

“Water, e no get enemy

Omi o lota o”

-Fela Anikulapo

# KEYNOTE ADDRESS ON POLICY AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS: STRENGTHENING POLICIES AND REGULATIONS TO PROTECT THE LAGOS LAGOON

(DELIVERED BY DR. MUIZ ADEYEMI BANIRE, OON, SAN, ON THURSDAY, 11TH SEPTEMBER, 2025 AT THE 1ST LAGOS WATERFRONT SUMMIT HELD AT EKO HOTEL & SUITES, VICTORIA ISLAND, LAGOS.)

## INTRODUCTION

Mr. Governor, members of the Lagos State cabinet, Legislators, members of the judiciary here present, policymakers, stakeholders, environmental advocates, members of the academia, distinguished leaders, esteemed colleagues, guardians of our environment, fellow Lagosians, members of the fourth estate of the realm, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, and friends of Lagos State.

I am honoured to stand before you today to deliver this keynote address on a matter of both urgency and importance: *strengthening policies and regulatory frameworks to protect the Lagos Lagoon. The topic is not only emotional but provocative.* I must say that it is indeed a great privilege to address you today on a subject that goes to the very heart of our city’s survival and its future: the protection of the Lagos Lagoon. This iconic body of water, stretching across our state, is not just a geographical feature; it is a living heritage, a source of livelihoods, a hub for commerce, and a vital ecosystem that sustains both people and nature. It covers an estimated surface area of about 6,354.7 square kilometers and stretches over 50 km in length and between 3 to 13km wide. The depth is generally shallow and averages 2-4 meters, with a deeper entrance at the commodore channel. Yet, it is under unprecedented pressure.

When you look at the lagoon, you are not merely gazing upon water. You are looking at history, culture, livelihood, and destiny. The Lagos Lagoon is not just a body of

water. It is a mirror of who we are. It reflects our ambitions, our resilience and, yes, our negligence. Every plastic bottle floating on its surface, every untreated effluent discharged into it, every mangrove uprooted for sand mining, is not just an assault on nature; it is a stain on our conscience. This is what our Lagoon symbolises.

The lagoon has cradled communities, nurtured families, supported industries, and carried the dreams of countless generations. From the fishermen casting their nets at dawn, to the bustling markets of in Makoko, to the industries that thrive along its shores, the lagoon has been a faithful companion to Lagos. As is known, Ehingbeti was the first harbor in Eko, Lagos of today where ships berthed and trade flourished. That explains why it is said that *ti oju o ba ti Ehingbeti, oju o le ti Eko*, implying that as far as the lagoon exists in Lagos, Lagos will continue to flourish. But today, this companion cries for help. It is, therefore, with profound honour that I stand before you today to reflect upon a matter that speaks not only to our present responsibilities, but to the very legacy we shall leave behind.

## **The Significance of the Lagos Lagoon**

The Lagos Lagoon is central to our socio-economic life. It supports fishing communities, enables transport and trade, and provides a cultural anchor for many settlements. Historically and till date, it occupies a central role in the commerce and industry of the State. From Makoko's floating homes to the industrial corridors of Apapa and Lekki, the lagoon has been both a blessing and a witness to the rapid urbanisation of our city.

However, the lagoon is also fragile. It is a delicate ecosystem that supports biodiversity, regulates local climate, and provides natural waste assimilation services. Once degraded, its loss would not only be an environmental tragedy but also an economic and social catastrophe. This is how crucial and critical the lagoon is to us as a people.

