

**WELCOME ADDRESS BY SENATOR OLABIYI DUROJAIYE,
CHAIRMAN BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE STEPHEN OLUWOLE
AWOKOYA FOUNDATION FOR SCIENCE EDUCATION AT THE 9TH
ANNUAL LECTURE & AWARD OF POST GRADUATE
SCHOLARSHIPS HELD AT THE MUSON CENTRE, ONIKAN, LAGOS
ON MONDAY MARCH 15, 2004.**

Madam the chairperson of today's event, Chief (Mrs) Toyin Olakunrin,
Our revered and most distinguished Special Guest of Honour Chief Emeka Anyaoku,
Our erudite and respected Guest Lecturer Dr Isaac Adedayo Akinrele
Distinguished Legislators and government officials,
My Colleagues on the Board of this Foundation,
Gentlemen of the fourth estate of the realm
Esteemed Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honour and privilege to welcome all of you good people and well-wishers of this Foundation on behalf of the Board of Trustees of Stephen Oluwole Awokoya Foundation for Science Education.

As usual, the Foundation is honoured by such a galaxy of distinguished Nigerian citizens. We have the immediate past Sec-General of the Commonwealth of Nations and one of the topmost diploma's of the world who has just added another feather to his cap by being appointed to step into the shoes of His Royal Highness Prince Phillips the consort of her Majesty the Queen, as President of World Wild Life Federation (WWF). I refer to no other personage than the illustrious Chief Chukwu–Emeka Anyaoku, Trinity Cross (TC) of the Caribbean, Grand Commander of the Victorian Order (GCVO) of England and Commander of the most distinguished Order of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFR). You are welcome sir.

For the first time the Foundation invited last year a female Guest Lecturer who acquainted herself exceptionally well. She is **Prof. (Mrs) Ibronke Akinsete**. For the first time in our history, we have today, a female Chairperson who is unquestionably very distinguished. She is **Chief (Mrs) Oluwatoyin Olakunrin**, Fellow of the Chartered

Institute of Accountants of Nigeria (FCA) and the first Nigerian female Chartered Accountant and past President of ICAN, Fellow Nigerian Institute of Management (FNIM) and Officer of the Most Distinguished Order of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (OFR) and at present, the Executive Chairman, Education Tax Fund. Our Chairperson combines a fertile brain with ageless and stainless beauty. Have you ever noticed her skin? To borrow the language of “Alaga Iduro” and “Ijoko” during traditional wedding engagement if my Senior Advocate, her husband charge me with “lookery and touchery” I will plead not guilty to “touchery” which is a more serious offence than mere “lookery”. A warm welcome to you madam.

We have for a Guest Lecturer today, the 9th but not the least in the series of the Foundation’s annual event. He is yet another very distinguished scholar in the same field – Chemistry, as **Professor Stephen Oluwole Awokoya** whose memory we have all gathered here to honour. I refer to **Dr Isaac Adedayo Akinrele** MA (Cantab), Dr of Industrial Chemistry (DIC) London, Phd, Fellow of Academic of Sciences (FAS), former Director of the Federal Institute of Industrial Research, Oshodi, and former Director, Centre for Development of Industry EEC/ACP (African, Caribbean, Pacific) Brussels. He will give us an intellectual feast on the topic “**TECHNOLOGY, RESOURCE ENDOWMENT AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**”. Hearty welcome, our dear brother-in-law.

Dr (Mrs) Omolara Awokoya-Adadevoh who comperes today’s events as Director of Programme, and who is a member of the Board and daughter of Professor Awokoya, will give recognition to so many other distinguished invitees in the course of today’s programme.

If the Lord decided to give occasional respite to our departed peers to cast brief glimpses at events organized in their memories our beloved father, teacher and mentor, **Professor Oluwole Awokoya**, would be very pleased and thankful to God for this prestigious gathering and the worthy efforts to continue his work in promotion of Science Education.

Coincidentally, today, the 15th day of March 2004, like the Ides of March when the great **Julius Ceasar** passed on, is the 19th anniversary of the transition of **Prof. (Chief) Stephen Hezekiah Oluwole Oluremi Atanda Awokoya**. I ask of you ladies and gentlemen to please rise and observe a minute's silence in memory of the departed Professor. May his soul rest in perfect peace with the Lord. Amen.

For those who have attended our series of annual lectures and those who are above 50, the person after whom the Foundation is named needs no introduction.

I am sure our Special Guest of Honour will have something to say considering the spontaneity with which he agreed to cancel all other engagements in order to do honour to the memory of Professor (Chief) Awokoya. But for the benefit of the younger ones and those attending for the first time, we of the Board of Trustees consider it proper to immortalize the memory of Chief Awokoya for his brilliant achievements in life and for continuing to lift the educational touch he lit and left.

