

# 'HARNESSING A NEW DAWN FOR NIGERIA'S CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY' ...*The PATRIOTS*

**T**he 2025 National Summit on The Future of Nigeria's Constitutional Democracy was convened by THE PATRIOTS, Nigeria's foremost group of elder statesmen and women, intellectuals and civic leaders, under the distinguished leadership of Chief Emeka Anyaoku, GCON, former Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, in collaboration with the Nigerian Political Summit Group (NPSG). Delegates at the National Summit held between 16th and 17th July, 2025 at the Congress Hall of the Transcorp Hilton Hotel, Abuja and the Nicon Luxury Hotel, Abuja, respectively were drawn from the civil society groups, women, the academia, ethnic nationalities, Nigerians in Diaspora, professional groups, faith-based organizations, traditional rulers, religious leaders, youth groups, market men/women, security experts, student leaders, the private sector and persons with special needs across the country. The National Summit examined and responded to the deep-rooted and systemic challenges confronting Nigeria and its diverse peoples. Deliberations at the National Summit touched on the urgent need to reposition the country through a new, inclusive democratic people's Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.



**G**uided by the aspirations of the Nigerian people for fairness, social justice, equity, security, and sustainable development, and confronted with the present systemic structural and governance failures and dysfunction under the current 1999 Constitution (as amended). Realizing that the 1999 Constitution did not derive its legitimacy from popular participation and approbation of the Nigerian people, the National Summit therefore affirmed the inherent flaws and consequences in the existing constitutional frameworks which manifest in the decline into unitary system (rather than fostering genuine federalism), poor leadership and weak delivery of governance arising from weak political structures and institutions; declining sense of citizenship and patriotism; an increasing multi-dimensional poverty and inequality that threaten peace, unity and development; widespread fear, anxiety and an increasing feeling of hopelessness; acute corruption and lack of accountability/transparency; insecurity across regions; sectional, ethnic, and religious conflicts with various dimensions and scope that have further weakened national unity and mutual distrust; poor infrastructure; poor management of the economy manifesting in disconnection from human capital development as well as environment mismanagement; and poor adaptation strategy resulting in increasing vulnerability of Nigeria and Nigerians to climate change. Convinced that Nigeria as a political entity needs holistic restructuring and comprehensive overhaul of the existing constitutional framework and governance architecture, the National Summit resolved to chart a new course for enduring future through renewed and unflagging commitment to demanding a new inclusive; democratic people's Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on the basis of the following resolutions.

## RESOLUTIONS

The following resolutions represent consensus reached at the National Summit, offering clear, constructive and principled remedies for Nigeria's pressing constitutional and governance crises:

### Urgent need for new a Constitutional order

The Summit agreed that the 1999 Constitution (as amended) is deeply flawed and unrepresentative in that it was not made by the people and is inadequate for addressing the country's pluralism and the various challenges confronting Nigeria as a nation. Therefore, delegates agreed that there is the need for a new people-driven, inclusive, democratic Constitution anchored on true federalism. For stability and maximal development, the Constitution must address Nigeria's plurality and diversity.

### Demand for Constituent Assembly

In order to actualize the above and other reforms agreed to at this Summit, the delegates agreed that the President be requested to introduce an Executive Bill to the National Assembly to empower the Independent National

Electoral Commission (INEC) to organize elections to a national Constituent Assembly. This Assembly shall be made up of delegates elected on non-partisan basis as well as representatives of special interest groups

### 3. Referendum

The Constituent Assembly shall be responsible for actualizing a people's democratic Constitution that will be subjected to a referendum of the Nigerian people before it is assented to by the President to midwife a people's democratic Constitution that will be subjected to a referendum of the Nigerian people before it is assented to by the President.

### 4. Return to genuine federalism

The Summit calls for an immediate constitutional framework that will return Nigeria to a truly federal system of government where the federating units will enjoy their autonomy as obtained in the First Republic and other genuine democracies of the World.

