

LET'S DO MORE!

BEING TEXT OF INAUGURAL ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY, GOVERNOR YAHAYA BELLO OF KOGI STATE DURING HIS SWEARING-IN CEREMONY FOR A 2ND TERM IN OFFICE AS THE 4TH EXECUTIVE GOVERNOR OF KOGI STATE AT THE GLASS HOUSE, GOVERNMENT HOUSE, LOKOJA, KOGI STATE ON THE 27TH DAY OF JANUARY, 2020

Protocols

1. I welcome everyone to this Inauguration Ceremony. It is indeed a red letter day for us as we receive another chance to take our New Direction Governance Principles to the Next Level and to Do More for our people and society over the next four years. I am truly glad that you could be with us today.

2. This is first of all a day for gratitude. In the first term journey which we have just concluded, God and Good were firmly on our side. We have lost count of how many times Divine Providence saw us through perilous seasons and situations. I cannot thank God Almighty enough for his immeasurable help.

3. I appreciate His Excellency, President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR for providing us an example of courage in leadership and the ability to keep your eyes on the ultimate prize, even when your good intentions are misunderstood or mischaracterised by design.

4. I appreciate His Excellency, Vice President Yemi Osinbajo for showing us how effortlessly the fear of God, character, competence, faithful stewardship and loyalty can be a complete package in high Office, even in the face of unfair criticism and personal attacks.

5. I appreciate most profoundly Hajia Dr. Aisha Muhammadu Buhari - 1st Lady of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Her Excellency, Mrs. Dolapo Osinbajo - wife of the Vice President, Hajia Ramatu Tijjani Aliyu, Ph.D - Minister of State for the Federal Capital Territory and a Kogi woman of substance, each and every one of the wives of Governors and all the other eminent Nigerian women who supported us, especially those in Your Excellencies' powerful entourage to the grande finale of our reelection campaigns last November. Your Excellency, you are indeed the mother of the nation and a fearless advocate of good governance.

6. I thank my colleague Governors, both those still in service and those who have completed their tour of duty as the No. 1 citizens of their respective states, honourable ministers of the Federal Republic, other top government functionaries, captains of industry, corporate bodies and well meaning Nigerians too

many to enumerate who stood with us through thick and thin and provided immense support and encouragement.

7. I thank our great Party, the All Progressives Congress (APC), His Excellency, Comrade Adams Oshiomhole - our National Chairman, Hajia Salamatu Baiwa - our National Woman Leader, Alhaji Abdullahi Bello - the APC Kogi State Chairman, the entire national and state membership and leadership of Africa's most empathic Governing Party, the APC, for providing us the platform and the political prowess which helped us to emerge victorious for a second time.

8. I thank my Team in the New Direction Administration, most especially, His Excellency, Chief Edward Onoja, my siamese twin and the Deputy Governor of Kogi State, for the hard work and loyal followership which enabled me to pilot this ship with a minimum of distractions. Edward Onoja is a Godly politician, an astute visionary and a talented strategist who has proved his worth to me, to Kogi State and to our party again and again - first as my Chief of Staff and now as my Deputy.

9. I salute our 3 Distinguished Senators, Chief Smart Adeyemi, Alhaji Jibrin Isah Echocho and Alhaji Yakubu Oseni, along with our 6 Honourable members of the House of Representatives and the 25 Honourable Members of the Kogi State House of Assembly, all of the APC, led by The Right Honourable Speaker, Prince Matthew Kolawole. These efficient lawmakers have proved that legislating is a job for independent-minded team players. Without your support, today may not have been possible.

10. My special thanks to His Lordship, Honourable Justice Nasir Ajanah and the Kogi State Judiciary for their roles in the task of governing Kogi State. No doubt, the principle of separation of powers has benefited tremendously from our experiences in the last 4 years.

11. I pay heartfelt homage to the Kogi State Council of Traditional Rulers led by His Royal Highness, Dr. Michael Idakwo, Ameh Oboni II, the Attah of Igala and His Royal Majesty, Alhaji Dr. Abdulrahman Ado Ibrahim, the Ohinoyi of Ebiraland as President and Vice President respectively. His Royal Majesty, Oba Solomon Oladele Owoniyi, Otitoleke Oweyomade I, the 44th Obaro of Kabba, His Royal Majesty Alhaji Abdulrazaq Gambo Isa-Koto, The Ohimege-Igu of Koton-Karfe and His Royal Highness, Chief William Keke, the Aguma of Bassa have all played invaluable roles in complementing governance in their domains.

