



CONVOCATION ADDRESS OF THE VISITOR TO THE UNIVERSITY AND PRESIDENT, FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE ARMED FORCES, PRESIDENT MUHAMMADU BUHARI, *GCFR*, AT THE 28TH AND 29TH COMBINED CONVOCATION CEREMONIES OF THE FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE, ABEOKUTA (FUNAAB), OGUN STATE, ON THURSDAY, 17TH MARCH, 2022.

PROTOCOLS

I am particularly delighted to be part of the 28th and 29th Convocation Ceremonies as the Visitor to the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB), Ogun State. I rejoice with the entire members of the University Community on this memorable occasion.

I felicitate in a special way with the Chancellor, His Eminence, the Obong of Calabar, Edidem Ekpo Abasi Otu V; for his re-appointment as the Chancellor of the University. I also felicitate with the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Felix Kolawole Salako, *FSSSN*; Principal Officers, members of Senate, Staff, Students, Graduating Students of the

University, Parents, Guardians, Honorary Awardee, Well-Wishers and dignitaries on this Convocation Ceremonies.

I sincerely congratulate the new graduates on this joyful day and felicitate with them on the successful completion of their various courses of study in the University. The nation, your parents, guardians, and teachers are proud of you because you have put in your best and found worthy in character and learning to become graduates of this great University. I challenge you to put into practice the knowledge, expertise, and skills that you have garnered from the University; let them be the strong pillars on which you will build your future.

Just as education is very important in the life of any individual, it is also the bedrock of national development. It is because of this truism that the Federal Government has been working tirelessly to ensure that education is made accessible to as many Nigerians as possible through adequate funding and favourable policy. The government is not unaware of the infrastructural deficits in the education sector, particularly in the universities. It is for this reason that deliberate and sustained efforts are being made to surmount these challenges to

guarantee the provision of quality education for the people. Recently, the Federal Government had declared an emergency in the education sector. This declaration has started yielding fruits. To ensure that we do not go back to the era where not much premium is placed on this critical sector, the Federal Government would ensure the full implementation of budgetary allocations to education in the 2022 fiscal budget.

Let me reiterate the need for our universities and other tertiary institutions of learning of the imperative of adjusting to the ever-changing demands of our modern day world by repositioning themselves and encouraging impactful education that will bring about sustainable development. Without education playing this catalytic role, not much development can be recorded by any nation. Universities should be the vanguard of research, teaching, and community service in line with their tripartite mandate. Our ivory towers, as citadels of learning, should take the lead in championing demand-driven research that would serve the society in making human lives better and enriched. We recognize the place of our intellectuals to undertake cutting-edge researches that will address

the challenges of development. It is regrettable that most of the outcomes of numerous research and studies carried out, as well as findings from presentations made by our scholars at national and international conferences usually end up on the shelves of their respective authors, supervisors, departmental or faculty libraries and other university archives.

We acknowledge that our advancement as a nation will be driven by a robust human resource base. It should be our collective determination to do our best to guarantee a peaceful and stable future for Nigerians through quality education. We shall continue to interface with the staff unions in the universities in a bid to ensure that we have a stable higher education sector that positively contributes to national and global competitiveness. We are aware that for universities to achieve their mandates, huge investment is needed in this regard. Inasmuch as government is willing and desirous of funding its universities, the respective institutions should take a step further and evolve creative means of supplementing what they receive as allocations and grants from the government.

Beyond funding, the quality of our education must be up to standards. By adapting our curriculum to meaningful change, our universities should be able to produce sound graduates that would be marketable, globally competitive and relevant. This can only be achieved if the universities run an all-embracing curriculum that is rich, globally compliant and locally relevant. The current administration, under my leadership, will give maximum support, within the available resources, to every planned and sincere effort that is geared towards self-reliance and job-creation. The ability to create jobs is one of the parameters that characterises a buoyant economy. In other words, an economy in which most of its youths and young persons are self-employed can literally be described as prosperous.

This is the driving force behind the re-orientation of Nigerian youths towards developing an entrepreneurial mindset, as this is vital to poverty reduction and wealth creation. The truth is that there is an urgent need to replace the aging population of farmers in the country if we are to achieve our food security targets, to cope with the rapidly increasing population of Nigerians. The government will always

ensure that agile youth in the country are gainfully employed, to reduce youth restiveness because an idle hand will certainly be counter-productive.

