

GOODWILL MESSAGE DELIVERED BY SENATOR MATTHEW A. URGHOGHIDE, CHAIRMAN SENATE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE, DURING THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF AUDITORS-GENERAL OF NIGERIA HELD IN PROTEA HOTEL, BENIN CITY, EDO STATE ON MONDAY, 6TH DECEMBER, 2021.

Protocols

It gives me great pleasure to address this revered group of Public Servants whose contribution to ensuring prudence in the management and administration of public funds is a guarantee for efficiency and effectiveness.

Let me also state that by association, we the members of the Public Accounts Committee have become members of this elite club of guardian angels for integrity, probity and accountability.

The recognition of the relevance of the management of scarce resources, side by side to some competing needs, informed the crafters of our rules to provide for the allocation of funds through appropriation by the legislature for the operations of government.

It is the desire to ensure that budgetary allocations are utilized judiciously and for the purposes they are meant for; that the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended)

provides for the Office of the Auditor-General for the Federation with the mandate to perform the duties as enshrined.

In the course of the discharge of the functions of his office, the Auditor-General is in a constitutional symbiotic relationship with the Public Accounts Committee. This functional relationship has laid bare, a lot of shortcomings on the part of MDAs with regards to procedures and processes in the application of extant laws meant to ensure probity, accountability and transparency towards the achievement of value-for-money and good governance for the people.

Beside the issue of processes and compliance with extant laws common to MDAs, the PAC in the course of considering the reports of the Auditor-General for the Federation on the accounts of the Federation of Nigeria, has observed certain operational challenges confronting the Office of the Auditor-General. Chief among the challenges is the concern about the late submission of financial statements by the Office of the Accountant-General of the Federation, MDAs lackadaisical attitude to audit queries and above all, absence of adequate support instrument for the Office as obtained in other countries with modern and updated (SAIs) laws.

The identified challenges of the Office of the Auditor-General would have been adequately addressed if Mr. President had signed the Audit Bill which had earlier been passed by the Eight Assembly. Be that as it may, let me state that the message of hope remains that the National Assembly is committed to ensuring the independence of the OAuGF. It is in this spirit that the Ninth Senate under the leadership of Distinguished Senator Ahmad Ibrahim Lawan, GCON, President of Senate and a veteran Chairman of the Senate Public Accounts Committee will continue to encourage that the Audit Bill becomes a reality within the life of its tenure.

The theme of the Conference am made to understand is, **Securing Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) Independence and its Sustainability; The Urgency of Now.**

As apt as the theme of the Conference is, one may ask, what is the urgency of now about securing the independence and sustainability of the Auditors-General Office?

For me, and indeed, for the National Assembly, the urgency of a strengthened SAI underscores the realization of our backwardness in public funds auditing amongst the comity of nations. The urgency of now, also speaks to the deep realization of the fact that public funds and resources in Nigeria can only make the desired or expected

impact when they are judiciously used. I guess it is also on the realization that resources would continue to be scarce particularly in the face of dwindling world economy and that the fight against waste would become more effective when malfeasance is nipped in the bud, as well as, expose corrupt practices at every level of public expenditure.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am convinced that the organisers have procured experienced resource persons to do justice to the issues constituting the urgency of now, lined for consideration.

However, permit me to request that at the end of the conference, the outcome should be such that would propel every sector of the nation desirous of the material, financial and physical development of our governance to act in an urgent manner to make real the rhetoric of ridding the country of all forms of waste emanating not from natural causes but human and citizens acts of corruption and mismanagement.

The Public Accounts Committee / Senate looks forward to receiving the outcome of this conference by way of Resolutions / Communiqué for possible legislative action where necessary or as added input/material towards the passage of the Audit Service Bill.

Distinguished participants, and gentlemen of the Press, with these few remarks, I wish you successful deliberations.

Thank you and God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.
