



SENATE OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS

Thursday, 21st July, 2005

1. The Senate met at 10.15 a.m. The Senate President read Prayers.
2. **Votes and Proceedings:**
The Senate President announced that he had examined the Votes and Proceedings of Wednesday, 20th July, 2005 and approved same.

By unanimous consent, the Votes and Proceedings were adopted.

3. **Reconstitution of Senate Special and Standing Committees:**
The Senate President noted that Senator Adolphus Wabara was not assigned to any Committee, but that he was free to belong to any Committee of his Choice. He further stated that it was in keeping with the honour accorded former Senate Presidents'.

4. **Motion:**

An Unprecedented Increase in the Prices of Foodstuff and Other Essential Commodities:

Motion made and Question Proposed: That whereas it is common knowledge that the unprecedented increase in the prices of foodstuff, building materials and other essential commodities in the last six months at such an alarming rate has become a major source of concern to the entire citizenry of this nation;

WHEREAS it is abundantly clear that majority of Nigerians have been impoverished and pauperized due likely to a combination of negative economic policies and ineffective implementation mechanisms, the core reason behind the recent phenomenon is scarcity of essential food items, arising from lack of profound policy framework, capable of guaranteeing food security for the nation;

WHEREAS at the moment, most Nigerians cannot feed well, the resultant effect of which being some people eating chaff, while others are forced to adopt the 0-1-0 feeding formula;

WHEREAS poverty, they say, breeds much discontent, Nigeria has been blessed with so much human and natural resources, yet, its citizens are so much plagued by abject poverty and acute shortage of basic amenities;

WHEREAS it is abundantly clear that the 21,000 tons of grains said to have been released into the market by the Federal Government recently did not help matters at all. This is because the number of Nigerians that cry for food on daily basis is on the increase;

WHEREAS the situation is so pathetic that in its 2005 quarterly report to the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the National Economic Intelligence Committee (NEIC) admitted the soaring prices of grains, building materials and other essential commodities and thereby urged the Federal Government to evolve urgent measures of overcoming the menace;

WHEREAS for many Nigerians life has become nightmarish, following persistent rising prices of basic foodstuff and other essential consumables across all sectors and income groups;

WHEREAS while the prices of staple food items such as rice, gari, yam, beans and vegetable oil have gone up by more than 50%, the more than 100% increase in the prices of industrial and edible sugar, salt and other food additives,

has triggered off a more than 50% increase in the prices of bread, locally produced drinks and confectioneries. Similarly, the building and construction, and indeed, the entire manufacturing sector have not been spared by the soaring prices, especially with the persistent runaway cost of raw materials, fuel, power, transportation, etc;

WHEREAS the seemingly various laudable food policies are, at least, inconsistent and ineffectual. For instance, the National Special Programme for Food Security (NSPFS) was set up in 2003 with Financial and technical assistance from Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the Chinese Government under the South-South cooperative initiative, to boost national food production, but since the project took off with the arrival of the first batch of 20 Chinese experts into the country, it is sad to note that nothing is being heard about the programme again;

WHEREAS even though not much success has been recorded in agriculture in recent past, agricultural development still remains the best means of reducing the incidence of poverty in Nigeria;

WHEREAS the frequent resort to poorly-conceived import ban of essential commodities and raw materials, even when viable Local alternatives are not readily available, have compounded the problems the more;

WHEREAS the poor state of infrastructural facilities and the prevailing harsh business climate do not in any way support commercial farming, rural and urban roads are in terrible state, hence the high cost of transporting farm produce from places;

WHEREAS our farming method is generally primitive, the storage facilities are buffeted by erratic power supply, thereby forcing a greater proportion of Nigerians to adopt the hand-to-mouth life style;

WHEREAS Mr. President has directed the Honourable Minister of Commerce, Ambassador Idris Waziri and the Hon. Minister (State) of Petroleum, Dr. Edmund Daukaro, on Wednesday June 22, 2005 to investigate the causes of the rise in prices of cement, sugar and diesel in the country;

WHEREAS in view of the foregoing, it is pertinent to point out that the Federal Government must realize that a nation that is incapable of feeding its populace and ensure sustainable development and self sufficiency in food production, is in danger of social unrest. Perhaps, that is why countries like the USA and Germany have not only taken farming technology to greater heights, but massively subsidized agriculture to feed their people, maintain adequate food reserves and still, have enough to export to the outside world; and

WHEREAS this distinguished Senate and indeed, the entire members of the National Assembly owe it a duty, as we cherish the unity of our great country and the attendant benefits that accrue from its thick population and physical size to attend to this issue with the utmost urgency it deserves.

