

**ACADEMIC STAFF UNION OF UNIVERSITIES
(ASUU)**



*TEXT OF THE PRESS CONFERENCE OF THE ACADEMIC STAFF UNION OF
UNIVERSITIES (ASUU) HELD AT THE END OF THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE
COUNCIL (NEC) MEETING HELD AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS, LAGOS,
12TH-13TH FEBRUARY, 2021*

I. PROTOCOL

II. INTRODUCTION

Comrades and compatriots of the Press,

The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) held its National Executive Council (NEC) meeting at the University of Lagos between Saturday 12th and Sunday 13th February, 2022. During this meeting, the union undertook a comprehensive review of the state of Nigerian universities and the worsening living and working conditions in the university system and the nation at large. The union was particularly alarmed by the declining conditions of federal and state-owned universities and their utter neglect over the years. It is, therefore, reasonable to devote much of this media briefing to the failure by the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) to fully implement the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and the Memorandum of Action (MoA) it signed with ASUU in recent years. We shall also draw attention to the various efforts our union and concerned individuals and organizations have made in the last one year to persuade the FGN to honor its signed commitments in this regard.

III. NON-IMPLEMENTATION OF MOA AND MOU BY THE FGN

You may recall that after series of exceedingly rigorous engagements, the FGN entered into an Agreement with our Union in 2009, formally known as the FGN/ASUU 2009 Agreement. Thirteen years after this Agreement was signed, its provisions were only partially implemented while the conditions of service of academic staff, funding and autonomy continue to be eroded in all our campuses. After years of pressure and insistence, the FGN reluctantly agreed to commence the re-negotiation of Agreement, due since 2012, in 2017, the process was concluded in May, 2021. However, to our shock and dismay, the FGN is yet indicate its readiness to sign the draft Agreement which is urgently needed to address the deteriorating conditions in our universities.

IV. NON-DEPLOYMENT OF UNIVERSITY TRANSPARENCY ACCOUNTABILITY SOLUTION (UTAS)

It is common knowledge that the IPPIS is a cesspool of corruption which glaringly and effectively undermines the autonomy of the Nigerian University System. This payment platform was unilaterally imposed by the FGN, further compounding the multi-faceted problems of our universities. The imposition of the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) undermines the universal tradition of sabbatical leave system, visiting and adjunct appointments, and other essential aspects of university autonomy by attempting to integrate the financial and bureaucratic administration of the universities into the Nigerian Civil Service structure. Our union insists that the

IPPIS is incompatible with the peculiar attributes and operations of the public university system. We shall continue to resist it.

The imposition of this grotesque platform challenged our union to develop an alternative system to IPPIS - the University Transparency and Accountability Solution (UTAS). This locally developed and cost-effective alternative payment platform has the distinct capacity to check corruption and preserve the hard-earned autonomy of Nigerian universities for the good of the country. Regrettably, the FGN is still foot-dragging over its adoption, contrary to an earlier agreement with our union, thereby allowing the financial chaos heralded by IPPIS to continue.

V. VISITATION PANEL REPORTS

Sending Visitation Panels to universities on a periodic (5-yearly) basis is a critical evaluation requirement stipulated in our university laws. Our union had to embark on an action for the FGN to institute such panels. However, many months after the panels submitted their reports, the White Papers are yet to be released. We call for immediate release of the White Papers to address numerous lapses in the administration of Nigeria's federal universities.

VI. EARNED ACADEMIC ALLOWANCES (EAA)

Compatriots of the Press, the Federal Government promised to mainstream the EAA into the annual federal budget in the various memoranda signed with ASUU and the

Government recently released N22.1 billion for payment of some EAA allowances. However, many years of unpaid entitlements are outstanding serving as triggers for industrial crisis in our universities.

VI. NON-PAYMENT OF EAA TO MEMBERS OF ASUU OAU

Similarly, it is necessary for the union to brief you about the illegal withholding of payment of Earned Academic Allowances of our union members in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. The Federal Government had disbursed the requisite money into the account of the University for the purpose of payment of EAA for 2021. This deposit was confirmed by the Vice Chancellor on 13th of December, 2021. However, for reasons best known to the university administration, the verified computation of entitlements of the beneficiaries, which complied with all laid down procedures and were properly audited by the university auditors, was set aside by the capricious Vice-Chancellor, Professor Eyitope Ogunbodede. The result is a needless and avoidable industrial relations crisis, which has led to the closure of the university indefinitely. We call on the authorities in OAU to retrace their steps while there is still time and immediately pay deserving academics their entitlements in line with the established procedure. Otherwise, the total and indefinite strike embarked upon by the Branch shall continue indefinitely.

