

MOOD AND MODALITY IN PRESIDENT MUHAMMADU BUHARI'S 2020 NEW YEAR LETTER TO HIS COMPATRIOTS

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Abstract

President Buhari's New Year letter is yet to be dissected, probably, due to its currency. His previous political speeches have been generating interests among critics. The present study is meant to contribute to this growing interest. The aim of the present study is to interrogate the deployment of the choices of mood and modalities in constructing interpersonal relationships in his letter. To achieve this aim, the analysis was placed under the crucible of Halliday's Mood and Modality Theory (2001). Data was collected through a random sampling method from Voice of Nigeria Online Newspaper (2020). The data sampled for analysis were extracted from nine out of a total of twenty-two paragraphs: each three paragraphs were extracted from the beginning, middle and end. The reason was to account for even distribution of data. The research design of quantitative analysis was adopted to account for the frequency of occurrence. Descriptive method of analysis was adopted to account for the interpersonal meanings negotiated in the letter. The results showed that President Buhari deployed declaratives (97.9%), imperatives (2.1%); the 'will' modal (80%), can (15%) and shall (5%). We conclude that the varied use of these linguistic elements have implicature for different interpersonal meanings.

Key words: Discourse Analysis, mood, modality, New Year speech, and political discourse

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1.0: Introduction

The field of Discourse Analysis (henceforth, DA) has been generating tremendous interest among scholars. Studies in this field have interrogated the meanings constructed in political discourses from different perspectives: (structural linguistics; functional linguistics Jegede 2017, Okafor and Issiffe 2017, Kouchade 2015, etc.; psychological; sociological; etc).

Political speeches is the manipulation and exploitation of the nuances of language to achieve communicative goals, namely, to inform, to interrogate, to educate, command, demand and even to entertain. This shows that language is meant to perform social functions, and as Halliday (1978) posits, language is not a code, nor a set of rules for constructing correct grammar, but a resource for making meanings, and these meanings are socially motivated. In other words, the function language is made to serve is context-based; hence, language is culturally and socially constrained (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). Chandler (2007) explicates that whatever a sign means is assigned by society (although symbolic signs (or words) are arbitrarily assigned as there is no formal relationship they share with what they symbolize (as cited in Chandler, 2007, p.) but, political speeches are ornamented and coded with signs. As language user has a repertoire of linguistic choices available to him, he/she chooses from the stocks of the resources those which suit the speech context to interact with his/her audience. Language performs three simultaneous functions, namely, the ideational, interpersonal and textual (Halliday, 1985), and he elucidates that the ideational metafunction is appropriated to represent all the goings on in the world; interpersonal is deployed to construct relationship between, or among participants, while the composition and organization of the two into a coherent text is in the domain of the textual.

Our focus in this study is the utilization of language to construct interpersonal relationships, and as Kress and Leeuwen (2006) states, interpersonal function of language accounts for the different levels of relationship embedded in communication. Edward Hall (1966) in his theory on proxemics identifies four different dimensions of space, which he claims are implicated in interaction, whether, verbally, nonverbally or visual modes of communication. They are: intimate, private, social and public, and he further says that intimate space is reserved for close relationships with family members, close friends and the space dimensions is 18 inches or less; personal less than 4ft; space refers to the relationships with acquaintances and the dimensions are between 4-8m; the relationships maintained in

offices between colleagues refer to social space with dimensions ranging from 8-12ft, while public space is reserved for public figures for security purposes and the dimension goes beyond 12ft (ibid). Hall's space categories, although signify physical entities, but, they could be articulated in speeches to establish the kind of power relationships that serve specific purposes. These dimensions of distance, by implication are realized in mood structures, modal verbs, etc. to negotiate different levels of engagements in interaction.

1.2: Aim and Objectives

The present study aims at interrogating the interpersonal meanings enacted in President Buhari's 2020 NYL. This is achieved through the following objectives:

1. To underpin the moods that are deployed in the letter
2. To also undercover the modal elements utilized in the text
3. And finally to find out how these interpersonal nuances intercept to construct social relationships between the president and his audience?

Research Questions

The analysis of the PMB's NYL is guided by the following research questions

4. What are the mood structures, and the percentage of occurrence that are deployed in the letter?
5. What are the modal elements, and also their frequency of occurrence in the letter?
6. How do these interpersonal nuances intercept to construct social relationships between the president and his audience?

