Again, Akpabio denies sexual harassment allegations, says Senate traumatised by Apoti-Uduagan’s action

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The Senate President, Godswill Akpabio, has again denied allegations of sexual harassment levelled against him by Kogi Central Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan.  
  
Mr Akpabio, who questioned the timing and credibility of the accusations, described them as “useless allegations” aimed at tarnishing his reputation.  
  
He spoke on the issue again at an event organised to commemorate International Women’s Day (IWD) on Saturday.  
  
This is the second time the Senate President has publicly denied the claims. He did so during the plenary on 5 March.  
  
Why allegations surfaced now  
  
Speaking at the event, Mr Akpabio questioned why the sexual harassment allegations surfaced after Mrs Akpoti-Uduaghan was removed as the chairperson of the Senate Committee on Local Content  
  
‘’It is only yesterday that I realised that what we are talking about only happened when there was a change of seat. That is when hell was let loose, and all sorts of allegations came up, only after the change of seat and change of committee, which my senators know happens from time to time,” he said  
  
The senate president dismissed the allegations over its sudden emergence with the argument the alleged incident occurred on 8 December 2023, yet no reports were made until recently.  
  
“This is said to have happened on December 8, a day before my birthday, which was celebrated in the Stadium in 2023. So from the 8th of December 2023, I never heard, my wife never heard, no Nigerian ever heard, even the husband never heard any issue of sexual harassment until her committee was changed and then her seat was changed,” he added.  
  
Pattern of accusation  
  
Mr Akpabio also emphasised that Mrs Akpoti-Uduaghan has a history of making similar allegations against public figures, none of which has been proven.  
  
He lamented the damage the allegations have caused to the reputation of the Senate.  
  
“Have you ever wondered about the trauma caused by that same woman on the other people she has accused in the past? None has been proven so far. Do you even wonder about the trauma this caused to the 10th Senate and the image of the Senate with all these useless allegations? I have refrained myself from making a statement.  
  
“Look at these beautiful women. They have come across me so many times. Have I ever harassed any one of you? Or is the person thinking that you are not beautiful?” he asked.  
  
Previous allegations  
  
This was not the first time allegations of sexual harassment had been raised against Mr Akpabio.  
  
In 2020, Joy Nunieh, the former acting managing director of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), also accused him of similar misconduct.  
  
However, Mr Akpabio denied the allegations, including the fresh petition from Mrs Akpoti-Uduaghan, claiming that he had never sexually harassed her or any woman.  
  
Also, this is not the first time Mrs Akpoti-Uduaghan has made sexual allegations against public figures.  
  
In 2021, she accused former presidential aide Reno Omokri of similar misconduct. Mr Omokri denied the allegations and even challenged her to take a lie detector test. He publicly provided evidence that he was not in Nigeria at the time Mrs Akpoti-Uduaghan said he sexually assaulted her in the country.  
  
She has also accused an unnamed minister of sexually assaulting her while he was in office. In the viral video of the allegation, she did not name the minister.  
  
Last Thursday, Senate Leader Opeyemi Bamidele addressed another claim made by Mrs Akpoti-Uduaghan on Arise Television, where she alleged that he called her late at night and warned that she would “go down” if Mr Akpabio continued to face criticism over his “nightclub” comment.  
  
Mr Bamidele acknowledged making the phone call but explained that his intention was to mediate and reconcile her with Mr Akpabio following the controversy surrounding the remark made in July 2024.  
  
Defamation lawsuit and political reactions  
  
In response to the allegations, Ekaette Akpabio, wife of the senate president, had filed two defamation lawsuits against Mrs Akpoti-Uduaghan, demanding N350 billion in damages for attempting to destroy her husband’s reputation.  
  
Meanwhile, political figures such as Atiku Abubakar and Bukola Saraki have called for an independent investigation, while Mrs Akpoti-Uduaghan’s husband, Emmanuel Uduaghan, confirmed that she had confided in him about her alleged encounter with Mr Akpabio.