

13th Convocation Address by Professor Eghosa E. Osaghae, Vice Chancellor on Friday 27th November 2015

To the glory of God Almighty, I welcome everyone to the 13th Convocation of Igbinedion University for the Award of First Degrees and Prizes, and thank you for honouring our invitation. I congratulate our graduates who have been found worthy in character and learning to earn the degrees to be awarded today, as well as our parents and guardians who have invested in the future of our children and are today being rewarded by them. The challenges of seeing young people through institutions of higher learning are so demanding and sometimes overwhelming that there is every reason to celebrate when they graduate. I join you all in thanksgiving to say all glory to God! But, sadly, the challenges of life do not disappear after graduation – in fact, in the midst of unemployment, economic depression bordering on insolvency at all levels of government and mass retrenchments in the organized private sector, insecurity of lives and property – they will most certainly increase. We appeal to the federal and state governments especially to pursue policies that will grow our economy, increase investment, productive and employment capacities, and redistribute income in favour of our youths. The time has certainly come to give meaning to the cliché that the future belongs to the youth.

At IUO, we try to prepare our students for the post-graduation phase of life in every way possible. It is in this regard that we established a centre for entrepreneurship and skills acquisition, the Dr David Centre, long before it became the fashion in Nigeria. For a university founded by Chief Igbinedion, one of the world's most successful entrepreneurs, you can say that should come naturally, and so it has. Today, our students have learnt the ropes and been grounded in the management of fashion, catering, block making, perfumery and driving education, and are able to prepare viable business plans for funding. In addition, our careers placement unit spearheads the hunt for lucrative jobs, and we continue to monitor and participate in the growth and development of our graduates. I am happy to say that because of these and other factors, including the continued support of our discerning parents, our graduates have done very well. Many are employed in elite public, private and professional sectors, and many more are in prestigious graduate schools at home and abroad. Here at Okada, the numbers of our graduates employed by the university and pursuing postgraduate degrees are increasing by the day, with at least 5 currently registered for PhD. The days are getting closer when IUO alumni will be Vice Chancellor, Registrar, Bursar, Deans and HODs.

As you can see from the distribution of graduates today, all academic programmes at IUO are accredited by the NUC and relevant professional regulatory bodies,

namely, Council of Legal Education, Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria, Pharmacists' Council of Nigeria, Council for the Regulation of Engineering in Nigeria, Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria, Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria, and Medical Laboratory Science Council of Nigeria. I thank all these bodies and their chief executives for the support and understanding we have enjoyed from them. In addition to undergraduate programmes, we also run accredited Masters and PhD programmes in Law, Accounting, Banking and Finance, Business Administration, Political Science and Public Administration, Economics and Development Studies, Biological Sciences, and are awaiting approval for Theatre Arts, Computer Science, International Relations and Strategic Studies, Mass Communication, Geography and Regional Planning, Biochemistry and Chemical Sciences.

In addition to the advances in academic programmes, the university has made steady progress in other important areas. Through the benevolence of our Parents' Consultative Forum, we now have a state-of-the-art science laboratory complex to be commissioned soon, and a fully-equipped student health centre. The benevolence of Bishop Dr. Matthew Okpebholo, a distinguished honorary alumnus of IUO, has also blessed us with a 3-kilometre tarred road in the Main Campus. We have also increased our capacity to generate and distribute electricity and water to student hostels and other parts of the university, renovated and upgraded our hostels, completed the Mallam Sanusi Lamido Sanusi College of Business and Management Studies, and strengthened our ICT infrastructure in partnership with UGRL, our technical partners. The latter includes the adoption and deployment of e-examination facilities, which, I am happy to say, is becoming a way of life in IUO. These growth points have been well received by our students who have reciprocated by making giant strides. Last September, four students of Petroleum Engineering were sponsored by the Nigerian Society of Oil Exploration to the World Oil and Gas Conference in Houston Texas as a reward for topping the competition for African universities that involved 42 universities across the continent.

In the course of the year under review, the Board of Regents inaugurated a new Governing Council, which is headed by Emeritus Professor Oluwole Akande, pioneer Provost of the College of Medicine at the University of Ibadan, former CMD of UCH, former Chair of the Governing Board of the Ife University Teaching Hospital, a WHO Consultant and Doyen of Medical Education in Nigeria. The composition of the new Council, which has leading Nigerians from the academia, judiciary, organized private sector and civil society, is indicative of the reinvention that is underway in IUO. We welcome the new Council, and pledge

our loyalty as we march towards making IUO the university to beat in Nigeria. Let me also seize this opportunity to express our appreciation to the immediate past Council and its Chairman, Professor David Awanbor, one of Nigeria's most distinguished education engineers, for leading the university to the great heights attained. We also have a new DVC, Professor Charity Emaviwe, an IUO Amazon and former Dean of Law. We welcome her on board, and thank her predecessor, Professor Alex Babatunde Odaibo, for the excellent services to IUO which were key to the rejuvenation of IUO in the past year. I am also grateful to my principal officers, Registrar, Bursar, Librarian, as well as Provost, Deans and HODs who have been outstanding in diligence. We thank, in a very special way, our indefatigable Proprietor and Hon. Chancellor, Chief Gabriel Igbinedion, who has continued to weather the storms that assail the university ever so often. A remarkable father, our Chancellor never flags in zeal, and remains unshaken in the face of the stormy distractions. Baba, God bless you and continue to grant you the wisdom that overcomes all adversaries. Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for your attention. God bless you.

