PREAMBLE
We, the Nigerian women bound by common intention and purpose:

RECALLING that women's rights have been recognised and guaranteed in all international human rights instruments,

RECALLING further that Nigeria has signed and ratified notably the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and its Optional Protocol, the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights and the Protocol to the African Charter on Women’s Rights.

RECOGNISING that the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria as amended guarantees equal rights for men and women and prohibits non-discrimination.

AFFIRMING that Nigeria in 2006, adopted the National Gender Policy with a goal to build a society devoid of discrimination, harness full potentials of all social groups and promote women and girl’s health, education, socio-economic and political well being;

WORRIED that Nigeria women suffer inequalities in all spheres of human endeavor, which has continued to hamper women’s development and exclude them from mainstream politics and governance

CONVINCED that gender accountability is critical to social justice, fairness and equity;

Hereby adopts the Charter of Demand of the Nigerian women.

**We Women of Nigeria** stand irrespective of our ethnicity, religion, age, ability and status to bring the desire and aspirations of every Nigerian woman from the margins to the centre of discussion. We decry injustice, corruption, inequality, conflict and
discrimination in any form. Therefore, we have come together as full citizens endowed by the creator with huge potentials to influence the direction of policy towards the progress of our Motherland Nigeria.

As Women:

- We recognize that women are not a homogenous category. We are marked by differences and diversities, which is strength to be tapped by Nigeria and Nigerians.
- We commit to serve as role models to ensure we are ethically and professionally credible in our work, wherever that may be.
- We will build knowledge and awareness amongst ourselves.
- We encourage those who have in the past enforced practices that endanger women’s lives overtly or otherwise to desist therefrom.
- We as the pacesetters will work in sisterhood towards the elimination of the erroneous but widely believed perception that ‘women are their own worst enemies’.
- We commit to building structures and processes to enable us track the delivery of our ‘demands’ and to review our charter as necessary.
- We celebrate the support of progressive men who are also deeply concerned about the rights of women and girls who are their daughters, wives and mothers, and resolve to work with them in pursuit of social justice, equality, peace and development.

The Five Political ‘Demands’

‘Demand’ 1: Demonstrate Political Will and Commitment to Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment

Rationale

- The promotion of gender equality, justice, and women’s empowerment has been identified as a critical strategy for enhancing the quality of lives and achieving progress in all areas of development in societies around the world.
- The Nigerian government has ratified an array of regional and international conventions and agreements, all of which provide a comprehensive framework for the elimination of gendered discrimination; promotion of gender equality and equity; and the empowerment of women.
- These instruments include the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies, the Millennium Development Goals, and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol), the Beijing Platform for Action, among others.
In recognition of the centrality of gender issues to effective policy development and implementation for national development, the Nigerian government made a commitment to gender mainstreaming as a tool for achieving social transformation.

Hence, in 2006, a National Gender Policy was developed to respond to the lingering challenges of the pervasive gender inequality in all aspects of the Nigerian society. The objectives of the Policy are to “build a just society devoid of discrimination; harness the full potential of all social groups regardless of sex or circumstance; promote the enjoyment of fundamental human rights and protect the health, social, economic and political wellbeing of all citizens in order to achieve equitable rapid economic growth; evolve an evidence-based planning and governance system where human, social, financial and technological resources are efficiently deployed for sustainable development.

Moreover, the principle of non-discrimination is enshrined in the 1999 Constitution, which consequently guarantees women and girls fundamental human rights set forth in Chapter IV of the document.

However, the guarantees contained in all the documents described above are watered down by the cocktail of parallel laws (statutory, religious and customary), patriarchal interpretation of religious and customary laws and practices, the sexist language of the Constitution, as well as the obvious limitations therein constitute impediments to women’s access to fundamental rights.

Specifically, women experience discrimination and inequality through the denial of respect for personal dignity and liberty; right to life, fair hearing, security of persons and property; freedom of thought, conscience, association, religion, movement, and expression.