12. Generally speaking, my administration is blessed with very enlightened Royal Fathers who are lovers of peace and advocates of social change. They have worked assiduously to advance our efforts in conflict resolution and inter-community cooperation. They are always willing to assist Engr. Abubakar Ohere and my team at the Ministry for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs on all matters of state requiring their attention, even at the risk of being misunderstood. When called upon, they have intervened for Kogi State as special envoys, including with Mr. President. I am immensely grateful.

13. It is of course impossible to forget Organised Labour in Kogi, the various unions and organisations including the student bodies whose firm support translated into crucial and substantial electoral votes. Of special importance are the faith-based duo of the Muslim Council of Ulama in Kogi State and the Christians groups led by the Christian Association of Nigeria. They proved to be upright partners who helped to keep us accountable to the people.

14. I celebrate my family:

a. My wives - Hajia Barr. Amina Oyiza Bello, Hajia Rashidat Bello, the First Lady of Kogi State and Hajia Hafiza Onyinoyi Bello.

b. My children - Miss Hauwa Bello, Master Hayatullah Bello (our super able son) and the rest of our lovely children.

c. My dear mother and matriarch of our family, Hajia Hauwau Oziohu Bello and my esteemed siblings.

d. And in memoriam, I recall with fondness my father Alhaji Ochi Ipemida Bello who died while I was still a toddler and my sister, Hajia Rabiya Bello who passed away in late December 2019. May your precious souls continue to rest in peace.

e. We are a closely-knit family unit which spends a lot of time together so I am really grateful for the incredible patience and sacrifice of my loved ones since I embarked on this tough journey about 4 years ago, especially as it has now extended into another 4 years.

15. I also recall the contributions of a great and unforgettable man to the emerging realities of today's Kogi State. Prince Dr. Abubakar Audu laid the foundations of robust governance as the 1st Executive Governor of Kogi State. He also built the APC into a formidable political force in the state, and personally led it to dislodge the former ruling party. Unfortunately, he died before he could see his beloved party at the helms of affairs in Kogi State. We salute this extraordinary visionary today, and pray the Almighty God to grant him eternal rest.

16. I have reserved my greatest thanks, my deepest appreciation and my heartiest celebration today for the good people of Kogi State - my employers and my only Reason for getting into politics. Kogites are the best people any Governor could ask for. They will set high standards for you, they will knock you into shape, they will keep you on your toes and no matter what you do, only your best will ever be good

enough for them at any time. However, if you serve them well, they will prove to the world that you are their own, and when you need them, they will stand solidly with you - an army that no one can defeat. I will never get over the massive support they gave me for my reelection!

17. In fact, let me use this opportunity to specially appreciate the awesome people of Kogi State for the unbelievable support they gave us in all the elections which were held during our first term, and in particular, the 2019 General Elections and the November 16 Kogi State Governorship Polls. This wonderful people handed the All Progressives Congress (APC) decisive wins across board in all the elections.

18. Kogi State reelected Mr. President and the Vice President with very sound margins before giving us a clean sweep of the various legislative seats by voting APC candidates into 2 out of 3 Senate seats, 7 out of 9 House of Representatives seats and all 25 Kogi State House of Assembly seats. In a subsequent rerun poll after the Tribunal rightly nullified the Kogi West Senatorial election earlier carted away by the main opposition party, the APC also won the third and final seat.

19. I will never forget the historic vote Kogites gave me for my own reelection on November 16, 2019. I ended up beating my nearest challenger in the 2019 Kogi State Gubernatorial Elections with over 215,000 votes! My victory was not only historic, but it marks a drastic paradigm shift in how we play our politics in Kogi State and will henceforth obligate politicians and their parties to court every constituency if they wish to govern Kogi State. I am indeed grateful that Kogi people counted me worthy to be the protagonist of these new realities. Thank you, thank you, and thank you!

20. The story of our stewardship in the term just ended is the classic tale of choosing a new direction and confronting whatever challenges it brings with courage, no matter how overwhelming they might become.

