

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

...Pedagogies and Odyssey of
My Ivory Tower Years at IFELAW

A VALEDICTORY LECTURE

By:

PROFESSOR MARGARET T. OKORODUDU-FUBARA

@ ODUDUWA HALL, OBAFEMI AWOLOWO
UNIVERSITY, ILE-IFE, OSUN STATE, NIGERIA

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[Protocols & Pleasantries]

PART A

PRELUDE... How did I get here?

John 1: 1-3 “*In the beginning was the WORD, and the WORD was with God, and the WORD was God. 2. He was in the beginning with God. 3. All things were made through Him, and without Him, nothing was made that was made.*”

Jeremiah 1:5 “*Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born, I sanctified you, I ordained you a prophet to the nations.*”

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen... everything that has a beginning surely has an end. Today the 6th of April, 2021 I stand before you in this hallowed University Hall as a **Destiny (definitely not an 'accidental') Professor and Scholar of Law** to deliver my **Valedictory Lecture**, twenty-two (22) years after the delivery of my **Inaugural Lecture** in this same hallowed chamber on the 13th of April, 1999 [see: the **Inaugural Lecture Series 133 @ Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, titled “DYNAMICS OF A NEW WORLD ENVIRONMENTAL LEGAL ORDER”, Obafemi Awolowo University Press Limited, 1999**].

Let me assure you *ab initio* that this Valedictory Lecture will be an exciting one, more intellectually relaxing and interestingly stimulating than the usual strictly academic and brain-charging Inaugural Lecture which was intellectually stimulating, but brain-cracking for the listening audience. This simply should be the pattern of a Valedictory Lecture... a relaxed farewell address. An occasion for reminiscing on my personal sojourn in time and space at this unique citadel of learning, before I take a bow from the Obafemi Awolowo University, today as I clock 70 gracious years to the glory of God Almighty. The Valedictory Lecture is a perfect platform to appreciate God Almighty, the University, my colleagues, students and teeming friends and of course my precious family, who made this 'career journey' a sweet and memorable experience for me.

Against the backdrop the two Scriptures I quoted, lending credence to my assertion and description of myself as “**Destiny Professor and Scholar of Law**”, consciously steered by my father Chief (Engr.) Alfred O.E. Okorodudu, **JP**, of blessed memory and my mother Mrs. Susannah L. Okorodudu under the guidance of God Almighty; my journey into that Divinely crafted destiny started in this same place, the University of Ife in 1968 (53 years ago). After passing out in 1967 from secondary school, Queens School, Ede/Ibadan, I gained admission

the following year to study 'Prelim Law' at the University of Ife, Ile-Ife. UNIFE was the only university in the southwest at the time that offered admission for pre-law to student/applicants with excellent Ordinary Levels (GCE) qualification and Preliminary Examinations result. Here I was at the tender age of 17 years old, stepping my feet for the very first time in 1968 on the soil of the place that would eventually be my DIVINELY ORDAINED *LOCUS* OF SOJOURN for more than three and a half decades to the glory of God Almighty. The same God who knew me before I was formed in the womb, and sent out His WORD that I shall be a Lawyer, Professor and Scholar of Law.

That narrative continues. After completing my prelim law program in the 1968/69, I did not remain in Ife. I sought and gained admission to the Faculty of Law, University of Lagos, Akoka, Yaba, Lagos through the Dean, Professor Teslim Olawale Elias, the iconic/legendary legal luminary (who at the time was also the Federal Attorney General). With the consent of my Dad, an appointment was scheduled by my uncle Chief M.E.R. Okorodudu, *QC*, of blessed memory for me to meet Prof. Elias at the Federal Ministry of Justice, Marina, Lagos and personally present my request to the larger than life legal icon. I remember very vividly to this day, his response. When I handed over my results from Queens School (the school certificate/GCE) and my University of Ife prelim year final examinations results to him, he looked through very carefully, nodded his head approvingly and said, "I am sure you will do better than most of the students we have admitted with direct entry A 'Levels results. That prophetic utterance, I cannot say that it was a heavy burden, but it definitely kept me seriously focused academically, as Baba Elias himself (as we called him) showed keen interest in my academic performance all through my UNILAG Law days 1969/1972. This was Divine set-up.

When I applied to the University College London (UCL) for my first LL.M Degree program in 1974/75, Professor Elias who was then the Chief Justice of Nigeria graciously gave me a very positive reference in support of my application for the post-graduate admission. **UCL Faculty of Law is one of the world's leading law schools and ranked 8th globally in the 2018 Times Higher Education World University Rankings for Law.** When I resumed studies at UCL Law, the Dean of the faculty, Professor Ryder who knew our legendary Professor Elias very well was desirous to see me and enquired about his highly esteemed academic colleague Professor Elias. I sensed it right away from the meeting with the dean that, coming from Nigeria and because of the drawn

connection with the academic legal icon as my referee, there was a high expectation from me in my PG studies at UCL. I must perform excellently and give credence to the letter of reference Prof. Elias gave on my behalf, paving way for my admission to the Master of Laws Degree program at UCL. I had no choice and that I did.

In 1976 I applied for the doctoral degree program at Harvard Law School (HLS). Harvard replied that doctoral applicants should have undergone the LL.M Harvard Program prior to consideration for the doctorate. That was not an issue for me. After all, my iconic Mentor, Professor Olawale Elias had multiple higher degrees in law. It was a dream comes true for me, if I ended up with multiple law degrees just like him. At this point in time Professor Elias was a Judge at the International Court of Justice, at The Hague, The Netherlands. Again I requested a reference from him, which he graciously mailed out to Harvard Law School in support of my application for admission. HLS which was founded in 1817 is the oldest continuously operating law school in the United States and one of the most prestigious in the world. Harvard Law, although ranked as the 3rd best law school in the United States by the U.S. News & World Report, the most widely referenced rankings publisher in the American legal community, **is ranked 1st by the Academic Ranking of World Universities.** I obtained the LL.M Harvard in 1977 and the SJD Harvard (Doctor of Juridical Sciences) in 1980, thereby completing the full circle - 360* of my academic endeavor that landed me straight into the Ivory Tower both in Nigeria and abroad.

Vice Chancellor, Sir, my distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I have given this brief narrative to show vividly the **Finger of God** in my **Academic/Career Trajectory... from Queens School to UNIFE to UNILAG to UCL to Harvard... and back to UNIFE (OAU).** Definitely, this is not accidental, but divinely crafted... *John 1: 1-3; Jeremiah 1: 5.*

Getting to know the Valedictorian:

Briefly, before I proceed further, in order to put my Valedictory Lecture in proper perspectives, I must tell you the following about myself:

1. Who I am;
2. Where I coming from; and
3. Where I am proceeding towards, in short, my trajectory... purpose, goals and achievements of my academic experience.

