

## ELISHAMA DECLARATION SPEECH

***We Deserve Better Than This;  
We ARE Better Than This***

My fellow citizens of Nigeria – both at home and abroad, friends of Nigeria, brothers and sisters, gentlemen of the press, ladies and gentlemen,

I consider it a marvelous privilege to be able to stand before you today, and I give God all the glory for the gift of life and sound health. I think I can rightly say that we all are privileged to be alive to see this day. As individuals, as families and as communities, and as citizens of this great nation, Nigeria, we know now that this is a privilege that no right-thinking Nigerian can afford to take for granted any longer. For we live in trying and dangerous times.

I want to thank all of you who have made time, in the midst of your other pressing engagements, to join us here today, not just physically but also electronically (via television, radio, and the internet). I want to especially thank those who have come on this journey with me right from when this vision was birthed in my spirit and those of my associates, and those who joined us along the way and helped to carry this vision forward. Your presence here today is very heartwarming, because it speaks of something deep and extraordinary; it speaks of a yearning for something bigger, something better, something MORE, than what we've had before now. Your presence here today speaks of dissatisfaction with the way things are at present; a restlessness with a sterile status quo that has held us in its sway and circumscribed the pace and direction of our individual and collective progress for so

long; and a desire for genuine and far-reaching change, change that will move your lives and those of your children from where you are to where you ought to be – indeed, to where God intended you to be. I know this because those are my sentiments as well. I want something more. I want something better. That’s why I’m here.

Nigeria today stands at a critical cross-road, poised uneasily between two destinations: the one leads to the prosperity, power and greatness that her enormous natural and human resources should rightly bestow upon her, while the other leads to the very real prospect of a continuation of the present decline in her economic fortunes, to the point of collapse – and indeed to outright disintegration.

How did we arrive at this critical cross-road? When did our beloved nation, Nigeria, suddenly become this theatre of contending grievances, contending anxieties and contending (and mostly self-serving) narratives of victimhood and entitlement?

For those of you who are old enough to remember, I’m sure you’ll agree that this country was not always like this. This downward slide was not always our inevitable trajectory. This decline in our fortunes was never our default settings as a society and as a nation. At independence in 1960, the promise of Nigeria shone like a million stars; it illuminated the political horizon of an entire continent and inspired hopes of an African resurgence after so many decades under European colonization and slavery. Back then, our leaders and our people clearly envisioned the prospect of our country taking her rightful place in the comity of nations – by virtue of her wealth, power and influence – not just as a force to be reckoned with, but also as a potent symbol of the imminent ascendancy of the Black personality upon the world stage and the validation of a uniquely Afro-centric ideology, worldview and solutions to global challenges.

If anyone had told them, back then, that almost 60 years on, Nigeria would still be mired in the dungeon of underdevelopment; that she would still be grappling with the most basic and existential issues of hunger, poverty, ignorance and disease, as well as the latent hostilities and destructive contentions that arise from primordial attachments to tribe, religion and socio-economic background as a barometer of identity and co-existence; and that Nigeria would trail far behind many of those countries with whom she began her journey into post-independent nationhood on most (if not all) of the globally-accepted indices of human development and socio-economic competitiveness, our leaders and our people would have found it hard to believe. For they knew, even back then, that this country had the resources, the capacity – and indeed the God-given RIGHT – to not only dream big dreams and dare great things, but also to instill in our people a belief in the actualization of those dreams. There was nothing in our land, or in our waters, or in our climate, or indeed in our physiological and psychological makeup as a people, to suggest that we were going to fall so far down.

And yet, that is the reality that stares us in the face today.

Over the years, as we see our resources dwindle by the day, and as we see our hopes shattered, we have learned to lower our expectations of our government and what it ought to do for us. We have learned to lower our trust in our neighbors, and we have learned to question ourselves as individuals; we have learned to diminish our worth as humans; we have learned to denigrate our values; and we have learned to doubt our capabilities.