## **The Current Challenges**

Over the past decades, the lagoon has suffered from a convergence of threats. In fact, but for resilience, we ought to have lost it due to the various abuses it has suffered in our hands. Let us now consider some of the threats:

1. **Pollution:** Unregulated industrial discharge, municipal waste including human waste, plastic pollution, and oil spillage have compromised water quality. Nigerians die in instalments through this. Iron in the waterways and the consumption of lead are ample examples. A lot of shipwrecks are all over, and their deterioration is poisonous to us. This explains why we die in instalments.
2. **Overexploitation:** Uncontrolled sand mining, dredging, and reclamation projects are destabilising the ecological balance. This is substantially unregulated due to lack of vision and capacity including the tools of trade. Tsunami is feared.
3. **Urbanisation Pressure:** The expansion of real estate and infrastructural development without adequate environmental safeguards have encroached upon the lagoon. Most times, there are no environmental impact assessments done, much less reports generated. Even the evaluation capacity is often lacking. Worst still is where it is done, regardless of the integrity, compliance with mitigation and adaptation plans and measures are often zero due to compromise and incompetence, as well as, at times, lack of working tools. There is virtually no monitoring of the developments.
4. **Weak Enforcement of Existing Laws:** Although Nigeria has environmental laws, enforcement has been inconsistent, undermined by corruption, weak institutions, and lack of political will. So also do we have overlapping and unhealthy competitive environment in terms of responsibilities specifically. In Lagos State alone, the Ministries of Energy; Waterfront and Infrastructure Development; Environment and even Works and Infrastructures have one form of mandate or another over the use of the lagoon. This is outside the external conflagration of federal and state dichotomy, which is often times unhealthy and basically rancorous. Among these laws birthing unhealthy rivalry are the National Inland Waterways Authority Act (NIWA) Act, Nigerian Ports Authority Act, Federal Environmental Protection Agency Act and the recently confused decision of the apex court in *N.I.W.A. v. L.S.W.A. [2024] 14 NWLR (Pt. 1959) 435*. In that case, nowhere was the issue of ownership of land, whether on the waterfront or Island a subject of consideration or pronouncement by the court. The said decision of the Supreme Court now misrepresented as conferring ownership of waterfront property on the Federal Government was commenced vide an Interpleader Summons by the duo of Incorporated

Trustees of Association of Tourist Boat Operators and Water Transporters of Nigeria and the Incorporated Trustees of Dredgers Association of Nigeria at the Federal High Court of Nigeria seeking the following reliefs:

- I. A Declaration that the plaintiffs are entitled to make payments, obtain and renew permits or licence from the proper and lawful Agency of Government under the law being either the 1st and 2nd defendants or 5th and 6th defendants;
  - II. A Declaration that the demand for payments for the operation of the plaintiffs on the inland waterways by both the 1st and 2nd defendants as well as the 5th and 6th defendants on same and similar issue to wit operational licence, operational certificate etc. amount to multiple charges and therefore unconstitutional and unlawful;
  - III. An Order directing the plaintiffs to make payment for their operational activities on the inland waterways and jetties to the proper defendants empowered and seized of the jurisdiction under the Constitution to collect such charges and issue licence/permit under the law of Nigeria;
  - IV. An Order restraining any of the defendants herein not empowered under the constitution from further collecting and imposing charges on the plaintiffs in respect of their operation of boats, ferry and water transportation on the inland waterways and jetties in Nigeria, as it relates to the plaintiffs;
  - V. An order restraining the defendants herein from collecting levies pending the hearing and, determination of this suit; and
  - VI. An order directing that the current levy, charges, dues for the use of the inland waterways be paid into the Honourable court's account until the determination of the suit for same to paid (sic) to the successful party."
5. Noticeable from the foregoing reliefs is that what was in dispute, and which was submitted before the courts, was clearly captured by the Supreme Court thus:

*"What is relevant in this appeal, therefore, is to determine whether the provisions of the 1999 Constitution and the National Inland*

*Waterways Authority (NIWA) Act have covered the subject of water transportation and sand dredging in all the navigable water bodies in Lagos state or whether there are some navigable water bodies left out in the exclusive list upon which the Lagos State House of Assembly can exercise residual legislative powers.”*