I shall address this in real and actual terms. As we are aware these questions are also relevant considerations in spiritual terms. It is important that every human being takes time out to ask him or herself: who we are; where we come from; where we are going. There is no doubt that education and our religious background plays important role in these seemingly philosophical questions. So briefly, in real terms:

Professor Margaret T. Okorodudu-Fubara is a 1972 law graduate of the University of Lagos with a distinguished record in environmental law consulting and university teaching. She was called to the Bar in 1973. She obtained the LL.M and SJD Degrees in 1977 and 1980, respectively, from Harvard Law School, USA, after a first LL.M Degree from the University of London, UK in 1975. She is the 1st Woman Professor of Law in Nigeria's first generation/Federal University; the 1st Professor of Environmental Law in the ECOWAS sub-region and 2nd Professor of Environmental Law in sub-Saharan Africa. Professor Okorodudu-Fubara, a former Dean of the Faculty of Law, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria (1995-2000), is widely published in reputable national and international journals and is the author of the 1st Nigerian text book on environmental law, widely circulated nationally and abroad. Professor Okorodudu-Fubara was granted the Senior Fulbright Scholar Award 1990/91 and the Robert S. McNamara (World Bank) Fellow 1990/91 (the first time in history a scholar would be recipient of both highly coveted scholarly grants in the same year according to an official of the USIS) to undertake overseas Sabbatical as Visiting Scholar at the St. Mary's University School of Law, San Antonio, Texas, USA, 1990/91 (primary host institution); and invited Visiting Scholar, Harvard Law School, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA, 1990/91 (secondary host institution). She was appointed Visiting Professor at the School of Law, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon, USA, 2001/02 where she taught Comparative Environmental Law. She was appointed Consultant for the United Nations Environment Programme, Gigiri, Nairobi, Kenya, 2002/03 engaged as part of the team to prepare a Draft Manual on the UNEP Guidelines on Compliance with and Enforcement of Multilateral Agreements. Professor Okorodudu-Fubara is a member of the IUCN an Associate Member of the IUCN Academy of Environmental Law. She was appointed by the President, Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Member of the National Universities Commission (NUC) 2009-2011. In 2012 she was

appointed Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) Professor of Taxation (Professorial Chair).

I have briefly **described** who I am, perhaps as most of you best know me. Let me also as a planetary citizen and an environmentalist **define** who I am from the bigger picture of the universe and specifically, situate within the planet Earth... an environment of the complex of physical, chemical, and biological factors/processes which sustain life...the only humankind-friendly planet and life sustaining environment. Man, which includes me, is part of the network of the natural components which make up the Earth's planetary ecosystem. (Okorodudu-Fubara, 1998).

It is important to understand, as has been rightly observed that *'the feeling we have as human-beings, of being part of this universe does not just start at our adult age, nor does it just arise from logical thinking. At the inception of our lives we feel tied to something greater than us. Right "from childhood we feel deeply linked to the universe and we face it with mixed feeling of respect and astonishment" and "we have become aware that the meaning of our lives is not separated from the meaning of the planet itself". Until we discover other human life sustaining planets, we only have one planet Earth "that is our friend. We have to learn to love it". (Moacir Gadotti, 2009).*

Mankind is first and foremost Earth citizen before our secondary geographical citizenship defined by the country each and everyone is individually born into or adopted by the constitutional law of the country. Just as we bear responsibilities as true patriots of our geographical country of citizenship, every citizen of planet Earth bear responsibility for good stewardship of the Earth, as true citizens of planet Earth. I am a true lover and defender of this God-given planet Earth and very passionate about the protection of the global environment, sustainable development and conservation of the world's natural resources for the present and future generations.

PART B

Transition to a Pedagogue in the University ...

I resumed life as an academic at the University of Ife on the 2nd December, 1982 (just six months short of my 10th year post-call anniversary, thus effectively 'escaping' the widely presumed appointment to the Higher Bench in the Bendel State Judiciary), and so transiting from the courtroom to the classroom. For someone who had never been a teacher at the primary or secondary school level, now finding myself as a pedagogue in the university, I simply deployed my most recent teaching and learning experience garnered from Harvard Law...the Socratic paradigm, often times combined with my earlier experiences from UCL and of course Professor T.O. Elias' very interesting and captivating teaching style that almost literally glues the student to the iconic teacher's lucid and captivating pedagogy. Frankly, this is not to say that I was quite close to my legendary mentor's powerful knowledge impartation method. The Harvard pedagogy offered a functional teaching method for me, especially at the postgraduate level.

My first set of post-graduate students, you may like to call them my pedagogic 'guinea pigs', actually they were 'eggheads', the best of the best, highly cerebral, some of them sitting across from me as I deliver this lecture today... Professor Ademola Popoola; Professor Mike Ikhariale; Chief Mike Ozekhome, SAN; Dr. Damola Aderemi and Professor Wale Ajai. The good news and the joy of my pride over these excellent gentlemen (all of them my 'aburos') as a matter of fact and to the glory of God Almighty; today I am yielding the Doyen seat of the Faculty of Law to one of these remarkable men, from my first set of PG students, the learned and erudite Professor Ademola Popoola, as I take my leave from the Faculty of Law, Obafemi Awolowo University. I leave with full assurance that with him in that saddle, the faculty is in very good and capable hands of the finest crop of my younger colleagues in the ranks of Professors, Readers, Senior Lecturers, Lecturers I and II, and the Junior Trainee Fellows (JTF) who have concertedly revitalized the Faculty of Law under the current Deanship of Professor Femi Odunsi and Vice Dean Dr. Korede Yusuff (Reader).

Since joining the services of the University in December 1982, I have been involved in the teaching of the following courses:

- Law of Business Associations
- Law of Taxation
- Commercial Law
- Criminal Law
- Environmental Law
- Law of Corporate Management and Finance
- Revenue Law
- International Environmental Law

My administrative services within the university system have included:

- Acting Head, Department of Business Law, 1987/88
- Acting Head Department of Jurisprudence and Private Law, 1988/89
- Acting Head Department of Business Law
- Acting Dean, Faculty of Law 1995/96 to 1997/98
- Dean, Faculty of Law 1998/99 to 1999/2000

As Dean of Law, by virtue of Statute 13: 3(v) (i)-(k), I was mandated to act as Chairman at meetings of the Faculty; Chairman at all meetings of the Faculty Board when I am present, and member of all Committees and other Boards appointed by the Faculty. I exercised "general superintendence over the academic and administrative affairs of the Faculty." I was also responsible for the presentation of "candidates for the award of Degrees (except Honorary Degrees) and other academic titles and distinctions in the subjects for which the Faculty is responsible." The period of my Deanship marked a significant turning point in the history of the Faculty of Law, Obafemi Awolowo University. As first female Dean of Law interestingly in the Year 2000, the Faculty/University recorded the emergence for the first time of an **LL.B First Class Honours Degree** awarded to a remarkable lady, Miss Olufunsho Aweda who, breaking the glass ceiling obviously changed the narrative for the records in the Faculty of Law, Obafemi Awolowo University since the establishment of this University. She subsequently applied to Harvard Law School for the LL.M Programme which I supported with a reference and she was admitted and successfully completed the programme.