2. Literature Review

It is a truism that several analytical models with different approaches had been deployed in the analysis of PMB's political speeches since he mounted the saddle of leadership as a civilian head of state in 2015. In this paper, a few of them are reviewed.

2.1: Previous works on PMB's speeches

In 2015, after his victory at the presidential polls, he delivered a victory speech having being declared the winner in a keenly contested election. The speech attracted several critics like Innocent Koutchade (2015) who deployed Halliday's SFL (1985) to interrogate the linguistic elements in

his speech. The analysis adopted a descriptive methodology to account for aspects of experiential meaning realized through the system of transitivity. The paper focused on transitivity processes: Material, Mental, Relational, Verbal, Behavioural and Existential, Circumstances of the processes, and the interpersonal meaning realized through modality. The findings show that President Buhari utilized more of persuasive strategies to foreground and market his ideologies of change, as well as his attitudes to his audience. This work share some similarities with the present work in theory, and methodology, but differs in its objectives and data proposed. The present research aims to describe and analyze the elements of mood and modality maximized in PMB'S 2020 NYL to interrogate the kind of social relationships constructed in the letter. This work differs from the present study both in data used, and in the method.

Virginia Okafor and Issiffe (2017) examined the mood and modal elements in the 2015 President Muhammadu Buhari's inaugural speech. The work employed Halliday's SFL (2000) and adopted a functional stylistic method of data analysis. The research design was quantitative and qualitative, which was meant to investigate the frequency of occurrence of different mood systems: declarative, imperative, interrogative, exclamative. Downing and Locke's categorization of modal verbs was adopted, which they perceive to be adequate for its clarity. The results show that PMB used over ninety-nine percent of declaratives, and less than a percent of imperative. They suggest that the reason was context-based, as the president was required to give enough information to his audience.

Their work, although in tandem with the present study in the framework, methodology and design, but they differ, in the sense that the present work uses different data, and adopts Halliday's idea of mood and modality for its analysis. The importance of analyzing the president's NYL cannot be undermined, as it is a much awaited time for him to present his scorecards, his achievements, challenges, and charts a new course that would drive the economy forward. A work of this nature is vital as it will offer a better understanding of the interpersonal meaning enacted in the text. It is also significant, because 2020 is the beginning of a new decade as the president rightly mentioned in his letter.

Similarly, Olusegun Jegede conducted a research also on the manipulation of mood and modal verbs in president's inaugural speech to examine how interpersonal meanings were constructed. Halliday's SFL was appropriated for the analysis. Unlike the latter work reviewed, his' adopted

Thompson's (2000) and Eggins (2004) categorizations of mood and modality to interrogate the number of times the interpersonal variables occurred in the speech. The results also show that declaratives topped the table followed by imperatives with scanty appearance in the text. Other mood elements were conspicuously absent. The present study is skewed towards the same direction which Jegede's tilts, but differs in the data for analysis.

2.2: Previous works on PMB's 2020 New Year letter

President Buhari's NYL had generated several critical attention, while some are pouring encomiums for what they believe was a holistic speech, others had ridiculed what their perceived as trivializing the indispensability of the opportunity availed in speeches which affords multi-semiotic resources that are more engaging than the communicative mode of letter. Apart from these comments, no scholarly works was found as at the time of compiling this work for typing. This, we adduce to the currency of the data proposed in the current research.

New Year message is a formal speech delivered by a country's president to his countrymen to felicitate with them for a successful crossover from the previous year. It also serves as a medium through which the president presents his scorecard for the year ending, with regards to his antecedents: achievements, challenges, prospects, as well as to chart a new course for the New Year. In Nigeria, a nation that is undergoing through series of political unrest, economic chaos, moral decadence, high rate of insecurity, religious bigotries, and other social malaises; expectations for the president's 2020 new year speech were very high, so were anxieties, also. The choice of PMB to interact with his people through the medium of letter was, for his political enemies, a calculated detachment; and for his supporters, it was acceptable. Was the president's letter interactive? To answer this poser is the motivation for this work. From the previous works reviewed, it is established that since his return to the political space, PMB's speeches had received scholarly attention from different perspectives, but none, to the best of the researcher's knowledge had dissected his 2020 NYL to his 'compatriots'. It is on this premise that the present work becomes a necessary adventure.

