**WELCOME ADDRESS BY THE CHAIRMAN OF STEPHEN OLUWOLE AWOKỌYA FOUNDATION FOR SCIENCE EDUCATION, SENATOR ỌLABIYI DUROJAIYE, mni, AT THE 23RD ANNUAL LECTURE AND AWARDS OF SCHOLARSHIPS AND HONOURS AT THE MUSON CENTRE, ONIKAN, LAGOS, ON TUESDAY 20TH MARCH, 2018:**

**SALUTATION:**

We have an unusual person as Chairman of today and so my welcome to him will be slightly unusual. I am referring to Kabiesi, Alaiyeluwa, Ọọnirisa, Ọba Adeyẹye Ẹnitan Ogunwusi, Ọjaja II, the Ọọni of Ifẹ.

 Mo ki yin ku abọ̀ Baba Olufẹ Akèjiomọ̀

 Abu, oju mì yẹ̀sọ̀

 Óju r’abẹ́ ó lé gẹ́ngẹ́

 Abu o ni j’ewe ògún ṣèrè

 Nwọn ni a kii dúró ki wọ́n ni’Fẹ Ọọ́ni

 Ao gbọdọ̀ b’ẹ̀rẹ̀ ki wọ́n ni ’Fẹ Oòyè

 Bi o ba ki wọn ni’Fẹ ò ò to ábẹ́rẹ́

 Ojúrábẹ́saá awọn baba mi, ẹbọ ni wọn fii ṣé

 Mo duro mo ki wọn ni ‘Fẹ Ọọni

 Nwọn ò f’imi ṣẹbọ

Mo si ki wọn ni ‘fẹ ooyé

Bẹẹ́ wọn ò f’imi ṣ’ẹbọ

Abu Olu’Fẹ Akèjiòmọ̀

Bi mo ba torí onikẹ́kẹ́ kú

Ng’ó wipe iku árẹwà lo p’ògò

Ti mo ba tori oni ṣọbọrọ kú

Ng’ ó wi pe iku árẹwà l’o p’ògò

Emi òni tori oni pẹ̀rẹ̀nṣẹ́ kú, a bilàmẹ̀ríndìnlogún

Oni pẹ̀rẹ̀nṣẹ́ ábílà ‘lògìdó

Ẹ́rúkẹrú abi lálá lẹ́nú etc etc.

 Ọọniriṣa; Jigbìnì bi atẹ́ àkún; Ẹni wọn t’ori rẹ dàlẹ́

 Olori Alade. Ẹ ku abọ si arin wa!

I also welcome our Guest of Honour Senator, Prof. Oluṣọla Adeyẹye, the Chief whip of the Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Nigerian Biologist and Statesman.

Our erudite lecturer, Prof. Kẹhinde O. Ọlayinka, Mrsc, C.chem, fiPAN, FICCON, Prof. of Analytical and Environmental Chemistry, Department of Chemistry, University of Lagos. You are heartily welcome, our dear sister and daughter.

Also heartily welcome are our three honours recipients of today as well as all past honourees here present. Today’s distinguished honours awardees are namely;

* Dr. Engr. Gregory Ero, fnse, FAeng, Chairman, Arkleen Oil and Gas Ltd; only the best.
* Chief Ọlabintan Famutimi, Chairman, the Tricontinental Group and
* Dame Winifred Akpani, Fca, C.E.O. Northwest Petroleum and Gas Ltd.

My dear colleagues on the Board of Trustees of Stephen Oluwọle Awokọya Foundation for Science Education;

My Lords Spiritual and Temporal,

The young scholarship awardees of today,

Their happy and proud parents and teachers,

Gentlemen of the Press,

Respected members of the audience,

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen.

**THE SOAFSE FOUNDATION:**

The great man in whose honour this Foundation was established on March 15, 1995 was Chief, PROF. STEPHEN HEZEKIAH OLUWỌLE OLURẸMI ATANDA JẸNRIỌGBE AWOKỌYA, the Aṣẹtọ of Awa-Ijẹbu. Born at Awa, Ijẹbu in present day Ijẹbu North Local Government of Ogun State. He started his educational career at Sagun Primary School, Oru, near Awa. He later attended St. Andrew’s College, Ọyọ; Yaba Higher College, Lagos and University of London, where he bagged the B.Sc. degree in Chemistry in 1946. He was the first Nigerian to obtain a University degree in Chemistry. He returned to Nigeria and served as Science Teacher at the famous Abeokuta Grammar School under the great Rev. Ransome Kuti, the father of well-known Musician – Fẹla Anikulapo Kuti. From there he was invited by his boyhood friends, Ọba Joel Adeboye and Ọba Daniel Adetayọ Sami, the immediate past two Orimọlusis of Ijẹbu-Igbo to serve as the foundation Principal of Molusi College,Ijẹbu-Igbo, from January 28, 1949 – December 31, 1951, after which he became the first Minister of Education in the Western Region of Nigeria under the able Premiership of Chief Ọbafẹmi Awolọwọ.