6. It is therefore surprising that in the advertorial issued by the Federal Ministry of Housing and Urban Development in The Nation newspapers of February 20, 2025, the Ministry, relying on the said judgment of the Supreme Court in *N.I.W.A. v. L.S.W.A. (supra)*, is asserting ownership of all lands on the waterfronts, shoreline areas and waterways setbacks. This is an issue already settled in terms of ownership by the apex court in the case of *A-G, Lagos State v. A-G., Fed. [2003] 12 NWLR (Pt. 833) 1*.
7. In *A-G, Lagos State v. A-G., Fed. (supra)*, the crux of the action was in respect of the powers of the respective tiers of government on physical and urban planning *vis-à-vis* the Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Decree No. 88 of 1992 which purported to cover all urban and regional planning in all the States of the Federation, including Lagos State, and its limiting effect on the developmental plan for Lagos State as a Modern City. In its judgment in the case, the apex Court held that all planning matters, approval, permits etc. are within the exclusive preserve of the State. **At page 194, paragraph E-H**, His Lordship, Uwaifo JSC, who delivered the majority decision held as follows:

*“In the circumstances, I have to say that Professor Osinbajo is right, in my view, in his submission that urban and regional planning for the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja is within the exclusive legislative function of the National Assembly but only by virtue of section 299(a) conferring residual power on it and not the controversial section 20 of the Constitution. Similarly, each State House of Assembly has the exclusive function to make planning laws and regulations for the State under its residual power. It must follow that the National Assembly cannot make a law in the form and to the detail and territorial extent of the present Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Decree No.88 of 1992. To do so will be in clear breach of the principles of federalism and an incursion into the legislative*

jurisdiction of the States. But it can make planning laws for the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja only on the basis of its residual powers.”

8. Without mincing words, His Lordship (Uwaifo, JSC) went further at **pages 197-199, paragraphs F-H**, to state that:

“No argument can defeat or reduce from the general planning legislative power of the House of Assembly of a State, which is a residual constitutional power. It gives the States the exclusive function for the planning, layout and development of their respective areas. Any Act, be it the Federal Highways Act, the Civil Aviation Act, the Nigerian Railway Corporation Act, which tends, or is implemented in a way to tend, to undermine or take away this function of any State, or allows the Federal Government to exercise or assume such function is unconstitutional and in appropriate circumstances will be declared so.... In my candid view, none of these Acts confers powers capable of enabling those bodies to interfere with the general planning control of land in Lagos State by the Lagos State Government.

*I am, therefore, with due respect unable to accept the submission of the learned Attorney-General of Delta State, Professor Utuama, that the Federal Government or its agencies may, under the Federal Highways Act, authorise the building of petrol stations or the erection of housing project within the vicinity of a Federal Highway without complying with the planning laws and regulations of the State concerned by duly obtaining permits for the projects. Only the Government of the State in whose jurisdiction the land is situated can do so.... These cannot, nor are they expected to, affect the general planning power and control of a State. I think in any real dispute as to what amounts to an infringement of the general planning power and control of a State by the Federal Government agencies in a particular instance, it is for the court to decide. But it must always be borne in mind that constitutionally town planning and development power belongs to the States. Any Act enacted by the National Assembly on a specific subject-matter must be subject to the*

*said constitutional power of the States so as to reasonably restrict the Act to its main essence.*

*Again, the argument that the Federal Government has planning power in respect of land owned by it in any State by virtue of the Land Use Act is faulty. Ownership of land in any State by the Federal Government is primarily limited to the question of title and the right to possession and use of it. It gives the Government the right to use it for its purposes. Like any other individual landowner, though obviously with more awesome presence, the Federal Government must respect the planning laws and regulations of the State or at least act in consultation with the appropriate authorities or agencies with a view to achieving mutual accommodation for the project intended. It must not act in competition with or unwholesome subjugation of the State by superimposing its own planning regulations by whatever method. There is no reason why the Federal Government should not respect and abide by those laws. After all, it is the State which provides the necessary infrastructures in line with its development plans. Those plans cannot be altered, distorted or superimposed by any other authority on the ground that it is making use of the land which belongs to it in a State. The argument that the Land Use Act allows the Federal Government to impose its planning measures over such land is completely flawed...*

