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FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

TWELFTH INDEPENDENCE ANNIVERSARY

OCTOBER 1, 1972

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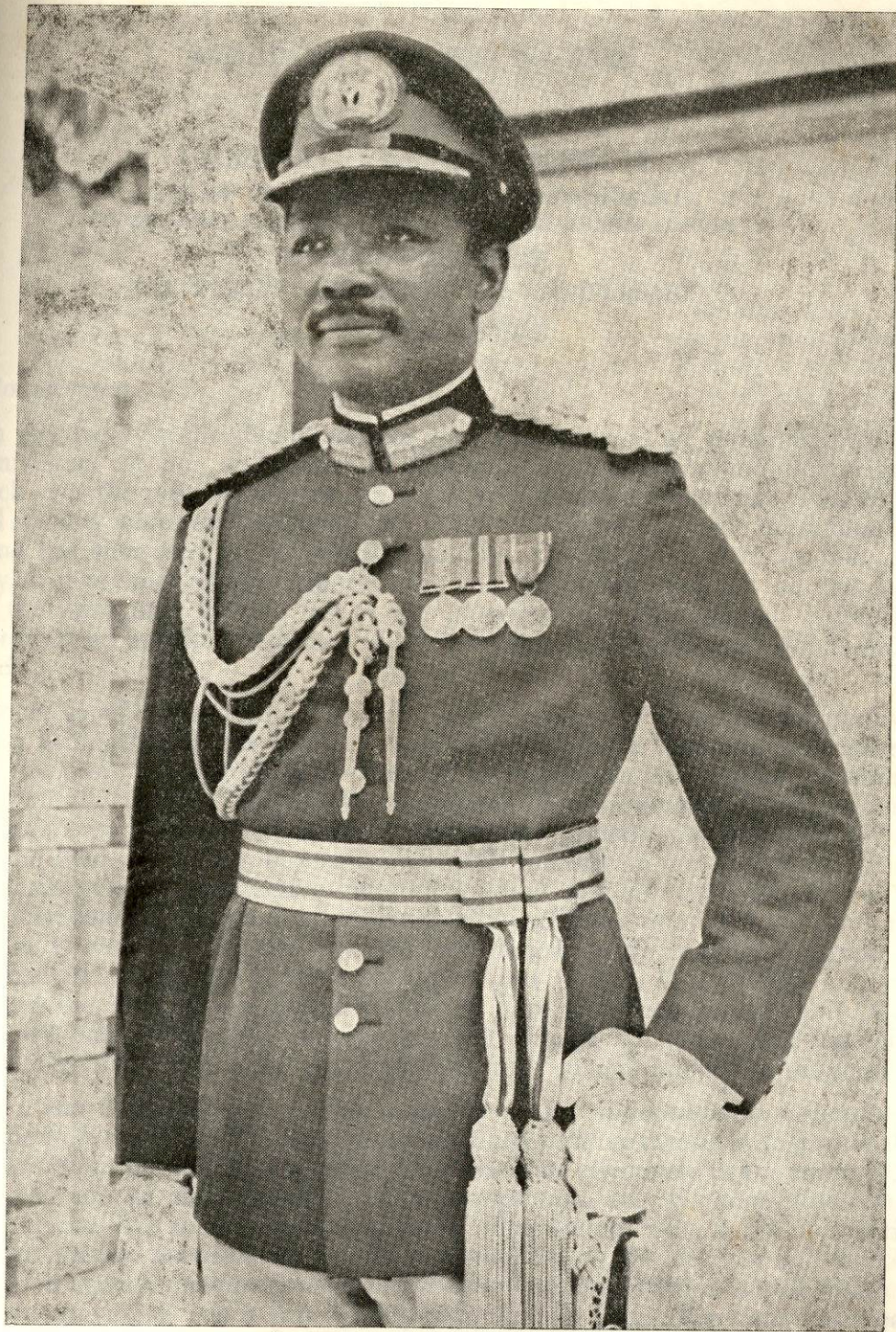
HIS EXCELLENCY

