

# ACADEMIC STAFF UNION OF UNIVERSITIES (ASUU)



NATIONAL SECRETARIAT  
Comrade Festus Iyayi Complex,  
University of Abuja, Main Campus, Giri, Abuja

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## PRESS RELEASE

### WHY ASUU REJECTS GOVERNMENT'S AWARD OF SALARY

1. At the resumed meeting of the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) and the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) 2009 Agreement Re-negotiation Committee on Tuesday, 16<sup>th</sup> August, 2022, the Government Team presented an "Award" of a *Recommended Consolidated University Academic Salary Structure (CONUASS)* prepared by the National Salaries, Incomes and Wages Commission (NSIWC) to ASUU. ASUU firmly rejected and still rejects the "Award".
2. The 1981 FGN-ASUU Agreement, under Alhaji Shehu Shagari's administration, established the principle of collective bargaining, based on the Wages Boards and Industrial Council's Decree No 1 of 1973, the Trade Dispute Act (1976), ILO Conventions 49 (1948), 91(1950), 154 (1988) and recommendation 153 (1981), Udoji Commission Report of 1974, and Cookey Commission Report of 1981. It also provided a platform for resolving such important issues as special Salaries and Conditions of Service of University Staff, University Funding, roles of Pro-Chancellors, Vice-Chancellors, and National Universities Commission (NUC). A key outcome was a special salary scale for university staff known as University Salary Structure (USS).
3. At the commencement of the renegotiation of the 2009 FGN/ASUU Agreement on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2017, both the Federal Government and ASUU Teams agreed to be guided by the following principles as their terms of reference:



- (i) Reversal of the decay in the Nigerian University System, in order to reposition it for its responsibilities in national development;
  - (ii) Reversal of the brain drain, not only by enhancing the remuneration of academic staff, but also by disengaging them from the encumbrances of a unified civil service wage structure;
  - (iii) Restoration of Nigerian Universities, through immediate, massive and sustained financial intervention; and
  - (iv) Ensuring genuine university autonomy and academic freedom.
4. Government's surreptitious move to set aside the principle of collective bargaining, which is globally in practice, has the potential of damaging lecturers' psyche and destroying commitment to the university system. This is, no doubt, injurious to Nigeria's aspiration to become an active player in the global knowledge industry.
  5. Rejecting a salary package arrived at through collective bargaining is a repudiation of government's pronouncements on reversing "brain drain". It is common knowledge that, more now than in the 1980s and 1990s, Nigerian scholars, especially in scarce areas like science and medicine, are migrating in droves to Europe, America and many parts of Africa such as South Africa, Rwanda, and Ghana with supportive environment to ply their trades as well as competitive reward systems for intellectual efforts. Does the Nigerian government care about what becomes of public universities in another five or ten years if this trend continues?
  6. FGN's repudiation of collective bargaining is in bad faith. It is a retrogressive step for a democratic government to abrogate the collective bargaining principle after more than forty years of its introduction into the Nigerian University System. The ILO's Policy Guide on Collective Bargaining stipulates that "*The principle of negotiation in good faith takes the form in practice of various obligations on the parties involved, namely: (i) recognizing representative organizations; (ii) endeavouring to reach agreement; (iii) engaging in real and constructive negotiations; (iv) avoiding unjustified delays in negotiation; and (v) mutually respecting the commitments made and the results achieved through bargaining*" (ILO 2015, p. 14). Hence it could be safely concluded that FGN's renegotiation of the 2009 Agreement with ASUU between March 2017 and June 2022 has been done in bad faith.
  7. Government imposed the ongoing strike action on ASUU and it has encouraged it to linger because of its provocative indifference. The Munzali Jibril-led renegotiation committee submitted the first Draft Agreement in May 2021 but government's official response did not come until about one year later! Again,



the "Award" presented by the Nimi Briggs-led Team came across in a manner of *take-it-or-leave-it* on a sheet of paper. No serious country in the world treats their scholars this way.

8. Over the years, particularly since 1992, the Union has always argued for and negotiated a separate salary structure for academics for obvious reasons. ASUU does not accept any awarded salary as was the case in the administration of General Abdulsalam Abubakar. The separate salary structures in all FGN/ASUU Agreements were usually the outcome of Collective Bargaining processes.
9. The major reason given by the Federal Government for the miserly offer, paucity of revenue, is not tenable. This is because of several reasons chief of which is poor management of the economy. This has given rise to leakages in the revenue of governments at all levels. There is wasteful spending, misappropriation of fund and outright stealing of our collective patrimony. ASUU believes that if the leakages in the management of the country's resources are stopped, there will be more than enough to meet the nation's revenue and expenditure targets without borrowing and plunging the country into a debt crisis as is the case now.
10. The New Draft Agreement has other major recommendations for the funding of major components of the renegotiated 2009 FGN/ASUU Agreement. One of such recommendations is the tax on cellphone and communication lines. Ironically, the Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning recently announced its readiness to implement ASUU's recommendation, as a revenue source, but not for education, without acknowledging the Union!
11. Our prayer: Where there is will, there will be way. The Federal Government, through the Ministry of Education, should return to the New Draft Agreement of the 2009 FGN/ASUU Renegotiation Committee whose work spanned a total of five and half years as a demonstration of good faith.

Thank you.



**Emmanuel Osodeke**  
*President*

18<sup>th</sup> August, 2022.