



WELCOME REMARK AT THE 4TH RETREAT OF THE NIGERIA GOVERNORS' FORUM, TODAY JUNE 6, 2014 BY RT. HON. ROTIMI CHIBUIKE AMAECHI, GOVERNOR OF RIVERS STATE & CHAIRMAN, NIGERIA GOVERNORS' FORUM (NGF)

PROTOCOLS

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you all to the 4th Retreat of the Nigeria Governors' Forum. I am particularly excited as your Chairman to also double as the host governor for this retreat. This unique opportunity means that we will ensure that everyone gets a double dose of everything that you may have been used to in our previous retreats. As always, we hope to create the enabling environment for us to deliberate on critical issues of national importance to move our country forward.

My brother governors, distinguished resource persons and participants, as with our previous meetings, this retreat is being held at a critical juncture in our national life. As both the Federal and State governments enter into the last laps of the various administrations, it is imperative that we do some stock-taking. At the Nigeria Governors' Forum, our flagship programme, the State Peer Review Mechanism (SPRM) has helped to facilitate peer learning and the replication of good practices for even development across States.

It is important to reiterate that most governors will be transitioning out of office in 2015. In the light of the above, I want to align myself with an American governor who once said: "Govern to the end. Plough to the end of the row. Avoid the myth of 'lame duck'. What you do in the last year or so may define or mar your governorship." What we do as governors in the last year, make or mar our administrations.

This Retreat will include focus on health and youth unemployment through a review of the focus of these issues in Nigeria. In addition, as most of us are completing our final tenures as governors, we have also chosen to address the issue of "Transitioning Out – Life after Office: Perspectives and Challenges."

At our last Retreat held in March 13 and 14, 2014 in Lagos, we had focused on Agriculture, Education and Corruption and came up with strong resolutions. Some of these resolutions have impacted on the polity in our various states. We hope that other State actors will see the need to adopt, and where necessary, modify some of these resolutions in order to move our country forward. I have no doubt in my mind that we will double our efforts at this 4th Retreat not only to reach resolutions but follow through in applying all the lessons learned in this and previous retreats. Finding solutions to the challenges that plague our nation is our duty as leaders in our country.

To my colleagues, as we prepare to bow out, I want us to reflect on the matter of the crack in the body of the NGF. Since it is our dream and aspiration to remain intact and grow together as one, regardless of any disagreements, the time to bring everyone back together is now. Our country and our people bear the

biggest brunt of a fractured Forum. As we forge ahead towards 2015 and the democratic bells ring again, let us continue to imbibe and internalize the democratic tenets where freely given mandates are respected and upheld, even while allowing the minority to have their say. I strongly hope that in the coming elections, democracy will be practiced as it ought to be. In all future elections, winners must be congratulated while losers must of necessity be commended for taking part. Mandates must be respected and held sacred. Therein lies the true democratic spirit and therein lies the way forward.

May I express our profound gratitude to the Director General of the NGF, A.B. Okauru and the entire management and staff of the NGF for the wonderful job that they have been doing over the years despite the prevailing challenges. I commend you all for being thorough professionals and truly focused individuals. I enjoin you to continue to foster that team spirit that has been the staying power of the Nigeria Governors' Forum.

Finally, I wish to thank, most profusely, Professor Amos Sawyer former President of Liberia for being here to chair a session of our deliberations. To all my brothers, I cannot express enough the depth of my gratitude for your support and your roles in the Forum. To other distinguished presenters, discussants and participants, I say thank you for parts in making this retreat a success.

Thank you for coming to our Rivers of possibilities. Explore the numerous potentials and always please come again.