At the close of my deanship, I received a letter of commendation and appreciation from the brave, bold, popular, well admired and forthright Vice Chancellor, Professor Roger Makanjuola. At this juncture permit me to refer to the letter Ref. No. VC 253/Vol.1/35 from the Office of the Vice-Chancellor dated 31st July, 2000 and it reads...

“Dear Professor Okorodudu-Fubara,
YOUR TWO-YEAR SERVICE AS DEAN OF THE FACULTY OF LAW: APPRECIATION AND GRATITUDE

On behalf of the Senate of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, I am writing to thank you most sincerely for your dedicated service as Dean of the Faculty of Law of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife over the last two years. During that period, your commitment and loyalty to the University, and the undoubted academic distinction and administrative ability which you brought to the task yielded great dividends. You have made your mark – a Faculty at peace with itself and with an enhanced sense of academic commitment.

I wish to thank you personally for all the help that you gave to me. You obviously cared for the success of my administration. Your support through the hard times, when so many others turned their backs, will forever be in my memory.

God bless you.
Yours Sincerely,
Sgd. Professor R.O.A. Makanjuola
Acting Vice-Chancellor.

Some of us will remember those turbulent days, when Professor Roger Makanjuola stepped in as Acting Vice Chancellor before he was confirmed as the substantive Vice Chancellor. I remember those occasions when we (DVCs, Deans, H.O.Ds and others) assisted Professor Makanjuola who was personally in the engine room at the University dam as “emergency plumber”, joined hands in pumping water to ensure continued supply of water to the residents of the staff quarters and the university community at large. Those were the days union unrest stalled smooth operations in the university and the Acting VC Roger Makanjuola would fearlessly step out to call off the bluff of the striking non-academic staff

and crossed many of those 'lines' which the 'African' feared to tread. (Lol). Right from the early days of my appointment in the university, I was also actively engaged in extracurricular assignments. I had intra-faculty and inter-faculty academic and administrative duties, experience and engagement as Member:

- Faculty Board of Social Science, representing Faculty of Law, 1983/84
- Faculty Board of Environmental Design and Management, representing Fac of Law, 1984/85
- Board of Post-Graduate School, representing Faculty of Law, 1986/87 to 1989/90
- Editorial Committee, Obafemi Awolowo University Publishing Company
- Panel of Enquiry set up to Investigate the Theft of Electric Typewriter in the Consultancy Unit of the Institute of Agriculture, Research and Training, Ibadan
- Panel Set up to Investigate Alleged Assault on the Person of the President of the Student Union
- Students Disciplinary Panel, set up by the Vice Chancellor in respect of Students' Unrest on the Campus which started around September 1995
- Council of Legal Education, Bwari, Abuja 1995/96 to 1999/2000
- Organizing/Planning Committee on Repositioning the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife for the 21st Century
- Multiple-time Member/Chairman of National Universities Commission Accreditation Panel... Tasked with the Accreditation of Academic (Law) Programmes in some Nigerian Universities
- Board of the National Universities Commission (NUC), 2009 – 2011
- OAU-MESA (Mainstreaming Environment and Sustainability in African Universities) Working Group
- Chairman, Institute Board, Institute for Entrepreneurship and Development Studies, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, 2016-2017
- Chairman, Ethics and Compliance Unit of the Anti-Corruption and Transparency Units of the Federal Government, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.

Let me quickly add that my appointment as Chairman OAU Ethics and Compliance Unit set up by the incumbent Vice Chancellor, Professor Eyiotope Ogunbodede, as component part of his mission to re-orientate the University in July 2018, was one which I accepted with the utmost sense of responsibility and patriotism because of the expected impact by my team members, who in the

words of the Vice Chancellor “**were carefully selected because of the sensitive nature of the assignment.**” The Vice Chancellor's confidence in the members “**abilities to steer above the challenges and lay a solid foundation**” was strong motivation for us to contribute in our own little way to reversing Nigeria's negative corruption index global image and going forward to become one of the top developed and respected countries in the world by 2030.

At the maiden meeting, I reminded members that the Unit was an offshoot of the Anti-Corruption and Transparency Units of the Federal Government which has been established in all MDAs. The idea was flagged off since 2001, but had remained largely inactive in most Federal Universities until recently when it was activated by the current Vice-Chancellor Prof. Ogunbodede. It is an honour indeed to be counted worthy by my Vice-Chancellor to serve as the First Chairman of such a strategic body. The assignments my team was entrusted with were quite weighty and onerous. However, we took the bull by the horn determined to play our own role in ridding our own immediate community, OAU of endemic economic, social, academic and moral putrefactions/decay. Be that as it may, we were determined to put in our best and succeed. Before I handed over to my successor, the team/unit had full assurance of unalloyed support of the University Management. The Vice-Chancellor was convinced that the Unit could serve as the leading light for other similar units to follow. I believe we set up a good template to emulate.

PART C

The Valedictory “Lecture”...My Bowing out “Speech”

Against the backdrop of the foregoing, I like to speak on the subject matter which has shaped my intellectual imagination, passion and interest over the years, and interestingly has been the pivotal point of my odyssey as I come to the end of my very fulfilling years of service at GREAT IFE under this **Valedictory Lecture Title...**

“Education for Sustainability...Pedagogies and Odyssey of my Ivory Tower Years at IFELAW (1982-2021)”

There is synergy between **Life** and **Education**, the latter meaning “the act or process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge and of developing the powers of reasoning and judgment”. Learning and life are interlinked. As a matter of fact before we attain the prescribed school age (even as suckling infants) we learn to live to survive. This simply is fundamental and is **the secret of how we “live life”**. We either “**learn to live**” or we shall “**live to drift**” if we fail to “learn to live”. As a pedagogue and an environmentalist, I am convinced that it is very important how we **learn to live sustainably**. Life itself is an unending **learning process from cradle to grave**. Life pedagogy is at the core of living successfully and sustainably in this one and only life sustaining planet Earth. Eco-pedagogy, which simply is a pedagogy focusing on life takes into account people, cultures, lifestyles and the respect towards identity and diversity.

It is a fact we cannot run away from. We learn to live on this Earth, and for optimum results, the following considerations are vital:

- How to learn to live
- Where to learn to live
- What to learn to live, and
- Who to 'teach', to teach to live (training the trainer).

