



By: Tomorrow's Affairs Staff

Bola Tinubu - A wealthy freedom fighter from whom Nigeria expects security and a better economy



Bola Tinubu, a wealthy, experienced politician, will lead Nigeria for the next five years, facing the challenge of pulling the country out of a failing economy and internal conflicts.

Tinubu will take over an eight-year political legacy from his party colleague Muhammadu Buhari in May. That legacy is more of a burden than a wind in his successor's sails.

"Together, we shall build a brighter and more productive society for today, tomorrow and for years to come," Tinubu told his supporters as he declared victory, wearing his trademark red hat with the imprint of a chain, which represents a broken shackle.

With about 220 million inhabitants, Nigeria is the largest African nation. The population is projected to double by 2050. According to the UN, it is also one of the youngest nations on average, with around 40% of citizens under the age of 15.

Security and economic burden

The economy is, however, in a very bad condition, particularly for the young population. Youth unemployment exceeds 40%, social inequality increases annually and corruption is still widespread.

The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have not been particularly deep for Nigeria, where slightly more than three thousand deaths from the infection have been recorded. Nigeria has a fairly high vaccination rate, which exceeded 110 million doses.

However, Nigeria still bears the scars from the fight against Boko Haram jihadists, whose terrorist actions have killed thousands and displaced millions.

The newly elected president comes with extensive management experience as governor of Lagos area from 1999 to 2007. Tinubu built his career as an executive in Mobil Oil, and in his own words Deloitte, although this company denied it during the campaign.

Tinubu's confidence mainly comes from his political background as a fighter against the military dictatorship, overthrown in 1999.

As an important activist of the pro-democracy movement National Democratic Coalition, he knows the value of freedom, because he himself was a victim of the former military dictator of Nigeria, Sani Abacha, who drove him into exile.

Do expectations exceed the powers of the new president?

Nigerians have huge expectations of the new president. Top expectations concern safety: primarily economic, but also physical. Previous President Buhari had three priorities when he came into power in 2015: security, the fight against corruption and economic recovery.

Even after eight years, Nigeria has not made much progress towards their realisation. That is why Tinubu promised during the campaign that he would stand in the way of terror, kidnapping and violence in general, by increasing the security forces, better equipping and training them.

Another expectation has been to reduce nepotism at the top of the security services, which is viewed as one of the main factors of their inefficiency. It is similar with large economic systems, where corruption has been the main cause of their decline.

How will Tinubu position himself globally?

President-elect Tinubu received congratulations from the United States. State Department called for calming the post-election scene after criticism of the regularity of the electoral process.

UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak also sent congratulations. "The UK-Nigeria relationship remains strong. I look forward to working

together to grow our security and trade ties, opening up opportunities for businesses and creating prosperity in both our countries”, Sunak said on Twitter.

A congratulatory message also arrived from Paris, from French President Emmanuel Macron, but not, for now, from Moscow.

On several occasions, first in March last year, and most recently on the anniversary of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, Nigeria voted in the UN General Assembly to condemn Moscow and demanded that Russian troops withdraw from Ukraine immediately.

Nigeria thus belongs to a smaller group of five African states that clearly condemned the Russian invasion, while 15 of them abstained in the last UN vote.

The mandate of the newly elected president of Nigeria will therefore be based on a special test in terms of his positioning according to the polarised positions of Russia and the West regarding the Ukrainian crisis.

Although Nigeria's internal problems are the main preoccupation of the new state leader, the West and Russia will fight for his favour on the foreign policy stage, considering that it is the most populous African nation with the largest economy.

The strategic issue in this respect will be focused on the future gas pipeline, about 6,000 kilometres long, which would connect Nigeria and Morocco.

In addition to those two countries, the pipeline will include all of West Africa, and its construction should start this year.

Many eyes are on this project, considering that Europe has been positioning itself as its main beneficiary. In conditions when European countries have been ending their dependence on gas from Russia, the Nigerian source appears as a huge opportunity for long-term and stable supply to Europe.