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ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT, COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE ARMED FORCES
GENERAL IBRAHIM BADAMASI BABANGIDA, CFR, FSS, MNI

ON THE

OCCASION OF THE PRESENTATION OF LETTERS OF CREDENCE TO
AMBASSADORS-DESIGNATE

LAGOS, 12 APRIL, 1991



Members of the Armed Forces Ruling Council,
Honourable Ministers,

Members of the Diplomatic Corps
Distinguished Ambassadors
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me, first of all, congratulate you on your well deserved appointments as Nigeria's Principal Envoys to your countries of accreditation. Your individual nominations were subject to thorough scrutiny, to determine your suitability to assume such an enormous responsibility. The fact that you are here today to receive your Letters of Credence is enough testimony to the confidence the Government has in you.

A cardinal statement in your Letters is that you are trusted envoys. You must, therefore, strive at all times not to betray that trust. Your task is a very important one. You are proceeding shortly to your countries of accreditation to represent the totality of our country.

Your primary responsibility, is therefore, to promote



and defend Nigeria's varied interests abroad, be they political, economic or social. I am aware that you have gone through an intensive induction course to prepare you for the tough job ahead. I also know that you undertook an extensive tour of the country to familiarise yourselves with our national needs and potentials at this stage of our development. I have no doubt, therefore, that you are well aware of what is expected of you.

However, I wish to specifically charge you to give a pride of place to the promotion of the welfare of Nigerians in your host countries. All Nigerians, by virtue of their nationality, are ambassadors abroad. You will, therefore, treat them with dignity and respect and endeavour to assist them as much as possible. In addition, you should demand from your host authorities a fair and humane treatment for our nationals.

True, some Nigerians, as indeed all other nationals, often run foul of the laws of the countries in which they reside. However, in punishing such erring Nigerians, their basic human and fundamental rights must be respected at all times. I charge you, as my principal envoys abroad, to make



the stay of Nigerians in your countries as smooth as possible.

It is unfortunate that some of our nationals, by their unlawful activities abroad, have given Nigeria a bad image. It will be your responsibility to help improve this image, especially in view of the tendency in some countries to exaggerate the activities of this small group of Nigerians to make unfair generalisations about Nigerians as a whole. You must take great pains to disabuse the minds of your hosts where these tendencies exist. You should, at all times, emphasise and demonstrate Nigeria's positive aspects, of which we have many.

Another major task before you, as you promote and defend Nigeria's interests abroad, is the vigorous pursuit of our policy of Economic Diplomacy and Complementarity. The success of your efforts in this regard will be measured by how much business you are individually and collectively able to attract to Nigeria. You will endeavour to strengthen economic relations between Nigeria and your hosts, particularly in the private sector, with a view to entrenching a favourable but



healthy economic relationship.

I trust that you are equal to the task. I have confidence in your abilities, as accomplished people in your respective fields, to realise these goals.

On the domestic front, you should keep abreast of developments in the political transition programme of this Administration, with a view to articulating to your hosts the determination of this Administration to entrench a stable democratic system by 1992.

As you are aware, Nigeria is hosting both the OAU and ECOWAS Summits in June this year at Abuja. This is a clear testimony, if any were needed, of our commitment to regional and sub-regional integration.

It is this commitment, Distinguished Ambassadors, that informed the role we are playing in the Liberian crisis. I wish to reiterate that our mission in Liberia, under the aegis of ECOMOG, is to help restore peace to that country in order that Liberians can face fully the task of nation building which is incumbent, at this stage, on all African countries. There can be no development without peace.

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On South Africa, I wish to note that Nigeria is gratified by the recent positive developments in that country. The international community sees these developments as a demonstration of President F de Klerk's commitment to a peace process that will lead to the creation of a free and democratic South Africa.

I wish to reiterate that we, on our part, would be fully prepared to promote and undertake initiatives at the forthcoming OAU Summit to lift sanctions on South Africa if the remaining apartheid laws are abrogated by May 1991.

By your Letters of Credence, I have introduced you to my brothers and colleagues in your respective countries, with the request that you be given all necessary assistance in pursuit of your main objectives of strengthening the cordial relations between Nigeria and these countries. You will avail yourselves of this rare benefit.

You are the leaders of the Nigerian communities in your countries of accreditation. Consequently, our nationals will look up to you to play an important part in integrating our country into the increasingly competitive international

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environment.

As you go, you will convey the warm and fraternal greetings of the Government and people of Nigeria to your hosts, underscoring our desire and determination to foster close and beneficial relations with them.

I charge you to be good ambassadors of Nigeria in every sense of the word.