



ADDRESS

BY

**DR DALHATU SARKI TAFIDA, OFR HIGH COMMISSIONER
OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED KINGDOM**

**AT THE 2009 ANNUAL RECEPTION OF
THE BRITAIN-NIGERIA EDUCATION TRUST**

HEAD AT NIGERIA HIGH COMMISSION, LONDON.

TUESDAY, 17TH NOVEMBER, 2009

PROTOCOL:

I am greatly delighted to welcome you to this year's Reception of the Nigeria-United Kingdom Education Trust, the second since my assumption of duties as High Commissioner. I first had the distinct honour of hosting this Reception almost a year ago on Friday, 28th November 2008.

2. The British-Nigerian Education Trust, the new name for the Tafawa Balewa Educational Trust started as Britain-Nigeria Association. Today, it has become a major strategic partner in forging stronger, social and cultural ties between Nigeria and the UK. I am, in fact, deeply fascinated and impressed by the calibre of members. I am also honoured to be a member of the Trust. All members have continued to give their time, energy and money to support the work of the Trust. I commend your support and personal sacrifices in this noble endeavour.

3. On behalf of the Federal Government of Nigeria, I wish to note, with deep satisfaction, that the Trust has continued to expand the scope of its work in the award of scholarships to Nigerians, grant of fellowships and support for teacher training programmes in various Universities and Institutes in Nigeria. The major challenge, in my view, is to devise means of increasing the membership base of the Trust, raise more funds under the rather difficult climate of global economic crisis and generate greater awareness about the activities of the Trust both in Nigeria and in the UK. I am very confident that the Trust is more than able to face these challenges.

4. Yet, the development of the human capital and the talent environment in Nigeria is an essential component of the Seven-

point agenda of the present Administration. It is also critical to the vision of making Nigeria one of the top twenty largest economies in 2020. Education is therefore being accorded topmost priority as one of the major drivers of these objectives.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

5. As you may all be aware, the blue print of Nigeria's Vision 2020, which is the product of wide-ranging consultation and inputs, was adopted and released to the public on Wednesday, 11th November 2009. Guided by this Vision, Government has redefined its role as one of enabler; to create the right and conducive environment for all Nigerians to actualise their full potentials in peace, harmony and justice.

6. To attain the objective of repositioning Nigeria, the Federal Government has continued to implement fundamental domestic reforms in all sectors, including banking and finance, the civil service and security sectors. Similar activities are also underway in other sectors such as education, health, road, rail and water transportation, to mention but a few.

7. In the same vein, the anti-corruption campaigns and enforcement are being intensified, based on strict adherence to due process and the rule of law. Government has also rekindled the national debate and serious deliberations on electoral reforms, based on the Justice Mohammed Uwais report.

8. The huge success of the Presidential amnesty in the Niger Delta has confounded even its acerbic critics who did not give the policy any chance of success when it was pronounced in June this year. The decision of the Federal Government to set aside 10% of its equity in joint venture operations with oil companies for oil and gas producing communities is sure to assuage strong feelings over resource ownership and participation. This is intended to address one of the root causes of agitation in the Niger Delta. This historic decision and the imperative need for deregulation of the downstream sector, form essential ingredients of the Petroleum Industry Bill currently before the National Assembly.

9. With the return of normalcy to the Niger Delta region, Nigeria is now poised to meet its oil production quota of more than 2 million barrels per day. This will substantially increase Government's revenue with which to fund the country's development agenda. The second immediate benefit is

increased supply of gas for power generation, which will enhance the prospects of meeting the targets set in this vital area.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

10. Nigeria will be celebrating the Golden Jubilee of its independence in 2010. We intend to mark the occasion through a yearlong series of activities, to be held in London and other major cities in this country. Without any doubt, Nigeria has a lot to celebrate in marking the fifty years of her independence.

11. As we seek to display these with colour and fanfare next year, we look forward to collaborating with BNET in commemorating this landmark occasion. This is so because your organization has been with us through thick and thin ever before our independence in 1960.

12. Once again, let me commend with deep appreciation, members of the British-Nigeria Education Trust, for their tireless efforts in the development of Nigeria and Nigerians. You have, by your active participation in the work of the Trust, especially members of the Board, demonstrated unrelenting faith in Nigeria and its bright future. The Nigeria High Commission will continue to cherish its relationship with the Trust as a corporate body and

with its individual members. I will like to assure you of the maximum cooperation of the High Commission in promoting and sustaining the objectives of the Trust.

13. On this note, I welcome you, once again, to Nigeria House and to this Reception in particular.

Long live the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Island.

Long live the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Long live British-Nigeria Relations.

Long live Britain-Nigeria Education Trust.

14. Thank you.

**NIGERIA HIGH COMMISSION
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17TH NOVEMBER 2009.