THE COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF A VIRTUAL. EXTRAORDINARY NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (NEC) MEETING OF THE NIGERIAN ASSOCIATION OF RESIDENT DOCTORS (NARD) HELD ON THE 7TH APRIL 2021.

PREAMBLE

The Nigerian Association of Resident Doctors (NARD) resumed from the recess of the extraordinary National Executive Council meeting today 7th of April 2021 to review the ongoing strike action and the offers of Federal Government so far.

The NEC was attended by over 100 members from more that 60 centers across the country via zoom. After extensive deliberations, the following observations and resolutions were made;

OBSERVATIONS

1. The NEC painfully observed that despite all the efforts of by the National officers committee ( NOC )to ensure that the Federal Government do the needful to prevent the ongoing strike, Government has continued in their insincerity of promises hence the current stalemate.

2. The NEC expressed her disappointment over the spurious misinformation spewed out by the Honourable Minister of Labour and Employment.

3. They noted that NARD gave a 2 month ultimatum before declaring her industrial action when it became apparent that the Ministry of Health was not interested in any form of settlement to avert the avoidable action. This is at variance with the falsehood being peddled by the Honourable Minister.

4. They also noted that the Memorandum of Action signed was after 12 midnight on 31st of March, 2021 when the ultimatum had elapsed. Without prejudice to the labour laws and other extant laws of the land, the industrial action had already begun before the MOA was signed and as such, not tenable.

5. They noted the admittance of the Hon Minister of state for health who wholeheartedly agreed that all the issues raised by NARD in her communique are germane and legitimate and further admitted that bureaucratic bottlenecks in government led to delay/ non-implementation of previous memoranda signed with NARD.

6. For the avoidance of doubt, the NEC stated clearly that the Nigerian Association of Resident Doctors is not a financial arm of the Nigerian government and therefore not involved in any form of payment of residency training funding as was alleged in the meeting called at the instance of the HMOL&E. To set the record straight, the offices and officers involved are the National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria and her Registrar as well as the Office of Hospital services and her Director. When the errors in payment were noticed, NARD informed both bodies appropriately for further action as may be necessary.

Reappraisal of the Demands:

1. Immediate Payment of all salaries owed to all house officers including march salaries (regardless of quota system) before the end of business on the 31st of March 2021.

As at today, although payment have been made to some of them, the payment is marred with so many irregularities. Most of them are still not paid.

2. Immediate payment of all salary arrears including march salaries for our members in all federal (GIFMIS platform) and state tertiary health institutions across the country.

Non of these Doctors who have worked for over four months has been paid. Our members in states like ABSUTH, IMSUTH and UNIMEDTH are still been owed twenty, five and four months salaries respectively.

3. Upward review of the current hazard allowance to 50% of consolidated basic salaries of all health workers and payment of the outstanding COVID-19 inducement allowance.

The hazard allowances has remained five thousand naira (5000) for over thirty (30) years. For the Honourable Minister of Labour & Employment (HMOL&E) to feign ignorance of this on national television today leaves a lot to be desired. This is an all time low coming from someone who has been in the Nigeria senate where monthly hardship allowance for senators is N1,​242,122.70.

Demanding for 5 weeks for it's review despite the ongoing strike is really shameful. A sincere government should immediately call all stakeholders together to address this issue ones and for all.

4. Payment of death in service insurance for all health workers who died as a result of COVID-19 infection or other infectious diseases in the country.

This legitimate demand has been left unattended to.

5. Payment of Salary shortfalls of 2014, 2015 and 2016 to our members in all federal institutions including state owned institutions as earlier agreed with NARD.

Nothing has been done in this regard.

6. Universal domestication/implementation of the 2017 MRTA by all federal government and state-owned training institutions to ensure proper funding of residency training in the country as stipulated by the Act.

Nothing has been done about this especially by the state governments.

7. Abolishment of the exorbitant bench fees being paid by our members on outside postings in all training institutions across the country with immediate effect.

The only positive result from the conciliatory meeting with the HMoLE, however no circular yet to back the abolishment.

8. Immediate payment of 2019, the balance of 2020 and 2021 medical residency training funds (MRTF) to our members including those under state government employ.

Despite our constant engagement with the FMOH on this issue, it was shocking to us that it took the conciliatory meeting by the HMoLE for the FMOH to be instructed to go and check if funding for residency training was captured in the 2021 budget. This is pitiful as well as awful.

9. Immediate review of the Act regulating Postgraduate Medical Training in Nigeria in line with international best practices to remove the unnecessary rigors in residency training in Nigeria, one of the factors attributed to brain drain in the health sector.

Nothing also has been done here.

10. The reintroduction of medical super salary structure and specialist allowance for all Doctors as already approved for some other health workers.

No mention was made about this very germane demand of our members.

This further buttresses the insincerity amongst government officials which has stalled meaningful negotiations in the wake of the current impasse

RESOLUTIONS

The NEC unanimously voted that the ongoing total and indefinite strike that started on the 1st of April 2021 be continued until the federal and state governments of Nigeria met up with our demands as captured in our earlier communique and reiterated above.

We want to use this medium to reiterate our commitment to the smooth running of all tertiary institutions in the country and the provision of specialist healthcare to Nigerians but we need to first of all care for our own health and welfare in order to give standard care to our patients. This is in line with the our physician oath.