13th Convocation Address by Professor Eghosa E. Osaghae, Vice Chancellor on Saturday 28th November 2015

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the 13th Convocation for the Award of Higher Degrees and Conferment of Honorary Degrees, and thank you for accepting our invitation to share our joy with us. Yesterday, over 600 deserving graduates, who have been adjudged worthy in character and learning, were awarded first degrees and prizes. We congratulate them on the milestone reached in their lives and pray that they will spring forth to make the best of their lives that IUO has equipped them for. I congratulate also our deserving candidates for the higher and honorary degrees today.

We are a young and growing university, but our achievements in several areas are truly outstanding. The total cumulative number of licenced medical doctors in Nigeria, including non-Nigerian doctors, is about 70,000, out of which IUO alone, young as it is, has produced over 2000. It is the same for Engineering, Law, Nursing and Computer Science. With today's postgraduate degrees, IUO has produced nearly 200 PhDs and Masters degrees. We have developed the human resource capacity that Nigeria is in dire need of, not only for IUO, but for other universities and institutions of higher learning across the country. In addition, we have grown capacity for the military – one of the PhDs today is for a Colonel, which is in addition to earlier PhDs for the Director of Medical Services in the Navy and the former Chief of Army in Namibia – and for governance, as the Executive Governor of Gombe State, and former Accountant-General of the Federation, Dr Ibrahim Hassan Dankwambo, holds a PhD in Accounting from IUO.

Let me provoke a debate on this note. What has IUO got in return from government for these invaluable contributions to the common good and national development? I dare to say very little, if at all. Think what difference we would make if, as is the case everywhere else in the world, we had access to competitive, not free, government support. Think what difference it would make if governments, multinationals and other major enterprises that take corporate social responsibility seriously, offered scholarships and bursaries to students who wish to avail themselves of the high quality education offered by private universities. It is as if people get punished for opting to study in private universities. If this were not the case, why restrict scholarships to students of public universities which are tuition-free? If private universities are to meet the goals for which they were established, which include increased access to higher education and provision of viable options to enhance national and global competitiveness and overall

excellence, there has to be a review of the suffocating policies that private universities presently operate under.

IUO has also distinguished itself in the calibre and class of honorary graduates, which boast of former heads of state and government, global and national statesmen and leaders, governors, legal luminaries, iconic and great women, exceptional entrepreneurs, and movers and shakers of our world. Someone once remarked that, put together, the intellect of the class of honorary graduates of IUO can help solve the country's problems. I am sure most people will agree with this view, which in a sense provides part of the rationale for honorary degrees: to acknowledge and reward contributions to national and global development and motivate recipients to do even more.

This is certainly the case with today's recipients, Dr Peter Bawa Shitgurum, Alhaji Musbahu, and Col Paul Ogbemor, rtd. I congratulate them and their families on this recognition, and pray that this will mark a turning point in the successes they have recorded in life. Luckily for IUO, our honorary degree alumni have proven to be invaluable partners and benefactors, reciprocating, if you will, in ways government has failed to do. Only a few months ago, the Hon. Chancellor commissioned a 3-kilometre paved road, endowed by Bishop Dr Matthew Okpebholo, 2013 recipient of the honorary degree. The distinguished Bishop was following the foundations already laid by Sir Dr David Osunde who has endowed our Centre for Entrepreneurship and Skills Acquisition, Air Chief Marshall Paul Dike, our Central Admin Block, Dr Wole Oshin, the Chair of Finance, and Hon. Senator Dr. Bala Mohammed, a Centre for Engineering Design. I am happy to announce that two of our honorees today have committed to legacy projects: Dr. Peter Bawa Shitgurum, the construction of an administration block for our medical school and a Chair in Maritime Studies; and Dr Musbahu, the Dr Musbahu ICT Centre. Dr Ogbemor's project will be announced in due course. On behalf of the Board of Regents, Governing Council, Senate, Staff and Students of IUO, I express our deep appreciation to our benefactors and pray that God Almighty, who loves and blesses a cheerful giver, will reward them abundantly. There are many worthy projects that IUO plans to undertake in the coming year, including Centres for Energy Research, Edo Studies, and Malaria Research. I solicit your support.

The year 2015 has been a monumental one for our country, not the least because we surprised the world with a peaceful transition at a time when most projections pointed in the direction of crisis and disintegration. God truly loves Nigeria, but that is not an end in itself; there is a lot more work to be done. We congratulate President Muhammadu Buhari on his election and ascension to the highest and

most powerful office in our country. We support his path-setting initiatives and strides, especially in the anti-corruption war, national values rebirth, economic diversification, and infrastructural regeneration, which, if successful, can take our country out of the recession, human insecurity and disorderliness that have been our lot for a long time. We also hope that the states and local governments can locate themselves as partners in the reinvention project, although we should caution that the desperation to win the wars should not lead us to lose the peace. As a university, we want to appeal to the federal government once again to review the policies that govern the operation of private universities in the country, with a view to enhancing the capacity to deliver on the mandates given to them on registration. We think that the time has come to establish an Intervention Fund, including an Education Support Bank, to redeem the tertiary education sector. People misunderstand the case private universities are making for government support. They are not asking the federal government to pay salaries, no. They are asking government to support research infrastructure and offer scholarships, bursaries and loans to students who opt for private education, and to meet their municipal obligations to individual and corporate citizens of Nigeria. We appeal to the National Assembly to take the lead in this review process.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I welcome you all once again to the 13th Convocation of Igbinedion University, and thank you for your attention. God bless you all.