

MAIDEN STATEWIDE BROADCAST BY HIS EXCELLENCY GOVERNOR CELESTINE OMEHIA KSM ON FRIDAY, 1ST JUNE, 2007.

My good people of Rivers State,

1. It is a great privilege to speak to you again in exercise of the mandate you graciously gave us in trust on 14th April 2007. Barely three days ago, my brother, the Deputy Governor, Engr. Tele Ikuru and my humble self, took our oaths of office in the presence of Almighty God and thousands of our fellow citizens to formalise our acceptance of your mandate, committing ourselves irrevocably to the service of our people. In my inaugural speech I promised to address the state today 1st June 2007 to outline the key highlights of our guiding vision, mission and policy thrust for the duration of our stewardship. We therefore give glory to Almighty God for making it possible for us to keep faith with that promise. Our prayer is that God will grant us abiding grace throughout the period of our service, to promise only what we can deliver and deliver that which we promise.

2. Let me use this opportunity once again, on behalf of my self, the Deputy Governor, our families and our great party the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to reiterate our immense appreciation to you for your expression of confidence through your votes cast at the gubernatorial elections of 14th April 2007. May I also acknowledge the massive outpouring of positive sentiments and manifest solidarity since our emergence from every segment of our state. We are truly humbled that out of millions of suitably qualified and competent Rivers men and women, it pleased Almighty God, in his sovereign favour through the instrumentality of the popular support of our people to give us these privileged positions as a platform to serve. Just 2 days ago, it pleased Almighty God to allow us inaugurate the assembly of our elected representatives, the Rivers State House of Assembly (RSHA) with whom we shall labour to deliver tangible returns on your investment of trust and confidence in us. Having inaugurated the legislative arm, the full business of government will now proceed on full steam for the beneficial transformation of our state.

3. Let me also reiterate our gratitude to the immediate past administration of His Excellency Sir (Dr) Peter Odili for the outstanding legacy' which We inherited. Also worthy of commendation are the invaluable contributions of our church leaders, traditional rulers, elder statesmen and youths who together with other citizens forged a viable bond to foster the impressive level of socio- economic restoration and development attained in the past eight years. Undoubtedly, the many achievements of the Odili administration's restoration agenda which was anchored on the attainment of sufficiency in power generation and supply, among others; as a necessary prerequisite for development, has placed us in prime position as we commence work. Consequently, our philosophy of governance as an administration is to consolidate this foundation and working with all stakeholders in the Rivers project to forge a strategic partnership for progress and prosperity in accordance with the blueprint of our SHIRE Contracts. We

have the fullest assurance and confidence that with God on our side, together we can and will succeed.

VISION AND MISSION

4. Our vision therefore, is; "the creation of a united, peaceful, stable and economically prosperous state that remains a clear leader within Nigeria's comity of states with Godly excellence and compassionate focus on its people as core values". Consequently our mission is to utilise the platform of government; "to foster this vision of a united, peaceful and highly prosperous Rivers State by encouraging hard work towards wealth creating enterprise(s); promoting social justice in a secure atmosphere; ensuring the provision of high quality world class infrastructure with local relevance and deliberate investment in all round development of human capital".

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

5. In pursuit of our strategic visions, goals and objectives as encapsulated in the SHIRE Contracts, our administration shall be mindful of and be guided by the following 5 principles.

a. Clarity and Consistency of Direction: It shall be the primary goal of this administration to mobilise and focus momentum as well as the main thrust of state efforts and resources towards the overall objective of discharging our obligations to Rivers people as envisaged in the SHIRE Contracts.

b. Continuity with Constant Review: This administration believes in the continuity of governance. There should therefore be linkages between previous, present and future projects and programmes of government. Efforts will be focused on completing on-going projects initiated by previous administrations with constant review to ensure their continued relevance to improving and positively impacting the lives of all Rivers people.