Nigeria's terrible reversal of fortunes in just over a half-century of our existence as a nation did not just come upon us like a thief in the night. Our situation today is a culmination of a prolonged crisis of leadership and a dysfunction in governance – a crisis and a dysfunction

arising from weak or non-existent institutions, and a flawed constitutional framework that allows the powerful to get away with serious breaches of the law and the demands of basic decency, while punishing the weak and victimizing the innocent.

It is a crisis of leadership, and a dysfunction in governance, that cannot be allowed to continue any longer if we are to survive at all – let alone succeed – as a nation. Our young people, in particular, can no longer wait, driven as they are by the fear that the '*tomorrow*' they were promised yesterday has perhaps already come – AND GONE. Our women – mothers, daughters and sisters – can no longer tolerate the indefinite postponement of the day when they will take their place along their husbands, fathers, brothers and sons as equal partners in the development of our dear nation – along with the families, communities and interests that make it up. And our children deserve a nation that can guarantee their safety at home, in school, on the playground and on the streets, and the protection of their innocence and fragile but potent dreams of a glorious tomorrow.

My fellow Nigerians, brothers, sisters and friends, Nigeria needs a different model of governance today. Nigeria needs a different kind of **LEADER** today: a leader who combines integrity with intelligence and a deep and vast understanding of the implications of the 21<sup>st</sup> global political economy and Nigeria's place in it (as defined, for example, by the Global Competitiveness Index of the World Economic Forum, and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals); Nigeria needs a leader who combines a no-nonsense strength of character and the moral authority to get things done in an efficient and timely manner, with the compassion of a mother for her children, as well as for the weak and the downtrodden in our society, along with a burning desire and a practical agenda to change their lot. At this critical point in her journey, Nigeria needs a leader whose own personal life-journey over the

years – in the service of God and man – is capable of inspiring a generation of Nigerians to imbibe habits, and carry out actions, of distinction; a leader who will inspire people to build communities of excellence; a leader whose example will move people to resolve the contradictions and contentions that threaten the corporate existence of our dear nation today and set her on the path to become a leading member of the global community of nations, able to interact with other nations with understanding, confidence (in herself) and respect for all. Nigeria needs a leader who, along with patriotic citizens wherever they may be, will stand at the vanguard of an economic as well as an ethical revolution, along with a new sense of identity, citizenship and civic duty among our people.

I believe with all my heart that I, **DR. ELISHAMA ROSEMARY IDEH**, am that leader.

In about two decades of advocacy and philanthropy on behalf of the less-privileged people in our society (be they individuals, families, groups and communities), I have traversed the length and breadth of Nigeria. I have heard stories of devastation and tragedy in the villages and IDP camps of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States. But I have also heard inspiring tales of survival in the face of formidable odds in the embattled communities of Benue and Taraba States, and even in the marine ghettos of Makoko and its environs in Lagos State. I have seen men, women and children carry the flame of hope in a better tomorrow and unlimited possibilities in their offices, farms, studios, classrooms, lecture halls, and on the streets of this country – from Zamfara to Akwa Ibom State, and from Delta to Jigawa State.

In my engagements with the various strata of society – male and female, young and old, rich and poor – I have seen the faces of Nigeria's past, present and future. And always, I have strived to reach for workable solutions to problems and challenges peculiar to the time and place of each of my engagements, no matter how deep-seated or long-standing those

problems and challenges might be.

In my various capacities and levels of engagement – as a Social Entrepreneur, as an Inspirational Speaker, as a Responsible Corporate Citizen, and above all, as a Patriotic Daughter of Nigeria with a fierce passion for the development of my country and the welfare and security of my people, I have gained a deep knowledge of both the material and psychological needs of our people. I have come to embrace (and try to embody) the cultural diversity of our nation, and I have developed the emotional intelligence that is mindful of cultural and religious sensibilities in a diverse and dynamic society like Nigeria. I have gained a deep knowledge of the workings of the Nigerian state, the character of its people, and its vast potentials, thanks to my one-on-one engagements with the targets of my advocacy and philanthropic activities; and with each passing day I have become more and more committed to my vision of a prosperous and just nation founded upon the principle of SHARED values, SHARED vision, SHARED responsibilities and SHARED benefits.

