

**ADDRESS BY THE REGISTRAR, ALHAJA (MRS.) MULIKAT A. BELLO,
AT THE FORMAL OPENING OF THE 60TH ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING
HELD IN ABUJA, NIGERIA ON TUESDAY, MARCH 27, 2012**

Your Excellency, President and Commander-In-Chief of the Armed Forces
of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
Honourable Minister of Education
Honourable Minister of State for Education
Honourable Minister for the Federal capital Territory
The Chairman of Council
The Vice Chairman of Council
Leaders of Delegation and Chief Government Nominees on Council
Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps
Former Chairmen of Council
Former Registrars to Council
Distinguished Friends of Council
Heads of National Office
Former Heads of National Office
Colleagues, Staff of the Council
Award Winners
Esteemed Guests
Gentlemen of the Media
Ladies and Gentlemen

INTRODUCTION

It is my singular honour and privilege to welcome you very warmly to the Formal Opening of the 60th Annual Meeting of the West African Examinations Council (WAEC). On behalf of the entire staff of the Council, I welcome specially the President and Commander-In-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, His Excellency, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, who has graciously deemed it worthwhile to squeeze out some time from his congested schedule to be in our midst at the opening of this Council Meeting. We appreciate your presence, Mr. President. We also appreciate your Government's hosting of the meeting and provision of the needed facilities to ensure its success. I want to assure Mr. President as well as the Honourable Minister for the Federal Capital Territory that delegates will make out time to explore the many geographical and other attractions which abound in Abuja and its environs.

ROTATIONAL PRINCIPLE

Your Excellency, the Annual Council Meeting is hosted by the member countries of WAEC on rotational basis in line with the Standing Orders of Council. This explains why we were here in 2007 and, five years on, we are here again. This year's meeting is however unique as it coincides

with the Council's *Diamond Jubilee* celebration, the theme of which is *The West African Examinations Council – Sixty Years of Commitment to Excellence in Educational Assessment*.

THE COUNCIL'S EXAMINATIONS

Your Excellency, Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, WAEC is West Africa's foremost examining board established by law in 1952, to determine the examinations required in the public interest in the English-speaking West African countries, to conduct the examinations and to award certificates comparable (in standard) to those of equivalent examining authorities internationally. By this tripartite mandate, WAEC is expected to assist in the development of sound education, ensure that educational standards are maintained, and give the people of West Africa a vision of the great potentials that lie beyond examinations.

Without any attempt at being immodest, Your Excellency, I dare say that WAEC has been executing its tripartite mandate very creditably over the years, conducting national and international examinations and awarding certificates that enjoy international recognition and acceptance. You will easily recall that several sub-regional organizations were established in pre-independence West Africa, but that among them all, WAEC is the only surviving one.

Your Excellency, as part of its efforts at taking its services to the doorsteps of its clientele, the Council has a well-developed network of offices in its five member countries - Nigeria has twelve Zonal Offices, eighteen Branch Offices and two Satellite Offices; Ghana has nine Branch Offices; Sierra Leone has three Branch Offices; and The Gambia has one Branch Office. The Council also reaches out to its stakeholders in all member countries through the use of its websites especially in regard of registration for its examinations, checking of examination results, accessing vital publications such as monthly seminar papers and research reports among others. The Council uses these vital publications as veritable avenues for the dissemination of invaluable information for policy decision-making for the development of sound education in the West African sub-region. I must say that the window of opportunity provided for the Council's stakeholders to access such vital information has been one way of the Council *giving the people of West Africa a vision of the great potentials which lie beyond examinations*.

Your Excellency, WAEC has indeed come a long way from its inception to date. From a total entry figure of only seven hundred and eighteen (718) candidates who sat its maiden examination in December 1952, the total entry figure for the Council's examinations hit the three-million mark in 2011. Registration of candidates for the Council's examinations has gone from manual to electronic. The Council's examination results are now be checked on-line, real time. Its certificates are photo-embossed. And, the Council remains one of the most credible and strongest chords that bind together the five English-speaking West African countries.

For sixty good years, Your Excellency, WAEC has remained the bridge that links the education sector of the member countries, offering the countries the unique opportunity to plan together, work together, and forge ahead together as a people with similar educational destiny. And, it is in

recognition of the vital role of WAEC as a key player in the education sector that the governments of its five Member Countries have continued to extend their support, cooperation and goodwill to the Council, while at the same time discharging their financial and diplomatic obligations to ensure the continued existence of the organization.