c. Dynamism: We fully subscribe to the assertion that "man cannot conquer new oceans unless he has the courage to leave the shore of past achievements". For us therefore, the impressive legacy we have inherited is a spring board to attain greater transformation and not a hammock for relaxation.

d. Strategic Alignment: The policies, programmes and projects of our administration will be designed to align with pertinent national and global targets, benchmarks, goals and objectives including the PDP manifesto, National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) and the United Nations (UN) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), with due cognizance for local peculiarities.

e. Utilisation of an Incremental Phased Modular Approach: We recognise that every administration has a finite life span within which it is practically impossible to do everything that needs to be done. In essence, all projects and programmes will be structured in a linked and mutually reinforcing short, medium and long term framework; in which each phase derives from the previous, reinforces it and lays the foundation for the next, while delivering tangible intermediate benefits of its own to our people.

SHIRE CONTRACTS

(6) Guided by these principles, we shall vigorously implement various aspects of our SHIRE Contracts as follows.

7. Social Contract. We believe that the theory of social contract is the foundation of modern society; that government is a product of the citizens' gracious sacrifice; that modern society is indeed a contract between the government and the governed; that order, stability and prosperity depend on both parties keeping faith with their obligations. Our administration is mindful of and committed to the faithful discharge of its obligations to the citizens. This administration will passionately pursue and ensure security of lives and property, law and order; efficient justice delivery system, respect for the rule of law as well as the promotion of peaceful and harmonious co-existence for everyone in Rivers State regardless of your tribe, race, social and ideological or political persuasion. In this regard, government will make significant investments to sustain and expand the level of support given to the security agencies in the areas of training, equipment, logistics and welfare. With the continued support and understanding of the Federal Government, we shall within the next few months, invest heavily in expanding police and other security agencies' presence, mobility, communication and visibility across the state. In return, the people of Rivers State expect greater commitment on the part of security operatives deployed to serve in our state; a commitment that should translate to tangible and perceptible improvement in the security ambience of our state in the shortest possible time.

8. Admittedly, a major prevailing security issue in our state is the spate of violent criminality and brigandage undertaken by some unscrupulous persons under different guises, with senseless bloodletting, sometimes of innocent lives and destruction of property. The sad part of it is that, the perpetrators of these acts are hoodlums and criminals who have penetrated our state, to hijack and exploit the legitimate agitations of our people to achieve their selfish desires; thereby giving our communities a false and frightful image of terror in the process. As most of us probably know, several efforts have been made by previous federal and state administrations to offer an alternative to all those involved in these criminal tendencies. Amnesties were granted and significant amounts of public funds spent on incentives for the return of illegal weapons. Sadly, a few deviants who have chosen to live by criminality and profit from the blood of innocent, law abiding human beings mistake the tolerance of the silent majority of our people for cowardice and acquiescence and now want to hold all of society hostage to their reign of terror. I can personally identify with the pain and hurt felt by the families of the victims of these criminal gangs. Clearly, persons who choose to target a defenceless elderly woman of my mother's age can not be fighting for the legitimate cause of any decent community or group.

9. There have been several cases where these cultists and criminals do not just rob their victims but go on to rape girls and women in the presence of their spouses, children,

friends and family members. Every sane person can only shudder to imagine the horrid images, trauma and devastating effect of such inhuman violation of people's dignity, and honour, especially those of our mothers, sisters and daughters. Marriages and cherished relationships have and are still being destroyed because of the demonic lust of these few criminals. Recreation and social life is disrupted While economic activity is seriously impaired. No responsible government can afford to abdicate its responsibility to its citizens and let this continue. Similarly no decent society should tolerate this assault on its humanity. In the name of God and everything that we hold dear and sacred, I urge every citizen and community in Rivers State to rise up and unite to stop the devilish assault on our society. This is Rivers State, not Sodom and Gomorrah. This trend cannot and will not be allowed to continue. Government stands prepared to pardon and rehabilitate any misguided person(s) who voluntarily choose to turn a new leaf. But let no one be in any doubt. This administration will go to any length at any cost, to track down those who choose to indulge in criminality and bring them to justice together with their patrons and sponsors. This is our solemn commitment and pledge. Parents, family and friends should warn their children, family members and friends who may be misled by others. There will be no hiding place and we shall not relent in this war. And because our cause is a Godly and good one, we shall 'win by the grace of God Almighty.

PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM

10. We shall continue to reorganize the way government business is done by instituting far reaching reforms to further reduce the cost of governance, and ensure improved efficiency in the delivery of government service(s) to our people. We shall work to remove the difficulties and bureaucratic bottle-necks encountered in transacting business with government institutions. We will uphold and deepen the tenets of equal access to opportunity for all citizens, transparency, due process and accountability in our governance process in pursuit of our quest for social justice.

11. Human Development and Quality of Life. In this Government, believe that people are society's best assets; that the growth of Rivers State depends on the development of our people; that the development of our people depends on the quality of life they live; that government has a duty to facilitate the highest quality of life for all citizens; that all Rivers' citizens and residents deserve an opportunity to reach their full potential; that it is the duty of government to provide such opportunities for everyone. Because our people remain our society's greatest assets, this government will place very serious emphasis on human development and the improvement of the quality of life of our people. We will invest decisively in the future of our society by equipping our people to be competitive in all fields of human endeavour. This is in recognition of the pivotal role of knowledge in our contemporary global village. We deeply appreciate that the progress of human civilization and economic prosperity in this century and the next is essentially knowledge based and driven. In the face of very strong challenge to the primacy of natural resource(s) and endowment including oil and gas as an index of societal wealth, we must prepare our people and society for the knowledge of economy. -

Consequently, we will provide unhindered access to high quality compulsory Universal Basic Education for our children as Well as enhance efficiency, resourcefulness and functionality in our educational system by optimizing technological and scientific education. As a deliberate policy, this administration will focus on developing high quality human resources for the academia to sustain our investment in and the growth of the knowledge industry. We shall therefore, provide 50 scholarships for Ph.D studies in reputable universities across the globe, every year for the next four years. To enhance sustainability and ensure adequate supply of feed materials for our knowledge industry, we shall build five centers of academic excellence at secondary school level targeted at developing the best brains from across the State. These centers will boast state-of-the-art facilities in all areas and serve as the pilot of the future model for secondary schools development in our state. We understand the pre-eminent role of teachers especially at the foundation levels of primary and secondary education in improving academic standards and the overall quality of education. Our administration will therefore pay special attention to teacher training and re-training in the short and medium term. In the long term, our objective is to attract and retain the best brains in the teaching profession through a deliberate policy of very stringent and rigorous recruitment as Well as competitive remuneration and career package(s). It is true that "the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world".

My good people of Rivers State, those who teach our children shape our future. The teaching profession should therefore attract the best materials who will receive the best training and work conditions in order to produce the best labour force for all sectors of our society. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a vital platform for education and the transformation of contemporary society in our global village. Therefore within the first 18 month of our tenure, a world class Digital Academy among other projects/programmes shall be established in partnership with the private sector as a key driver of a larger ICT marshal plan aimed at transforming Rivers State into a cutting edge information society, best labour force for all sectors of our society. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is capable of competing in the global arena.

13. The health and well-being of our people is vital to human development and improvement of the quality of life. This is because only a sound mind in a healthy body can be optimally developed to its full potential. We will therefore improve and strengthen all existing healthcare programs, while embarking on extensive rehabilitation and expansion of existing and new health facilities. The healthcare management and administration systems will be reviewed and restructured for optimal service delivery. A comprehensive health map of the state will be developed and all hospitals in the state will be standardized. We shall refurbish and properly equip all hospitals that have not yet been renovated. A new children specialist hospital dedicated for the special care of mothers and children will equally be built.

