



FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

# AN INAUGURAL ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY

HIS EXCELLENCY  
DR NNAMDI AZIKIWE

*President and Commander-in-Chief  
of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*

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*President and Commander-in-Chief  
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## *Eternal Gratitude*

### *to my Country*

Mr Prime Minister, Excellencies, Friends and Compatriots :

After three years of independence, our Parliament has proclaimed Nigeria to become a Federal Republic. Thus our country has now emerged as a fully fledged independent member of the family of nations.

Instead of being restive, we have every reason to be composed because our leaders have proved their mettle by soberly guiding us safely through the crucible of political apprenticeship during these three difficult years of transition from a monarchy to a republic.

On this history-making occasion, I have three major tasks to perform : to amplify the significance of the oaths administered to me ; to clarify the nature of our Constitution ; and to acknowledge the honour done me by my country.

You are living witnesses of the fact that two oaths have just been administered to me. The first is the Oath of Allegiance enjoining me to be loyal to the country of my birth by preserving, protecting and defending its Constitution. The second is the Oath of Office bidding me to serve my country as a faithful functionary according to law.

Loyalty to one's country is the most precious tribute a patriot can pay to his nativelyland. Faithfulness to duty is the most acceptable service expected from a conscientious servant. Loyalty implies submissiveness, devotion, amenability. Faithfulness involves trustworthiness, truthfulness, honesty. Thus loyalty and faithfulness express the idea of steadfastness to a common purpose.

An oath is a solemn declaration formally invoking God to bear witness to the truth of what one says and to attest the fact that one has publicly declared his intention to do what he says. To-day, I have reverently vouched to uphold the Constitution of our Federal Republic and to nourish it in the performance of my duties.

Our Constitution is the organic law of the land. It came into operation barely ten hours ago. It is a written one and a formidable document. It delimits the territories of our federation, defines



*His Excellency Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, LL.D.  
President and Commander-in-Chief of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*



Nigerian citizenship, guarantees fundamental rights, and provides for the maintenance of law and order by distributing powers among the executive, legislative and judicial arms of the State, based upon the principles of parliamentary government and the concepts of liberal democracy.

The primary purpose of our Constitution is to further the ends of liberty, equality and justice both in Nigeria and in the world at large. Its secondary aims are directed towards five objectives: to establish a federal republic; to ensure the unity of our people; to inculcate in our citizens faith in our fatherland; to promote inter-African unity; and to foster harmonious international relations.

The spirit and letter of our Constitution are the bulwark of our liberties under the law. They provide for a government of our people by their elected representatives, whose source of power is derived from the consent of the people. Ours is intended to be a democracy in a republic which was created in order to consolidate our national unity into a more perfect union that will be perpetual, inseparable and indivisible.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria has been established upon the basic principles of respect for individual freedom under the law, equality of opportunity for all, dispensation of justice to all without fear or favour, and the delegation of executive powers to the collective responsibility of dedicated servants of the State, whose forte is intelligence, humanity, fairplay and honesty.

Our National Anthem summarised these principles in simple poetic language, thus:

“Though tribe and tongue may differ  
In brotherhood we stand.”

This places an important emphasis on our national unity.

“Our flag shall be a symbol  
That truth and justice reign.”

This elucidates our unshakable belief in the rule of law and in the insulation of our judicature from political subversion.

“O God of all creation,  
Grant this our one request,  
Help us to build a nation  
Where no man is oppressed,  
And so with peace and plenty,  
Nigeria may be blessed.”

This illustrates the objective we expect our rulers to attain in order to preserve the corporate existence of our nation and also ensure the well-being of our people.

Let us follow this path, which our National Anthem has delineated, because it is straight and leads to the haven of peace, order and good government. Moreover, it will add lustre to the splendid reputation we have made as a budding model of democracy not only in Africa but in the world.

With such a commendable record, we can afford to place our stewardship on the plinth of critical, but informed, public opinion. By all means let us be tolerant of the criticisms of our action executed in the course of our duties and responsibilities. Democracy exacts from its votaries the privilege to be an open target for public assault. That is one price we have to pay for cherishing it.

But we must jealously guard our new freedom to live like free men and free women in a free republic, and we must defend with all our might any attempt, no matter how subtle or from any source it may emanate, to interfere either in our internal affairs or in our external relations.

To no person, no matter how wealthy, should we sell our soul. To no nation, no matter how powerful, should we mortgage our conscience. To no group, no matter how influential, should we pawn our thoughts. But we should always reserve to ourselves and to our posterity the right to know, to think, to hold opinion and to pursue our own good in our own way without denying or depriving others of their right to do so. That is our concept of true national freedom.

It is only on very rare occasions that a nation confers on its son the unique privilege of incorporating his name in a written Constitution as its first citizen. Within the context of recent African history, some independent States have so honoured their distinguished sons, among which are—the Kingdom of Burundi, the Empire of Ethiopia, the Republic of Ghana, the United Kingdom of Lybia, the Kingdom of Morocco, the Republic of Tunisia, and the State of Uganda.

To elevate me to the pedestal of Head of State is glorious enough. To portray me as a symbol of our national personality is more than any human being can desire. But to place on permanent record in a written Constitution that I shall be deemed to have been elected President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria



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and to have such a Bill unanimously adopted by both Houses of our Parliament constitute in my humble way of thinking an eternal honour that enshrines me in the hearts of the men and women of my generation.

I thank my country for the honour done me. My country men and women have clothed my names with an aura of honour and dignity for which I shall be eternally grateful.

God helping us, let us serve this nation loyally and faithfully with determination to preserve and protect the rights and obligations enshrined in the Constitution of our new Republic. In doing so, we shall give faith to the skeptic, infuse courage in the timid, and restore hope to the disillusioned.