

Where are YOU?

Positioning You for Personal Development, Nation Building and Global Competitiveness



by

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Face Lift for 2006

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1 Darkness and Light

Have you ever been in a dark room? If you have (and I suspect that you have been), then I'm very sure you will agree with me that any form of light – no matter how faint – shines through, including the little illumination from mobile phones. May I now request that you return with me to this room? Thank you. Can anyone see the light coming from my phone's screen? I doubt it... I have only asked this to be able to explain an enduring truth: darkness is not necessarily an opportunity for the celebration of the lack of much-needed light, it is an opportunity for even the least of lights to find expression, or shine. And if the little lights can come together, they can probably produce great light – which will naturally overcome darkness. Keep this on your mind as we continue on the day's journey... I invite you to tighten your seatbelts as I act as the pilot of this flight, "Face Lift for 2006". Our final destination is your mind, and the mission is to stir that mind towards creative action for personal development, nation building, regional cooperation and global participation. Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to "Face Lift for 2006"!

I should, at this point, thank the Youth Hotline Network, for this kind invitation. I should thank you for honouring this invitation too. Its great to be back home... my mind takes me back to over twenty years ago, when my dad and the family would drive past this place where *Morims* stands today. There was definitely no *Morims* then, but I can remember my dad driving in just a few meters down the road – into my mum's office at the Health Management Board. And then we would proceed to St. Peter's Demonstration primary school... where the likes of Mr. Oriere, Mrs. Osho, Mr. Anifaloba and Mrs. Akinniranye were doing a great job at moulding today's leaders. I said "today's leaders", not tomorrow's for a good reason. Before now, we were told that, "youth are the leaders of tomorrow", but tomorrow never seems to come. We are the leaders of today – and have to deliberately take responsibility for our future. My future, your future, can not be at the mercy of gun-wielding legislators, bail-jumping governors, sit-tight presidents, an unpredictable system or even epileptic educational sector (among others).

In fact, what I have been asked to do today is to ask you a simple question: where are you? As simple as the question is, it seeks an answer to the relationship between you, this nation and your desired destination in life. Is it really worth being a Nigerian today, or should we just register en-masse for the visa lottery? At some point, I will invite you to join me in reciting the second stanza of the national anthem.

2 The Nigerian Youth

The average Nigerian does not hold so much premium on his/her nation. And to make matters worse, it has not exactly been a great year. A few days ago, you celebrated Christmas but some families could not – at least not without noticing the obvious difference. Junior would usually put up the first Christmas decoration, but he died on his way back from school – in a plane crash! Folake should have been baking

the cakes, but she was attacked while on her way to Jos for NYSC, and the trauma has left her a living corpse. Uncle can't come home this time to buy you all the gifts because he's scared of coming home; in fact, the travel advice of his mega corporation in his new-found country has stated that Nigeria is a dangerous place to visit. In the next few minutes, another life may just be lost in a political (or politically motivated) uproar. Life expectancy is dropping by the day. If you think I'm through... just hold on! How about the young Nigerian?

In the midst of all these, young Nigerians are victims of their own birth. Education is a *no-go* area because even the best of graduates knows deep within him that his is a result of the *CPF* model. What is *CPF*? Cram-Pass-Forget! He does that all through his stay in school, and by the time he's out of those four walls, he is a misfit. He has to go for some few weeks of training before he can fit into the job he has been trained for over the last four years of his life. So, what exactly are we talking about? When last did you listen to the news and decide to share the content with your friends in other countries? How often have you been told to stand aside because you carry a green passport that bears the Nigerian coat of arms? What are you going to tell a young lady who went through expensive education and can not find a place to put her mind to work? Are you also a young Nigerian? Do you understand what I'm saying at all? But where do all these leave you and me? A good question to ask at this point is, "*Quo Vadis?*" Where do we go from here?

