



**ỌBAFEMI AWOLỌWỌ
FOUNDATION**

**EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP SEMINAR
HELD AT THE FOUNDATION
ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2013.**

THEME:

**‘NATIONAL CONFERENCE: ROAD
MAP TO NIGERIA’S STABILITY?’**

WELCOME ADDRESS

**BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DR
ỌLATOKUNBỌ AWOLỌWỌ
DOSUMU**

Protocols

I feel unusually gratified to welcome you to this strategically important Executive Leadership Seminar on the theme, '**National Conference: Roadmap to Nigeria's Stability?**'

I feel gratified because, as most of you will confirm, I had made telephone contact with you regarding the hosting of this seminar **before** the announcement by Mr President, in his Independence Day broadcast, of the setting up of the Advisory Committee on National Dialogue. Our decision to host this seminar flowed from the statement on the matter made by the Senate President at the opening of the new legislative session in September.

We salute President Goodluck Jonathan for this bold and momentous move. We congratulate the committee's chair, Senator Femi Okurounmu, on his well-deserved recognition and we wish him and his distinguished team every success in their historic assignment.

As we are all aware, however, intentions, even the best of them, do not necessarily guarantee success in any endeavour. Despite many years of persistent and strident clamour for a national dialogue, Mr President's announcement has still evoked cynicism in some quarters. Furthermore, if lessons from similar efforts in other countries are anything to go by, national conferences do not always end successfully. Nevertheless, many applaud this initiative as a definite step in the right direction, even if long-overdue, and are earnestly willing it to succeed.

The Obafemi Awolowo Foundation originally intended, as our contribution to this national effort, to organise this forum to offer the opportunity for calm, analytical and rational discussion, not only to validate, or perhaps invalidate as the case may be, the rationale for a national dialogue, but also to think through the possible pitfalls (and there are many!) along its road to a successful outcome.

Now that it appears that the President has given his tacit endorsement to the idea of a national conference, we need to focus discussions at this seminar on the modalities for the conference. We need to address, for example, such issues as the basis for representation at the conference; the procedure for choosing delegates; percentage representation for each identified group; who determines the issues for discussion (government or participating groups); timing of the conference (before or after the 2015 elections); etc.

I believe that the impressive team here assembled, although each of you represents one or the other of Nigeria's six geopolitical zones, will apply your outstanding scholarship and consequent analytical skills to come up with viable options and recommendations that will achieve the ultimate goal of the entire initiative, i.e. the final forging of a stable Nigerian nation. These recommendations will be presented to the relevant authorities.

Once again, I welcome you and thank you most sincerely. In this age of crass materialism, I am astounded by your remarkable display of patriotism and public-spiritedness. May God reward you bountifully.

Dr Olatokunbo Awolowo Dosumu
October 7, 2013