

LET GOD'S WILL BE DONE AGAIN

A Declaration for Re-election by the Executive Governor of Akwa Ibom State, His Excellency Chief Godswill Obot Akpabio, on September 20, 2010

On November 26, 2006 we gathered here on this hallowed grounds and knocked on the door of destiny and it opened and since then our state has not been the same again. We have come here once again to make a demand on destiny. We did it before; it's time to do it again.

For some time now, the call for us to renew the covenant we entered into with Akwa Ibom people in 2007 has blown across our land like a refreshing ocean breeze. From the undulating hills of Itu to the rice fields of Ikono and from the sandy beaches of Ibeno to the palm plantations of Ikot Ekpene, the call has been the same, that we should enter into another covenant come 2011. This call was taken up by the Ibibios in a most touching and unforgettable reception at the hallowed grounds of Asan Ibibio, the Annangs did the same at Aquo Aran Afaha Obong, the Oros also made their call clear, the Eket people were not left out and one by one Akwa Ibom people spoke with one voice and one faith that this ship should continue to sail and berth at shore in 2015.

We still remember the majestic and steady voices of our royal fathers pleading that we should not let the people down by failing to continue our labours of love for our state beyond 2011. We recall the youths pleading that we should seek reelection and continue beyond 2011. We remember the men and women of our state saying the same thing openly, in whispers and in the media and declaring that not to seek reelection would amount to letting down the people at high tide.

Today, as a proof that the voice of the people is the voice of God, as a testament that whatsoever is born of faith overcomes the world and as testimony that your wishes are my command, I stand before you my dear compatriots and the Lord God Almighty, to declare my intention to seek re-election in 2011.

The Akwa Ibom of today is very different from the Akwa Ibom of 2007. Not only have we accelerated the pace of development and given hope to the hopeless and strength to the weak, we have broken the shackles of ethnicism and tribalism. We are glad that no umbrella of tribal hatred and ethnic chauvinism is strong enough to provide shelter for any politician from the torrential outpouring of our love and commitment to one united and indivisible Akwa Ibom State.

Thirty-eight months ago we made nonsense of the predictions of the “experts” and proved that nothing can stand on the way of a people who truly want change. In that November that we will always remember, you kept faith and vigil with me and ensured my emergence as the flag bearer of the Peoples Democratic Party on December 16, 2006. In the long drawn battle to keep that ticket, you did not relent and together we overcame the odds and built a coalition for a new Akwa Ibom State. That election of 2007 was a proof that names do not win elections, people do. You gave me your mandate not because I was anybody’s favoured candidate, you did not vote for me because I had a godfather; no, you gave me the mandate because you saw in me the sincerity of purpose and the passion to make our state a better place.

When I speak about our state I speak with great passion because I have a deep burden to make our state truly the Land of Promise. When the architects of our state creation bequeathed to us the sobriquet of the Land of Promise, they gave a cheque of hope to every generation of Akwa Ibom people to cash and withdraw from the vaults of God's promises concerning us. Several generations cashed that cheque and could not withdraw sufficient resources to meet our needs.

But because you believed in me and in my belief that the vaults of God's promises are inexhaustible, with faith and love we could cash this cheque and let manna rain down from Heaven. And we have seen manna in the form of free and compulsory education for our children. It may not have been done before but we came to challenge tradition and show our people that what we were born to see is not what we were born to be.

In the educational sector we have not only introduced free and compulsory education up to senior secondary schools, we have built over 500 classroom blocks, and renovated 1500 others. Public primary schools are beginning to look like private schools and the lines between both are becoming blurred. Those who thought that we would remain the house boy and girl factory of Nigeria are at pains that the house boys and house girls are set to become the scholars and professionals. We have changed the story of the Akwa Ibom child and we have created great hope and a brighter future for the hitherto hopeless children of our state.