Today, Your Excellency, WAEC conducts national and international examinations for candidates in the five member countries. In addition, the Council conducts aptitude and selection tests for governments, organizations, institutions and employers of labour, and administers various examinations on behalf of other examining boards.

The Council's national examinations include the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) which is conducted for candidates in The Gambia, Ghana and Sierra Leone; the General Business Certificate Examination (GBCE) and the Advanced Business Certificate Examination (ABCE) which are conducted for candidates in Ghana; the National Primary School Examination (NPSE) which is conducted for candidates in Sierra Leone, the National Assessment Test (NAT) which is conducted for candidates in The Gambia; and the Junior and Senior High School Certificate Examinations which are conducted for candidates in Liberia. Nigeria is the only member country that does not patronize WAEC for the conduct national examinations.

The Council's international examination is the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE).

PATRONAGE

Your Excellency, in 2011, the Council's main national examinations recorded a total candidature of **692,712**, made up of **76,915** candidates (or 11.10%) from The Gambia, **377,840** (or 54.54%) from Ghana, **58,828** (or 8.49%) from Liberia and **179,129** (or 25.85%) from Sierra Leone.

In the same year 2011, the total candidature for the Council's international examination, the WASSCE, was **2,300,189** candidates, made up of **12,475** candidates (or 0.54%), made up of **7,878** school candidates and **4,597** private candidates from The Gambia; **287,965** candidates (or 12.51%) made up of **149,175** school candidates and **138,790** private candidates from Ghana; **1,943,936** candidates (or 84.51 %) comprising **1,539,075** school candidates and **404,861** private candidates from Nigeria; and **55,813** candidates (or 2.42%), comprising **45,323** school candidates and **10,490** private candidates from Sierra Leone.

The Council also conducted aptitude/selection tests for **19,024** testees made up of **296** testees from Ghana, **968** from Liberia, **17,723** from Nigeria and **37** from Sierra Leone.

RELEASE OF RESULTS

Your Excellency, I am delighted to report that the results of both the May/June and November/December 2011 WASSCE were released much earlier than ever before in all the Member Countries. This is evidence that our efforts at deploying ICT to the various processes in

the conduct of the Council's core business, especially in the areas of registration of candidates, capturing of candidates' scores at the marking venues and processing of examination results, are beginning to yield the desired dividends. We have succeeded in progressively reducing the period for the processing of WASSCE results from an average of **131 days** in 2008 to an average of **84 days** in 2011 for the May/June diet and from an average of **134 days** in 2008 to an average of **75 days** in 2011 for the November/December diet. The results of the May/June 2011 WASSCE were released in August 2011, while those of the November/December 2011 WASSCE were released in December 2011 in all the Member Countries.

EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE

Your Excellency, it is with a heart full of joy that I state here for the records that all the Council's examinations in 2011 were conducted without any leakage of question papers in any country. It will interest you to know, in particular, that the November/December 2011 WASSCE was the seventh consecutive leakage-free examination in Nigeria. For the national examinations, the December 2011 series marked the ninth consecutive leakage-free series in all Member Countries without exception. Gladdening and cheering as this is, however, I must hasten to point out that other forms of examination malpractice have persisted in the Council's examinations in all the Member Countries. Principal among these are *collusion, mass cheating, the use of cell phones to cheat*, impersonation and the *non-appearance syndrome*, which is perhaps peculiar to Nigeria for now.

Permit me to say here that examination malpractice, in whatever form it takes, is a societal problem that has its roots mainly in the candidates' lack of self-confidence and their fear of failure, both of which stem from inadequate preparation for the examination. Of course, there are a whole lot of other factors, including misplaced societal values that can aid the breeding and perpetration of examination fraud. It is my humble opinion that the point at which to start the fight against examination malpractice is the provision of facilities and equipment in schools, recruitment, training and retention of the right quality and number of teachers, creation of an atmosphere that is conducive for teaching and learning, promulgation and enforcement of relevant legislations, and of course, public sensitization and advocacy against the evil that examination fraud constitutes.

I therefore want to use this opportunity to appeal to all stakeholders in education in all the Member Countries of WAEC to partner the Council in fighting examination malpractice to a standstill. The Council, on its part, shall continue to be extra-vigilant at every stage in its process of conducting credible examinations in the Member Countries and sharpen its established monitoring systems to detect and sanction examination impropriety in whatever form it takes.

DEPLOYMENT OF ICT TO SERVICE DELIVERY

Your Excellency, computerization and the deployment of ICT to service delivery remain on the front burners in our policy implementation. The Council has continued to embrace best practices

in all aspects of its operations. Our strive for the highest standards in the application of ICT to the various processes in the conduct of the Council's core business has resulted in the reduction of the period for the processing of WASSCE results, as indicated earlier in my address. Our commitment to raising the level of access to and competence in the use of ICT by staff, service providers and board members has enhanced our gradual but resolute march towards the paperless conduct of the Council's business.