3.0 Theoretical Framework

The present study is placed under the crucible of Halliday's Mood and Modality system (2001) in SFL and Downing and Locke's (2006)

categorization of mood. This choice is justified by their appropriateness in undercovering the stylistic choices deployed in the enactment of social interactions in discourse. Moreover, Virginia Okafor and Gloria Isiffe used the same theories and suggest that the combinations of these two frameworks are germane for a critical and comprehensive analysis of language functions in discourse.

3.1: SFL and Stylistics

SFL as propounded by Halliday (1985) is a theory that views language not a set of rules for making correct sentences, but a system of choices for making meanings. By system of choices he means that language is a repertoire of choices available to its users to perform three functions: ideational, interpersonal and textual (ibid). Martin et al (1997) note that Halliday's three metafunctions of language are classified to articulate the form-function correlation in language use. The ideational function of language is that which expresses the experiences human beings go through in life; the interpersonal function is used to construct relationships, while textual function relates to the organization of both the experiences and the relationships, in texts (Martin 1997). In other words, language has evolved to satisfy human needs, and the organization of this language is functional with regards to those needs. Halliday (1978) further states that the patterns of language use in a particular social context reflect the function that language is made to perform in that context. Talking about context, Thompson (2000) explains that context determines the amount of meanings that a speaker/writer could express, which is also dependent on the amount of words that they might use to express them, including the factors that allow that the specific kinds of meanings or wordings will be chosen.

Halliday (2001) further classifies social context into three variables: field (refers to the experiences being represented); tenor (the participants in the interaction and the relationship between them); mode (how language or text is functioning in the interaction). The contextual parameters of field, tenor and mode activate choices in ideational, interpersonal and textual components, respectively. He elucidates that these metafunctions are realized, simultaneously in clauses. While the ideational function is realized in transitivity, interpersonal in mood and modality, and textual meaning in theme (Halliday 1985 cited in David 2016). The fusion of form-function in SFL is its major strength as it makes it a viable tool in underpinning the linguistic choices embedded in discourse. The study of linguistic choices in discourse is

the thrust of stylistics. Such linguistic elements embedded in discourse include mood and modal verbs, which are deployed by participants to achieve their communicative purposes.

These purposes include, expression of attitudes towards a proposition, expression of confidence in the proposition, and these are realized in mood (Thompson 2000). And Eggins (2004) elucidates that modality is a semantic category by which, language users express their attitudes or confidence, and five categories of modals are identified according to the writer's attitudes to the proposition they utter, and they are: validity, predictability, desirability, obligation, and permission (Fowler 1985). Validity is when the speaker expresses greater or lesser confidence in the truth of the proposition; predictability, when the future events referred to are more or less likely to happen; desirability relates to practical, moral or aesthetic judgments; obligation refers to a speaker's judgment that another person is obligated to perform some actions and permission means that speaker allows addressee to perform some actions (Ibid). Fowler's modal categories are captured in two different kinds of attitudes: assessing the truth of the proposition or the potential occurrence of the event in terms of, certainty, probability, or possibility; intervening in the speech event by laying down obligations or giving permission (Downing and Locke 2006). The former is called epistemic or extrinsic modality, and the latter, deontic or intrinsic modality.

Downing and Locke (ibid) further identify the followings as belonging to the modal family: auxiliary forms (may, shall, must, need, can); lexical modal auxiliaries of 'be' and 'have' (e.g.s. have got to, be found to, be likely to); lexical verbs (e.g.s. guess, promise, allow, suggest, warn); semi-modals (e.g.s. need, and dare); verbs relating to non-factual meanings (wonder, wish, hope) and parenthesis (I think and I guess).

3.1.2: **Modality**

Modality is indispensable in interrogating the interpersonal meaning in clauses, because it shows the degree to which the proposition is valid (Halliday, 2000). It demarcates between 'Yes' and 'No', showing the speaker's judgement of possibilities or the obligations involved in what he/she is saying. Thompson identifies two elements of modality: "Modalisation and Modulation, and explains that the former relates to the speaker's judgement of the validity of the proposition in terms of probability (possible-probable-certain) and usuality (sometimes-usually-always)"

(Thompson 2000, 57) (as cited in Okafor and Issiffe, 2017). Jegede (2018) in his research on the interpersonal meaning of President Buhari's 2015 inaugural speech observe that possible-probable-certain shows how confident the speaker can be in the eventual success of the exchange which includes the degree of obligation (allowed-supposed-required), and the inclination (willing-keen-determine) (Jegede, 2018).

