

THE NATIONAL THINK-TANK: OUR HOPE;

OUR OBJECTIVES

BY

PROFESSOR A. BOLAJI AKINYEMI

The mission statement of this National Think-Tank was published before the elections were held, and I can attest to the fact that consultations have been going on for close to eighteen months, long before it was clear what the political landscape would look like. It was made clear from the beginning that this is a private initiative necessitated by the need to broaden in-puts into public policy formulation.

It is perhaps essential to make obvious certain facts. No claim is being made that this is the first Think-Tank in Nigeria. Governments at both Federal and State levels have set up governmental Think Tanks on either specific or general issues. However, as the template for governance and development has changed dramatically as characterized by a shift away from government ownership of the controlling heights of the economy to the controlling role of the private sector either in partnership with government or by going it alone, the need for changes in the template of Think-Tanks has become more compelling.

This current exercise at establishing a non-governmental Think-Tank will mark the first time that a National Think-Tank that is completely voluntary and omni-focus in orientation will be attempted. This current exercise amounts to seeking to establish a bank of talents of Nigerians who are both at home and abroad. I would have thought that the existence of the plethora of problems that still face this country justifies the search of more institutions to seek for answers as to how to address these issues.

That we are embarking on this initiative is no condemnation of existing institutions. In fact, the history of the world shows that solving existing problems is no guarantee that there would be no more problems. In fact, the world gets more complex everyday, throwing up more and more problems that need to be addressed. Therefore the driven to set up the National Think-Tank is an admission that as Nigeria embraces space technology, we should also endeavour to try new methods at solving old problems and new ones as well.

We are not unaware that there is also some bewilderment as to the inclusive nature of our membership. The fact that the past and the present are represented in our membership. The fact that the past and the present are represented in our membership has given rise to some concern. But we must accept that without a yesterday, there would have been no today. And without yesterday and today, there will be no tomorrow. There are lessons to be learnt from yesterday's failures as well as successes. If we discard the past because we are disenchanted with it, our today and tomorrow will not be full. In life, even the living benefits from the dead through post-mortem.

We are a thoroughly cynical nation and quite rightly so, given sixty or so years of unmet expectations and unfulfilled hopes. Therefore we expect and welcome questions and issues raised about this new project. It is a challenge to us to keep it firmly in our mind that we need to prove ourselves before Nigerians will be reassured that we have only one motivation and that is

to ensure that this nation lives up to the expectations of its citizens.

Thank you.