

**WELCOME ADDRESS BY THE CHAIRMAN OF STEPHEN OLUWOLE
AWOKOYA FOUNDATION FOR SCIENCE EDUCATION, SENATOR
OLABIYI DUROJAIYE *mni* AT THE 25TH ANNUAL LECTURE, AWARDS OF
SCHOLARSHIPS AND HONOURS AT THE MUSON CENTRE, ONIKAN,
LAGOS, ON TUESDAY 17TH MARCH, 2020**

SALUTATION:

It is with great joy and honour that I rise to SALUTE, WELCOME and THANK all of you Distinguished Guests to the 25th Anniversary, i.e. the ***SILVER JUBILEE of the establishment of the STEPHEN OLUWOLE AWOKOYA FOUNDATION FOR SCIENCE EDUCATION.***

First of all, I heartily welcome the Chairman of today's event. But before I mention his name, I must convey the apologies of His Highness, Dr. Edmund Daukoru, the Amayanabo of Nembe Kingdom, Bayelsa State, whose name has been printed in our invitation cards. A friend of Prof. Awokoya and of some of us on the Board of the Foundation, His Highness had confirmed his plan to attend today's event before an emergency arose that necessitated his absence. We are, however delighted to have amidst us Chief Chamberlin Oruwari Oyibo as Chairman of today's gathering. He was at a time, the Managing Director of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), and now the CEO of Prime Energy Resources. Chief Oyibo also enjoys good reputation for integrity and substantial contributions to worthy causes. For example, our Chairman of today donated a modern junior secondary school facility to the Rumu Ekpe Community in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State. We thank him for accepting to be Chairman at a very short notice.

By way of protocol ranking, our No.1 guest today is our GUEST OF HONOUR, **HIS EXCELLENCY, PRINCE ADEDAPO ABIODUN MFR, Governor of Ogun State.** His Excellency hailed from Iperu in the Remo Division of Ogun State. He was born five years after the introduction of FREE PRIMARY EDUCATION in Western Nigeria, from where he has grown to be Governor of the State of origin of both Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the Premier and Chief Oluwole Awokoya, the Minister of Education. These two intellectual giants championed the revolutionary programme which has accorded South Western Nigeria in general and Ogun State in particular some pre-eminence in the Educational and professional ranking of our dear country. So, we are today, witnesses to the truth of the saying that – ***"The young shall grow!"***

Please keep up the good work you are doing in our Gate-way State.

*“E ku ise! E si ku abo sibi,
Omoba Alaperu, Omo Akesan Baale oja”.*
God will continue to guide and strengthen you. Amen.

Next on our welcome list, is our erudite Guest Lecturer. She is **Professor Grace Olapeju Otinwa, (O sese wa ni o), B.Ed, M.Ed., PhD, FNASSM, FNIS, Professor of Exercise Physiology**. She has volunteered to speak to us on the topic of - **“EPIDEMIOLOGY AND TECHNOLOGY; A LOOK AT THE PAST AND PRESENT: JUSTIFICATION FOR MODIFIERS IN MAJOR NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES”**.

In this age and time, when the entire world is focused on fighting the CORONA VIRUS epidemic, a studied talk or lecture on non-communicable diseases will be a well-come and soothing relief. We are poised to listen to an expert opinion on the importance of exercise and other remedies which are the bed-rock of prevention of non-communicable diseases. With this topic and the impressive citation of our Guest Lecturer, I wish to borrow the late Chief Kingsley Ozumba Mbadiwe’s language in describing our lecturer as a **“Lady of Timber and Caliber”**. Welcome Madam!!

May I now welcome all our past Honourees present here today and especially the three notable Nigerians joining that elite corps today:-

Some of my colleagues on the Board of the Foundation will introduce the three new honourees in greater details. Suffice to say we are very delighted to have with us **Dr. OLAYIWOLA FATONA (FNAPE), BSc. MSc, Phd, DIC, DSc, founding Managing Director, Niger Delta Exploration and Production Plc.**

We also have **Ambassador (Prof.) Lawrence B. Ekpebu, OFR, BA.(Hons.), M.A., MPA, PhD, former Nigerian Ambassador to Ivory Coast**. An impressive citation on this well-accomplished Nigerian will soon be presented.

Last but not the least honouree of today is **Mrs. Catherine Uju Ifejika, OFR, LLB(Hons), ICSAN, FIAC, Chairperson/CEO Britania-U Group**. Hearty welcome, my learned colleague, **“Nno o”**. May I humbly request all of us to please stand while Mrs. Ifejika sits to listen to our Happy Birthday song in her honour. By a wonderful coincidence, today we chose to honour her is her BIRTHDAY!