Educate Man to Live

Education is the foundation of life. Education (in this sense formal or non-formal) is the building block of life. Let me reiterate once again, learning is a life process. Every human being on planet Earth learns in one **form** or the other, and the 'form' of learning makes a huge difference. We are a 'learning-being' created

by our Maker for survival at optimum level greater and higher than any other living creature. **Genesis 1:27-30** *“So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. . . Then God blessed them, and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth. . . And God said, “See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed, to you it shall be for food. . . Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every herb for food”; and it was so.”*

This is not an ordinary bequeathal. It is not as man gives to man. This is a Divine bequest and Man is yet to unravel the full package with well educated minds. Man must learn to process, utilize and do all that we are mandated to do by the Creator with this Divine gift of life and the unique substances attached to it for maximum good of life and our 'development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' on this planet. In short we must demonstrate the full competence to carry out all what **Genesis 1:27-30** has given us the liberty to do as humans with our Divinely gifted rich environmental resources. An idiot certainly cannot do it, only the well educated, well informed, highly imaginative/ingenious and with well calculated ability to take risks, can do this and achieve major breakthroughs for mankind.

Obviously, we can say Man has not disappointed God much in this regard, barring fallouts from climate change which still threatens life on planet Earth. Since the Industrial Revolution Man's display of technological and scientific ingenuity has skyrocketed to astonishing heights. Recently on 18th of February, 2021 the entire World was spellbound as CNN life-streamed NASA Team's successful landing of Rover code-named **Perseverance** on the Red Planet, Mars, 200 million kilometers away from planet Earth. This is an extraordinary accomplishment in search of, and to gather information of possible life sustaining matters in a planet that once bore such evidence three thousand plus years ago. Man is anxious to discover whether we are alone in the universe, and if there is another planet where man can safely call home in addition to our own planet Earth. The extraordinary robot, Perseverance landed on the Red Planet as Human Ambassador with clearly defined scientific mission 'poking the surface of Mars for information for Mankind'. When on 16th July, 1969 **Astronaut Neil Armstrong** (the man who took the giant leap) landed **Apollo 11** on the Moon for the first time in our human history, he said these famous words: *“a small step for man and a big step for*

humanity”. Successful landing of Perseverance is another huge potential game changer for Mankind. This is what “education” has made possible.

The point I like to emphasize here, is that the Americans (NASA) didn't just get there overnight or in slumber. They did it by unleashing their acquired and well grounded scientific and technological knowledge, talents and ingenuity built on a sound, efficient and transformative education system. Interestingly, following the landing of Perseverance on Mars, one of the interviewed CNN guest-commentators quipped that the planet is “not the kind of place you want to live and raise your kids, but very good for scientific research”. The immediate issue at stake is **“what, where, and how”** do humans learn to live sustainably, meaningfully and in harmony with and within our earthly environment and with other living things with whom and which we share planet Earth. In short, the pedagogy of life/ecosystem is fundamental to sustainability of life on planet Earth.

Dreams in abeyance

I am tracing some of my frustrations in this regard in the context of my Ivory Tower experience to my personal involvement in and experience with the Mainstreaming Environment and Sustainability into African Universities (A UNEP-Initiative) and the fallout from walking the talk. To set the stage, let me reproduce the statement I made as the Team Leader and MESA, Nigeria-Rep, when I led the group on a courtesy visit to His Excellency, Vice-President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, GCON at Aso Rock on 14th November, 2007;

“Your Excellency, Vice-President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, permit me first and foremost to thank you for the positive response to the request by the Obafemi Awolowo University – MESA Group for a courtesy visit and to appraise you of our mission and aspirations for our great country Nigeria. We deeply appreciate your kindness, and understandably too, your soft spot for the academia and the nation's Education industry, which in actual fact is your primary constituency. You distinguished yourself in that field (prior to taking to politics), having obtained the highest degree (PhD) in your academic field of study and actually started your professional life as a Lecturer in the tertiary education sector. This is a remarkable distinction which our incumbent nation's First Citizen, His Excellency President Umaru Musa Yar Adua and Your Excellency have in common.

Worldwide, education stands out as a veritable springboard of a country's development. It is the builder of the nation's critical manpower base. A nation can only be as strong as the quality of its education foundation. Look out there for a great industrialized highly developed country in the world today, and you are sure to find that what is propelling such country is a very strong education system.

The OAU-MESA Group strongly believes that there is an urgent need to revitalize and reform Nigeria's education sector. This is the motive for the Group seeking audience with His Excellency, the Vice-President, essentially to enlist your support and that of the present administration for the rapid promotion of "Education for Sustainable Development" (ESD) in our country in general, and Mainstreaming Education and Sustainability (MESA) in our universities.

Justification

Let me begin by explaining briefly what we mean by Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Two things that ESD is not must be stated upfront. The aim is not to teach sustainable development, as such, but to prepare the next generation to be better equipped to contribute to achieving sustainable development of people and country.

It is noteworthy that the United Nations declared the "DECADE ON EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, 2005 – 2014, (UNDESD)". UNESCO, the United Nations mandated task manager for the UNDESD succinctly explained ESD as preparing people for all walks of life to plan for, cope with and find solutions for issues that threaten the sustainability of our planet...understanding and addressing these global issues of sustainability that affect individual nations and communities are at the heart of ESD. These issues come from three spheres of sustainable development: environment, society and economy.

The vision of the UNDESD is to create a world where everyone has the opportunity to benefit from quality education and learn the values, behavior and lifestyles required for a sustainable future and for positive societal transition. From this perspective, the OAU-MESA Group strongly advocate for the adoption and inculcating the ideas and practice of ESD in Nigeria from primary to tertiary level of our education system. This is very

vital for our national development and could turn out to be the much needed positive game changer. The development of our great country Nigeria lies in our own hands. We must unleash talents of our internally endowed human resource through quality education (teaching and learning) and training in formal and non-formal sectors.

We should not be too surprised that the vast majority of developing countries have simply not moved far on the path of industrialization, even in the 21st Century despite far reaching technology-transfer clauses in various bilateral and multilateral trade and development treaties signed with the developed highly industrialized nations. The fact of the matter is, 'transfer of technology' will not come freely or easily on a platter of gold from the North to South (i.e. developed to developing countries). Additional to several of the known and unknown constraints, there are also the obvious legal issues of intellectual property rights to deal with. Most of the technologies are in legally protected/secure private domain/rights in the developed countries.

Against this backdrop, we must look inward and develop our own scientific and technological expertise. This will entail a radical transformation of our nation's education system, particularly the extant pedagogies towards a paradigm that will promote overall sustainable development. There is urgent need to reevaluate our methods of impartation of knowledge on the one hand as well as the acquisition of knowledge cum learning/process/skills mindset. It is imperative for our schools, colleges, universities, etc to be more creative and innovative in our teaching and learning processes at these various levels of our education system, particularly at the tertiary level. For our students, emphasis must be placed on hands on experience to inculcate a culture of ingrained actualization of acquired theoretical knowledge that can easily be deployed to path breaking technological, scientific, medical, etc breakthroughs to promote much desired development of the country.

Your Excellency, it might interest you to know that the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) initiated the Project, "Mainstreaming Environment and Sustainability in Africa (MESA) Universities. We are proud to inform Your Excellency that Obafemi Awolowo University is actively working with UNEP in this Initiative. Obafemi Awolowo

University has also been selected as the Regional Centre for the West Africa sub-region.

