

## **The Outcome of the State Executive Council Meeting held on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> July, 2011**

The State Executive Council meeting held on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> July, 2011 was temporarily halted by shouts of joy and happiness by members immediately Mr Governor and Chairman of Council, Dr Olusegun Mimiko broke the news of the appointment of their colleague, who was then the Commissioner for Education, Dr Pius Osunyikanmi by President Goodluck Jonathan as his Special Adviser on International Relations.

In his congratulatory speech, Mr Governor described the appointment as a confirmation of the sterling professional and leadership qualities possessed by indigenes of the state wherever they are around the globe.

According to him, Council will surely miss Dr Osunyikanmi due to his sound and positive contributions to good governance in the state since the advent of this administration.

At the meeting which lasted till early hours of the following morning, Council deliberated on a wide-range of issues of importance to the well-being of the electorate and came out with decisions which would give strength to the untiring efforts of the present administration to deliver the dividends of democracy through the speedy implementation of its policies and programmes.

### **CONSTRUCTION OF MEGA PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

A policy thrust of this administration is the provision of free and qualitative education for the citizenry, especially children of primary school age through massive investment in the building of 21<sup>st</sup> Century compliant schools in addition to restoration and expansion of existing structures in schools.

In pursuit of this goal, Council approved the construction of new Mega Type 2 schools to be undertaken by a private developer, STEP DEVELOPMENT LIMITED at Ondo, Ile Oluji, Araromi Obu and Oke-Ijebu Akure in a project-financed model and a Memorandum of Understanding between the state government and the company on the project has been signed.

The project will cost the state government a sum of N867million (N.8b), but under the arrangement, the entire project shall be solely financed by the developer from the commencement to the completion stages. Upon completion and handing over of the Mega schools to the government, the payment which is in three stages shall commence.

Each of the schools, which will have 21 classrooms, state-of-the-art equipment and accommodate 525 pupils, shall be completed within eight months.

### **RE-ARTICULATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Council also deliberated and considered the work plan developed by a Committee it set up on the re-articulation of secondary schools in the state in view of the correlation between staff vacancies at the Teaching Service Commission and disarticulation of schools.

The schools have been graded based on enrolment to determine the number of Vice Principals per school and the data on the Principals and Vice Principals were analysed to determine the number that will revert back to the classroom as a result of the exercise. As a result of this, over 600 Vice Principals would revert back to the classrooms to reduce drastically, the teaching staff vacancies in TESCOM from 962 to 337.

It should however be noted that the posting of Principals and Vice Principals would be based strictly on merit while it is expected that the exercise would be completed by August 2011 so that all schools in the state would have reverted to their old status by the beginning of the 2011/2012 session.

## **ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATION OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS**

It will be recalled that the National Association of Proprietors of Private Schools (NAPPS) in April 2010 pleaded with the state government for assistance over their inability to pay the current fees payable by private school owners as approved by Council.

Being a listening administration and in living true to its Caring Heart tag, the state government decided to take the bull by the horn by urgently reviewing the existing guidelines for the establishment and operation of private schools as well as the fees being paid by the school owners in reality with the prevailing economic situation in the state.

It should however be noted that while government is desirous to encourage private partnership in the education sector, there is a compelling need to enforce minimum standard for the establishment and running of private schools and enthrone high academic and moral standard.

It is worrisome that the present trend of all comers to the sector has encouraged proliferation of schools which if not checked, will lead to a total decline in the standard of education in the state.

Government has also interfaced with stakeholders on this matter and consequently, Council has approved the new guidelines for establishment and operations of private schools and the new regime of fees payable by the proprietors. The new fees regime took into consideration certain criteria to grade the schools into three categories.

Some of the major points in the reviewed guidelines are:

- \*The distance between two private schools shall be at least one kilometer apart.
- \*Any private Nursery and Primary School seeking approval must be on permanent site of not less than four plots and Secondary School on seven plots of land.
- \*Nursery and Primary School should not be sited on the same compound with Secondary Schools.
- \*Provisional approval of two years in the first instance could be given to schools considered viable in a conducive environment, but are yet to acquire and/or move to the permanent site, provided there is evidence of proposed permanent site. Failure to relocate to the permanent site at the expiration of the two year period will attract the closure of the school.
- \*Inclusion of “**International**” to the name of a school will attract additional payment as approved.
- \*All approved schools shall be given an **Approval Number** which shall be boldly written on the sign post of the school.

## **DOWNWARD REVIEW OF COCOA GRADING/INSPECTION FEE**

Sometime ago at one of its meetings, council approved in principle, an upward review of cocoa grading/inspection fee from N3,000 to N5,000 per metric tonne as jointly agreed upon by all 14-Cocoa Producing States while the commencement date was to be approved by the Commissioner for Natural Resources subject to confirmation of compliance by other member states.

The Ondo State Cocoa Traders Association, the major buyers, later requested for a re-visit of the recent upward review as it could make business unattractive and unprofitable, more so that the neighbouring Ekiti, Edo, Osun and Kogi States are not yet implementing the decision.

Again, in line with the policy of this administration of making the electorate not to suffer unnecessarily, Council considered and approved a downward review of the new cocoa grading/inspection fee from N5,000 to N3,500 per metric tonne. This amount will be made up of N3,250 for Ondo State Government and N250 as Cocoa Development Fund.

## **CONCLUSION**

At this juncture, the Ondo State Government want to re-iterate, for the umpteenth time, that no matter the tempo of the destructive activities of those whose mission and mindset is to reverse the democratic gains already recorded in the state after many locust years, it won't be deterred or lose focus by their retrogressive antics because the people know better.

It is no more a hidden fact that the administration of Mr Governor, Dr Olusegun Mimiko, had in the last two years, impacted positively on the lives of the people through the various programmes and policies that were primarily designed to bring the electorate from the pit of hopelessness and squalor it had been consigned into in the past to the next level of prosperity and better life.