VII. ILLEGAL APPOINTMENT OF DR ISAH ALI IBRAHIM PANTAMI AS A PROFESSOR OF CYBERSECURITY BY FUTO

Compatriots of the Press, you may recall that our union disassociated itself from the appointment of Dr. Isah Ibrahim Pantami as a professor of cybersecurity by the Federal University of Technology, Owerri (FUTO) during our NEC meeting held at the University of Abuja on 18th-19th November, 2021, until a Fact-Finding Team to be dispatched to the branch reports its findings. The Team visited the branch on 10th-14th February, 2022, and reported back to NEC. As a result of the comprehensive report submitted on all the relevant matters, NEC hereby rejects in its entirety the purported appointment of Dr. Isah Ali Ibrahim Pantami as a professor of cybersecurity. From the evidence available to us, Dr. Pantami was not qualified, and the said appointment violated established procedure for appointment of professors in the university. NEC directed all members and branches of our union throughout the Nigerian federation not to recognize, accord or treat Dr. Isah Ali Ibrahim Pantami as a professor of cybersecurity under any guise. NEC also resolved to sanction all ASUU members who participated in the process that led to the illegal appointment in accordance with the established procedures of our union.

VIII. PROLIFERATION OF STATE UNIVERSITIES

The Federal Government had claimed that the Bill to amend the National Universities Commission (NUC) Act with a view to empowering the NUC to address the problems of proliferation and under-funding of State Universities was before the National Assembly for consideration. This promise has lingered for too long and more

universities at both the Federal and State levels are being established despite the challenge of funding. State governors are establishing universities as constituency projects at a time most of them cannot pay salaries. Recently, the senate had signed bills establishing three additional Federal Universities, while State Assemblies in Lagos and Delta States had signed bills to establish two and three additional Universities, respectively. We call on the National Assembly to as a matter of urgency consider and pass the Bill.

IX. VICTIMISATION OF ACADEMICS IN STATE UNIVERSITIES

We are constrained to note with sadness that State Governments and highhanded Vice Chancellors have continued to victimize our members in Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU), Abia State University (ABSU), Kogi State University (KSU), Ebonyi State University (EBSU), Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT), and few others.

In COOU, the lives of our members are being threatened with the aid of armed youths on a daily basis and freedom of movement is no longer guaranteed. The payment of check-off dues has been stopped, and this has thwarted the activities of our union in the branch.

In EBSU, the autonomy of the University has been completely eroded, while the university has been without a Governing Council since November, 2020. Salary payments are haphazard, and members of our union are constantly being threatened, especially the Chairperson of the branch, by the Visitor to the University.

Our members in ABSU were not paid their salaries for the months of September 2021 to January, 2022. Additionally, eighteen (18) months arrears of shortfall, arising from the 2009 FGN/ASUU agreement from July, 2009 to December, 2010 amounting to N902, 161, 550.82 have not been paid. Similarly, Cooperative deductions amounting to N201, 378, 003.00 has not been remitted. The case of ESUT is not different. Apart from deducting our members' check-off dues without remitting to the union, the Acting Vice Chancellor has stayed for almost two years contrary to the provisions of the law.

We reaffirm our displeasure with the proscription of the union and termination of our members' appointment in Kogi State University. This highhandedness is unacceptable, and our union shall resist any form of victimization and oppression in our public universities

We demand that the Visitors of State Universities in Ebonyi, Enugu, Abia and Anambra States detach themselves from the running of the Universities and desist from harassing our members and denying them their legitimate entitlements. Rather, they should ensure prompt payment of salaries and proper funding of their universities.

