

**AN ADDRESS PRESENTED BY THE PRO-CHANCELLOR AND
CHAIRMAN OF GOVERNING COUNCIL, DR. BARR. ABOKI
ZHAWA, OON, FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE,
ABEOKUTA AT THE 26TH CONVOCATION CEREMONY HELD
ON 22ND AND 23RD NOVEMBER, 2018**

PROTOCOL

Your Excellency, President and Commander-in-Chief of Armed Forces,

Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development,

Honourable Minister of Education,

Members of Federal Executive Council here present,

Your Excellency, The Executive Governor of Ogun State,

Your Excellencies, Other Executive Governors here present,

Chairman of Convocation, The Chancellor, His Eminence Edidem Ekpo Okon, Abasi Otu (V), the Obong of Calabar,

Members of State Executive Council here present,

The Executive Secretary, National Universities Commission (NUC),

The Executive Secretary, Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund)

Members of FUNAAB Governing Council,

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Felix Kolawole Salako,

Other Principal Officers of the University,

Distinguished Members of Senate and Congregation,

Members of Staff and Students of FUNAAB,

Other Pro-Chancellors and Vice-Chancellors of Sister Universities
here present,

Your Royal Majesties and Royal Highnesses here present,

My Lord, Temporal and Spiritual,

Gentlemen of the Press,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

Today, as I look back over last year's convocation, I am overwhelmed with joy and satisfaction in the performance and achievements of the University (I leave the catalogue of achievements to be reeled out by the Vice-Chancellor). This assertion is better appreciated when we look back at the unwholesome drama of events that took place over a period of five years before our assumption of office. My address, therefore, will focus mainly on and pay tribute to the actors that have contributed to the immense success of the University, in the last one and a half years.

The Visitor, President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR, must be appreciated for his vision in putting up a strong team that has used its last blood to make sure that the University returns to its original glory. I make bold to say, all the members of Council are eminently qualified, mentally alert, physically fit and proper,

morally and spiritually upright, and above all, academically sound. This has accounted for the quality of discussions during Council meetings.

The Minister of Agriculture, Chief Audu Ogbeh, OFR, has sufficiently and adequately represented Mr. President at all occasions. In his personal capacity as the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, he has passionately promised to take Federal Universities of Agriculture to the next level of practical agriculture. To demonstrate the genuineness of his good intention, late last year, he donated a block moulding machine to be used in moulding blocks for the construction of some infrastructural facilities. It has now been put to use after some modifications. We should be expecting some tractors next year, he has promised. Honourable Minister, Sir, thank you very kindly for your encouragement. We look forward to greater support in the next financial year.

Our dear and amiable Chancellor, the Obong of Calabar, (Dr.) Edidem Ekpo Okon Amasi Abasi Otu V, stands out, distinctly. Despite the fact that he was treated ignominiously, he did not exacerbate the crisis in the University. Imagine, for over one year, after his appointment as the Chancellor, he was not

installed until last year. All this while, he did not complain. Thank God, since his installation, he has been a caring father, an inspirational motivator, a wonderful counsellor, a prince and a worthy ambassador of peace. Above all, he believes in the rule of law, equity, justice and good conscience. Your Royal Majesty, in reciprocity, we owe you respect and obedience.

I doff my hat for the Council Members. From the day we had our maiden meeting, until the appointment of the Vice-Chancellor, in October last year, we were faced with humongous and myriads of challenges. The meetings were tumultuous, treacherous, windy and stormy and the issues were seemingly unresolvable. Just when we were about giving up, the doggedness, indomitable will, resourcefulness and the trust in God, pulled us through the odds, dangers, the legal and spiritual threats. We came, saw and conquered. We give glory to God.

The Senate deserves special recognition for the role it played in the early days of our herculean task in the University. It did not interfere with our work nor did we receive petitions from it as a body or from individuals. The members have proved to us that they are, indeed, Distinguished University Senators. We really appreciate you and are honestly proud of you.

The Convocation and the Congregation cannot be treated with ignominy. When we went round to solicit their support, we made a compact to have mutual respect for each other and to operate within the ambit of rule of law. On behalf of Council I thank you for keeping to your promise. We shall never disappoint you.

As expected, we had a few issues with the unions but they were amicably resolved, after protracted discussions, in the spirit of give and take. We thank you for your understanding and cooperation, thus far. However, there is still one thing that we demand from the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), that is, to have mercy on our children and return to the classroom while discussion with Government continues. The students are crying, the parents are groaning, the society is swelling up with half- baked graduates, while the world is laughing at us. May God bring the impasse to an end very soon.