Modality is realized through a number of ways such as verbal, non-verbal, through deliberate and non-deliberate features. Among these channels, Halliday (2000) states that the most common channel for the realization of modality as a function of the mood is through modal verbal operators (Halliday, 2009). He equally states that when realized by modal verbal operators, modality involves degrees and scales about the validity of a proposition, which coins the term "modal commitment". These modal commitments have three basic values: high, medium and low scales, maintaining that different scales suggest different meanings (Halliday 1994).

Modalities are aspects of the interpersonal meaning construed in a clause. Mood is a grammatical category concerned with choices made by a language user from the possible options in the structure of the clause in order to enact basic speech roles such as statements, questions, exclamations, and directives or commands. Lillian (2008) explains that the mood offers choices between indicative (declarative and interrogation), and imperative, and the choice a language user makes from these options depends on the speech role he wishes to enact (as cited in Okafor and Issiffe, 2017). The indicative is typically used for exchange of information, while imperative is used to act on others to get things done by requesting, ordering, and so on.

The particular grammatical structures used to perform these speech functions are declarative clauses (for statements and exclamations), interrogative clauses (for questions), and imperative clauses (for commands). Thompson (2000) explains that only independent clauses in English normally have a choice of mood, with subject[^]finite, finite[^]subject as structures of declaratives and imperatives, respectively. He further explains that the subject slot is filled by any nominal group while the finite is drawn from verbal operators expressing tense (be, have, do) and those expressing modality (can, may, might, must, will, would).

In the present study, Downing and Locke's classification of modality is adopted to complement Halliday's Mood and Modality system. This choice is justified by its clarity in accounting for the meanings they expressed. Also,

Okafor and Issiffe (2017) who had appropriated his categorization note that it is adequate in accounting for interpersonal meanings negotiated in interaction.

3.2: Methodology

Descriptive and analytical methods are adopted for an analysis of the mood and modal elements in the text under review. Data for analysis are extracted from the Voice of Nigeria (henceforth, VON) online site (www.vononlinenewspaper.com) through sampling method of data analysis VON is chosen for its wider visibility, objective reportage of all the activities of federal government, being one of the major media officially employed to relay news from government to the public. Secondary sources like internet, journals, books, etc, are also utilized for the analysis. The data, entitled: A Letter from President Muhammadu Buhari to Nigeria, was published on January 1 2020 as it was made available to the press. The letter opens in this format:

"My Dear Compatriots,
Nigeria Decade,

Today marks a new decade. It is a time of hope, optimism and fresh possibilities. We look forward as a nation to the 2020s...."
(www.vononlinenewspaper.com)

The focus of this study is not to interrogate the grammatical correctness of the letter, but rather, to investigate the interpersonal meanings construed in the text through the manipulation of mood and modal forms to negotiate the kind of relationships that the addresser wants from his addressees. The instrument for the collection of data is improvised through PDF file, which is validated by the convention guiding internet documents. The use of this instrument is further validated by Virginia Okafor and Gloria Issiffe (2017) who had undertaken similar research using PMB's 2015 inaugural speech. They note that Halliday's SFL can adequately account for the nuances of mood and modality in any text.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

Research question 1: What are the mood structures, and the percentage of occurrence that are deployed in the letter? This question will answer the first objective raised in 1.2 (to underpin the moods that are deployed in the letter). The major thrust of interpersonal function of language is to create

power relationship between a speaker/writer and his/her addressee, and Halliday (2000) contends that mood structures and modality can interrogate such roles as the roles of the addresser and addressee. Based on this, PMB'S 2020 NYL to his 'Compatriots' is analyzed in relation to its choice of mood and modals to examine the relationships which he had constructed in his interactions with his 'compatriots' to whom the letter was addressed to.

4.1: Mood Analysis

The table below presents data on the mood types and frequency of occurrence

Table 1: Mood Types

S/N	Mood types	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Declarative	46	97.9
2	Imperative	1	2.1
3	Interrogative	-	-
4	Exclamation	-	-
	Total	47	100

The table shows that the structuring of clauses in most PMB's letter is subject[^]finite, meaning that all the moods, except one in the letter are declaratives. This is demonstrated in Table 2 above.