21. When we took Office for our first term on the 27th day of January, 2016, we quickly discovered that if Kogi State must survive the twin troubles of recession and insecurity which were ravaging Nigeria at the time, we must do a whole lot of things differently. We knew that the Youthfulness and Patriotism which we brought to Government would be overcome by the status quo if we failed to quickly upset the old ways which accorded unholy privileges to a favoured few at the expense of the rest of the populace.

22. Thus, it was clear to us from the beginning that conformity would mean more of the retrogressive ways and corrupt practices which had caused our state so much trouble. Since this was not an option to us, we moved on to chart a different but more difficult path, and one which put us on a collision course with strong vested interests.

23. We identified godfatherism, tribalism, class consciousness and religious divides as the four legs of the table of corruption in this state and the ready tools of oppression and misgovernance. They had distorted social equity and equality among Kogites so over the four years of our first term we confronted these four evils wherever we found them. Today, we have cut them off and they no longer determine the rules of engagement between the government and the people in Kogi State.

24. More importantly, by vigorously enlightening the populace to the real costs of these divisive and discriminatory practices, even to those who may appear to be benefiting from them, we were able to empower the people to resist such. Our people are now less inclined to mortgage their welfare to gain some fleeting patronage. In fact, we are now seeing more and more individuals, families and even whole communities across Kogi State rising up and freeing themselves from social, economic and political subservience to a few individuals and their entrenched interests.

25. I make bold to say therefore that uniting the rich human and natural diversities of Kogi State into a progressive and cohesive force for good is the main achievement of our first term and will remain a priority of this 2nd Term. We shall not relent in weaving equity and equality into the fabric of our society and strengthening the bases for our coexistence.

26. Truth be told, no single Governor can completely rebuild a society in the time available to one administration, but we can and we are making plans for the long term. As Martin Luther King Jr said, 'we must live together as brothers or perish together as fools'. This makes the battle for a united and egalitarian Kogi society one which we must not only win, but sustain, and at the appropriate time, pass on to posterity. I also take the liberty to commend this quote by the great Civil Rights activist to our nation as well. We must understand that what hurts one of us in Nigeria hurts all of us, and with that understanding we must begin to pool our energies for mutual protection and profit. Truly, if we do not urgently make greater effort to live together as brothers and compatriots, we will continue to perish together as fools.

27. One small but significant achievement of our first term, and one that I am particularly elated over because of its uniting force, is the building of a beautiful Chapel inside the Kogi State Government House premises for the first time in 28 years. It is not so much the cost of the building, but the balance which we were finally able to bring in the seat of power between the two major religions in our state after such a long time which excites me. It may be a token, but it is a significant token.

28. Of course, the rent-seekers who were beneficiaries of the old ways as well as their protégés came at us with Vengeance, like a Tsunami. They twisted and turned our every word and action into all sorts of negative shapes before the world, especially through their captive media, and for a while the news only reported bad things about us, nearly all of which were false.

29. However, a key attribute of the Truth is that it cannot be hidden forever. Today, with the help of God and the support of our people, we have not only reduced the footprint of sectionalism in our body politic but we have also tamed the capacity of their beneficiaries to redeploy and benefit from them.

30. We are not ashamed to admit that we lost the propaganda war during our first term, but neither are we shy to say that we won the battle for Truth, which is more important. Today, we are defined, not by the lies which uncharitable people have told about us to the nation, but by the many infallible proofs of great governance which we were able to produce and deliver to our people across the state.

31. I will be guilty of a huge error if I do not at this juncture say a big 'thank you!' to those brave souls in the media, both conventional and social media who insisted on reporting only what is true and fair about us. In the face of syndicated and unrelenting fake news about the New Direction Administration in Kogi State, these brave souls managed to find and report the truth, sometimes at the risk of offending editors or advertisers. Thank you for remaining true to your conscience and your journalistic ethics.

32. Indeed, as the revered Shehu Usmanu Dan Fodio once said, 'Conscience is an open wound, only truth can heal it.' There is plenty of proof today that during our 1st Term, in addition to achieving the enhanced cooperation and integration among our people which I have spoken about earlier, we also made critical developmental and governance milestones which are helping to reposition Kogi State to face the future head-on and unafraid. Above all, we set out to touch the lives of the people with the dividends of democracy and it is not immodest to say that we did a good job of it, by every objective standard.

