

# Akpabio's Senate and hope for the future

BY EDWARD USORO

From inception, only a tiny few doubted his competence, capacity and candour! Yes, his reputation for diligence, hard work and achievements precedes him everywhere he goes. Still, on June 13, 2023, during his inauguration as President of the 10th Senate, Senator Godswill Akpabio's humane side remained a well-kept secret. But recently, the compassionate spirit that earned him the tag of "Ubok eno-eno" (Caregiver) broke free during the screening of the last set of ministers. A nominee had slumped, and the Senate chamber was thrown into a panic. Some senators were frozen in shock. But before the paramedics were summoned, Akpabio, from years of humanitarian services, pulled from his cap, like a magician, an immediate remedial measure to revive the man. "Water, water, water! Bring sugar; give him water and sugar," he was heard shouting. Some medical experts later commended his proactiveness, which obviously saved the day, as the affected nominee was said to have suffered from exhaustion.

Almost everything about Akpabio is "uncommon." The way he has marshalled the activities of the 10th Senate has silenced earlier critics. From his appointments, composition of committees, coordination and direction of sessions, etc, Akpabio has shown class and capacity. His efforts at uniting the senate has also been commended by many. For him, his colleagues are his friends; their welfare and wellbeing must not be toyed with. From day one, he acknowledged that he is "one among" the senators and has worked cordially with them all, irrespective of party affiliation. "I'll be a Senate President that will stand for all," he pledged at inauguration. For Akpabio, there's no dividing line between those who supported him and those who didn't. Even his inaugural speech shocked many with its soothing content. That was where he clearly outlined his blueprint. Peace, unity and glamour grew within the senate a few



tensed moment as he defuses anxieties with a tinge of humour.

The Senate President is very conscious and in tune with the current realities in the country. Thus, his focus on ensuring legislations that will help ease the economic and social burdens of Nigerians. Yes, he promised us that "the 10th Senate will do national duties." He also assured that the Senate, under his leadership, will tackle the numerous problems facing us headlong. In his words, "we'll look into the existing laws to ensure they are fit for purpose... we'll try our best to make laws that will move the nation forward and encourage foreign direct investment into the country." So far, objective analysts say he has walked the



talk. We are all aware that the country has been grappling with a lot of difficulties and that the economy requires renewal and revitalisation. Akpabio's 10th Senate admits that, too. It's often said that the first step to solving a problem is the admission that it exists. That signals an unpretentious disposition towards changing a deplorable status quo. To Akpabio: "The Senate is about Nigeria and Nigerians. And so long as the policies that come to this chamber concern the empowerment and upliftment of Nigerians, we shall dwell and deliberate and then have robust debate on them, with public hearings."

From his days as the Governor of Akwa Ibom state, Akpabio has always delivered quality leadership. Hence, he earned the sobriquet of an "uncommon" leader through all his public assignments. So, when he told the nation that he will bring about "uncommon changes," many believed him because his track records are there for all to see. "Whatever will happen here (Senate), we will think Nigeria and we will make a very big (positive) difference," he assured. The Senate, undoubtedly, demonstrated that a few days later. When the President requested approval towards obtaining \$800 million to cushion the effect of fuel subsidy withdrawal, he got it with speed. That was in line with the senate's avowed determination to support policies that would ease the burden on the masses. So far, the current Senate appears clearly people oriented. It started with a promise never to betray its mission, which include renewing hope, revitalising the Nigerian economy, working closely with the executive to better the lives of the people. It also pledged to deal favourably with gender matters; issues concerning persons with disabilities and the vulnerable

population in the society; promotion of positive engagement of the youths, among others. Irked by the disturbing involvement of youths in vices like Boko harm insurgency, unknown gunmen, etc, Akpabio's senate has promised to draw up legislations to help create jobs, thus check insecurity.

Working with the Executive arm, the senate, says Akpabio, is poised to expand the revenue stream across the country, so that debts can be tackled. Understandably, when debts are defrayed and the cost of servicing reduced, funds can then be channeled into productive ventures that will be of greater benefits to the greater majority. It was to this that the Senate President referred when he promised to support the Tinubu-led government to ensure that Nigeria produces what she consumes. Clearly, when put into the expected action, the nation stands to gain a great deal in productivity and prosperity.

Environmental issues and sustainable growth also fall into the priority scale of the 10th Senate. Akpabio, to underscore the commitment of his leadership, focuses on providing the required legislative framework to help government anchor its policies and programmes. In other words, the senate engages in, supports or promotes all activities that will yield enormous benefits for the masses. With the way he has handled the Senate's affairs, so far, within the last four months, Akpabio has used the National Assembly to raise more hope for a greater Nigeria. Clearly, his proactive Senate is gradually building greater hope for the future. And, the days ahead promise more glorious prospects!

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