

DEVELOPMENT WITH HUMAN FACE

DEVELOPMENT WITH HUMAN BACK

**ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY
PRESIDENT OLUSEGUN OBASANJO
ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCH OF 1999 HUMAN
DEVELOPMENT REPORT AND 1998 NIGERIA HUMAN
DEVELOPMENT REPORT, NICON HILTON, ABUJA
THURSDAY, 19TH AUGUST, 1999
DEVELOPMENT WITH HUMAN FACE**

Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a pleasure to welcome you to this occasion of the Launch of the 1999 *Human Development Report* and the 1998 *Nigeria Human Development Report*.

I particularly welcome the Associate Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Mr Zephirin Diabre and members of his entourage. I wish you a very successful and rewarding time with us during this short visit to Nigeria.

The two reports being launched today further demonstrate our firm belief in co-operation with our development partners in the international community. I am pleased to note that the 1998 *Nigeria Human Development Report* was put together largely by Nigerians, and the fact that Nigeria is among the first countries in Africa to come up with a comprehensive National Development Report.

Ladies and Gentlemen, We must not lose sight of the main focus of the National Human Development Report. As you are probably aware, the maiden issue of the Report was a logical reaction to the low ranking of Nigeria in both the Human Development Index (HDI) and Human Poverty Index (HPI) in the World Human Development Report.

The current statistics on poverty in our country is alarming. Life expectancy among our citizens is just over 50 years, only 55 per cent of adults are literate, around 49 per cent have access to safe water and health services, and just over 33 per cent will survive to the age of 40.

It is estimated that by the end of 1997, nearly 49 per cent of our citizens lived below the poverty level. Statistical evidence indicate that the rate of impoverisation between 1993 and 1997 was highest in the history of modern Nigeria. What is worse, the population of the extreme poor has accelerated even faster, from 29 per cent in 1985 to 40 per cent in 1992 and 66 per cent in 1997 of the total population of the poor. Nigeria's population of the poorest among the poor trebled within twelve years, reaching a phenomenal figure of over 37 million in 1997. It is hardly surprising that Nigeria now ranks among the 25 poorest countries in the world !

Poverty means denial of choices and basic opportunities to live a tolerable life, materially, psychologically, politically, socially and culturally.

Our Administration will pursue such economic policies that contain comprehensive strategies for tackling all forms of deprivation in which poverty manifests itself: human freedom deprivations; physiological deprivation; human deprivation; income deprivation; and social deprivation.

There is need, especially in a democratic dispensation, to constantly remind ourselves that the human being is both the instrument and the ultimate beneficiary of all development efforts. Development is about people, and democratic governance is also about people. Democracy and development are two sides of the same coin. It is very difficult—if not impossible—for any country to achieve sustainable growth and development without the full mobilisation and effective utilisation of its human resources. Equally, no country can maintain a peaceful, stable democratic policy without a certain degree of sustainable development. Democracy and development are therefore mutually reinforcing.

Our Administration is fully committed to the pursuit of policies and programmes designed to reverse the disturbing trend in poverty. We are determined to make the ordinary Nigerian the centre of development, by ensuring his access to affordable food, education and health. With food security through the revitalisation of the nation's agriculture, with educational and health institutions that are dedicated to the service of the people and, with a reasonable level of employment generated by both the public and a re-invigorated private sector, Nigeria should, within a reasonable period, produce a picture of human development that truly reflects the country's potentials. We are determined to succeed in this national endeavour.

The Report before us today is principally an attempt to examine and identify the specific causes of poverty with a view to advocating solutions for improving the standard of living in Nigeria. It should also challenge all stakeholders (Federal, State and Local Governments, Civil Society and other development partners) to face squarely the challenges of eradicating poverty in the midst of plenty. Let us all harness every available resources and opportunity to hasten the transformation of the nation into a poverty-free country. Let us dedicate ourselves to policies that enhance equitable re-distribution of wealth of this nation, creating jobs and opportunities for our people and empowering people (particularly women, the poor and the disadvantaged) to participate meaningfully in the development process.

