

Maiden Speech of Major-General Muhammadu Buhari. January 1, 1984.

In pursuance of the primary objective of saving our great nation from total collapse, I, Major-General Muhammadu Buhari of the Nigerian army have, after due consultation amongst the services of the armed forces, been formally invested with the authority of the Head of the Federal Military Government and the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It is with humility and a deep sense of responsibility that I accept this challenge and call to national duty.

As you must have heard in the previous announcement, the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1979) has been suspended, except those sections of it which are exempted in the constitution. The change became necessary in order to put an end to the serious economic predicament and the crisis of confidence now afflicting our nation. Consequently, the Nigerian armed forces have constituted themselves into a Federal Military Government comprising of a Supreme Military Council, a National Council of States, a Federal Executive Council at the centre and State Executive Councils to be presided over by military governors in each of the states of the federation. Members of these councils will be announced soon. The last Federal Military Government drew up a programme with the aim of handing over political power to the civilians in 1979. This programme as you all know, was implemented to the letter. The 1979 constitution was promulgated. However, little did the military realise that the political leadership of the second republic will circumvent most of the checks and balances in the constitution and bring the present state of general insecurity. The premium on political power became so exceedingly high that political contestants regarded victory at elections as a matter of life and death struggle and were determined to capture or retain power by all means.

It is true that there is a worldwide economic recession. However, in the case of Nigeria, its impact was aggravated by mismanagement. We believe the appropriate government agencies have good advice but the leadership disregarded their advice. The situation could have been avoided if the legislators were alive to their constitutional responsibilities; Instead, the legislators were preoccupied with determining their salary scales, fringe benefit and unnecessary foreign travels, et al, which took no account of the state of the economy and the welfare of the people they represented. As a result of our inability to cultivate financial discipline and prudent management of the economy, we have come to depend largely on internal and external borrowing to execute government projects with attendant domestic pressure and soaring external debts, thus aggravating the propensity of the outgoing civilian administration to mismanage our financial resources. Nigeria was already condemned perpetually with the twin problem of heavy budget deficits and weak balance of payments position, with the prospect of building a virile and viable economy.

The last general election was anything but free and fair. The only political parties that could complain of election rigging are those parties that lacked the resources to rig. There is ample evidence that rigging and thuggery were relative to the resources available to the parties. This conclusively proved to us that the parties have not developed confidence in the presidential system of government on which the nation invested so much material and human resources. While corruption and indiscipline have been associated with our state of under-

development, these two evils in our body politic have attained unprecedented height in the past few years. The corrupt, inept and insensitive leadership in the last four years has been the source of immorality and impropriety in our society. Since what happens in any society is largely a reflection of the leadership of that society, we deplore corruption in all its facets. This government will not tolerate kick-backs, inflation of contracts and over-invoicing of imports etc. Nor will it condone forgery, fraud, embezzlement, misuse and abuse of office and illegal dealings in foreign exchange and smuggling.

Arson has been used to cover up fraudulent acts in public institutions. I am referring to the fire incidents that gutted the P&T buildings in Lagos, the Anambra State Broadcasting Corporation, the Republic Building at Marina, the Federal Ministry of Education, the Federal Capital Development Authority Accounts at Abuja and the NET Building. Most of these fire incidents occurred at a time when Nigerians were being apprehensive of the frequency of fraud scandals and the government incapacity to deal with them. Corruption has become so pervasive and intractable that a whole ministry has been created to stem it. Fellow Nigerians, this indeed is the moment of truth. My colleagues and I – the Supreme Military Council, must be frank enough to acknowledge the fact that at the moment, an accurate picture of the financial position is yet to be determined. We have no doubt that the situation is bad enough. In spite of all this, every effort will be made to ensure that the difficult and degrading conditions under which we are living are eliminated. Let no one however be deceived that workers who have not received their salaries in the past eight or so months will receive such salaries within today or tomorrow or that hospitals which have been without drugs for months will be provided with enough immediately. We are determined that with the help of God we shall do our best to settle genuine payments to which government is committed, including backlog of workers' salaries after scrutiny. We are confident and we assure you that even in the face of the global recession, and the seemingly gloomy financial future, given prudent management of Nigeria's existing financial resources and our determination to substantially reduce and eventually nail down rises in budgetary deficits and weak balance of payments position. The Federal Military Government will reappraise policies with a view to paying greater attention to the following areas:

