

Address by the Vice Chancellor, Professor Eghosa E. Osaghae, PhD, JP, at the eleventh convocation ceremony of Igbinedion University Okada on Friday 29th November 2013

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This is a day of joy! A day of rejoicing! May joy and rejoicing remain the portion of our graduates and everyone that has come to celebrate this occasion with us at Igbinedion University. Amen. With this prayer, I welcome you all, our graduates who have worked hard and been blessed by God to reap the fruits of your labour, our parents and guardians who have looked forward to this day of fulfilment, our honorary graduates for whom the bells of honour are tolling, friends, brothers and sisters of IUO, our invited guests, to our eleventh convocation for the award of degrees and prizes. This year, we are turning out 1007 graduates with first degrees, 29 of them with first class honours, with 7 from the record-setting department of economics and development studies and 4 from the department of mechanical engineering. There are 246 medical doctors and, to the glory of God, we have our very first graduates in human anatomy, 13 of them in all, 10 in the second class upper category and 3 in second class lower. These are important distinctions of the current graduating set, but they are not the only distinctions. As usual, nearly 70 per cent of our graduates and 70 per cent of the best performing of them are female, a trend that reflects emerging national and global patterns, and on the basis of which we can conclude that the women are finally taking over. I congratulate all women on this great feat and challenge our men to take urgent steps to ensure that a woman can do a man can also do! This year, we have another record-breaking legacy graduation. The last time it was the Ollors with mother and daughter. This time, it is the Atus with five graduates, 2 Masters in Accounting, and 1 in Medical Laboratory Science, and 1 first degree each in Accounting and Electrical Engineering. All five are the children of Mr. Atu, lecturer in our department of accounting who is on the way to challenging the Dafinones for the distinction of the family with the most accountants in Nigeria. We congratulate the Atus and assure them of the University's support all the way. Perhaps this is the point at which to say that IUO, as a university of choice, has become Nigeria's leading family legacy university. At the last count, we had one family with 11 students, another with 6 students from the same father and mother, 18 from one district, several with 2, 3 and 4, and many more whose children have all graduated from Igbinedion Education Centre and Igbinedion University. I use the Atu graduates as a point of contact for all our graduates. I congratulate you all and pray that God in His infinite mercies will grant you all a bright future and make you the drivers of change our country and the world have been waiting for.

As has become traditional, I shall attempt to take stock of the giant strides IUO has recorded since the last convocation. On the academic front, all of our 14 programmes that were due for NUC re-accreditation passed. We are one of very few universities in the country whose programmes are all accredited! The 246 medical doctors graduating today have all been inducted by the MDCN, having passed the prescribed Council examinations in flying colours. Only one week ago, our 60 pharmacy graduates were inducted by the Pharmacists Council of Nigeria. In the last Bar Examinations of the Nigerian Law School, our graduates as usual posted over 90 percent pass rate. The outstanding performances of our graduates in the bar examinations over the years was a major factor in our top ten law faculty ranking by the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies – other criteria, just so you may know the full weight of this distinction, included caliber and quality of lecturers, library resources and other infrastructure, curriculum and post-graduation placements of lawyers. 90 percent of our graduates of nursing and medical laboratory science passed the professional examinations by the Nursing and Midwifery Council and Medical Laboratory Council of Nigeria respectively. I have more good news of outstanding academic performance. Two weeks ago in Cotonou, Benin Republic, IUO, represented by 4 students from Pharmacy, Law, Mass Communication, won the African Inter-Tertiary Institutions Debating Competition in which universities from all over Africa participated. During the year under review, more than ten of our students and graduates published and presented major literary and

scholarly works. Those who have read them wonder what it is about our university that inspires and prepares the students. I know, we know, but unfortunately, it is a closely held secret that I cannot share with you, but you can be rest assured that your children will be grown into champions by IUO!

