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Transcript

The Challenge of Change: Democracy and Development in Ekiti State, Nigeria

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HE Dr Kayode Fayemi

The elders of my small but scenic hometown, Isan-Ekiti, had come to see me to express certain displeasure with me shortly after I was sworn-in as the Governor of Ekiti State in late 2010. At this point, while Government House in the State capital was being renovated, I was driving to the Governor's office from my hometown daily. The elders told me that they found it disappointing and sorely disconcerting that the people in the town were hardly aware of when I drove out of, and back into, town every day. Why was this a problem, I was forced to ask them.

Well, they understood my credentials as a scholar, they were also aware that I had been an activist for many years. But now I was the Governor of Ekiti State and this would be the first and perhaps only time in a long while that the Governor would come from their hometown. Why then was I denying them the opportunity of enjoying the pomp and circumstance of power by driving in and out of town without using the siren – if only to remind the people of the adjoining towns that their own son is the governor of the state?

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, there are countless such stories that I can tell to illustrate both the challenges and the opportunities for change in the ethos and practices of power and governance in Nigeria. But let me first express my gratitude to Chatham House and Alex Vines, Head of the Africa Programme at Chatham House, for this invitation to speak here today. The original topic I was given was 'For Better, For Worse: State Governance, Change and Unity in Nigeria.' I have decided to speak on the same issue, but to alter the title slightly by speaking to 'The Challenge of Change: State Governance, Democratisation and Development in Nigeria.'

I am particularly pleased to honour the invitation of the Africa Programme which has been working hard over the last decade to develop foreign policy-oriented research on issues affecting African countries, both internally and externally. I know that I am preceded by distinguished speakers and leaders from all over the African continent, the United Kingdom and elsewhere in the world. I am glad that this forum provides the opportunity for questions and a discussion after the main speech. I look forward to this interaction and would therefore only lay out key issues, including the fundamentals, the ethos and the practices which I believe are significant in examining the challenges facing state governance, democratisation and development in Nigeria.

Change is central in all these, because social transformation is an indispensable factor in any society - even in the most developed ones.

Because society is a permanent work-in-progress, continuity and change must be in a constant struggle so as to find the best direction and methods of social progress. However, no lasting social change starts outside the minds of human beings. This is why Albert Einstein stated that 'The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking.' If a political culture encourages people to think that a state governor is not 'governor enough' if he does not announce his going and coming with blaring sirens, even when there is no obstructing traffic, then we have to realise that the challenge of change is multi-dimensional and I intend to touch on some of these in this lecture.

The Fundamentals of the African State

The last two decades of democratisation in Africa have witnessed significant social, economic and political changes on the African continent. As one who spent several years in civil society, working with social forces in Africa and development agencies across the world to encourage change on the continent, indeed, I can confirm that Africa is changing for the better.

Of course I am not unaware that a lot has been written by western scholars on the African predicament which oscillates between hope and despair and described in various dark grammars – failed states, collapsed states, incapable states, proforma democracies, to mention but a few of such epithets. Some African scholars have equally responded to many of the dark prognoses on the African state by describing them as 'collapse thesis.' Some western scholars have even gone further, adept at what they consider to be the most sinister manifestations of the state in Africa since it fits a convenient and popular narrative, to announce that, despite all its 'illogicality,' 'Africa actually works', because as they conclude, 'disorder acts as political instrument' in the continent.

While my intention here is not to indulge in philosophical and/or theoretical postulations about the continent, it is fitting to turn to a Marxian dictum in reacting to the prevailing restrictive and popular constraining attitude both in the academy and the international development community toward the African state. 'The philosophers have only interpreted the world,' says Marx in *The German Ideology*, 'the point, however, is to change it.' We can say the same about Africa: the philosophers have only interpreted Africa, the point, however, is to change it. We have not only been presented with the fundamentals of the African state, millions of us have also lived this reality in

the last half a century since independence. The challenge, therefore, is to change these conditions for the better, and through this help interested parties in recognizing key elements and useful signs towards deepening democracy and achieving better governance.