My fellow citizens of Nigeria, brothers, sisters and friends, I therefore stand here before you today, to declare my intention to run for the office of President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in the 2019 General Elections. To this end, I am seeking nomination as the presidential flag-bearer of the

Alliance for a New Nigeria (ANN) . I am a firm believer in the values, vision and mission of this great party, and I'm committed to the actualization of its ideology and its innovative roadmap for the regeneration of Nigeria and the creation of the material and social wealth that will secure the present welfare and future security of Nigerians living today and generations yet unborn. Like my companions in the ranks and file of the Alliance for a New Nigeria. I stand for prosperity and for posterity. I stand for equity (both in the generation of

our commonwealth and in its distribution). And I stand for inclusion. In my Presidency, no Nigerian will be left out, or left behind. Every Nigerian has a stake in the regeneration of our nation, and will be made to feel a sense of belonging.

Let it be known that in seeking the highest office in the land, I am not motivated by my personal ambition or any desire on my part for personal aggrandizement or promotion. I am only answering the clarion call of destiny, a historic summons to save my beloved nation from the path of perdition upon which it is currently, almost inexorably, embarked. This quest, therefore, is not at all about me. It is really about YOU – your hopes and dreams for yourselves, your families and communities, and for this country we call our home. By choosing me as your next President, you are actually electing yourself; you are taking your present welfare and future security into your own hands.

I speak to the youths of this country, whose apathy and disillusionment with the state of our country has reached historic levels – with many of them preferring to vote with their feet by leaving our shores and attempting, even at the risk of untimely death, to cross the Sahara into Europe. I promise to give our youths a reason to believe in Nigeria again. Our prospective administration already has a comprehensive and innovative roadmap, as enunciated in our manifesto, designed to put our young people to work again.

I speak to the women today. I am your sister, and I dare say I am the ONLY hope for your true empowerment as equal partners in the holistic development of our nation – beginning with the family unit and the community. Like some of you, I am a mother. Therefore I share your joys and pains, as well as your natural desire to nurture your family and safeguard its future, and to build the community of today and tomorrow. You are the unsung heroines of our story as a people, but you will no longer be unsung; the time has finally come for you to

be celebrated – and who better to do it than one of your own? You are indeed the pillars of our society, but even pillars do need support. I, Elishama Ideh, am the support you have been waiting for. Support me today, and I will support you tomorrow and in the days, months and years to come.

We Nigerians are a naturally sympathetic and compassionate people – especially when faced with the sufferings of the physically and mentally-challenged, and the less-privileged in our midst. But over the years, our sympathy and compassion have been diffuse, unstructured and random, with everyone doing what they can out of the goodness of their hearts. But persons living with disability, and the destitute, don't need just our sympathy and compassion; they also need our collective *EMPATHY*, our ability as a society to put ourselves in the place of our most vulnerable fellow-citizens. More importantly, they need a deliberate policy of support, solidarity and rehabilitation for persons living with disability on the part of governments at all levels and other major stakeholders in this country. Nigeria needs a comprehensive Disability Law that not only protects the rights of the differently-able, but creates a conducive environment for them to live and function effectively as equal members of society, beginning with the provision and maintenance of user-friendly facilities and infrastructure for persons living with disability. We will provide these things as a matter of policy. As President, I will push for the enactment and implementation of such a law, as well as the ratification and domestication of international conventions and protocols in this regard. So, if you are – or someone dear to you is – living with some form of disability, consider me a companion. Come May 2019, by the grace of God, you will be able to say that you have a friend indeed, in the corridors of power.

To the business community I say: let us harness the human and material resources of this



country to create both financial and social wealth for all our people – wealth based on innovation, production, equity and sustainable solutions. Let us create good jobs for our youths and business opportunities for all our people who are willing to tap into them. In my Presidency, the business community will always find a friendly partner, a listening ear, and a mind always open to new, innovative and workable ideas. My administration is determined, from the very first day of our assumption of office, to work towards reducing the cost and simplifying the processes and procedures of doing business anywhere in Nigeria, so that local and foreign investors – be they small and medium enterprises or giant multinationals – to thrive. We are committed to continually improve Nigeria’s standing on the Global Competitiveness Index by creating incentives that will attract investment from both local and foreign players, and to apply our energies towards the actualization of the UN Sustainable Development Goals in our country. We need the input and cooperation of the business community to achieve this.

