

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN  
ALUMNI ASSOCIATION, WORLDWIDE CHIEF RICHARD OMA  
AHONARUOGHO ON SATURDAY THE 21<sup>ST</sup> DAY OF  
NOVEMBER, 2009 AT THE 1<sup>ST</sup> GLOBAL HOME COMING AND  
39<sup>TH</sup> FOUNDER'S DAY CELEBRATIONS BY THE UNIVERSITY  
OF BENIN ALUMNI ASSOCIATION.**

**Protocols.**

**On Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> November, 2006 I was elected unopposed into office as the 11<sup>th</sup> President of our great Association, the University of Benin Alumni Association. On 15<sup>th</sup> November, 2008, I was once again elected unopposed into office as President to serve our Great Association for a final term of two years; but by this time, with the appellation of President "Worldwide".**

**During the Inaugural meeting and the 129<sup>th</sup> Regular meeting of the newly re-constituted Governing Council of our University on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2009, I had the honor and privilege to invite His Excellency, Sir Dr. Gabriel T. G. Toby, the Pro-Chancellor and Chairman, Governing Council and other Members of the University's Governing Council to this event. My Pro-Chancellor, commended the efforts of the Alumni but threatened to 'disrobe' me, as "Worldwide" should I fail to raise the envisaged sum of =N=500 Million for the due completion of the 1000 Seater Lecture Theatre (1000LT) being built for the University by the Alumni Association and to embark on some other landmark projects including (a) Uniben Alumni 1 Radio; (b) Alumni Exchange Building to house foreign Lecturers and Students on Exchange programs and (c) the International Conference Centre and Trade Fair Complex, all for which land has been provided by the University.**

**I have started on this note, not because, I have cause to fear, that this distinguished gathering, will fail to meet the**

**said target of =N=500 Million, and therefore prepare grounds for an *allocutus*; but to request you to welcome in a very special way, the 'Unibest' way, our brand new Governing Council by surpassing even our modest expectations!**

**It is however, important, to say that "Worldwide" was made possible by the untiring efforts of my able predecessors in office, particularly, Dr. Mike I. Okonfua, JP *Distinguished Alumnus* and the Immediate Past President (IPP) and Dr. (Mrs.) Mary O. Edema, *Distinguished Alumnus* and the Immediate Past Secretary General (IPSG) who in 2005, encouraged the movement for establishment of the first international branch of the Association.**

**On Saturday, October 15 2005, those who we now know as "UBAANA's Golden 12" (Tonia Ajao, Judith Giwa-Amu, Ngozi Abili, Toyin Enahoro, Yeta Eweka, Margaret Adubor, Bolanle Uduebo, Sarah Uzamere, Ngozi Ezeihuaku, Omozuwa Etokhana, Adesuwa Uzamere, and Stella Aduba) held the 1<sup>st</sup> re-union of Alumnae of the University of Benin residing in the States of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut in the United States of America. You can imagine a meeting of 12 dynamic, brilliant, beautiful and purposeful ladies under one roof, with one common goal – the formation of the University of Benin Alumni Association North American Branch (UBAANA)! Thus, the journey to becoming a Worldwide Alumni Association began, during the tenure of President Mike Okonfua, but it was my good fortune, to be the President who gave UBAANA her Charter on 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 2007 at Charlotte, North Carolina, United States of America and for which the Mayor of Mecklenburg County, Jennifer Roberts, made a Proclamation of 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 2007 as "UNIVERSITY OF BENIN DAY". The said Proclamation was ably delivered by the County Commissioner, Norman A. Mitchell, Snr. Already, UBAANA has fixed 16<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> July, 2010 for her 5<sup>th</sup> re-union conference tagged "Philia 2010".**

**I am happy to report, that we have since found footings in the United Kingdom, where a Summer Ball, coordinated by Patricia Aderibigbe and Maureen Bond was held on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 2008 at the prestigious London Hilton Hotel and in Japan where Mr. John Ologbosere is showing great leadership.**