You will most likely not get a multiple choice answer, but all hope is not lost. If the content is corrupted, there's the option of changing the vessel or checking the source of the content. If the cup is empty, there is also the option of finding a way around filling it with the appropriate content. "What are you talking about", you may ask. Do you remember my analogy earlier in the day? Darkness is an opportunity for the least of lights to illuminate its environment – and shine. We have many options: we can begin an immediate evacuation of all nationals to a better place; we can turn our eyes off and pretend nothing is happening (and pay dearly for it while remaining at the mercy of an unpredictable system); and we can also make a decision to fix the problem. I bet that someone is thinking, "don't even go there, Nigeria's problem is beyond fixing!" While I agree with you that we are not talking about paper-based national reconstruction here, I will also insist that most nations that we envy today have "been there". Some have been at the same place with us and have now gone ahead, some others were fortunate to get early assistance.

But one thing that I have seen that marks every great nation is the resolution of the people, the kind of resolution that made Rosa Parks say, "I'm not leaving this bus. You can do all you want, you can even kill me, but we say NO MORE"! It's the kind of resolution that makes a bunch of young people – not so many of them – decide that they will begin the process of change and follow it through. And it has worked before. Remember the days when you decided that those grades were simply unacceptable as they wouldn't lead you in the direction of your final CGPA? You changed a few things, studied a little more, spent some more time thinking about how to get "there". Did you meet the exact target? Maybe not exactly, but things changed. Now, that is the power of resolution. That is the effect of decisions backed up by action. And how

about this... the first time you walked. I can't remember the first time I walked, and I guess I was pretty busy thinking about the next meal or how to get the toys I saw with my friends. But what I remember with so much clarity is how my younger sister walked without assistance for the first time.

It was her first birthday and everything was set. The cake, the chairs, the music and all... friends of the family were dressing up in their respective homes, but one person wasn't ready. Tosin was not. She just wanted to walk... you could call her a late boomer, but she didn't care. I think she must have thought to herself, "baby, they think you're a baby but you're not. If you could just walk and prove them wrong". She would take a few steps holding anything within her reach, and then fall on her nice dress. But guess what, she didn't mind. Everyone else gave up on her and thought, "okay, we get it, you're trying to impress us but it's all good, at least you're not yet the age when Tunde started walking". Even I must have felt that way. But Tosin wouldn't give up, she kept at it until she walked a straight line and of course, everyone got really excited. She wouldn't stop walking until it was time for the big party. She smiled like an angel all through, and I guess she was busy telling all her friends, "I started walking just today but see how perfect my strides are". And then, it happened - she tripped and fell on the cake. She might deny it, but I have a feeling she just wanted to taste the cake first. That is the simple story of a child's first mature walk.

And my point is this, we all went through that. Tosin, and everyone listening to me, or reading this, had the choice of sitting still on their *butts* and saying, "I really would love to walk, but it is more comfortable to crawl. Can you imagine how nice to be lifted by everyone. And to make it worse, the environment is not helpful. My parents were richer than this - and Nigeria was better - before they had me." We all have reasons not to believe in the Nigerian system, we all have maybe good reasons to leave this ailing nation in its dying state and pursue our own lives. And you may not be entirely off track doing that, you have a life to live anyway. You will one day have a family to feed, and children to send to school... so, in their honour, you rightly make decisions today. Every great people-group, nation or region will have to go through transition. And in those days, no matter how prolonged (as it appears to be in Nigeria); there must be men and women who will stand within their spheres of influence to change things. And just like the ripple, waves will join to waves and produce a lasting wave; and like the biblical miracle of the "exceeding great army", bone will join to bone, tendon to tendon, and ligament to ligament!

Why not pause for a second and think about the great names we throw around in Nigeria today. They are reformers in their own right, winning international accolades and enjoying local praise. Where were they all these years? Did they drop from heaven? No sir! These are men and women who chose to focus on what they know best, develop themselves pretty well around this purpose, and have now chosen to apply themselves to nation building. "Oh, they're lucky to have been appointed. I will never be, so why bother", goes your thought. It's not only about those in public light. There is the traffic warden at Unity junction in Ikeja, who has likely not won any award, but keeps a smile on the faces of motorists even in the mad rush of Lagos traffic. There will be those who will never win national honours, be mentioned in the

news or even appointed into public offices – but they will discharge their responsibility to themselves, the nation, and possibly the world at large. These are people, who in their youth decided to be responsible for change. And like I once heard it defined, “responsibility is response ability – your ability to respond positively regardless of obstacles”.