First, I think we all need a typology of Africa's democratization that further interrogates the broad categories away from the Manichean divide – of success and failure, pessimism and optimism, sub-optimal performance and unprecedented progress – which is possible and indeed, necessary because of its practical implications for policy choices by African citizens, their governments and development partners. In this vein, one could clearly talk about five strands and even within them, experiences remain mixed and non-linear. One, there are states in the process of consolidating democracy and achieving better governance due to more legitimate and accountable governance, reformist economic management, a rights-based agenda, and a more active and demanding citizenry among other critical success factors – Botswana, Benin and Ghana qualify here. Second are states in various stages of transitions – Kenya, Senegal, South Africa, Mozambique and Tanzania. Third, are states in conflict or emerging out of conflict – DRC, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Liberia, Sierra Leone, for example. Fourth are states in relapse or re-militarization – Comoros, Guinea Bissau, Madagascar and Mauritania and fifth, in my view, are out-rightly authoritarian states.

One must point out however that accurate as this typology is, it remains incomplete in its inadequate analyses of the process and dynamics of change and in its focus on outcomes. As argued elsewhere, 'both optimists and pessimists of the African condition focus on outcomes, linking these outcomes in a linear relationship with particular reforms and assuming static environments.' Yet, what is needed is an understanding of the relationship between evolving economic and political contexts of reform – of how and why reforms proceed. Equally, we must move away from a focus on judgments pegged on macro-reforms: that is, country level analyses and big ticket issues – democratization, privatization, anti-corruption, insecurity – that are often measured by large, dramatic shifts – technically appropriate but often lacking in political fit. Opportunities to accelerate change and strengthen governance structures are often missed in the context of this exclusive focus, or worse they may accelerate the challenges, inherent in the process of change, by withdrawing, for example, in the wake of partial reform. Rather than focus on short term gains, it is important to understand social change in Africa in a longer term perspective rather than through the typical binaries of success

and failure. In this way, it would become clear that societal transformation in Africa in the past two decades of democratisation has led to the emergence of new social forces, changed the importance of others and consequently altered the relationships among various social and political actors whilst fostering new coalitions between the state and society. Consequently, in many parts of Africa - to different degrees, and with different forms of agency - people are engaging the state and insisting that, both in violent and peaceful ways, the state must answer to society.

The Ethos of Governance

What then is the ethos of governance in contemporary Africa? As I argued in a recent address at an event organised by the grant-making Open Society Africa Foundations of the Soros Network in Accra, Ghana, the dialectics of reform in Africa have demonstrated in the last two decades that rarely does transformation come from a single, big shift, but rather as a cascading outcome of cumulative shifts. Yet, democracy watchers and development experts insist on seeing the glass of good governance as consistently half-empty or half-filled, the truth is that significant variations exist in between these broad generalizations when we move away from outcomes and focus on the dynamics, quality, texture and content of democratic and governance reform on the African continent. While it's clearly, overall, a Gramscian case of the new being born with the old not yet dead, this conflict of exaggerated expectations and unmitigated disappointments are perhaps not surprising in Africa's half a century of multiple transitions. What has become clear to more discerning watchers of political reform in Africa in the last decade – particularly those interested in better governance is the fact that success is not at all dependent on how technically sound such reform initiatives are, but on the extent of its political and programmatic fit. In other words, we must move away from overtly technocratic and a-political conceptions of reforms and embrace reforms that are both 'technically appropriate' and 'politically grounded'.

In many ways therefore, as a process of decision-making and the means or methods by which decisions are implemented, governance is about change and it must be sensitive to the process, not just intended products. What the concept and practices of governance have alerted us to, in very complex ways in contemporary Africa, are the fundamental ways in which government is only one of the actors, even if the most critical actor, in governance. As a concept and vehicle of change, governance involves many actors acting in

consonance to ensure social transformation. Therefore, good governance is participatory, consensus-oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and ensures the rule of law.

