of national spirit would rather engage the space than allow for a vacuum. No matter how we feel about these torch bearers, they gave the best they are capable of. There were mistakes but not enough to

erase the contributions to give us a country that though not perfect but enough to build on.

In Lagos State, in the last twelve years, we have strived to build on past efforts, changing the perception of our people that government could actually work for the good of the people. We have invested heavily in programs and projects that are bearing direct benefit for the people. We have brought governance closer to them and involved them directly in all its aspects. One of the ways we have done this is by making them see governance as a Social Contract between the people and the Government. By asking them to pay tax and deploying the proceeds of the taxes in projects that have a direct benefit to them, we have been able to regain their confidence and, in the process, explode some of the myths that they have built around governance such as the concept of "Us and Them" which has, for decades, characterized the relationship between the people and the government in the country.

When we took the mantle of leadership, in 2007, one of the things we did was to change the concept of 100 days in office, which had, hitherto been turned into a carnival of sorts across the country. Instead of a celebration, we made it a vehicle of interaction and rendering an account of our stewardship. Every one hundred days present a robust discourse between the government and the governed during which we tell them what we have done and what we intend to do in the next 100 days. If there were promises, we made before but has not come up, we quickly go to them to explain why it has not taken off and when it would be done. We never make promises we cannot keep. They, on their part, give us a feedback on our performance and their expectations.

Another way we have gained their confidence is by empowering them economically. Through our Beautification and Greening program, we have not only created thousands of jobs for our teeming youths but have created a new economy where none existed before. Today, hundreds of youths and not so young have built strong businesses in landscaping and horticulture. Our environmental sanitation program has given rise to the PSP which has equally created jobs for thousands of people. These two have combined to turn Lagos from one of the dirtiest to one of the most beautiful cities in the world by international reckoning.

We have invested in security to protect lives and property of both residents and visitors. Through our Security Trust Fund, we have exploded the myth that the

Nigeria Police Force was a failed institution. We have reduced crime rate by more than 80 percent making our State about the safest in the whole country. We have built and are still constructing intra-city highways and inner-city roads to link communities and people with the centers of business and commerce. We have lit up these roads to enhance security thereby resuscitating the night economy. Our innovation in transportation and traffic control has greatly reduced travel times and made movement across the state a pleasant experience, both for business and for pleasure.

Of course, the reward has been tremendous. We have had a harvest of direct local and foreign investments. We have sharpened our business incentives, which have led to the resuscitation of old businesses while new investors are daily seeking our partnership. We have invested in affordable housing to give an opportunity to residents and those who wish to make our State their home the opportunity to own their own houses. Our Home Ownership Mortgage Scheme, due to be launched soon, will provide equitable funding on the platform of mortgage financing for the purchase of homes where by applicants will become owners of their own homes upon payment of an equity contribution not exceeding 30 percent of the price of the housing unit with the balance payable over a period of 10 to 20 years. Details of this are available in Lagos HOMS official website - www.lagoshomsgov.org - which we launched recently.

In Education, we have, in addition to our free education policy, resuscitated some extra-curricular activities that make schooling attractive to the children; activities like Boys' Scout Movement, Girls Guide, Boys' Brigade, Red Cross, etc. are all back in our schools.

We have built skill acquisition and vocational centres across the State to empower young men and women with relevant skills to earn a living and even become employers of labour. Through our Micro Finance Scheme, established at the inception of our first tenure, we have empowered graduates of these centres and other small businesses to set up their business and expand them.

In the Health sector, we have renovated and expanded existing hospitals and clinics and built new ones, including Maternal and Childcare Centers at both primary and tertiary levels to bring healthcare close to the people. While generally improving our curative healthcare system through equipping the hospitals and clinics adequately, we have laid emphasis on preventive healthcare delivery through

our various free screenings for some terminal diseases such as Hypertension, Cancer, Diabetes, etc. while also offering free medical treatment to children and the aged.

All these we have done and are still doing, to restore their dignity and self-esteem and their belief in the workability of government to bring them the dividends of democracy.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, the transformation that has taken place in Lagos in the last four years is largely due to the re-establishment of the peoples' confidence in the government of the day. We have largely run our administration like a big business enterprise where we have made the people not only the central focus but also participant in governance. They have responded to our transparent and accountable leadership by paying their taxes and responding positively to the various laws made for the good governance of the state. They have interacted freely with the people in government, including my humble self, through our phone numbers and e-mails, which have been published. Our toll-free 767 and 211 phone numbers are for their immediate use to contact relevant agencies of government for assistance in times of emergency.

I will conclude by saying that there is nothing cryptic about what we have done in Lagos. We have simply demonstrated commitment to public service and sincerity of purpose through the involvement of the people in governance. Like an enterprise, we have rendered honest service to our employers (the people) and gained their confidence that it can be done. In response, the people have come to trust us and are always willing to be partners in progress.

Distinguished participants, I thank you for your attention.

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GOVERNOR OF LAGOS STATE