

ALAIGBO DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

(ADF)



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*The Rebuilding and Development of Igbo Nation and the Rebirth and
Advancement of the Spirit of her Culture and Civilization*

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Senator Enyinna Abaribe
NASS
Abuja,

February 28, 2018

Dear Distinguished Senator,

IGBO POSITION ON THE CURRENT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN NIGERIA

1. Let me first thank you for inviting me to the recent meeting you organized in Lagos on the subject of Igbo Position on the Current Political Developments in Nigeria.
2. I am happy you accepted the suggestion I made that the meeting should observe one minute silence in memory of the millions of Umuigbo who have lost their lives since 1914 in the turbulent existence of Ndigbo in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. I made this suggestion to underscore the solemnity of the current discourse of the future of Ndigbo and the future of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Having said all these, please permit me to make the following observations on the exercise you are presiding over:

3. When you began your opening address, you made reference to “Ndigbo”, who you otherwise referred to as “Ndi South-East”. In my comment, I did point out, my dear Senator, that “South-East” is only a part of Alaigbo. Alaigbo extends to Anioma, Ikwerre (and Port Harcourt) in Rivers State. Some are also aware that there are Igbo-speaking peoples in Benue State.

4. The Igbo Position and Igbo National Interests

At this stage of the struggle for survival of Umuigbo and others, we should be speaking of Alaigbo as a whole, making every effort to re-unite Alaigbo and enhance our national integration, identity and consciousness.

As a result of the intensity of the national struggle, it is strongly dawning on most people that the main source of the instability of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is the fact that autonomous nationalities were artificially lumped together into a Federal Republic without any regard to their separateness and their wishes.

All through the history of Nigeria, two things have clearly demonstrated again and again, the reality that we are separate nations. Please disregard the archaic European anthropological appellation of ‘tribe’ to Africa nations. Those two things are the following –

- i. The greatest heroes in the Nigerian history are leaders of the Ethnic Nationalities – and these include: –
 - Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto, the leader and hero of the Fulani Nation.
 - Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the leader and hero of the Yoruba Nation,
 - Alhaji Aminu Kano, the leader and hero of the Hausa Nation
 - Chief Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, the leader and hero of the Igbo Nation.
 - Mr. Joseph Tarka, leader and hero of the Tiv Nation,
 - Isaac Boro, the leader and hero of the Ijaw Nation,
 - Ken Saro-Wiwa, the hero of the Ijaw Nation, etc. etc.

The case of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, and Sir Tafawa Balewa, were somehow different. Both of them sincerely worked under the illusion that Federalism can override Ethnic Nationalism in the conduct of the affairs of a multi-national Federation.

- ii. In a multi-National Society such as Nigeria, politics is ultimately struggle, not among individuals, but among the nationalities that make up the multi-national society. It is not even a struggle among political parties in the final analysis. ‘Tribalism’ or ‘Ethnic Nationality’ are European anthropological concepts used to refer to nations in Africa and other non-European societies, while ‘Nation’ instead of ‘tribe’ or ‘ethnic nationality’ is applied to similar European societies. Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa, Fulani, Tiv, Ijaw etc, are nations like English, Scotland, French, Germany, Russia, etc. In other words, the Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa, Fulani, etc., are separate nations with distinct languages, cultures, interests, loyalties, etc.

All through colonial and post-colonial history of Nigeria, the Fulani nation have sustained their dominance over the rest, not only because of the privileged position the British carved out for them in the affairs of the Nigerian Republic, but because their feudal order have remained a major bulwark in their politics. They have systematically exploited cultural and religious factors, and even family order in sustaining their pre-eminence within the whole political and economic equation in Nigeria. The North is virtually under the ruler-ship and domination of one Fulani family.

The Yoruba Nation has gone very far in sustaining and putting their solid national consciousness to immense political advantage, next to the Fulani. They have used to maximum effect the spirit of their progenitor Oduduwa and the spirit of their next in the order of their national pantheon, Awolowo, into great use in the political struggle in Nigeria. Today, when you talk of Yoruba or summon a gathering of Yoruba, those in Kwara and Kogi anxiously and proudly identify.