- The economy will be given a new impetus and better sense of direction.
- Corrupt officials and their agents will be brought to book.
- In view of the drought that affected most parts of the country, the federal government will, with the available resources, import food stuffs to supplement the shortfalls suffered in the last harvest.

Our foreign policy will both be dynamic and realistic. Africa will of course continue to be the centrepiece of our foreign policy. The morale and combat readiness of the armed forces will be given high priority. Officers and men with high personal and professional integrity will have nothing to fear.

The Chief Justice of Nigeria and all other holders of judiciary appointments within the federation can continue in their appointments and the judiciary shall continue to function under existing laws subject to such exceptions as may be decreed from time to time by the Federal Military Government. All holders of appointments in the civil service, the police and the National Security

Organisation shall continue to exercise their functions in the normal way subject to changes that may be introduced by the Federal Military Government. All those chairmen and members of statutory corporations, parastatals and other executive departments are hereby relieved of their appointments with immediate effect.

The Federal Military Government will maintain and strengthen existing diplomatic relations with other states and with international organisations and institutions such as the Organisation of African Unity, the United Nations and its organs, Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries, ECOWAS and the Commonwealth etc. The Federal Military Government will honour and respect all treaties and obligations entered into by the previous government and we hope that such nations and bodies will reciprocate this gesture by respecting our country's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Fellow Nigerians, finally, we have dutifully intervened to save this nation from imminent collapse. We therefore expect all Nigerians, including those who participated directly or indirectly in bringing the nation to this present predicament, to cooperate with us. This generation of Nigerians, and indeed future generations, have no country other than Nigeria. We shall remain here and salvage it together.

May God bless us all. Good morning.

Maiden Speech of Major-General Ibrahim Babangida – August 27 , 1985

Fellow Nigerians, When in December 1983, the former military leadership, headed by Major-General Muhammadu Buhari, assumed the reins of government, its accession was heralded in the history of this country. With the nation at the mercy of political misdirection and on the brink of economic collapse, a new sense of hope was created in the minds of every Nigerian.

Since January 1984, however, we have witnessed a systematic denigration of that hope. It was stated then that mismanagement of political leadership and a general deterioration in the standard of living, which had subjected the common man to intolerable suffering, were the reasons for the intervention.

Nigerians have since then been under a regime that continued with those trends. Events today indicate that most of the reasons which justified the military takeover of government from the civilians still persist.

The initial objectives were betrayed and fundamental changes do not appear on the horizon. Because the present state of uncertainty, suppression and stagnation resulted from the perpetration of a small group, the Nigerian Armed Forces could not as a part of that government be unfairly committed to take responsibility for failure. Our dedication to the cause of ensuring that our nation remains a united entity worthy of respect and capable of functioning as a viable and credible part of the international community dictated the need to arrest the situation.

Let me at this point attempt to make you understand the premise upon which it became necessary to change the leadership. The principles of discussions, consultation and co-operation which should have guided decision-making process of the Supreme Military Council and the Federal Executive Council were disregarded soon after the government settled down in 1984. Where some of us thought it appropriate to give a little more time, anticipating a conducive atmosphere that would develop, in which affairs of state could be attended to with greater sense of responsibility, it became increasingly clear that such expectations could not be fulfilled.

Regrettably, it turned out that Major-General Muhammadu Buhari was too rigid and uncompromising in his attitudes to issues of national significance. Efforts to make him understand that a diverse polity like Nigeria required recognition and appreciation of differences in both cultural and individual perceptions, only served to aggravate these attitudes.