33. We started off by developing a well drafted plan, the New Direction Blueprint, which acted as our roadmap for accelerated development of Kogi State in all her constituencies. It provided guidance and helped us to focus on 7 key thematic areas, to wit, Education, Health, Infrastructure, Job Creation, Civil Service Reforms, Agriculture and Security. Today, the results speak for themselves.

34. For the first time since Kogi State was created we have enjoyed equity in the spread of government appointments and projects. When it comes to appointments, everyone knows that Yahaya Bello only considers merit, fairness and justice in selection and placement of persons who work with him. When it comes to projects, we have tried to spread the love proportionately between our 3 Senatorial Districts.

35. Tribe, religion or class are no longer the determinants of who or where gets what. They play no role except as a measure of proportionality. We also made it a deliberate policy to observe affirmative action. For the first time in our history, the youth and the womenfolk occupied the largest number of high profile positions in government ever, and wielded real influence.

36. We inherited a Kogi State that was notorious for insecurity, especially as the kidnap capital of Nigeria. It was a hotbed of armed robbery, communal clashes, home invasions, political thuggery and other violent crimes. The state recorded over 250 kidnappings in 2015 alone, but less than 6 months into my tenure, those numbers dropped drastically. In fact, for a 6 month period from July of 2016 to early January of 2018 we recorded no kidnaps at all. Till today, kidnapping has remained an opportunistic and isolated crime in Kogi State.

37. We invested in over 200 brand new vans and trucks and over 500 motorcycles and distributed them free among all the security agencies operating in the state. We also imported and supported them with modern communications gadgetry and provided finances and logistics. We built a Forward Operations Base for the Nigerian Army from scratch and established smaller outposts for other agencies across the state.

38. We forged synergy between the various agencies and formed a Joint Task Force of the Nigerian Police, the military and all other federal law enforcement agencies in the state. We flooded every nook and cranny of the state with mobile patrol teams. We set up the Kogi State Vigilante Services which currently has over 5000 active personnel, mainly retired security agents and agile youths and tasked them with community policing.

39. Consequently, we were rated the 2nd most peaceful state in the federation after Osun in 2018, and the most peaceful in northern Nigeria by the National Peace Index (NPI). Kogi State under my leadership was in the same 2018 rated the state with the second lowest crime statistics after Kebbi by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

40. The great gains we made in securing the lives and properties of our people and those who traverse our territory demanded of us creative thinking and plenty of sacrifice, which we did not fail to provide. Kogi is thus more secure as we go into our 2nd Term than she has ever been at any time. This is a gain we intend to strengthen and sustain.

41. Moving on from security, we worked hard to improve our fiscal responsibility and sustainability capacities as a state. Our budgets for every year has always been passed before the end of the previous year since we came to office. We passed fiscal accountability laws to close the gaps we met in the stewardship of public finances. We upload our budgets and routinely publish our stewardship of public finances both online and in newspapers to improve transparency.

42. The results have been great. Our Internally Generated Revenue has grown from about N350m monthly when we took Office in January 2016 to about N1.4bn per month now, mainly by the elimination of waste and corruption and by improving collection. Our IGR figures since 2016 are in themselves a metaphor for the steady development which we have achieved in most areas:

a. 2016 - N9,569,123,755.23

b. 2017 - N11,244,260,974.7

c. 2018 - N11,334,113,743.5

d. 2019 - N16,389,026,388.86.

43. Less than 2 years into my first tenure, Kogi State became one of only 4 states in the federation deemed success stories in the SDGs by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). We were invited to the 72nd UN General Assembly on this score. In addition, we consistently received high ratings in key performance areas from credible local and international agencies.

44. In 2019, the World Bank Group recognised us as the top performer in World Bank Portfolio. It bears repeating that since we took Office we have been intentional about meeting Kogi State's counterpart funding obligations to the World Bank Group and other development partners. That is a lot of money, but the dividends have been much too. Our partnership with the World Bank Group is one I wish to deepen greatly in this second term.