### 5. Federal System of government

The Summit agreed that the current presidential system of government is too expensive, prone to abuse; constitutes a hindrance to peoples welfare and a major threat to the future of democracy in Nigeria.

### 6. Geographical restructuring

Flowing from the above resolutions, the Summit resolved that the present six geopolitical zones should be restructured in such a way as to ensure a truly federal system of government.

### 7. Devolution of Federal powers

The current political reality is that too much power is concentrated at the Centre. Quite enormous powers are currently concentrated in the presidency. The reduction of the enormity will discourage autocratic tendencies and encourage inter-institutional checks and balances. The patriot therefore recommends the devolution of powers from the center to the federating units.

### 8. Legislature

The Summit agreed that a two-chamber federal legislature is unsustainably expensive for Nigeria to maintain. The Summit therefore recommends a more appropriate cost-effective system.

### 9. Administration of justice

Justice delayed is justice denied. The centralized court system has impacted the administration of justice so negatively that congestion of court registries with cases has become a problem that may never be solved unless there is a decisive Constitutional intervention. Therefore, the summit delegates recommend that there is the need for each federating unit to have its court hierarchy up to the Court of Appeal, thereby leaving the Federal Supreme Court to deal with heavy Constitutional matters, interstate disputes, and disputes between the Federal and



subnational governments. The summit also recommends the creation of special courts to manage special offenses such as electoral matters, corruption and terrorism cases amongst others.

#### 10. Appointment of Non-politically Partisan Attorney-Generals

The Summit recommends that the office of the Attorney-General of the Federation and that of the Minister of Justice as well as the office of Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice at the state level should be separated to enable the appointment of non-politically partisan Attorneys-General.

#### 11. Electoral reforms

Free, fair and credible elections are the real pillars of democracy. The current reality is a democracy that has been taken away from the control of voters. Elections are too costly and prone to fraud. Billions of Naira are spent on recruitment of electoral officers, security agencies and logistics while the courts have become the real electors of leaders. Among other reforms, the summit resolved therefore, that all elections be conducted in a single day, as this is cheaper, time saving and less prone to fraud. Brazil and Ghana are good examples of countries that have adopted single-day elections. The Summit demand amendment to the Electoral Act and the relevant sections of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) for Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and electronic transmission of results real time to be made mandatory.

#### INDEPENDENT CANDIDATURE

The new Constitution should include provision for independent candidacy for aspirants who do not wish to run for elections on party basis.

#### CROSS CARPETTING

The summit recommends that once a person is elected on the platform of a political party, he or she shall not defect to another political party till the tenure is over. Where this takes place, such seat shall automatically and unconditionally be declared vacant and such person shall forthwith cease to hold the office.

#### 12. Cost of governance

Cost-cutting is a time-tested solution to bankruptcy. The

present pseudo-federal system is too large and unmanageable. It takes so much to run while the result is over-bloated bureaucracies and political structures at both state and federal levels.

#### 13. Number of Ministers and Political Appointees

The Constitution should set caps on the number of ministers, commissioners, special advisers and such officers to reduce bloated government structures. Ministries at federal and regional levels should not be more than 15 while departments and agencies should be reduced to one quarter of the existing number.

#### 14. Corruption and breach of public trust

Pervasive corruption and impunity remain symptoms of governance failure in Nigeria. These are enabled by the



inherent contradictions and inadequacies in the 1999 Constitution which was imposed on the country by the military and all of which now manifest in centralized leadership structure. These flaws in the Constitution have been consistently and systematically exploited by political actors and government bureaucracies to institutionalize corruption.

The Summit agreed that for these deficiencies to be effectively tackled, there must be enough deterrence for offenders. Certainty of arrest, an uncompromised judiciary and severity of punishment which are guaranteed deterrence to criminality are currently circumvented with impunity in Nigeria. The Summit demand comprehensive restructuring of the police and the court system for effective, corruption-free justice delivery.