Major-General Tunde Idiagbon was similarly inclined in that respect. As Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters, he failed to exhibit the appropriate disposition demanded by his position. He arrogated to himself absolute knowledge of problems and solutions, and acted in accordance with what was convenient to him, using the machinery of government as his tool.

A combination of these characteristics in the two most important persons holding the nation's vital offices became impossible to content with. The situation was made worse by a number of other government functionaries and organisations, chief among which is the Nigerian Security Organisation (NSO). In fact, this body will be overhauled and re-organized.

And so it came to be that the same government which received the tumultuous welcome now became alienated from the people. To prevent a complete erosion of our given mandate therefore, we had to act so that hope may be rebuilt.

Let me now address your attention to the major issues that confront us, so that we may, as one people, chart a future direction for our dear country. We do not pretend to have all the answers to the questions which our present problems have put before our nation. We have come with the strongest determination to create an atmosphere in which positive efforts shall be given the necessary support for lasting solutions.

For matters of the moment which require immediate resolutions, we intend to pursue a determined programme of action. Major issues falling into this category have been identified and decisions taken on what should be done.

Firstly, the issue of political detainees or convicts of special military tribunals. The history of our nation had never recorded the degree of indiscipline and corruption as in the period between October 1979 and December 1983.

While this government recognises the bitterness created by the irresponsible excesses of the politicians, we consider it unfortunate that methods of such nature as to cause more bitterness were applied to deal with past misdeeds. We must never allow ourselves to lose our sense of natural justice. The innocent cannot suffer the crimes of the guilty. The guilty should be punished only as a lesson for the future. In line with this government's intention to uphold fundamental human rights, the issue of detainees will be looked into with despatch.

As we do not intend to lead a country where individuals are under the fear of expressing themselves, the Public Officers Protection Against False Accusation Decree 4 of 1984 is hereby repealed. And finally, those who have been in detention under this decree are hereby unconditionally released. The responsibility of the media to disseminate information shall be exercised without undue hindrance. In that process, those responsible are expected to be forthright and to have the nation's interest as their primary consideration.

The issue of decrees has generated a lot of controversies. It is the intention of this government to review all other decrees.

The last twenty months have not witnessed any significant changes in the national economy. Contrary to expectations, we have so far been subjected to a steady deterioration in the general standard of living; and intolerable suffering by the ordinary Nigerians have risen higher, scarcity of commodities has increased, hospitals still remain mere consulting clinics, while educational institutions are on the brink of decay. Unemployment has stretched to critical dimensions.

Due to the stalemate, which arose in negotiation with the International Monetary Fund, the former government embarked on a series of counter-trade agreements. Under the counter-trade agreements, Nigerians were forced to buy goods and commodities at higher prices than obtained in the international market. The government intends to review the whole issue of counter-trade.

A lot has been said and heard about our position with the International Monetary Fund. Although we formally applied to the fund in April 1983, no progress has as

yet been made in the negotiation and a stalemate has existed for the last two years.

We shall break the deadlock that frustrated the negotiations with a view to evaluating more objectively both the negative and positive implications of reaching a mutual agreement with the Fund. At all times in the course of discussions, our representatives will be guided by the feelings and aspirations of the Nigerian people.

It is the view of this government that austerity without structural adjustment is not the solution to our economic predicament. The present situation whereby 44 per cent of our revenue earning is utilised to service debts is not realistic. To protect the danger this poses to the poor and the needy in our society, steps will be taken to ensure comprehensive strategy of economic reforms.

The crux of our economic problems has been identified to centre around four fundamental issues:

1. A decrease of our domestic production, while our population continues to increase.
2. Dependence on import for both consumer goods and raw materials for our industries.
3. A grossly unequal gap between the rich and the poor.
4. The large role played by the public sector in economic activity with hardly any concrete results to justify such a role.

These are the problems we must confront.