As for Ndigbo, I know that the major assault of the enemy after the loss of Biafra was the weapon of dismembering the common identity of Ndigbo. Almost three thousand men and youth in Asaba were massacred because they were Umuigbo – the relations of Nzeogwu and Ojukwu.

In this era of Rebuilding and Development of Alaigbo, our success and survival will depend on achieving a high level of Igbo National INTEGRATION & CONSCIOUSNESS. That should be our priority today, taking a cue from the Fulani and the Yoruba.

Dear Senator, it was in the light of the forgoing that I asked why your Committee did not think it wise to schedule Asaba and Port Harcourt for purposes of consulting our kits-and-kin in those States. I ask again WHERE IS ANIOMA, WHERE IS IKWERRE AND WHERE ARE OTHERS WHO BELONG TO OUR RACE in the Nigerian Federation? Is there any mechanism or process for consulting millions of Umuigbo - our brothers and sisters - in the diaspora? We know there are several organizations of Umuigbo in the diaspora; are we not consulting them?

5. Elders not being carried along in the crucial search for the Future of Ndigbo at this critical time:

Dear Senator, I expressed great surprise that none of the Igbo Elders were being carried along in this crucial exercise. Such a meeting was holding in Lagos but Admiral Ndubusi Kanu was not there; Ebitu Ukiwe, Chief Pascal Dozie, Capt. Emmanuel Ihanacho, Dr Emma Eleazu, Prof Anya O. Anya, Admiral Allison Madueke, Amb Anyaoku, Mazi Sam Ohuabunwa, as well as several other key Igbo leaders, including many in business and politics, were not there. And you are talking of having come to Lagos to consult Umuigbo on the Future of Alaigbo in Nigeria!!!

The same thing happened when you came to Abuja, The meeting was held in a private home and many people did not know about it.

5. No working Document or even a Template for the Crucial Consultation:

The most curious observation on the exercise being conducted by your Committee is that there is no Report or Working Document produced by the Committee set up by the Ohanaeze leadership under the chairmanship of Prof. Chigozie Ogbu. In announcing the commencement of your assignment you state and I quote:

*“I was appointed as Chairman of the Agenda/Programme (**Restructuring**) sub-committee of Ohaneze with a specific mandate to produce a draft of Igbo position on **restructuring**. (Note the emphasis on **RESTRUCTURING**)*

You went further to explain:

“In carrying out this assignment we reasoned that to start the discussions there should be a starting point. On advice from eminent people like Amb George Obiozor, we decided that the Igbo Position at the 2014 Political Conference should form the basis of our interaction with our people in Abuja, Lagos and Enugu...So the draft is nothing but Ndigbo position at the 2014 National Conference which of course could be jettisoned if we do wish”.

Dear Senator, according to you, your mandate is

- i. *to conduct consultation on Restructuring, period.*
- ii. *That the Igbo Position at the 2014 Political Conference should form the basis of your Committee’s interaction with our people in Abuja, Lagos and Enugu.*

Dear Senator, you must have observed that majority of the people who have commented on your exercise have expressed so much embarrassment that the Ogbu-led Committee was unable to produce any report or working document, and the document given to you as a basis for consultation is the badly “badly flawed” document, to use Senator Chris Anyanwu’s phrase in qualifying the Igbo Position submitted to the 2014 Jonathan’s National Conference.

The document is out of tune with the realities of today. Does it mean that Ndigbo are incapable of producing a draft document for our broad discussion on our future at this time? The Yoruba, the South-South and the Middle Belt with whom we are in consultation had position which they presented to the Jonathan Conference and none of them is basing their current stand on such documents.

..