3 Response Ability

Young people are the proof of sustainability of any task or concept. We are the only hope that our parents have, the only sign that our families will not remain in their present *not-too-nice-to-be-in state*, and the proof that things will be better. Hasn't it occurred to you that our generation seems to have a unique opportunity of setting things right? Begin from the level of the United Nations to that of your nuclear family, has it not occurred to you that investments made in you are a proof of the trust that you won't fall short of expectations? Why do some of our parents do things we may even be ashamed of, just to give us a good education? Are you not bothered by the thought of your child asking you, “daddy, I heard that things were better in your days, why did waste your tomorrow at the altar of your yesterday and today?”

Many of us waste tomorrow at the altar of today by assuming that, “based on what we have seen in Nigeria for the past *umpteen* years – in fact, since independence, – Nigeria is finished!” That takes us to wasting tomorrow at the altar of today. “Since really works around here, why should I bother my head. *Woo, mak' I do my own commot*”, I heard your mind whisper. There could not have been a better time to be a young Nigerian, and just before you raise your nose at my statement, may I remind you that the books we read about great men today are testimonies to the possibilities that men can attain to when they decide that failure is not final. Do these names mean anything to you? King Arthur, Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr, Philip Emeagwali, Ben Carson, Wole Soyinka, Pat Utomi... How about these countries? Malaysia, India ... I see that you're already completing the list. They all had challenges, had reasons not to continue with the work of reconstruction – but they forged ahead.

And speaking here of the need to take responsibility, I do not refer only to those you may wish to call national heroes. I speak of those who are able to conquer themselves and make meaning of their personal lives. In fact, one of the greatest victories a man can win is that battle over self-pity! Within the same system that many wake up to curse each day, there are those who are busy climbing the ladder of success and creating pathways for themselves. Please take a look around you. In the next few weeks, you can predict where (s)he will be, but take your mind further by 5 years, and you will be amazed. There are people sitting in this hall today who are busy developing themselves, sharpening their skills, beating through the thickness of the nation's failures, and will emerge shinning. Then, you will call them lucky. At that time, long lost relatives will show up to claim them! Oh, there's nothing called luck... it is when ageless preparation meets ready opportunity that men interpret such to

mean luck. And you know as much as I do that success has many fathers, cousins, mothers and relatives.

My challenge to you, fellow youth, is that you lift the lid and break the glass ceiling. Take responsibility for your future. While we continue with the national project of discovering mature leaders that will stir the ship of the nation aright, your life can not wait. What I have told those who care to listen is that those who we see as failed leaders today are mere “opportuned occupiers” of leadership positions, you and I are the true leaders in our spheres of influence! Personal development is not a pie in the sky. From the little lessons you will learn in meetings like this, with the motivation you will get from choosing to stand up for action, along with the other learning opportunities you will be exposed to, develop yourself. As you do that, you will discover that the whole world will stand aside for a man who knows where he’s going! Even unstable systems respect people whose minds are made up, and will not be deterred by time-bound limitations. While the task of personal development is ongoing, it will only be natural to find yourself involved in nation building. You will then find it necessary to contribute your quota within your region of residence. Your advice will be sought, and your voice will count. At that point, it is only a matter of time before you become globally relevant.

4 Local Champions vs. Global Citizens

With the boundaries that marked geographic definition of nations submitting to the force of globalization, it is only wise for you to wake up from your slumber. Gone are the days when you cared less about what was happening in other places. Now, a plane crash in Nigeria triggers warnings in the United States; hurricanes in North America become popular bed-time stories in Asia; tsunami hits in Asia become news items in Africa. So connected is our world today that subsidies given to local cotton farmers in the US affect trade balances in Africa, and meetings of leaders of the world’s most industrialized nations are keenly followed by nationals of the global South – waiting to see if aid will truly increase. Did you notice how there were literally no borders in 2005? And even the years before then. Was it only the UK that mourned Princess Diana? How about all of us having raised hairs while the twin towers were crumbling? Has it occurred to you how events like the Olympics and sporting activities like football stand to truly assert that the world is now a global village?