ON FOREIGN POLICY:

Nigeria's foreign policy in the last 20 months has been characterised by inconsistency and incoherence. It has lacked the clarity to make us know where we stood on matters of international concern to enable other countries relate to us with seriousness. Our role as Africa's spokesman has diminished because we have been unable to maintain the respect of African countries.

The ousted military government conducted our external relations by a policy of retaliatory reactions. Nigeria became a country that has reacted to given situations, rather than taking the initiative as it should and always been done. More so, vengeful considerations must not be the basis of our diplomacy. African problems and their solutions should constitute the premise of our foreign policy.

The realisation of the Organisation of African Unity of the Lagos Plan of Action for self-sufficiency and constructive co-operation in Africa shall be our primary pursuit.

The Economic Community of West African States must be reborn with the view to achieving the objective of regional integration. The problems of drought-stricken areas of Africa will be given more attention and sympathy, and our best efforts will be made to assist in their rehabilitation within the limits of our resources. Our membership of the United Nations Organisation will be made more practical and meaningful. The call for a new International Economic Order which lost its momentum in the face of the debt crisis will be made once again.

Nigeria hereby makes a renewed request to the Non-Aligned Movement to regroup and reinvigorate its determination to restructure the global economic system, while we appeal to the industrialized nations to positively consider the

debt plight of the developing countries and assist in dealing with the dangers that face us. We shall remain members of the various multilateral institutions and inter-governmental organisations which we belong to and do what must be done to enhance the membership and participation within them.

Fellow Nigerians, this country has had since independence a history mixed with turbulence and fortune. We have witnessed our rise to greatness, followed with a decline to the state of a bewildered nation. Our human potentials have been neglected, our natural resources put to waste. A phenomenon of constant insecurity and overbearing uncertainty has become characteristic of our national existence.

My colleagues and I are determined to change the course of history. This government is determined to unite this country. We shall not allow anything to obstruct us. We recognise that a government, be it civilian or military, needs the consent of the people to govern if it is to reach its objective. We do not intend to rule by force. At the same time, we should not be expected to submit to unreasonable demands. Fundamental rights and civil liberties will be respected, but their exercise must not degenerate into irrational expression nor border on subversion.

The War Against Indiscipline will continue, but this time, in the minds and conduct of Nigerians, and not by way of symbolism or money-spending campaigns.

This government, on its part, will ensure that the leadership exhibits proper example. Criticisms of actions and decisions taken by us will be given necessary attention and where necessary changes made in accordance with what is expected of us.

Let me reiterate what we said in 1984: This generation of Nigerians and indeed future generations have no other country but Nigeria. We must all stay and salvage it together. This time it shall be pursued with deeper commitment and genuine sincerity.

There is a lot of work to be done by every single Nigerian. Let us all dedicate ourselves to the cause of building a strong, united and viable nation for the sake of our own lives and the benefits of posterity.

Finally, I wish to commend the members of the Armed Forces and the Nigeria Police for their mature conduct during the change.

I thank you all for your co-operation and understanding.

God bless Nigeria.

The June 12, 1993 Election is Annulled. Speech of General Ibrahim Babangida – June 26, 1993

Fellow

Nigerians,

I address you today with a deep sense of world history and particularly of the history of our great country. In the aftermath of the recently annulled Presidential Election, I feel, as I believe you yourself feel, a profound sense of disappointment at the outcome of our last efforts at laying the foundation of a viable democratic system of government in Nigeria .

I therefore wish, on behalf of myself and members of the National Defence and Security Council and indeed of my entire administration, to feel with my fellow countrymen and women for the cancellation of the election. It was a rather disappointing experience in the course of carrying through the last election of the transition to civil rule programme.

Nigeria has come a long way since this administration assumed power and leadership about eight years ago. In the attempt to grapple with the critical and monumental problems and challenges of National existence and social progress, this administration inaugurated and pursued sound and justifiable policies and programmes of reform.

