

**COMMUNIQUE OF THE OBAFEMI AWOLOWO FOUNDATION EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP
SEMINAR ON THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE HELD AT THE FOUNDATION'S OFFICE ON
OCTOBER 7, 2013**

Preamble

The Obafemi Awolowo Foundation mounted an Executive Leadership Seminar on the theme: **'The National Conference: Roadmap to Nigeria's Stability?'**

Held at the Foundation's office located at 15 Lanre Awolokun Road, Gbagada Phase II, Lagos, on October 7, 2013, the seminar was convened at the instance of the Executive Director, Dr Olatokunbo Awolowo Dosumu and chaired by Professor Bolaji Akinyemi, CFR. It was attended by academics, civil society activists and other professionals who brainstormed exhaustively on various aspects of the proposed national conference.

In particular, the seminar considered the following sub-themes:

- a) The case for a national conference;
- b) Lessons from other lands;
- c) Modalities of the conference, especially the issue of design and representation; and
- d) 'No-go' areas

The conference commenced with a call by the chairman for a minute's silence in memory of all those who lost their lives in recent tragic events, including the air crash of Thursday October 3, 2013, and the massacre of students by insurgents.

The Executive Director's welcome address emphasized that the seminar was called as an effort to contribute to the on-going national discussion on the national conference.

The seminar received a goodwill message from Chief Olu Falae. Papers were also received from Professor Banji Akintoye and Professor Suleiman Elias Bogoro.

After thorough and careful deliberations, the seminar observed and recommended as follows:

Observations:

1. Since there is a perception that the Nigerian people were not directly involved in the preparation and adoption of the present constitution, there is a need for a national conference, given the fact that Nigeria is a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious country with diverse interests.
2. The majority of Nigerians are limited on critical issues of survival, contrary to the assumption of the political elite. Consequently, the mismanagement of the economy and the fortunes of Nigeria are a siege on defenceless citizens, irrespective of their origin or abode.

3. Nigerian federalism, in its distributive mode, is dysfunctional, counter-productive and lacking in innovation.
4. Some of the critical issues facing the Nigerian state include revenue derivation, devolution of power, minority rights, security, state police, census and local government autonomy.
5. There is palpable anger and alienation in the land.
6. While acknowledging the understandable fear that Nigeria should not be dismembered, there is an urgent need to revalidate the political system in a way that gives autonomy to the sub-national governments and promotes accountability.
7. The convocation of a national conference is capable of contributing significantly towards the creation of a viable Nigerian polity.
8. The move by the President, Dr Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, to initiate the process of convoking the national conference is, therefore, commendable.
9. Membership of the Okurounmu committee is, however, considered skewed against the younger generations who will have to live with the consequences of the decisions to be made.
10. We owe it a duty to assist the Presidential Advisory Committee on National Dialogue, and other institutions that may flow from it, to achieve the objectives of the National Conference.

Recommendations:

1. There should be no 'no-go' areas in the course of this national discourse. The fact that people are not restricted will enhance frankness of discussions as well as greater acceptability and respectability of the conference outcome.
2. The conference should address true federalism as established by the founding fathers, with emphasis on granting the federating units room to develop competitively at their own pace.
3. The conference should be channelled to build a more tolerant, egalitarian and prosperous modern state with a constitution that emphasizes the protection of individual rights.
4. The present state structure should be reconfigured to more manageable and sustainable units.
5. The outcome of the conference should address and lay appropriate emphasis on the needs and aspirations of the Nigerian people.
6. The conference delegates should not be more than 400 members constituted as follows:
 - a. 90% - by electoral colleges from ward, local government, state and zonal levels, on non-partisan basis. However, nominations for such elections can be made from outside the membership of the electoral colleges;
 - b. 10% - nominees of professional bodies, trade unions, civil society organizations, youths/students, women and pan-Nigerian religious bodies.
7. The duration of the conference should not be more than nine months.

8. The draft constitution so produced shall be subject to a national referendum no later than three months after the end of the conference.

Signed by:

- **Mr. Femi Adesina**
- **Professor Ayandiji Daniel Aina**
- **Professor Princewill Alozie**
- **Prof. Bolaji Aluko**
- **Dr Chris Asoluka**
- **Prof. Bukar Bukarambe**
- **Mrs. Ayo Obe**
- **Professor Ayo Olukotun**
- **Dr Tunde Oseni**
- **Prof. Akin Oyebode**
- **Professor Itse Sagay**
- **Alhaji Yerima Shettima**

Professor Bolaji Akinyemi, CFR
Chairman

Dr Olatokunbo Awolowo Dosumu
Convener