In 2007 we met our educational infrastructure in shambles. The structures were dilapidated and the data base was as shocking as it was revealing. But thirty-eight months later, we have changed the face of our educational

infrastructure. We have succeeded in abolishing all kinds of levies in primary and secondary schools by the payment of subvention to school heads to cater for the logistic of school children at the rate of N100 per pupil per term and N300 per student per term. In addition we have provided over three million free textbooks, science and laboratory equipment, including reagents to ensure our children undergo science practical's without pains. We have also paid examination fees for our children. We have come a long way, but we still have some rivers to cross.

Fellow compatriots, I am happy to inform you that the Akwa State University law had been signed. We have upgraded facilities there and the institution is set to take-off. At the University of Uyo, a federal institution, we also upgraded infrastructural facilities, tarred 3.5 km of internal roads and built school and academic blocks. Courtesy of our intervention, the institution regained accreditation in 28 courses hitherto lost. We did this in the interest of our children and future generations of Akwa Ibom people who would be beneficiaries of this gesture.

You will recall that prior to our assumption in office on May 29, 2007, I promised that neither your life nor our state will be the same again. My vision was to transform our dear state from being a pedestrian state to a destination. To do this, we set out on a journey to change the face of infrastructure in Akwa Ibom State and this has come to be known as "uncommon transformation." Today, out of the quagmire of bad and deplorable roads we met in 2007, have emerged dual carriageways, standard highways and single lane roads of the highest quality running like industrial nerves throughout the state. We have given a new lease of life to communities which were cut off by impassable roads, some for more than

30 years. Over 205 roads of more than 600 km have been rehabilitated/constructed. Over 200 km of federal roads have also been constructed. Critics claimed that we should have ignored them because they were federal roads, but the people who suffered untold hardship and sometimes died on these roads were not federal citizens, but citizens of Akwa Ibom State.

We have changed the face of Uyo, our capital city through massive road projects and the concentric flyovers at Itam junction. With pride it must be stated that Uyo is one of the fastest growing cities in Nigeria and it was necessary to construct these flyovers to receive and evacuate future traffic in a seamless and efficient manner. This is in addition to the ongoing urban renewal and remodeling of Uyo metropolis.

When we came into office we met a dilapidated Governor's Lodge. We were confronted with the choice of rehabilitating the structurally deficient one or to build a new one. We opted for the later and that decision has paid off. We built a brand new state-of-the-art Governor's Lodge within sixteen months. This edifice is the symbol of the new Akwa Ibom.

For so many years, the city of Uyo had suffered flooding and successive administrations had attempted various options to solving the problem, to no avail. I am aware that during heavy rain fall, various part of the city suffer this problem of flooding essentially because Uyo sits on a table land. In order to address this 'monster', my administration embarked on the construction of the first ever in Africa underground drainage project using the Pipe-jacking technology. This breathtaking initiative has reservoirs with up to 40 metres of depth and a hallow piping traversing 3.7 km to an

outflow. It is the first of its kind in Africa. Let me assure you that we are attacking the flood problems in many fronts believing that succor will soon come to my brothers and sisters in those affected areas.

At the inception of my administration, I did assure our people that government is a continuum and therefore will pursue projects and initiatives that will benefit the generality of the people. I also assured that my administration would make prudent use of resources coming to the State to develop lasting and enduring infrastructure. This propelled our decision to pursue the completion of Akwa Ibom International airport which was at 10% completion in 2007. By sheer determination and commitment, we completed the first phase of the airport which was commissioned by Mr President during his recent visit. I am happy to announce to you that today Akwa Ibom people can fly.

The old adage that Health is Wealth has found a place in Akwa Ibom State under this administration. In line with our commitment of ensuring a sound and healthy populace, we declared free health care programme for children, expectant mothers and the elderly. Similarly, we have constructed 5 brand new general hospitals (commissioned two), rehabilitated existing ones, while the Specialist Hospital is under construction.