**As we look forward to taking Uniben Alumni to all Continents, we have also increased the scope and coverage of Alumni activities within Nigeria with new branches and chapters being inaugurated. As Alumni of this Great University, we have a duty to assist in raising the moral and academic tones of the University as positive role models and philanthropists to worthy causes in our various faculties, schools, departments, hostels and other facilities. I believe that this Home Coming has provided us the opportunity to do just that.**

**I must confess, that the idea for the Global Coming Homing was put forward most forcefully to me and the Hon. Secretary General, Mr. Stephen Obeki Obeki by Mr. Rumundaka Wonodi, the 1<sup>st</sup> President of UBAANA and some members of his Executive at the 3<sup>rd</sup> re-union conference held at the University College Maryland, USA in 2008. It was this same UBAANA members, that encouraged the University to elevate the office of the Alumni Relations and Endowment Officer (AREO) to that of a Directorate, a request that was made to the very supportive, Prof. Emmanuel A. C. Nwanze, the then Vice-Chancellor. Today, the office of the AREO is manned by a Deputy Registrar and it is hoped that in the new future, a Director will be appointed into that office.**

**The events of the Global Coming Homing have indeed impacted on us all. We have been able to see "lost but found friends" and we have remembered with nostalgia our days in GREAT UNIBEN. I am sure each and every one of us, will be**

**able to take back home some fond memories of these events.**

**It only remains for me to say that UNIBEN is indeed greatly blessed with good men and women who can be found in all spheres of human endeavor. Some of whom, I have the pleasure to present as Distinguished Alumni at today's event.**

**Nigeria is also greatly blessed with good men and women who can be found in all spheres of human endeavor.**

**We have began the search for role models for our up and coming generations and we are sure that the men and women who are being honored at today's event, will continue to uphold those distinct qualities for which they have been so recognized and honored. Nigeria, will definitely benefit from good leadership, hence we challenge leadership at all levels, to be true to their Oaths of Office and to deliver the dividends of good governance.**

**Time, will not permit me to make a special recognition of the very many special and most distinguished personalities here present. But permit me, Mr. Chairman, to say a BIG THANK YOU to His Excellency, General Dr. Yakubu Gowon, GCFR, a Former Head of State of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, who, when it became obvious, that he might not be able to attend to deliver the Guest Lecture, personally telephoned me to give his regrets. This is the stuff of GOOD LEADERSHIP. God bless and keep His Excellency in strong health as we join his family and teaming admires in wishing him very happy 75<sup>th</sup> birthday which was celebrated on 19<sup>th</sup> October, 2009.**

**His Excellency, General Dr. Yakubu Gowon, GCFR is here ably represented by no less a personality than Chief Dr. E. K. Clarke, OFR, CON, one of the Founders of the University of Benin. Chief E. K. Clarke, a leading Lawyer and Nationalist, was The Honourable, The Commissioner for Education in**

**Mid-Western Nigeria in 1968 and he was greatly instrumental to the establishment of the then Mid-West Institute of Technology on 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 1970. Chief E. K. Clarke was the 1<sup>st</sup> Pro-Chancellor for 5 years, while our legendary two time Governor, His Excellency, Dr. Samuel Osaigbovo Ogbemudia was the 1<sup>st</sup> Visitor to the University of Benin. It is hoped, that the University of Benin, shall in no distant time, name one of its edifice after Chief (Dr.) E. K. Clarke in appreciation of his monumental contributions to this University.**

**Our University is located with the Niger Delta and we are therefore interested in the matters of peace in this blessed but troubled area. We must have lasting peace in Nigeria's Niger Delta as indeed in the rest of the Country.**

**And starting from our University, there is need for lasting peace. True peace and brotherly love. It is our desire in the Alumni to create ONE BIG HAPPY FAMILY and I believe that the University of Benin Community, should toe this line.**

