

A Letter of Gratitude to President Yar'Adua

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President Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua
The President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
Office of the President
Aso Rock Villa, Asokoro District, Abuja, Nigeria
[C/o Nigerian Embassies in New York, Washington DC, Atlanta, & Canada]

Your Excellency:

We are deeply grateful for your recent decision, disclosed by the Minister of Transportation, Mrs. Diezani Alison-Madueke on November 13, 2007, to "upgrade Akanu Ibiam Airport, Enugu to the status of an international airport." Clearly, this decision manifests true grandeur of leadership on your part. True leadership lies with listening, sustained and lightened by the intellect of man. In just a few months in office, you have shown plainly that you listen and will continue to listen to the voice of Nigerians. This is democracy proper, and we are grateful.

In addition to your willingness to listen, you have also demonstrated that economic empowerment of Nigeria is paramount in your administration. As a matter of fact, this decision to upgrade Akanu Ibiam International Airport (AIIA) for international flights reveals that Your Excellency understands the nexus between national economic growth and the economic empowerment of all regions of Nigeria.

Mr. President, it is obvious that the people of the South-East have waited for so long for an international airport. Promises to upgrade AIIA have been made in the past but never kept; hence, our petition: www.nigerianleadershipcouncil.org/akanuibiam.html. This time around, there is an assurance. Now we know there will be no more delay or hesitation, or any compromise with your decision because the upgrade will be completed "by utilising existing budgetary appropriations along with new initiatives under Private Investment Schemes to generate the requisite funds" (*ThisDay*, Nov. 15, 2007). On our own side, we are steadfast in our commitment to securing international carriers, and ready to provide further assistance in any way possible.

Truly, Your Excellency understands the dire situation the people of the South-East have been facing for some years now due to lack of an international airport in that zone. Accordingly, we are eagerly waiting for that joyous day in 2008 when AIIA will become operational for international flights. When that day comes, not only that "the travails of the many business men and travelers to the South East zone will be alleviated," as you rightly stated, but you will leave a landmark in the annals of Nigerian history.

Thank you for your understanding. May God bless you, and the people of Nigeria.

Your Sincere Compatriot,

Bedford Nwabueze Umez, Ph.D. [President, Nigerian Leadership Council]
[On behalf of the Petitioners: www.NigerianLeadershipCouncil.org/akanuibiam.html]

CC: Distinguished Senator Ike Ekweremadu, Deputy President of the Senate
CC: Distinguished Senator Elder Anyimchukwu Ude, Committee Chair on Aviation
CC: Hon. Mrs. Diezani Alison-Madueke, Minister of Transportation