4.1.1: Declarative Clauses

In interpersonal function the speaker/writer utilizes declarative resources to inform, state, or declare. Downing and Locke (2006) state that this type of mood creates detachment between interlocutors. It shows that the speaker has higher role than the addressee (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001). It is also a clever way of engaging the audience in order to elicit or change the addressee's attitudes towards his proposition, and to arouse his interest to share in his worldview, without being intimate. The following clauses that underpin declarative mood are shown below:

Paragraph 1

7. *Today marks a new decade.*
8. *It is a time of hope, optimism and fresh possibilities.*

9. *We look forward as a nation to the 2020s....*
10. *These are pledges on which I have been twice elected president...*

Paragraph 2

11. *Elections are the cornerstone of our democracy.*
12. *I salute the commitment of the millions who voted in peace last February....*
13. *I understand very well the frustrations our system has in the past triggered.*
14. *I will be standing down in 2023*
15. *I will not be available in any future elections.*
16. *But I am determined to help strengthen the electoral process.*
17. *My primary concern is the security of the nation.*
18. *My first task was to rally our neighbours*
19. *Chaos is not a neighbor any of us hope for.*

Paragraph 9

20. *A good example of commitment to this inclusive growth is the signing of the African continental free trade area.*
21. *The creation of the national action committee is another good example of commitment to this inclusive growth.*

Paragraph 10

22. *The joint land border security exercise is meant to safeguard Nigeria's economy and security.*
23. *No one can doubt that we have been good neighbours and good citizens.*
24. *We have been the helpers and shock-absorbers of the sub-region.*
25. *We cannot allow our well planned economic regeneration plans to be sabotaged.*
26. *Normal cross-border movements will be resumed.*

Paragraph 11

27. *We are making key infrastructure investments*
28. *We are making significant progress*
29. *2020 will also see tangible progress*
30. *We are also using alternative funding programmes*
31. *Abuja and Port-Harcourt have new international airport terminals...*
32. *These projects are not small*
33. *They do not come without some temporary disruption*

- 34. *I thank you for your patience.*
- 35. *I look forward to the dividends*
Paragraph 20
- 36. *Our policies are working*
- 37. *The results will continue to show themselves*
- 38. *Nigeria is the most tremendous, can-do market*
- 39. *Investors can look forward*

Paragraph 20

- 40. *They can also be certain of our unshakeable commitment*
- 41. *It is more important than ever to call out those ...*
- 42. *We will continue to press our partners abroad*
- 43. *We have received some encouragement*
- 44. *We expect more funds stolen*
- 45. *They will be ploughed back*
Paragraph 22
- 46. *This is a joint initiative*
- 47. *I thank you for your support*
- 48. *Transition by its very nature carries with it change and some uncertainty.*
- 49. *This is a new year.*
- 50. *This is the beginning of a new decade*
- 51. *Some of the projects Nigerians should expect include...*
- 52. *Thank you very much*

4.1.2: Imperative Clauses

The use of imperatives, Halliday says is to appeal to the audience to follow the addresser's instruction. Jegede (2018) notes that it is used to assert the authority of the addresser. Halliday states further that imperative clauses convey two kinds of messages: one commands others to do something, the other invites the audience to collaborate to do something, and that the latter is always identified by the format, "let's". The only imperative clause used in the data is a subtle command or a demand, demanding tolerance from his audience. PMB is by implication issuing a command to his compatriots to tolerate the harsh social and economic conditions which his audience appears to be going through. Thus, the imperative mood presents the president as not interactive and engaging in his message. Only one imperative mood is identified in the data presented above:

Excerpt 2

I encourage you to be tolerant.

From the excerpt above, the functional meaning of the use of imperative mood is that PMB maintains official relationship with the audience, ironically in an informal letter format. Chandler suggests that each genre has its codes which are constrained by convention to which language users are already familiar with (Chandler).

4.2: **Modality**

Question 2: What are the modal elements, and their frequency of occurrence in the letter?

Table 2: **Modality in the text**

S/N	Modal verbs	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Will, would	16	80
2.	Can, could, cannot	3	15
3	Shall, should	1	5
4	May, might	-	-
	Total	20	100

The table in 4.2 reveals that 20 modal verbs are deployed in the letter, out of which "will" accounts for 16 and "can" 3.

Research Question 3: Finally, how do these interpersonal nuances intercept to construct social relationships between the president and his audience?

