

SUSTAINING POLICE REFORM

AN ADDRESS PRESENTED BY
THE EXECUTIVE GOVERNOR OF
AKWA IBOM STATE, HIS EXCELLENCY
CHIEF GODSWILL OBOT AKPABIO, CON,
ON THE OCCASION OF THE POLICE RETREAT,
MAKURDI, JANUARY 30, 2014

I came to this retreat today with great hope and expectation. Hope that this event would offer you a great opportunity to review your activities and strategies, and prepare yourselves for the challenges of today and tomorrow. Expectation that as we begin the slow march to elections next year, and political campaigns begin this year, you will use this retreat to re-strategise on how to remain a potent force for keeping the law boosting the confidence of the populace in our democracy. I pay tribute to His Excellency, President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, GCFR, for initiating the Police Reform programme in 2012. He has done a great work as the President of our great country and his commitment to our rebirth as a nation is exemplary. I also want to commend the Inspector General of Police, Mr. Mohammed Abubakar, and his team. In joining Mr President to reform the Nigeria Police you have given our democracy a fresh breeze and boosted faith in our democracy. However, though you have taken the police a long way, there is still some distance to cover, and I pray that in the course of this retreat you will come up with ways on how to cover that distance. I also believe

that you would find new ways to tackle the challenges facing our nation in the course of this retreat. There have been some criticisms of the Police by the larger society. But those who criticize the Police fail to understand that like the Greek philosopher, Aristotle, said, "Man cannot be better than his society." When Aristotle said this he meant that the society socializes the man and determines his likes and dislikes. The society is the father and mother of the man and woman. The society determines the values of each citizen. Consequently, each institution is a mirror and microcosm of the society, and this is true of the police. Police reform should, therefore, be accompanied by attitudinal re-orientation in the society. A part cannot reform if the whole does not reform. The Nigeria Police recruits its men and women from the society and what the society puts in the police is what it gets out of it. So as the society clamour for the reform of the Police, they should also look inwards to reform itself so that what ever reform the police undertakes would be sustained. At the same time I would want to say that the Police can chose to change the course of our history and become the conscience of our nation. We are conscious that our former colonial masters set up the police structure to take care of restive communities. Then the police were agents of our then colonial masters. But now you are working for your mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, uncles and aunties and there is need for a paradigm shift. There is need sustain this reform. There is need to completely remove the last vestige of our colonial past and place the force in the vortex of national rebirth and as a bulwark of our democracy. I know that you can do this under the able leadership of Mr Abubakar, a worthy patriot. This can be a defining moment in the history of the Police and in the annals of our nation. When we talk about

the dividends of democracy, it must be stated that such dividends begin with the provision of security. In my state we have invested heavily in security in terms of the provision of vehicles and equipment to combat crime and insecurity. We have twin security outfits in the "Operation Thunder," a joint police/military intervention squad; and the "Quick Response Squad," a police anti-vice squad. Members of these squads are covered by insurance and have proven to be of good conduct. With these two squads and the cooperation of other security agencies we have created a peaceful society with minimal security challenges. This to me is an eloquent proof that the Police has untapped potential and in the right conditions would show themselves worthy patriots in our country. I thank you for the kind invitation to come and address you on this occasion. May the echoes of this retreat reverberate in the pathways of our history as a response by patriotic officers to Nigeria's call as espoused in those immortal words in our national anthem. I wish you a great retreat.

Thank you and God bless you all.