On the non-academic front, I am happy to report major infrastructural strides. The landscape of our young main campus has changed and is changing. It now boasts the architectural masterpiece of our main library, which is arguably the most modern library in this part of the world today. We are grateful to the Central Bank of Nigeria, under the able leadership of Mallam Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, who has remained Africa's Best Central Governor for three years running, for endowing the university with this great facility. We can only hope that other government agencies with intervention capacities and mandates will take a cue from the Central Bank. We once again insist that the mandate of TETFUND must be reviewed to include interventions in private institutions. The perception that private universities are for-profit institutions is wrong and must be corrected. In any case, no private university can match the subsidies and funds that flow to public universities and yet we are expected to produce similar if not better graduates! Let me take one example. In the last three months, we have not had electricity from the PHCN and its successor agencies, and have had to expend over N6million Naira every two-and-a-half weeks fuelling and servicing generators! Let us suppose government is justified in not granting us subsidy, but should they also deprive us of a major social service to which we are entitled? The least government can and should do is to provide basic infrastructure for private institutions – roads, water, electricity – as a matter of building capacity for and encouraging the much-desired growth of the private sector. Tax reliefs, including tax holidays, lower duties, free landholding, takeoff and intervention funds and other generous incentives are accorded other private sector players, including Nollywood and audacious profit-seeking organizations, but very little is done to encourage private universities by all levels of government even though we pay some of the highest per capita taxes in this country. I appeal for a rethinking and paradigm shift.

Meanwhile, we thank God that government's position is not shared by all. This year, by the grace of Air Chief Marshal Paul Dike, former Chief of Defence Staff of the Armed Forces of Nigeria, we have an ultra-modern Central Administration Block, which we moved into in February 2013. May God bountifully reward this great benefactor and other benefactors. Amen. Our Parents, through the PCF have also done great. They have built for us a fully-equipped student health centre, where students receive free healthcare services and a student recreation centre. We are grateful to the PCF executive led by Dr Aibangbee, and would continue to count on the support of our parents, friends and well wishers.

To close, let me acknowledge and appreciate the support of our principals, governing authorities, professional regulatory bodies and several others. We thank our proprietor, Chancellor and Chairman, Board of Regents, HE Chief Gabriel Igbinedion, CFR, the Esama of Benin, Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of our industrious Governing Council, Professor David Awanbor and members of the Council, Principal Officers of the university and members of Senate, staff and students of IUO who have all worked with zest to take the university higher and higher. We thank the NUC and its indefatigable Executive Secretary, Professor Julius Okojie, MDCN and its Registrar, Dr Mumini Ibrahim, Pharmacists Council of Nigeria, and its Registrar, Pharmacist G. Abumere, Council of Legal Education, COREN, ICAN, Medical Laboratory Council of Nigeria, and the Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria for all the support and cooperation that have continued to sustain us. In a special way, we thank HE Governor Rabiu Kwakwanso and the good people of Kano State as well as our distinguished alumnus, Governor Isa Yuguda and the good people of Bauchi State, and Professor Isaac Adewole, VC of the University of Ibadan for entering into smart partnerships with IUO.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for your attention, and pray that the good Lord will continuously bless this day in our memory. Amen.

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I welcome you all to our eleventh convocation ceremonies. Beginning last year, we have instituted a two-day convocation ceremony, with the first day devoted to the award of first degrees and prizes and the second day, award of higher degrees and conferment of honorary degrees. Yesterday, we turned out a total of 1007 first degree graduates, including 246 medical doctors, 82 engineers, 70 computer scientists, 60 pharmacists and 61 economists (7 of them with first class honors). That occasion also saw the graduation of our pioneer graduates of human anatomy, and the record-setting legacy of the family of Mr. Atu, a lecturer in our department of accounting, with five graduates in a single convocation. Three of the five are graduating today with Masters degrees in Accounting and Medical Laboratory Science. We congratulate the Atus once again, and look forward to many more legacy graduations from families and parents that have three and more students in IUO at the same time. It goes without saying that we have legacy graduates because IUO remains the most preferred private university in Nigeria. In my address yesterday, I also gave further insight into why we enjoy this enviable status. We are one of a few universities in the country whose programmes enjoy 100 per cent accreditation, our law programme belongs to the top ten category according to the ranking done by the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, and only two weeks ago, in Cotonou, Benin Republic, our students beat other universities from across Africa to win the 2013 African inter-tertiary institutions debate competition. We give all the glory to God for these and several other achievements and distinctions.

Today, we have 51 higher degree graduates: 4 postgraduate diplomas, 35 Masters and 12 doctorate degrees. Six of the PhDs are in Law and four in Political Science, while 16 are in Accounting, products of the joint postgraduate programme we have with ICAN. There are two newsworthy points about today's graduates. The first is that the majority of those graduating with doctorate degrees are academic staff of IUO. This is part of the success story of the staff development programme which the university has vigorously pursued over the years. Almost all of our junior lecturers are enrolled in PhD programmes in IUO and other universities and our target is that by 2016, all lecturers in IUO would have PhDs. I salute our lecturers and their supervisors and thank them for sharing the ideals of our march towards excellence. The second newsworthy point is that one of the PhD graduates today is an incumbent state Governor, Dr. Dankwambo, Governor of Gombe State and former Accountant General of the Federal Republic. The Governor deserves to be specially recognized because notwithstanding the heavy burden of governing Gombe into one of the best-performing states in the country, especially in the areas of education, healthcare and industry, he still found time to burn the midnight oil to get the doctorate degree in his beloved field of accounting.

