



AYGF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S SPEECH ON ASUU/FG FACE-OFF RESOLUTION PRESS CONFERENCE

Venue: No. 4, Ouagadougou Street, Wuse Zone 2, Abuja.

Date: September 14, 2022.

Time: 11:00am

Gentlemen of the press, members of the public, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I welcome you to this conference and a brainstorming session on what I term 'a situation of emergency'.

The unfolding woes that have befallen our education sector, particularly the tertiary education subsector, is a sad one which has become a sore thumb. One very prominent symptom is the industrial action, otherwise known as the strike, which has lasted for well over six months and is still counting.

Without boring you with details of the strike, which is common knowledge, I will like to highlight some of the consequences of the strike. This is because we cannot have genuine and responsible solutions without a background knowledge of the issue. As two of our core mandates here at AYGF are on education and youth welfare.

The ongoing industrial action by the Academic Staff Union of Universities is crippling the education sector, particularly in the areas of engineering, research and development.

One of the consequences of this is the workforce gap it would create in the future.

Statistics have it that it would take Africa, Nigeria inclusive, 250 years to get to the current development level of the United States of America.

These include trained workforce and human capital development.

Nigeria being the giant of Africa, is trapped in the circle of unending stoppages in the process of developing its workforce. This is a huge setback for Africa.

In the long run, we would not only be left behind by other countries in human capital development, but also be burdened by capital flights in the way of importing human resources and products that could have been produced locally.

Another major fallout of the incessant strike is the brain drain resulting from continuous unemployment.

ASUU and the government have been in negotiations, accusations and counter accusations over the strike. In all of these, like it is often said, when two elephants fight, the grass suffers; our children are suffering and languishing at home.

ASUU has accused the government of not keeping its promise to pay over N1.5 trillion which is to be used in the upgrade of the universities and increase the remuneration of the lecturers. The sum, the government has repeatedly said, would be difficult to raise.

As a fallout of the refusal of the government to pay, ASUU feels it is left with no option but to go on strike. This strike so far, has not yielded any positive result. That is why we are here.

One of our aims here is not to apportion blame. We have to put our heads together and suggest a way forward from our current impasse. If we look at the consequences of the strike, we have no choice but to plead with all parties to sheath their swords.

While we recommend that the government put empathy for the students first, it must take into cognizance the fact that our human capital development gap is widening. The students are going to be rushed through their courses,

overburdened and the entire system will be crowded with mediocrity. Therefore, the government must as a matter of urgency, go the whole hog in solving this issue.

We are also urging ASUU to consider finding a middle ground in all that has been said and agreed in the negotiations with government and other stakeholders in the interest of national cohesion and posterity.

Our dear students should in the interim, register for online courses to update themselves, acquire skills and become productive while negotiations progress. Any period of crises is a period to rediscover one's self.

One of our mandates here in AYGf is targeted at education and Youth Welfare.

Our footprint in these areas and others are there for all to see.

As non-state actors, AYGf is pained as we are concerned that there seems to be no end in sight to the strike.

We hope for the sake of posterity, a quick and amiable resolution that will end the strike is found as soon as possible.

Thank you all.

Dr. Arome Salifu
Executive Director