



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS

Tuesday, 24 June, 2008

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1. The House met at 10.50 a.m. Mr Speaker read Prayers.
 2. **Votes and Proceedings:**
Mr Speaker announced that he had examined and approved the Second Votes and Proceedings of Wednesday, 4 June, 2008.

By unanimous consent, the Votes and Proceedings was adopted.
 3. **Admittance into the Chamber:**
Motion made and Question proposed, "That pursuant to Order XV, Rule 9 (iv) and (viii), this House do admit into the Chamber, former Speaker of the House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Aminu Bello Masari and some former Members of the House to witness the swearing-in of former House Leader, Hon. Abdul Ahmed Ningi and two other Members-elect."

Question put and agreed to.
 4. **Oaths of Allegiance and Membership:**

The following Members-elect, took and subscribed the Oaths as required by law:
 - (i) Abdul Ahmed Ningi (*Ningi/Warji Federal Constituency*);
 - (ii) Mohammed Ahmed Al-Makura (*Lafia/Obi Federal Constituency*);
 - (iii) Chuka Ama-Nwauwa (*Oguta/Ohaji-Egbema/Oru West Federal Constituency*).
 5. **Announcement:**
Conferment of Award:
Mr Speaker announced the conferment of awards for the advancement of humanity in Africa on Hon. Baba Shehu Agaie and Hon. Abdullahi Umar Faruk, on 21st June, 2008, by Family Education Helpline, London, United Kingdom.
 6. **Mr Speaker's Beginning of Session Address:**

Dear Honourable Colleagues, it is my delight to welcome you back to this hallowed Chamber after the brief adjournment. It is indeed my pleasure to be back into this warm and enabling presence of great friends and compatriots.

In the course of fashioning out an appropriate legislative framework, that would guarantee the attainment of good governance, we have bonded as statesmen in our contract of engagement with the Nigerian people. We have developed deep respect for one another's viewpoints, in the understanding that no one individual has a monopoly of wisdom.

We relish our conviviality and the passion and robustness of our deliberations which are underpinned by collective search for the best solutions to pressing national problems. Daunting as these problems and challenges may be, our faith remains our passport and I have no doubt we shall overcome. Permit me to re-state here that we briefly adjourned Plenary to allow Honourable Members to take time to review their work and carry out important Committee assignments. The interlude was a tactical disengagement so that Honourable Members can intellectually re-equip for the journey ahead of us.

During the course of our adjournment, we were all engaged in different activities that re-enforce our core legislative duties. While some of us were engaged in oversight activities, some used the opportunity to visit their constituencies in order to better acquaint themselves with the aspirations of those who elected them.

Other Honourable Members travelled outside the country for important official engagements; but which ever way we spent the period of this adjournment, I believe that each of us has gathered useful insights that would add value to the activities as we resume the 2008 and 2009 Legislative Sessions.

Honourable Members, I took the opportunity of the adjournment to lead a delegation of Honourable Members on a visit to the United States Congress and met with some US House leadership and Committee Members. We also visited some Congressional agencies and met with some officials of the US States Departments. We visited and listened to Nigerians in diaspora and sought their views on our performance. We also made valuable contacts with the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the International Republican Institute (IRI), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), etc.

It is my belief that these contacts are in consonance with our resolve to deepen collaboration with the parliaments of other countries, and it would go a long way to help build and strengthen our legislative institution and democracy overall.

I am happy to report to this honourable Assembly that everywhere we visited, our compatriots and friends expressed great respect for the Nigerian House of Representatives.

Our performance especially in recent past, has received the appreciation of those who care deeply that democracy survive in Nigeria. The various commitments and support that we have received would be fully explored in building our individual and institutional capacities, particularly the report of the commendations of high ranking legislation in the United States Congress, for exemplary commitments of Nigerian Honourable Members to good governance and legislative due process.