Our twin employer, the Minister of Education, Alhaji Adamu Adamu and the academic standard pace-setter, the National Universities Commission (NUC), under the distinguished

leadership of Professor Adamu Abubakar Rasheed, mni, MFR, have perfectly combined to raise the standard and quality of University education. They have brought innovations into the university curriculum. While we welcome and cherish this development, we hope that the delisting of College of Management Sciences (COLMAS) from the JAMB brochure is only temporary and will soon be revisited. The advantages of having the College far outweigh the disadvantages.

The Executive Secretary of Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), Professor Abdullahi Bichi Baffa, and the NEEDS Assessment office have made an indelible mark and impression in the University. Most of the buildings you see and the construction going on in the University are the efforts of TETFund and the NEEDS Assessment office. We pray that this intervention will continue and to outlive us.

I want to specially thank and appreciate the masquerade of Ogun State, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, PhD., GCFR, for his unflinching support and fatherly words of encouragement. We also want to acknowledge his desire and zeal to partner with the University in establishing a Diabetes Centre. We hope this will take off soon. May Almighty God continue to supply him

sufficient energy, long and healthy life for us to continue to benefit from his wealth of unparalleled experience.

The Alake of Egbaland, His Royal Majesty, Oba (Dr.) Adedotun Aremu Gbadebo III, CFR, and his other Obas cannot easily be forgotten. As Royal fathers, they have unconditionally supported the University, even at short notice. As you can testify, the Paramount Chief, Oba (Dr.) Adedotun Aremu Gbadebo III, CFR, is unavoidably absent but he has sent a capable representative. We thank him for his tremendous moral and spiritual inspiration. Let me borrow the saying of Queen Bathsheba, when she went to see King David in I Kings 1:31, "Then Bathsheba bowed with her face to the earth and did reverence to the King and said, "Let my Lord, King David live forever". In the same vein, I say to Oba Adedotun Gbadebo III, may he live forever.

To the graduating students, I say bravo. Today is for you to give thanks to: Almighty God for giving you good health to study; your lecturers, for suspending their pleasure to attend to your academic needs and for giving you quality grades; your parents, for providing adequate parental care; and the University community for providing a serene and conducive academic environment. Congratulations!!!!!! You now have FUNAAB

certificate. It is ranked among the top ten Universities in Nigeria. Unfortunately, the certificate will not talk or do any work for you. You are now on your own. Your success depends on how you apply the knowledge you have acquired (the story of a Professor of Mechanical Engineering who couldn't fix the tyre of his car because he couldn't locate the jack). We urge you to be good Ambassadors of great FUNAAB. We pray that the Almighty God will grant you your hearts' desires.

In conclusion, let me make a clarion call to those out there who still doubt that the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta is among the top ten Universities in Nigeria; who still wonder if the dream of our founding fathers is still alive; who still doubt the capacity of FUNAAB to make meaningful contribution towards Nigeria's food security. Let me beg of you:

First, to take time out to have a tour of our facilities so that your eyes will see, your ears will hear and your mouths will bear testimony to our achievements. Second, to visit the website of the two Awardees who have accepted to receive our honorary degrees. These are top world acclaimed scholars who would not just jump at any award. Is it Professor Akinwande Oluwole Babatunde Soyinka who is a celebrated playwright, and the first

African to be awarded a Nobel Prize in Literature, in 1986? I leave the citation of him to the University Curator. However, suffice it to say, the fact that he has accepted our Honourary degree, speaks volumes about the quality of our University. I can almost swear that it is not every University that he will accept its Honourary degree. You can just imagine how I felt when I was informed that he had accepted to be honoured by FUNAAB and that I will have the honour and privilege to be part of his decoration. We appreciate you sir our role model and mentor.

Our second awardee, Prof. Toyin Falola is equally an accomplished and an erudite scholar of national and international repute. His resume, which will be presented by the University Curator, vindicates our choice of him as a worthy awardee. Sir, we are aware of your tight schedule and numerous engagements. Just last Saturday, you were the Guest Lecturer at McPherson University, Seriki Sotayo, Ogun State, at the 3rd convocation ceremonies and the presentation of Permanent Operational Licence of the National Universities Commission to the University. On 21st November, 2018, you were our Convocation Guest Lecturer. Sir, we thank you for

squeezing us into your tight schedule and accepting to add glamour to this convocation.

Finally, may I specially and candidly acknowledge the able leadership of the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Felix Kolawole Salako, in purposefully steering the affairs of the University. It is the style of his leadership that has endeared him to the Management and Staff of the University. To think otherwise, I assure you that last year's and this year's convocation ceremonies couldn't have taken place. I am pleased to report that hardly does he take major decisions without seeking my opinion and guidance. I must also add that the teaching and non-teaching staff are very understanding, cooperative and well behaved. However, let me quickly make a footnote that in the process of repositioning the University, a few casualties were recorded. But that is nothing to worry about. I plead with all the teaching and non-teaching staff to continue to give the Council and the Management maximum cooperation. United we stand, divided we fall.

Thank you for your attention.