

A Vision for Ondo at 70

“Àpatà rẹrẹ fejú, sùgbón kò sunmi; odò tí kò kún, kì í gbé nnkan lọ.” Even the grandest rock needs a spring of water to bring life, and a river needs to be full to carry its people to a new destination. In our fifty years as Ondo State, we have built the Àpatà, a solid unshakable foundation of peace and intellect. But now, we are at a stage where we must ensure our resources “flow” more abundantly for everyone. I see a future where we finally stop being "potentially" great and start being the engine of the nation. By our 70th anniversary in 2046, my vision is for Ondo to transform its ₦5.1 trillion GDP into a powerhouse that rivals continental economies.

We are the state of "Grade A" minds, housing world-class institutions like the Federal University of Technology, Akure (FUTA) and Adekunle Ajasin University. Yet it has become a culture for our brightest stars to shine in other skies. We train them here, only for them to "japa" because our local industries are sleeping. My vision for the next twenty years is an Ondo that becomes a magnet, not a departure lounge, by creating innovation hubs and public-private partnerships that transform our intellectual capital into local enterprises. I see an Ondo where a graduate from our high-class institutions doesn't need to pack a bag for London to find a world-class career.

Our state is geographically and geologically blessed. The bitumen in our soil with proven reserves of 42 billion tonnes (the second largest in the world), our 75 kilometers of Atlantic coastline (the longest unbroken seashore in the nation); in twenty years, that door must be wide open. We should not be "the state near Lagos"; we should be the industrial hub that makes the world look West, the beating heart of West African trade. I see our bitumen paving the very roads that connect our rural farmers, who already produce 40% of Nigeria's cocoa, to global markets.

We must stop the misconception that we are merely a "civil service state." and embrace our identity as a powerhouse of resources and intellect. The strategy for the next two decades must be one of industrial courage. We must harness our ocean and our minerals to build a state where the son of a farmer in Okitipupa can become a captain of industry right here on his home soil. By 2046, our population is projected to reach 10 million people. This is a workforce and a market that can sustain a self-sufficient, industrialized economy.

When I tell people I am from Ondo, I want the response to be a nod of respect for our infrastructure and our innovation, not just our history. If we lay the foundation of transparency and industrial courage today, the Ondo of 2046 will not just be a state in Nigeria; it will be a light for the continent. I am proud to be from the Sunshine State.