These policies and programmes have touched virtually all aspects of our national life – the economy, political process, social structures, external relations, bureaucracy and even the family system. I believe strongly that in understanding, conception, formulation and articulation, these policies and programmes are not only sound but also comparatively unassailable. I believe too that history, with the passage of time, would certainly score the administration high in its governance of our country.

Let me also express my deep conviction that the core strategy and structures of our reform policies and programmes, as enunciated in 1986/87 would, for a very long time, remain relevant and durable in the course of changing our country positively. I believe that at the exit of the Administration from power, we would leave behind for prosperity, a country with an economy, the structures of which have been turned around for good. The average Nigerian person has come to reconcile himself with the fact that his or her social progress remain essentially in his or her hands in collaboration with other fellow Nigerians and not merely relying on what government alone could provide for him or her. The days are gone for good, when men and women trooped to government establishments for employment and for benevolence.

This administration has built the foundation that would take Nigerians away from their previous colonially-induced motivations and the encumbrances of colonialism. We have laid the foundation for self-reliant economic development and social justice. We have established a new basis in our country in which economic liberalization would continue to flourish alongside democratic forces and deregulated power structure. In all these, the average Nigerian person has more than ever before this administration imbibed and assimilated the values of hard work, resilience and self-confidence.

It is true that in the course of implementing our reform policies and programmes and especially because of the visionary zeal with which we approached the assignment and responded to incidental pressures of governance, we engendered a number of social forces in the country.

This is so because we sought to challenge and transform extant social forces which had in the past impeded growth and development of our country. We also sought to deal with the new forces to which our programmes of action gave rise. Thus in dealing with the dynamics of both the old and new social forces, we ran into certain difficulties.

In particular, during the course of handling the interlocking relationships between the old and new political forces and institutions, some problems had arisen leading us into a number of difficulties and thereby necessitating our having to tamper with the rules and regulations laid down in the political programme. As a result, the administration unwittingly attracted enormous public suspicions of its intentions and objectives. Accordingly, we have experienced certain shortfalls and conflicting responses to the pulls and pushes of governance in the course of policy implementation.

I believe that areas of difficulties with the transition programme, especially from the last quarter of 1992 to the recent cancelled presidential election, derived primarily from the shortfalls in implementing the programmes of actions which, though objectively taken, may have caused a deviation from the original framework and structure of the programme.

Fellow Nigerians, it is true that by the cancelled presidential election, we all found the nation at a peculiar bar of history which was neither bargained for, nor was it envisaged in the reform programmes of transition as enunciated in 1986/87. In the circumstance, the administration had no option than to respond appropriately to the unfortunate experience of terminating the presidential election. Our actions are in full conformity with the original objectives of the transition to civil programme. It was also in conformity with the avowed commitment of the administration to advance the cause of national unity, stability, and democracy. In annulling the presidential election, this administration was keenly aware of its promise in November 1992 that it would disengage and institute a return to democracy on August 27, 1993. We are determined to keep the promise.

Since this transition, and indeed any transition, must have an end, I believe that our transition programme should and must come to an end, honestly and honourably.

History will bear witness that as an administration we have always striven, in all our policy decisions, to build the foundation of lasting democracy. Lasting democracy is not a temporary show of excitement and manipulation by an over-articulate section of the elite and its captive audience; lasting democracy is a permanent diet to nurture the soul of the whole nation and the political process.

Therefore, it is logical, as we have always insisted upon, that lasting democracy must be equated with political stability.

Informed by our sad experience of history, we require nothing short of a foundation for lasting democracy. As an administration, we cannot afford to leave Nigerian into a Third Republic with epileptic convulsions in its democratic health. Nigeria must therefore confront her own reality; she must solve her problems notwithstanding other existing models of democracy in other parts of the world.