FINANCE

Your Excellency, we wish to register our appreciation to all the Member Governments and their representatives on Council for the efforts being made to ensure the fulfilment of government commitments to the Council. We want to assure the Governments that the resources put at our disposal shall always be prudently disbursed and that the confidence reposed in us shall not be betrayed nor misplaced.

WAEC ENDOWMENT FUND

Your Excellency, Distinguished guests, as part of its efforts at keeping faith the Council's Mission of encouraging academic excellence among the youth, the WAEC Endowment Fund was inaugurated by Council at its 30th Annual Meeting in Liberia in 1982. Among the objects of the Fund are the promotion of educational development projects of an international nature, provision of prizes for outstanding performance by candidates in the Council's examinations, and conferment of honour on eminent citizens of the Member Countries who have made outstanding contributions to the Council's work. The Fund has consistently accomplished its objectives and discharged its responsibilities since inception.

Yesterday, the 17th WAEC Endowment Fund Lecture titled *Nipping Educational Failure in the Bud* was delivered by Professor Pius Augustine Ike Obanya of Nigeria. It was a learning session and a clarion call on stakeholders in education for urgent action. We appreciate the lecturer for his erudition and eloquence in the delivery of the lecture.

Today, still under the auspices of the WAEC Endowment Fund, the *WAEC International Excellence Award* will be presented to three candidates for their excellent performance in the May/June 2011 WASSCE. The three candidates are Miss Sakyi Ann Abena Antwiwaa, a Ghanaian who wrote the examination in Ghana (1st Prize), Master Hameed Irbaz, a Pakistani who wrote the examination in Ghana (2nd Prize) and Miss Adeloje Christianah Ope, a Nigerian who wrote the examination in Nigeria (3rd Prize). The three candidates were selected from a total of **1,741, 451** candidates who sat the examination in the The Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

The *Augustus Bandele Oyediran Award for the Best Candidate in West Africa* in the May/June 2011 WASSCE will also go to Miss Sakyi Ann Abena Antwiwaa.

Similarly, the WAEC *National Distinction Award* will be presented to three candidates for their distinguished performance in the May/June 2011 WASSCE conducted for a total of 1,539,075 candidates in Nigeria. The three candidates are Miss Adeloje Christianah Ope (1st Prize), Miss Omigbodun, Iyeyinka A (2nd Prize) and Miss Nwigbo, Kanayo Uduani (3rd Prize).

Also, the *Augustus Bandele Oyediran Award for the Best Performing School in Nigeria* will be given to Lumen Christi International High School, Uromi, while the *Omo N'Oba Erediauwa Coronation Trophies* will go to the Schools that produced the best male and female candidates in Nigeria.

On this same august occasion, the prestigious award of *Distinguished Friend of Council* will be conferred on two eminent Nigerians and illustrious citizens of the West African Sub-region, Chief (Mrs.) Margaret Oyebola Shonekan and Prof. Ifedioramma E. Nwana, in recognition and appreciation of their contribution to the success of the work of the West African Examinations Council.

CONCLUSION

Your Excellency, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, we give glory to the Almighty God for successful operations and the achievements recorded by the West African Examinations Council these past sixty years. The modest successes recorded by the Council have been facilitated largely by the understanding, support and encouragement which we received from the representatives of Governments and other Members of Council. Added to these is the atmosphere of peace, cordiality and strong ties that exists among the Member Countries all of which enable the Council to execute its mandate without hindrance. Our Member Governments have continued striving hard to sustain WAEC and make it possible for the Council to deliver quality service to its stakeholders. Our sincere appreciation therefore goes to all our Member Governments for their support, even in the face of scourging economic meltdown.

Our sincere gratitude goes to all government functionaries who have remained the link between the Council and their respective governments, and whose doors are open to the Council at all times. These functionaries include the Ministers, Permanent Secretaries/Chief Directors, Directors and other top officers in the Ministry of Education of each Member Country. We also wish to appreciate the Council's service providers who make the successful conduct of our examinations achievable. They include the item writers, item moderators, supervisors, invigilators, examiners and script checkers. There is nothing the Council can achieve without the cooperation of these service providers.

Your Excellency, Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, I appreciate you all for the great honour done our flagship organization by your presence at this Formal Opening of the 60th Annual Council Meeting.

I thank you most sincerely. May God bless you.