

SPEECH OF THE CGC HAMMAN BELLO AHMED AT
THE FIRST MEETING WITH DCGs, ACGs AND
COMPTROLLERS OF CUSTOMS, HELD ON TUESDAY,
3RD JUNE 2008, AT CONFERENCE ROOM, CUSTOMS
HEADQUARTERS, ABUJA.

CALL TO PROFESSIONALISM.

It is with gratitude to the Almighty Allah, the most merciful the most gracious who gives and takes at his own wish, that I have the honour to address you today in the capacity of the Comptroller – General of Customs. This grace of Allah bestowed on me is definitely not because I am better than you in anyway or because I have scored higher marks in any written examination, but because Allah's benevolence has chosen me to steer the ship of social re-engineering of the Service towards professionalism.

With humility and great sense of service. I have accepted the mantle of leadership of our dear Service and now call upon you all to see the development as another opportunity to render even greater services to our Nation through the Nigeria Customs Service.

Change, the most permanent thing on earth has brought for us a new opportunity to demonstrate our resilience and co-operate to effectively manage the position of trust given to us as critical contributors to National economy. We should therefore not be unmindful of the challenges ahead of us which includes amongst other things:-

- a. Restoring Professionalism in the rank and file of the Service.
- b. Building a workforce that is skilled through regular training and retraining.
- c. Driving the reforms and modernization projects while taking maximum advantage of the Service Providers.
- d. Enforcing and sustaining high level of compliance among all our Stakeholders.
- e. Ensuring that all Officers and Men are carried along while providing welfare packages that are commensurate with other critical sectors of the economy.
- f. Building a Service that has integrity and good image, while providing efficient and effective Service.

In confronting the above challenges, we will not pretend to know it all or that all is well with us. We must close ranks to succeed as a Service. We must not work at cross purposes.

Though by Allah's grace, I am the Comptroller – General of Customs, I will not ascribe to myself the monopoly of knowledge as I require the support of all to succeed.

Accordingly, this administration will be anchored on an Eight Point Agenda namely:-

1. Conformity with the Rule of Law.
2. Restoring Professionalism in the Service.

3. Forging Strategic partnership with the Private Sector.
4. Instilling Discipline and Integrity through enhanced Welfare for all Officers and Men.
5. Consolidating on – going Customs Modernisation Projects.
6. Attainment of 48-Hour Clearance Time.
7. Optimizing Benefiting derivable from bilateral/multi-lateral International Commitments.
8. Restoring the Service as legitimate trade facilitator.

As we move towards restoring professionalism, we owe it a duty to observe the Supremacy of the Rule of Law.

Our commitment to the 48-Hour clearance time is not something to fiddle with. To this end, the success of the ASYCUDA ++ which is a more effective way of goods clearance will be crucial in this administration.

All Zonal coordinators, Customs Area Controllers and Heads of Unit must work within the purview of the 8-Point Agenda to build a Service that Nigerians will be proud of.

It is gratifying to inform you that during my discussion with Mr. President, he promised to provide the political support necessary to reposition the Service as a Strategic Public Institution, as well as the Financial Support necessary to back up our operations. This management will follow up on that so that the take home pay of every Officer will indeed not only take him/her home but bring comfort to his family.

We are however to note that to whom much is given, much will be expected as Nigerians will be justifiably expecting better Services from us.

As you return to your different Commands and Stations, I expect that you pass this message down the ladder through Meetings, Parades and Circulars.

Finally, let me reiterate our determination to steer the ship of this administration effectively to the end by calling on those who are not ready to offer maximum co-operation to this noble cause to leave honourably.

We remain indebted to the administration of President Umaru Musa Yar-Adua for giving us this opportunity to serve. We intend to reciprocate this gesture through quality service to Nigerians. Nothing less will be expected. Together we will work to succeed.

Thank you and God bless.