We should indeed take deserved pride in our collective performance as law makers, while keeping our eyes fixed on the enormous task ahead of us. Congress remains a reliable friend of Nigeria and the US Congressmen will be visiting us later on this week as a continuation of our dialogue with purposeful leadership.

A full report of the interactive sections and recommendations from the US Congressional visit would be made available to all the Honourable Members.

While we were on the same adjournment, I also was invited as the Speaker of the House of Representatives by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to take part in the bi-lateral talks between Nigeria and the Republic of France. As you all know, I also led a delegation to the French Government earlier on this year, and the first point of call of President Umaru Musa Ya'Adua's visit to France was the Speaker of the House of Representative's Office in France.

I later on took part in bi-lateral talks which shows clearly for the first time that House of Representatives, just like the US Congress, is now a major factor in designing Nigerian Foreign Policy.

Honourable Colleagues, as we resume 2008 and 2009 Legislative year, we have many outstanding and new Bills to pass into law. Since the inception, the Legislative Chamber has passed relevant Bills which have helped to bring about many of the economic successes recorded so far. But there is no gain saying in the fact that a lot still needs to be done to consolidate these successes and make them irreversible. We would work hard to pass Bills into forms and contents that will facilitate the full realization of the objective of the Seven Point Agenda. It is quite clear that we believe in the Seven Point Agenda as a blue print that if faithfully implemented will launch our economy into the top twenty economies of the world by 2020.

My dear Colleagues, I plead with us all to offer ourselves more in Debate in the Chamber, Research and Analysis in Committee Rooms and inclusiveness, thoroughness and fair play in our over-sight functions. We need more energy, more critical analysis, more resources, and indeed better time management to keep up to the pace of Nigerian's peculiar developmental imperatives.

My Hon. Colleagues, we have resumed Plenary Sessions at the critical period in our Nation's strive to consolidate democratic governance. In weeks and months ahead, Nigerians will expect us to rise to these challenges and exhibit leadership as true representatives of our people. Hon. Colleagues, we have decided to take our oversight functions exceedingly serious. We are taking on Institutions in a manner in which we have never done.

Hon. Colleagues, we are under no illusion, as to the consequences of what we are doing. Get ready for more political shenanigans. Get ready for more attacks. Get ready for more attempts if we trade our rights. The Seven Point Agenda is a clear message. Let us ignore bickerings. Let us concentrate on the serious aspect of delivering power, transportation and all those aspects that have to do with the Seven Point agenda. That is my resolve. It is either you are with me or not. It is either you are with the Federal Republic of Nigerian or not. This is our resolve. This is what we set out to do.

I am glad Hon. Colleagues and exceedingly proud as well, to know that we have since replaced that episode of divisive partisanship with our era of constructive partnership. This House of Representatives of honourable Ladies and Gentlemen, united by the common purpose to do the most good for the greatest number with our scarce resources.

As a person, I cherish the friendship that I have cultivated here, the diversity and robustness of your ideas as well the uncommon zeal and single-mindedness with which you have undertaken your civic responsibilities as leaders and representatives of the people. Never before have I been in the midst of so much experience and positive energy. I enjoin you Hon. Colleagues to continue with the same spirit of Patriotism which led to the introduction of '62 Members Bill, 130 Motions and 192 Petitions in the last Session.

Again, we are not under any illusion that the task of Nation building is easy, but we are inspired by the confidence reposed in us by Nigerians and determine to make a difference.

At this point, at this moment, I acknowledge the presence of the Former Speaker, an inspiration to all of us, Rt Hon. Aminu Bello Masari.

Hon. Members, Hon. Colleague I can confidently echo the words of the Anthem of the Civil Right Movement in the US, that we shall overcome!

Thank you and God bless.

House in Executive Session — **11.30 a.m.**

House in Plenary — **1.15 p.m.**

7. Adjournment.

That this House do now adjourn till Wednesday, 25 June, 2008 at 2.00 p.m. (*Hon. Tunde Akogun*).

Adjourned accordingly at 1.30 p.m.

Dimeji Sabur Bankole
Speaker