However, the paradigm that produced the exclusive focus on country level analyses, which led to disillusionment in 1980s Africa, also produced a total shift to civil society in the post 1980s-era. The first failed to realise the complexities of the different social formations that compose the state and the inter-relationship among the different levels of state organisation that make up the state in Africa, particularly in a federal state. The other failed to realise that, in the end, civil society, even where it produces reform, cannot sustain positive change without the mobilisation and control of state power. Gladly, many in the international community, including international development agencies, have come to realise the complexities and the shifting context of politics that must be appreciated in engineering change on the continent. To be concrete, international development agencies and donors, such as the UNDP, UKAid, the European Union and the World Bank, are now aware, even if they sometimes choose to ignore this, that ensuring and embracing micro-level transitions at sub-national levels in a country like Nigeria is important for promoting good governance. Whereas many still focus exclusively on the development index and democratic and governance index at national levels, some of these organisations can bear testimony to the participatory, consensus-oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive governance matched by adherence to the rule of law at the sub-national level in Nigeria. Take for instance a few health indicators in the human development index that illustrate my point: the average life expectancy in Nigeria is 47 years, but Ekiti with the highest life expectancy in Nigeria is 55 years. Equally, the HIV infection rate in Nigeria is 4.1% but in Ekiti, it is 1.1%, again the lowest in the country and under-five mortality in Nigeria is 157 in 100,000 but in Ekiti, it is 110 in 100,000 births, which is still too high in my view.

In Nigeria, sub-national states like Lagos, Edo, Anambra, Gombe, Jigawa, Rivers and my own state of Ekiti, are constantly demonstrating the possibilities of change and good governance under popularly elected governments. I am particularly proud to use Ekiti State as an example. Despite all the negatives that we inherited, which included the violation of the people's sovereign right to decide the leadership through democratic means, when my administration came to office, we launched a well-articulated 8-point Agenda of making poverty history in our State. We have pursued this agenda

vigorously with a dedicated team of professionals with outstanding track records in various spheres of human endeavour, and a high degree of personal integrity. Having been a core activist in both local and international civil society and having now being in partisan politics for eight years and in government for two years, I have been able to mobilise the energies in the three spheres – civil society, political society, and the state - to ensure best practices and good governance and support from development partners. This is done with a strong belief in the need to build coalitions for change beyond the three orbits, which I believe, should not constitute a basis for separation and fragmentation, but rather a basis for building community and cohesion.

Against this backdrop, in Ekiti State, within two years, we have restored the core Ekiti values of passion, courage, integrity, meritocracy and honour; we have restored confidence in Ekiti State among local and international development partners and investors with our people-oriented policy thrust in all the units of governance. Our 8-point agenda include Participatory Governance; Infrastructural Development; Modernising Agriculture; Education and Human Capital Development; Healthcare Services; Industrial Development; Tourism; and Gender Equality and Empowerment. Planning, prudence and a hundred percent commitment to the agenda we have set to achieve, that is putting the people first, have produced a change that was unimaginable only a few years ago.

To cast our mind back to when our administration came on board and took on the reins of public office in October 2010, after a protracted judicial struggle against electoral heist and brigandage, we met a state that evinced several indices attesting to a paucity or decline of leadership and apposite planning – there were the deficits of vision, holistic strategy and service delivery, which were accentuated by administrative neglect and poor infrastructure. Corruption was rife within the system and the unstable political culture that had been operative was one that depended on and was sustained by patronage and rent-seeking. Ekiti State was beholden to a debt peonage in excess of N42 billion, while several infrastructural projects had stalled or were already sliding into a terminal condition, with the federally granted revenue allocations to the State being burdened by a recurrent expenditure overhang, making it virtually impossible to execute capital projects. More so, the State was haemorrhaging greatly through leakages in the revenue and tax collection system. The failure of previous political actors in the State to carry out the responsibilities attached to public office, whilst drawing on its privileges, etc. all resulted in a state of ‘arrested development’ that deepened

the cynicism through which the people related to government and its functionaries. That was the 'tabula rasa' upon which we had to inscribe a new narrative.

The first challenges of change that we faced in office therefore was how to restore and rebuild public trust in governance; how to re-create the necessary institutional architecture required to deliver change; how to implement policies that would combat poverty, inequality, unemployment; how to diversify the economy and industrialise; how to promote democratic governance; and how to provide social security. Our essential purpose in government – on the basis of which we sought and campaigned for public office – was the necessity of making poverty, alongside its attendant manifestations, history in Ekiti State. To that end, the change that impelled our efforts was driven by the desire to put our people at the centre of development, to promote freedoms and human rights, and to combat the systems and structures that impoverish our people and engender oppression. Importantly, our mission was to activate the institutions that would help to attain the goals of development.