GENERAL YAKUBU GOWON

HEAD OF THE FEDERAL MILITARY GOVERNMENT,
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE ARMED FORCES OF NIGERIA

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His Excellency GENERAL YAKUBU GOWON
*Head of the Federal Military Government, Commander-in-Chief
of the Armed Forces of Nigeria*

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BROADCAST TO THE NATION

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY

GENERAL YAKUBU GOWON

**HEAD OF THE FEDERAL MILITARY GOVERNMENT,
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE NIGERIAN ARMED FORCES**

**ON THE OCCASION OF
THE TWELFTH INDEPENDENCE ANNIVERSARY**

1st OCTOBER, 1972

Fellow Countrymen,

I am very happy to be able to address you, once again as we celebrate today the 12th Anniversary of our attainment of National Independence and Sovereignty. As we look over the past 12 months, let us all give thanks to Almighty God for the peace and stability which we have enjoyed as a Nation and for the many other blessings which God has showered on us and our families. On occasions such as this, it is customary to take stock of the achievements and disappointments of the past year, whilst at the same time making use of the experience we have gained to continue with determination and forthrightness in the task of nation building to which we are committed.

While we as a Nation continue to make good progress on all fronts, the performance of our economy and the positive steps which we have taken in the economic field over the past year provide a good cause for happiness and a great measure of confidence for the future. The growth rate of our Gross Domestic Product is now estimated at 12 per cent which is about double the growth rate projected for the period in the Plan. There has been a considerable increase in our capital formation, with emphasis on direct productive investment which is a clear demonstration of the increasing confidence in the economy. Our external and domestic trade have continued to expand as Government maintains a relatively liberal policy designed to arrest the upward trend in prices and improve the lot of our people. Our foreign exchange situation and the level of our external reserves have improved considerably. Consequently, we have been able to wipe out our foreign exchange back-log while arrangements have been made for regular payments for current imports to the country.

Since I last addressed you on the occasion of our Independence Celebrations last year, the Federal Military Government has taken positive measures to ensure that Nigerians are given the fullest opportunity to participate effectively in the commercial and industrial life of the country. In this connection, the Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decree has since been promulgated. The Decree aims solely at securing for Nigerians greater participation in the economic life of the country and is not a punitive action against genuine foreign investors whose contribution is still welcome. It is our firm conviction that if this country is to be truly great, Nigerians must learn

to take active part in the exploitation and utilisation of our natural resources and must build up considerable reserve of self-reliance. Therefore this Decree is a great challenge to our people and offers a great opportunity for Nigerians not only to participate in the economic and social development of the country but also to cultivate sound commercial principles in their business practices and to replace the erst-while primitive business methods by sound planning, hardwork and dedication ; these are necessary qualities if we are to make a success of our indigenisation programme.

The Federal Government on its part is taking adequate measures to ensure the smooth indigenisation of designated enterprises. Plans are in an advanced stage to establish Industrial and Commercial Credit Bank while the activities of Nigerian Industrial Development Bank are being expanded with a view to making available to indigenous businessmen adequate capital funds in form of medium and long term loans. I have no doubt that these measures will arouse in Nigerians a welcome spirit of expectancy and engender in them a great determination to make effective contribution to the success of the indigenisation programme.

You are all aware that Nigeria is a vast country covering an area of about 500,000 square miles, stretching from the North to the South for 700 miles and from the East to the West for about the same distance. Within this area live and work, on the basis of the projection of the 1963 census of population, about 65 million dynamic people. The Federal Military Government is conscious of the fact that new infrastructural services are indispensable to the proper, social and economic development of a country of the size and complexities of Nigeria. Therefore, the Government has paid great attention to the development of the economic potentials of the Nation. Communications and other forms of transport systems which are essential for the economic take-off along the path of self-sustained growth are being fastly developed. In the last twelve months, considerable progress had been made in the expansion, modernisation and diversification of our postal and telecommunications services and facilities in all parts of the country. We have quite recently successfully commissioned the Subscriber Trunk Dialling System linking several Nigerian cities with the Nations Capital, Lagos. There are plans to place many more cities on the Subscriber Trunk Dialling System, and when the new plan is completed, about 20 more towns in Nigeria will be so linked.

