



PRESS STATEMENT

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Transparency International's Verdict on Corruption in Nigeria: Federal Government Must Work to Defeat Enemies Within

The Resource Centre for Human Rights & Civic Education (CHRICED) has been keenly following the public debate sparked by Nigeria's recent dismal ranking by global anti-corruption watchdog, Transparency International (TI). CHRICED finds it critical to acknowledge the modest gains recorded in the war against graft, especially the massive loot recoveries made by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). Although these successes are commendable, there are other serious contradictions that have tended to undermine the progress that has been recorded.

There can be no mistaken the fact that some of these contradictions contributed in no small measure to the unflattering verdict on Nigeria by TI. In the first place, the global anti-corruption watchdog must have taken a good look at key institutions of government, and how they are faring with respect to the anti-corruption program of the government. In that regards, it is not only embarrassing, but very untenable that Nigeria's National Assembly is being led by a man who has been repeatedly linked to several corruption scandals across the globe, including being mentioned in the Panama and Paradise papers for hiding assets in offshore tax havens.

It is similarly clear that the judicial and executive branches of the government harbor certain individuals who see any effort to kill corruption as a threat to their personal interest. If this were not so, Nigerians keep wondering how the Minister of Justice and Attorney-General of the Federation would repeatedly be taking steps to undermine the anti-graft agency, without any decisive response from the head of the government. At the level of perception, global watch dogs like TI can see through the corruption and abuse of power by those who manipulate their closeness to the corridors of power, without being held to account. The wrong signals are also sent to the outside world, when a Pension Chief, who should be facing the law, is suddenly reinstated before intense public pressure leads to his ouster.

Similarly, the anti-corruption crusade will not resonate, and have the desired impact if it does not permeate the grassroots level. CHRICED calls on the government and stakeholders to put more efforts towards deepening the anti-corruption message at the local level, so that programs like the Whistle Blower Policy can have more impact in the lives of citizens. As enunciated in the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) the government has a duty to evaluate its efforts against corruption. The essence of this evaluation is to come to terms with what is not working, with a view to making the necessary adjustments. In the context of the current anti-corruption crusade, there is no disputing the fact that a lot of enemies within the government are undermining efforts towards dealing a real blow to corruption. Government therefore has the lead role to play in ensuring that these adversaries of the anti-corruption crusade do not succeed.

Long live the Federal Republic of Nigeria!

Signed:

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