



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

NIGERIAN MUSLIMS NETWORK

And hold fast, all of you together, to the Rope of Allah, and be on

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE SULTAN

Safar 26, 1428 H (March 15, 2007).

Your Eminence,
The Sultan of Sokoto.

Sir,

As-salaamu 'alaykum wa Rahmatu'llahi wa BarakatuH,

We, members of the Nigerian Muslims Network (NMN), a worldwide Internet based Nigerian Muslims organization, hereby write to express our happiness on your ascension to this important throne. We pray that Allah makes your era shine with successes that would see the alleviation of the mammoth problems faced by Nigerian Muslims in particular and our dear Nation in general.

We would like to acknowledge and appreciate the several recent public utterances made on your vision for the future of Nigerian Muslims and the country at large. It is our belief that you are very much aware of the deplorable condition of not only the Nigerian Muslims but also the average Nigerian masses in the socio-political, educational, and economic spheres of the Nigerian society. It is also our belief that, by the grace of Allah, you are determined to strive, along with concerned individuals and groups, Muslims and non-Muslims, to effect positive changes. It is for this reason that we put forward the following recommendations for your consideration:

A. Socio-Religious

1. We humbly suggest that your eminence should strive to make the Caliphate serve as a rallying point and provide guidance for the Muslim Ummah and the general society. One vital way of uniting and providing guidance to the Muslim Ummah is to unite the country's Ulamas. Your eminence should endeavour to unite the Ulamas irrespective of their ideological leanings and make them toe the line of pan-Islamic unity. Your eminence should also serve as a conscience of the society and an advocate of social justice, fairness and equity through public commentary on issues of concern or through private advice to political leaders.
2. It is proposed that your eminence should consider a bi-annual review (report) of the state of Muslim Ummah in Nigeria (The report will serve as a compass and agenda-setting tool on annual basis).
3. We also encourage your eminence to harness the energy and resources within the emirate

system such as utilising the younger, well-educated, confident and visionary emirs on the lower rungs of the royal hierarchy. Then harness the energy and resources within the emirate system to modernize and sensitize traditional rulers and institutions to be more proactive in uplifting Islam and the Nigerian Muslims in their socio-political and economic endeavors. The traditional institutions should seek the advice of, and work in concert with, Muslim professionals.

In a world that is fast changing and continuously so, recording breakthrough developments in Science & Technology, the Nigerian Muslim Ummah are constantly in need of guidance on issues relating to scientific leaps. We are concerned that some of our Ulamas, sincere as they may be, are ignorantly involved in giving misleading fatwas that, in the end, is detrimental to the well being of the Nigerian Muslim Ummah.

We would like your eminence to consider forming a forum to consist of Muslim professionals from various fields of human endeavors, notably, renowned Nigerian medical doctors, Pharmacists, Biotechnologists, Agricultural Scientists, Social Scientists, Lawyers, etc, and respected Nigerian Ulamas. This forum should meet whenever necessary on issues for which guidance is required and serve as an advisory committee to the Sultan and by extension, the Nigerian Muslims.

4. We also propose to your eminence to prioritise building bridges and networks among the traditional leadership - first between the Muslim circle north and south on Islamic issues and then the wider circle of the rest of the traditional rulers when it comes to issues of national interests. It is heartening to read that your eminence already set this as one of your important focus when you were quoted as saying (THE SUN, Wednesday, February 7, 2007) " First, unity and cohesion of the Muslim Ummah (community) will be our utmost priority...". This can be through courtesy visits and meetings. There is already a northern traditional rulers' conference or meeting, which can be widened nationally.

B. Restructure/Transform (Revitalise) Religious Organisations

1. Your eminence should also engineer the re-structuring and the transformation of JNII (Jama'atu Nasril Islam) and NSCIA (Nigerian Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs) to serve as an engine house for the advancement of the Ummah. The NSCIA shall serve as an umbrella organization for all Muslim Ummah in Nigeria . Your eminence and other Muslim Emirs/Obas/Ezes to serve as advisory board cum steering committee with you as Chairman. The NSCIA could have an executive management committee comprising executive secretary and directors of specialized directorates namely (for example):

- i. Inter-religious and Inter-ethnic dialogue,
- ii. Public and Governmental affairs, Security and Crisis management,
- iii. Timing (moon sighting, prayer timings etc)
- iv. Economic empowerment. For example, running skill development/acquisition (i.e., entrepreneurship programmes, utilising the strength of the Muslim community such that those who know spare their time to teach those who do not)

An Executive Secretary could be appointed, merit driven and he must be somebody focused, knowledgeable and dynamic. Directors could be elected/selected on a 2-3 years rotational basis. It is hereby suggested that deliberate effort should be made to make it all-inclusive in order to reflect the diversity of the ummah. There is also the need to have a befitting secretariat.

