

INVESTING IN PEOPLE

I am happy to be here with you to celebrate the birthday of my friend and political partner, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu. I call on all Nigerians to join me in celebrating this man. Asiwaju Tinubu is widely known as a political strategist. But strategy is barren unless wedded to a higher purpose than just itself.

2. Here, Asiwaju also sets himself apart. I have come to see him as a man who cares about people and who is a fountain of ideas for economic development and improving the situation of the common man and woman. He is a true humanitarian and we appreciate his contributions to Nigeria's and Africa's progress.

3. I salute the Vice President, Professor Yemi Osinbajo and other members, for initiating this colloquium a full decade ago. Over the course of that ten years, we have traveled far in one sense, yet have moved but a few steps in another.

4. We as a people and a nation are in the midst of a grand endeavor. We seek to change the ways and means of our collective existence, we seek to construct a nation where leaders no longer rule by whim but govern according to law and for the betterment of the people.

5. We seek to replace corruption with correctness, insecurity with safety and poverty with prosperity.

6. The road we tread is rough and hard in spots. The search for progress and reform has its rough patches. Many will fight you and connive to deter the march toward a better land.

7. But that march is inevitable. There is no mortal hand that can keep us from our best destiny unless that hand be our own.

8. Thus, we invest in people, we invest in ourselves because we are enlivened by God given faith that tomorrow can be better than today and that good will triumph over evil.

9. Forums such as this present ideas and spark important discussions that enliven our national discourse and enrich our policy options.

10. We seek to rebuild what has been wrongfully constructed and to plant a firm foundation for progress where nothing now exists.

11. Our goal is to bring together every section of the nation and every Nigerian of every creed, every region and ethnic group in mutually beneficial, productive, social, economic and political relationships.

12. To accomplish our historic mission we must invest in people.

13. Here, I can say that the expenditures made by this government constitute investment in and for the people. We depend on the people to govern. This government recognizes this, hence our investment in critical areas that touch the lives of people directly.

14. Social investment program. The school feeding program. Massive investments in agriculture, a sector that employs over 65 per cent of our people. We strive to set Nigeria on an irreversible path of growth and development. This is the objective that guides our investments and expenditures as a government.

15. We join hands to build a better country. We are resolute in our commitment to uplift our people and to make Nigeria a better place.

16. I think my friend Asiwaju would be happy with such a birthday gift.

17. Happy birthday Asiwaju. May God grant you many more years of good health and service to Nigeria.