

THE INAUGURATION OF THE NATIONAL DRUG LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY (NDLEA) BOARD

THE INAUGURATION OF THE NATIONAL
PROBATION DEPARTMENT AGENCY (NIDA) BOARD

**SPEECH OF THE PRESIDENT
CHIEF OLUSEGUN OBASANJO
ON THE INAUGURATION OF THE NATIONAL
DRUG LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY (NDLEA) BOARD
TUESDAY, 5TH OCTOBER, 1999**

This occasion marks a milestone in our anti-drug crusade. This is the first time that a well constituted Board is being inaugurated for the NDLEA under a democratic government.

The desire of this Administration to constitute Boards of all government parastatals and extra-ministerial departments should not be seen as an avenue for political patronage but as a positive response to the need for result oriented policies and programmes.

As the Agency charged with responsibility for combating illicit drug trafficking and abuse in Nigeria, the NDLEA has weathered many storms. These include hostilities from drug barons and traffickers who never feel comfortable with its existence and operations.

Prior to the establishment of the NDLEA, we were seen as a drug trafficking nation because of the involvement of a few of our nationals in drug trafficking. However, this trend has changed for the better, thanks to the unrelenting onslaught on drug traffickers and barons by the NDLEA.

The recent recertification of our country by the US Government as well as the positive accreditations received so far from **relevant** international drug bodies such as the United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) are testimonies that our **beloved** country is once more on course. It is our commitment to improve on this **score** that accounts for the inauguration of this Board today in keeping with the **laws** establishing the NDLEA. This Board which is made up of twelve persons will **have** responsibility for fashioning out policy guidelines for the operations of the Agency and ensuring that its operations are in line with legally acceptable standards and current realities.

The NDLEA is basically a security outfit involved in the surveillance, arrest, investigation and prosecution of drug offenders. That is why government considered it appropriate for it to be headed by a seasoned serving law enforcement Officer who is abreast with the tenets of law enforcement. Other members of the Board are persons of proven integrity who have excelled in their various fields. Government and indeed, every Nigerian therefore, expect members of this Board to bring their experience and professionalism to bear on the operations of the NDLEA.

Furthermore, you must ensure that Nigeria remains at the fore-front of the United Nations' affirmative action against illicit trafficking in narcotics and psychotropic substances through the formulation of efficacious policies and adherence to civilised procedures in drug interdiction and demand reduction.

Nigeria has acceded to all regular drug conventions and will stretch her hand of fellowship to all countries equally committed to making our world a drug-free one. Cognisant of this fact, your performance as members of this Board must be guided by the spirit of international collaboration capable of eliciting strategies that would complement this trend.

This ceremony is not a formality. It is to God and the nation that you commit yourselves this day. Your duty is not only to God but also to our laws. If you fail in the duties which you swear to uphold, you will be betraying not only I who appointed you in good faith but also all those who have invested their hopes in you.

I urge you to humble yourselves and reciprocate the good gesture of the nation. As wise and as hardworking as you are, there are many who surpass you in wisdom and hardwork. As public spirited as you are, there are many in our country who are more public spirited and dedicated than yourselves. You were appointed not because you had distinguished yourself but in order to distinguish yourself. And you shall distinguish yourselves not by any illicit wealth that you may acquire but by the selfless service that you render. I have nothing against the ambition of those who desire wealth. On the contrary I commend it on condition that such wealth is lawful and is used for the benefit of the generality of the people.

This is our own country. It is we who administer it. It is we who must make the needed sacrifices without which, as a people, we shall never be strong.

I thank the authorities of the agency for the good work which they have done so far. I pay tribute to all those officers of the Agency who have lost their lives in the course of the struggle to eliminate drugs from our society. If in the end we succeed, as I hope we shall, then their blood will not have been shed in vain. The supreme example of sacrifice which such officers have set is one which I urge the rest of the nation to emulate. The deplorable situation into which our nation has been plunged demands great sacrifice on the part of every citizen in order to restore hope and dignity to the nation. Every citizen is now challenged to do something for the nation. Criminals are challenged to give up crime. Drug dealers are called upon to give up their evil trade. Drug users are urged to give up the

abuse of their own bodies. Opportunities now abound for the employment of our talents and we have no justification to prefer crime. My government is committed to using the resources of the nation to provide opportunities for all our people. Those who were driven by despair to use drugs can now have hope. I urge you, I appeal to you to join me in rebuilding the nation. On the other hand, if you prefer to violate the laws and the Constitution, then I have to remind you that we shall invoke against you every necessary process of law and punishment. I therefore urge the Agency to be vigilant to utilise every power vested in it by law to eradicate the cultivation, sale and use of drugs in our society.

I assure the nations of Europe, Asia and America of our co-operation to arrest, punish or extradite our nationals who offend the drug laws of those nations. In the past, these criminals have exploited the weaknesses in our criminal justice system and escaped arrest or extradition. I am now taking steps to eliminate these weaknesses and to strengthen the law enforcement machinery. I have made provisions for better training and equipment of the Police. This will go a long way in enhancing the success which the NDLEA has recorded so far.

Thank you.

Opportunities are abundant for the employment of our
My government is committed
to provide opportunities for all our people
to participate in the nation's growth and development
I am confident that the government will continue to
provide the necessary support and resources to
ensure that all our people have the opportunity
to reach their full potential and contribute
to the nation's progress and prosperity.

It is the responsibility of the government to
ensure that all our people have the opportunity
to reach their full potential and contribute
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