We also have on the graduation list today, two eminent sons of our great country, who are to be conferred with honorary degrees. One is Rev. Matthew Okpebholo, the successful industrialist and entrepreneur who has literally made everything out of nothing and become a quintessential exemplar of the biblical man described in Psalm 1:1-3 whose every contact brings prosperity and Proverbs 22:29 whose diligence exalts him to stand before kings and not before obscure men. The other is Hon. Kingsley Kuku, the generational conflict management icon and national bridge builder, to whose creative genius Nigeria owes the de-escalation of the Niger Delta wars which threatened our national survival for a long time. In our tradition of excellence, we are honoring these outstanding personalities for their integrity and invaluable contributions to national development. As Vice Chancellor, I am most delighted and privileged to admit both of you to the Distinguished Roll and Board of Honorary Graduates of Igbinedion University, a roll that has the iconic Dr Nelson Mandela, former President of South Africa and Father of Modern Africa, Most Hon. P.J. Patterson, former Prime Minister of Jamaica, Dr John Kuffuor, former

president of Ghana, and Dr Shehu Shagari and General Abdulsalami Abubakar former president and head of state of Nigeria, amongst many others. I congratulate you both on this occasion and look forward to working closely with you as we grow IUO along the paths of excellence.

Convocations traditionally provide the occasion to take stock and articulate well-reasoned positions on matters of interest and consequence to us as a university. I dwelt extensively on our rich stocks yesterday, but permit me to highlight once again, the endowments the university has been blessed with over the past year. First is the main library, an architectural masterpiece on our main campus that has been delivered to the university by the Central Bank of Nigeria under the able leadership of Mallam Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, three-time winner of African Central Bank Governor of the Year, as part of its intervention projects in selected institutions. We salute and remain grateful to Mallam Sanusi for his forthrightness, dogged determination to lead by example and unparalleled commitment to national development even in the face of strong opposition. Second is the Air Chief Marshal Paul Dike Administration Building, an endowment by Marshal Dike, former Chief of Defence Staff of the Armed Forces of Nigeria. These endowments put a lie to the hostile attitude towards private universities as institutions underserving of public good support. This attitude, which largely informs government's policies as exemplified by exclusion from TETFUND support and support by other intervention agencies, stems from the wrong and misleading premise that private universities are for-profit institutions. When government took the wise decision to approve private universities, I am sure it also recognized the imperative of protection that has ensured the development of infant industries the world over. This is especially more so that private universities have proven their mettle as dependable partners and beacons of hope for our ailing university sector. The least government at all levels, federal, state and local, can do is to protect private universities and support them to grow the way it is encouraging other private sector players through incentives and intervention funding. Let me also use this opportunity to make the point that, contrary to what some commentators think, private universities are not in competition with public universities. We see ourselves as fellow travelers and partners whose existences are complementary. Many older public universities serve as mentors and midwives to infant private universities, which is how it should be. Indeed, it is wrong to regard private universities as the opposite of public universities, because we all now constitute part of an integral whole whose stakes and interests are far bigger than those of its component parts. For this reason therefore, it is wrong, partial and untenable to attempt to address the pathologies of the university sector in Nigeria from the prism of public universities only. Neither the NUC nor any of the regulatory bodies makes a distinction between public and private universities in their regulatory and quality assurance activities – in fact, if anything, they are harder on private universities. What is more, the extant conditions in public universities, including most importantly salaries and wages, JAMB scores and the like are applicable to private universities! It is against this backdrop that I believe that the time has come to rethink our approach to university sector development and recommend an integral perspective that recognizes public and private universities as one whole. We may not have ASUU, but the issues ASUU is engaging are for all of us.

To close, let me acknowledge and appreciate the support of our principals, governing authorities, professional regulatory bodies and several others. We thank our proprietor, Chancellor and Chairman, Board of Regents, HE Chief Gabriel Igbinedion, CFR, the Esama of Benin, Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of our industrious Governing Council, Professor David Awanbor and members of the Council, Principal Officers of the university and members of Senate, staff and students of IUO who have all worked with zest to take the university higher and higher.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for your attention, and pray that the good Lord will continuously bless this day in our memory. Amen.