WELCOME ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF PENGASSAN,
COMRADE FRANCIS OLABODE JOHNSON DURING THE 40TH
ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF THE ASSOCIATION AT THE
TRANS CORP HILTON HOTEL ABUJA ON OCTOBER 18 2018.

PROTOCOL

It is my distinct honour and great delight to welcome you all to this 40th Anniversary Celebration of our great Association. On behalf of the Central Working Committee (CWC), the National Executive Council (NEC), members and staff of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN), I thank you all for taking time out of your very busy schedules to honour our invitation. We do not take your esteem presence lightly.

PENGASSAN was registered on 15th August 1978 to promote, protect and improve through collective action, the social and economic interest of the senior and middle management employees in the oil and gas sector. It is a notable pressure group that continues to play a huge role in nation building, undertaking the daunting task of the mirror in the society. As a foremost union in the oil and gas sector, we also shoulder a huge responsibility in national development.

The Association and its allies like NUPENG, NLC and TUC were at the forefront of the fight for the democracy that the country relishes today. The fearless, patriotic and irrepressible leadership of the Association, gave their all to regain and secure our democratic liberty despite the intimidation, victimisation and harassment of the military junta. Our erstwhile President and General Secretary, Comrade Gani Adebola Owodunni, Comrade Milton Gilchrist Dabibi, Comrade Francis Aidelomon as well as Comrade Frank Addo suffered varying degrees of persecution including imprisonment and torture. We have also continued to collaborate with the Trade Union Congress and the Nigerian Labour Congress in the struggle against policies of the Government that negatively affect the Nigerian worker in both the public and private sector of the economy. It is said that Life begins at 40, but PENGASSAN is a child that was born running with life, long before the attainment of forty. Indeed, it has been a long walk to freedom and the road was rough for the most part.
In the oil and gas sector, we engage the government on policies that will develop the industry. When it became glaringly clear that the country no longer derives maximum benefit from oil and gas operations, the Association collaborated with other agencies for the passage of the Nigerian Content Law to enable Nigerians to take ownership of the operations in the industry through the transfer of technical know-how and use of local raw materials. We were also resilient in the struggle to restore normalcy to the downstream sector in 2016. We supported the new Joint Venture cash call framework and the NNPC reforms. Currently, we are at the forefront in engaging the Executive and Legislature on the passage of the Petroleum Industry Bill.

Like most Trade Unions, the Association continues to face a lot of challenges as we work diligently to carry out our mandate. One of those challenges is that some of the indigenous oil companies continue to engage in anti-labour practices; they develop strategies for a “union free workplace” by threatening employees that are engaging in collective activity and promising unattainable incentives if they stop identifying with the Labour Union. In the International Oil Companies, we have issues with the duration of contract jobs. Some of the contract employments are so short that one wonders how the employee will plan a life with such short term employments. Furthermore, the Contractors are changed after almost every term and the workers face the issue of whether they will be dropped with the ending contract or be absorbed into the new one. This is why we implore the National Petroleum Investment Management Services (NAPIMS) to look into this and ensure that the Contract worker is well protected. Our Legal system equally poses its own danger in the sense that some labour cases drag for years in the Court and the workers get wearied or even die without getting justice for the wrong suffered. We appeal to the Government to look into our labour laws and strengthen the provisions to protect the contract worker in the light of contemporary challenges.

Be that as it may, the socioeconomic state of the Nation remains our biggest challenge. Nigeria is a country richly endowed with natural resources and high quality human capital. However, issues of insecurity, ethnic division, infrastructural decay, nepotism, unemployment, impunity, illegal migrations, capital flight, abuse of power, and recklessness of some members of the political class continue to hinder the growth of our economy. This current state of the
Nation is the direct consequence of the actions or inactions of the leadership class that has managed the affairs of the country since independence and if not positively addressed, major investments will continue to elude us as a Nation. As we approach another election year, I urge us to act diligently by electing leaders who have the ability and willingness to rise to their responsibilities and move the country forward.

The Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association (PENGASSAN) has left its marks on the sands of the Nation’s economy and will continue to be a significant force that shapes the oil and gas industry. We have relied heavily on members’ dues and stakeholders to finance our activities but at 40, the Association wants to be financially independent and take its place in the Nation. In order to achieve this, we are delving into investments that will enable us to create additional income for the Association, contribute to the human capacity development of every worker in the industry, provide employment and improve the Nation’s GDP. This is why we are building Digital Libraries and Event Resource Centres in our four Zonal Councils located in Kaduna, Port Harcourt, Warri and Lagos. I urge you all to partner with us to deliver these projects.

As I wrap up, let me remind us that we have huge challenges and great opportunities in the oil and gas industry. If we all work together in our various capacities as Labour Unions, Stakeholders and Government, we will surmount these challenges and develop the opportunities. In the end, we will not only have developed the Oil and Gas industry but would have helped a Nation to maximally utilise her Oil and gain resources that will help to develop other sectors of her economy. This should be the bedrock of the plans for a future that will be less reliant on oil.

PENGASSAN commends the efforts of NNPC Management to fully rehabilitate the refineries and resuscitate the Mosimi, Ore, Calabar, Aba, Ilorin and Enugu Depots. These are giant strides that will aid fuel distributions. The dismantling of the famous Arepo hideout near Ikorodu, where lives have been lost due to nefarious activities of hoodlums on Oil installations, is also commendable.

Finally, as we celebrate our corporate existence as a socially-responsive Association and a Trade Union of repute, we have identified institutions and individuals who have positively impacted on society beyond the call of duty.
Time and space constrains me to list these outstanding personalities who have endeared themselves to the Association with their courage and exemplary exploits. We have five categories of these distinguished medals to present to these men and women of character. We have the Corporate Social Awards to two excellent Nigerians and an outstanding institution. The history of PENGASSAN will never be complete without prominent mention and recognition of its founding leaders, particularly the past Presidents and the General Secretaries, who toiled for a cohesive and formidable Association. They will be honoured with lifetime service awards. For those who are no longer here with us, we honour them with post-humous excellence service award. We will also be honouring worthy strategic social partners for their concerted efforts at improving industrial relations within the oil and gas sector. The highpoint of these special recognitions is the award of service to the President, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Muhammadu Buhari GCFR.

At this point, your Excellency(s), distinguished guests, may I humbly request that we observe a minute silence for our departed colleagues and past Presidents.

Thank you once more for honouring us with your presence.

Long Live PENGASSAN!

Long Live Federal Republic of Nigeria!

**Comrade Francis Olabode Johnson**  
*October 18, 2018.*