Born in the small town of **Awa** in Ijebu on July 9, 1913, little Awokoya had the reputation of being 'ever-first' in the class and in all the schools he attended. These include Sagun Primary School, Awa, Saint Andrews College, Oyo, Yaba College of Technology Yaba and later the University of London where he made the record of being the first Nigerian university graduate in Chemistry. He was the Science Master at Abeokuta Grammar School in the mid 1940s and the foundation principal of Molusi College Ijebu-Igbo (1949-51). He was appointed the first Minister of Education in Western Nigeria early in 1952. Three of the former students at the School he nourished at Ijebu-Igbo are members of this Board namely **Dr Ayo Kola Fasina** Phd Chemistry, **Prof Ayo Ogunye** Phd Chemical Engineering and the speaker who knew no Chemistry but graduated in Economics, Law and Strategic Studies.

Only God knows how many university graduates and skilled professionals have been produced from among the beneficiaries of the Universal, Free, Primary Education Programme of Western Region which was introduced by the government of the

illustrious **Chief Obafemi Awolowo** with Chief Awokoya as the Minister in charge of Education in the star studded cabinet of 1952-1956. Chief Awokoya also had his hand in increasing skilled – manpower supply in Nigeria by virtue of being the first Principal of the Emergency Federal School of Science, Lagos, Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Education and Chief Adviser on Education to the Federal Government during the period 1957 to 1965.

It was in the latter capacity that he established the ASPAU – (African Students Programme in American Universities). At least one of the beneficiaries of the programme is on the Board of Trustees of this Foundation in person of **Prof. Isaac Ayinde Adalemo**. I am sure there are many others among the audience and in key positions all over Nigeria. Prof Awokoya's bright star also twinkled in the international firmament as a Deputy-Director General of the UNESCO and consultant to the UNDP, ECA and Association of African Universities. His last duty post was a Professor of Education at the University of Ife, now Obafemi Awolowo University.

Our Foundation was established 9 years ago to carry on the good work of Prof. Awokoya in the field of Science Education by organizing series of lectures on subjects that will stimulate learning and by awarding post-graduate scholarships to Nigerian students in science-based subjects. One of my colleagues in the Board, **Dr Folarin Awokoya** will presently announce what we have done in the past nine years including the four (4) postgraduate scholarships we are awarding today. The scholarships are for students drawn from various universities in Nigeria strictly on merit and without consideration of ethnic, religion or gender bias.

Mentioning **Dr Folarin Awokoya** there are three (3) other children of Professor Awokoya on the Board of Trustees namely **Dr (Mrs) Funmilayo Martins** Phd (Education) of ABU, **Mrs Modupe Aduke Ogunwale** first female graduate in meteorology (weather science) and Secretary to the Board, and **Dr Omolaraeni Awokoya Adadevoh** a medical practitioner in Lagos. The last but not the least member of the Board is our well-informed Vice Chairman **Otunba Oloruntade Ismael**,

MSc...Past President of Nigerian Chartered Institute of Real Estate Valuers and Surveyors.

I will not consider my welcome address complete if I only say nice things about the successes of Professor Awokoya I might give the impression of narrating a fairy tale in which the “charming prince married a beautiful princess and both lived happily ever after”. I must place on record the only one aspect of human endeavour in which after a brilliant success, Professor Awokoya experienced a disappointment and failure. It was in the field of politics. Politics, politics - ever alluring but slippery terrain in which, more often than not, very articulate, patriotic, and well-meaning participants are frustrated, deceived and sometimes soiled and wounded by other spineless, selfish and ever-scheming participants who are often in the majority. It is time to distinguish the few statesmen we have had from the rank and file of adventurous and avaricious, ‘anything goes’ politicians.

What is most detestable and despicable in the body politics of Nigeria today is the unprecedented spate of killings and assassinations sometimes camouflaged as armed banditry. There have been no less than four in the past 10 days and perhaps over twenty (20) in the last three years. Yet, despite all these foreboding satanic happenings, there is still evidence of God’s mercy and blessing on Nigeria! We, of the Awokoya Foundation bear witness to one good example, that despite the falling standard of education all over the country, Nigeria, amazingly still has brilliant and first class youths in the field of Science Education. It is always a thug or war for us to select the best 3 or 4 candidates for the annual award of scholarships. Dr Awokoya will soon narrate our experience and introduce the 4 recipients to you. Thank God there is still hope for the country. It is on this happy note I end my welcome address and thank you all for being with us. Thank you.

Senator Olabiyi Durojaiye.

Lagos. 15th March, 2004.