4.2.1: **Use of Will**

A total of 20 modal verbs are detected in the data. 'Will' accounted for 16, and it is used to perform two major functions: to indicate future events, and to indicate strong wish and determination

'Will' as a Future Marker

Excerpt3

Paragraph 4

53. *The Northeast development commission will work with local and international stakeholders.*

Paragraph 5

54. *The federal government will continue to work with state governors, neighbouring states and our international partners.*
55. *The new ministry of police affairs will build on what we are already delivery.*
56. *2020 will also see tangible progress on the Lagos to Kano Rail line.*
'Will' as a marker of strong wish and determination

Excerpt 4

57. *We will use all the human and emerging technological resources available to tackle kidnapping, banditry and armed robbery.*
58. *Our actions at all times will be governed by the rule of law.*
59. *New agreements with morocco, Russia and others will help us access on attractive terms.*
60. *Our security forces will receive the best training and modern weaponry*
61. *These projects will be under close scrutiny and transparency*
62. *There will be no more extravagant claims that end only in waste, theft and mismanagement.*

Halliday also posits that different scales of modal commitment lead to different meanings and that 'will' represents a higher scale of modal commitment, which signals a higher degree of certainty about the validity of a proposition (Jegade 2018, 191). Therefore, PMB has used 'will' frequently to show his commitment and determination to deliver the dividends of democracy to his audience. It further indicates that more actions will be taken in future.

4.2.2: The use of 'can'

In contrast to 'will', 'can' has a low value modulation. It is seen as the lowest degree of pressure, opening the possibility for the other person to do the action but leaving the decision to them (Halliday 1985). By the use of 'can', which occurs only 3 times, PMB constructs an intimate relationship with his addressees, on one hand, while on the other, using it to motivate them to take action, which is to collaborate with him to move Nigeria forward.

Excerpt 5

63. *They can also be certain of our unshakeable commitment.*
64. *No one can doubt that we have been good neighbours and good citizens.*
65. *We cannot allow our well planned economic regeneration plans to be sabotaged.*

By using “can” in the excerpts above, the president creates an equal power relationship with his “compatriots inviting them into his personal space, to share in the task of moving Nigeria forward.

5: Summary of Findings

From the analysis of mood and modality deployed in the text reviewed the findings shows that the president used declarative structures all through his letter, except only one imperative. We observe that this is attributable to the fact that he needed to present his score card for the year 2019. This implicates giving information about his antecedents (egs. “A good example of commitment to this inclusive growth is the signing of the African continental free trade area”; “The creation of the national action committee is another good example of commitment to this inclusive growth”). The implication is that the PMB was detached from his audience, by so doing; he created a public space between him and his compatriots.

Similarly, we observed the use of ‘will’ modal verb to perform the functions of a future marker, and to indicate strong will; ‘can’ a lower modulated verb; shall; they all have different meanings in the text, as Halliday (2001) maintains that the meaning of a word is the function which it is meant to serve in a social context. Therefore, ‘will’ and ‘can’ in the context of political discourse is used by politicians to negotiate public distance and intimate distance, respectively.

Conclusion

Halliday’s (1985) interpersonal metafunction has proved to be a viable tool for uncovering the social relationships negotiated in speeches. The analysis shows that PMB utilizes more declarative clauses to interact with his audience. We observe an overwhelmingly deployment of declarative mood in the letter written by President Buhari. This is appropriate in political discourse where leaders owe their subjects the responsibility of informing them of their antecedents. And Nigerian President Buhari had just done. The

result also shows that there is very little use of imperative which is an index for intimate engagement. In fact, only a single imperative mood was recorded. This portrays the president as somebody who is not ready for any form of close affinity with his compatriots. The only time he utilized an intimate marker ('can') was when he wants his audience to be in synergy with him to tackle the issues of economic hardship staring the country on her face.

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Appendix 1: full text of PMB's NYL

FULL TEXT OF PRESIDENT BUHARI'S NEW YEAR MESSAGE

January 1, 2020

A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT AT NEW YEAR

My Dear Compatriots,

NIGERIA'S DECADE

Today marks a new decade. It is a time of hope, optimism and fresh possibilities. We look forward as a nation to the 2020s as the opportunity to build on the foundations we have laid together on security, diversification of our economy and taking on the curse of corruption. These are the pledges on which I have been twice elected President and remain the framework for a stable, sustainable and more prosperous future.

Elections are the cornerstone of our democracy. I salute the commitment of the millions who voted in peace last February and of those leaders who contested for office vigorously but fairly, submitting to the authority of the electorate, the Independent National Electoral Commission and judicial process. I understand very well the frustrations our system has in the past triggered. I will be standing down in 2023 and will not be available in any future

elections. But I am determined to help strengthen the electoral process both in Nigeria and across the region, where several ECOWAS members go to the polls this year.