Ekiti is a State in the South-West of Nigeria that is a rapidly transforming urban, peri-urban and rural geography hosting about 2.5m people who are renowned for their passion for education, agriculture, and cognate activities. And one of its enduring features has been its serving as a very large repository of highly skilled human capital, with possibly the highest number of university intellectuals and scholars per capita in Africa laying claim to it as their home state. In recognition of the peculiarity of our circumstances, geography and comparative advantage, we have focused on governance on agriculture, infrastructure and education as well as building a healthy population. Consequent upon the implementation of programmes and activities opened up by the 8-point Agenda, our administration has achieved, in the past two years of its existence, substantially more than what our two predecessors were able to achieve in the preceding seven years.

Yet, while change and the processes leading up to it has been our mission in the past two years, and through which we have attained much mileage in our project of providing good governance to the people of Ekiti, we must also admit that our regenerative blueprint has encountered practical challenges resulting from economic and political limitations. While the expectations on us to 'perform' has been higher than can be possibly met with the constraints of resources determining how fast the government could run with its intentions and projects, pockets of resistance have equally emerged to resist change. Some of these confrontational attitudes have, no doubt, arisen from human

nature which tends to become ossified in its conventional ways of doing things – particularly when it also benefits from these – and thereby resists change, but others have equally resulted from the political context and dynamics even when the policies in contention are not only technically sound but also ultimately in the best interests of the populace.

Definitely, some of our decisions have been controversial, but we are a government that has not shied away from taking very difficult decisions that would ultimately restore our pride of place and positively impact on the lives of our people. Ready instances in this direction include the teachers' competency appraisals to determine their skills gaps and training needs, and the forensic audit of local council workers who demand increases in wages but refuse to conform to procedures that would assist the government in blocking the financial leakage that would make such increment possible.

The reclamation of trust that has promoted the compact between our administration and the people of Ekiti State is constituted on the premises of openness, transparency, selfless-service, probity and accountability in the management of public funds and resources. We are not only in the business of government to deepen the commonwealth and create sustainable value for our people, but equally to make information about the government and its processes as publicly accessible as possible. This is the effort to enhance participatory governance through engaging with critical stakeholders in development planning, and to come to the 'table' and leave it with clean hands.

As an open administration, we were the first State in Nigeria to demystify governmental insularity by passing the Ekiti Freedom of Information Law 2011 on the 12th of April 2011, making the information of government to be readily available and publicly published. The Ekiti FOI legislation – a domestication of the national Freedom of Information bill that was forwarded to the State parliament as an executive bill – provides for the free access of public records and information in a manner that is consistent with public interest, while also protecting serving public officers from the adverse consequences of disclosing certain kinds of information without due authorisation. This coupled with the assent of the Ekiti State Fiscal Responsibility Bill into law and the public declaration of my assets and those of my Deputy and aides, signalled our government's commitment to the reinstatement of a climate of transparency in public office, which has restored and increased the public's confidence in our administration.

A vital aspect of openness that we have inserted into the business of government in our State pertains to the process of participatory governance in which critical stakeholders across the lengths of Ekiti cities, towns and communities – civil servants, artisans, market women, educators, private sector professionals, farmers, and the regular folk, etc. – are carried along in the making of decisions that determine their welfare and affect their lives. They are actively incorporated into the agenda-setting for governance, in terms of the identification and projection of their developmental choices and preferences. Rather than past approaches in which the conception and implementation of budgets were top-down affairs involving officials, policy-makers and ‘experts’ who drew-up the projects and funding priorities of government and foisted these on the public, our administration brought the people of Ekiti into the heart of budget-making in 2011. We met up with them in their rural, urban and peri-urban locations through town hall meetings carried out in all the 16 local government areas of Ekiti, and sought their inputs into the budgeting process. With their identified needs and concerns, we were able to put together a people’s budget for 2012. Hence, with their contributions to the composition of the current budget of the State, we have not only been able to co-generate a realistic people-driven financial plan, but also secured their collaborative ownership of the development process.

As a major flank of participatory governance and the operation of an open government at this juncture in history when the necessity of harnessing information for greater productivity has become an essential feature of our reality, we have taken on the notion of E-governance very boldly. And, further to the launching of our digital online channels in February 2012, we responded to the need for intense transparency in governance by uploading the 2012 budget of Ekiti State on our website [www.ekitistate.gov.ng], thereby becoming the first State in the country to have its full budget located on the Internet for public contemplation.

