

**KEY NOTE ADDRESS**

**BY**

**DR DALHATU SARKI TAFIDA, OFR,**  
**NIGERIA HIGH COMMISSIONER**  
**TO THE UNITED KINGDOM**

**AT THE OPENING OF THE TRAINING PROGRAMME**  
**ON CUSTOMER RELATIONS MANAGEMENT AND**  
**CAPACITY-BUILDING**  
**FOR LOCAL STAFF OF THE HIGH COMMISSION,**  
**WEDNESDAY, 29<sup>ND</sup> APRIL 2009**

**Your Excellency, Ambassador Dozie Nwanna, OON  
Deputy Head of Mission**

**Heads of Section of the High Commission,**

**Ministers and staff of the High Commission,**

**Staff members of the High Commission,**

**Chairman of CANUK,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen of the Press,**

**Fellow Nigerians,**

On Thursday, 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2009, I launched a comprehensive programme of reforms of immigration and consular services of the Mission. On that occasion, I informed the Mission and the public of my intension to take additional measures to sanitise the two Sections and enhance service delivery. I further informed the public that the Immigration Section of the High Commission is one of the windows to the world. I stressed that no matter what the Mission does on the political and economic fronts, the image of the Mission is largely formed and informed by how well the mission discharges its consular and immigration functions.

In this regard, I highlighted some of the complaints from Nigerians and members of the public as follows:

- a. Poor but often times, wrong perception by members of the public, exacerbated by the Mission's unflattering, and some times, unearned reputation for bad image arising from poor services.
- b. Allegations of bribery, corruption and extortion against staff.
- c. Unusually large number of applicants, especially Nigerians that throng the mission on a daily basis, giving the impression of chaos in the Visa Hall.
- d. Poor access control with large number of Nigerians coming for services without prior appointments.
- e. Poor public relations on the part of frontline staff.

To address these problems, the following measures have been introduced:

- i. Token increase in the cost of services rendered by the Mission, mostly passports and visas, to cover administrative and related charges.
- ii. Making the Visa Hall more congenial and user-friendly.
- iii. a rigorous programme of staff training and re-training in service delivery and public/customer relations for frontline staff in the passport and visa units.
- iv. Staff reorganisation and redeployments of staff to be carried out with a view to ensuring that no staff in the Section stays longer than necessary or is allowed to entrench the culture of corruption and impunity in the Section.
- v. Zero tolerance of corruption and other sharp practices.
- vi. The erection of Complaints/Suggestion Boxes; one in the Reception/Banking Hall and another in the Visa Hall.

- vii. Provision of Information Desk in the Banking Hall to sort out categories of applicants before being sent to the Visa Hall, including the use of the Reception Hall as a "Holding Room", to reduce congestion in the Visa Hall.
- viii. Provision of privately-run Facilities/Services Desk, equipped with photocopying machine, computer, printer and internet facility, at a fee for the benefit of visitors to the Mission for various services.
- xi. Redesigning the Mission's website, to make it more user-friendly.

As we continue with the implementation of these measures, one of the pressing challenges we face is poor public relations on the part of staff of the Mission. Our disposition is, at times, aggressive and unfriendly. Some of us are impatient with the public. We sometimes give incomplete or wrong information on immigration and consular matters. We, some times demonstrate considerable difficulties in listening attentively to members of the public when they make enquiries about our services. Our telephone manners leave much to be desired. In short, many of us are generally unhelpful, thereby giving the Mission the name and image it does not deserve. I am determined to change these negative disposition and orientation.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

This is why we have considered it necessary to organise this training programme in customer relations management. It is also an essential part of our human resource and capacity building initiative. As you have also

observed in the last few days, we have undertaken some staff re-deployments, to ensure a better interface with the public, while enhancing service delivery. This is the first phase of the exercise as many more are being contemplated, to ensure that we put square pegs in square holes in terms of performance and integrity. Every one must be on guard as all eyes are on each and every one of you.

While I do not expect that a short programme such as this would radically alter the character and make-up of many of us, I am however confident that, at the end of the two-day intensive programme, your attitudes and orientation to work and to members of the public would have changed for the better. I do not expect anything less from you all.

Let me warn that any staff member who compromises himself/herself by engaging in sharp practices would be severely sanctioned. At the same time, I have approved a package of incentives for those who live above board and render exemplary services to the public. All hands must be on deck to ensure that a positive image of the Mission is projected to the public at all times. As we have committed ourselves to enhanced service delivery, the expectation of Nigerians and members of the public would even be higher in the days that lie ahead. We must strive to meet those legitimate expectations.

With these few remarks, it is my honour and privilege to declare the training programme open.

I wish you success in the tasks ahead.