45. Still in 2019 we ranked the 7th top performer among all the states and FCT in basic education funding according to the records of the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC). We have renovated, or constructed from scratch, over 375 classroom blocks in basic education (primary) schools across the state. Those of you on the lookout might have seen some of these buildings in the schools you passed on your way here today. They are painted an iconic blue and white, and you cannot miss them.

46. Our secondary schools and Tertiary institutions also received extensive attention from my administration in our first term, mainly in provision of enhanced learning materials and development of physical infrastructure.

47. Our gory experience with sections of the media notwithstanding, we did not refrain from giving the media and communications industry their full dues as resources would permit. In keeping with our healthy respect for the media and practitioners therein, I will also be upgrading Information and Communication from a Bureau to a full-fledged ministry in this 2nd Term. This will not only accord the media her pride of

place as the 4th Estate of the Realm but also strengthen her capacity to act as ombudsman between the Government and the people.

48. In this regard, the new ministry will be deploying the Kogi State Open Government and Accountability System (KOGAS) within 60 days of this Inauguration. KOGAS will be a real-time online accountability platform designed to mobilise the people in checking government and her functionaries, by nipping misconduct and excesses in the bud.

49. For the records, we also built a modern headquarters for The Graphic Newspaper, our state-owned print media outfit and repositioned her to a level of technical output which is I am told is currently best-in-kind amongst similar state entities in the country. We also procured a state-of-the-art Outside Broadcast (OB) Van for Confluence Radio and new digital transmitters for the Broadcasting Corporation of Kogi State thereby migrating her fully into the elite corps of digital broadcasters in the country.

50. We embarked on a meticulous staff screening and verification exercise which Organised Labour in the state has described as 'difficult but necessary' and credited with deepening efficiency in the civil service.

51. In 2019, the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics rated us one of the only 9 states which reduced unemployment at a time that the rest of the country slid further into it. This rating in particular silenced those who invested a lot into discrediting my civil service reforms.

52. Today, the claims of non-payment of salaries which dogged our footsteps during our staff screening and verification exercise have become history. I have been able to bring my salary payments up to date and since August last year I have had the incredible joy of fulfilling my dream cum promise to pay salaries before they become due. We now pay our workers even before the month ran out. Henceforth, it is our plan, all things being equal, to pay salaries and pensions between the 25th and 28th of every month.

53. I commend the patience and support of Organised Labour in Kogi State throughout the process of implementing our civil service reform schedules. They understood that we were only trying to sanitise our workforce and payroll and they acted as fierce, but fair, watchdogs over the process.

54. Infrastructure was a big need in Kogi State when we arrived Government House and it was a big deal for us. It is still a big need today, but we also got a lot done in our first term by tackling infrastructure as vigorously as time and funding would permit.

55. Across the state, we awarded 16 new intercity roads and designated 2 existing ones for complete overhaul. This enabled us to construct about 200km of new roads. 34 other roads were rehabilitated 100% in towns and cities across the state which added another 150km. About 350km of motorable asphalt overlay added to our existing road network is not bad for a first term in office, especially one which started in a recession! Our second term will see several legacy infrastructure projects come on board.

56. We connected over 200 communities to the national electricity grid - some of them for the first time while others were reconnected after really long periods of disconnection. In our second term, we intend to accelerate electrification of many other communities through on-grid and off-grid options. Our ongoing Project Light Up Kogi East which is personally overseen by the Deputy Governor under my supervision is an ambitious project that is on course to strengthen electricity facilities serving the Kogi East axis where we have the lowest electricity penetration in the state. When completed the project would have provided another 200-500 communities with electricity.

57. We provided over 300 boreholes and rural water schemes to villages and hamlets across the 3 Senatorial Districts and revamped existing waterworks in several urban centres for improved provision of portable water to the populace.

58. Agriculture has always been earmarked as the mainstay of government's efforts to engage the people profitably and we will continue to invest in it. Already we have thousands of Kogites gainfully engaged in the Agricultural value chain and it will be our policy thrust in the second term to enlarge the scope.

59. We constructed a brand new 50 tons per day Rice Mill at Ejiba in the Kogi West Senatorial District during our first term. It is supported with about 800 hectares of paddy under cultivation. We have enlarged the scope of support to farmers and agricultural undertakings across the state. Government support has taken the form of free or subsidised agricultural services or inputs such as tractors and other farm equipment, fertilisers, improved seeds and seedlings, land preparation and extension services.