Yet, the change in governance being operationalized in Ekiti State under the direction and watch of our administration, takes cognisance of the responsibility of government to enhance the efficacy of the available pool of resources to deliver on robust services for the good of the people, whilst innovating alternate resource generation directions. A major aspect of our programme in this regard involved the introduction of a biometric system that not only audited the existing stock of resources but plugged the loopholes and leakages that had been haemorrhaging the capacity of the State to implement its developmental endeavours. Through this procedure, the internally

generated revenue (IGR) profile of the State increased in multiple folds from a measly N106 million (\$650,000) a month to over N600 million (\$3.75m) a month, and it is anticipated to hit the N1 billion (\$6m) a month mark in the near future. Worthy of note is the fact that this surge in IGR occurred without increments in taxes or levies, but through the deployment of e-payment options, the blockade of tax seepages, and the elimination of remunerations traditionally accruing to ghost workers, from which the State lost about N3.5 billion yearly.

Importantly, in widening the human safety net, our administration evolved a Social Security Scheme – the first of its kind in the country – that is responsive to the care of elderly citizens who are incapable of surviving properly without the intervention of a support structure. Through this plan, a stipend of N5, 000 (\$35) a month per individual is granted to elderly folk above the age of 65, who are demonstrably unable to financially care for themselves, and this along with free health services equally available to them, are administered without recourse to party affiliation or political following. Over twenty thousand elderly people are currently benefitting from this scheme on a means-tested basis.

With the understanding of the Civil Service as being the engine-room of the government, from which developmental policies and programmes percolate to the people, we have embarked upon the reformation of this highly critical institution. The Service is increasingly undergoing re-engineering to make it more flexible and adaptive, and to motivate its force to greater productivity. In line with these, appointments and promotions in the Service are now based on merit, and the issue of capacity gaps in workers is being addressed through the design of continuous training schemes. This is particularly the case with teachers in primary and secondary schools in Ekiti whose development needs we are assessing in the effort to tackle their capacity gaps.

In addition, our administration has been involved with embarking on a large scale commercial development and expansion of agriculture, attendant upon the overhaul of the State's agricultural policy, as a means of expanding jobs and boosting internally generated revenue (IGR), through such schemes as the Youth Commercial Agricultural Development (Y-CAD) project targeted at creating over 20,000 jobs. Equally, we are developing the full value-chain of the production of crops like cocoa, cassava, rice and oil palm. These initiatives in the area of agricultural transformation are designed to attract commercial agricultural players into large-scale farming in the state.

Also, we are making massive investments in human capital development through declaration of free education in primary and secondary schools in Ekiti State, the renovation of all dilapidated school buildings across the State, and the promotion of an ICT culture in which we provide one solar laptop per student in secondary schools. Equally, we have ensured access to healthcare for children, pregnant women, senior citizens, and the physically-challenged in hospitals in Ekiti State in the past two years, while healthcare centres have been established in all localities. Further to these has been the jumpstarting of industrial development through the establishment of technology parks for small and medium-scale enterprises; urban renewal; the creation of micro-credit facilities; development of the agro-allied and solid minerals sectors; and massive investments in the tourism corridor.

It's still the structure, stupid!

Yet, we still face fundamental odds. The structural deformities of the Nigerian federation have circumscribed many of the possibilities of our state, and many other states in Nigeria and the country as a whole. Both local and international observers have described Nigeria as an 'embarrassment of riches,' both in human and materials terms. Why then is the Nigeria state in such a wobbly state and why are the citizens of the country trapped in such disappointing socio-economic and political realities? What could be done to bring about sustainable change at the national-state level?

It is difficult, if not impossible to sustain good governance at the national level in Nigeria because of the structural fatalities that I have mentioned earlier. The over-concentration of powers in the federal centre must give way to devolution and decentralisation of power and authority. Therefore, a critical fundamental political restructuring of the Nigerian federation is an unavoidable step that must be taken to generate the basis for the creation and sustenance of a participatory, consensus-oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive national governance and one that is based on the rule of law. I am convinced that this can, and will definitely, happen in Nigeria at some point in the near future.