As Commander-in-Chief, my primary concern is the security of the nation and the safety of our citizens. When I assumed office in May 2015 my first task was to rally our neighbours so that we could confront Boko Haram on a coordinated regional basis. Chaos is not a neighbour any of us hope for.

We have been fighting on several fronts: violent extremists, cultists and organised criminal networks. It has not been easy. But as we are winning the war, we also look to the challenge of winning the peace, the reconstruction of lives, communities and markets. The North East Development Commission will work with local and international stakeholders to help create a new beginning for the North East.

The Federal Government will continue to work with State Governors, neighbouring states and our international partners to tackle the root causes of violent extremism and the networks that help finance and organise terror. Our security forces will receive the best training and modern weaponry, and in turn will be held to the highest standards of professionalism, and respect for human rights. We will use all the human and emerging technological resources available to tackle kidnapping, banditry and armed robbery.

The new Ministry of Police Affairs increased recruitment of officers and the security reforms being introduced will build on what we are already delivering. We will work tirelessly at home and with our allies in support of our policies to protect the security of life and property. Our actions at all times will be governed by the rule of law. At the same time, we shall look always to engage with all well-meaning leaders and citizens of goodwill to promote dialogue, partnership and understanding.

We need a democratic government that can guarantee peace and security to realise the full potential of our ingenious, entrepreneurial and hard-working people. Our policies are designed to promote genuine, balanced growth that delivers jobs and rewards industry.

Our new Economic Advisory Council brings together respected and independent thinkers to advise me on a strategy that champions inclusive and balanced growth, and above all fight poverty and safeguard national economic interests.

As we have sat down to celebrate with friends and family over this holiday season, for the first time in a generation our food plates have not all been filled with imports of products we know can easily be produced here at home. The revolution in agriculture is already a reality in all corners of the country. New agreements with Morocco, Russia and others will help us access on attractive terms the inputs we need to accelerate the transformation in farming that is taking place.

A good example of commitment to this inclusive growth is the signing of the African Continental Free Trade Area and the creation of the National Action Committee to oversee its implementation and ensure the necessary safeguards are in place to allow us to fully capitalise on regional and continental markets.

The joint land border security exercise currently taking place is meant to safeguard Nigeria's economy and security. No one can doubt that we have been good neighbours and good citizens. We have been the helpers and shock-absorbers of the sub-region but we cannot allow our well-planned economic regeneration plans to be sabotaged. As soon as we are satisfied that the safeguards are adequate, normal cross-border movements will be resumed.

Already, we are making key infrastructure investments to enhance our ease of doing business. On transportation, we are making significant progress on key roads such as the Second Niger Bridge, Lagos – Ibadan Expressway and the Abuja – Kano highway. 2020 will also see tangible progress on the Lagos to Kano Rail line. Through Executive Order 007, we are also using alternative funding programmes in collaboration with private sector partners to fix strategic roads such as the Apapa-Oworonshoki Express way. Abuja and Port Harcourt have new international airport terminals, as will Kano and Lagos in 2020. When completed, all these projects will positively impact business operations in the country. These projects

are not small and do not come without some temporary disruption; we are doing now what should have been done a long time ago. I thank you for your patience and look forward to the dividends that we and future generations will long enjoy.

Power has been a problem for a generation. We know we need to pick up the pace of progress. We have solutions to help separate parts of the value chain to work better together. In the past few months, we have engaged extensively with stakeholders to develop a series of comprehensive solutions to improve the reliability and availability of electricity across the country. These solutions include ensuring fiscal sustainability for the sector, increasing both government and private sector investments in the power transmission and distribution segments, improving payment transparency through the deployment of smart meters and ensuring regulatory actions maximize service delivery.

We have in place a new deal with Siemens, supported by the German government after German Chancellor Angela Merkel visited us in Abuja, to invest in new capacity for generation, transmission and distribution. These projects will be under close scrutiny and transparency – there will be no more extravagant claims that end only in waste, theft and mismanagement.

The next 12 months will witness the gradual implementation of these actions, after which Nigerians can expect to see significant improvement in electricity service supply reliability and delivery. Separately, we have plans to increase domestic gas consumption. In the first quarter of 2020, we will commence work on the AKK gas pipeline, OB₃ Gas pipeline and the expansion of the Escravos – Lagos Pipeline.