You are studying hard today to become an engineer but I hope you have noticed that competitiveness is no longer defined by how much smarter you are than the other 200 guys (and ladies) in your class. It’s not even about the 1,000 engineering graduates that the entire faculty and university will produce. It would have been easier if the competition ended with the over 30,000 engineers that will graduate all around the tertiary institutions in Nigeria that year. How about the other few millions that become qualified engineers with you from other spots on the world’s expansive space? Now you are talking... pick up *The Economist* and you will notice that jobs are

now advertised with the thought of attracting the best brains regardless of where they are located in the world – and no one cares if they are coloured or colourless. Ask me about the Indians and Chinese who will soon start having mini-census in Nigeria. Oh, yes, they are engineers like you, and will compete for the same jobs with you – on your own soil. I met an Indian in Chennai the other day, and he left his breakfast table to find out if I was truly Nigerian (please don't ask me if he knew from my accent). As soon as I told him I lived in Lagos, he couldn't hide his joy. "I have worked in Nigeria for a long time... I've been to Kaduna, Onitsha...", and he kept going. Tell me about a foreigner who has eaten the good of the land and I will tell you that he'll be back in Nigeria – but this time with his entire family. He will join voices with the Australian man who said, "I found my *ori-inu* in Nigeria", or my *blogger* friend who said, "*dudu ni mi, mo kan pupa ni*".

Let's face it; it is no longer okay to be a local champion. Yes, you are a citizen of one (or a few more) countries, but a global citizen you are! Every young Nigerian must seek to build global competitiveness such that at any time, you can stand shoulder high and compete favourably with your peers from any corner of the globe. And if human life is ever discovered on Mars, get ready for the extension of the competition perimeter! If anyone tells you that the world we live in is changing, run away from such liars; the world **has** changed. You used to queue to check your JAMB results, but your younger brother sent you an SMS to help him get a scratch card to check his result online. Your uncle had to send his job application to *G.P.O. Box 2618 Dugbe*, your elder sister sent hers by email, but you now need to complete the application online. Wake up... it's the New Economy, driven by new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). You know what they call "beings" that do not fit into the times? Dinosaurs. Actually, the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* defines a dinosaur as, "something very large and old-fashioned that no longer works well or effectively". Please don't be a dinosaur, I beg you.

5 Space for Expression

Guess what the collapse of physical boundaries has done to everyone? It has placed us all on the same platform, reduced inequalities and thrown opportunities to the global stage for anyone to grab... but that only stands true for the prepared. The *New Economy* is a space for expression for the wise. Gone are the days when we were taught that who you know, where you grow up, the spelling of your father's name, or even the number of cars parked in your father's compound (including the non-functional ones) bear any relevance to how far you can go in life! There are amazing opportunities that new technologies have brought our way. We consider mobile phones simple devices, but have you ever wondered what life was like before the GSM-bug hit Nigeria? How about the Internet? You can now transfer money, check account balances, recharge your phone credit limit, watch your sister's graduation ceremony thousands of miles away... all from the convenience of your lap(top) or hand(held).

Can I take this to another level by sharing a few thoughts with you on ICT opportunities that young people can advantage of? Maybe I should start with research, which many of us are involved with from time to time. Either you're checking up on schools you wish to send applications to or gathering information about your chosen career path, you can't beat the world's largest pool of knowledge and data – the Internet. Then, let's talk about communication: you can stay in touch without stress and remember birthdays with ease. eMail, chat and web-based SMS are only a few examples of communication channels that help meet that essential need to stay connected to our friends, family, project partners and business colleagues. Skype's free VoIP calls, GMail's 2GB of space and many more web-based offerings are redefining the traditional limits set by technology service providers. How about trans-generational impact? Leave a legacy and contribute to global web content. With only 0.1% of web content described as authentically of African origin, what you upload (it doesn't always have to be download) can help push that limit. Your personal website can help inspire another young person.

