

UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS, NIGERIA



OPENING ADDRESS OF THE PRO-CHANCELLOR, PRINCE DR. SENATOR OLANREWAJU TEJUOSO DELIVERED AT THE 'TOUCHDOWN AT THE ROOT', IN COMMEMORATION OF THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2022

PROTOCOLS

How providential it is that I am privileged to be the Pro-Chancellor of the prestigious University of Lagos at this time that the institution clocks 60 years.

My association with the UNILAG education franchise began as a pupil of the University of Lagos Staff School in 1967. That was some 55 years ago and the University was in its fledgling years. My father, Oba Dr. Adedapo Tejuoso, CON, the Osile Oke Ona Egba, Oranmiyan, Karunwi III, wanted the best possible start for me in life, so he enrolled me at the UNILAG Staff School. Upon completion of my elementary education there, I proceeded to Igbobi College, Lagos in 1974 for my secondary education. I am almost certain that if the University of Lagos International School had been established then, it would have become my next port of call because by 1981, I returned again to this great University to study Medicine at the College of Medicine University (CMUL).

I must note that I experienced the two campuses of the University as I was both an Akokite and an Idi-Arabite having spent my first year in Akoka. My association with the University did not end with my graduation from the MBBS programme as I was back at the Lagos University Teaching Hospital for my House job where I remained under the tutelage of some of the greatest icons of medical training in Nigeria based at the CMUL.

Why, you might ask, have I embarked on this personal journey into the past?

It is to establish why I do not make light of the privilege of being able to return to the University of Lagos to give back through the office of the Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of the Governing Council of the University, the peak of the citadel. The odds of the fortune as I have known are slim indeed and I reckon, it can only be divine. Thus, having had the opportunity of obtaining world-class education at all levels here at the University of Lagos, I consider it my bounden duty to keep our flag of excellence flying high. It is for this reason that the Governing Council, under my leadership, is avowed to the goal of **1 Council for Cooperation, Creativity and Consolidation (1C for 3Cs)**.

Today, we are gathered to salute the visionaries of the past, who drove the establishment of this great citadel of learning and the icons of the higher education system - academia and administrators who laboured to lay the solid foundations on which we now continue to build. I dare say, we are here to build for the future. As you all know, the theme of this celebration is UNILAG@60: Eyes on the Future.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, I also salute you and your entire team - all academic and non-academic staff of the University of Lagos. Indeed, I can attest to the passion and zeal with which you pursue the "vision ... to uphold our great heritage as the Nation's Pride".

To our great alumni and students, without whom we could not be a University, I doff my cap also. You chose us and still choose us, which has helped us to earn the sobriquet, "The University of First Choice".

But it is not yet "Uhuru". Surely, our great University is not where it should be after 60 years of existence. Our concerted efforts at making our University one of the 100 Global Best, continue to be severely challenged by various factors - internal and external to the institution. Indeed, we celebrate this 60th anniversary today with mixed feelings as we note the sad fact that our academic staff have been on strike for more than 8 months (the non-academic staff were on strike for about 5 months), the consequent results being severe disruption in the academic calendar which risks truncating the dreams and vision of many - students and staff. We pray and trust that the issues at stake will be resolved soon by the parties and we can fling the University gates open to our students to return. Fortunately, I understand that the 60th anniversary was always planned to be a year long celebration so we trust that the students will soon join us and pick up from where we are.

It cannot be disputed that there is an urgent and critical need to improve the financial fortunes of our University to be able to address our dire infrastructural challenges, amongst other things. If you look around you, whether here at Idi-Araba or Akoka or even Yaba, the iconic structures and beautiful environment of our great University in the 1960s and 70s till the mid-80s are now a shadow of themselves. Maintaining them as our heritage is a task we must take up with singlemindedness even as we are challenged to add to these iconic structures of our time that will awe those to come.

The burgeoning demand for higher education and the preference of many for our University imply urgent need for infrastructural expansion – well-equipped classrooms, lecture theatres, laboratories and workshops, offices, student hostels, improved internet access and connectivity are some of the capital projects that our dear university still needs to consolidate her position as a top institution of higher learning in Africa and the world. Not to be left out is the need to adequately fund research, and global scholarship. I am informed by the Management that our aspiration for the near future is to transform into a research university and rank among the best global academic institutions. And this, we will do by the grace of God.

So how do we go forward in our mission? I say, by giving and giving and giving. It is for this reason that the University is relaunching the \$500,000,000 Endowment Fund as the primal programme of this 60th anniversary celebrations. I therefore call on all alumni, friends, partners and all other stakeholder to join us in our quest to build towards **UNILAG@100**. True, many of us here today will not likely be here then but posterity would record and celebrate what we have done just as we are we doing with respect to those who have built over the last 60 years.

I must, at this juncture, recognise and commend the efforts of numerous individuals and corporate organisations toward the continued development of the University of Lagos. Evidence of your love for and large-heartedness towards UNILAG dot our campuses and stand as testimonies to your support. Like Oliver Twist, however, UNILAG wants more. I will leave the Vice-Chancellor to provide the details of Endowment Fund and how else benefactors may support our University.

Let me assure you that the Governing Council under my leadership will do our best to bequeath a governance structure that is supportive of this mission and accountable to all.

As we congregate for this 60th anniversary, with our 'Eyes on the Future', let us reminisce, reconnect, and recalibrate our efforts to advance the vision of the founding fathers of UNILAG.

God bless you all.

God bless University of Lagos.

God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Thank you.

Senator Dr. Olanrewaju Tejuoso
Pro Chancellor/Chairman Governing Council
University of Lagos