

DEMOCRACY DAY ADDRESS BY RT. HON. ABBAS TAJUDEEN, PHD, GCON, SPEAKER,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES JOINT SITTING OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY HOUSE
OF REPRESENTATIVES CHAMBER, ABUJA, 12 JUNE 2025

[PROTOCOL]

We have gathered in this hallowed chamber to celebrate a truly historic occasion: twenty-six uninterrupted years of democracy. Your Excellency's address has not only elevated our commemoration but also reaffirmed the vitality and resilience of our democratic institutions. On behalf of the National Assembly, I express our profound gratitude for honouring us with your presence.

We recall with reverence the historic events of June 12, 1993, a day when Nigerians, across ethnic and religious divides, united to affirm their collective will for democratic governance. We also salute His Excellency President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, who himself was a frontline crusader in the NADECO pro-democracy struggle. Mr. President, your presence here today is historic. You are one of the patriots who laboured so that democracy might thrive, and now you lead our nation under the banner of Renewed Hope. Your story itself is that of the triumph of democracy. Mr President, esteemed colleagues. Democracy is not a destination but a continuous journey, one that requires vigilance, sacrifice, and collective effort. Thus, this day is an occasion for reflection and renewal.

Over the past twenty-six years, the National Assembly has served as the guardian of our democratic institutions: in 2006, we rejected the third-term bid; in 2010, we invoked the doctrine of necessity to ensure uninterrupted governance; and we have championed constitutional and electoral reforms, including the 2010 Amendments and the 2015 Electoral Act review. Since June 2023, under President Tinubu's stewardship and the 10th National Assembly, we launched an eight-point Legislative Agenda fully aligned with the Renewed Hope Agenda. Within two years, we have reviewed 2,263 bills. Of these, 65.3% have passed Second Reading, while 186 have been successfully passed. A total of 51 bills have received presidential assent, marking an unprecedented milestone for any President in his first two years. Congratulations on that feat, Mr. President. The House considered 1,100 motions, most of which addressed matters of urgent public concern, reflecting our commitment to responsive, people-centred representation.

Our legislative efforts have yielded measurable progress on multiple fronts. In security, we allocated ₦6.11 trillion (11.1%) of the 2025 budget to the security sector. The Defence Industries Corporation of Nigeria Act, 2023, signed by President Tinubu, has set Nigeria on the path to self-reliance in arms production and logistics. Similarly, the revised Cybercrimes (Prohibition and Prevention) Act, 2024 further strengthens our digital defence capabilities. The Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons Act, 2024, has tightened regulatory loopholes in arms control. It is expected to significantly reduce the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons. On the economic front, we supported the removal of subsidies and the unification of foreign exchange windows. We courageously passed legislation targeted at tax reforms. Cumulatively,

these actions, along with the bold decisions of the President, are boosting investor confidence, increasing federal revenue, and augmenting state allocations. Nigeria's net foreign reserves have surged from \$3.99 billion to \$23.11 billion, while over \$50 billion in foreign direct investment affirms global trust in our markets. In April 2025, Nigeria met its OPEC production quota of 1.486 million barrels per day. This is the first time Nigeria has met its target since 2021. Through legislative measures, we have supported and accelerated the President's infrastructure revolution. Funding for infrastructure rose to 8.16% in 2025, sustaining 440 ongoing road projects, including the Abuja–Kaduna–Zaria–Kano corridor and the Lagos–Calabar Coastal Highway.

In the social sector, allocation to education increased from 5.7% in 2021 to at least 8.2% in 2023/2024. The Student Loan Act has empowered over 500,000 students. Mr. President, with legislative support, you have established ten new universities, polytechnics, and specialised institutions. This is the highest of any President in his first term. We are committed to providing funding to these institutions to ensure a smooth take-off. Health allocations increased to 5.46% in 2024, resulting in the revitalisation of 4,000 primary healthcare centres and the expansion of community-based clinics nationwide. We also supported the implementation of a ₦70,000 minimum wage to reinforce social protection.

To stimulate balanced regional growth, we legislated six new development commissions. The passage of the Electricity Act alone is said to have attracted over \$2.8 billion in capital inflows into Nigeria's power sector, invigorating crucial infrastructure investment.

The House of Representatives has actively conducted oversight of executive agencies to ensure that laws are implemented and that development funds are allocated properly. The House Public Accounts Committee has reported recoveries exceeding ₦61.5 billion in outstanding debts owed to the Federal Government by oil and gas companies.

We have also deepened transparency through our biannual Youth and Women's Town Halls, an annual live televised citizens interactive session, and the annual House Open Week. We are excited to announce that the next Open Week is scheduled for July. Mr President, we would be honoured if you could join us and officially declare the event open.

Our parliamentary diplomacy has also flourished. We established 82 friendship groups, which have significantly contributed to fostering legislative ties with global partners. Equally, our collaborations with development partners and civil society organisations (CSOs), including the UNDP, PLAC, UN Women, KAS, and YIAGA Africa, have enhanced our expertise and promoted inclusion.

