



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

Office of the Deputy Speaker

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Inter-Parliamentary Union  
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## 150th IPU Assembly Tashkent, Uzbekistan (5–9 April 2025)

### Deputy Speaker's Speech: General Debate – Parliamentary Action for Social Development and Justice

#### [Protocol]

It is my honour to address this esteemed gathering of the 150th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union here in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Today, as we engage in a debate on “Parliamentary Action for Social Development and Justice,” I stand before you representing Nigeria—a nation dedicated to equitable, inclusive, and sustainable development through deliberate and impactful legislative action.

In Nigeria, we firmly believe that social development is not merely an objective for economic growth or environmental protection—it

is a fundamental pillar that must guide all public policy. We have seen through extensive studies and practical experience that nations investing in robust social policies achieve human development indices that are up to 20% higher than those that do not. This clear evidence compels us to place people firmly at the centre of our development agenda and to recognise that social development and sustainable development are intrinsically linked.

### **Social Development and Sustainable Development: A Unified Vision**

Sustainable development is not just about protecting our environment or growing our economies; it is also about ensuring justice, fairness, and equity for every citizen. When we speak of social development, we refer to building societies where access to quality education, healthcare, housing, and decent work is not a privilege for the few but a right for all. True sustainable development must be inclusive—it must bridge the gap between the haves and the have-nots and ensure that progress is measured not only in economic terms but also in the quality of life experienced by our people.

However, the path to sustainable social development is not without its challenges, especially for Africa. The continent is burdened by a huge debt load that strains public finances and often limits the resources available for social investments. Can Africa optimize social development justiciably in the face of such financial constraints? This is a critical question, and while the debt burden presents formidable challenges, it must not be an excuse for inaction. Instead, it calls for innovative fiscal policies, debt restructuring, and, importantly, greater support from the global community.

### **Global Disparities and the Call for Justice**

When we compare the global South with the global North, we must acknowledge the stark historical and contemporary disparities. The global North has, over centuries, achieved considerable progress in social development, driven by resources, technology, and economic opportunities. Africa, on the other hand, is still emerging from the profound scars of the slave trade and the burden of colonization—a legacy that has left deep economic and social fractures.

Measuring the progress of African social development against the rest of the world requires us to look beyond conventional metrics. We must consider historical contexts and the immense challenges that Africa has had to overcome. Despite these challenges, African nations have made significant strides in recent years. Yet, there remains a considerable distance to travel before we can say that justice and fairness in social development have been fully achieved.

In the spirit of justice and fairness, one might ask: should not the global North take up some responsibility for strengthening the sustainable social development of the global South? The answer is clear. Justice demands that those who have historically reaped the benefits of global economic structures contribute to rectifying the imbalances that persist today. In this regard, international cooperation, fair trade practices, and targeted investments in social infrastructure are not just acts of charity—they are imperatives of global justice.

### **Nigeria's Legislative Response: Meeting Global Demands for Social Development Justice**

Nigeria has taken decisive steps to meet the global demand for sustainable social development and justice. Our legislative achievements in recent years bear testament to our unflinching

commitment. One of the key pillars of our strategy has been the establishment of regional development commissions. Over the past year, the Nigerian Parliament has enacted legislation to create four new regional development commissions. These bodies are dynamic institutions tasked with channeling resources where they are needed most, ensuring that policy interventions are tailored to the unique challenges and opportunities of each region. By decentralizing our development efforts, we are breaking away from the one-size-fits-all approach and ensuring that every region can chart its own course toward sustainable progress.

We have passed the Student Loan Act 2024 to open higher education to the underprivileged, complemented by a large increase in our budgetary allocation to Education, ensuring that funds are available to support quality learning and empower our youth for the future. We have also established national commissions for Mass Literacy, Almajiri and Out-of-School Children, Nomadic Education, Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons, and Persons with Disabilities—ensuring access, equity, and protection for the most vulnerable in our society.

Furthermore, we have strengthened healthcare by ensuring free emergency treatment for pregnant women and expanding health coverage via the National Health Insurance Authority; expanded health coverage, and created financial support systems—including non-collateral loans for youth and women cooperatives, entrepreneurship grants for NYSC members, and mandatory entrepreneurship education in universities; advanced social inclusion with the Not Too Young to Run Act to unlock governance spaces for youth.

We are now considering five new gender equity bills to boost women's representation. We are also currently amending our

constitution to increase the number of women in Parliament, and have enhanced funding for the Ministry of Women Affairs for grassroots empowerment; and passed the Nigeria Startup Act 2022 and Companies and Allied Matters Act 2020 to unlock digital opportunities for young entrepreneurs and tech innovators, especially women.

Another significant legislative measure has been our new minimum wage bill. This legislation not only safeguards the rights of our workers but also lays the foundation for a more dynamic and productive economy—one where every citizen can participate fully and equitably.

Complementing these initiatives are our progressive tax reforms, driven by our progressive reformer, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. The recent tax reform bills, which emphasize a progressive taxation framework, are designed to ensure that those who benefit the most from our nation's economic activities contribute their fair share, while vulnerable Nigerians are not overly burdened. These reforms are critical in generating additional resources to fund our expanding portfolio of social services and infrastructure projects. In essence, by strengthening the fiscal backbone of our government, we are better equipped to invest in the sectors that will lift our society as a whole.

Additionally, we are amending our laws to give greater attention to solid minerals as we seek to guide our economy away from an over-reliance on hydrocarbons, thus ensuring a more diversified and resilient economic future.

### **Oversight, Accountability, and Inclusive Governance**

A cornerstone of our approach is robust parliamentary oversight.

Effective oversight ensures that public funds are judiciously managed and that our social investments reach the intended beneficiaries. In Nigeria, we have strengthened our oversight structures, reinforcing transparency and accountability in all aspects of governance. This is essential not only to maintain public trust but also to ensure that every legislative measure translates into tangible improvements in the lives of our citizens.

Inclusivity in governance remains a driving force behind our policies. As part of our commitment to social inclusion, we have embarked on a comprehensive strategy to ensure universal access to basic services. Over the past two years, targeted social investments by Nigeria's federal executive have reached more than five million households. These initiatives are specifically designed to support the most vulnerable segments of our society, including older adults, persons with disabilities, and children. Our goal is clear: justice is achieved when every Nigerian—regardless of status—is given a fair chance at prosperity.

### **Conclusion: A Renewed Commitment to Justice, Fairness, and Inclusive Development**

In closing, Nigeria's journey towards social development and justice is defined by a steadfast commitment to human dignity, equity, and sustainable progress.

Today, as we deliberate on parliamentary action for social development and justice, I call upon all members of this esteemed assembly to reaffirm our shared commitment to a new social contract—one that places people at the center of every decision and prioritizes robust oversight and accountability.

Thank you.