**Demand**

a. Safeguard the tenets of democracy by the guarantee of internal democracy, open candidate selection criteria, transparent, free and fair primaries, supremacy of party rules and discipline.

b. Legislative change to improve the lives of women so as to achieve economic, social and physical security.

c. Creation of public awareness of relevant legislation towards realization of gender equality and women empowerment.

d. Establish a system of gender mainstreaming which incorporates 35% of women in all sectors of government

e. Show commitment to non-discrimination against women and people with disabilities by passing the “Disability Bill”.

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f. Include gender, young women and persons living with disabilities as parameters of federal character and equal opportunity where no gender is more than 60%

g. Work with data-generating agencies to generate gender disaggregated data to inform policy

h. Have clear gender indicators showing delivery and tracking of results for girls, boys and women in every sector

i. Establish an Equal Opportunity Commission to replace the Federal Character Commission as presently constituted to ensure that gender discrimination is eliminated.

j. Uphold the definition of citizenship based on residency rather than indigeneity.

‘Demand’ 2: Improve Women’s Participation in Politics and Decision-Making

Rationale
Despite constituting about half of the population, with the right to vote and be voted for:

- Women occupy only 33% of ministerial positions and 7% of legislative positions at the national level, the lowest in West Africa.
- Women are visibly missing from their list of members in a third of Nigerian States.

- Diverse obstacles limit women participation in politics, including sex stereotyping and conceptualized public and private spheres dichotomy.
- Violence and intimidation, which remain the defining characteristics of elections, hinder women’s participation in the political sphere, thereby perpetuating the status quo at the expense of sustainable democracy and development.
- Women who are either political leaders or leaders in other spheres face a number of significant challenges which have been identified over the years as not unique to a particular party, are drawn from the leadership experiences of women. These include the difficulty of being seen as capable and competent in their own right outside the shadow of powerful political men; limited representation of women in party leadership; the ugly perceptions /stereotypes of women in leadership/decision-making arenas (disrespectful, bossy, promiscuous, cantankerous, etc); lack of financial resources; party structures and processes that are not women-friendly (odd hours of meetings, non-transparent decision making processes, God-fatherism etc); lack of confidence by party leaders in women who they see as hard to sell candidates among others.

- Unfortunately, the current party frameworks do not encourage mentorship of young and upcoming politicians, especially women who have long been absent in the political arena.

- Although there has been a clamour for at least a 35% quota for women, successive governments have not yielded to the yearnings of women, and neither has any political party prioritized women’s concerns in this regard despite international obligations undertaken by Nigeria to promote affirmative action, equal participation of men and women in politics and other spheres of life.
Demand

a. Institutionalise justice and fairness for men and women within the party and its framework by;
   i. Creating an organ within the party to monitor and evaluate the implications of party policy and practice for both men and women.
   ii. Strengthening the office of the Woman leader to serve as the focal point for implementation of gender issues within the party;
   iii. Encouraging female political aspirants by making nomination forms and all other processes concerning aspiration for political office free for women.
   iv. Adequate and guaranteed access to funding, human and technical resources to carry out the responsibilities of the office; and
   v. Devoting at least 15% of the Party’s annual budget to delivering of (i- iii).

b. Reform of electoral law to provide for affirmative action as a criteria for registration of political parties;

c. Henceforth no gender constitutes more than 65% of appointees to public offices, including parastatals, diplomatic missions, cabinet, corporations and institutions.

d. Implement conscious action in political party structures to ensure that no gender constitutes more than 65% from the ward to national level in any subsequent elections.

e. Ensure that no gender constitutes more than 65% of delegates, candidates, and list after primaries

f. Institute accountability mechanisms and frameworks in principal documents i.e. party constitution, party manifesto, party leadership and strategies on the implementation of the National Gender Policy and use of gender disaggregated data for planning.

g. Ensure transparency in the nomination, appointment and election of party officials to ensure that there is at least 35% representation of women in the party executive and other decision-making structure

h. Enact a Gender Equality Act and a Political Parties Act specifying the required 50% representation by gender in party structures and decision-making bodies;

i. Domesticate relevant regional and international conventions and frameworks in Nigeria, including the UN Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its Protocol; and the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa.

j. Parties provide adequate training and other support for female members at all levels.

k. Party representatives in the National Assembly support and facilitate electoral reforms to create a level playing field for women’s effective participation in elective politics and governance in general.

l. A Party constitutional provision be instituted to provide for a right to initiate the recall of elected members involved in criminal activities; violence against women and girls; and promoting discriminatory practices against women.
m. The Ministry of Women Affairs be given adequate financial and technical support to strengthen the Nigerian Women’s Trust Fund to institute concrete measures that will support women to participate in political processes at all levels and take leadership positions and responsibilities.

n. Parties should work with civil society organizations to support, fund and encourage mentorship between women in political positions and young female politicians.