60. In the health sector, we have done rather well too. Kogi has the lowest infant mortality rates in Nigeria according to a November 2019 study by the National Population Commission (NPC) and the Federal Ministry of Health sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Along with saving hundreds of lives among our children under five years of age, we also achieved a corresponding drop in maternal mortality rates. This followed the launch of free health services to our pregnant women, nursing mothers and the newborns themselves.

61. Following the resolution of sundry contractual and legal impediments which occasioned some delay and distorted our earlier schedules, we have nearly completed the Confluence Advanced Medical and Diagnostic Centre, a full-fledged Ultramodern Diagnostic Center at the Specialist Hospital, Lokoja.

62. We beefed up the fight against deadly and infectious diseases by constructing a brand new Biosafety Laboratory, reactivating the moribund Lassa fever treatment centre and establishing a Public Health Operations Centre.

63. I set up the Kogi State Poor and Vulnerable Peoples Fund early in my administration and provided money for health and other interventions to the poor. Wealthy citizens were also encouraged to donate to the Fund and some of them were very generous indeed. We were able to sponsor 876 surgeries and over 50,000 other medical cases, some of which were treated abroad under the auspices of the Bello Health Intervention initiative.

64. In addition to large scale facelift of Health training institutions in the state through infrastructural developments, we also recruited thousand of personnel for the health sector. The Kogi State College of Nursing, Obangede was able to receive the full accreditation which had eluded her for many years.

65. We have 239 wards in Kogi State and we built, renovated or remodeled at least one Primary Healthcare Centre in each ward in the State. A few wards actually received more than one.

66. We set up the Kogi State Health Insurance Agency with an eye to the planned rollout of universal healthcare services in our second term.

67. My Administration is happy to accept all the help she can get from every honest source. The various initiatives under the Federal Government's Social Investment Programme (SIP) have proven an invaluable social safety net which we have exploited for the benefit of tens of thousands of Kogites. As at today, we have the following SIP statistics:

a. N-Power: 12,964 beneficiaries earning N30,000 each per month, which adds about N388,920,000 to our economy monthly.

b. Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT): 62,160 poor and vulnerable people receiving N5000 monthly grant which injects N621,600,000 into the Kogi State economy monthly.

c. Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP): 4,192 beneficiaries of interest free loans for market women which has added N209,600,000 to the economy of Kogi State.

d. Home Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP) is still operating at pilot stage, but currently feeds about 100,000 pupils in 620 public primary schools while employing 1,067 caterers and putting in over N100,000,000 into Kogi's economy per month.

e. Currently, the SIPs as a whole pump in about N1.1billion into the Kogi State economy monthly.

f. We have received commendations from the Presidency through the Honourable Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development for outstanding performance in partnering with the Federal Government on the SIPs.

g. We shall not relent in our efforts and during our second term we intend to scale up on all the components of the SIP by at least 100%.

68. We ran for a 2nd term with the slogan, 'Let's Do More', and made a strong case for reelection by showcasing our 1st term achievements while undertaking to improve on them. Kogi voters have reelected us with the most historic margin in a gubernatorial election ever seen in this state and it is now incumbent on us to keep our electoral promises - and we shall do just that.

69. Our Let's Do More mantra stands on 3 Operative Principles, ie, Partnerships, Progress and Prosperity. The 3Ps (as we call them) will underpin all our engagements in this new term of Office. Everything we do will explore partnership, be progressive and produce as much prosperity as possible for Kogi State.

a. Partnership: Our Next Level in Kogi State will rely on synergy at every stage, primarily the one between the People and the Government but also with a wide array of domestic and international investors, service providers and development partners spread across the public and private sectors.

b. Progress: The partnerships which will define our 2nd Term must be inherently progressive. Their trajectory must be a progression from where we are to where we plan to go, and rely predominantly on homegrown solutions for meeting our unique challenges as a people and state.

c. Prosperity. Our second term must improve the lot of every Kogite who is willing to put in an honest day's labour. Our aim is to grow an inclusive economy which has room for every willing participant, irrespective of his or her ethnic extraction, physical location and preferred occupation.

70. Our overall mission in this second term is to develop Kogi State into Nigeria's foremost and most secure emerging commercial hub through optimization of the state's geographical location, natural endowments and human resources for a sustainable future.

