

ADDRESS OF THE VICE-CHANCELLOR, PROFESSOR FRIDAY OKONOFUA, FAS AT THE 1ST FOUNDATION DAY LECTURE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MEDICAL SCIENCES, ONDO STATE ON DECEMBER 8, 2016

SALUTATIONS!

It is with great delight that I welcome you to the first in the series of Annual lectures designed to commemorate the founding of the University of Medical Sciences, Ondo City, Ondo State. By the grace of the Almighty God, the bill establishing the University was passed by the Ondo State House of Assembly in September 2014 and passed into law by His Excellency, the Executive Governor of Ondo State, Dr Olusegun Mimiko, CON in November 2014. However, it was not until April 2015 that the first set of officials appointed to run the University by the visitor assumed office. The National Universities Commission (NUC) gave approval for the University to begin its operations on 22nd April, 2015. Thereafter, more academic and administrative staff were recruited but it was not until December 7 and December 8, 2016 that the University was visited by the NUC and the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria respectively for advisory and resource verifications. Thereafter, we admitted our first sets of students, who came into Residence on 9th January, 2016.

Thus, our choosing today – December 8 as the Founder’s day of the University is derived from the date we received formal approval from the NUC to commence academic programs in the University. That is the day the University could be said to have been birthed because without students and without academic activities there can be no University.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, let me take this opportunity to thank all those who played key roles in establishing this University. First and foremost, let me thank His Excellency Dr Olusegun Mimiko, CON, whose foresightedness, wisdom, uncanny knowledge, and high profile achievements in the health sector led to the founding of this University. Generations of today and those yet to be born will be eternally grateful to you Mr. Governor for this innovation that is the first of its kind in Nigeria and the whole of West Africa. We thank you, we thank you, we thank you.

Our sincere thanks and appreciation also goes to Kabiyesi, the Osemawe of Ondo Kingdom, His Royal Majesty, Oba Dr. Victor Kiladejo for the wonderful support and the high commitment he has shown towards the development of the University. There are others too numerous to mention, but let me single out the indefatigable roles played by the Commissioner of Health, Dr Dayo Adeyanju and that of Finance, Dr Yele Ogundipe and Education, Arch Adejuyigbe in the founding of the University, and indeed all members of the Governing Council. I am grateful to you all.

Special tributes would be paid now and in eternity to the Chairman of the Governing Council, Professor OO Akinkugbe CON, NNOM, who was forced out of retirement just to be able to contribute to the founding of the University. A medical icon of no mean order respected and highly revered both in Nigeria and internationally – his acceptance to chair the Governing Council of the University is the single most important impetus and stimulant this University has

received since its founding. Sir, we are grateful to you for the wonderful role you have played in helping this university to develop its mission and vision statements that have been the guiding light of the institution.

At this point, let me also pay due respects to several national and international experts who have made huge contributions to the University by playing advisory, mentoring and supportive roles. Some of these include: Professor Peter Okebukola, former Executive Secretary of the NUC, Professor Julius Okojie, immediate past Executive Secretary of the NUC, professor Bamiro, former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ibadan, Professor Lale, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt, Professor Kelsey Harrison, former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt, Dr Kole Shettima of the Macarthur Foundation, Mr Innocent Chukwuma and other program officers of the Ford Foundation, Professor Nimi Briggs, Professor Anao, the VC of Redeemer University, Ede, Professor Faborode, Executive Secretary of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities, among several others. We are grateful to them, while we look forward to future collaboration with them.

Today's lecture is being delivered by no less a personality than the current Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission, Professor Abubakar Rasheed. For those who do not know him well, Professor Rasheed is one of Nigeria's best intellectuals, one of the most outstanding Vice-Chancellors this country has ever produced, and a patriot extra-ordinary. As the immediate Vice-Chancellor of the Bayero University, Kano, he transformed that University to become one of Nigeria's best and high ranking Universities. You only need to visit BUK to see the astonishing milestones he left behind. Indeed, my determination to get him to deliver this lecture is an illustration of my personal desire to copy him for every step he took in building BUK, and to enlist him to be a mentor and adviser to this University.

Today, he will be speaking on a topic that is central to the development of the Nigeria's University system today. He will outline the characteristics of the type of Universities that he desires for this country and map out his road map for achieving the related objectives. We thank you, sir for accepting to come here today to deliver this important lecture.

Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, the University of Medical Sciences has come of age and there can be no going back. Certainly, as with all other Universities in our land, we do not have all the resources to run the University, but when there is a will there is a way. There is a will by all those who desire the best educational system for our medical graduates to run this University and we will certainly not disappoint the Nigeria public.

At this point, let me appreciate those who have made financial and material contributions, outside the government subventions, to the running of this University. Most especially, let me use this opportunity to thank and appreciate Chief Akintade a high profile chief of Ondo Kingdom, who donated the building of the magnificent Faculty of Basic Clinical Sciences to the University, a multi-million Naira project devoted to promoting the pathological sciences of the University. The building is currently in progress and is nearly 40% complete, with a completion date set for February 2017. We are eternally grateful to Chief Akintade for this pioneering donation – knowing that he does not have any child or ward as a student in the University, his

donation of this building confirms that there are Nigerians who are faithful to the Nigerian project and will do everything to ensure that we succeed in all aspects of our life. We are indeed, very grateful to him.

We are also grateful to the Provost of Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo city, Professor Olukoya Ogen and to members of his Governing Council who donated a complete 3-storey building to the University to accommodate our Faculty of Science. We are extremely grateful for the wonderful display of friendship by the management of Adeyemi College of Education and NIEPA since UNIMED became their neighbors.

We are also grateful to all those who have donated to the Friends of UNIMED Fund (FUF), a fund launched in July 2016 to provide an avenue for citizens to donate at least N1000 each year to the University. We are hoping to attract 1 million donors of 1000 naira each year, so that the University will be able to obtain an additional 1 billion each year for its project activities. Several individuals (now about 2000) have since made donations that surpass our expectations. These include high profile donors like the Osemawe of Ondo Kingdom, the Lisa of Ondo Kingdom, High Chief Adeduro, the Deji of Akure Kingdom, the Olukare of Ikare, Professor Mafiana of the NUC, several Vice-Chancellors, including the Executive Secretary of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors, Professor Faborode, among several others. The complete list of donors to the Fund is contained in the Annual Report of UNIMED being released today. We are grateful to the donors, and we pray that the Almighty Lord will give them the resources to be able to redeem their pledge during the forthcoming year.

Donors should please note that the University has not used the donated funds for any purpose. We hope to grow it to a sizeable sum before deciding on the legacy project that will be named after the Fund.

Chairman Sir, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen – today, we are celebrating the modest achievements the University of Medical Sciences has made in the short period of its existence. These achievements have been due to the hard work of the Chairman and members of the Governing Council, and all staff and students of the University, and to the numerous friends and benefactors of the University. It's on record that our students have progressed to the 300 level class and during this period, there has been no stoppage of any kind and no disruptions of academic and administrative activities. If this trend continues, we are happy to report that in the next 3 years we would be graduating our first set of medical doctors, a feat that would be unsurpassed in this country. Despite the difficult financial times, we have been able to manage our resources well, with the result that the University is up to date in payment of salaries and emoluments.

We believe very strongly that with the necessary support from all stakeholders, this University will stand out clearly in the not too distant future as the centre of excellence for medical education, research and service delivery.

I thank you all for listening.