Be it, therefore, resolved that:

- (i) the Federal Government do as a matter of utmost urgency release enough grains at a subsidized rate to the public from its Strategic Grains Reserve, pending the outcome of the investigation report;
- (ii) more Strategic Grains Reserves silos be constructed across the Nation, while those under construction be completed and the existing ones be rehabilitated, for effective storage of Agricultural commodities;
- (iii) the Federal Government do pay more attention to the development of agriculture, particularly in rural areas, by distributing sufficient fertilizer to the farmers in time, as majority of them have no other means of income than farming;
- (iv) Government programmes in respect of River Basin Development Authorities (RBDA) and the Nigeria Agricultural Cooperative and Rural Development Bank (NACRDB) be re-evaluated and strengthened.

Specifically, the development must be designed to transform the unproductive age-old traditional methods of farming into more productive modern farming techniques;

- (v) the Federal Government do through the Federal Ministry of Agriculture evolve simple techniques for the encouragement of greater mechanization through the use of simple tools and implements, by fabricating affordable tools locally, to meet the need of cottage industries, while the most expensive tools be assembled locally, with a view to reducing cost;
- (vi) the Federal Government do encourage and provide enabling environment for irrigation farming by enlightening the people on how to carry out modern irrigation farming and also by giving out loans to those who are trained to carry out such farming; and
- (vii) most importantly, as a matter of urgency, the Senate Committees on Commerce, Industries and Agriculture be mandated to look into the soaring cost of foodstuff like rice, salt, sugar, beans, maize, millet, guinea corn, flour, poultry feed, beef, fruits, vegetables, spices as well as other condiments; similarly, the prices of cement, timber, ceiling and other associated building materials be also looked into; submit their findings to this distinguished Senate within two weeks (*Senator Usman K. Umar*).

Debate:

Amendment Proposed:

That the motion be referred to the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development for further action and report to the Senate in two weeks (*Senate Majority Leader*).

Question that the amendment be made put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the motion be referred to the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development to examine and report to the Senate in two weeks (**S, Res/022/05**).

4. Presentation of Bills:

- (i) Compulsory Registration and Monitoring of Aliens Bill 2005 (SB, 188) — *Read the First Time*.
- (ii) Fire (Precaution and Control) Bill 2005 (HB. 59) - *Read the First Time*.
- (iii) Nigeria National Commission for UNESCO Bill 2005 (HB. 96) — *Read the First Time*.
- (iv) Federal Road Maintenance Act (Amendment) Bill 2005 (SB. 112) — *Read the First Time*.

5. Confirmation of Appointment:

Motion made and Question Proposed: That the Senate do refer to the appropriate Committee the request by the President, Commander-in-Chief of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, for confirmation of appointment of the following nominees as Chairman and members of Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission.

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| (i) | Dr. Ransome E. Owan | — | Chairman |
| (ii) | Alhaji Abdul-Rahman Ado | — | Vice Chairman |
| (iii) | Professor O. C. Iloeje | — | Commissioner |
| (iv) | Engr. Abimbola Odubiyi | — | Commissioner |
| (v) | Dr. Muhammed Alimi Abdulrazak | — | Commissioner |
| (vi) | Engr. Muhammed Baba Gana Bunu | — | Commissioner |
| (vii) | Dr. (Mrs) Grace O. Eyoma | — | Commissioner |

(*Senate Majority Leader*).

Question put and agreed to.

Request accordingly referred to the Committee on Power and Steel to report in two weeks.

6. National Institute of Animal Science Bill 2005:

Motion made and Question Proposed: That the National Institute of Animal Science Bill 2005 be read the Second Time (*Senate Majority Leader*).

Debate:

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Second Time and referred to the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development to report in two weeks.

7. Committee on Judiciary, Human Rights and Legal Matters:

Report on the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences (Amendment) Bill 2005 (SB. 01):

Consideration deferred till next Legislative day.

8. Adjournment;

Motion made and Question Proposed: That the Senate do adjourn till Tuesday, 27th July, 2005 at 10.00 a. m. (*Senate Majority Leader*),

Adjourned accordingly at 1,00p.m.

Ken Nnamani
President of the Senate