



**KEYNOTE ADDRESS
BY
DR DALHATU SARKI TAFIDA, OFR
HIGH COMMISSIONER OF NIGERIA
TO THE UNITED KINGDOM**

**AT THE TOWNHALL MEETING WITH NIGERIANS
IN DIASPORA ON VISION 2020,**

**HELD AT THE RECEPTION HALL
NIGERIA HIGH COMMISSION, LONDON
SATURDAY, 22ND AUGUST 2009**

Protocol

It is with profound pleasure that I welcome you all to this gathering. Our purpose today is to deliberate on **Vision 2020**, which is the development agenda of the Federal Government that seeks to make Nigeria one of the top twenty leading economies by the year 2020.

The role and significance of proper visioning in any human endeavour cannot be over-emphasised. A nation without a vision cannot survive. As a country, we must have a thorough understanding of our past, an appreciation of the challenges of the present and the prospects for the future. In this context, a well articulated vision provides the framework for the mission and the specific development agenda of Government, which is encapsulated in the **Seven-Point Agenda**. This is the vehicle that is expected to transform Nigeria into a land of great opportunities, while guaranteeing a secure future for present generation of Nigerians and for those yet unborn.

Nigerians in this country are currently estimated at 2 - 3 million. In fashioning out a development blue-print for our country therefore, it makes good political and economic sense for the Federal Government to take into due consideration the views, interests and concerns of such a huge and vibrant population.

Besides, Nigerians in the Diaspora have always been a critical factor in the development of Nigeria. Your contributions to the development of our country have also been well acknowledged and documented.

The World Bank, in its recent survey for instance, concluded that Nigeria made \$10 billion from migrant remittances in 2008 alone. If current trends towards global economic recovery continue, the expectation is that such remittances are sure to rebound next year, after falling victim of the current financial melt down.

Further more, your collective skills, expertise, knowledge and experiences of best practices have, and could still make even more significant impact on Nigeria's development enterprise. This is why the Federal Government decided to send abroad, a high-powered team as members of the National Steering Committee on Nigeria **Vision 2020**, led by the Honourable Minister of National Planning and Deputy Chairman of the National Planning Commission, Dr Shamsuddeen Usman, (OFR).

Today's event is therefore part of the process of consultation that is necessary for the proper development of the Vision. The overall objective is to develop national consensus around a development blue-print that is fully participatory, owned and promoted by Nigerians for Nigeria, including Nigerian communities abroad. Through your comments, observations and submissions, the document would have greatly benefited from your individual and collective wealth of experiences in all walks of life in this country.

It is, therefore, my expectation that you will, at the end of today's event, feel proud to have been associated with this epoch-making visioning process of the Federal Government.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

To attain the objectives of **Vision 2020** therefore, we must be clear and strategic in our objective and focused in our mission. From the various official pronouncements on this issue so far, it is not altogether clear what we aim to achieve. Do we, for instance, wish to make Nigeria one of the top twenty leading economies in the world by 2020, or one of the top twenty developed, or developing, emerging or industrialised economies in the world by 2020? Today's gathering should assist to clarify thinking on this matter.

Beyond this clarity of vision, we must also move away from rhetoric and platitudes to the realm of individual and collective actions. Let me end by appealing for the implementation of whatever blue-print would be adopted at the end of on-going exercise. The challenge we face as a people derives not from the absence or lack of progressive ideas and well-researched papers on how best to promote development in our country. It is usually the problem of haphazard or non-implementation of agreed decisions and development programmes, even of annual budgets.

Without a doubt, it is only through conscientious hard work and selfless service that the noble Vision of making Nigeria one of the top twenty developed economies in 2020 can be realised. The challenge is huge and the task, daunting. One only needs to take a look at where we are today as a country vis-à-vis others on the global development table, to appreciate the enormity of the challenge that confronts us as a country. But with the resourcefulness of our people, the "**Can Do**" spirit of all

Nigerians and especially the efforts of the National Chairman of the Steering Committee of the Vision 20202, Dr Shamsudden Usman and his team, I am very confident that this national objective will be attained.

Once again, I thank you, my dear country men and women, for answering the national call by attending today's event. May the Almighty continue to bless you all.

Long life the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

I thank you for your kind attention.