Our goal as a nation is to be one of the 20 Global super powers and strongest world economies by year 2020. One of the means by which we can attain that goal is by mainstreaming sustainable development concepts and practices into our nation's education system, in other words, essentially revitalizing our methods of teaching, learning, research, community engagement and management of the nation's tertiary institutions.

The graduates produced by our tertiary institutions, certainly have major role to play in the development and future of this country. Graduates and undergraduates (recall Bill Gates was just a fresh intake at Harvard when he came up with an invention that revolutionized telecoms to this day) from our higher educational institutions should be able to apply their acquired learning/knowledge to improve their lives, their communities, their nation and above all, to make responsible decisions and influence others for the greater good.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is a vital key to unlocking the potential and of course, natural talents in our youths. This is majorly the secret behind the technological and scientific "wonder success stories" pervasive in the leading industrial nations, the United States of America, United Kingdom, Japan, Germany, France, Sweden, Switzerland, Canada, etc. Education is a formidable launch pad for sustainable development of any nation. There is no doubt that the ESD vision is in tandem with the overall vision and mission of the Yar Ardua Administration for Nigeria. It is on this basis that we are seeking the support of the Vice President to ensure that this dream for our country is realized.

We thank Your Excellency and we pray that God Almighty shall endow you and the President with Divine wisdom to successfully steer the affairs of this nation.

Presented by:

*Professor Margaret T. Okorodudu-Fubara,
Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.
MESA, Nigeria-Rep. (14th November, 2007)*

[With me on the courtesy visit to Aso Rock were: Professor Lara Orafidiya (representing the DVC Academic); Professor Chris Manus; Professor Ayobami Salami; Mrs Dorothy Salami; and visiting Swedish guest, Mr. Micheal Ward. Also present at the meeting was Distinguished Senator Emmanuel Diffa who graciously facilitated the meeting with His Excellency at Aso Rock].

Outcome of the Courtesy Visit

Frankly, the team was not left in any doubt regarding the Vice President deep understanding of the issues I presented before him. The former President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan is a scholar, an academic who obtained the Bachelors, Masters, and Doctorate Degrees in the natural sciences field and with a displayed passion for environmental protection issues. I saw His Excellency, then Deputy Governor of Bayelsa State, personally present and active in Conference/Workshops related to environment matters at the **2004 SPDC "Integrated Environment and Community Development Stakeholders Workshop"**, organized by Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria, Limited at the Petroleum Training Institute, Conference Centre Complex, Effurun, Warri. So it did not come as a surprise to us when His Excellency responded positively to the MESA Team and instructed the Minister of State for Education who the VP had in attendance at the meeting with us, to ensure that the Minister followed up with the MESA Group for the realization of the goals and objectives of MESA in Nigeria.

UNFORTUNATELY THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR EDUCATION DID NOT FOLLOW UP WITH US... and our MESA dream seemed on the verge of cracking up. We continued to struggle with the support we were getting from the National Universities Commission under the leadership of the Executive Secretary, Professor Julius Okojie. Professor Okojie, like the former President is not a novice to environment matters. In fact, he is one of the listed national environmental experts. This in part explained the keen interest he took in the MESA mission, giving our team huge personal and NUC organizational support to the extent possible logistically.

Where is MESA today???

The original MESA Initiative technically has been 'retired' and 'replaced' by **Global Universities Partnership on Environment for Sustainability (GUPES)**, as one of the flagship programmes of UN Environment's

Environmental Education Training Unit. GUPES builds on the successes of the Mainstreaming Environment and Sustainability in African Universities, the nascent Mainstreaming Environment and Sustainability in the Caribbean Universities and the Asia-Pacific Regional University Consortium (RUC). There are presently, over 800 universities and regional partners/focal points from five different continents within the growing GUPES network. (See, UNEP Newsletter). It is active at the regional level in Africa, Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean, and the national level in Spain.

The overall goal of GUPES, similarly to that of the defunct MESA which preceded it is to promote the integration of environment and sustainability concerns into teaching, research, community engagement, the management of universities including greening of university infrastructure/facilities/operations, as well as to enhance student engagement and participation in sustainability activities both within and beyond universities. This is in tandem with the **UN Post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005 – 2014, and the outcome of the Rio+20 Summit – **The Future We Want** among others.

The Objectives are,

- To provide a strategic platform for the mainstreaming of environment and sustainability concerns into university systems across the world, and to facilitate inter-university networking on sustainability issues with emphasis on South-South and North-South partnerships;
- To build, through university education systems, a professional capacity and leadership needed for the prevention of and responses to environmental issues, risks and associated sustainable development challenges;
- To contribute to revitalizing the global higher education system and enabling it to address current sustainable development challenges with emphasis on UN Environment's seven thematic priorities;
- To contribute to knowledge generation within UN Environment's seven priority thematic areas and other contemporary environmental and sustainability issues, risks and challenges;
- To optimize development opportunities provided by ecosystem services in a sustainable manner in line with the principles of “Green Economy” and in the context of sustainable development;
- To help prepare the world for the projected impacts of global climate change, disasters and conflicts, harmful substances and hazardous

wastes, as well as to assist in reversing and mitigating these and other negative environmental and sustainability trends.

Africa Environment Education and Training Action Plan (AEETAP) 2015 – 2024: Strengthening Sustainable Development in Africa:

This is borne out of the perceived inadequate and uncoordinated environmental awareness in many African countries exacerbating environmental degradation within the continent. To address this challenge, the UN Environment, in collaboration with other stakeholders, is promoting capacity development for future professionals on environmental education. The AEETAP 2015 – 2024, an idea sponsored by the Africa Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), is one of the UN Environment's modes of facilitating and promoting environmental awareness, education and training.

The Action Plan advocates for ecosystem resource management; communication and dissemination of environmental material in all forms of education; spatial planning and urban design through green campus designs; sustainable tourism and efficient transport; and water and sanitation, among other green practices. The main objective of the AEETAP is to enhance community environmental education and training within the continent, through various formal education, training, lifelong learning and capacity building programmes and projects, encouraging participation of both males and females equally. These programmes and projects are envisaged to fundamentally improve the environmental, societal and economic state of Africa's people, and are closely aligned to the five AMCEN flagship programmes.

