

## **Political Science Conference Holds in EBSU; Examines the unfolding Dynamics of Governance, Nation-building and Development Problems in Africa**

The 31<sup>st</sup> National Conference of the Nigerian Political Science Association (NPSA) on the theme “**State, Governance and Regional Integration in Africa**” was held from Monday 26 through Wednesday 28 March, 2018, at the Akanu Ibiam International Conference Centre, Abakiliki. The conference which began with the Annual Billy Dudley Lecture by Professor Alaba Ogunsanwo, attracted several administrators, political office holders, INEC, Civil Society Organisations, Diplomats, Scholars and students of politics from the 6 geo-political zones as well as international participants. The dignitaries that graced the event included the Executive Governor of Ebonyi State, Engr Dave Umahi represented by the Deputy Governor, Barr.Dr.Eric Kelechi Igwe, Prof. Alaba Ogunsanwo, Prof. Elochukwu Amucheazi, Prof. Okechukwu Ibeanu, Prof. Hassan Saliu, Prof. Ahmed Alkali, Prof. Shuaibu Ibrahim and the Vice Chancellor of Ebonyi State University, Prof. Chigozie Ogbu, among other eminent personalities. In addition to the Billy Dudley lecture, the Conference had a Special Roundtable, Special Plenary and 28 Parallel Sessions in which 326 papers were presented. The Special Roundtable and Special Plenary were chaired by Prof. Kimse Okoko and Prof. Osioma Nwoli respectively while the Parallel Sessions were chaired by various seasoned academics, based on areas of specialization. The scholars at the conference utilized extant conceptual and theoretical explanations to interrogate the unfolding dynamics of governance, nation-building and development problems in Africa, with emphasis on trends in Nigeria’s political structures and processes, foreign policy and national security, nature and character of governing elites, youths and gender mainstreaming, the nexus between security and stability including

elections, separatist nationalism, securitization, restructuring, Brexit and regional integration in Africa, upon which the prognosis on the precarious future of the Nigerian State was built.

2. In the light of the above, participants observed that:

- i. The nature and structure of states inherited at independence from the colonialists constitutes invitation to perennial conflicts and instability in Africa.
- ii. Separatist struggles and agitations in Africa have intensified since the Arab Spring in North Africa and the Middle East.
- iii. Sustained rapprochement between strong regional actors like Nigeria and Cameroon constitutes vital building blocks to foster integration between and beyond West and Central Africa sub regions.
- iv. Nigeria has poor record in the management of relevant treaty documents such as diplomatic protocols, conventions, agreements and letters among others.
- v. Growing insecurities in today's Nigeria especially the menace perpetrated by Boko Haram and most recently armed herdsmen on rural farming communities are too dangerous for silence as it constitutes threats to food security and the pursuit of stability and development in the country.
- vi. Security and nation-building are two significant issues in the 2019 General elections because passions are very high as the awareness and mobilization for participation are consistently increasing.
- vii. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has achieved sustained and appreciable improvements in the management of elections in Nigeria since 1999, but the orientation and character of

the political class constitutes the single most important threat against credible elections in Nigeria.

viii. The total independence of Election Management Bodies is sacrosanct for the conduct of free, fair and credible elections in Nigeria.

ix. Rapid urbanisation and human displacements have resulted in the emergence of new settlements which are not adequately covered by the INEC for electoral purposes.

x. Abuse of age limit for voters, non-compliance to rules of engagement by political parties and politicians, compromise by security agencies and various public officials working on election related matters, poor state of basic infrastructures across the country and recurring inadequacies of electoral materials constitute major obstacles to credible elections in Nigeria.

xi. International interests and concerns on elections in Nigeria is growing and the 2019 elections will elicit significant media attention and global scrutiny.

xii. The success of the 2019 election is a collective responsibility of INEC, the political class and the entire society.

xiii. Some political actors are not trained for their respective assignments and hence exhibit gross lack of principles of governance and legislative character. Worse still, they thrive on ideological *tabula rasa* and hence project only self-regarding interests in the conduct of their respective public assignments.

3. On the strength of the above observations, the participants resolved as follows:

- i. African countries particularly Nigeria should de-emphasize the use of military response as first option in the management of internal conflicts but should embrace genuine dialogue, political restructuring and inclusiveness for addressing conflicting political interests, separatist agitations, fostering inter-group relations and nation-building across the continent. Again, members recommended that a conscionable blend of the kinetic and non-kinetic strategies will address the depreciating security conditions.
- ii. Functional cooperation at bilateral and inter-regional levels should be embraced and strengthened by core actors in the respective Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to enhance peace, security and integration in Africa.
- iii. The objectives of Nigeria's foreign policy and external relations in peace and crisis period should be strengthened and broadened beyond western allies by accommodating more strategic partners across the globe.
- iv. Nigeria should evolve a robust strategic plan for arms procurement and military-industrial complex to avoid superpower meddlesomeness and sabotage in crisis situations.
- v. The Federal government should evolve efficient and effective mechanisms for the management of treaty documents.
- vi. Nigerian government should articulate a body of national interests that will prevail over parochial ethnic, party and/or private interests of governing elites on issues of national security, electioneering and governance. These interests should serve as the source of various national policies and action plans.
- vii. Restructuring should emphasise effective decentralization of power to the core federating units in the country. These must be geared

towards reinventing productive instincts and healthy development competition among the various nationalities.

viii. Professional groups like the Nigerian Political Science Association (NPSA) should rise to the challenge of giving credible policy directions to Nigeria's political leadership.

ix. Effective community engagement and a functional criminal justice system are very instrumental for combating the threats of kidnapping, terrorism and other insecurities threatening peace and stability in Nigeria.

x. In relation to herders-farmers conflicts, the government should be sensitive to its integrity and the integrity of defence and security forces in combating the menace.

xi. INEC should review and take appropriate measures where necessary on the spread of polling units across the country to address the shortcomings of the existing structure. Again Professionals with sound skills and knowledge should be charged with the responsibility of managing the electoral bodies at both the State and National levels.

xii. INEC and State Independent Electoral Commissions (SIECs) should be provided with the basic institutional and infrastructures support by various tiers of Government and the citizens to enhance the integrity of the electoral process.

xiii. The Nigerian Political Science Association (NPSA) and other critical professional bodies should be engaged in the training and retraining of political office holders with a view to building and entrenching ideological values that will drive the political process and stem the tide of money politics and mindless cross-carpeting from one political party to another.