

**CONVOCATION ADDRESS, DELIVERED BY THE CHANCELLOR,
HIS EMINENCE, EDIDEM EKPO OKON, ABASI OTU V, OBONG OF
CALABAR, NATURAL RULER, TREATY KING & GRAND
PATRIARCH OF EFIK EBURUTU KINGDOM AT THE 28TH AND
29TH COMBINED CONVOCATION CEREMONIES OF THE
FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE (FUNAAB),
ABEOKUTA, OGUN STATE, ON WEDNESDAY, 16TH AND
THURSDAY, 17TH MARCH, 2022.**

PROTOCOLS

His Excellency, Mr. President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces

His Excellency, Executive Governor of Ogun State, Prince Dapo Abiodun, MFR

The Honourable Minister of Education, Mallam Adamu Adamu

The Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development

The Executive Secretary, National Universities Commission (NUC)

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Felix Kolawole Salako,

All Principal Officers

Members of the Senate

Other Pro-Chancellors and Vice-Chancellors of sister Universities

My Lords Spiritual and Temporal

Your Royal Majesties, Highnesses and Chiefs

Deans of Colleges

Heads of Departments

Professors

Academic, Administrative and Technical Staff of FUNAAB

Beloved Graduands

Gentlemen of the Press

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

I sincerely welcome you all to the 28th and 29th Combined Convocation Ceremonies of our great citadel of academic excellence; Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB). In a special way, I appreciate the presence of the Visitor to the University, His Excellency, President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR. I wish to congratulate the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Felix Kolawole Salako, Principal Officers, members of Senate, Staff, Students, Graduating Students of the University, Parents, Guardians.

Let me first and foremost express my deep appreciation to the Visitor to the University, His Excellency, President Mohammadu Buhari, GCFR for approving my reappointment as the Chancellor for another term. It is a rare privilege that I will never take for granted. Thank you so much, Your Excellency.

Your Excellencies and invited guests, our University has lived up to expectations in different spheres. We have won laurels and confirmation from the right quarters clearly indicates that we are on

track. The Vice-Chancellor and Management team have done very well in placing the University on the right path to academic excellence. I am proud to say that since my appointment as the Chancellor of this great University, FUNAAB has grown from strength to strength. Certainly, the sky is the limit for this citadel of learning to continue to wax stronger.

I consider it as a matter of utmost urgency to inform Your Excellency that this year is a transition year for the University because many of the Principal Officers, including the Vice-Chancellor, will be completing their tenures of office. There is the need to begin the process of appointing new Principal Officers. In actual fact, within the next few months, the process of appointing new Principal Officers should begin in earnest. I am proud to say that the University, over the years, has been transiting from one Administration to another peacefully, smoothly and without rancours.

As much as we would have loved to ensure that this tradition of peaceful transition is sustained, the absence of a Governing Council

has become a source of worry to all stakeholders. It may interest Your Excellency to know that since the exit of the 6th Governing Council on 6th May, 2021, the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta has been operating without a Governing Council! The situation is the same with all other Universities of Agriculture in the country.

We are therefore pleading with Your Excellency to please reconstitute the Governing Council for this University as soon as possible to ensure a peaceful transition at the Management level. We are grateful for the Visitor's anticipated immediate action on this issue.

I wish to appreciate Your Excellency for the partial restoration of courses in one of our Colleges that were delisted about six years ago. Our plea to Your Excellency is for the full restoration of all the other Management Courses so that the teeming population of our youths far and near will have access to tertiary education through these courses.

Your Excellency, Sir, Permit me to restate that the establishment of the said College was borne out of the call for diversification of academic programmes in specialised Universities with the assurance to retain courses in Agriculture as the flagship in Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta. The existence of the College of Entrepreneurial Studies is to add value to what we are doing because of the strong inter-relationship between Agriculture and Management.

I wish to express appreciation to the Federal Government for the increase in the capital budgets which has enabled the University to undertake the constructing of a Dam to promote irrigation and water provision for the University community. Like Oliver Twist however, we wish to request for better funding especially to cater for the overhead expenditure of the University.

I also wish to lend my voice to those of the Committee of the Pro-Chancellors on the need for the Federal Government to ensure adequate staffing of the Universities. It is important therefore to

ensure that the present ban on employment in our Universities need to be lifted to ensure replacement of departed staff and upgrading the staffing levels in our Academic Departments and other Units.

There is also an urgent need for the Federal Government to have fulfilled engagements with all the Universities based staff Unions to stem the tide of incessant industrial strikes and unrests which seem to have become a relay race in the University System in Nigeria. There is no gain saying the fact that the incessant strikes by the staff Unions due to the usual disagreements with Government on issues of the welfare of their members as well as issues of lack of work tools are having crippling effects on the quality of education at the tertiary level. I also wish to appeal to all the staff Unions to embrace meaningful dialogue in settling industrial disputes rather than embarking on frequent strike actions, which have debilitating effects on the system that their members are important stakeholders and should protect its sanctity.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, once more, I express my hearty congratulations to all stakeholders in the University, parents, well-wishers and most especially, the graduands that we are celebrating today. I wish you all success as you continue your life endeavours and activities.

Thank you for listening and God bless you all.

**His Eminence, Edidem Ekpo Okon, Abasi Otu V,
Obong of Calabar,
Chancellor, Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta
March 2022**