In my address to the nation in October 1992, when the first presidential primaries were cancelled, I had cause to remind our country men and women that there is nowhere in the world in which the practice of democracy is the same, even if the principles are similar and even for countries sharing the same intellectual tradition and cultural foundation. The history of our country is not the history of any other country in the world which is either practicing advanced democracy or struggling to lay the foundation for democracy. Yet, in spite of the uniqueness and peculiarities of Nigeria, there are certain prerequisites which constitute an irreducible minimum for democracy. Such essential factors include:

- A. Free and fair elections;
- B. Uncoerced expression of voters preference in election;
- C. Respect for electorate as unfettered final arbiter on elections;
- D. Decorum and fairness on the part of the electoral umpires;
- E. Absolute respect for the rule of law.

Fellow Nigerians, you would recall that it was precisely because the presidential primaries of last year did not meet the basic requirements of free and fair election that the Armed Forces Ruling Council, the, had good reason to cancel those primaries. The recently annulled presidential election was similarly afflicted by these problems.

Even before the presidential elections, and indeed at the party conventions, we had full knowledge of the bad signals pertaining to the enormous breach of the rules and regulations of democracy elections. But because we were determined to keep faith with the deadline of 27th August 1993 for the return of civil rule, we overlooked the reported breaches. Unfortunately, these breaches continued into the presidential election of June 12, 1993, on an even greater proportion.

There were allegations of irregularities and other acts of bad conduct leveled against the presidential candidates but NEC went ahead and cleared them. There were proofs as well as documented evidence of widespread use of money during the party primaries as well as the presidential election. These were the same bad conduct

for which the party presidential primaries of 1992 were cancelled.

Evidence available to government put the total amount of money spent by the presidential candidates as over two billion, one hundred million naira (N2.1 billion). The use of money was again the major source of undermining the electoral process.

Both these allegations and evidence were known to the National Defence and Security Council before the holding of the June 12, 1993 election, the National Defence and Security Council overlooked these areas of problems in its determination to fulfill the promise to hand over to an elected president on due date.

Apart from the tremendous negative use of money during the party primaries and presidential elections, there were moral issues which were also overlooked by the Defence and National Security Council. There were cases of documented and confirmed conflict of interest between the government and both presidential aspirants which would compromise their positions and responsibilities were they to become president. We believe that politics and government are not ends

in themselves. Rather, service and effective amelioration of the condition of our people must remain the true purpose of politics.

It is true that the presidential election was generally seen to be free, fair and peaceful. However, there was in fact a huge array of election malpractices virtually in all the states of the federation before the actual voting began. There were authenticated reports of the election malpractices against party agents, officials of the National Electoral Commission and also some members of the electorate.

If all of these were clear violations of the electoral law there were proofs of manipulations through offer and acceptance of money and other forms of inducement against officials of the National Electoral Commission and members of the electorate. There were also evidence of conflict in the process of authentication and clearance of credentials of the presidential candidates. Indeed, up to the last few hours to the election, we continued in our earnest steadfastness with our transition deadline, to overlook vital facts.

For example, following the council's deliberation which followed the court injunction suspending the election, majority of members of the National Defence and Security Council supported postponement of the election by one week. This was to allow NEC enough time to reach all the voters, especially in the rural areas, about the postponement. But persuaded by NEC that it was capable of relaying the information to the entire electorate within the few hours left before the election, the council, unfortunately, dropped the idea of shifting the voting day. Now, we know better. The conduct of the election, the behaviour of the candidates and post-election responses continued to elicit signals which the nation can only ignore at its peril.

It is against the foregoing background that the administration became highly concerned when these political conflicts and breaches were carried to the court.

It must be acknowledged that the performance of the judiciary on this occasion was less than satisfactory. The judiciary has been the bastion of the hopes and liberties of our citizens.

Therefore, when it became clear that the courts had become intimidated and subjected to the manipulation of the political process, and vested interests then the entire political system was in clear dangers.

This administration could not continue to watch the various high courts carry on their long drawn out processes and contradictory decisions while the nation slides into chaos.

It was under this circumstance that the National Defence and Security Council decided that it is in the supreme interest of law and order, political stability and peace that the presidential election be annulled. As an administration, we have had special interest and concern not only for the immediate needs of our society, but also in laying the foundation for generations to come.

