

## A CHARGE TO PATRIOTISM



It is a dear hope of mine that next years' election will not only bring or give us a president and the vice president that Nigeria deserves, but also the political contest we deserve. One that inspires our young people to see politics as a noble calling, so that the best and the brightest of our young people will commit themselves to public service. That way, in 2027, and in 2031, and beyond, the caliber of candidates will be, if anything, even greater.

All thanks to the dedicated efforts of those who take responsibility here and now. The sad fact is that too many of our countrymen and women are cynical about politics, and about the whole process. Nigerans have experienced many frustrations in the decades since we won our independence. The path to full democracy has been a slow and uneven one. We all know that we are not there yet.

Patriotic leaders like my father have played their part in keeping our country together, and in bringing about the stability and the rule of law required for economic growth and human flourishing. But ofcourse, it will be an understatement to state that not all of our leaders have served us well. Even since the advent of the 4<sup>th</sup> republic in 1999, the history of democracy in Nigeria has been a checkered one, so it is natural that Nigerians are weary at election time. B ut it is also important that we do not give in to cynicism.

The 2022 electoral bill has been an important step forward and I hope it will give voters great confidence in the conduct of the electoral process. It is important that the elections are not only free and fair, but seen to be free and fair, so transparency is a key principle. Along with the integrity and independence of electoral officers and ofcourse, the judiciary. A strong and independent judiciary is as essential to democracy as the elections them self because, it is only when voters have faith in the rule of law, that they will participate enthusiastically in the elections and trust the results.

Naturally, there are also concerns about the monetization of the electoral process because nobody must be able to buy votes or steal an election. But we must remember that majority of those who entered politics, whichever party they are, are motivated by public service and a desire to shape a better future for Nigeria.

And ofcourse, It is also the purpose of today's dialogue (The Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida Legacy dialogue), there are many wise men and women gathered here today. Brought together by the gravitas of one of the wisest heads of all – President Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida. So, this is an opportunity to share some of that wisdom and to educate and inspire a new generation of leaders for our country.

Next year's election campaign is a time for party politics. Now is the time for unity, for national togetherness, a time to forgive and forget the quarrels of the past, and to focus on the solutions for the future.

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