In summary on this point, it is our stand that *since the draft is nothing but Ndigbo position at the 2014 National Conference, and is indeed out of tune in the light of the challenges of the moment, it should be jettisoned.*

6. Mandate of the Committee is Restructuring or Nothing:

Your Committee was set up and given a specific mandate to produce a draft of Igbo Position on Restructuring. From this, it is obvious that the mandate of your Committee is to dwell on Restructuring, no more no less. Given this mandate of your Committee and the entire exercise being conducted by Ohanaeze leadership, there appears to be a Script on which the present Ohanaeze leadership is acting. It is a script authored not in the interest of Ndigbo at this critical exercise.

7. The Memorandum On the Future of Ndigbo submitted to Chief Nnia Nwodo, the President of Ohanaeze Ndigbo requesting to present it to Ime-Obi Ohanaeze Ndigbo.

On January 10, 2018, the Alaigbo Development Foundation(ADF) forwarded to you a Memorandum on the Fuure of Akaigbo and thr Future of the Fedral Republic of Nigera t the President-Generl of Ohaneze Ndigbo, and I quote the covering note.

*“Dear President General of Ohanaeze Ndigbo, Ike Ukehe,
Greetings*

When we (ADF Team) visited you last time, I did inform you that the Alaigbo Development Foundation (ADF) was working on a document that would address the current debate on the future of Alaigbo and the Federal Republic of Nigeria, with particular reference to the issues of Restructuring, Nigeria and Biafra.

I forward to you copy of what may be regarded as the First Edition of the Memorandum and request you to summon a meeting of Ime-Obi Ohanaeze for ADF leadership to present and defend the position as articulated in the document.

We refer to this version of the Memo. as First Edition because the views expressed at Ime-Obi will be taken into account in the final edition of the document.

At the moment we are making the document available to other pan-Igbo organizations and other compatriots and collating their views which shall be taken into consideration in the final edition.

This exercise is our modest contribution in the current debate and search for a safe and honorable future for our beleaguered Alaigbo and her citizens.

The main text is accompanied by an Outline.

*Prof. Uzodinma Nwala
ADF President”*

Chief Nwodo did nether acknowledge this letter and the attached Memorandum nor invite AD to Ime-Obi as requested. The Ogbu-led Committee has never made reference to the document. Here there is goodwill and candor, ADF should have been invited by the Committee. In all the deliberation of the Abaribe Committee no reference has been made to the ADF Memo. I do not want to dwell much on this experience.

But I would like to end comment on it with an anecdote

In those days (I believe in the sixties), the Local Government Compound of Okpula Ngwa had one of the best and most attractive Local Government Buildings in Eastern Nigeria. The Ngwa people were so proud of it and expressed this in a popular proverb.

“Ta onye ngafere Okpuala Ngwa leghi anya nazu, la olu ndaraya ahu’

Anyone who passes the premises of the Okpula Ngwa Local Government and does not look back just to once more appreciate its beauty, then that person must have a problem with his neck.

Such cavalier treatment given to a document many Umuigbo have eulogized as a great visionary document *agbagh aka*.

Dear Senator, given the fact that both the Constitutional and Structural foundations of the Republic have collapsed, what is indeed required today at this crucial moment are -:

- i. A RENEGOTIATION of the basis for the continued existence of the Nigerian Federation and
- ii. A Clear Vision of the Future of Nigeria within or outside the Nigerian Federal Republic.

This conclusion is inevitable in the light of all that have been stated above.

8. Our Internal Political Weakness and The Failure of Igbo Office holders

Senator, Chris Ngige made the point which a good number of people keep rehearsing, namely, that Nigerians are to blame for their predicament in Nigeria. He like others blame ourselves and argue that we are our own nemesis. He cited the fact that we have held the offices of the Vice President, Senate President, Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Key Ministerial positions (Finance, Defense, External Affairs, etc.) and yet we are shouting marginalization. Well said but,

To understand the political environment under which Nigerians held such positions, take a look at the office of the Senate President which about five Igbo Senators held like a musical chair. For a given period, they were being shuffled like children's game.

