

COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF THE SPECIAL NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (NEC) MEETING OF THE SENIOR STAFF ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES (SSANU) HELD ON THURSDAY 27TH OCTOBER, 2022 AT THE NATIONAL SECRETARIAT ABUJA.

The National Executive Council (NEC) at its Special meeting held on Thursday, 27th October 2022, deliberated on some critical issues affecting the Union, the Nigerian University system and the country in general.

NEC in Session thereafter resolved on the following issues:

COMMENDATION TO MEMBERS FOR LOYALTY TO THE UNION

The leadership of the Union appreciates and commends all members for their resilience in the midst of the hardship experienced during the last industrial action embarked upon by the Union. It is on record that despite the non-payment of four months' salaries, members displayed maturity and loyalty to the union throughout the course of the strike and showed more faith by resuming to their offices based on the assurances by the leadership following the agreement reached with government. Members are urged to continue to have faith in the leadership of the Union as no effort shall be spared in pursuing their welfare and rights in the University system.

NEC similarly urges the Federal Government to expedite the process of upholding its part of the terms of agreement on which the strike action was suspended.

ON THE “NO WORK, NO PAY” STANCE OF GOVERNMENT

NEC noted that the root cause of the recent industrial action embarked upon by the Joint Action Committee of NASU and SSANU was the failure of the government in honouring previous Collective Bargaining Agreements entered into with the Unions. NEC further observed that in embarking on the strike, all due consultations and deliberations were carried out with the relevant government offices. Due process was duly followed in line with extant labour laws. The action of the Government to therefore withhold the salaries of members of the union is totally unnecessary and has brought about untold hardship to hapless Nigerian citizens.

NEC therefore requests Government to rescind this decision of “No work, No pay” and release the withheld salaries of members of the Joint Action Committee of SSANU and NASU.

POOR FUNDING OF STATE UNIVERSITIES

NEC expressly rejects the current trend in most states in Nigeria, where state governments that are unable to meet the financial, structural and capacity building needs of state-owned universities, neglect already established universities and approve the establishment of new ones. Some state governments now own more tertiary institutions than the financial capacity of their states. This unfortunate situation has brought about the gross under funding of most state-owned institutions. Consequently, the resultant effect is the depreciation of the quality and standard of education that is acquired in such institutions. Service delivery in such institutions is constantly nose diving, because most staff are owed their legitimate payments for services rendered. The lack of financial capacity to adequately fund state-owned institutions has also resulted in inadequate provision of equipment and facilities in the various offices, laboratories and practical centres in the university.

NEC therefore urges state governments to conduct needs assessment of their existing universities with a view to ascertaining deficiencies within them. The findings and recommendations of the needs assessment will guide the state government to allocate adequate funds to such institutions to enable it meet international best practices and save their universities from imminent collapse.

NEC expressed particular concern over the poor status of funding and non-payment of Salaries of SSANU members working in these Universities;

1. Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun.
2. Olusegun Agagu University of Science and Technology, Okitipupa.
3. Adekunle Ajasin University Akungba Akoko.
4. Kwara State University, Malete.
5. Plateau State University Bokkos.
6. Abia State University, Uturu.
7. Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.
8. Cross River University of Technology, Calabar.
9. Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti.

INCESSANT PROSCRIPTION OF TRADE UNIONS

According to the Trade Unions Act (Chapter 437) as amended, the rights of citizens to freedom of association, collective bargaining and industrial relations are protected by law. Consequently, any proscription of trade unions is therefore an infringement on the fundamental rights of the group affected.

NEC notes that it has become a trend for State Governors or even Vice-Chancellors to proscribe trade unions at the slightest provocation. The case of the proscription of trade unions at Bamidele Olumilua University of Education Science and Technology, Ikere, Ekiti and the actions of the Edo State Governor,

Mr. Godwin Obaseki in the state-owned Ambrose Ali University, Ekpoma are vivid examples. A situation where the State Governor is owing staff their legitimate wages, but goes ahead to proscribe the unions is not only illegal, anti-democratic, wicked, but barbaric. NEC notes that proscriptions of Trade Unions do not lie within the powers of State Governors or University authorities and as such any declaration of proscription is an illegality which cannot stand the face of the law.

NEC therefore urges the Federal Government to call State Governors to order to prevent them from towing the path of dishonour.

THE RAVAGING FLOODS IN NIGERIA TODAY

NEC commiserates and empathises with citizens that have been negatively affected by the current floods ravaging various towns and cities in Nigeria. According to available reports, hundreds of lives have been lost, properties worth billions of naira destroyed and millions of people displaced, thereby causing serious humanitarian crisis.

NEC frowns seriously at the lukewarm approach of the Federal Government to this unprecedented natural disaster by not showing enough empathy through provision of relief materials and physical presence of her agencies. We therefore urge the Government to direct NEMA to live up to its responsibilities by urgently providing relief materials equitably to all affected areas. State Governments are also required to use the ecological funds to ameliorate the sufferings of her affected indigenes. In addition, the Federal Government should as a matter of urgency, embark on deep dredging of the Benue, Niger and adjoining coastal rivers to accommodate more water in case of future release from the dam in Cameroun.

NEC calls on the Federal Government to declare a state of emergency in the affected states, as 33 out of the 36 states of the federation are currently devastated by the floods. The Federal Government should also as a matter of urgency put in place measures that would bring an end to future occurrence of perennial flooding in Nigeria. The country has since 2012 annually experienced flooding, even though the current experience has so far surpassed those of previous years. The destruction of lives, properties and means of livelihoods is simply unimaginable.



Comrade Mohammed Haruna Ibrahim fnipr
National President