While we look to create new opportunities in agriculture, manufacturing and other long neglected sectors, in 2020 we will also realize increased value from oil and gas, delivering a more competitive, attractive and profitable industry, operating on commercial principles and free from political interference. Just last week, we were able to approve a fair framework for the USD10 billion

expansion of Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas, which will increase exports by 35 percent, restore our position as a world leader in the sector and create thousands of jobs. The Amendment of the Deep Offshore Act in October signaled our intention to create a modern, forward-looking industry in Nigeria. I am confident that in 2020 we will be able to present a radical programme of reform for oil and gas that will excite investors, improve governance and strengthen protections for host communities and the environment.

We can expect the pace of change in technology only to accelerate in the decade ahead. Coupled with our young and vibrant population, this offers huge opportunities if we are able to harness the most productive trends and tame some of the wilder elements. This is a delicate balance with which many countries are struggling. We are seeking an informed and mature debate that reflects our rights and responsibilities as citizens in shaping the boundaries of how best to allow technology to benefit Nigeria.

During my Democracy Day speech on June 12, 2019, I promised to lay the enduring foundations for taking a hundred million Nigerians out of mass poverty over the next 10 years. Today I restate that commitment. We shall continue reforms in education, health care and water sanitation. I have met international partners such as GAVI, the vaccine alliance, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation who support our social welfare programmes. I will continue to work with State and Local Governments to make sure that these partnerships deliver as they should. Workers will have a living wage and pensioners will be looked after. We are steadily clearing pensions and benefits arrears neglected for so long.

The new Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development will consolidate and build on the social intervention schemes and will enhance the checks and balances necessary for this set of programmes to succeed for the long term. I am able to report that the journey has already begun with the passage and signing into law of the 2020 Appropriation Act. As the new decade dawns, we are ready to hit the ground running. Let me pay tribute to the Ninth National Assembly who worked uncommonly

long hours to make sure that the 2020 budget scrutiny is both thorough and timely. The close harmony between the Executive and Legislature is a sharp contrast to what we have experienced in the recent past, when the Senate kept the previous budget for 7 months without good reason just to score cheap political points thereby disrupting the budgetary processes and overall economic development plans.

Our policies are working and the results will continue to show themselves more clearly by the day. Nigeria is the most tremendous, can-do market, offering extraordinary opportunities and returns. Investors can look forward with confidence not only to an increasing momentum of change but also to specific incentives, including our new visa-on-arrival policy.

They can also be certain of our unshakeable commitment to tackle corruption. As we create an environment that allows initiative, enterprise and hard work to thrive, it is more important than ever to call out those who find the rule of law an inconvenience, or independent regulation an irritation. We are doing our part here in Nigeria. We will continue to press our partners abroad to help with the supply side of corruption and have received some encouragement. We expect more funds stolen in the past to be returned to us and they will be ploughed back into development with all due transparency.

This is a joint initiative. Where our policies have worked best, it has been because of the support of ordinary Nigerians in their millions, numbers that even the most powerful of special interests cannot defy. I thank you for your support. Transition by its very nature carries with it change and some uncertainty along the way. I encourage you to be tolerant, law abiding and peace loving. This is a new year and the beginning of a new decade – the Nigerian Decade of prosperity and promise for Nigeria and for Africa.

To recapitulate, some of the projects Nigerians should expect to come upstream from 2020 include:

66. 47 road projects scheduled for completion in 2020/21, including roads leading to ports;
67. Major bridges including substantial work on the Second Niger Bridge;
68. Completion of 13 housing estates under the National Housing Project Plan;
69. Lagos, Kano, Maiduguri and Enugu international airports to be commissioned in 2020;
70. Launching of an agricultural rural mechanisation scheme that will cover 700 local governments over a period of three years;
71. Launching of the Livestock Development Project Grazing Model in Gombe State where 200,000 hectares of land has been identified;
72. Training of 50,000 workers to complement the country's 7,000 extension workers;
73. Commissioning of the Lagos – Ibadan and Itakpe – Warri rail lines in the first quarter;
74. Commencement of the Ibadan – Abuja and Kano – Kaduna rail lines also in the first quarter;
75. Further liberalisation of the power sector to allow businesses to generate and sell power;
76. Commencement of the construction of the Mambilla Power project by the first half of 2020; and
77. Commencement of the construction of the AKK gas pipeline, OB₃ gas pipeline and the expansion of the Escravos – Lagos pipeline in the first quarter of 2020.

Thank you very much!

(<https://www.von.gov.ng/full-text-of-president-buharis-new-year-message/>)