X. JAMB AND THE ENCROACHMENT INTO UNIVERSITY AUTONOMY

The autonomy of universities is under increasing threat by the meddlesome activities of Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board (JAMB) in admission processes and regulation of academic activities in the Nigerian University System. JAMB was created by an Act of the national Assembly in 1978 and responsible for the conduct of matriculation examinations for admission into tertiary institution in Nigeria,

appointment of examiners and collection/dissemination of information on all matters relating to entrance examinations. It is the prerogative and responsibility of each university senate to superintend over all academic matters in the university. These include setting the admission requirements and approval of university undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. JAMB has no powers to decide qualification for admission and does not have powers to give admission or delist programmes of universities. At best, JAMB is an examination body and clearing house for admission into tertiary institutions. Giving admission to candidates is the duty of senate, while regulation or accreditation of programmes is the prerogative of NUC. However, it is a matter of regret that JAMB is operating outside its jurisdiction of collecting and disseminating information on matters relating to admissions from respective institutions based on senate recommendations. We call upon JAMB to desist from overstepping its original mandate and allow Universities to decide on admission policies and processes.

XI. STATE OF THE NATION

NEC observed with concern the deepening crisis in the Nigerian State fueled by widespread and rising insecurity, kidnapping, banditry, and insurgency in various parts of the country. The pervasive insecurity and its various manifestations have negatively undermined the capacity of the Nigerian people and the country to foster progress and the general economic development of the country. This inability has brought about untold hardship of inflation, scandalous rising cost of food, oppressive

electricity tariff and fuel price increases, resulting in deepening poverty among our people.

Increasing plundering of the country since the return to civil rule in 1999 is making the country to bleed. The Nigerian army has always claimed progress on the war against insurgency. It is unfortunate that Billions of naira have been spent on insecurity with little or nothing to show for it.

The exchange of one dollar to naira is currently over N460. Inflation is so high that the purchasing power of Nigerians is being eroded daily due to the rising cost of commodity items. All this has made nonsense of the N30,000 minimum wage which many oppressive State Governors have not even started to pay. Unsteady electricity supply is the reality of the sad situation in the country today. It is almost impossible to boast of six hours of uninterrupted power supply in most parts of Nigeria. This is in the face of unjustified higher tariffs by the profit-driven private electricity companies. And it is no longer news that the so-called deregulation of the power sector has subjected millions of Nigerians to untold hardship.

Last week, the Federal Government made spirited efforts to withdraw from circulation an adulterated fuel supplied some registered companies. This attests to the failure of leadership in the sector as those who were saddled with the duty of inspecting the fuel before supply failed to do their work. We insist that unless those found culpable are appropriately sanctioned to the knowledge of the generality of Nigerians, the

shenanigans of leadership failure in the petroleum industry which has made it impossible to fix the country's refineries will continue endlessly.

We must reiterate that ASUU members are not insulated from the consequences of the pervasive social bedlam and suffocating economy. Come rain, come shine, our union shall continue to stand with other patriotic Nigerians to work for bringing reliefs to the suffering and toiling people of Nigeria.

XII. NEC RESOLUTION

Compatriots of the Press, after its two-day meeting, NEC resolves as follows:

Considering that the Government has failed to fully implement the Memorandum of Action it signed with the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) on 23rd December, 2020; given that the draft report of the Renegotiated 2009 FGN/ASUU Agreement has been submitted for finalization for more than nine months; and noting that the forceful payment of ASUU members' salaries and emoluments with the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) and non-adoption of the University Transparency and Accountability Solution (UTAS) have continued to shortchange our members, NEC resolved to embark on a four-week roll-over total and comprehensive strike action beginning from Monday, 14th February 2022.

XIII. CONCLUSION

Comrades and compatriots, it was a painful decision for NEC to arrive at the roll-over strike option. Contrary to the views canvassed in some quarters, our union loathes to disrupt academic activities on our campuses. We love our students and respect their parents and guardians. We are also not insensitive to the genuine concerns about stable academic calendars in public universities expressed by patriotic Nigerians and lovers of

Nigeria. But the blame should be squarely put at the doorsteps of those who have ignored our patriotic yearnings for a development-oriented education in Nigeria. The patience of our members has been tasked beyond tolerable limits. The greatest asset of any nation is its human capital. Any nation that pays lip service to education as we currently witness in Nigeria will only grow in age and never experience genuine development. We therefore seek the understanding and support of all stakeholders to make Nigerian government more responsive to issues of human capital development including health and education.

We invite all lovers of education to join our struggle for a greater Nigeria. Nigerian politicians keep proliferating educational institutions without prioritizing education. ASUU will not relent in its historic responsibility of advocating for an improved university system because it holds the key to our collective prosperity and a better future for our children and our children's children. So, let's work together to fix it.

The struggle continues!

Thank you.



Emmanuel Osodeke
President

14th February 2022