



**REMARKS**

**BY**

**HIS EXCELLENCY,  
DR. DALHATU SARKI TAFIDA, OFR  
HIGH COMMISSIONER OF NIGERIA TO THE  
UNITED KINGDOM**

**AT THE LAUNCHING OF THE HIGH COMMISSION'S NEW WEBSITE,**

**LONDON, THURSDAY, 17TH SEPTEMBER, 2009.**

## **PROTOCOL**

When we met at an interactive session on 2<sup>nd</sup> of April this year, I launched a programme of reform of the Mission's Immigration and Consular Services. One of the major highlights of the programme was the re-branding of the Mission's website, which we are here this afternoon to launch.

Our objective is to make information about the Mission's services readily and freely available to members of the public. As a multi-media outreach, the website will afford a great opportunity for easy communication with the public on all aspects of the Mission's activities and services.

It is therefore with the greatest delight and deep sense of satisfaction that I welcome you to this event. Let me assure you that we will continue to improve on our services until the situation is turned around for the better. We are determined to make the High Commission more citizen-centered and user-friendly in all our activities. Nigeria, Nigerians, and indeed, the public deserve no less and this is our Service Charter with the Nigerian people.

In the age of globalization that has transformed the way business is conducted around the world, Nigeria has no choice but to be part of this global movement. We cannot afford to be different. We must therefore seek to improve on our standard of service delivery by

adopting modern management techniques. We must take full advantage of advances in information and communication technologies, to improve our services. This is what underpinned the introduction of the e-passport biometric system by the Federal Government.

I am pleased to note, in this regard, that the new passport has gone a long way to restore the integrity of the security document. It has also started to earn our country greater respect that it rightly deserves across international frontiers.

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In addition to the re-branded website that we are about to launch, the High Commission is actively considering the introduction of an automatic appointment system. This is intended to assist in bringing some sanity and order into the immigration services, thereby reducing overcrowding in the Visa Hall.

In seeking improved services through automation however, we shall not lose sight of the peculiar needs of our people. We shall bear in mind the desire of Nigerians to feel the human touch in their interaction with the Mission. To this end, some telephone lines would be dedicated to public enquiries about passport and visa matters. This is to ensure that applicants receive prompt responses and feedback to their queries when they telephone the High Commission on any issue.

Let me seize this opportunity to appeal to Nigerians and members of the public to desist from patronizing touts for passports and visas. I am painfully aware that some unpatriotic Nigerians have embarked on deliberate campaigns of disinformation and deception of their fellow compatriots as regards procurement of passports. They operate as touts or so-called agents, by charging exorbitant fees to illegally fleece hapless Nigerians of their hard-earned income, in the process of obtaining passports under false pretences.

Some of these touts dissuade their fellow citizens from coming to the High Commission, by telling baseless stories of how difficult and near impossible it is to get anything done at the High Commission.

I need not say how far this is further from the truth. We are, nonetheless, determined to counter these negative campaigns and to change those perceptions about the High Commission through improved services and aggressive media and public communications strategies. The launching today of the new website is the first step in this direction.

Whatever your immigration status and circumstances, I strongly urge you not to patronise these touts or so-called agents. You are hereby advised to contact the Mission directly, to explain your situation to Immigration Officers, who have been instructed to show greater flexibility and understanding in handling difficult cases. It is my firm

belief that once the Mission keeps to this open door policy, touting, which has given the Mission the name it does not deserve, will soon become a thing of the past.

Once again, I invite the public, including Nigerians in the United Kingdom, to regularly visit the new and improved website. It is the only authentic gateway in the UK to the Mission and contemporary Nigerian Government affairs. We intend to make it the most effective and efficient means of receiving your feedback on the activities and performance of the High Commission. Your partnership, support and cooperation in this respect will, as usual, be greatly appreciated.

Let me end by pointing out, as I have done on numerous occasions in the past that, we, at the High Commission are in London to serve Nigerians and members of the public. We are not your masters, and we owe it a duty to render quality services in the name of our country. This is our duty and responsibility as a Mission. It is also the covenant I have entered with the people of Nigeria in the UK.

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

May I, on this note, formally launch the new website of the High Commission, which is located at [www.nigeriahc.org.uk](http://www.nigeriahc.org.uk)

I thank you for your attention.