The implication from the above is that even land vested in the Federal Government by virtue of Section 49 and 51 of the Land Use Act, 1978, must comply with the State Laws and regulations on urban and regional planning and cannot be used without respect for such laws or in compliance with federal laws on urban planning. We refer to **Ona v. Atenda [2000] 5 NWLR (Pt. 656) 244 at 273 paras C-D per Oduyemi J.C.A.** (as he then was) and **Ofodile v. C.O.P, Anambra State [2001] 3 N.W.L.R. (Pt. 699) 139 at 161 paras A-B per Olagunju, J.C.A.** (as he then was)

9. **Climate Change:** Rising sea levels, flooding, and salinity intrusion further threaten the lagoon's resilience. Any sea level rise beyond two meters will create tsunamis in the State. We often witness tidal locks these days, leading to destruction of lives and properties through flooding.

Again, at the risk of repetition, the Lagos Lagoon is more than water and waves; it is the soul of our city. It has cradled our communities, sustained our industries, and served as the lifeblood of commerce and culture. Generations of fishermen have cast their nets upon it; countless families have drawn their sustenance from it; and the heartbeat of Lagos itself has long been intertwined with its tides.

If left unchecked, these pressures will turn the lagoon from a life-giving resource into a lifeless drain. In fact, if I may say, from all the negative activities and indications discussed above and the evidence available, it is already a nightmare. Common safe navigation is becoming a challenge, which ought not to be taken for granted. Thus, as at today, that heartbeat grows faint. Pollution darkens its waters. Encroachment eats away at its edges. Indifference threatens its survival. If we lose the lagoon, we lose more than an ecosystem, we lose part of who we are. *Eko ar'omi sa legbe, legbe* (Lagos, the centre of aquatic splendour). What then must be our vision? We must envision a Lagos where the lagoon gleams once again; where fishermen return with bountiful catches, where families gather along clean waterfronts, where industries thrive in harmony with nature, and where children can swim in waters that reflect both their joy and their safety. Such a vision is not an illusion. It is a possibility within reach, if only we choose stewardship over short-sightedness, and responsibility over recklessness.

## **Why Strengthened Policies and Regulations Matter**

Some may ask: why talk about policies and regulations? The answer is simple: laws are the backbone of justice, and justice must extend to the environment. Without strong frameworks, development becomes destruction. Without enforcement, progress becomes pollution. Policies and regulations are the compass that ensure our march towards prosperity that does not trample upon the very foundation of life. We must not only make laws; we must make laws that are alive, laws that protect, laws that punish offenders, laws that restore, and laws that inspire stewardship. The path to saving this vital resource lies in strong, purposeful

governance. Policies and regulations are not mere words on paper; they are the instruments by which we draw a line between stewardship and destruction.

Where laws are weak, exploitation thrives. Where enforcement falters, pollution spreads. Where policies lack vision, communities suffer. Yet where governance is firm, where institutions are resolute, and where leadership is courageous, renewal is possible.

Indeed, history shows us that great cities have restored great waters. The Thames in London, once declared biologically dead, was reborn through steadfast policy. The Marina Bay in Singapore, once polluted, now thrives as a model of urban sustainability. As I remarked above, we can learn from Singapore's Marina Bay, where strict water quality controls and urban planning transformed a polluted bay into a model ecosystem. Lagos must aim for nothing less. Lagos too can write such a story but only if we act with vision and resolve. This leads me to how to navigate this seemingly murky water.

## **Policy and Regulatory Gaps: The question then is what is the framework we have towards safeguarding this abuse?**

At present, several frameworks exist, from the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA) guidelines to Lagos State Environmental Protection Agency (LASEPA) Law, and Regulations, Nigerian Ports Authority Act, the NIMASA Act, FEPA Act and Regulations, Shippers' Council laws etc. However, the gaps are numerous to capture in a keynote address, consequently, I hope that relevant paper presenters that touch on the issue will abundantly do justice to the subject. To mention some of the noticeable challenges, however, there is the issue of fragmentation of responsibilities across multiple agencies. I have hitherto dealt with this aspect. There is also the lack of comprehensive Lagos Lagoon Management Policy. I recall that there was an attempt made through Darl Handasah during the tenure of Governor Fashola. However, I am not so sure that the efforts were concluded. I have made enquiries as to the status, but no one seems to have an answer for me. If there is positivity in this regard, a new initiative may have to be taken. The challenge of lack of robust monitoring systems and reliable data to

inform decisions still stirs us in the face. Until of recent, the entire country is plagued with the issue. While I must acknowledge the fact that the National Bureau of Statistics, since Kale's period, has triggered some traction, not much is felt in the area of maritime which ought to ordinarily be the custodians of the primary data.

Another recurring issue is that of the inadequate community engagement and awareness. Few days ago, I read the complaints of the Governor on the nefarious activities of the villagers and the various developers of our lagoon resorts. The fact remains that most of the iniquities committed by them, unfolding from the interaction with them, reveal the fact of ignorance for most of the awkward things that they do. Thus, what we need is not only more laws, but *stronger, smarter, and enforceable frameworks* anchored in collaboration. How then do we strengthen the policy and regulations which, as observable above, are weak, conflicting and obsolete?

## **Pathways to Strengthening Policy and Regulation.**

To secure the future of the Lagos Lagoon, we must pursue bold, coordinated action in the following manners:

### **1. Develop a Comprehensive Lagos Lagoon Protection Policy**

This should serve as a guiding framework integrating water quality standards, land-use planning, and biodiversity conservation. It must be legally binding and backed by enforceable regulations. It must be a framework that integrates conservation, sustainable use, and enforcement, binding on all actors. Without this, neither the State nor the country cannot have a direction. We will simply continue to wallow in the confusion we are now. There is absolute need for the demarcation of use of the lagoon including the waterways. The aquatic lives are vanishing fast. How many of the *eja wewe* are we seeing again? Pollution is fast making them extinct. We are suffocating them, just as we are consuming them. As between the fishermen and the fish, who goes into extinction first is the question on our mouths now.

### **2. Strengthen Institutional Coordination**

A dedicated Lagos Lagoon Authority could be established to unify fragmented mandates. One institution, one mandate, one voice, dedicated solely to

safeguarding the lagoon. Beyond the cohesion it will engender, the outfit will be empowered to harmonize mandates, monitor compliance, and ensure accountability. This body would work across ministries of environment, water resources, transport, energy, and housing, ensuring coherence and accountability. The body will serve as umbrella body for all the concerned inter-ministerial departments by way of steering committee to combat external aggression. The limitation here will, however, lie in the continuous hostility of the federal agencies that are stakeholders and players in the maritime environment. The dilatory legal regime in this area of the protection of the lagoon remains a major impediment therefore. The time is, therefore, ripe, if only we have forthright legislative visioners in the National Assembly, that the federalism we advocate ought to have been reflected in this area through the reform of the various anachronistic laws. The challenge in this country is the tendency to build strong individuals as opposed to strong institutions. Each actor in the political firmament of this country wants to be an emperor for no good cause. If it were to be otherwise, I probably would have overlooked same but most times, it is usually borne out of selfishness and greed. How for instance do you rationalize the various absurd and illegal pronouncements of the federal agencies recently? How can an agency wake up to revoke allocations done by the State Government in respect of land? Where is the power coming from? How can an advertorial be placed requesting coastal landowners and developers to approach the federal survey department for approvals and documentation of their interests? As noted earlier, these are issues already settled not only by the law but by the apex Court of the land. In *A-G, Lagos State v. A-G., Fed. [2003] 12 NWLR (Pt. 833) 1* where the Supreme Court established beyond doubt that the urban, regional and physical planning matters are state legislative matters due to their importance to the society. Beyond doubt, therefore, publications of this nature are instruments used by federal agencies to promote disobedience of the Lagos State Urban and Regional Planning Law and the State Regulations by targeting the Lagos State Building Control Agency (LASBCA) in their publications. One discernible fact from all these Federal Government publications is that the Federal Government and its agencies actively seek the circumvention of the apex court's decision in the case of *A-G, Lagos State v. A-G., Fed. [2003] 12 NWLR (Pt. 833) 1* wherein this Honourable Court