It was by their joint efforts that the revolutionary and epoch-making **“Universal Free Primary Education Scheme”** which transformed Western Nigeria to a higher level was introduced. This was the first in Nigeria and indeed first in Africa. Professor Awokọya proceeded to be the foundation Principal of Federal Emergency Science School in Lagos in 1957/58 as well as Chief Federal Adviser on Education. It was in the latter capacity that he established the ASPAU Scheme i.e. the **African Scholarship Programme of American Universities** which turned out to be a booster to a high-level manpower development project. Thereafter, Professor Awokọya was appointed the Deputy Director of **UNESCO** – United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, based in Paris, France.

After his return to Nigeria in 1973, he took up appointment as Professor of Education and Curriculum Development at the University of Ifẹ; now Ọbafẹmi Awolọwọ University, Ile-Ifẹ. Prof/Chief Oluwọle Awokọya was happily married to Chief (Mrs.) Josephine Olufunkẹ Awokọya (nee Otubusin, a member of the royal family of Ijẹbu-Ode). By the time the erudite Professor returned to his Maker on March 15, 1985, at age 71, virtually all his children and some grand children had obtained University degrees in various fields of Science and most of them were married with children.

**The Rationale for the Foundation:**

This ebullient and brilliant teacher of teachers had inspired and positively touched the lives of many successful Nigerians including all ASPAU, AFGRAD scholars and Molusians. Some of us are in this gathering today. So, we all can see the rationale for immortalizing his memory by continuing the good work which he devoted his life to, i.e. inspiring youths, moulding good character and widening the intellectual horizons of builders of a great, modern, African country – **NIGERIA**!

 **Need For Funds:**

As I have always admitted openly, inadequate funds limit the extent we can go by way of annual awards of scholarships. One of my colleagues on the Board of Trustees of this Foundation, **Dr. Folarin Awokọya** will soon come to this podium to announce this year’s scholarship winners. You will be amazed by the level of brilliance always shown by Nigerian students. Limited by funds, we are only able to award **seven scholarships** this year as against eight in 2017, eight in 2016 and seven in 2015 etc etc.

We have, however, refurbished the Science Laboratory of Molusi College, Ijẹbu-Igbo, a school mid-wifed and nurtured for its first three years my Mr. S. O. Awokọya (as he was then). We want to do more. Ladies and Gentlemen, please help us and tell others who can help us through generous donations to award more scholarships and to equip more laboratories and libraries in Nigerian higher institutions of learning! We should not leave funding of Education to governments alone.

**Contemporary Challenges:**

One abiding tradition of this Foundation is that the Chairman of our Board has never ended his welcome address without commenting on one or two contemporary events or challenges confronting our dear country and suggesting one or two solutions. Issues of “**BOKO HARAM**”, “**CORRUPTION**” and “**KIDNAPPING” etc etc** have been fingered in the past. Our comments/suggestions in the welcome address of March 17, 2015, about what to do concerning the general elections of that year turned out to be prophetic within two months. Today, I will only call attention to two issues, one very serious and challenging, the other is a comparatively light hearted aspiration.

The serious issue is the need to pay a little more attention to the responsibilities of the masses of the people, to try more, to live to their own biddings instead of heaping all societal ills on Government alone. The rain will soon be here and we will soon be shouting about flooding, when we ourselves stock our drains with empty bottles and other trashes which are supposed to be heaped in identified locations for disposal. Unfortunately, this malady is not peculiar to us alone. Even more advanced societies equally exhibit poor records of the populace not complying with the directives of their leadership. For example, the progressive administration of President Barrack Obama of the U.S.A. made many efforts to modify the “gun laws” of the U.S.A. But the people stubbornly stick to their “guns” with adverse consequences on the populace.

In our own case, efforts have been made to boost agricultural productivity, encourage exports and reduce imports so as to increase domestic employment and earn more foreign exchange. Last December, 2017 for example, I was pleased to see the first pyramids of agricultural products in Southern Nigeria. This was the ofada rice pyramids in Ogun State. But recent reports indicate that there are some traders who still persist on importing contrabands and other prohibited goods or products to Nigeria. Worst still, the Custom and Excise Department frequently displays confiscated contrabands like arms and ammunition and expired drugs which are obviously dangerous to the masses of the people.

True enough, in all democracies, the people have the fundamental right to criticize their government and the government has a duty to listen and make amends. What I am pointing out today is that for once, we the populace should show greater self discipline and vigilance in checking those harmful practices that are injurious to all of us, instead of expecting the Police to check all the infractions.

The second and lighter side of my observation today apart from God’s gift of very brilliant youths to Nigeria, a handful of whom we are about to award scholarships, is the cheery news that Nigerian National soccer team defeated their world-famous Argentina counterparts in a football match a couple of months ago. My hope is that we will continue the lead and win the World Cup trophy in Russia, this summer.

My Kabiesi, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome and thanks for your audience.

**Senator Olabiyi Durojaiye *mni.***

20th March, 2018