To continue action on the basis of the June 12, 1993 election, and to proclaim and swear in a president who encouraged a campaign of divide and rule among our ethnic groups would have been detrimental to the survival of the Third Republic. Our need is for peace, stability and continuity of politics in the interest of all our people.

Fellow countrymen and women, although the National Electoral Commission and the Centre for Democratic Studies officially invited foreign observers for the presidential elections, the administration also considered it as important as a democratic society, that our activities and electoral conduct must be open not only to the citizenry of our country but also to the rest of the world. In spite of this commitment, the administration did not and cannot accept that foreign countries should interfere in our internal affairs and undermine our sovereignty.

The presidential election was no an exercise imposed on Nigerians by the United Nations or by the wishes of some global policemen of democracy. It was a decision embarked upon independently by the government of our country and for the interest of our country. This is because, we believe, just like other countries, that democracy and democratization are primary values which Nigerians should cultivate, sustain and consolidate so as to enhance freedom, liberties and social development of the citizenry.

The actions of these foreign countries are most unfortunate and highly regrettable. There is nowhere in the history of our country or indeed of the third world where these countries can be said to love Nigeria or Nigerians any more than the love we have for ourselves and for our country. Neither can they claim to love Nigeria any more than this administration loves our country.

Accordingly, I wish to state that this administration will take necessary action against any interest groups that seek to interfere in our internal affairs. In this vein, I wish to place on record the appreciation of this administration for the patience and understanding of Nigerians, the French, the Germans, the Russians and Irish governments in the current situation. I appeal to our fellow countrymen and women and indeed our foreign detractors that they should cultivate proper understanding and appreciation of the peculiar historic circumstances in the development of our country and the determination not only of this administration but indeed of all Nigerians to resolve the current crises.

Fellow Nigerians, the National Security and Defence Council have met several times since the June 12, 1993 election. The council has fully deliberated not only on our avowed commitment but also to bequeathing to posterity, a sound economic and political base in our country and we shall do so with honour. In our deliberations, we have also taken note of several extensive consultations with other members of this administration, with officers and men of the Armed Forces and will well-meaning Nigerian leaders of thought. We are committed to handing over power on 27th August 1993.

Accordingly, the National Defence and Security Council has decided that by the end of July 1993 the two political parties, under the supervision of a recomposed National Electoral Commission, will put in place the necessary process for the emergence of two presidential candidates.

This shall be conducted according to the rules and regulations governing the election of the president of the country. In this connection, government will in consultation with the two political parties and National Electoral Commission agree as to the best and quickest process of conducting the election.

In the light of our recent experience and, given the mood of the nation, the National Defence and Security Council has imposed additional conditions as a way of widening and deepening the base of electing the president and sanitizing the electoral process. Accordingly, the candidates for the coming election must:

- (1) Not be less than 50 years old.
- (2) Have not been convicted of any crime;
- (3) Believe, by act of faith and practice, in the corporate existence of Nigerians;
- (4) Posses records of personal, corporate and business interests which do not conflict with the national interests;
- (5) Have been registered members of either of the two political parties for at least one year to this election.

All those previously banned from participating in the transition process other than those with criminal records, are hereby unbanned. They can all henceforth participate in the electoral process. This is with a view to enriching the quality of candidature for the election and at the same time tap the leadership resources of our country to the fullest. The decree to this effect will be promulgated.

Fellow Nigerians, I wish to finally acknowledge the tremendous value of your patience and understanding, especially in the face of national provocation.

I urge you to keep faith with the commitment of this administration.

I enjoin you to keep faith with the unity, peace and stability of our country for this is the only country that you and I can call our own. Nowhere in the world, no matter the prompting and inducements of foreign countries, can Nigerians ever be regarded as first class citizens. Nigeria is the only country that we have. We must therefore renew our hope in Nigeria, and faith and confidence in ourselves for continued growth, development and progress.

Thank you all, and God bless you.