In the external telecommunications service, increasing utilization of our Satellite Earth Station has been made to improve and expand the overseas telephone, telex and telegraph services of the country in order to cope with the rising demand from the public and industrial sectors. In this regard more telephone channels have been added to the London and Rome steams ; all telegraph private circuits have been transferred to satellite ; automatic subscriber calling has been introduced on the new international telex exchange installed in the past year. Direct telex operation to the United States was opened, and agreement for establishing direct telephone working is to be signed in a few weeks time. Of spectacular interest was the extension of television reception of world events, via satellite, to the Television centres in Lagos and Ibadan. The

Nigerian Satellite Earth Station now has the capability to transmit television programmes. In other areas, the short-wave radio link to East Africa has been upgraded with error-protection telegraph equipment ; considerable improvement has been made on the telecommunication services to ships at sea by the installation of additional equipment ; orders have been placed for the expansion of the automatic international telex exchange to cope with the planned national telex network. Plans are also being concluded for the provision of an international automatic telephone exchange and computerised telegraph switching centre in the proposed (N.E.T.) Nigeria External Telecommunications multi-storey Headquarter buildings which will also accommodate the planned high-capacity radio link terminal to West African countries and provide the expansion necessary to make Nigeria a major switching centre for international telecommunications in Africa. Our aim is to be able to have direct telecommunication links with all African Countries.

The Federal and States' road programmes have made encouraging progress during the year. We have also decided to develop and equip eighteen airports to modern standards capable of handling medium jet traffic. The Federal Government has also approved management contracts under which Trans World Airlines will co-operate with the Nigeria Airways to implement its reorganisation and staff development programme. It is our determination to link all the States with efficient transport system which will facilitate free mobility of persons and goods throughout the country and promote our national goal of unity, stability and progress.

The Federal Government continues to give the utmost priority to extending the supply of electric power throughout the country and to improving the efficiency of the National Electric Power Industry. As promised in my Budget Day Speech, the Federal Government has promulgated a Decree merging the former Electricity Corporation of Nigeria and the Niger Dams Authority into a single large and integrated entity, the National Electric Power Authority. Negotiations have reached an advanced stage with a very large overseas power company for an agreement under which the overseas company will provide management and technical support to help National Electric Power Authority (N.E.P.A.) in successfully implementing its modernisation and expansion programmes over the next five years. The agreement should be concluded soon and the Government will give the Authority all necessary support to enable it give satisfactory service to consumers in all parts of the country.

The oil industry continues to make tremendous impact on our economy, and actually accounts for nearly half of the estimated growth rate of 12 per cent in the gross domestic product for the 1971-72 plan period. Negotiations are proceeding with foreign oil companies in pursuance of Government's policy of ensuring a larger and more effective indigenous participation in all aspects of the country's economy, especially in all strategic sectors.

We are also making encouraging progress in the negotiations with Foreign Commercial Banks for Government participation in their operations in Nigeria.

The performance of the Agricultural Sector has not, however, been particularly encouraging during the past year ; this is due to various natural and artificial constraints. The Federal Military Government has given serious thought to this situation and is pursuing vigorously, in consultation with the State Governments, measures to encourage farmers to grow more food and cash crops and help them to get better prices for their produce. The Nigerian Agricultural Credit Bank has been established to grant loans to farmers with well-conceived and viable agricultural schemes. In addition, steps will be taken urgently to reform our Marketing Board system with the objectives of improving the operational efficiency of the Boards, providing adequate incentives to producers through the pursuit of a price policy aimed at substantially increasing producers' incomes, encouraging large-scale plantation and promoting the domestic processing of Nigerian produce to enable an increasing proportion of their exchange values to be retained in the country. It is the intention of the Federal Government to initiate discussions with our farmers and all concerned on plans for the establishment of Farmers' Marketing Co-operatives, which I believe will bring about greater benefit to the farmers themselves.

The Federal Military Government is also determined to enter into large-scale agricultural productions in partnership with State Governments and competent foreign investors and management interests on the pattern of joint projects in the manufacturing industry sector. We propose to establish a number of large-scale Federal Government farm projects, mechanised and organised for optimum productivity with integrated processing industries.