**In concluding my address at the last Award ceremonies on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> November, 2007 to mark the 37<sup>th</sup> Founder's Day, I had this to say-**

***"With the conferment of the awards of today, we now have 99 persons who have received the Distinguished Akumnus Awards of this Association. Yes, this is the time to sow. Who will be the 100<sup>th</sup> Distinguished Alumnus of this Association. It is time to sow".***

**I am happy to say that the lot of the 100<sup>th</sup> Distinguished Alumnus falls on The Honourable, The Minister of Aviation, Engr. Babatunde Omotunde Omotoba, a member of the graduating 1990 Class of Engineering (Civil) of the University of Benin who I am sure will lead others to ensure that the dreams of the Foundering Fathers of our Association are kept**

**alive by contributing meaningfully to our society.**

**May I use this opportunity to thank the Acting Vice-Chancellor and the Management of the University for making every effort made for the successful hosting of the events of the Global Home Coming and 39<sup>th</sup> Founder's Day.**

**We are also grateful, to HRM, the Oba of Benin for receiving us in audience at our courtesy visit and for his fatherly love to us his children. Long may His Royal Majesty's reign.**

**To our Chancellor, His Eminence, The Sultan of Sokoto and the 1<sup>st</sup> Grand Patron of the University of Benin, we can only say that UNIBEN has been blessed by your coming as we wish Your Eminence, Happy Ramadam in the coming week.**

**The Honourable Speaker, Edo State House of Assembly, Hon. Zakawanu Garuba must be commended for the able manner in which the Legislative Arm of Government which he heads as Speaker has been able to carry out its functions with a Governor belonging to a different political party and persuasion, without the usual blackmail and '*Balarabe Musa*' , hitherto associated with such like situations.**

**Our indefatigable Comrade Governor Adams Aliu Oshiomhole, mni has been a marvel. He has shown transparency in governance and he is ready to deliver the dividends of democracy to the Good People of Edo State. We are sure that he will succeed.**

**To our Distinguished Alumni Governors, Dr. Emmanuel Eweta Uduaghan and Mr. Babatunde Raji Fashola, SAN we can only say keep the flag flying even higher. In 1999, we had one Uniben Alumnus as Governor, His Excellency, Chief James Ibori, who was re-elected in 2003. In 2007, two Alumni were elected as Governors and I believe that in 2011 they will be re-elected. In 2015, there shall be a minimum of four Uniben**

**Alumni Governors in the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and so shall it be, Amen.**

**His Excellence, Governor Godswill Obot Akpabio efforts in turning around Uyo in particular and Akwa Ibom State in general is legendary, and comparable only to that of His Excellency, Governor Babatunde Raji Fashola, SAN, his counterpart in Lagos. Both men, like His Excellency, General Dr. Yakubu Gpwon, GCFR, are GOD sent and we can only pray from more Akpabios and Fasholas.**

**May I thank most profusely the entire Council, Executive and Members of our Association for your support and encouragement. I love to serve you all. I must thank in particular the Organizing Committee for all the hard work.**

**This event would have been incomplete without the Greatest of the Great Uniben Students, whose President and Speaker of Parliament, Members of the Executives and Members of Parliament have been partners in progress with our Association. Our dear Lecturers and other non-academic Staff of the University have been supportive and have made our stay and visit these past few days worth the while. I can safely speak for all of you, that we shall, God keeping us, safe and happy be back at the next Global Home Coming. Our Chairmen at the 1<sup>st</sup> Global Home Coming and 39<sup>th</sup> Founder's Day ceremonies, Engr. (Dr.) Chris Osa Ogiemwonyi and Mr. Paul Osogbe Enebeli, *FPSN* have remained committed Alumni in whom we have every reason to be proud.**

**I look forward to handing over the brand new Kia Sportage Car as well as the other prizes that will be won at the Raffle Draws later this evening to the winners.**

**Uniben Alumni – One BIG Happy Family.**

**Greatest Uniben, Greatest.**

**Thank you and God bless.**