

SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE 2ND MATRICULATION CEREMONY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MEDICAL SCIENCES, (UNIMED) ONDO CITY, ONDO STATE BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR PROFESSOR FRIDAY OKONOFUA, FAS ON TUESDAY, APRIL 11, 2017

The Executive Governor of Ondo State, Your Excellency, Arakunrin 'Rotimi Akeredolu, SAN

The Deputy Governor of the State, Your Excellency, Arakunrin Agboola Ajayi

Kabiyesi, the Olukare of Ikare Kingdom and Chairman of Ondo State Council of Chiefs, HRM Oba Akadiri Saliu Momoh

Kabiyesi, the Osemawe of Ondo Kingdom HRM Oba Adesimbo Victor Kiladejo.

Other Kabiyesis here present....

Distinguished High Chiefs, Chiefs and Royal Princes and Princesses here present

The Secretary to the Ondo State Government, Hon Sunday Ifedayo Abegunde

The Head of Service, Mr. Toyin Akinkuotu

The Chief of Staff, Mr. Olugbenga Ale

Permanent Secretaries here present

Deputy Vice-Chancellors of the University

Other Principal Officers of the University

Visiting Vice-Chancellors and Principal Officers from other Universities and Tertiary Institutions

Members of Senate and Staff of the University

Parents of Matriculating Students,

The very Dear Students of UNIMED,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with great delight that I welcome you all to the second Matriculation ceremony of the University of Medical Sciences. I wish to specially welcome His Excellency, the Executive Governor of Ondo State, Arakunrin Rotimi Akeredolu SAN, who is paying his first official visit to the University today. Sir, we once again, congratulate you on your election to this Distinguished High office, and pray that the good Lord will give you the wisdom, guidance and protection to take Ondo State to a higher level of development. In Jesus Name, I pray, Amen.

At this Matriculation ceremony, the University will formally admit 490 students into various courses in Medicine, Dentistry, Nursing, Physiotherapy, and medically related courses in the Sciences and Basic Medical Sciences. Today's event is therefore significant being that it marks the formal enrolment of the matriculating students into the University's academic program, in line with the recommendations of the National Universities Commission. It is therefore with great pleasure and joy that I welcome all the students into the University and pray that the good Lord will use the armaments of this University to foster their growth and development in the overall interest of our dear Country. I also wish to use this opportunity to congratulate your parents for the pivotal roles they have played in your lives, and to hope and pray that the investment they are making in you will not be in vain.

Permit me to at this point, offer a word or two of advice to the students. The University is a place where you enjoy a lot of freedoms, but that freedom often comes with some corresponding obligations. Here, your freedom ends where another person's freedom begins. So, not only must you protect your rights, privileges and freedoms, you

must also ensure that you do not trample on the rights, privileges, and freedoms of others.

In this University, we pride ourselves in not only training students in academic work, but also in character, so that upon graduation the student is fully ready to be a responsible citizen who will contribute to national development, in a patriotic and result-oriented manner. So we recommend that you emulate the example of your mentors and teachers in self-discipline, self-care, good mode of dressing, fidelity to your studies and work, and general comportment, so that you will not be found wanting at any time. I wish you every luck as you take this noble path to glory and high level achievements.

Your Excellency, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, the University of Medical Sciences has now come of age. Although we are only two years old, our students' population has grown considerably with approvals given by the NUC for the establishment of key courses in medical sciences, in the University. Our pioneer students in Medicine and Dentistry are currently in 300 Level, and if the pending accreditation visit of the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria and other subsequent visits go well, we will be graduating our first set of doctors and dentists in 2019. This will be a very significant achievement for a State which only 2 years ago, was the only state in Southern Nigeria that did not have a medical school for the training of health professionals, even though some of the most outstanding scientists and medical professionals in this country today, are from this State.

The University's strategic vision is to provide the best research and service delivery niche in the health sciences. We have no doubt that this University is strongly positioned to solve the healthcare problems, not only in Ondo State, but in Nigeria in general. Indeed, the University has very tall mission and vision statements; however, our resources are very limited. Nevertheless, we will continue to appeal to all men and women of goodwill to support the University to attain its noble dreams and aspirations.