The acute shortage of housing is one of the major social problems facing the Nation today. You are no doubt aware that provision has been made in the current Development Programme for the Federal Military Government to build low-cost houses for workers throughout the country. A lot has been said about this before but, regrettably, not much has been done. Now, the Federal Military Government intends to commence, immediately, the low-cost housing scheme for workers for the remaining part of the Plan period. Our target is to build about 10,000 units of low-cost houses for some of our working population in Lagos and about 4,000 units in each State Capital. This is indeed a bold scheme which will cost the Federal Military Government about £80 million over the period ; but this huge investment is insignificant compared with the hardship and suffering to which our working population in urban areas are now subjected. This is not a once-for-all exercise, it must be a continuous exercise as the Federal Military Government is firmly committed to provide these low-cost houses for working population in urban areas. As a further evidence of the determination of the Federal Military Government to improve the lot of our workers, it is our intention to establish, in the very near future, Workers and Civil Service Co-operatives. I have no doubt that all of you will contribute your quota to make these projects a success.

I wish now to turn to the forthcoming Population Census. I am happy to say there has been considerable progress in the arrangements for holding a national Population Census in November, 1973. The National Census Board was appointed in May this year and it has since applied itself vigorously to the task of ensuring a successful population count next year. The Board has established census committees in the States to mobilise the resources of the various States. Census offices have been set up in each State and State Census Officers have been appointed ; funds have been made available to supply the necessary supporting staff and equipment to the State Census offices. In those fields where local expertise is lacking, the Board has engaged the services of experts. The demarcation of the country into enumeration areas is in progress and it will not be long before it is completed. Training workshops have been established for the various field officers throughout the country so as to ensure sufficient supervision of the population census at all levels. It would be seen from the steps already taken that the forthcoming national population census has been launched on the right foot. It is hardly necessary for me to emphasise the great importance which the Federal Military Government attaches to the accurate count of all persons in this Federation. I therefore urge everyone of you to resolve to make the exercise a worthy and profitable one, to give it every support and to co-operate with all those charged with the responsibility for conducting it. I am confident that you will rise to the occasion, as you have done several times in the past, to ensure that we allow no room for controversy in the resultant figures.

The Federal Military Government has also set up a Public Service Review Commission to review the structure of the Federal and State Public Services, the services of the Universities, Public Corporations and State-owned Companies, the Nigeria Police, the Judiciary and Teaching Services. I need not say how important to the future of this great country is the work of the Commission. You know very well that the Public Services of this country are a great asset to our Nation and that it is important that their organisation, structure, management, conditions of service and training arrangements should be periodically reviewed so as to keep pace with the expansion, development and the inevitable complexity of the social and economic life of this country which these services are expected to serve. The purpose of the exercise is therefore to enable the Commission to make a careful study of these Public Services with a view to submitting to Government recommendations which would secure the adequate development and optimum utilisation of the manpower resources in the Public Services and increase their efficiency and effectiveness in meeting the needs of a dynamic economy. I therefore appeal to the men and women of our Public Services and the Private Sector throughout the Federation to co-operate with the Commission and exercise restraint so as to allow the Commission to discharge its onerous duties in an atmosphere of industrial peace in the overall interest of the Nation. I am confident of your support and co-operation in this matter.

Satisfactory progress has been made during the past year in our effort to reorganise the Armed Forces. Two of the units—the First Division and the Second Division—have moved to their designated Divisional Headquarters. Vocational training for

disabled soldiers has started in real earnest and is already yielding dividends by rehabilitating wounded soldiers and preparing them for productive and respectable life in the community. The reorganisation programme, which has been embarked upon, is bearing fruits in the form of greater efficiency and high morale and also appreciable reduction in the running cost of the Armed Forces allowing more funds for improving supporting services. Members of the Armed Forces continue to be deeply involved in civilian activities connected with development projects in various sectors of the economy, mainly road construction works in various parts of the country. The Nigerian Air Force has since been able to take delivery of some of its new Aircrafts thereby enhancing their transport and strike capabilities. The Naval Flagship, the Frigate *NNS Nigeria* has since been refitted and is now back on full commission. It will be joined soon by other modern corvettes in the near future. All these will increase our Navy's capability to defend our territorial waters. I commend the good sense of disciplined loyalty and dedication which our Armed Forces and the Police have shown during the past year. I am confident that they will all continue to demonstrate these good qualities demanded of them. We must eternally be vigilant if we are to maintain our liberty and safeguard our hard-won peace and stability. It is the responsibility of every Nigerian, not just that of the law-enforcing agencies and the security forces, to ensure that nothing disturbs the peace and stability which God has been pleased to grant this Nation.

