



**ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY, THE GOVERNOR OF CROSS RIVER  
STATE,  
SENATOR LIYEL IMOKE, AT THE SWEARING-IN OF 17 NEWLY  
ELECTED LOCAL GOVERNMENT CHAIRMEN AT THE MAIN BOWL OF  
THE CULTURAL CENTRE COMPLEX, CALABAR ON FRIDAY, 14TH  
DECEMBER, 2007**

Your Excellency, the Deputy Governor of Cross River State, Barr.  
Efiok Cobham

Hon. Speaker and Members of the State House of Assembly

Honourable Chief Judge of the State,

Hon. Chairmen of Councils

Secretary to Government

Members of the State Executive Council

Representatives of Service Chiefs

Chairmen and Members of Boards and Commissions

Heads of Extra Ministerial Departments

Permanent Secretaries

Distinguished Invited Guests

Your Royal Highnesses

Members of the Press

Ladies and Gentlemen

The swearing-in ceremony of duly elected Chairmen of Local Government Councils which we have just witnessed marks another turning point in our quest to truly deliver the dividends of democracy to our people. As the third tier of government, the local government system has to compliment the other tiers if we are not to experience a gap in our development efforts. Unfortunately, this has not been the case, as the general cry across the country in recent times, seem to suggest.

The Local Government System in Nigeria has passed through a tortuous road of criticism and dashed aspirations. From allegations of ineptitude to echoes of alarming fraud among operators; and to matters of out-right abuse of office and due process. All of these have come to shape the loathsome image of Local Governments.

We have from the inception of this Administration designed a number of programmes to reverse this negative perception and thus achieve the desired result. We began by setting a Committee on Local Governments and Local Government Administration during the

transitional period preceding my inauguration. Decisions of this Committee have formed part of our central agenda for the Local Government Administration.

Upon assumption of office, we constituted a Local Government Reform Committee to study, analyse and make appropriate recommendations for the reform of the Local Government System. The report of this Committee has been submitted and issues needing legislative consideration are currently before the Cross River State House of Assembly for consideration. We are putting in place, a comprehensive package of development that would positively affect the lives of every Cross Riverian, particularly, our rural dwellers, in addition to providing everyone with fresh opportunities for effective participation in the overall development of our state and nation. Indeed, our establishment of direct intervention agencies such as **the Rural Development Agency, the State Electrification Agency, the State Border Communities Development Commission**, as well as the introduction of **Due Process Mechanism** among others, in all our development activities are indicative of our determination to pursue this goal to its logical conclusion.

Our intention here is not only to ensure that our people are linked through good road network, but that they also have access to

modern health facilities, education, electricity and all else that would help to improve their living standards and general welfare. Of course, we cannot achieve these lofty goals without the effective participation of local government chairmen and their various councillors who, as major stakeholders, are indispensable in the actualization of the entire developmental programmes.

Let me therefore use this opportunity to emphasize strongly, the need for every local government chairman to realize that he/she is one of the important links in the state's development chain. And, as you all know, a chain is as strong as its weakest link. You must all therefore work hard to remain powerful links in the overall development of our state.

This calls not only for probity, transparency and accountability in all your dealings, but also for absolute discipline and the observance of due process in all public procurement, award of contract and general management of resources at your disposal. The challenge before you is for all of you to work hard to change the unfavourable public perception of the local government system as a failed system. Our people deserve to be served right. And the time to do so is now.

We cannot afford to compromise. For far too long, our people have complained and cried themselves hoarse about poor services at the grassroots. They want positive results now, not unending promises. We shall have zero tolerance for fraud, abuse of office, corruption, poor service delivery and mal-administration at all levels in the state. As you take up the mantle of leadership in your Councils, I urge you to pay close attention to the fundamentals of good governance – effective planning based on approved budgets, transparency and absolute reliance on due process.

We also expect that as you go on to swear-in your local government councillors after this ceremony, you would in turn pass on this clear message to them for their own guidance. Above all, they must, together with you, ensure a harmonious working relationship with the state government in all areas of development. That is also the one sure way of ensuring that the ship of state does not only sail in the right direction, but actually anchors on the shores of prosperity.

Having said that let me also congratulate all of you on your victories at the just concluded local government elections in the state. The process that led to your emergence was free and fair and the elections peaceful and credible. We welcome you on board the ship of state and assure you of our every co-operation and support in our

collective endeavour to uplift our people and anchor prosperity throughout our land.

May the Good Lord grant you all a fulfilling and successful tenure as you serve your fatherland in the years ahead.

Thank you and God Bless.