**GOODWILL MESSAGE**

**BY**

**HIS EXCELLENCY ARC. (OBONG) VICTOR ATTAH**

*AT THE PATRIOTS’S CONSTITUTIONAL SUMMIT*

*THEME: Reclaiming our Sovereignty; Rebuilding Our Nation*

**Distinguished Patriots, Eminent Leaders of Conscience, Representatives of the Geo-Political Zones, Members of the Press and Fellow Nigerians**,

Let me begin by commending *The Patriots* for their vision, their courage, and their unwavering commitment to convening this historic summit. In a nation burdened by silence. Convening a dialogue of this magnitude, though not the first of its kind, is an act of bold patriotism.

As a son of the South-South, and as one who has carried the burden of this nation’s dream across many decades, I stand before you not just to offer goodwill, but to lend **voice to a truth that has often been expressed and can no longer be deferred**.

This summit is not another routine conference. It is s defining moment. Perhaps, it is the last peaceful opportunity we have to confront the **fundamental contradiction** of Nigeria: that we are governed, not by the will of the people, but by a constitution that robs us of our sovereignty.

**The State of the Union: Fractured But Not Beyond Repair**

Let us speak frankly. Our Federation is in distress. Our democracy is in disrepute. And our people – the very source of power in any true republic – have become totally disenfranchised and therefore disillusioned, detached and alienated.

We, from the South-South region, join other zones across this country who now agree that **this union is not working as it is.** It can only be sustained if it is restructured on the basis of equity, justice and mutual consent.

**The Agenda of This Summit**

The Patriots have called us to examine:

1. The legitimacy of the 1999 Constitution
2. The viability of our current political system
3. The path toward restoring true sovereignty to the Nigerian people.

**This Agenda therefore is not only the Right One but infact the Only One that matters now.** We endorse it in its entirety. Because the truth is this:

* The 1999 Constitution was **not a people’s constitution**
* It was a military decree, impose without the consent of the people
* The military suspendedthe 1963 Constitution which remains the last legal expression of our people’s collective will and agreed terms of condition for staying together.
* That Constitution was **SUSPENDED**; it was never repealed, proscribed or abrogated. At the end, rather than lift the suspension and restore our legitimate constitution, it was instead replaced with a fraudulent document that begins with the lie: **“We the people…”**
* This document was not even submitted to the National Assembly for adoption or ratification before it was put into use. The people of Nigeria were not consulted; we did not consent; it was foisted on us and our sovereignty was stolen.

**Why our Present Political System Cannot Work**

We are running a democracy where:

* Election results are determined not by the ballot but by various other undemocratic means.
* Representatives and leaders are selected by a few and imposed; they are not elected.
* Power flows from the party barons, not the people.
* Public service is privatized for profit, not national purpose.

This is not democracy. This is *elite authoritarianism with scanty democratic decoration.* And **the people know it**. That is why voter turnout declines. That is why trust in the government is dead. This has been exacerbated by our departure from a functional federal system to an imperial, presidential, unitary system which we practice at the moment. Unless we act now to reverse this situation, this country is bound to fragment.

**What the New Constitution Must Fix**

We, in consultation with other leaders and **The Compatriots** – a group I chair – believe the following must be addressed.

* **Sovereignty must return to the people.**
* **We must get rid of this *Unitary System* and reinstate the *Federal* *System* of governance that our founding fathers had agreed to.**
* **True Federalism must guarantee maximum autonomy to the federating units.**
* **Cost of politics must be brought down to open space for inclusiveness and real leadership.**
* **Unicameral legislature with ministers appointed only from elected representatives.**
* **Real mechanisms for accountability, recall and sanctions for non-performing and deviant public office holders.**
* **Impunity must end. Transparency must begin.**
* **Elections must be driven by ideas and integrity, not money.**
* **Party leadership must grow from within.**

**The Critical Questions this Summit Must Answer**

If this summit is to be considered a success, it must provide honest answers to three critical questions:

1. **Is the relationship between the nations that form Nigeria working?**

if not, why? And what new terms can make it work?

1. **Is the constitution helping us unite, coexist peacefully, and prosper?**

If not, why? And what type of constitution will?

1. **Is our political system inclusive, is it delivering accountable governance and promoting national progress?**

If not, why? And what political system will?

If we cannot honestly face these questions and leave here with a clear **strategy**, **timeline and commitment to change**, then this summit – with all its good intentions – would have been a tragic waste of opportunity.

**This is the Right Meeting – But what are Our Chances of Success?**

That will depend on just one thing: **Will we confront the hijacking of our sovereignty and do every legitimate and legal thing to fix it?**

If we leave here with a clear, actionable roadmap to:

1. **Restore sovereignty to the people**
2. **Enact a truly people-driven constitution**
3. **Reform our political system to reflect our realities**

…then this meeting will go down in history as the turning point for Nigeria.

But if we leave with nothing but speeches, handshakes and photo ops – the tragedy of Nigeria will continue. And we will all share in the blame.

**Let Us Reclaim Nigeria – Together**

We must not be afraid to change. We must rather be afraid not to change. Nigeria’s unity will only be preserved through fairness and justice – not force or fear. And if we miss this opportunity, the next chapter may be one of irreversible fragmentation. I believe, and I know many of you also believe, that time is running out.

Let this Summit be a strident call for a new beginning. Let The Patriots be remembered as the spark that reignited the flame of sovereignty. Let Nigeria be reborn, not just as a country, but as a **True Nation**.

Thank you, and may history remember this day not for what we said, but for what we were able to change.

**God bless you. God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria**

*His Excellency, Arc. (Obong) Victor Attah*

Leader, South-South Region

Chairman, The Compatriots