

CAMPAIGN FLAG OFF SPEECH BY SIR CELESTINE OMEHIA ON FRIDAY, 23RD FEBRUARY, 2007.

1. My beloved Rivers people, my Brother Engineer Tele Renner Ikuru and I are humbled and elated to address you in our new capacities as Governorship and Deputy Governorship candidates of the PDP in Rivers State.

2. My good people of Rivers State, we appreciate the enormity of the responsibility placed on us by our great party. This indeed is a call to duty and service. We are undaunted by the enormity of our assignment, as we will seek to forge a partnership with the good people of Rivers State, to put our State on a faster pedestal of growth. Together, we shall take Rivers State from the envious heights attained by the present administration to greater heights. We intend to continue to set the pace in infrastructural development, human capacity development and good governance.

3. Our good people of Rivers State, our task is made easier especially in view of the fact that the Governor Peter Odili-led administration is handing us a firm legacy to build on. This is evidenced by the inculcation of a singular sense of belonging, pride and belief in the entity constitutionally called Rivers State. In particular, exemplary and giant strides have been made in the areas of transportation, health care delivery, housing, education, roads, power generation, skills acquisition and many more. Having provided us with the enabling environment, we express our willingness and desire to build and improve on the legacy now entrusted to us.

4. Our vision is to continue to emphasise the drive for excellence by partnering with all stakeholders in consolidating present achievements, so as to build a united, peaceful, stable and economically prosperous State: a reference for everything good, enduring and sustainable.

5. We shall achieve this vision by our desire to act for the general good of the society by ensuring increased wealth creation through enterprise, hard work and social justice reforms, Land acquisition process reforms, accountability, transparency and due process.

6. To this end, we hereby propose a 5-point agenda with the River people embodying a Social contract, Human development & quality of life contract, Infrastructural development contract, Rural & agricultural development contract and Economic empowerment and poverty reduction contract. (the “SHIRE” contracts).

7. The key elements of our social contract shall be improvement of internal security, enhancement of social justice and the reform of major institutions of governance. No community develops without peace. Where there is no rule of law, might becomes right and man sinks to the level of other animals. The resultant effect is lawlessness, crime and deviant behaviour. We will therefore strive to reduce all forms of violent crime, eliminate cultism and gangsterism, enforce the rule of law and guarantee equity, justice and fairness. We shall aggressively pursue reforms in key institutions of governance. This will include tax reforms, Land acquisition process reforms, accountability, transparency and due process.

8. Our people remain our greatest assets. We must continue to protect, empower and care for them. Our human development contract will therefore focus on capacity building, health care, quantitative and qualitative education; improvement and sustenance of our environment. Youth and gender issues will continue to receive priority attention.

9. Service delivery through infrastructural development is a critical element of governance. We shall continue to maintain and expand investments in vital areas such as Roads, Housing, Power, Water supply etc. It is a common economic phenomenon that agriculture supports the productive energy of the State through food production. It is a potent instrument for economic growth. It provides for the sustenance and livelihood of the most vulnerable members of our society in the rural areas and provides opportunity for massive employment. Therefore, we shall encourage investment and public/private sector partnership in agriculture and agro-based industries. Increased wealth creation is a sureway to poverty reduction. We will encourage our people to be involved in the wealth creation process through enterprise. We will guarantee that Rivers State will continue to be investor- friendly and encourage public /

private sector partnership. We shall consolidate and expand the scope, content, efficiency and management of infrastructure for business development.

12. Our dear people of Rivers State, we put ourselves forward for stewardship. My Deputy and I are strong advocates of strong family values. My brother, Tele is an Engineer and I, a Legal practitioner. We have the fear of God and cherish excellence. We shall endeavour to inculcate excellence and to manage our public affairs through good and exemplary conducts. We shall be open to public scrutiny as a way of showing probity, accountability, due process and our unquenchable desire to achieve good governance. We urge you to join us in strengthening the solid foundation laid by our beloved Governor, Dr. Peter Odili and his team.

13. We accept the responsibility bestowed upon us by our great party the PDP with humility. We hereby call on our brothers and sisters who may have been disappointed one way or another to sheath their swords and join hands with us in full reconciliation as one indivisible PDP family in Rivers State. We urge that we should stick together to build a formidable political machinery. This is because the task ahead of us is daunting. We thank His Excellency, Dr. Peter Odili, Governor, Rivers State for his political sagacity and especially convey our gratitude to our great party and the beautiful people of Rivers State for this unique opportunity given to us to seek to serve. We shall commit every minute of our time towards the success of this enterprise.

14. Our goal is to keep Rivers State as the number one State in Nigeria. We affirm that we are all equal stakeholders and nobody shall be despised because of his ethnic origin, geography, sex, creed or opinion. Vote for PDP at all levels and secure our democracy.

15. We believe that your bold support for our great party would translate to massive votes for us and for all PDP candidates in the State and National Assembly elections and finally for our Presidential candidate Alhaji Umar Musa Yar'Adua. We assure you that your decision in this direction shall be rewarded with good governance. We thank you all for your support, solidarity and prayers. We urge our people to entrust their tomorrow into our hands and with God on our side, we will not disappoint you on the

delivery of greater dividends of democracy. God bless our Rivers State and Nigeria.