



FESTUS IYAYI NATIONAL SECRETARIAT COMPLEX
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PRESS RELEASE

MEETING WITH PRESIDENT BUHARI: BEYOND IPPIS

The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has found it necessary to correct the wrong impression created by a section of the media that the meeting of the Union with President Muhammadu Buhari (GCFR) on Thursday, 9th January, 2020 was called solely to discuss the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) which ASUU rejected, and still rejects, for sound reasons.

1. Background to the Visit

ASUU believes that engagement with the leadership of Nigeria by the academic community should be a seamless process. Before the last visit to the State House, ASUU had previously engaged former Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo, Musa Yar'Adua and Goodluck Jonathan at various times respectively. Such visits afforded the Union opportunities to put across the perspective of Nigerian academics on what role education should play in addressing national challenges.

2. Issues Discussed at the Meeting

The meeting of ASUU with President Buhari on 9th January 2020 was conceived in the broad context of education and national development within the Triple Helix principles as established in China, Singapore, Malaysia, among other emerging economic powers. The meeting was called in response to the Union's request as conveyed in its letter of 21st October 2019. The letter specifically outlined three issues for discussion:

- ASUU's position on the violation of Universities' Autonomy Law (Universities Miscellaneous Provisions (Amendment) Act 2003, Laws of the respective universities and Agreements with ASUU as it relates to the planned forceful enrolment of academics in Federal Universities on the Integrated Personnel and Payroll Information System (IPPIS).
- The 7th February 2019 FGN-ASUU Memorandum of Action and implications of its non-implementation.
- ASUU's Proposal for Sustainable Funding of Education.

It is perhaps understandable that the media and some section of the public have focused more attention on the IPPIS because it appears "topical" or "trending". However, ASUU has always argued that the IPPIS crisis cannot be resolved without paying due attention to the foundational issues of autonomy and academic freedom, collective bargaining agreements (CBAs), and sustainable funding of education for the transformation of Nigeria.

For the avoidance of doubt, ASUU made six clear prayers at the meeting with President Buhari:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'M. D. S.', is written over a horizontal line.

- ❖ The need for appropriate officers to obey universities' laws and abide by collective bargaining agreements.
- ❖ The need for the implementation of all outstanding provisions in the 7th February 2019 FGN/ ASUU Memorandum of Action.
- ❖ The need to re-commence and conclude the Re-negotiation of the 2009 FGN/ ASUU Agreement, based on ILO's collective bargaining principles within the six-week timeframe originally set for it.
- ❖ The need for Mr. President, as Visitor to the Federal Universities, to constitute and activate Visitation Panels to all Universities and direct that the outcomes be fully implemented.
- ❖ Government should welcome ASUU's ongoing innovation of a more robust system of human resource management and compensation, called the *University Transparency and Accountability Solution* (UTAS), which will address the peculiarities of universities and end inappropriate recruitments in the system.
- ❖ The need for Government to declare a Five-Year State of Emergency in the Education Sector. During this period, at least 6% of the GDP or 26% of the FGN Budget as well as 26% of each State Government Budget should be allocated to Education during this period.

3. Positions at the Meeting and Conclusion

President Buhari agreed with ASUU that education, particularly university education, holds the key to the future of the country. The Union, on its part, noted with interest Mr. President's comment that the "Minister of Education has a lot of work to do"; after which he handed over the position paper of ASUU on the issues raised to the Minister for follow up.

As expected, the Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning spoke spiritedly in defence of IPPIS, including levelling some unfounded allegations against ASUU, in order to portray the Union in bad light before Mr. President. However, some other officials of Government (e.g. Minister of Labour and Employment, and Secretary to Government of the Federation) alluded to the possibility of "marrying" ASUU's proposed UTAS with IPPIS. Also, the Minister created the wrong impression that a substantial number of ASUU members had enrolled in IPPIS in defiance of the Union. For the avoidance of doubt, however, the Minister failed to provide the ratio of academic to non-academic in her questionable data.

To put the records straight, and contrary to what was reported in the official media, at no point during the meeting did President Buhari put a closure to the ongoing discussion on ASUU's preference for the University Transparency and Accountability Solution (UTAS) or directed that the salaries of ASUU members be stopped for failure to enrol in IPPIS. Any report to the contrary is calculated to mislead not only the public but to weaken the resolve of the academic staff, a large majority of who are standing by the position of our Union.

In conclusion, ASUU remains committed to its tradition of consultation and dialogue, which informed the engagement with President Muhammadu Buhari on Thursday, 9th January 2020, with the hope that all the prayers sought would receive the expected prompt attention.


Biodun Ogunyemi
 President

14th January, 2020.