The rising profile of online journals (also referred to as web logs or blogs) have further raised the stake. I keep a personal blog at www.gbengasesan.com/blog and named it "Òrò: 'Gbenga Sesan lets out the words". From the blog, I tell the world what's new and where I've been to. In the next few hours, you will be able to read this online. I spoke about personal development earlier, and the opportunity to maximize Internet opportunities brings the MIT's Open Courseware to mind. Located at <http://ocw.mit.edu>, the online resource gives you the opportunity to attend this prestigious institution without having to pay any fees or buy an air ticket. Just log on, take classes and improve your mental capacity – and skills. Well, I must also be fair enough to tell you that the certificate would likely not be delivered in your mailbox. But really, which do you prefer (when you have to choose between both) – certificate or proficiency? How about global participation or collaboration? You can now be omnipresent... subscribe to mailing lists that discuss topical issues of interest. Some of these mailing lists presently discuss possible intervention within various sectors of the Nigerian development space.

6 A New Nigeria

Would you mind if I ask you to join me in reciting the second stanza of the national anthem now? Please rise...

*O God of creation, direct our noble cause
Guide thou our leaders right
Help our youth the truth to know
In love and honesty to grow
And living just and true
Great lofty heights attain
To build a nation where peace and justice shall reign*

Wow... I've never heard a prayer so relevant! I have always argued that in His own infinite mercies (having seen today from yesterday), God planted that anthem on the minds and lips of the generation that will deliver Nigeria from the pit! But we hardly hear this profound prayer on the lips of students and Nigeria's citizens at large. Guess what, our minds have been so abused that we don't even believe in the anthem or pledge anymore. Most Nigerians only recite the anthem or pledge as a matter of duty, not from the sense of patriotism as it should be. Come on; answer my question... when last did you ever stand on your feet, with your hand on your chest and loyalty in your spirit, to sing the national anthem with hope. Will you permit me to remind you of that same anthem?

O God of creation, the one who made light out of darkness. Direct our noble cause... we had one before national vision became submerged in the pool of self-interest. Help us rediscover this vision that can bring us together as a nation... Guide our leaders right. They are leading us in the wrong direction, but we ask that you touch their hearts and guide them right. But if there are lost dogs among them, take them out of the way and give us authentic leaders. Help our youth to know the truth. Nothing sets free like the truth! If we know the truth about our potentials, we will not despair. If we know the truth about our future, we will not give up! If we know the truth about success, we will not cut corners. If we know the truth about tomorrow, we will not give up today! That in building adequate leadership and revealing truth to the youth, we may grow in love and honesty while living just and true. With all these, we will attain great and lofty heights, and build a nation where peace and justice will reign! I see a new Nigeria!

Every time I hear people talk about New York, I smile at the emergence of a New Nigeria. Each time I hear or read about any of New Delhi, New Orleans, New England or New Zealand, something rises within me to sing the song of the New Nigeria! When I stood at the University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, in November 2001 and declared, "I see a New Nigeria...", I'm sure some people would have said, "there goes the dreamer!" But guess what, clearer than what I saw then, I say again:

I see a new Nigeria emerging, one that will be built on the labours of our heroes past, hewn out of the debris of the present waste and engineered by the strength of the future leaders: the youth. These young men and women will adopt Information Technology for the purpose of personal development, nation building, regional cooperation and global participation. They may be unknown today, but in the secrecy of their abode, they master the tool that will change their lives and that of their nation. They're building the nation's tomorrow today!