Collectively, we must actively promote and enhance the teaching and learning of entrepreneurial skills in our educational institutions, thereby, exposing our youth to the basics and rudiments of starting and sustaining their own businesses. Specialised universities like the Federal Universities of Agriculture should leverage on their core mandates to produce graduates that will be good entrepreneurs in the spirit of the diversification programme of the Federal Government. Let me assure our graduates that as you make your ways into the world beyond the ivory towers, my administration is committed to providing the enabling environment that will guarantee that the skills and knowledge you have acquired are productively put to use. While many of you will be gainfully employed in the public and private sectors, some of you may choose to explore the entrepreneurial route of small and medium scale businesses. The knowledge and competences you have developed in the course of

acquiring your degrees, diplomas and certificates are to be applied to the noble cause of national development.

Let me say that the inability to provide jobs for all graduates is not peculiar to Nigeria alone. No country has all the means to do so. What you need to do is to identify your interests, talents, strengths and passion. Once you have done this, look out for opportunities around you and explore them to make a difference. Already, there are a number of programmes that have been put together to promote youth employment in Nigeria through the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMA&RD), Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN Anchor Borrowers' Programme), Bank of Industry, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Industrial Training Fund (ITF), Bank of Agriculture (BoA), Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES), Youth and Women Empowerment (PW/WYE), N-Power, and the Presidential Youth Empowerment Scheme (P-YES), among others.

Nigerian Universities should also build closer and better relationships with the industrial sector as this will help to bridge the gap between theories and practical with a view to addressing some of the most

important and urgent needs of the nation. A university degree is not a meal ticket; rather, a rich degree or diploma should assist the holder to grapple with the challenges of life. You are also being cautioned that university degrees do not usher you into completely rosy life. Rather, it equips you with the competence to grapple with the ever-changing challenges of life, of which youth unemployment is one source of concern.

Universities of Agriculture, by virtue of their mandates, are meant to aid the diversification of our economy, which is currently heavily dependent on crude oil. Agriculture remains a flagship and critical sector of our economy both for reducing our dependence on imported food and stimulating agro-industrial development.

The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development should continue to work harmoniously with the Universities of Agriculture to restore agriculture to its rightful place in the Nigerian economy. The Nigeria's Agriculture Promotion Policy (2016-2020) has made positive impact in national development. More than ever before, we can count our gains in terms of re-orientation and taking agriculture to its pride of place within these parameters:

- (1) Agriculture as a Business,
- (2) Agriculture as key to long-term Economic Growth and Security,
- (3) The Value Chain Approach,
- (4) Climate-Smart Agriculture, and
- (5) Viable Option to Diversification.

As partners in the Nigerian business, the private sector is encouraged to join hands in assisting government to build a virile economy.

Permit me to restate that the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta is living up to expectations through some of its unique programmes such as the Community-Based Farming Scheme (COBFAS), which serves as an outreach platform to promote students' involvement in farming by making them live among the rural communities in various parts of Ogun State. Let me encourage you to do more to foster the existing relationship between Town and the Gown. Government is equally impressed with the laudable feats recorded by programmes such as the World Bank Centre of Excellence for Agricultural Development and Sustainable Environment (CEADESE).

To turn these interventions into meaningful ways of life, we must make concerted efforts to re-orientate our people towards cultivating the habit of growing what we will eat and shun the penchant for eating foods that we do not grow. It is instructive to note that FUNAAB has played prominent role in the promotion of cassava as a value-crop all over Africa. This is commendable.

Let me add that no nation can achieve greatness in an environment, where corruption thrives. The war on corruption can never be fought and won by the government alone. We are all stakeholders in the future of our dear country. Universities should, therefore, be at the forefront of the fight against corruption and this can be achieved through the enthronement of the culture of discipline, hard work, honesty and inspirational leadership.

University administrators should always endeavour to be the shining light by subscribing to prudence, transparency, accountability, and fairness in the management of human and material resources. My administration will not relent in its commitment to following due process, preserving the sanctity of the rule of law, fighting corruption, securing the lives and property of our people, and

rehabilitating or upgrading our critical infrastructure. We are determined to enthrone hard work and honesty as a way of life in our dear nation in addition to placing the welfare of our citizens above everything else. We must all join hands to take Nigeria to the next level of development.

Once again, I charge the Chancellor, His Eminence, the Obong of Calabar, Edidem Ekpo Okon Abasi Otu V; Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Felix Kolawole Salako; and members of the University community, to sustain their commitment to the overall development of FUNAAB and by extension Nigeria.

Thank you and God bless.

LONG LIVE, FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA.

President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR