

Solidarity message delivered by Comrade Ayuba Wabba, President, Nigeria Labour Congress on the occasion of the Congress of LO-Sweden, Holding from 17- 21 June, 2016 at the City Conference` Centre (Folkets Hus) Sweden .

Protocol

Dear comrade delegates, local and national friends of the LO-Sweden, allies, comrades and organisations from the international trade union confraternity here present, amiable persons of the press, distinguished ladies and gentlemen. Good morning.

Comrade delegates and friends, I bring you warm courtesies and appreciations from the teeming members of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and also from my colleagues in the leadership of the NLC on the occasion of this Delegates 'Congress.

It is fitting to note that the LO-Sweden has continued to practice and keep faith with its time-tested tradition of participatory internal democracy by the timely, orderly and issues-based convocation of this Congress. We are confident that the discussions, debates and decisions from this Congress will be passionate, robust, profound and progressive.

Comrades, given that one of the functions of this Congress will be that stock will be taken of activities undertaken within the immediate past quadrennial, I wish to appeal to your indulgences for me to put on record some of the laudable, endearing and inspiring contributions, collaborations and cooperation the Nigeria Labour Congress and indeed African workers have and benefited from working with the LO-Sweden:

Nigerian and African workers are grateful to the LO-Sweden and the other Swedish organisations and also the Swedish government for the continuous support to the Pan African Education Programme (PANAF) that is benefitting thousands of workers annually in over 15 African countries. This unique programme that brings together partners from 3 continents continues to be instrumental in rank and file trade union education. For us in Nigeria, we continue to see the benefits of the PANAF programme. For one, it has helped to increase membership consciousness thus making mobilisation for collective actions easy. The increased consciousness is also evident in how we are able to effectively manage ethnic diversity within our trade union organisations and society.

Comrades, I wish to also acknowledge that the LO-Sweden is indeed a friend indeed. I say this because LO-Sweden is one of the very few organisations that have continued to support our brothers and sisters in Somalia with a view to contribute to their efforts to restore sanity, law and order there. On behalf of our comrades in the Federation of Somalia Trade Unions (FESTU), we say thank you.

In the same vein comrades, the LO-Sweden continues to show serious concerns and passion for development in Nigeria and in Africa. To demonstrate their genuine concerns, the LO-Sweden was among some of the international delegates that graced the 9th Delegate Congress of the Nigeria Labour Congress in March 2015 braving the security concerns in the process. Comrades, this is the stuff true friends and progressive organisations are made of, standing by their friends in trying, difficult and dark times. For this, we say a BIG thank you!

Dear comrade delegates and friends permit me quickly tease out some of the issues that we at the NLC think will be useful for this Congress to give some thoughts to, even as the issues will demand further international cooperation and action to reverse them.

The state of global economy continues to pose serious concerns and worries for working families. Workers continue to do hard and long work, but wages have remained low with serious strains being exacted on households. The situation is such that global wealth is growing, but poverty, inequality and want are on the geometric increase. The exclusion of the 99% continues. We must do something about this.

In Africa, working parents are making the decisions to recruit their children as work hands so as to supplement family income. Thus child labour continues to spike. For the teeming youth without jobs, desperate migrations journeys are not difficult decisions to make. For us in Africa, the many and continuous deaths in the Mediterranean and Sahara Desert are avoidable.

Comrades, the growing insecurity and terrorism in the world is another issue demanding effective global response. All manners of terror groups and criminal gangs are spreading fear, hate and inflicting violence and deprivations on peoples, communities, minorities and economies.

Comrades, I can relate directly to the plight and pains of the victims of terror wars. Yes, I know the shades and colours of these pains as I'm from the North-East Nigeria and my village has also come under repeated attacks from Boko Haram militants. I therefore urge that we all work to ensure that we defeat terrorism and stop all wars weather in Mali, Tunisia, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, Iraq, anywhere.

Let me quickly return to the issue of migration, refugee and asylum situations that poverty, civil conflicts and terrorism have exacerbated. We are witnessing developments where migrants, refugees and asylum seekers recipient/host countries are churning out pieces of legislation that show shallow consideration for the plights of these persons who were forced to flee in search of safety and survival. We urge host countries to show these victims kindness and compassion.

Furthermore comrades, let me also appreciate the efforts of Sweden in the way they have welcomed and plan to rehabilitate refugees and migrants. However, African trade unions wish to advise that those who are equally in difficult or even in far worse situations are made to pay the price of management of this crisis. In essence, we are saying that the recent OECD-DAC suggestion to cut Overseas Development Aid so as to have more resources to channel to the management of the migrants/refugees crisis might negatively impact developing economies that depend on aid.

Comrade delegates and distinguished guests let me conclude by saying that we in Nigeria take note of the Swedish “Global Deal” initiative to addressing global crises as a bold and progressive imagination worthy of further and profound consideration. We hope in the cause of our stay learn more about it.

Once again, on behalf of the teeming membership and leadership of the Nigeria Labour Congress, please accept our best wishes for a successful Congress.

Viva Swedish workers viva!

Viva workers of the world viva!!

Viva working-class International solidarity viva!!!

**Comrade Ayuba Wabba, Mni,
President Nigeria Labour Congress**