

**TOAST ON THE OCCASION OF THE GALA DINNER MARKING THE GOLDEN  
JUBILEE ANNIVERSARY OF NIGERIA'S INDEPENDENCE, PARK PLAZA HOTEL,  
LONDON, FRIDAY, 1<sup>ST</sup> OCTOBER 2010**

**BY**

**CHIEF ADEBAYO OLADIMEJI**

**Retired Biochemist at the Kings College at Guy's Hospital Campus,  
Founder, Nigerian Council of Elders and  
Trustee, British Nigerian Education Trust**

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

**Excellencies, the Dean of Diplomatic Corps,  
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 with the highest sense of humility, distinct honour and deep fulfilment that I stand before this distinguished gathering to propose a toast to the Federal Republic of Nigeria on this auspicious occasion marking fifty years of the country's independence.

Fifty years in the life of any individual, organisation or nation is no mean record. It is a unique occasion with spiritual significance that is not likely to take place more than once in the life of all those born on or before the year of Nigeria's independence.

And for the Federal Republic of Nigeria, it is a special occasion. As a country, Nigeria has come a long way, having been through a number of trials and triumphs, some of which shook it to its very foundation.

But today's anniversary event is not just about celebrating the fact that the Federal Republic of Nigeria has survived far beyond the apocalyptic predictions of many. Important as this is, there are many other great things to celebrate in the life of our country.

I came to the UK some thirty years ago and therefore in a vintage position to see the tremendous transformation that has taken place in Nigeria, including, not least, the growth and development of the Nigerian Diaspora here in the UK.

Understandably, many Nigerians and true friends of Nigeria feel under-fulfilled and are united in the view that our country ought to have done much better in terms of social and economic development. For me,

this expression is itself worthy of celebration as it does convey the positive sentiment and upward disposition of a people for a better future. Nigerians, like other great nations and great peoples are never contented with their present and always working harder and looking ahead into a secure future.

History demonstrates that the greatest asset of any country is the human capital, not oil and gas. Yet Nigeria is blessed with these and many more. A country of over 140 million people, composed of one of the most vibrant, enterprising and resourceful people on the face of the earth, and with a burgeoning population of youths under the age of twenty, Nigeria is a nation with an assured future. And today, we have a Government in Nigeria that is set to turn these assets and the challenges that we face into great opportunities for all Nigerians to actualise their full potentials.

While saluting Nigerians for having shown great resilience over the past fifty years and being united in their hopes and aspirations for the future, I must also pay tributes to the founding fathers of the nation and our host country, Great Britain, who not only weaned Nigeria from independence but has continued to support the growth and development of our country. For a federation as complex as that of Nigeria, the support of foreign friends and partners like the UK remain crucial to the corporate existence of our country, but more importantly, to the realisation of the country's development aspirations. On this score, the UK has been a reliable ally and partner over the last fifty

years. I am confident that Britain has no reason to waver in its commitment to a united, stable and prosperous Nigeria.

May I therefore ask you, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, to rise and drink to the Federal Republic of Nigeria on this special anniversary of fifty years of her independence from the United Kingdom and to also drink celebrating the vibrancy of UK-Nigeria relations.

Thank you and God bless.