‘Demand’ 3: Invest in Women’s Economic Empowerment and Livelihoods

Rationale

➢ The 2009 poverty estimate shows that about 83.9% of the population lives on US$2 per day, and a greater part of these populations are women. Women are disempowered by their limited access to and control of economic resources owing to gender biases in the allocation of state and other resources. They are at greater risk of poverty, with lone parents (unmarried, divorced, widowed) and grassroots women more vulnerable than others.

➢ Although women play a major role in the production sector of the economy, but they are being impeded by lack of access to markets for their products.

➢ Legal and customary barriers to ownership and access to land, use of natural resources, access to capital and credit, compounded with lack of opportunities, resources, training and skills, access to, and use of technology as well as wage differentials in both formal and informal sectors, both military and para-military all pose as impediments to economic growth to women.

➢ Improving and investing in women economic empowerment livelihood is crucial to gender equality and equity.

➢ It is imperative for government to invest in women economic empowerment to livelihood for sustainable social and economic development.

➢ Women should be paid for every service they rendered. These include even house wives for example cooking, cleaning at home and taking care of the children, etc.

➢ The economic marginalization of women has resulted in the feminization of poverty and declining living condition in Nigeria, as is pronounced in social indicators such as human development index.

➢ Government should put appropriate measures in place to enhance the economic capacity of Nigerian women so they can contribute effectively to national development.

➢ A favourable economic situation for women is a crucial aspect of gender equality. While particular attention has to be paid to working women’s wages, hours of work, and work and living conditions - their right to health facilities, crèches and other benefits must also be addressed by politicians and employers.
Demand

a. Institutionalize measures that increase women’s access to credit and capital (Micro-credit, SMEs, scaling up for women entrepreneurs, etc. Central Bank should develop gender sensitive lending policies to enable women to benefit from loans.

b. Commit to provide microfinance for at least 10,000 women in each state per year

c. Commit to reducing unemployment especially among women by at least 5% annually for four consecutive years in the first instance.

d. Institute and implement a policy of providing child care in all work-places

e. Enact constitutional provisions that guarantee the rights of women to own property equally with men;

f. Ensure recognition for women’s unpaid labour through the implementation of the provisions in the Beijing Platform for Action, which relate to valuing and accounting for unpaid work in its System of National Accounts.

g. Promote women’s leadership in agriculture to enhance the role of women farmers and facilitate access to land, funding, technology and market.

h. Provide a realistic and implementable strategic plan for providing life saving infrastructure – power, integrated transportation, water and mass housing.

‘Demand’ 4: Value Women’s Education, Health, Security and Safety Demonstrate Principled

Rationale

➢ Nigeria is a patriarchal society and women’s rights and concerns are not accorded respect by human right standards rather are violated in both private and public spheres. Women in Nigeria have limited access to opportunities and resources.

➢ Although women are more affected by the outbreaks of conflicts in Nigeria they are consistently excluded from decision making in relation to peace building as contained in the provision of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.

➢ About 3.9 million Nigerians are living with the HIV virus, making Nigeria the second highest number of people living with HIV in the world. Prevalence among young women aged 15 – 24 years is estimated to be three times higher than among men of the same age. Each year, 55% of AIDS deaths occur among women and girls. HIV is the leading cause of death among women of reproductive age of 15 – 49 years, (NACA Fact Sheet, 2011).

➢ Contraceptive use is 9.6% among women of reproductive age. These problems are currently making it difficult to reduce poverty in Nigeria.
The role of the media in addressing women’s concerns and gender inequalities cannot be overemphasized. Female media practitioners should promote gender equality through projection of positive image of media rather than the portrayal of stereotypes and discriminatory reportage.