Let me at this point inform Mr. Governor that we have taken to heart the advice he gave to the Management Team of the University when we visited him about two weeks ago, that we should embark on fund-raising efforts to fully consolidate the development of the University. To this end, I would like to report that before then, we had reached out to several international organizations such as the Department for International Development (UK), the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Ford Foundation, with carefully prepared proposals on specific projects. We are hopeful that they would provide the requested funding and development-related support soon. Additionally, students and lecturers from Howard University, Washington DC, USA are currently visiting our facilities and working with our staff and students, with the hope that a Memorandum of Understanding on collaborative research and exchange programmes will emanate thereafter.

Furthermore, in July 2016, we established the Friends of UNIMED Fund (FUF) where individuals are requested to donate a minimum sum of one thousand Naira (N1000) only, to the University, each year. Our hope is that if one million persons donate to this Fund each year, we will be able to raise at least N1 billion Naira each year towards the development of the University.

Since the launching of the Fund, we have been able to raise about N15,000,000.0 (Fifteen Million Naira) in cash, and several items of furniture and equipment from various individuals across the country. I also must mention for the benefit of the donors present here today that these funds remain in UNIMED bank accounts and have not been used in any way. We are hoping to develop the funds to a sizeable amount that would be sufficient to develop a massive project in the University that would be named "the Friends of UNIMED" project. The Fund was fully audited in January 2017 by the University's external auditor appointed by Council, the results of which will be published in our website and also made available to anyone who requests the information.

Also, during the FUF launch, Chief (Dr.) I. F Akintade donated the building of the Faculty of Basic Clinical Sciences worth several millions

of Naira to the University. The building is now nearly 60% complete with a completion date set for June 2017. We hope that Mr. Governor during his tour of the University today would be able to see this huge legacy that has been put in place by a noble son of Ondo State for the exclusive use of the University. We appreciate Chief Akintade very deeply – surely, the University will remain perpetually grateful to him for his generosity.

The names of all the donors under the FUF have been written in gold and published on the University's website and several other channels. Other lead donors to the FUF include the Kabiyesi himself, the Osemawe of Ondo Kingdom; the Deji of Akure Kingdom; the Olukare of Kingdom of Ikare Kingdom; High Chief SO Oguntimehin, the Lisa of Ondo Kingdom; High Chief Olusola Adeduro; Engineer Rotimi Ajileye; Professor Peter Okebukola; Chief (Dr.) Akingbule; Otunba Noah Fadayomi; Professor Mike Faborode; Hon Dayo Ogunniyi; and HRM Oba Julius Oluwole Akintimehin, among several others too numerous to mention. We thank them and we will continue to appreciate all of them in perpetuity.

I would like to seize this opportunity to invite Mr. Governor to become a Friend of UNIMED by making a token donation, and encouraging his friends and associates to make similar donations. This is aside from the support that the University would normally request from the State Government, in line with the advice Mr. Governor has given to us.

In particular, we will be grateful if Mr. Governor can support the University to complete our movement into the Odosida campus of the University, to provide more vehicles for staff and students (as we currently have only one bus), and to provide funds to enable the University meet the requirements for the full accreditation of all its courses by the NUC and the MDCN. Also, we would require an increase in our monthly subvention from the State Government. Presently, our monthly subvention is one of the lowest in any Nigerian University due to the fact that we have been recruiting academic staff in stages. However, to enable us recruit more academic staff to meet the accreditation requirements of the NUC and the MDCN, an

increase in subvention would be required. We appeal to Mr. Governor to help us achieve this goal.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the huge community support that UNIMED has received since its establishment. However, to whom much is given, much is expected. Therefore, I wish to assure all present today that the University will continue to be administered with high level integrity and high regard for the passion that the Ondo people have for quality education.

The DNA of UNIMED is based on the tripod of Transparency, Effectiveness and Accountability – which we fondly call the “Tea of UNIMED”. I wish to assure all present today that we will never compromise these principles, regardless of the circumstances. Despite what the “nay Sayers” may be saying, as there will always be this category of persons in all places where progress is being made, I wish to assure everyone that the University of Medical Sciences is being positioned to be a trail-blazer in good governance, accountability and transparency within the firmament of Nigeria's educational system. The foundation being laid will in future lead the University to be a supplier of resources to the State, rather than being a parasite waiting passively to receive resources and funds from the State.

Once again, I thank you all for your presence here today, and pray that the good Lord will take you back safely to your various destinations.

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU!

Professor Friday Okonofua, FAS

Vice-Chancellor, UNIMED