We are building the New Nigeria today! The New Nigeria that I see is way beyond crude oil, resource control, PDP, MRDD, 3rd term, Northern Agenda, South-South/South-East/South-West Agenda, census, aviation mishaps, or even 2007; its about the celebration of you and I – the celebration of the discovery that we define what the Nigerian nation is; not a few opportunists whose clocks now say, "mene mene, tekel upharsin". They have been found wanting and their days are numbered... it is time for you and I to take responsibility for our future by developing ourselves

within our sphere of influence. Welcome to the New Nigeria, welcome to the nation our forefathers dreamt of. But hold on for a second, what will your place be in all this? **Where are You?**

7 Where are You?

He can not be more eight years old, but he stood in front of thousands of people in the auditorium and declared, "I am proud of Nigeria, Nigeria is a great nation, and I want the New Nigeria to come now". I felt like yelling, "you're right!" and running towards him to lift him on his feet but the ushers would have thought I needed medical or spiritual attention. After writing the other sections of this on Christmas day (and a few days before that), I left for church with the plan to return home and complete this section tagged, "Where are You?" As soon as I alighted from the car and stepped towards the church gate, I heard Pastor Tunde Bakare's voice, and he was speaking of the New Nigeria. Wait for this, if that was just it, I could have brushed off some close coincidence. Next was the presentation of an album, and guess what the title was... New Nigeria. And at that point, a young man came forward that he had something to say... and that was what he said. He must have been shy when he looked into the audience, but that was not strong enough to keep him from expressing his passion. Right there, it was clear to me that the New Nigeria is closer to you and I than we know.

You and I can make it happen. We can tell the world that the groundnut pyramids in Kano, the rubber from the East and cocoa from the South West have not disappeared forever! We can assure the world that if oil brought a boom (even though I often feel like spelling the oil boom is o-i-l-d-o-o-m), then they should hold their breath for what tourism and human capital will bring. Sooner than you think, no one will bother his or her head with another region's resources below the soil, because there are resources above each state's soil. You and I are Nigeria's true resources! We are the resources that should be nurtured, managed and prepared as national treasures. That, my friend, is the true meaning of resource control. Forget the percentages, greed brought us there: the greed that makes me take resources from the Niger Delta, poison their waters, degrade their environment and bribe their elders with stained wealth... that is *multinational greed!* There is something called social responsibility and it's beyond annual scholarships, its beyond nature-friendly adverts, it's about appreciating the value of the land and not exploiting it with the support of the custodians of the people's rights.

Have you seen the breath-taking sights of Nigeria? Have you seen its wild life taking majestic strides? Can you measure the level of impact that Nigeria has had on nations through our worthy ambassadors who daily contribute intellectual capital to the growth of the global economy? Forget the few criminals for a second... they only thrive because the system is still comfortable for them. When you and I stand up for truth and take our appropriate places, the temperature will rise above that which accommodates fraud. Then, we will tell our youths the truth about mentorship and

alternatives. The truth is that most of us (yes, you and I – young Nigerians) are exposed to wrong mentors. As long as they have *hammered*, we will follow their paths, only to discover that theirs is ill-gotten wealth and an irritable life. When the true mentors stand to take their strategic positions, darkness will give way to light. Wake up, mentors for the New Nigeria. From Accounting to Zoology, we seek mentors for the upcoming generation. Mentors that can stand before man and God, and declare that their wealth is from hard work and the application of their acquired knowledge. Then, we will find alternatives for the rot in the system.

Okay, its time to zero in on the last piece of the puzzle... you! Where are **you**? Wake up from your slumber and take your place. “How”, you ask, “do I do that?” Begin with personal development. What exactly is your direction in life? Where do you see yourself in the next five or ten years? You need to honestly assess yourself and identify with the things you love to do, the things you can do with ease, the things you cannot do, and the things that make you sad – or glad. Many of us are in a rat race today because your sense of competition is faulty; you keep developing a pre-heart attack each time someone who grew up in the same neighbourhood with you gets something you don’t have. If I may tell you now, what keeps every man out of the rat race is the discovery that the true and long-lasting competition of life is not between you and your classmate (you’ll soon part ways anyway), not even between you and your colleague in the office (he’s about to change his job); its between you and You. You need to find out where you wish to be in the next few years, and the competition will be between you (on December 30, 2005) and You (in, for example, December 2015).

