

Address By WAEC Registrar Dr Iyi Uwadiae
At The Formal Opening Of The 63rd Annual Council
Meeting In Lagos Nigeria On Tuesday March 24, 2015

Your Excellency the Executive Governor of Lagos State
Chairman of the West African Examinations Council
Distinguished Senators
Honourable Members of the House of Representatives
Your Excellences, Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps
Honourable Minister of Education, Federal Republic of Nigeria
Honourable Minister of Education, Republic of Liberia
Members of the Lagos State House of Assembly
Commissioner for Education, Lagos State
Leaders of Delegation and Chief Government Nominees on Council
Members of Council
Former Chairmen of Council
Former Registrars to Council
Distinguished Friends of Council
Staff of the Council
Students
Media Representatives
Ladies and Gentlemen

Introduction

It is my honour to welcome you all to the formal opening of the 63rd Annual Meeting of the West African Examinations Council (WAEC). I welcome the Special Guest of Honour, the Executive Governor of Lagos State, who is ably represented here by the State Commissioner for Education, Mrs. Olayinka Oladunjoye. On behalf of the Management and staff of WAEC, I wish to express appreciation to the Government and people of Lagos State, and by extension the Federal Government of Nigeria, for the warm reception and hospitality accorded our delegates since their arrival in Lagos. I urge the delegates to make out time during this short period of their stay to visit some of the very many places of interest in Lagos, *the Centre of Excellence*.

Rotational Principle

Your Excellency, the five member countries of WAEC – The Gambia, Ghana, Liberia Nigeria and Sierra Leone – take their turns to host the Annual Council Meeting based on a rotational arrangement earlier agreed upon. Following this arrangement, each country gets to host Council once in every five years when the Meeting must have gone full circle round the five countries. It was in adherence to the rotational principle that at the end of the 62nd Meeting in Freetown, Sierra Leone in March 2014, Council accepted an invitation from the Government of Liberia to hold the 63rd Annual Council Meeting in Monrovia in March 2015. The Government of Liberia and the Monrovia Office of the Council immediately commenced preparations for the successful hosting of this meeting. Unfortunately, midway into 2014 the deadly Ebola virus disease broke out in Liberia, which rendered the country unsafe for the hosting of the meeting. Management was thrown into a dilemma by the situation in Liberia, but drawing from past experiences during the era of civil wars in some member countries, the WAEC Headquarters was mandated to take over all arrangements for the holding of the Council Meeting.

The 63rd Annual Council Meeting is being held in Nigeria instead of Ghana, where WAEC Headquarters is located, because the Council has got in Nigeria facilities that can be utilized with minimal costs and logistics. Also, the Meeting has been brought to Lagos instead of the country's capital city as is the Council's practice because, going by the rotational arrangement earlier mentioned, it will soon be the turn of Nigeria to host the Meeting in Abuja in March 2017. I therefore, wish to stress that the taking over by the WAEC Headquarters, Accra of the responsibility for planning the current meeting and the holding of the Meeting in Lagos, Nigeria have not in any way affected the rotational arrangement. The status of the Republic of Liberia as the host country remains intact, and the country's delegates are poised to enjoy all the due privileges and clinch the roles or positions conceded to the scheduled host country.

The Council's Examinations

Distinguished guests, the examinations conducted by WAEC in the five member countries fall into two main categories – the international and the national examinations. The international examination is the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) which is conducted for candidates in all the member countries, while the national examinations are restricted to the respective member countries. The Council also conducts aptitude tests, selection tests and various examinations on behalf of other examining bodies.

Last year the Council successfully conducted all its scheduled examinations in the areas where prevailing security and environmental situations permitted the conduct. The Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone presented candidates for both the May/June and November/December 2014 editions of the WASSCE, while Liberia presented candidates for the May/June edition only. Various national examinations were also offered to candidates in the member countries, except Nigeria. The Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) was offered in The Gambia, Ghana and Sierra Leone while the Junior and Senior High School Certificate examinations were offered in Liberia. The General Business Certificate Examination (GBCE) and the Advanced Business Certificate Examination (ABCE) were conducted in Ghana, the National Primary School Examination (NPSE) in Sierra Leone and the National Assessment Test (NAT) in The Gambia.

We are looking forward to a time when Nigeria will take advantage of the Council's expertise in the reshaping and conduct of its national examinations.

Patronage

A total of 2,450,626 candidates sat the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) in all the Member Countries in 2014. Out of this total figure, 2,018,497 candidates sat the May/June WASSCE conducted for school candidates while 432,129 candidates sat the November/December WASSCE as private candidates. The 2014 candidature showed a decrease of 140,161 candidates (or 5.41%) below the 2013 figure of 2,590,787 and a decrease of 97,604 candidates

(or 3.83%) below the 2012 figure of 2,548,230. A breakdown on country basis shows that out of the 2,450,626 candidates recorded for WASSCE in 2014 a total of 15,146 candidates (or 0.62%) sat the examination in The Gambia; 397,275 candidates (or 16.21%) in Ghana; 1,987,751 candidates (or 81.11%) in Nigeria; 5,034 candidates (or 0.21%) (made up of school candidates only) in Liberia and 45,420 candidates (or 1.85%) in Sierra Leone.