My dear people of Akwa Ibom State, you will agree with me that lack of sufficient Power supply has been the bane of industrial development in the country. I am happy that Mr. President has accorded this sector the attention it deserves. In order to ensure Akwa Ibom people enjoy uninterrupted power supply, my administration pursued the completion of Ibom Power Project at Ikot Abasi, which we met at 65 per cent level of

completion, with great resolve. Today, we can boldly say that we can generate 191 megawatts of power for our people and indeed Nigerians. While we are working out details of transmission and distribution to ensure the provision of uninterrupted power supply in our state, it is worthy to note that we have entered into a first PPP in the gas sector with Septa Energy for the supply of uninterrupted gas to the IPP.

By now it would have dawned on you that the centre-piece of our policies is the Akwa Ibom person. We have moved development and the provision of basic amenities to the rural communities and touched the lives of our brothers who sojourn in the remote parts of our state. So we have executed more than 3,000 rural projects (including reticulation of water supply, boreholes, primary health care facilities, rehabilitation of school blocks etc) across the 31 local government areas of the state. Our resolve to ensure that every community in Akwa Ibom State is connected to the national power grid by 2011 is on course and so far more than 865 communities have been connected with the national power grid.

So between 2007 and now what has been the lot of the Akwa Ibom person? Public and civil servants now enjoy a 13th month pay and prompt payment of salaries and declare at each forum that they have never had it so good. Doctors, senior judiciary officers, royal fathers today ride to work and their businesses in brand new cars, courtesy of this administration. Parents are spared the payment of fees for their wards in primary and secondary schools. Husbands are spared the payment of medical bills for their pregnant wives and babies. Medical and law students enjoy improved bursaries with laptops to enhance their performances. Many of our children have been sent on all-expenses training abroad to study avionics, aviation

operation officers, engineering, deep sea welding, while civil servants are going through various training programmes within and outside the country. We have also used the inter-ministerial direct labour jobs to empower our people and encourage local contractors in our state. Our youths numbering more than 2,000 have been trained under the state integrated farmers scheme and empowered with N500,000 each to engage in commercial farming. Our administration has opened employment opportunities through the Civil Service, Judiciary Service and indirect engagement of our youths through the various construction projects ongoing in the state.

What we have done has caught the imagination of the nation. We have received countless awards and accolades from the academia, media, churches and reputable organizations within and outside the shores of this country. And like I said on each of these occasions, the true winners of these awards are the children of Akwa Ibom State, whom we are positioning as tomorrow's tigers.

We stand at a bridge today. A bridge between a past filled with great memories which we have attempted to capture in this brief summary; and a future which beckons with great hope and promise. Someone asked me in a television interview, " You have done so much in the first term that I fear that there will be nothing left to do in the second term."

I understood where he was coming from. He was looking at what we have done not what we could do; he was looking at the floor not at the sky; today our eyes are on the skies and we are set to break new grounds. We have expanded our perspective and broadened our horizon. We are set to do more in the next four years than we did in the last four. We intend to anchor

this race in style come 2015. And that is why I keep telling my people, “you ain’t seen nothing yet.”

So what promises do the next four years hold? Having laid the foundation for the industrial development of our state through the provision of an enabling infrastructure, we intend to embark upon the industrialization of Akwa Ibom State through the establishment of one industry per local government in the state using the public/private partnership (PPP) model. We shall explore Internal and national corporation to help move this turnkey initiatives forward, while fashioning out ways of strategic engagement of our citizens in the Diaspora for the development of the state.

We look forward to the construction of the Ibom Industrial City. Ibom Industrial City will be an industrial mix of oil and gas–based support services, dockyard and watercraft repair facilities, fertilizer plant, oil refinery, gas-to-liquid projects, petrochemical industries, power plant, deep seaport, etc. In fact this promises to be a self-sustaining industrial city with schools, hospitals, shopping malls, hotels etc. It will be one of its kind in the entire world. Other priority areas will include the full completion of the Tropicana Entertainment Centre, the opening up of Uyo metropolis by the construction of ring roads, and the construction of roads in other local government areas, and an Olympic-size stadium in Uyo.