Discovering your life’s direction will make you identify opportunities that others will naturally neglect. I keep telling the story of how a newspaper advert that many saw and said, “they have come again... which one is web developer contest for Nigerian youth”, became the key to my role as Nigeria’s first Information Technology Youth Ambassador. How about the challenge thrown in another class that was brought to my room, since the two emissaries of the great news felt, “Gbenga, you’re the one always talking about Nigeria and IT. *Prof* has asked for any brilliant article written by a young person, *you get interest?*” Of course! The eventual article was titled, “ICT and Development Opportunities: The Role of Youth”. That was the article that made me get an international passport, it opened the door of my first sight of an airplane outside a poster or a movie, and added an International Telecommunications Union Fellowship to my kitty. When I discovered in 1999 that the competition had shifted from the four walls of a classroom to the boundless limits of my own life, everything changed. I stood for something, and was able to avoid falling for just anything. ASUU strikes no longer brought my life to a stand still, but became energizers that kept me developing myself in the direction of Information Technology. With many moths almost wasted (and I still hear some young people say that ASUU and the Federal Government brought their lives to a standstill), I brought plans from *tomorrow* into *today* in order to occupy the vacuum in *today* and free up space in my *tomorrow*!

Nothing makes a man live a fruitful life like planning. What I was running with was my 5-year plan from 2000 to 2005. Now that the last drop of ink is about to be cast on

the 2006-15 plan, I look back and smile. Are there things I wanted done that were not achieved? Oh, yes. But guess what: plans guide you when (not if) the stormy waves of life want to sink your ship. As mighty as **titanic** was, the mighty fell from the moment the captain did not plan for the iceberg ahead. There have been tons of warnings coming your way about icebergs ahead for those who are not prepared... are you planning ahead, or just waiting for the worst to happen. You seem to be so sure that *uncle* will still be the deputy governor for the next four years. "In fact, he's governor-in-waiting", you say. *Kare*. Wake up! Plan your life, review the plan, and act in the direction of fulfillment. Keep the cycle going. Effective plans make failure a bus-stop and not a destination; they give new meaning to your life and make you smile when others shed a tear or two. A sense of direction for your life will keep a clear sight ahead of you when others throw in the towel. The whole world will stand aside for a (wo)man who knows where (s)he is going.

Where are you? Are you deliberately walking the path of personal development, nation building and global competitiveness? When others see lack, the smart see opportunity. The other day at the bus stop, everyone was waiting for buses that almost never showed up. *Eze's* friends were cursing and complaining about how every other country had a better transportation system, as sweat rolled down their faces. They saw the crowd and terrible wishes swelled in their minds for the governor. Meanwhile, *Eze* was busy thinking, "if there are so many people here, then I can as well get my elder brother's car and make some money helping people get to their destination". A few years later, some of his friends are now travelling home on one of the buses in *Eze's* fleet. Each time they complain about increase in fuel price, he smiles to the bank because ticket fees would be automatically readjusted. Listen friends, it's a choice – you can either see the glass as half-full or half-empty, and both are right. The void and darkness in our nation today may make some faint, but to you and I, it's a *call to arms*. It's a challenge to take up leadership positions in the sector of your training. Will you sit there at the base of the pyramid or join us on our journey to the tip, where leaders are? Where are you?!

It's a great place to end my series of presentations for the year. You can almost be sure that you won't see me speaking in public until next year – and don't forget that the fees have increased ☺ Thank you for your kind attention and may our little lights come together to form the great light that will help deliver our nation from its present darkness. If we fail in this day of adversity, it is not because we are cursed, it is not because we attended the wrong schools, it is not because we haven't even prayed enough, it is not because we lack the numbers to make things happen, it is not because we were born into the wrong family (or did not have the privilege of an elite background), it is simply because our strength is small! It all starts from you as an individual, and I believe that you need to remember this: the whole world will stand aside for a (wo)man who knows where (s)he is going!

Where are you? **Where** are You? Where are **You**?

Thank you.