

WELCOME ADDRESS BY THE VICE CHANCELLOR OF UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS, PROF. RAHAMON BELLO, ON THE OCCASION OF THE FOUNDATION LAYING CEREMONY OF THE 15 - STOREY, DAME (DR.) PATIENCE GOODLUCK JONATHAN FEMALE HOSTEL BLOCK, BY THE FIRST LADY OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA ON THE 21ST FEBRUARY, 2014

Protocols

On behalf of the management, staff and students of the University of Lagos, it is indeed my most sincere pleasure to welcome you all to the University this beautiful afternoon. I am particularly delighted to welcome the First Lady of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Your Excellency Dame (Dr.) Patience Goodluck Jonathan, the President, African First Ladies Peace Mission. Ma, Your love and commitment to the cause of women and children of Nigeria are simply amazing. It is on record that since you became the First Lady, you have continuously fought the battle on the affirmative action in Nigeria, which today has resulted in women occupying about 35% of the federal cabinet.

Your Excellency, distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, University of Lagos has a current student population of 27,224 undergraduates and 12,967 postgraduates making a total of 40,291. This number excludes those on Distance Learning and other part-time modes of about 16,055. The 40,291 full time equivalent students then consisting of 22,247 male and 17,934 female students.

Due to previous government policies, banning the use of government fund for the development of hostel and staff accommodation many years back, University of Lagos has only a total of 8,500 bedspaces for students' accommodation with 3,894 earmarked for male and 4,871 for female students.

This means that the 40,291 eligible students vie for only 8,500 bedspaces. An attempt to increase the number of bedspaces through BOT arrangements has only yielded extra 280 bedspaces over years. This puts a great pressure on available bedspaces.

The peculiarity of University of Lagos, in an urban setting makes it worse for the students, as accommodation is not readily available in the vicinity of the University. Hence, any attempt to lessen the burden of accommodation for the students is very welcome. We, therefore, thank and congratulate the Parents Forum, for this wonderful initiative. We also adore Your Excellency Dame (Dr.) Patience Goodluck Jonathan, for associating with the initiative of the Parents Forum to alleviate the sufferings of the vulnerable 13,063 female students currently unable to access bedspaces.

The University of Lagos was the first University in Nigeria, to be established by an Act of Parliament in 1962 and being cited in Lagos, was allotted about 362.22 hectares of land at this site, out of which over 60% is wetland or not readily available for infrastructural development. The solid land available is almost built up and that is why the University in 2011 came up with a policy of vertical development, on the remaining solid land, for maximum and effective utilization to meet the needs of the present and the next 50 years development of the University. Hence, the need for the 15-storey facility being developed to house the "Dame (Dr.) Patience Goodluck Jonathan Female Hostel".

Your Excellency, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, today's foundation laying ceremony is a milestone. It is also a step in the right direction. I am sure that our students are as excited as myself and in fact look forward to the speedy completion of this edifice. We promise our benefactors, being ably coordinated by the Parents' Forum, that we will use and manage it well.

We are hopeful that God willing, two years from now, we shall again invite you to the commissioning of this edifice – the first of its kind in any Nigerian University.

May God bless you all.

Prof. Rahamon A. Bello *FAEng*
Vice Chancellor
University of Lagos
21st February, 2014.