The same goes for labour unions in Nigeria. We will work together to ensure fair remuneration in terms of wages, welfare packages and retirement benefits within the limits of our means. Periodic wage increases will be carried out, not on sentimental, emotional or even humanitarian grounds, but always according to our production capacity and corresponding revenues. For this reason, we will insist that our partners in Labour shun the entitlement mentality that has often obscured the more important requirements of competence, efficiency, productivity and merit. Meeting these requirements is the only way our economy can grow and ensure the prosperity of our people.

As President, I will reform the country’s revenue generation and allocation structure, including our federal tax regimes. We will strive to strike a balance between making sure

that nobody evades their financial obligations for the amenities that government provides, and ensuring that our tax regime allows businesses to take root, expand and create jobs. I will encourage state and local governments to improve on their internally-generated revenue in a manner that helps their people, especially their youths, to thrive.

As President, I will ensure that our security organizations – the armed forces, the police and civil defence corps – are constantly upgraded to ensure their battle-readiness and ability to ensure internal security, not just in terms of up-to-date hardware and training, but also in terms of their ability to gather, use and share intelligence on current and emerging threats to our security and our territorial integrity, and to build a mutually empowering relationship with the people, neighborhoods and communities they are mandated to protect and serve.

Finally, we will confront the monster of corruption with utmost vigour, but with a different mindset from past and current efforts. For us in the Alliance for a New Nigeria, corruption goes beyond just the stealing of public funds – as terrible as that is. It is also about people deliberately warping our collective values. It's also about people sabotaging the government's developmental efforts in order to gain some political advantage or score points. It is also about people sowing the seeds of discontentment and division among our people in order to undermine the political and electoral process. It is also about flagrantly disobeying court orders, denigrating the image of our judiciary and attempting to institute a parallel system of justice for narrow advantage. It is also about degrading our physical and moral environment for short-term gain, and it is also about promoting a culture of impunity in both words and actions. Therefore, we will fight corruption in all its tangible and intangible manifestations: we will strive to enhance the independence and autonomy of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission in terms of its funding, privileges, powers and even the

composition of its leadership. Its modus operandi will be governed and regulated by statutory bodies such as the Nigerian Judicial Council; the National Police Commission; the Nigerian Human Rights Commission; and, to some extent, the National Assembly – rather than solely by an all-powerful Presidency, as obtains at present. Unlike our opposition, who seek to use the EFCC as an attack-dog to fight their opponents while shielding their friends from the consequences of corruption and other misdemeanors, we are confident in giving the EFCC the latitude it needs to carry out its statutory mandate, and to prosecute cases without bias or prejudice, simply because we have NOTHING TO HIDE.

My fellow citizens of Nigeria, brothers, sisters and friends, here I am, an ordinary woman who, over the years, has been blessed by the grace of God to join hands with others to do extraordinary things. For over two decades, I have served my fellow citizens in various capacities across the length and breadth of this beautiful land of Nigeria. My organizations and I have helped lift hundreds of men, women and children out of the pit of poverty and hopelessness.

We have given a new lease of life, and a renewed sense of hope, to thousands more.

I now ask for the opportunity to serve you, and our beloved country, from the highest pedestal – from which we can serve and save millions. I believe that there is nothing Nigerians cannot achieve, no height to which we cannot attain, if we put our minds to it, and if we join hands together. All we need is a visionary, dynamic, proactive and transformational leader.

I, Elishama Ideh, am that leader. Make me your President in 2019, and together, we shall write the next glorious chapter in our history and evolution as a nation and a people. Let us

recover the promise of our independence once again; let the story of Nigeria be retold anew, and let it said that we are a land of justice, peace and prosperity anchored upon an inclusive national constitution, our shared aspirations, our commitment to the finest principles of social democracy, and our faith in an Almighty God.

Long live the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Thank you, and God bless you.