2. JNl could serve as Da'wah hub and comprise of a committee of Ulama on:

- i. Madrasah affairs to deal with 'almajiranci' and modernising Islamic education/learning. Almajiranci issue is one of the grave concerns that is militating against educational development, especially in the North. It is proposed that the Sultan should galvanize the northern governors into taking concrete steps (as would be recommended by stakeholders and concerned groups) to end this practice. There is, however, the need to provide an alternative for these kids. For example, governments could create and spend more on integrated schools, etc. Efforts must also be made to cater for the traditional Malams who, apparently, would be left out (being beneficiaries) if the Almajiranci phenomenon eventually collapses.
- ii. Public preaching: Da'wah in non-Muslim environment. For example, sponsoring Du'ats and running Madrasahs amongst young Muslim communities especially in the East.
- iii. Research and Development
- iv. Fataawa
- v. Intra faith dialogue
- vi. Computerisation / Database Development

It is suggested that your eminence's topmost priority should be working with governments and non governmental organizations to revitalize our educational system and make it affordable to all. With education, most of our problems will be solved, for instance, people will not be ignorant of tree conservation and planting as vital means of arresting environmental degradation. They will not be ignorant that simple environmental cleanliness is vital for enhancing public health. With education, people will themselves spearhead all important endeavors vital to their survival. There is high expectation in this area as your eminence has already identified in The Sun of February 7, 2007, when you said "Education is the tool for progress and development in any society. Therefore, we can't afford to sit down, fold our arms and lag behind."

C. Civil Reorientation

1. Your eminence should also set-up NGOs (Non Governmental Organisation) on public service. For example, operations roll back desertification and other man-made environmental degradation (solid mineral mining etc). In time past the structure of the emirate system came in handy in mobilisation and implementation on tree planting. Your eminence should revitalise this effort. One of the main aims is to re-enact the successful tree planting campaigns of the yester years that saw the spread of the Neem trees across Northern towns and villages. Moreover, today Neem seeds have found economic value. There is also the need to begin a societal reorientation to gear up the ummah to the challenges of the 21st century. This is not the time for us to stay behind and allow non Moslems to be ahead in all economic and intellectual activities. We should be made to compete with all in the pursuits of excellence within the bounds of the Sharia by doing away with all perceived hindrances.

As a way forward, your eminence could convene a conference cum workshop of Emirs and Chiefs to develop an agenda for action, within the next 6 months to one year. NMN (Nigerian Muslims Network) and like minds can support by getting experts to 'set the scene' e.g. a well researched presentation on the case for action' highlighting, for instance, the rapid environmental degradation (desert encroachment, shrinkage of lake Chad etc) witnessed in the last 20 or 30 years, and the fact that if nothing is done the consequence for the populace will be grave

An outcome from the conference could be an NGO with the Sultan, senior Emirs/Chiefs as

steering committee, and District / Village / Ward heads as grass root mobilisers. This could include:

- i. Setting up tree nurseries across the states
- ii. Re-invigorating the private wood lots programme initiated by EC (European Commission), but abandoned during the sanctions period of Abacha's government
- iii. Other innovative approach to encourage planting and nurturing of trees.

Funding sources to include:

- i. General public ala the recent international campaign for people to be 'carbon neutral' i.e. pay something to neutralise one self's contribution to desertification e.g. activities of farming, grazing, construction on virgin land/forest etc.
- ii. International donor agencies like UN (United Nations), EU (European Union), OIC (Organisation of Islamic Conference), IDB (Islamic Development Bank) etc
- iii. Donations by State and Local Governments.
- iv. The NGO could also act as pressure group to ensure government do the right thing.

2. Your eminence should also restore the integrity of the traditional institutions by avoiding too much Government patronage and discourage indiscriminate award of traditional titles to moneybags and corrupt officials. Traditional title should serve as merit award for services rendered by all/any deserving public member.

Yours sincerely,

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