The truth is that the power equation in Nigeria has always been controlled and manipulated by the forces of the prevailing hegemony and their agents. This is why many have insisted that an **Igbo President** under the given circumstances will be an exercise in frustration, except for the tiny minority of those that may hanker and succeed in getting appointed to one political position or another, or given one contract or the other. The Igbo nation will continue to remain a nation in captivity.

The same goes for the blame we heap on our elected Governors, especially on their political weakness and inability to take firm positions in defense of their people. The truth is that these brothers are operating in a most oppressive political environment. They have to go to one Emir or one Fulani political heavy weight to get their due allocation to run their State; they depend on a Fulani controlled-INEC for their election victory; they have to depend on the Northern-controlled Judiciary for the validation of their election victory; they have to depend on the Fulani-controlled Police, NSS, DSS, to enforce security in their states; they can't even protect their youth who are harassed by all manner of repressive state apparatus nor can they defend their people when they are butchered by the AK-47-wielding Fulani terrorists.

So, their political leaders are powerless to defend them when they are in trouble. The only thing they have around them are toothless internet warriors who operate in various platforms, many of who are sponsored by the slave-masters.

Fayose is operating in a different political environment from the Igbo Governor. Governor Ortom was in the same political vulnerability like his Igbo counterparts the other day. He was always in pains, watching helplessly as his blood relations were butchered like animals. But as soon as his people ringed themselves around him, not as internet warriors, but standing solidly firm, leaders, students, women and youth, Governor Ortom became first a patriot, then a radical and today he is a revolutionary standing firm on those measures which have now begun to wedge the reckless onslaught again at his people. Now, he has become another Fayose.

We can produce our own Fayose our Otom in Alaigbo once some of our office-holders with conscience find that they have the people standing by them as a powerful pillar on which they can lean on in times of political travail. But the greatest guarantee of all these is a renegotiation for a radically new political order, without masters and slaves, a political order standing on the altar of self-determination, freedom and self-reliance.

The Memorandum of the Alaigbo Development Foundation (ADF) on the Future of Alaigbo and the Future of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is a visionary document. It is addressed to the Igbo nation and it is also addressed to other nationalities in Nigeria some of who are now astir and provoked by the ferocity of the forces of hegemony that have divided and manipulated them in the past.

Let us ask the question, why did the Ohanaeze President ignore the ADF Memorandum? Senator Abaribe did not even mention it even though he got a copy during the Handshake event in Enugu and I sent a soft copy before the Lagos meeting. The ADF Secretary also distributed over four dozen copies in the course of the Lagos meeting and personally handed a copy to Senator Abaribe.

Then consider the authorship of the document. If anyone could ignore such a document under such circumstances in meeting summoned to discourse the Igbo position, then it is tragic.

Once more the ADF position is a Visionary Document for today and for tomorrow. It is addressed to our people and their neighbors facing the same existential threat like them.

Finally on the Igbo Position.

We in the Alaigbo Development Foundation (ADF) wish to reiterate what we stated in an earlier letter to Senator Abaribe and copied the Ohanaeze President, Chief Nwodo, and I quite:

“The solution to the present political quagmire in the Federal Republic of Nigeria is beyond Constitutional Amendment, It is beyond the powers of the National Assembly or the Executive. It requires a Political Conference in which the various nationalities will determine those who represent them in such a political conference. The outcome of their deliberations will be subject to a National Referendum”.

Our advice, therefore, dear Senator, is for you and your team to ask various organized groups of Umuigbo to present their thoughts as working papers which can be discussed and out of which an Igbo Position can be distilled. The Elders and Statesmen in Alaigbo cannot be ignored in such an exercise. If there is spirit of candor and genuine commitment to the cause of our people, the ADF document is an adequate Working Document we can review for the purpose.

The Challenge in Nigeria today is how to redefine the relationship among the various NATIONS that make it up as a Federation, This cannot be done within the confines of the existing highly flawed 1999 Constitution.

Thanks,

Prof. Uzodinma Nwala
ADF President.