(Onu, Kalgo, Uwaifo and Ejiwunmi J.S.C. constituted the majority) resolved that urban and regional planning as well as physical development is a residual matter within the exclusive legislative and executive competence of the State. Equally, the Land use Act never, beyond the lands in possession of the federal government and its parastatals being used for federal purposes, confer any title on the federal government. The good news is that I had fruitful conversation with Mr. President on this, and his directive is not what is being executed. I am optimistic a pronouncement normalizing same in accordance with the law will soon emanate from the President. My attitude for now is just to ignore and advise affected developers to ignore the illegal directives. No citizen is under obligation to obey illegal directives. The worst that the federal agencies can do is to go to court where the issue can be determined in line with the pronouncement of the apex court in the AG Lagos v. AG Federation (supra).

**3. Enforce Polluter-Pays Principles**  
Industries discharging waste and effluents into the lagoon must bear the cost of treatment, clean-up, and environmental restoration, so that those who profit from the lagoon also pay to protect it. They must shoulder the duty of its protection. Penalties must be stiff enough to deter infractions, including ferry and ship operators, waste management and other sludge disposal agents.

**4. Invest in Monitoring and Technology**  
The Government needs to boldly invest in satellite surveillance, water quality monitoring stations, and real-time data collection towards improving enforcement. Lagos must embrace digital tools to detect violations swiftly. Let us harness technology to gain real-time monitoring, satellite tracking, and digital enforcement, so that no violator can hide. Again, even where this is to be done, we must constantly bear in mind the debacle of federal obstructions.

**5. Encourage Public-Private Partnerships**  
The protection of the lagoon is not solely the duty of the government. The private sector, especially industries that benefit from its resources, must invest in Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives targeting lagoon

restoration. Beyond this, there might be need for special fund to be launched, just like security trust fund. The boat owners, private and commercial are all over the place. The dredging and reclamation companies; the beach house owners; the real estate owners abutting the coastal lines etc. Currently, I am oblivious of the role of NIWA in the restoration of our waterways, and still by the extant decision, they are collecting the tolls from the boat operators. I thought in Yoruba parlance, *ibi ti eeyan ba gbe amala de, lo ma jo de!*

**6. Strengthen Community Participation**  
Communities that live by the lagoon, fishermen, artisans, and residents must be part of the solution. Empowering them with knowledge, alternative livelihoods, and platforms for engagement ensures grassroots enforcement. Let us empower the local people for the lagoon cannot be protected without those who live by it, fish in it, and depend upon it.

**7. Integrate Climate Resilience Measures, both Adaptive and Mitigation.**

All lagoon protection policies must be climate-sensitive, incorporating flood control systems, mangrove restoration, and sustainable urban planning. Let us integrate climate resilience mechanisms such as planting mangroves, reclaiming wetlands, and preparing Lagos to stand tall against the rising seas and shifting climates

8. The most important action point is the formation of a movement or crusade for the actualisation of true democracy , particularly through constitutional amendment so as to enable the exclusive control and management of the lagoon and waterways; the alternative is which is the advocacy for the regionalisation of governance in the country and the pursuit of resource control.