A key challenge to women’s human rights in Nigeria is the interaction conflict of the three parallel systems of laws (statutory, religious and customary).

Cultural and religious fundamentalism poses barriers to the enjoyment of women’s rights.

In the rural and urban communities in Nigeria, the use of firewood is a major source of hazard to women and the environment. According to the WHO, smoke from cooking with wood causes 95,300 deaths, mostly women and children in Nigeria every year.

**Demand**

a. National Assembly and State Assemblies should enact the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Bill into law and amend the Criminal and Penal Codes to make spousal violence a criminal offence.
b. Strengthen the system of response within the police to protect survivors of violence.
c. The Judiciary should establish special courts to handle cases of gender based violence.
d. Government should provide shelter, medical and psycho-social support to victims of gender based violence.
e. Strict enforcement of laws that deals with removal of girls before completion of secondary school and to promote their participation, particularly in science subjects.
f. Outlaw at all government levels, harmful practices such as child marriages and FGM and enforce such laws that care for victims of VVF/RVF and widowhood rites.
g. Pass the Child’s Right Act in all states, where this has not been done and enforce the rights of all vulnerable children.
h. Legislate on at least 35% of LGA budget for social security and safety nets for the poor, women, elderly and children.
i. Allocate at least 20% of health sector budget for maternal and mortality issue in Nigeria.
j. Review of economic policies to promote the wellbeing and security of women, girls, young women and women with disabilities.
k. Government working in partnership with gender focused organizations should popularize and implement the UNSCR 1325 at all levels of governance in Nigeria.
l. Provide viable technological options that reduce the effect of climate change on women and children for example support for the clean cookstove initiative, which saves women’s lives, money and the environment.
‘Demand’ 5: Demonstrate Principled Transformational Leadership

Rationale

- Accountability, transparency and commitment are qualities of women which serve as the bedrock of transformational leadership.
- Adherences to the principles of rule of law, the respect of the law and dedication to service are fundamentals of good governance inherent in women.
- Women have the capacity and ability to generate and redistribute wealth in a fair and just manner.
- Women provide credible leadership and generate positive followership.
- Nigeria is in huge deficit of sub-regional, regional and international treaties domestication and implementation; increased number of women in parliament will assist Nigeria in honoring her commitment.
- Domestication and implementation of sub-regional, regional and international treaties will promote human rights, protect the rights of women and place Nigeria on the global map of developed nations.
- Women will increase socio-economic, educational and political empowerment for sustainable development.
- To transform the economy and position Nigeria among the first twenty economies in line with the vision 20:20.
- The full implementation of this women’s charter will speed up women's active involvement and meaningful participation in political and corporate governance, elective and appointive positions, processes, programs and activities.

Demand

Political Party leadership, other levels of government and corporate governance adheres to the following non-negotiable key values to serve as the code of ethics for the representatives, and which will provide the kind of leadership that will ensure protection of women’s rights and enhance a sense of equity and justice

a. Respect for women and minority rights
b. Ethnic and gender diversity in hiring staff
c. Commitment to use already-existing policy mechanism to improve the lives of women and men
d. Partnership with Civil Society to develop innovative means of ensuring that citizens engage government and private sector to demand and receive accountability.
e. Promotion of leaders who are gender responsive, exposed to knowledge and communication skills.

We hereby submit this Women’s Charter of Demands, signaling the dawn of a new beginning for Nigerian women, as an agenda of minimum demands for action on gender equality and equity in Nigeria.
Sources

We acknowledge and remain grateful for the myriad of sources that have influenced the content of this charter. In particular, experience from women’s organising across Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Zambia.

- African Charter on Human and People’s Rights and Optional Protocol
- 2006 National Gender Policy
- AC N Women’s manifesto
- Draft Nigerian Women’s manifesto 2010
- IRI Youth Manifesto 2011
- National AIDS Commission data sources
- People’s Democratic Party Constitution
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- The Popular Front Draft Manifesto for the APC merger process
- WORNCO, 2005 “Womanifesto”