

## **REBUTTAL**

### **RE: EGYPTIAN CONTRACTOR ACCUSES ALHAJI SANI DANGOTE OF N30 MILLION FRAUD IN ALLEGED BREACH OF CONTRACT.**

We refer to Premium Times online publication of 8 April 2019 by one Evelyn Okakwu with the above scandalous headline.

Having read through the said publication from beginning to the end, our management has come to the inescapable conclusion that the piece was jaundiced, malicious, misleading and concocted to defame our Chairman Alhaji Sani Dangote and bring his hard-earned reputation and integrity to question.

In order not to allow a lie manufactured in the furnace of emptiness to stand, it has become apposite in the present circumstances to set the records straight in respect of the weighty but fraudulent and baseless allegations by Mr. Marco Zoccoli and his hatchet writer against our Chairman.

First, it is manifestly clear that Mr. Marco Zoccoli neither understood the contractual relationship he entered into with MPS, his employer nor the relationship between Alhaji Sani Dangote and the firm. Mr. Zoccoli had neither a contract of employment with Alhaji Sani Dangote nor is the latter indebted to him as maliciously claimed. This nebulous claim was made clear in his offer letter from MPS Limited, a company which has a corporate status

and identity different from all those associated with it, including the shareholders.

The truth of the matter, in this present case, is that Mr. Marco Zoccoil was a staff of a company called MPS Limited in which Alhaji Sani Dangote is a director.

Like a drowning man looking for a piece of straw to hold on, Mr. Marco Zoccoli came with the outlandish tale that his passport was seized. This again reveals the mind of a man bent on character assassination because at no time was his passport seized. Mr. Zoccoli had lied to the police that his Italian international passport was seized by MPS Limited and a senior staff of the company and instigated the malicious prosecution against the staff.

After he personally gave evidence on the allegation, the court upheld the no case submission of the defendants, discharged and acquitted them and dismissed the case. In its ruling of 8 August, 2018 His Worship, Magistrate Jalarth O. Agim of the Calabar Magistrates' Court held inter alia in Suit No. MC/270C/2018 that: **“the evidence (of Mr. Zoccoli and the police) is unconvincing and lacks consistency, rendering it manifestly unreliable.”** Mr. Zoccoli agreed with the court decision that his passport was never seized only to inexplicably turn around to re-litigate the issue in Premium Times and lie that the passport was returned to him only after the intervention of the Nigerian Immigration authorities and the court.

By not appealing against the court decision till date, Mr. Marco Zoccoli recanted his fraudulent claim of a missing passport and shamelessly admitted that his passport was not seized.

Again, it was an exemplification of his character flaw for Mr. Marco Zoccoli to claim the scandalous thirty (N30) million published in the Premium Times of April 8, 2019 as the outstanding salaries he claimed was owed by MPS Limited, his employers.

The imputation of fraud against Alhaji Sani Dangote and the allegation of breach of contract are in bad taste and a figment of the imagination of Mr. Marco Zoccoli because he entered into a three (3) year contract of employment with MPS Limited and not Alhaji Sani Dangote.

The question every sane person should ask is why Marco Zoccoli instituted a court action against his employers, MPS Limited, at the National Industrial Court of Nigeria in suit No.NICN/212/2018 but turned around during the pendency of the suit to accuse an innocent person in respect of the same issue. So he knew his employer was MPS? And that MPS Limited is a duly incorporated company and separate legal entity from the personality of Alhaji Sani Dangote?

Mr. Marco Zoccoli misled the company and obtained money to buy wood processing machineries that were not suitable for the business plan he personally developed and thereby incurred huge losses and practically made the company bankrupt. He had equally presented to the company's directors a business plan to set up a wooden door production company upon which the directors committed their hard -earned resources relying on the business plan. It should be noted that at the time his contract expired, the same company he managed incurred outstanding salaries of over One Hundred

Million Naira (N100) million to the staff he employed as the Managing Director of the company; rather he is concerned with his personal gain and false indebtedness by the company and ignoring the humongous financial losses he had caused the company.

Till date, MPS Limited, the company that he mismanaged and ran aground is still battling for survival and to be in a position to settle outstanding liabilities incurred by his unethical and cavalier manner as Managing Director. All fiduciary responsibilities were observed in the breach by the man entrusted with running the multi-billion business.

The claim by Premium Times of reaching out to some staffs of MPS Limited does not exonerate the publishers from publishing unverified falsehood without hearing from the other side. That was what truth and objective seeking called for and that was where Premium Times failed in its duty to hear from both sides.

We wish to state unambiguously that Alhaji Sani Dangote is neither owing any sum of money to nor breached any contract with Mr. Marco Zoccoli. It is in the interest of Mr. Marco Zoccoli, to return to his former employer and resolve issues, if any, with them and, henceforth, stop dragging the name and reputation of Alhaji Sani Dangote to disrepute.

We will no longer gloss over any intentional, irresponsible or inadvertent mischief calculated at embarrassing, impugning or disparaging the name of Alhaji Sani Dangote and the brand he has built over the years.

Consequently, we are giving Premium Times seven (7) days' notice within which to retract the offensive publication with a written apology to Alhaji Sani Dangote. Should this demand not get the expected response, we shall be left with no other option that to take legal recourse to regain the collateral consequences suffered by Alhaji Sani Dangote on account of your offensive, malicious, one-sided and provocative publication.

MANAGEMENT OF MPS LIMITED