71. We shall embark on large scale urban renewal projects to further transform Lokoja into a resilient capital city with modern utilities attractive to residents and tourists alike. Even though upgrading the sights and sounds of Lokoja will be paramount, this beautification project will extend to at least one major town in each Senatorial District.

72. We will sustain focus on Agriculture for improved food security, mass employment and increase in Internally Generated Revenue. We will take the Agricultural Revolution which we started in the first term to the Next Level.

73. Specifically, Rice, Cassava, Cashew, Aquaculture and Livestock will remain the bedrock of our activities in the agricultural sector as follows:

a. In addition to the state-owned rice mill at Ejiba which I mentioned earlier, we will work to see more Rice Mills built by private capital in the state, increase land under cultivation with rice and facilitate off-taker agreements for local growers. We want to make Confluence Rice the dominant brand, at least in the home market.

b. Nigeria is the largest cassava grower in the world and Kogi State is Nigeria's largest grower. We will add 500,000 new cassava farmers from our populace into our initiatives around this amazing crop during this second term.

c. We also plan to build the nation's largest ethanol plant in Kogi State for the production of ethanol fuel from cassava. This will and further expand the use of green fuels in Nigeria given that Climate Change has become such a dramatic concern globally. We have secured a partnership with the NNPC Group, the Central Bank of Nigeria and a private investor to make this project a reality.

d. Kogi State is a leading player in Nigeria's cashew nuts industry. We have largely eliminated the communal conflicts around this crop and will continue working with orchards and growers to improve the quantity and quality of our produce as well as the size of our market share in the multibillion naira cashew industry.

e. We have added thousands of new fish ponds and their proprietors to the numbers we met in 2016 and we shall be taking our aquaculture to the next level as well in this second term.

f. Livestock farming has always been subsistence in Kogi State but over the last four years, we have grown the numbers of participants in this area too. Our second term strategy is to support more Kogites to find employment in poultry farming. We will also be establishing institutional cattle ranches to take advantage of the employment and income options in this neglected area.

74. Outside of Agriculture, we are also going to pay greater attention to human capital development by investing more in training our people for enhanced relevance in a technologically evolving future.

75. With Information and Communications Technology becoming such a big earner for individuals and societies, we will do our best to facilitate some youth with the relevant cognates and competencies to acquire further education in this area at leading institutions abroad.

76. I do not intend to outline everything we shall do in this second term in this brief speech. That will have to wait for our updated New Direction Blueprint which should be out within the next 90 days. However, it is important that we give us an idea of our governance thrust and that is what we have just done.

77. The more you bear the burden of leadership, the more you realise that people, and not things, events or places, matter the most. This places a demand on you to make your people and their welfare the heart of your leadership. But since things, events and places exert a profound influence on people, you also find yourself obligated to improve them for the benefit of your people.

78. Therefore, my definition of good governance is the ability to unite the people, things, events and places within our leadership space in a wholesome, symbiotic relationship.

79. When approached with the above mindset, governance ceases to be a popularity contest and becomes a life-saving vocation requiring the leader's best efforts always. Our governance objective in Kogi State since January 27, 2016 when we first took Office is to do the right thing for the present generation and for posterity without fear or favour. This objective will remain unchanged throughout my second tenure.

80. My primary allegiance as Governor will remain to Kogi State and her citizens, not to party or tribe. Everyone is my citizen and I owe everyone the protections and fidelities inherent in the Office.

81. I therefore call on all and sundry, friends and perceived foes, to put aside all differences of politics, ideology or affiliation and join hands with us to give Kogi State the best of governance.

82. By the grace of God, the Oath of Office I have just taken is a pact to do right by all citizens as the 4th Executive Governor of Kogi State. In this second and concluding term of my constitutional tenures as Governor, it shall be the principal preoccupation of my administration to bring revitalised energy to bear in delivering refocused governance.

83. It is on this note that I enjoin all Kogites to look forward to the next four years with optimism and great expectations. We will do everything in our power as government to make sure they are productive, prosperous and peaceful.

84. So help me God.

85. I thank you all.

86. God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

87. God bless Kogi State.

88. And God bless you all.

YAHAYA BELLO

Governor of Kogi State

27 January, 2020.