#### 15. Citizens' rights/Empowerment initiatives

The United Nations has said that there are currently over

20 million Nigerian children out of school while over 130 million Nigerians wallow in multidimensional poverty. There is also an acute state of infrastructure decay and deficit. With over 50% infrastructure deficit that covers roads, transport, electricity, housing, water and sanitation (World Bank 2024), real development requires a dedication to system and structural overhaul much of which a peoples Constitution can direct.

### 16. Women and Other Groups

The Summit therefore recommends that the new Constitution should entrench robust provisions for the protection of the peoples socio-economic and political rights such as education, security and employment. Summit recommends the inclusion of women, youths, people with special needs and minorities in political participation, governance and nation building. The new Constitution should ensure gender equity in determining citizenship by marriage and the explicit provisions that protect women and the girl child against all forms of abuse and discrimination in the society.

### 17. Nigerians in Diaspora

Nigerians in the Diaspora have over the years complained of disenfranchisement and exclusion from the voting process. Currently, statistics put the figure of Nigerians in the Diaspora at over 15 million, yet these Nigerians are excluded from the voting process, despite their huge contributions to economic development through diaspora remittances. The Summit recommends the establishment of a legal framework that will guarantee the civic rights of this class of Nigerians to participate in the democratic process.

### 18. National security architecture & strategy

The virtual collapse of security infrastructure has led to the continuing death of thousands of Nigerians and the displacement of over 3 million from their homes. More than 10 million Nigerians have fallen victims of attacks by non-state actors. All these tragically impact lives, livelihood and business. Data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) shows that from May 2023 to April 2024 alone, 614,937 Nigerians were killed. Furthermore, the porosity of Nigeria's borders has contributed immensely to the worsening insecurity in the country. It enables the trafficking of weapons from as far as North Africa via Niger to Nigeria. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reports that there are over 350 million arms and ammunition illegally circulating in Nigeria, making the country the biggest trans-border market for illicit arms in Africa.

Summit therefore recommends a broad range of measures, one of which is that there should be establishment of border/coastal security guards to support the conventional security forces. There should be enactment of statutes that will lead to the introduction of a community-based border policing model to the nation's security systems. Summit also affirmed the need for

equity in statutory rotation of headship of national security agencies among the sub-nationals.

### 19. Secularity/Religion

The Summit agreed that given her pluralism, Nigeria shall in perpetuity remain a secular state. Both the central and the sub-national governments shall do nothing to detract from this secularity.

### 20. Sub-national Police

The Summit recommends the urgency of a legislative framework that would enable the creation of state police to tackle the pervasive internal security issues across the geopolitical zones.

### 21. Federal/Sub-national Constitutions

The federating units should enjoy a great measure of constitutional autonomy in a federal system. The three (later four) regions of the First Republic had their individual constitutions in addition to the Federal Constitution. This is a provision which the Summit agreed should be part of the new Constitution as part of measures to reclaim the country from the vice grip of unitarism.

### 22. True Fiscal Federalism

The summit recommends that the new Constitution should make provision for the restoration of fiscal federalism and resource control given the fact that all parts of Nigeria are well endowed with Natural resources.

### Conclusion

The Summit leadership thanks all delegates from all the states of the federation and Nigerians in the Diaspora who attended virtually, for believing in this cause. The Summit salutes the resolve of all patriots to make Nigeria work. The current gush of enthusiasm and commitment from Nigerians of all classes across the globe is a further demonstration of the urgent need for a new nation governed by a new democratic, and inclusive constitution. With sustained action and unflagging support for the resolutions reached at this submit, it is our belief that the dawn of a new, just, equitable and peaceful Nigeria is nigh. Together, we shall live to see that new, prosperous Nigeria where no child is left behind and where no man and woman is oppressed.

We thank you.

**Chief Emeka Anyaoku, GCON**

Convenor, National Summit

*Being the Communique presented at the end of the National Summit put together by the PATRIOTS on the future of Nigeria's Constitutional Democracy held from the 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> July 2025 at the Transcorp Hilton Hotel Abuja*