We shall strategically position the Akwa Ibom State International Airport for regional and international operations: commence full operation of maintenance repair and overhaul (MRO) services. Commencement of an international cargo services and completion of the international main terminal building for the region.

We have done a lot to improve security in our state and we will stop at nothing to ensure that lives and properties are secured. We intend to provide the latest technology and necessary logistics to the police and other security agencies to enhance their operations and the gathering of necessary intelligence to stamp out acts of banditry and kidnapping in our state.

Great nations go through great trials. Nations like Malaysia rose through a dint of hard work, diligence and sacrifice to achieve industrial renaissance. Japan emerged out of the ruins of the Second World War with great determination and resolve and today it is one of the leading industrial nations. We in Akwa Ibom have what it takes to make the sacrifices today for the tomorrow of our dreams. It would do us a lot of good to see this days as our planting season and not as harvest time. Let us believe that in the Second Term, the fruits will ripen and the harvest will begin. I mean greater empowerment for our people.

When you see Godswill Akpabio on television or see me as you are seeing me today you do not know where I am coming from. When the world was at war and freedom was threatened, my father was one of those who signed up and went to fight to keep the world safe. He died shortly after I was born, but the spirit that drove him to those shores to fight for justice, was one of the traits he bequeathed to me. I was left in the warm arms of a loving mother who was a petty trader and who seldom had enough to meet our needs. So I understand.

The discomfort President Jonathan talked about in his declaration sounded like a passing ambulance to some people, but to me that same ambulance

came for me early. I laboured through primary school but could not start secondary school the year I ought to have started because my mother could not afford the fees for three of us in secondary school. I used to sneak into a nearby secondary school until the day I was chased out by the security men and I fell in the shrubs and hurt my leg. That scar is still there in my leg and it is a daily reminder that no one should have to face what I faced as a child.

Every day I look at that scar and renew my commitment to the welfare of our children. That is why children are guaranteed by law the right to education. No more shall any child in my lifetime be denied education because of lack; I paid the price for all Akwa Ibom children. This I believe is why God brought me from my humble estate to pilot the affairs of our state. And so we believe that all of us may not have same talents but we should all have an equal opportunity to develop our talents. We note that “messiahs” are not usually born in palaces, but in mangers and if any has been born in our time, we will not deny him the opportunity to fulfil his mission.

And if I, who once was chased out of school because I did not have ten Naira to pay the fees, could become the Governor of our state, let any child, youth, man or woman who is buffeted by circumstances not lose hope. You may have been born in the slum but the slum was not born in you. Never let it cross your mind that yesterday’s pitfalls can be today’s albatross. My pains of yesterday have become our gain today and clouds of pain have brought forth showers of gain for our children and for our state.

As I seek your mandate for re-election today, let every child who has been anxious about his tomorrow be assured that the vaults of opportunities of our land shall remain open to all irrespective of ethnic group, tribe or religion. Those who seek to whip up hatred, ethnicity and ignorance have come too late. In the book “Pilgrims Progress” by Bunyan there is the story of the man with the muckrake, who would not look up or see anything else apart from the mud and the rake. We have men like that in our midst and they have failed to look up and see that that a new dawn has fallen on our state.

They are still holding onto their muckrake and slinging mud. But in this campaign we have decided that nothing shall compel us to wrestle with pigs. We shall conduct this campaign on the moral high ground of decorum and dignity. We shall let our achievements speak for us and just as we did in 2007, we have sought the face of God and handed over our destiny to the Almighty God.. Therefore I send out this call to all Akwa Ibom people that they should sound the trumpets, roll out the drums and sing from rooftops that God’s will is about to be done again come 2011. So let God’s will be done again come 2011.

God bless you all!

God bless Akwa Ibom State!

God bless our country Nigeria!