Nigeria is a deeply divided, but immensely blessed and potentially great country. While Nigerians and foreigners are often focussed on the deep divisions, little is said, for the most account, on our immense assets and potentials. What Nigerians need to do is to use our immense blessings, both

human and natural, and transform our potential greatness into real greatness, in order to reduce our deep divisions and enhance or strengthen our unity. The two steps I have elaborated above are critical in doing this. There must be a fundamental political transformation of Nigeria; then, good governance must become the underlying basis of political power. With these, I believe that the question of deepening democracy and enhancing development would be largely resolved. Nigeria cannot achieve this without a national resolution by Nigerians to come together as one people with a common destiny.

The true representatives of the various parts of Nigeria last met between September and October 1958 to agree on the ways in which the federation should be constituted. This was during the last round of the Constitutional Conferences preceding independence. Since then, neither the military regimes nor the civilian governments at the centre have allowed the Nigerian people to come together democratically and in all their diversity, to re-determine their common fate. Those at the centre of power in Nigeria have become so terrified about change that they have foreclosed the possibility of a national dialogue. Fifty years after independence and against the backdrop of the unrelenting inter-ethnic and inter-faith bloodletting, after five decades of abysmal leadership at the federal level - which has turned a country which was regarded at independence as the hope of Africa into what Eghosa Osaghae describes succinctly as the 'crippled giant' - there is the need for a new national togetherness that will re-authorise the federal union and re-energise Nigeria.

Those who are clamouring for this kind of change are fundamentally concerned with how to create a country that is strong, stable and liveable, one that is diverse but united, and one which, through good governance, ensures life more abundant for all. Such a good life that is provided by good governance is neither bound to ethnicity, nor to religious affiliation. In the Nigeria that we seek to re-create, our divisions will not be the parameters of our oneness and common humanity; rather, our oneness and common humanity will be the basis of resolving our divisions. We seek to create a country in which all Nigerians will have the confidence that when they lose, they have lost fairly; and that when they win, they have won equitably. It is the absence of this seemingly simple logic of national togetherness – one that is participatory, consensus-oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and one that is based on the rule of law – that has been the frustration of most Nigerians. From the insurgency in the Niger Delta to the extremisms in the far north, justice, equity

and fairness can be used as the mechanisms of preserving and consolidating Nigeria's national unity.

While the fundamental restructuring of the Nigerian State will address key questions of political transformation – such issues as the writing of a people's constitution and the question of constitutional governance, the fundamental precepts or authorising principles of national togetherness, citizenship and the nationality question, the political economy of federalism, including the raising, sharing and spending of public revenue, human rights, justice and equity, the nature of the autonomy of the constituent parts vis-a-vis the centre, the recognition and protection of minority rights, and such other fundamental questions – good governance is geared towards resolving the questions of social and economic reconstruction, electoral reform, strengthening of legislative oversight, security sector governance, social security, public sector reform, privatization, gender equality, and other such issues. The dynamism and vitality or vivacity of the Nigerian people, the diversity and beauty of our climate and land, Nigerians' passionate and unsurpassable nationalism when the Super Eagles are playing against other national teams, and the astonishing good sense that even our much-maligned national elite exercises every time Nigeria faces an outrageous conflict that threatens to terminate the country as a corporate entity, all convince me that Nigeria, in the course of time, will rise to match her manifest destiny.

Conclusion

As I said at my inaugural address in October 2010, it is possible. Positive change is possible in Nigeria. There are many change agents who are devoted to ensure the legitimacy and responsiveness of the State, the deepening and expansion of democracy, good governance and national unity in Nigeria. These change agents are not only in civil society. We also have them in the political society and the State. There are many challenges that these change agents face, but most of us, and I count myself among them, are undaunted.

In Ekiti State, with massive investment in agriculture, infrastructure, public education, social services and health, and by creating a conducive environment for private enterprise to thrive, thereby creating economic opportunities for our people and working towards expanding the middle class, and by creating synergy not only locally, but also regionally among our contiguous states and by partnering with international development agencies,

we have shown that change is possible and that good governance is achievable – even in a resource challenged state. This change is not only material, but also attitudinal.

As for my people in Isan-Ekiti, two years after, I still don't announce my arrival and departure with the siren when I drive into town, and they have now embraced this as part of the best practices of good governance. Positive change is constantly beckoning on us. We only have to continue to rise up to the occasion but I urge friends of Nigeria not to let the perfect become the enemy of the good.

I thank you for listening.