Also delegated to another colleague of mine, Dr. Folarin Awokoya, is the introduction of the ten young scholarship awardees of today. I can only say

you are one of the major reasons we are assembled here today. Congratulations to you and your parents and hearty welcome to all of you. Our friends, the gentlemen of the Press are also heartily WELCOME.

THE AWOKOYA FOUNDATION:

The great man in whose honour this Foundation was established on March 15, 1995 was **Chief, PROF. STEPHEN HEZEKIAH OLUWOLE OLUREMI ATANDA JENRIQGBE AWOKOYA**, the Aṣeṭo of Awa-Ijebu. He was born on July 9, 1913 at Awa, in present day Ijebu North Local Government of Ogun State. He started his educational career at Sagun United Primary School, Oru, near Awa. He later attended St. Andrew's College, Oyo; 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 Prof. Olikoye Ransome-Kuti and well-known Musician – Fela Anikulapo Kuti. From there he was invited by his boyhood friends, Oba Joel Adeboye and Oba Daniel Adetayo Sami, the immediate past two Orimolusis of Ijebu-Igbo to serve as the foundation Principal of Molusi College, Ijebu-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 Obafemi Awolowo.

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. This achievement earned Chief Awokoya the international honour of CBE i.e. a Commander of the Distinguished Order of the British Empire, conferred on him in 1956 by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II. Professor Awokoya proceeded to be the foundation Principal of the 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 Awokoya 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 Ife; now Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. Prof/Chief Oluwole Awokoya was happily married to Chief (Mrs.) Josephine Olufunke Awokoya (nee Otubusin, a

member of the royal family of Ijebu-Ode). By the time the erudite Professor returned to his Maker on March 15, 1985, at age 71, virtually all his 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 Awokoya** 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 **ten scholarships** this year as against eight in 2019, eight in each of the preceding three years and seven in 2015.

We refurbished in 2018, the Science Laboratory of Molusi College, Ijebu-Igbo, a school mid-wifed and nurtured for its first three years by Mr. S. O. Awokoya (as he then was). We have rendered only a few other services to secondary schools since then. We have not been able to build or equip many other Laboratories or Libraries as we would have liked to do, due to lack of funds. 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. We solicit your financial support.

CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES:

One usual practice 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**" have been fingered in the past five to six years! 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 briefly call attention to three or four issues. They are (1) the issue of **BETTER SECURITY**, I hope the “**Amotekun**” initiative in Western Nigeria will be effective and will be successfully replicated in other regions of Nigeria to supplement Federal Police and Military efforts. The second point is the issue of **Youth unemployment**. By way of solution, many Nigerians including the former Emir of Kano, **His Highness, Alhaji Muhammad Lamido Sanusi**, recently urged the need to pay more attention to our children’s Education. To this I add greater emphasis on **TECHNICAL/DIGITAL EDUCATION** which will enable self employment among our school leavers. During my 3-year tenure as Chairman of the Nigeria Communications Commission, (NCC), I paid serious attention to identifying, training and equipping Nigerian youths who have the Bill Gates’ and Mark Zuckerberg’s type of talents, to invent and produce digital apps that other countries will come to Nigeria to import or patronize. I hope the scheme will soon materialize. A third and related issue is the frightening statistics that Nigeria accounts for 20% of entire world out-of-school children population! The “**FREE and COMPULSORY PRIMARY EDUCATION**” scheme for which Pa Awolowo and Prof. Awokoya are remembered and eulogized today should be re-visited despite the fact that Education gulped 50% of Western Region Budget of 1955!

The last but not the least contemporary issue of note and comment is the need for the Federal and State Governments to make the sacrifice for easy access to fiber cable connection to all the 774 Local Government capitals all over Nigeria. This will shoot Nigeria up in our ranking in the global Digital 4th/5th industrial revolution of the world! For example, it will enable us to disseminate education and public enlightenment from one centre to individual homes. Our dilemma, however, is that the goose that lays the golden egg is ill; with our budget estimate of \$57 per barrel of oil nose-diving to only \$30 per barrel within four months!! Thanks to CONVID 19!! We should hope and pray that the good Lord will help us.

Mr. Chairman, Your Excellency, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome and thanks for your audience.

Senator Olabiyi Durojaiye mni.
17th March, 2020