On the international scene, African leaders came away from the Rabat Organisation of African Unity's summit meeting, convinced that the new spirit of accord and reconciliation, which they found among themselves, would usher in a new phase for Africa. With its member states freed from internal armed conflicts and open warfare between themselves, the Organisation of African Unity appeared much stronger than ever before and more determined to realise its latent strength for the good of our continent.

But, barely four months after the summit, all is not well ; it is a matter for great concern that disputes, which could have been resolved in a fraternal spirit, have been allowed to erupt into shooting wars between sister African states. Foreign detractors of Africa are still able to exploit, with impertinence, internal dissidence to create a false image of Africa. Besides, threats to the rights of citizens of one African State to reside and undertake legitimate activities in another African state could undermine the sense of solidarity and purpose so indispensable for rational co-operation among African states.

Speaking for Nigeria, I appeal to all our African brothers to bury the hatchet. Let us concentrate our efforts on our common and twin concerns of decolonisation and development. Let us ensure that the consequences of our policies benefit rather than injure our neighbours. Africa will not count in the councils of the world unless we realise the objectives of our agreed joint endeavours ; unless our policies towards one another are based on relationship of equality, friendship and mutual trust.

Nigeria, at peace with herself and deeply conscious of her obligations to Africa and world peace, will not relent in her commitment to the principles of the Organisation of African Unity and the United Nations Organisation. Through visits and agreements, Nigeria has sought in the past year to intensify her relations and interest with several countries in Africa and other parts of the world.

The development of areas of economic co-operation with African countries has been a major focus of Nigeria's external economic relations during the year. A number of bilateral agreements were concluded between Nigeria and several African States to promote trade, increased industrial harmonisation and development of infrastructure facilities. New air services agreements have been negotiated and concluded with Cameroon, Algeria, Ghana and Sierra Leone. Others are under active discussions and negotiations. During the period, the Lake Chad Basin Commission met for the first time at the level of Heads of State since its inauguration in 1964. Nigeria is in consultation with several West African countries on the possibility of establishing West African Economic Community. As a result, Nigeria and Togo have agreed to establish a nucleus of such a Community with a view to providing an appropriate institutional framework for economic co-operation in the West African sub-region.

Nigeria's relations with the world outside Africa have also continued to grow and expand. A number of delegations, some in connection with economic or trade matters, others on political and good-will missions, from a large variety of countries from all parts of the world were received in Nigeria in the past year. Nigerian delegations also went abroad on similar missions. Significantly, a Nigerian Economic and Trade Mission visited the People's Republic of China in August 1972 and negotiated a trade and economic co-operation agreement between Nigeria and China. A return visit by a Chinese delegation is expected in Nigeria shortly. Some members of the Supreme Military Council have undertaken very useful visits to many countries of the world and recently the Commissioner for External Affairs has undertaken an official tour of Australia, New Zealand and Indonesia. All these in pursuit of our policy to reach out to the world and make friends for Nigeria.

I believe that a policy of peace and friendship is the right one for Nigeria. With the entry of Britain into the European Economic Community next year, Europe will take a new shape, the full consequences of which the rest of mankind, least Africa, cannot be indifferent to. Because of the emerging *detente* between the great powers, a new pattern of international economic and political order is inevitable. In the face of these historic developments, whether the developing countries of the world will be enabled to pay their way and not remain recipients of aid which is increasingly proving inadequate and inappropriate; whether Africa will find an effective and independent role to play in the new international relationship; and whether Nigeria can prove its worth so that the black man is treated with dignity throughout the world—these are the problems that should be engaging our attention in the coming year.

