

**WELCOME ADDRESS DELIVERED BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
DR OLATOKUNBO AWOLOWO DOSUMU, AT THE 2012 OBAFEMI AWOLOWO
MEMORIAL LECTURE, HELD AT NECA HOUSE, ALAUSA, IKEJA,
ON FRIDAY, MARCH 9, 2012**

Protocols

It is for me an enormous pleasure and privilege to welcome you all to the 2012 edition of the Oḃafemi Awolowo Memorial Lecture, hosted by the Oḃafemi Awolowo Foundation.

Looking at the array of the great and the good in attendance here today, I stand in awe of the amazingly enduring influence of the simple and useful life that Chief Awolowo lived.

Our distinguished guest speaker, Professor Toyin Falola, an outstanding, world-class academic who is exceptionally well regarded internationally, accepted our invitation with the ease that only the name of the likes of Chief Awolowo could have procured.

The presence of some of the most eminent royal fathers across Nigeria as well as this sizeable and high calibre audience, drawn from all sectors of the Nigerian society, leaves me virtually speechless. But it speaks eloquently to the fact that, 25 years after his transition, Chief Awolowo's trailblazing leadership keeps being acknowledged and celebrated and indeed, increasingly so.

More importantly, this gathering says that in spite of current, seeming evidence to the contrary, there is still an overwhelming desire across the land to build bridges of understanding in order to remain brothers and sisters domiciled in one united, indivisible Nigeria and that the prospects for consensus-building on critical national issues are not necessarily far-fetched.

However, in the words of John Maxwell, 'the word 'reactive' and the word 'creative' are made up of exactly the same letters; the only difference between the two is that you 'c' (see) differently'. It appears that these times should compel us, more than ever before, to cease being reactive but to 'see' better and be far more creative in our efforts to seek the solutions that will guarantee our arrival at our, obviously, collective desire for Nigeria.

In this regard, permit me to commend to leaders at all levels of the Nigerian society the words of John Kenneth Galbraith, 'all of the great leaders have had one characteristic in common: it was the willingness to confront unequivocally the major anxiety of their people in their time. This, and not much else, is the essence of leadership'. May the good Lord help us all.

The Oḃafemi Awolowo Foundation has chosen to seize the opportunity of this Lecture to unveil its latest, pre-eminent initiative, the **Oḃafemi Awolowo Leadership Prize**, which is being instituted on the basis of one of the major recommendations of its Special Dialogue on the theme, "Transformational

Leadership and Good Governance: Lessons from the Awolowo Example”, held in Ikenne in July 2011. This national Prize is instituted in the name of Chief Obafemi Awolowo to reward leadership and good governance.

As is already well known, the hallmarks of Chief Awolowo’s leadership include vision, credibility, integrity, courage and discipline, among many others. He was also a leader who knew the way, went the way, and showed the way. For him, the growth and development of people was the highest calling of leadership.

His actions, in his lifetime and even today, ‘inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more’. And I think we can safely assert that he passes ‘the final test of a leader, which is that he leaves behind him in other men (and women), the conviction and the will to carry on’.

The Obafemi Awolowo Leadership Prize is therefore established to encourage, recognize, reward and celebrate excellence in Nigerian leadership.

Further details of the Prize will be made public in due course, but suffice it to say for now that the Prize will be awarded to Nigerians who have demonstrated excellence in leadership and good governance within the country or abroad, within the public sector or civil society.

The Prize places greater premium on the honour and recognition that it confers on the recipient and it is designed to be a strong incentive for the pursuit of excellence in leadership and good governance in Nigeria.

The Prize will be awarded every two years. Where no suitable candidate is found in the year of award, the selection will take place in the immediate successive year. The date of the actual award of the prize will be March 6, which marks Chief Awolowo’s birthday, but the announcement will be made a few months earlier.

In selecting candidates, emphasis will be placed on certain characteristics of leadership and good governance that are in tandem with Chief Awolowo’s values. Thirteen criteria have been identified, which will be rigorously evaluated by a Selection Committee made up of a select group of outstanding individuals who are considered to possess the requisite track record of integrity and service to the nation.

It is our fervent hope that, with time, lessons from the Awolowo leadership example will percolate so thoroughly throughout the land that, like Awo, coming generations of Nigerian leaders will ‘not go where the path may lead, (but) go instead where there is no path and leave a trail’.

Your Excellencies, Our Eminent Royal Fathers, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I welcome you all once again, most sincerely, and I thank you for your attention.

Dr Olatokunbo Awolowo Dosumu, Executive Director
March 9, 2012