14. It is estimated that Port Harcourt City alone generates about 6,000 to 7,000 tons of waste per day. As part of our service delivery agenda, we shall immediately undertake a comprehensive study of the sanitation problem in the State as a basis for putting in place a proper waste management system.

15. **Infrastructural Development.** We believe that human development and quality of life is enhanced by good infrastructural facilities. We believe that it is the primary duty of government to ensure the provision, maintenance and expansion of such facilities. We believe that every part of Rivers State deserves equal attention in infrastructural development; while citizens have the responsibility to secure these facilities and use them properly. Rivers State deserves infrastructure of the highest quality and standard, comparable to the best standard in the world. Our administration remains committed to changing the landscape of our state capital, Port Harcourt and all other parts of the State to reflect the status of Port Harcourt as a global cosmopolitan centre. To this end government will collaborate with the private sector to invest massively in roads, housing, power and water supply, mass transportation as well as the development of new business districts and market facilities. Within the life span of our administration, we are committed to building a multi-carriage ring road around Port Harcourt, to ease traffic in addition to developing the greater Port Harcourt master-plan. Work will commence immediately towards the rebuilding of the burnt Mile One Market and Port Harcourt Township New Layout Market while government will aggressively encourage private sector development of world class shopping and recreational malls in the state.

16. **Rural and Agricultural Development.** We believe that our state is made up of local communities, most of which are rural; that for our state to be truly developed, our rural communities must be developed. Since agriculture is the main occupation of most of our rural communities; the development of our rural communities to a large extent, depends on the continued modernization of agriculture. We believe that Rivers people are hardworking and only require the tools and equipment to work with while government has a duty to provide such tools and equipment. Our administration will strive to change the face of our rural communities through a deliberate effort to improve rural family income by modernizing agricultural production and processes as well as creating new agricultural entrepreneurs by moving agriculture from its current subsistence level to a major commercial vocation. Government will encourage large scale commercial farming by providing appropriate support services, easing land acquisitions procedures as well as encouraging and empowering a new breed of young and educated entrepreneur farmers. Premium attention will be paid to cassava farming, palm oil production; fishing and aquiculture to attain sufficiency in food production and for export.

17. **Economic Empowerment and Poverty Reduction.** We believe that the wealth of our state is the commonwealth of our people and that government has a duty to ensure equitable access to this wealth, for all citizens. Our firm conviction and commitment is

that no working citizen of Rivers state should live below the poverty line. Government will equip and assist all citizens, to fight against poverty and win. In this wise, our administration shall implement a deliberate policy of creating at least 100 new indigenously owned enterprises every year, each with a minimum net worth of Ten million Naira (N10m) across diverse sectors. But let me emphasize that Government alone cannot create all the jobs required to absorb our population. Our strategy is to facilitate entrepreneurship and create a conducive environment for businesses to thrive, as means of creating jobs and spreading wealth. We will implement a well-articulated, functional and sustainable poverty reduction program drawing from the initiatives of the immediate past administration. Our people must be partakers in the wealth creation process. As a people, we must resist the syndrome of expecting something for nothing. For every hard working Rivers man or woman, the pledge we make to you today, is that this Government will give you a helping hand but only if and when you demonstrate your preparedness to take your destiny in your hands.

CONCLUSION

My good people of Rivers State, the task of building the society of our dreams is enormous but achievable. It will require commitment, sacrifice patience and understanding from all of us, but the reward will more than adequately compensate our collective efforts and investment. We are confident that we can count on the support of all citizens and residents of Rivers State alike. We appreciate that the sacrifice and adjustments needed to realize our goals may cause some inconvenience in some aspects of our life. We crave your understanding support with a solemn pledge to do everything possible to ease the pain of such adjustments. Our expectation is that at the end of our stewardship, every stakeholder in the Rivers project should be in a position to say "we have fought a good fight, we have kept the faith and we leave for our children and future generations a legacy better than that which we inherited to the glory of God".

My dear brothers and sisters, together we can.

Thank you for your attention.

God bless Rivers State.

God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.