The Dream must be Resuscitated

So what happened to our goal to be “one of the 20 Global super powers and strongest economies by Year 2020”? That date has come and gone past; we did not achieve that national aspiration. All hope is not lost if we revisit the proposal for revitalization of our education system and retool our teaching and learning methods for effective and productive outcomes. MESA has transitioned internationally to **GUPES**. At our national level, here in Nigeria I am proposing, following that lead, MESA should effectively transition to the *Nigerian Universities Partnership on Environment for Sustainability*, **NUPES**, with the strategic goal of mainstreaming environment and sustainability issues in our tertiary institutions as a veritable launch pad that will filter through entire national education and societal systems. It cannot be **“business”**, or rather, **“learning as usual”**. The game plan must change. In fact the COVID 19 pandemic caught the

entire world off guard...and Africa in particular is still crawling, waiting for Vaccines from the developed world. This should be a wakeup call and makes it imperative for us as a people to be jolted out of our 19th Century 'analogue system' of teaching and learning. We must change course and do something different in the 'digital era' of the 21st Century, to be more prepared as a people and as a nation with appropriate skills and competences for present and future emergencies. If this will entail NUPES as a prime driver of swift revitalizing of our education system, let Nigeria embrace NUPES going forward. Education no doubt is a powerful force with unimaginable energy for transformation of the human being. I was fascinated when I heard President Joe Biden say, during his recent visit to the Pfizer Vaccine Plant, Portage, Michigan, **“We will be guided by science to save lives”**; and added, **“Once we get over COVID, we will end cancer.”** Wow! This is what sterner stuff or huge dreams are made of. NIGERIA/NIGERIANS CAN DREAM BIG TOO BUT THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR IT TO THRIVE MUST BE CREATED AND WELL ESTABLISHED.

Challenges/Teething Problems

Mainstreaming education for sustainable education in tertiary institutions is not without challenges. Some of these challenges based on a case study at a Teacher's College in Jamaica were found to include:

- Skepticism;
- Students' expectations of course;
- Content versus the actuality of an “expanded” course with ESD input;
- An absence of policy;
- Syllabus constraints; and
- Ways in which these were expressed.

Certainly, these challenges are not insurmountable. What we need to do in order to curtail or drastically reduce these perceived challenges is to lay a solid foundation for the entrenchment of mainstreaming education sustainability into the national psyche. This is fundamental. In addition to a strong political will, adequate economic/financial resources, and legal reforms to foster a robust national movement of education for sustainable development; we must consciously and widely disseminate **The Earth Charter** principles from the elementary through the tertiary levels.

I am an ardent advocate for The Earth Charter... *a Declaration of fundamental principles for building a just, sustainable, and peaceful global society in the 21st century*. Over the years I have introduced my students in all the courses I teach in the university at undergraduate and postgraduate levels to The Earth Charter, not just my Environmental Law courses. It is a starting point for all my students including Company Law (Law of Business Associations), Revenue Law, etc. I believe it is important and helpful for the students to fully understand and appreciate their locus inside the Cosmos as responsible Planetary citizens; and from the education they are getting from the university, they are also gaining the right values from the true and proper perspectives of planet Earth as their one and only life sustaining planetary environment; just as they acquire the knowledge to live a satisfying life in this world and make it a better place than they found it. The essence of the Earth Charter cuts across all the academic disciplines and subjects offered in the University.

What is the Earth Charter?

“The Earth Charter is a declaration of fundamental ethical principles for building a just, sustainable and peaceful global society in the 21st Century. It seeks to inspire in all people a new sense of global interdependence and a shared responsibility for the well-being of the whole human family, the greater community of life, and future generations. It is a vision of hope and a call to action.

The Earth Charter is centrally concerned with the transition to sustainable ways of living and sustainable human development. Ecological integrity is one major theme. However, the Earth Charter recognizes that the goals of ecological protection, the eradication of poverty, equitable economic development, respect for human rights, democracy, and peace are interdependent and indivisible. It provides, therefore, a new inclusive, integrated and ethical framework to guide the transition to a sustainable future.

The Earth Charter is a product of a decade-long, worldwide, cross cultural dialogue on common goals and shared values. The Earth Charter project began as a United Nations initiative, but it was carried forward and completed by a global civil society initiative.” (It was completed in March 2000 at UNESCO headquarters in Paris and launched during a special ceremony at the Peace Palace at the Hague, The Netherlands, on 29th June 2000).

As educators, as students, as pupils and as national leaders, we must leverage on the great potential of the Earth Charter for education and sustainable development. The programme initiated Decade on Education for Sustainable Development demands the re-examination of educational policy, in the sense of reorienting education from the kindergarten up to University and lifelong learning, so that it is clearly focused on acquiring knowledge, competences, perspectives and values that are related to sustainability. (Unesco, 2005).

I agree with Moacir Gadotti that the Earth Charter has a great educational potential, which has not been sufficiently explored either in formal or non-formal education; particularly his logical reasoning that, “(sic) **its proposal of intertranscultural dialogue, makes the Earth Charter a major contributor to conflicts resolution or avoidance in our civilization.** Education can help us overcome living a civilization crisis. The educational value inherent in The Earth Charter “is not a matter of creating a system that has a unique ideology, which would be a totalitarian initiative. It would be a matter of highlighting what we have in common. **If we don't find what we have in common, war is our only future...we need to highlight what binds us together.** Before highlighting our differences, we need to highlight what we, as human beings, have in common. The education systems are very similar all over the world, in spite of the cultural diversity. That aspect has both advantages and disadvantages. The disadvantage is their rigid structure, resisting to changes; the advantage is that the innovation introduced in one system can be introduced in the other systems more easily”. (Gadotti,2009). This is germane for Nigeria in the throes of perennial ethnic and religious conflicts amidst severe social tensions across the length and breadth of the country. This makes it all the more imperative for us as a nation to entrench Education for Sustainability. It is a *sine qua non* for peace and political stability and viability, and by extension the much quest for economic development and overall sustainable development of the country.

The Brundtland Report established the following as conditions for sustainable development:

- A political system that secures effective citizen participation in decision-making;
- An economic system that is able to generate surpluses and technical knowledge on a self-reliant and sustained basis;
- A social system that provides solutions for the tensions arising from disharmonious development;

- A production system that respects the obligation to preserve the ecological basis for development;
- A technological system that can search for new solutions continuously;
- An international system that fosters sustainable standards of trade and finances; and
- An administrative system that is flexible and has the capacity for self-correction. (Brundtland Report, 1987)

Wither Nigeria against the backdrop of these stipulated sustainable development “conditionality”? Are these conditions thriving here, if not... what, how, when can they be found as the 'actual facts of reality' or 'normal order of situation' in our country? What are the major factors that can stymie the perfect take-off and realization of the Sustainable Development Goals? Were there meaningful recorded success stories or major achievement with the Millennium Development Goals which preceded the SDGs? These are ongoing subject matter of academic research.

