

WELCOME ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT/VICE CHANCELLOR, BABCOCK UNIVERSITY, PROFESSOR ADEMOLA S TAYO, AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF GENDER AND AFRICAN STUDIES GROUP, BABCOCK UNIVERSITY (BUGAS) WITH THE THEME: “GENDER, CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES” ON MONDAY OCTOBER 3, 2016.

GREETINGS

Principal Officers, Babcock University, Ilisan, the Conveners of this conference, Professor Mobolanle Ebuloluwa Sotunsa and Dr. Olajumoke Yacob-Haliso, the Keynote Speakers of this event, Dr. Insa Nolte, and Professor Akinyemi Akintunde, special guests, reputable and respected scholars from all over the world, gentlemen of the press, our dear students, ladies and gentlemen.

I thank the Principal Officers of this great University for creating the enabling environment. I also commend the zeal of the conveners and members of the Local Organising Committee for their astute planning and assiduous contribution and execution of this conference.

I am overtly delighted to welcome you all from different parts of the country and even beyond the shores of Nigeria to Babcock University located in the town of Ilisan, Ogun State, Nigeria. We are proud that the Babcock Gender and African Studies Group (BUGAS) has been able to pull this unique crowd into our University and we are honoured to have distinguished scholars converge in our University. BUGAS was created five years ago out of the vision and vibrant leadership of two formidable BU faculty: Professor Mobolanle Sotunsa and Dr Jumoke Yacob-Haliso. The initiative was inaugurated by the Director of Research and International Cooperation at an event which also served as the launch of their first edited volume. Babcock University as a first class faith-based institution supports and actively promotes the growth and development of initiatives like this one, and so I congratulate the conveners, conference committee and all participants on this inaugural conference on BU campus.

This event also highlights another aspect of the Babcock mission, which is to create, strengthen and proliferate linkages with other first class universities around the world, Babcock itself being a member of a network of over 120 Seventh-Day Adventist universities and colleges around the world. It may interest you to know that Babcock University has a strong MOU with University of Birmingham, and we are greatly enthused that Dr Insa Nolte accepted to be here today from Birmingham to give a keynote address and has partnered with BUGAS to make this event a reality and success. On behalf of Babcock University Administration, Faculty and Students, please accept our appreciation, and extend our fraternal greetings to your institution and administration. I am also aware that Professor Akintunde Akinyemi is here from the University

of Florida at his own expense, and in order to encourage the BUGAS initiative. Thank you, sir, and we look forward to other collaborations with you and your institution.

The First International Conference of BUGAS therefore is expected to come up with ways that the study of Gender and African Studies can further be enhanced for the advancement and betterment of the African race. The theme of this conference is quite topical and very relevant to the study of Gender and African Studies today especially as it always excites the interest of scholars across disciplines. In fact, it is one of the driving forces behind many government policies and programmes for the promotion of the African race as well as its women. Nobody can better speak about our issues than ourselves – as women and Africans.

I do not want to pre-empt the keynote addresses, however, I am confident that they will kick-start the programme and set the ball rolling for the discourse on Gender, Culture and African Development. Through this conference, it is expected that lasting solutions to the problems of development of Africa, culture and its women will be proffered by all of us assembled here today. We must constantly keep at dissipating dignified intellectual energy to set our women and continent on the path of greatness. I strongly believe, judging from the array of abstracts drawn from multi-disciplinary perspectives, which the conference shall live up to expectation through the various presentations of scholars here present.

Once again, welcome to Babcock University, Ilisan, and be sure to enjoy your few days in our beautiful campus.

I hereby declare this conference open, in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. God bless you.

Professor Ademola Tayo
President/Vice Chancellor,
Babcock University, Ilisan, Ogun State, Nigeria