May I seize this opportunity to emphasize that we cannot sub-contract development. Development is our national responsibility and must be built on what exists to ensure sustainability and self-reliance. In this regard, I want to particularly commend the UNDP for working with the Federal Government in the area of sustainable development. In

fact, the efforts made by the UNDP through the nine core programme implemented during the last 4th Country Cycle as well as the on-going four programme of the current 5th Cycle otherwise called First Country Co-operation Framework have brought about notable changes as serious efforts were made and are still being made to carry the people along in development activities.

I am pleased to observe that the 1999 Human Development Report is dedicated to the laudable objective of how we could all co-operate to achieve "Globalisation with a Human face". As the report rightly points out :

"The core values of respect for life, liberty, justice, equality, tolerance, mutual respect and integrity underlie the charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They now need to be the guiding objectives of globalisation with a human face."

I would like to sound a note of warning : globalisation with a human race cannot be a substitute for a solid national foundation based on good governance and human-centred development. The 1998 UNDP Human Development Report on Nigeria fully illustrates this point. Only a Nigeria that is politically and economically strong will be able to seize the opportunities and face the challenges of globalisation.

Poverty alleviation and eradication is a difficult task if policies are entirely based on market forces and macro-economic stability as an end in itself. The challenge before us is to fine-tune our policies and programmes in such a way as to ensure a balance between macro-economic stability and human-centred development. The plain fact is that there are many human development factors that operate outside the realm of market forces.

Government is about people and Government has a moral responsibility to ensure that such goods and services that cannot be provided on the basis of market forces must be provided by the efforts of government partnership with the private sector, non-governmental organization and civil society groups. Human development is a collective effort. Our Administration aims to provide an enabling environment in which collective efforts can bear fruit for the over- all development of the Nigerian people and the Nigerian Society.

We are also convinced that the imperative need for collective efforts in human development extends beyond national boundaries. There is need for collective co-operation at the regional level and at the global level. This is the reason why we have considered it necessary to establish, under the Presidency, a new Ministry for Co-operation and Integration in Africa. Regional economic co-operation and integration is the only way forward for Africa into the global economic system.

Globalization means competitiveness, and our countries cannot effectively compete at the global level without regional economic co-operation and integration. ECOWAS

was established nearly 25 years ago. Its progress has been less than we had expected. There is therefore an urgent necessity to move ECOWAS forward, so that together with other African regional economic groupings such as SADC, we shall provide a new momentum for the realization of the objectives of both the Lagos Plan of Action and the Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community.

This Report has the courage of its convictions when it clearly states that "today's institutions of international governance are inadequate to the challenges of the 21st century"

Global institutions must demonstrate a sense of responsibility towards people's notion of equity and social justice. The United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization must be re-structured to make them more responsive to and more representative of people. Indeed, there is an urgent need for the democratization of global decision-making institutions.

Respect for human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights cannot be limited to national government only. Individuals and increasingly powerful multinational corporations must demonstrate a new responsiveness to the needs of people. This is more so when we realize that the three richest individuals in the world have total assets that are more than the Gross National Product of all the least developed countries with a total population of 600 million people ! We are also reminded that the 10 largest telecommunications companies in the world control 86 per cent of the world telecommunications market.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my fervent hope that efforts to produce the Human Development Report annually will be sustained so that it will continue to serve as a veritable tool for identifying our strengths and weaknesses in order to proffer solutions for the way forward in our development process. It is my hope that Nigerians will continue to take responsibilities for their own development through the development of local authorities such as we are witnessing today, to build capacities for the elimination of poverty. Total eradication of poverty must be our long-term goal. This is the vision and goal which our Administration desires to pursue to a logical and successful end.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, it is now my pleasure to launch both the 1998 *Nigeria Human Development Report* and the 1999 *Human Development Report*.

I thank you all. God bless.