Relevance of Eco-pedagogy for sustainable development

We must reinforce the essence of pedagogy of the earth in our educational institutions. Eco-pedagogy is critical for sustainable development. The whole idea of “sustainable development” is not rocket science. It simply means development that is capable of satisfying the needs of today's generations without compromising the capacity of the opportunities of future generations. However, theoretically the academics of it as a course of study present it as technical subject. In very lucid words, carefully chosen and reasoned, H.E. Judge Nagendra Singh, President, International Court of Justice, in his foreword to the Report of the Experts Group on Environmental Law of the World Commission on Environment and Development, explained the concept of “sustainable development” as follows:

“The right to development does, however, have certain limitations in as much as it cannot be asserted at the expense of the community or even at the expense of neighboring States whose prospects may be jeopardized. For example, a State cannot, in the name of development, proceed to applications of nuclear energy in such a way as to harm the environment and imperil human life, whether in the immediate neighborhood or in the surrounding region. In fact environment and development go together and have to be examined simultaneously in this context. In the process of advocating sustainable development, one has to examine the

rights and responsibilities of States, both bilaterally and in relation to the international community as a whole. The need for cooperation among nations has to be viewed in the light of new imperatives. The effort of the World Commission need to be briefly mentioned here because, it makes a major contribution to the concept of development in relation to sustainability. The Commission's emphasis on "Sustainable Development" is vital to the well-being of humanity not only today but in the context of future generations. This aspect deserves to be fully appreciated not only in the legal domain but in terms of the physical world and its prosperity on which must depend the future of humanity." (Okorodudu-Fubara, 1998).

There is synergy between eco-pedagogy and education for sustainability. That brings me to the issue of how well many of us, supposedly the well educated, fully comprehend the physical world around us. Take for example, my listening audience right now may think they have a clear **understanding or definition of "FORESTS"**. With due respect some of us do not have that clear understanding. If I ask: What exactly is "forest"? The answer to this cuts across cognizance of **"forest de-facto"** and **"forest de-jure"**. The definition of "forest" is contained in different statutes, laws and regulations across the world; and these definitions vary from one country to another. Actual vegetation on the ground forms the basis of definition in some places. The European Union, for example, defined forestland as having at least 20% canopy closure and a minimum area of 0.5 hectares. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) on its part, has defined forests as land with 10% tree cover. The prevalent definitions rely largely on legal designation of areas as forests, or legal classification of land use as forest, agriculture, or urban. In Nigeria, the legal concept of forest can be gleaned from extant federal and states laws. The emphasis under the States' Forestry Laws is on "natural vegetation". The Control of Bush Burning Law, 1989 (Ondo State, defines "bush" to include "farms, forest, grass, leaves and weeds of whatever species" (Okorodudu-Fubara, 2013).

In the United States, the Wilderness Act 1964 expressing the policy of Congress to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness, under section 2(c) defines "wilderness" as follows:

"A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the Earth and its

community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor but does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean...an area of underdeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions as which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological or other features of scientific, education, scenic, or historical value."

Strangely and quite unscientifically, "forests" are sometimes defined or viewed as "tree lots". In actual fact, forests are more than simply "areas with trees", since trees are but one component of a forest ecosystem, which comprises various species of plants, animals, mammals, and other organisms that interact among themselves and with their physical environment. This is well captured under Principle 8(b) of the Rio Forest Principles which addresses issues of "...forest cover and forest productivity (sic) the rehabilitation, reforestation and reestablishment of trees and forests on unproductive, degraded and deforested lands, as well as through the management of existing forest resources". Forest resources encompass a wide range of fauna and flora, ecosystem, ecological products, and services, etc, (Okorodudu-Fubara, 2013).

The interactive teaching style I adopt in my classes takes the definition of 'forest' beyond the theoretical realm. I instruct the students in my final year environmental law class to apply their mental 'camera' and take a 'snapshot' of: **Planet Earth without the "forests"** as we have come to know... **"What do you see behind the camera lens?"** It is very difficult to imagine. It actually borders on the unthinkable and possibly, unimaginable. I tell the students to take a second to capture another mental picture. Visualize planet Earth without forests, plants and grass. What do you see? How do you perceive the world? Attempt to paint the big (unimaginable) picture of the vision of planet Earth without forests resources. The ensuing picture can be quite weird and almost scary to the viewer behind the mental camera lens. **The graphic substance of the emerging picture is a "naked", bare Mother Earth without "her forests"**. The forest is the natural garment, the lovely dressing which adorns or covers Mother Earth. Forests adorn planet Earth in its varied enchanting colours (mainly green),

patterns, shapes, contours, etc. Without it Mother Earth is stark naked. Deforestation is gradually robbing Mother Earth of her graceful cover. Man cannot through deforestation reduce graceful Mother Earth to a “disgraceful” status. A disgraced Mother Earth is a disgraced humanity (Okorodudu Fubara, 2013).

With this narrative and simple mental exercise/illustration the student captures the definition of forests in theory, as well as the deeper practical understanding of its importance and bearing on sustainability concepts. They understand, moreover, that forests are the natural lungs of the Earth as providers of carbon sinks for the mitigation of climate change, sustaining atmospheric air quality, and also vital for regulating the flow of the world's water courses. **Man derives unquantifiable life-sustaining valuables from the forest ecosystems** (UNEP, <http://www.unep.org>).

This approach of knowledge impartation aligns with the observation in the preface to the Brundtland Report, “**Our Common Future**” by Gro Halem Brundtland, the former Prime Minister of Norway, that “...*unless we are able to translate our words into a language that can reach the minds and hearts of both young and old people, we shall not be able to undertake the extensive social changes needed to correct the course of development.*” This is the underlining essence of eco-pedagogy and education for sustainability. It influenced greatly the trajectory during my career in imparting knowledge largely driven by concepts of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD). The DESD is seen as “*the golden opportunity offered to us all – committed teachers at all levels, schools and university heads, students, education ministers and other education politicians all around the world – to take serious matters seriously, to work with others to change our educational systems in every level*” (Carl Lindberg, 2007).

Towards a Transforming Education

So much can be achieved through transforming education. Education for sustainable development will contribute a great deal to make the citizens better prepared to face the challenges of the present and the future, and decision-makers who will act responsibly to create a viable country and by extension the world we live in. Five kinds of fundamental learning will be enhanced:

- Learning to know;
- Learning to do;

- Learning to be;
- Learning to live together, and
- Learning to transform oneself and society.

According to UNESCO, “...**a transforming education is necessary; an education that contributes to make the urgent and fundamental changes brought by the challenge of sustainability possible (sic). However, a learning experience within the ESD program cannot limit itself to a personal sphere – learning must lead to an active participation to search and adopt new organizational standards and changes (sic)...environmental education is an already established school subject that emphasizes the relationship between man and natural environment, in terms of how to preserve it and how to appropriately manage its resources. Therefore, sustainable development joins together environmental education by putting it in broader context that considers social and cultural factors and social-political issues, such as equality, poverty and quality of life.**” (Unesco, 2005). ESD will remain a focal point of educational systems going forward. We must reengineer our school systems and inculcate a deep culture of sustainability in the entire school psyche, the system and stakeholders with shared fundamental values, ethical principles and knowledge as formulated by The Earth Charter (2000) and Sustainable Development Goals (2015).

Vice Chancellor, Sir, the fact is that there is no universal model of education for sustainable development. Each country has to define its own priorities and actions. The goals, emphases, and processes must, therefore, be locally defined to meet the local environmental, political and socio-economic conditions in culturally appropriate ways. Education for Sustainable Development is equally relevant for both developed and developing countries. The underlying values which ESD must promote are the following:

- Respect for the dignity and human rights of all people throughout the world and a commitment to social and economic **justice** for all;
- Respect for the human rights of future generations and a **commitment** to intergenerational responsibility;
- Respect and care for the greater community of life in all its **diversity**, which involves the protection and restoration of the Earth's ecosystems;

- Respect for cultural diversity and a commitment to build locally and globally a culture of tolerance, non-violence and peace.