On an occasion like this, I always wish to address a special message to the youths of this Nation. You will recall that the Federal Military Government has set aside May 27 of every year as the Youth Day in recognition of our abiding faith in the youth of this country. The Federal Military Government recognises that the future of this country lies in the hands of the youth of today. It is therefore prepared to ensure that it provides the physical, mental and spiritual environment in which these young persons can grow up to be worthy citizens of this great Nation. As evidence of our determination to get our youth irrevocably committed to the cause of unity and greatness of this Nation, I promised the Nation when launching the current Four-Year Development Plan that Government proposed to establish a voluntary Youth Corps transcending political, social, State and ethnic loyalties and as a basis for fostering loyalty to the Nation. Preparatory work for this voluntary Youth Corps is already in an advanced stage and it is my earnest hope that it will be launched before long.

The Government also proposes to establish a compulsory National Youth Service Corps the aim of which is to bring together our qualified young men and women and to inculcate in them a sense of discipline, dedication, national pride and consciousness through nationally directed disciplined training, not necessarily in the Armed Forces, but in serving the nation in any capacity for a short period in their life-time before settling down to their chosen career. It is the intention of the Government that this scheme should be initiated on a modest scale to enable the attendant problems of the scheme to be fully and carefully examined. It is therefore proposed that the scheme will start initially with the graduates of our Universities, thereafter, in the light of the experience gained with the graduate members of the Corps, the field for the compulsory recruitment into the National Youth Service Corps may be widened. I commend this new National Service Scheme to our Youths. I am bold to make this proposal because of the abiding faith I have in our younger generation and also because I sincerely believe that if the energies of our young people, mental and physical, are directed into the proper channels, the future of this country can be assured. I shall seize the earliest opportunity to give details of the compulsory National Youth Service Corps to the Nation.

A country like ours should have, in addition to economic and political goals, a well articulated programme of social action aimed at ensuring not only the full participation of every citizen in the cultural renaissance which has gripped the African continent but also the overriding commitment of every Nigerian citizen to the national objective of building a virile, self-reliant and united country. As a start, the Federal Military Government therefore proposes to establish, in the Cabinet Office, a Directorate of National Guidance which will be charged with responsibility for, among other things, finding ways and means of inculcating in the generality of our people a sense of self-reliance, clean service, self-respect, dedication, discipline and industry. It is our hope that, in due course, the responsibility of this Directorate will be raised to full ministerial status.

We can claim, in all modesty, that Nigeria has succeeded in creating a good image for herself both at home and abroad. It is however, a matter for deep concern that

performances in the field of sports has not measured up to world standards. I promise this Nation that we shall revolutionize sports in this country. We intend to make our sportsmen and women prove to the world their true capacity in sports and other fields of human endeavour. As we shall be playing host to the All Africa Games in January 1973, I urge all Nigerian sportsmen and women to redouble their efforts to bring credit to this Nation not only in the acquisition of the most coveted medals but also in the exhibition of the highest standard of sportsmanship. I also urge every Nigerian to give our brothers and sisters from all over Africa who will be coming to participate in the Games a very fitting welcome. As for the participants themselves, I need hardly assure them of a warm welcome and of the proverbial hospitality of our people.

Finally, I wish to place on record my profound gratitude and appreciation for the efforts which every Nigerian has made over the past year in the task of building a long, united and stable country. In this connection, I have been deeply impressed by our achievements of complete national reconciliation as reflected, in particular, in the policies of the various State Governments in their recruitment of personnel and the free mobility of labour and trade throughout the country. It is our firm resolve to continue to promote and maintain, at all times, our indissoluble unity and the inter-dependence of our national economy. We need the strength that comes from the unity of purpose to carry out our various programmes.

Although our achievements over the past year have been quite encouraging, we cannot afford to be complacent. The successful attainment of our goals for the future demands the best in us at all times. We must be prepared to make personal sacrifices and to work hard for the realisation of our national objectives and priorities. Our nation must continue to move forward in strength and progress.

Our cause is right; our policies are just and I am confident that with God's guidance and with your co-operation and support, we shall succeed.

May God help our efforts in nation building to triumph.

I wish you all God's blessings, good luck and a successful 12th Independence Anniversary Celebrations.

Long live one, united, strong and prosperous Nigeria.