



**WELCOME ADDRESS**

**BY**

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

**AT THE GALA DINNER/RECEPTION COMMEMORATING THE  
GOLDEN JUBILEE OF NIGERIA'S INDEPENDENCE,  
PARK PLAZA HOTEL, WEST MINSTER BRIDGE  
LONDON, 1<sup>ST</sup> OCTOBER 2010**

**Lord Wallace of Saltaire and Deputy Leader of the House of Commons and House of Lords Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs,**

**Excellencies, High Commissioners/Ambassadors, their Spouses and members of the Diplomatic Corps,**

**President of the Central Association of Nigerians in the UK, Dr Mark Abani,**

**Chairman of Nigerians in the Diaspora Organisation (NIDO - UK South), Mr Kayode Ogunsola,**

**President, Council of Nigerian Elders, Mrs Gladys Olowu and members of the Council,**

**Gentlemen of the Press,**

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is not usual for Heads of Mission to make prepared speeches on their countries national day. But for Nigeria, this is different.

2. Today marks fifty years of the birth of Nigeria as a sovereign and independent nation. It is a landmark in the life of any nation or individual, and deserves to be celebrated like never before.

3. It was in recognition of this that the Federal Government of Nigeria decided to organise series of events to mark this historic event, both in Nigeria and in all capitals and major cities in the world where Nigeria maintains diplomatic and consular presence. Nigerians across the UK and in other parts of the world have also very rightly being commemorating this occasion with fanfare.

4. London offers a special significance, being the mother country that bequeathed Independence to Nigeria. It is in London, at the Lancaster House that most of the constitutional conferences that prepared Nigeria for independence were held. Unlike the history of many nations in the same historical space, Nigeria's independence was attained without violence. In effect, Independence came as a positive outcome of peaceful negotiations.

5. Having lived together as one independent nation for the past fifty years, Nigerians deserve to be congratulated, not least because the country had stood together as one, despite many challenges of nation-building and economic development. The sheer resilience of our country in the face of adversities has sometimes confounded critical observers. In addition, the abundance of human and material resources at the disposal of our country since Independence supports the view that Nigeria should have done much better as a country.

6. The Government of His Excellency President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, GCFR has never been in denial about this fair assessment. What should be most comforting to all Nigerians at home and abroad, including friends of Nigeria is the vision and mission of the present Administration, anchored on the strength of character and total commitment to the implementation of its transformation programmes and policies.

7. Let me therefore assure you of the unflinching commitment of the Federal Government to guaranteeing a better future for Nigeria and for Nigerians, using the Vision 20:20.20 as the framework for this social, economic and political transformation. The adoption of the Road Map for the power sector reform and Government's efforts at addressing the

country's infrastructure deficit are key priorities in this regard. The Federal Government is also committed to the conduct of free and fair elections in 2011. It has already demonstrated its resolve in this area by the re-composition of the Independent Electoral Commission and by ensuring adequate provision of financial and material resources for the electoral body. As the Federal Government improves its governance structures and ethos, achieving these national objectives requires the strong support of all Nigerians and friends of Nigeria at home and abroad. I believe that the United Kingdom has a special and strategic role to play in this regard.

8. Our mission is to create the conducive domestic environment in which every Nigerian, regardless of his/her social or economic circumstance, religion, ethnicity or creed, can actualise his/her full potentials for greatness in security, happiness and in close harmony with neighbours. Nigerians and friends of Nigeria in the UK should therefore renew their faith in the future of our country, so that Nigeria could achieve its full potentials for greatness. I urge you not to dwell too much into the downside of our past, but to focus on the positive elements and set your eyes squarely on the future, confident that current efforts of the Government would bear the desired fruits in no distant future.

9. At this juncture, let me seize this special occasion to pay tributes to our country's founding fathers and patriotic leaders of our country who have paid the supreme sacrifice in the cause of freedom. We must recognise the role of our ordinary Nigerians from all walks of life who have continued to make their modest contributions in order that Nigeria could stay united and put on a path of sustainable growth and development.

10. On behalf of the Federal Government of Nigeria, I will like to end this address by welcoming you to this event. My deep thanks go to all those who have contributed in one way or the other to the series of activities and events marking this occasion across the UK.

11. May I ask you, Distinguished Ladies and the Gentlemen, present here tonight, to join us in celebrating this historic occasion with the modest arrangements that have been made by the Nigeria High Commission. Let the series of celebrations here in London and across the UK fire the imaginations of all Nigerians. Let the occasion echo in the minds of Nigerians and friends of Nigeria that ours is a country that is determined to transform itself into the league of leading economies of the world in the nearest future. Let the candle of freedom that was lit by our founding fathers fifty years ago continue to glow. Let the labour of our heroes past not be in vain.

12. As new generation of Nigerians, let us rededicate ourselves to the development of a peaceful, stable and prosperous country. On this occasion of the Golden Jubilee of our country's independence, let us commit ourselves to doing things differently so that future generations of Nigerians could inherit a country that truly earns its rightful place and is well respected in the comity of nations. This is the only way that we can, acting in concert, build a country of our collective dreams and aspirations.

13. I wish you a joyous independence anniversary celebration and thank you for your attention.