## **Call to Action**

Protecting the Lagos Lagoon is a shared responsibility. This is not the fight of government alone. This is the fight of us all. Regulators must craft visionary laws but not without properly federalizing the country. I say, Legislators must enact laws that endure beyond politics. Regulators must enforce them without fear, favour,

or compromise. Industries must embrace sustainable practices. The private sector at large must invest, not just in profit, but in posterity. Citizens must treat the lagoon as a heritage to be safeguarded; treat the lagoon not as a dumping site, but as a sacred trust. Imagine a Lagos Lagoon restored to life. Imagine children learning to swim in clean waters. Imagine fishermen hauling abundant catches once more. Imagine eco-tourism thriving along its shores, industries growing responsibly, and communities proud of their role as guardians of this natural jewel. This is not a dream too far. It is a vision that is realizable. It is within our grasp if we have the courage to act decisively today. If we fail, we betray not only our generation but those to come. But if we succeed, Lagos will be celebrated as a city that balanced growth with sustainability, commerce with conservation, and development with dignity.

The path to saving this vital resource lies in strong, purposeful governance. Policies and regulations are not mere words on paper as said earlier; they are the instruments by which we draw a line between stewardship and destruction. As I opined earlier, where laws are weak, exploitation thrives. Where enforcement falters, pollution spreads. Where policies lack vision, communities suffer. Yet where governance is firm, where institutions are resolute, and where leadership is courageous, renewal is possible. Indeed, history shows us that great cities have restored great waters. Can we treat the Otto creek water in a similar way that The Thames was treated? Where is Odo Iya Alaro?

Someday, decades from now, when our grandchildren stand by the shores of the Lagos Lagoon, what story will they tell? Will they say, “This generation failed us; they traded our future for greed and neglect”? Or will they say, “This was the generation that turned the tide, that chose stewardship over exploitation, that gave us a Lagos Lagoon teeming with life and beauty”? Put differently, when the generations to come stand upon the shores of this lagoon, what shall they say of us? Will they remember us as the generation that watched in silence as the lagoon died, or as the generation that rose to the moment, forged strong policies, and preserved a living heritage? The answer does not only lie in what we resolve here and now. The answer is in our hands. The power to decide lies in this room, in this moment, in our will to act. Let us not walk away with fine speeches alone. Let us walk away with commitment, with courage, and with the conviction that the Lagos Lagoon must live, not just for us, but for all who come after us.

## **Conclusion.**

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the Lagos Lagoon is a mirror of our governance, our values, and our legacy. The Lagos Lagoon is both our inheritance and our responsibility. To strengthen the policies and regulations that guard it, is not merely to protect water, it is to protect life, economy, culture, and destiny. Strengthening policies and regulatory frameworks to protect it is not merely an environmental duty. It is an economic imperative, a social contract, and a moral responsibility. Let us rise to this challenge. We must remember the lagoon does not belong to us alone. It belongs to our children, and to their generations yet unborn. We are but trustees, stewards of a sacred trust. Our children will not forgive negligence, nor will history excuse indifference. Let us act with vision. Let us act with courage. Let us act with unity of purpose. For if we save the lagoon, we shall have saved Lagos. And in saving Lagos, we shall have secured a legacy of hope for Nigeria and for Africa. Let us make the Lagos Lagoon a model of sustainable management in Africa. And let history record that this generation acted decisively to protect the jewel of Lagos for posterity. If the lagoon dies, a part of Lagos dies with it. But if we save it, Lagos will breathe deeper, grow stronger, and shine brighter as a city of hope, not just for Nigeria, but for Africa and the world. Ladies and gentlemen, let us rise to this call. Let us save the lagoon. Let us save Lagos. Let us save ourselves. The time is now. The responsibility is ours. The Lagos Lagoon must live.

**Thank you.**

Dr. Muiz Adeyemi Banire, OON, SAN