A total of 38,265 testees presented by various institutions also sat the aptitude/selection tests conducted by WAEC in the member countries in 2014. The total figure was made up of 994 testees from Ghana, 930 from Liberia and 36,341 from Nigeria.

In summary, the Council's WASSCE, national examinations and aptitude/selection tests were patronized by a total of **3,280,594** candidates in 2014. This figure indicated an overall decrease of **2.74%** below the **3,373,077** candidates recorded in 2013. Among the factors responsible for the decline in total entries for the Council's examinations and tests in 2014 were the measures adopted by the various offices and ministries of education to curb examination malpractice.

Examination Malpractice

Your Excellency, I am pleased to report that leakage of question papers did not occur in any office of WAEC in 2014. It is however, worrisome that other forms of malpractice featured in the conduct of the Council's examinations in all the member countries. The fight against examination malpractice is rigorous and the weapons are expensive. The National Offices have intensified their efforts at eradicating the malaise through various strategies, such as extensive group briefings or meetings, stakeholders' dialogue, prime space media advertorials, the use of metal detectors, etc. These efforts will soon be rendered futile, if all other stakeholders remain indifferent leaving WAEC to wrestle with the highly sophisticated, innovative and resilient perpetrators. I therefore, wish to reiterate our constant appeal to our member governments and other stakeholders in education to resume a fierce battle against examination malpractice to safeguard the integrity of public examinations in our Sub-region.

Deployment Of ICT To Service Delivery

The Council has computerised significant proportions of its operations, activities and service delivery systems. Management has continued to adopt global best practices and dream up more initiatives to place the Council on the same level with other reputable international educational institutions. The Computer-Based Testing (CBT) facility at the WAEC International Office, Agidingbi, Lagos has commenced operation. Effort is being intensified to actualise a Video-conferencing project for the Council. Training programmes are being organised for staff to facilitate the implementation of Online Aptitude Testing. Technology is being deployed to detect malpractice cases with the piloting of Item Differentia Profile software. These various efforts indicate that WAEC's appetite for technology is insatiable and the Council's technology-driven service delivery systems have placed it light years ahead of its competitors.

Finance

There was no improvement in the funding of the National Offices and the Headquarters during the past year, but through prudent management of resources the Council was able to keep afloat in the face of escalating costs of goods and services. This unpleasant situation notwithstanding, the Secretariat profoundly appreciates the visible efforts made by the government representatives on Council at ensuring the fulfilment of financial commitments to the Council by their respective governments. I urge them to do more for us in the current year. Management will continue to make representations to the appropriate departments and agencies for funds and we shall strive to achieve and sustain top performance in service delivery to be able to persuade, convince and encourage our member governments to give greater attention to the timely and adequate funding of this flagship organisation.

WAEC Endowment Fund

Distinguished guests, the 20th WAEC Endowment Fund Lecture, titled *What Else are We Writing on the Slate: A Holistic Preparation of the Youth* was delivered

yesterday by Hon. Augustine Kpehe Ngafuan, Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Liberia. The lecture has been described by many as a product of uncommon erudition. I use this opportunity to congratulate Hon. Ngafuan on the outstanding delivery of the lecture. I wish to remind the general public that copies of this and the earlier lectures can be obtained at WAEC offices across the member countries.

At this opening ceremony, the WAEC Excellence Award in respect of the May/June 2014 WASSCE will be presented to three candidates - Master Mickail Hasan (1st Prize), Master Blaykyi Kenyah (2nd Prize), Master Archibald Henry Enniful (3rd Prize). The three candidates, all from Ghana, were selected from a total of **2,018,497** candidates who sat the examination in The Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

In addition to the first prize, the Augustus Bandele Oyediran Award for the Best Candidate in West Africa will be presented to Master Mickail Hasan.

Also at this ceremony, the prestigious *Distinguished Friends of Council* Award will be conferred on one of our own, Mr. Eli M. Lumei, a Liberian and former Head of the Monrovia Office of WAEC.

Conclusion

Your Excellency, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I wish to express profound gratitude to the governments and peoples of the member nations of WAEC for keeping the Council alive and functioning creditably for over six decades. We appreciate the strong cord of unity which binds together members of the great WAEC family in all the member nations, and wish that the cord be made even stronger in the years ahead.

I wish to publicly express our special appreciation to the Chairman of Council, Emeritus Professor Pius Augustine Ike Obanya whose three-year tenure as Chairman ends with the current meeting. Prof. Obanya's calmness, astounding sense of humour, wealth of experience in international collaborations, leadership qualities and unquenchable love for education were all brought to bear on the

Council's operations and activities these three years. His handling of the affairs of Council has strengthened the unity and mutual understanding among Council members. He encouraged sincerity, tenacity of purpose and total commitment by all and thus broadened the way to quality decisions and successful operations for the Council. We cannot thank him enough.

We are indeed grateful to all Members of Council and its various committees at both international and national levels for their immeasurable contribution to the Council's success in the Sub-region.

I appreciate all my colleagues, particularly the Heads of National Office, for their support and commitment which has earned our organisation an impressive scorecard.

Most of all, I thank the Almighty God for the opportunity provided for each of us to contribute positively to the development of education in our Sub-region. I pray for His continued grace and protection in the current year and beyond.

Thank you all and God bless.