This represents a **new vision** of education, a vision that helps people of all ages better understand the world in which they live, addressing the complexity and interconnectedness of problems such as poverty, wasteful consumption, environmental degradation, urban decay, population growth, health, conflict, violation of human rights and climate change that threaten our future.

This vision of education emphasizes a **holistic, interdisciplinary** approach to developing the knowledge and skills needed for a sustainable future as well as changes in values, behavior, and lifestyles. This requires us to reorient education systems, policies and practices in order to **empower everyone**, young and old, to make decisions and act in culturally appropriate and locally relevant ways to redress the problems that threaten our common future. In this way people of all ages can become *change agents* empowered to develop and evaluate alternative visions of a sustainable future and fulfill these visions through working creatively with others. (UNDES, Unesco 2005-2014; UNEP, 2008).

Vice Chancellor Sir, I am delighted to say that the OAU MESA Group under my leadership recorded remarkable achievement. The Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife with the support of the National Universities Commission (NUC), had served as the hub for MESA activities as early as 2006 and the Regional Centre for the SIDA sponsored International Training Programme on ESD in Higher Education in 2008. The NUC demonstrated its support for the MESA Group and the hosting of the **1st MESA International Conference: Environment, Development and Climate Change in Africa: Universities Responding?** This is seen as part of Nigeria's support for the UNDES, in consonance with the then 7-Point agenda of the Yar Ardua Administration.

Vice Chancellor Sir, hopefully given the political will and the Federal and States Governments' preparedness to adopt the idea of the proposed **Nigerian Universities Partnership on Environment for Sustainability (NUPES)**, I believe that Obafemi Awolowo University has the human intellectual and material competences and resources to serve as national hub of NUPES to promote ESD not only within our immediate community here, but across the country. Virtually all the courses we teach in the university are **“greenable”**, that is, amenable to sustainability concepts. Let me also say that the university can introduce a new

General Studies (GNS) course formulated on The Earth Charter, to be compulsory for all 1st year (new entrants) students into the university, across all disciplines; including post-graduate students who did not offer the course at the undergraduate level. Thus The Earth Charter should be a substantive and compulsory General Studies course in the university. Moreover, I propose that the university organize and structure periodic workshop/conferences on mainstreaming environment and sustainability concepts targeted at the: (i) undergraduate and post-graduate courses in the university; (ii) university management, lecturers/faculty and administration; (iii) university contract/services providers; (iv) students; and (v) other relevant stakeholders of the university.

In concluding this brief review on ESD, recall that I said the then VP Goodluck Jonathan expressed strong enthusiasm for the vision of the OAU MESA Group when we visited His Excellency's office at Aso Rock. **At this point I wish to call on the former President Goodluck Jonathan, as an Elder Statesman and a highly revered private citizen to take on the ultimate patriotic challenge and pitch his tent once again with his Primary Constituency, the EDUCATION SYSTEM (POLITICS being his Secondary Constituency), as the main DRIVER of that unfinished MISSION my group presented before His Excellency almost 14 years ago.** As Nigeria's first university Graduate Vice-President and the second university Graduate President (after President Umaru Yar Ardua), His Excellency, President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan has the intellectual competences and mindset to champion the National Movement for Revitalization of Education for Sustainable Development and Mainstreaming Environment and Sustainability into Nigerian Universities through the platform of the proposed NUPES. This can be a strategic Flagship of his Presidential Library at Yenagoa. I can assure the former President of a large retinue of intellectual 'foot and brain' soldiers who would take up the NUPES Vision and run with His Excellency to make Nigeria one of the top industrial and powerful economies by the Year 2030. **Let us give “Education for Sustainability” driven by the NUPES a trial and put an end to the fundamental shortcomings plaguing our education system thereby stalling rapid and sustainable development of the country.**

CONCLUSION: Blessed to be a blessing

Obafemi Awolowo University has been a huge blessing to me. **In diverse manners it actually made me 'blessed to be a blessing'**. I return all the praises, glory, adoration and thanks to God Almighty and all the people He used to give me this wonderful career and family life experience here in this divinely ordained LOCUS of SOJOURN. First my Dad who advised me, or should I say, instructed me, his Toritsemugbone (as my Dad fondly called me) to move to the academia; my colleagues in the Faculty over the years, including Professor Jonathan O. Fabunmi... the main instigator and encourager of my Dad's "moving order" back in 1982; my current Head of Department, Business law, Dr. Mike Adeleke who requested me to give this Valedictory Lecture; my current Dean, Professor Femi Odunsi, who I affectionately refer to as my "first born" Ph.D Law, being my first supervised doctoral candidate. It is a great joy for me to be retiring from the University with him as my Dean and Full Professor of Law. I believe this is a first on record in the faculty. My "last born" Ph.D Law Dr. Misbau Lateef, I am very proud to say, is also also a highly reputable young aspiring lecturer in the Faculty, currently on Post-Doctoral programme at Columbia Law School, Columbia University, New York, USA. In between them are a minimum of at least eight of my other doctotoral offspring all doing very well, including the highly cerebral environmental legal scholar Professor Oludayo Amokaye of UNILAG Law, who prides himself as my "academic son" and likes to compete the 'senior-son' status with Sammy. I must not fail to register my profound appreciation of our dynamic former Vice Chancellor, Professor Wale Omole who appointed me Acting Dean of Law for three years consecutively, (1995/1996; 1996/1997; 1997/1998) and gave me opportunity to serve the University prior to my substantive Deanship in the Faculty of Law (1998 – 2000). Vice Chancellor, Sir Professor Eytayo Ogunbodede, our very own **Mr. Integrity** it is an honour to be retiring from the university today 6th of April, 2021 with you at the helm of affairs of this great institution. I thank you for the confidence reposed in me to serve as Chairman of two vital bodies within the university system under your watch.

Finally, with deepest love and affection I appreciate my amazing children and grand children Samuel, Deborah, Barbara, Dozie, Christiana, Mazeli, Hadassah, and Kamalu...you were Divinely entrusted to me and remained formidable source of the inspiration and the energizer for my successes in my Ivory Tower years, really confirming the Words of Isaiah 8:18... "Behold I and the children who the Lord has given me are for signs and

wonders."

With this, I sing out loud and clear....

"When I think of the goodness of Jesus, and all he has done for me; my very soul shall shout hallelujah; praise the LORD for loving me...Praise the Lord for blessing me...Praise the Lord for blessing us."

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, thank you for felicitating with me as I bid a joyous *au revoir* to the University and remain Divinely blessed, in Jesus Name.

Professor Margaret Okorodudu-Fubara

6th April, 2021.

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