

ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE COMMISSIONER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, DR. MUIZ ADEYEMI BANIRE AT THE MAN 2008 ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SEMINAR HELD AT THE MAN HOUSE, 77 OBAFEMI AWOLowo WAY, IKEJA-LAGOS ON TUESDAY 4TH NOVEMBER, 2008.

PROTOCOL

I consider it a privilege to be invited to this forum and to deliver an opening remark. To begin with, I want to commend the organisers of this seminar for the choice of a most appropriate and very apt theme “Preparing Businesses in Nigeria for Environmental Challenges and Opportunities”. Equally, I want to thank all members of this noble association for your consistent support for government policies and programmes especially the recently launched tree planting campaign.

My brief is to dwell on the topic “Linking the Lagos Mega City Vision to a Sustainable Environmental Framework” and I shall try to do justice to that within the timeframe. Lagos State is the smallest in Nigeria with an area of 365,861 hectares of which 75,755 hectares are wetlands, yet it has the highest population, which is over 11 percent of national estimate.

The State has a population of 17 million out of a national estimate of 150 million. The United Nations estimates that at its growth rate, Lagos State will be the third largest city in the world by Y2015 after Tokyo in Japan and Bombai, India. That is to say that Lagos by 2015 would have become a mega city.

Faced with this reality, the task of preparing the State for its mega city status to enable her take her rightful position among other mega cities of the world began with the assessment of the high level of environmental degradation and abuse. Waste was indiscriminately dumped on the roads, set backs, open spaces, bridges and the water bodies thereby creating a very dirty environment.

There is no gainsaying that our environment had been subjected to serious abuse, trees were fell indiscriminately, open spaces were turned to dens of miscreants and hoodlums who converge on and use them as launch pads for their nefarious activities.

Industries discharge effluent and poisonous waste into the drainages and the water bodies thereby threatening the aqua culture. Equally poisonous gases are being emitted into the air every minute by industrial machines and the heavy duty generating sets which has become the main source of power generation for the industries as public power supply has been comatose. Noise pollution from machines, generating sets, religious houses, musical shops and other gadgets is another major source of worry.

As a coastal State, Lagos is highly vulnerable to flooding, thus there is the constant challenge of storm water management, a problem which was being compounded by inadequate drainage channels, siltation of the existing ones and indiscriminate dumping of solid waste into the canals.

Confronted with these barrages of environmental challenges the State directed her policy towards the need to create and ensure a cleaner, healthier and sustainable environment that will promote economic growth and well being of the citizenry through implementation of community based solid waste management, flood control, vegetal control and enforcement of high standard home and personal hygiene, sanitation, control of environmental pollution (air, water and noise), landscaping and beautification of open spaces to create as much greenery as possible and make the State investors and tourists delight.

To this end, the State Government declared the Environment as one of its priority areas of focus for the next four years hence the declaration of zero tolerance to all forms of environmental nuisances to ensure that our cities, towns, highways, major roads and streets are free of refuse, street trading, shanties, illegal structures and all other environmental nuisances.

Environmental Health Officers were also charged to step up inspection of premises for the detection of nuisance and abatement of same and ensure school, market and abattoir sanitation while street sweepers were engaged, well equipped and highly motivated to clean the highways of dirt and vegetal nuisance. The result is the cleaner and healthier environment we have today.

In order to preserve and conserve the biodiversity and ecosystem towards protecting the State environment from degradation arising from unsustainable development resulting in gully erosion, ocean surge, deforestation, subsidence, fog, smog, destruction of bio-ecosystem, global warming, improve security and aesthetics of the city, the State Government embarked on massive landscaping and beautification of open

spaces, verges, road set backs, medians, roundabouts, recreation parks etc which had hitherto been taken over by illegal structures and street urchins who use them as launch pads to unleash terror on the members of the public. We are also aggressively pursuing our Tree Planting Campaign which is aimed at planting One million trees in 4 years.

In furtherance of our efforts to create a sustainable environment for healthy living and economic growth, the government has confronted the challenge of managing storm water frontally. Lagos is a coastal State, that makes it very vulnerable to flooding but it is the belief of this administration that with effective management the effects of flooding can be curtailed effectively.

To this extent about 300 drainage channels were desilted and cleaned while about 200 others were dredged, lined or newly constructed. I make bold to say that there is no part of the State where one drainage work or the other is not going on. The dividends of this massive drainage works were reaped during the last raining season especially on July 15 when it rained heavily for about 8 hours and no calamity befell the State.

Chairman of this occasion, Ladies and Gentlemen, in the area of Waste Management I am sure that participants here present will bear me out that Lagos is a lot cleaner. We have overhauled our waste management strategy. The old rickety vehicles used for waste collection and disposal are rapidly giving way to compactor trucks. The State Government also recently took delivery of 100 brand new compactor trucks which had been deployed to major highways to improve the waste management activities.

Waste Management is one area which I wish to call the attention of investors to. It is a known fact that waste generation is a daily affair as long as there is human existence. Thus it goes without saying that waste management is an undying investment. Apart from waste disposal, there are investment opportunities in waste recycling and reuse.

Today we have a compost plant in Odogunyan where organic waste are turned to compost (Organic fertilizer). There is also a nylon recycling plant in Ojo. The State still require about 600 new trucks and 20 transfer loading stations out of which we have paid for 3 while hoping to pay for another 3 next year. This and land fill are areas of investment where government expect private sector participation.

I am convinced that if we take waste recycling seriously a major part of our waste management problem would have been solved as sachet water packs and bottle water plastics which has become a menace to the environment would become a money spinning asset that will be better disposed.

Of paramount importance is the issue of Environmental Pollution. There is high degree of carbon emission from industrial plants and power generating sets, indiscriminate discharge of effluent into the drains and water bodies which endanger the aquatic culture. The State Government while striving to combat this menace has always taken to account the power and economic situation of the country to avoid adding more burden to that of the few surviving industries. I however seek your support and understanding in this area so that we can together protect the environment.

Ladies and Gentleman, I want to conclude this address by inviting you to look at areas of possible cooperation and collaboration with the Government to chart a new course for environmental management in our dear state nay Nation.

Thank you for your attention and God Bless.

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