It is worth noting, Mr. President, that the 10th House has forged a strategic partnership with the United Nations Development Programme, which has culminated in a Memorandum of Understanding to mobilise ₦50 billion over four years, resulting in the Parliamentary Development Project. Under this flagship initiative, 60 per cent of the funds will be provided by the UNDP and other donor partners to support targeted capacity-building programmes and institutional strengthening.

Mr President, distinguished colleagues, the 10th House has proven to be a 'House with a Human Face'. In March 2025, Members donated ₦705 million, equivalent to half their salaries over six months, to support the President's relief programme for vulnerable Nigerians affected by subsidy withdrawals. The House also contributed ₦650 million to provide housing for the families of deceased Members and former leaders. Furthermore, individual Members donated over ₦500 million to support communities in Kaduna, Enugu, Anambra, Oyo, Niger, Borno, Plateau, and the Federal Capital Territory, assisting displaced persons affected by banditry and communal violence.

Furthermore, as part of the Renewed Hope Agenda, the 10th House extended dedicated support to our traditional institutions, recognising their vital role in community leadership and cohesion. We provided 40 brand-new vehicles to traditional rulers across all six geopolitical zones, ensuring they can more effectively attend to the needs of their communities and foster grassroots engagement.

Mr President, we express profound gratitude to you for conferring the national honour of GCON upon the Speaker following pleas by Members and for expanding the National Security Council to include the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House. Both decisions affirm the principle of institutional partnership. We pledge to nurture this spirit of cooperation. As we move forward, it is important to recognise the personal connections that have strengthened this partnership. Mr. President, at the risk of provoking the First Lady, I wish to reveal a secret to you. Here at the House, Members fondly refer to you as the "darling of the legislature." You have accomplished what no President has done for the National Assembly, namely, substantially augmenting our capacity to respond to the needs of our constituents. We thank you for that.

While we celebrate our successes, we remain acutely aware that it is not yet Uhuru. As we enter the second half of our term, our determination is unequivocal: to expedite and finalise the constitutional amendment process by December 2025. Under the leadership of the Deputy Speaker, Rt. Hon. Benjamin Okezie Kalu, the Constitution Review Committee, has already advanced 87 amendment bills to Second Reading. Beginning next month, nationwide public consultations will be conducted, including two zonal hearings in each of the country's geopolitical zones, to ensure broad-based and inclusive citizen participation.

Some of our priorities include special reserved seats for women, formal constitutional roles for traditional rulers, and legal backing for a 35% affirmative-action gender policy. We commend Mr President for standing as a HeForShe champion; in the interim, we respectfully request that you issue a presidential directive to ensure the immediate enforcement of this policy. Furthermore, we earnestly appeal to the Chairman of the Nigerian Governors' Forum and the Progressive Governors' Forum to advocate for these essential reforms at the state level.

Other priorities for the 10th House in the second half of our term include fast-tracking the Judicial and Legal System Reform Bill, enacting the Almajiri and Out-of-School Children Education Act, and strengthening frameworks for the inclusion of Internally Displaced Persons and Persons with Disabilities.

Mr President, I would be remiss in my responsibility to you if I concluded my brief remarks without also offering some useful recommendations on the way forward. You have demonstrated remarkable resolve in removing the fuel subsidy and allowing the Naira to float. Now we require an equally decisive intervention in our power sector. While progress is evident, it is time to 'wave your magic wand' once more: to break the cycle of underperformance by shifting from an over-reliance on thermal and hydroelectricity to a diversified energy mix. We must embrace renewable and clean energy sources, such as solar, wind, and even nuclear, to ensure a reliable and sustainable national grid. If anyone can do this, Mr. President, IT IS YOU!

Secondly, developing the solid minerals sector is essential for Nigeria's economic diversification. I commend the President for the seriousness with which he has approached this critical area. While we have some existing geological data, it lacks the precision and quality needed to support large-scale exploration. The strategic agreement recently signed with France to support geological data exploration is, therefore, a timely and commendable step. In parallel, the Federal Executive Council's approval of ₦2.5 billion for satellite surveillance of mining sites will bolster efforts to curb illegal operations and associated security threats. To complement these executive actions, the House of Representatives will immediately commence an urgent review of the 2007 Mining Act to allow subnational entities to operate within the profitable limits of the law while enhancing oversight and mitigating security risks. We must also streamline licensing procedures to foster transparency and investor confidence. If pursued with discipline and clarity, these reforms will position solid minerals as a strategic pillar of our national economy.

Finally, Mr President, we also need your Midas touch in the manufacturing sector. You can accelerate a genuine manufacturing renaissance by launching cluster-based industrial zones that provide shared utilities, common facility centres, and on-site testing laboratories to guarantee product quality. I propose the establishment of a National Industrial Transformation Fund, supported by private-sector contributions and Central Bank backing, to finance machinery upgrades and the adoption of new technologies.

In conclusion, Mr President, permit me one final, earnest appeal. Today's ceremony has been truly magnificent, and you have achieved what past Assemblies could only envision: an annual address by the President to a joint session of the National Assembly. By accepting our invitation, you have made history. I respectfully urge that we now institutionalise this address as an annual event.

On behalf of the Senate and the House of Representatives, I thank you for choosing to celebrate this Democracy Day with us in this hallowed chamber.

Happy Democracy Day.
May God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.