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PRESIDENT BUHARI OF NIGERIA LAUNCHES THE AU THEME OF THE YEAR 2018 ON FIGHTING CORRUPTION IN THE CONTINENT



Addis Ababa Ethiopia, 29 January 2018- The theme of the year 2018: “Winning the Fight Against Corruption: A Sustainable Path to Africa’s Transformation”, was officially launched by H.E Mr. Muhammadu Buhari President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, on 28th January 2018, during the opening ceremony of the 30th Assembly of Heads of State and Government of

the African Union (AU) currently holding at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa Ethiopia.

President Buhari congratulated the African Union for dedicating the theme of the year to the noble cause of fighting corruption on our Continent. He thanked the African Heads of State for entrusting him with the responsibility of serving as the Champion of the theme of the year. He pledged that he will do his very best to ensure that the anti-corruption agenda will receive the attention it deserves and make the impact we all hope for, during 2018 and beyond.

“Corruption is indeed one of the greatest evils of our time. Corruption rewards those who do not play by the rules and also creates a system of distortion and diversion thereby destroying all efforts at constructive, just and fair governance”, said the theme Champion for 2018. He added that, in tackling corruption, the Continent has made significant strides, putting in place legal and policy frameworks, notably the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (AUCPCC). “However, the adoption

of the legal and policy frameworks have not had the desired success in tackling this evil”, he noted.

According to President Buhari, fifteen (15) years after the adoption of the African Union Convention, 2018 provides a good starting point to take stock of progress made so far, assess what still needs to be done and devise new strategies to address new corruption challenges. “It is true that our continent has witnessed sustained growth over the past two decades. Nonetheless, public confidence has been eroded by a focus on short-term priorities and payoffs, propelled by corruption, which too often leaves projects uncompleted and promises unfulfilled” he underlined.



The President further highlighted that corruption and its effects have many sides. It poses real threat to national security, unity and survival of the African State and people. The African Union Agenda 2063, under Aspiration 3 recognizes that corruption erodes the development of a universal culture of good governance, democratic values, gender equality, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of the law. The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, under Goal 16, calls on all countries to promote and develop accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, notably, by reducing bribery and corruption.

“In this connection, I cannot over-emphasize the value of strong institutions. A Judiciary which stands firm against arbitrariness and injustice by the executive is a vital pillar in the anti-corruption fight. As leaders, we must build synergy between the Executive, Legislative and Judicial arms of government in order to entrench good governance, transparency and accountability”, stressed the Nigerian President.

Meanwhile, the Champion of the AU theme of the year pointed out that, strong institutions are a necessary condition in any society which aims to fight corruption. In building strong national and regional institutions, “we

must adequately empower our national anti-corruption agencies and insulate them from political influence. We have to encourage increased institutional collaboration between Law Enforcement Agencies and anti-corruption Agencies in order to win this fight”.

To that effect, the President recalled that, it is evident that corruption has a devastating impact on marginalized communities especially the youth, women and children. He said corruption breeds unequal societies, renders vulnerable groups prone to human trafficking, as well as recruitment into armed groups and militia. “In effect, corruption deprives our young citizens of opportunities to develop meaningful livelihoods. We must therefore, work together to defeat this evil”, he emphasized.

President Buhari promised the Heads of State that, with their endorsement during the course of 2018, he will prioritize the following initiatives, to help fight corruption I Africa:

- a) to organize African Youth Congresses against Corruption, in order to sensitize and engage our youth in the fight against corruption;
- b) mobilizing all African Union Member States to implement the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption; and
- c) advocating for the strengthening of the criminal justice system across Africa through exchange of information and sharing best practices in the enforcement of anti-corruption laws.

The President expressed the wish that African Union Advisory Board on Corruption be strengthened in order to play a more proactive role in the anti-corruption fight. He also proposed to enlist as partners, important actors such as parliamentarians, women associations, the media, the business community, faith-based groups, the youth, educational institutions and traditional leaders, among others. He further underscored the need to redouble efforts in addressing the causal relationship between corruption and illicit financial flows. “The Report of the AU High Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa, chaired by H.E Thabo Mbeki, former President of South Africa, in partnership with United Nations Economic Commission (UNECA) revealed that Africa loses about 50 billion dollars annually” he said. He added that, the High Level Panel has also pointed out the corrosive role that tax havens and secrecy jurisdictions play in concealing ill-gotten assets. Therefore, calling on the African Union to do more to stop “the continuous assault on our economic and financial resources by multinationals in collusion with some of our citizens”.

The Champion stated that, it is important that one of the goals of this year’s theme should be the development of a Common African Position on Asset Recovery. He said, the manifestation of corruption in Africa is also a reflection of the need for stronger leadership and oversight institutions. “Tackling corrupt acts and greed require a reorientation of our attitudes and

perceptions. To win the fight against corruption, we must have a CHANGE of mind set” he emphasized. “Changing the state of play requires retraining a greater awareness as a means to instill better and more transparent values in the political class and the citizenry, especially people in positions of trust”.

Before concluding, President Buhari informed the Summit that, Nigeria has gone far into the implementation of its CHANGE Agenda, which is primarily aimed at fighting corruption. He urged his peers that as they set off on this honorable path, they should bear in mind that fighting corruption is not going to be a straightforward task and that corruption does fight back. “While we may face some setbacks, we should remain resolute. Our common goal is to eradicate corruption in the best interest of our societies”. The President of Nigeria and Champion of the AU theme of the year 2018 ended his speech by reiterating Nigeria’s abiding commitment to “the fight against corruption today, tomorrow and the day after tomorrow. He said “I am truly inspired in this task by the commitment, encouragement and support of my fellow African Heads of State to succeed in this noble cause”.

The meeting of African Heads of State and Government will conclude today, Monday 29th January 2018 with the adoption of decisions and declarations to guide the work of the African Union all through the year.

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