

KEY NOTE ADDRESS DELIVERED

BY

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AT THE

SYMPOSIUM ORGANIZED

BY

MUSTAPHA AKANBI FOUNDATION

HELD AT

**STELLA OBASANJO MULTIPURPOSE HALL,
AJASE-PO ROAD, ILORIN, KWARA STATE**

ON THE TOPIC

**"PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE
AS A FUNDAMENTAL TOOLS FOR SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT"**

Introduction:-

It is to me a matter of great pleasure to be asked to address this august gathering in my capacity as the Chairman and Founder of the Mustapha Akanbi Foundation. I am deeply grateful for your response to our invitation. I believe you are here because you love us, you trust us and you share our views, and believe in our hopes and aspirations to make Nigeria the pride of the black race and the haven of all that is good and decent in nature. I thank each and every one of you for agreeing to be part of this endeavour to reform and transform Nigeria from being a nation of self serving individuals to a Nation that places high premium on selfless service, transparency, integrity, patriotism, love and commitment to the supreme well-being of the citizenry.

During our first outing when the Foundation was inaugurated on the 12th September 2006, the subject of our discourse was: Awakening Hope in the Nigerian Project. Our intention on that occasion was to lift up the hearts and spirit of our people to a realization that if they do not give up hope, they can still make this country great by keeping hope alive and by engaging in positive thinking and acts which can see us through the intricate problems that hitherto believed the nation to the extent that we were in those days referred to by the outside world as a pariah nation.

Today, we have chosen as the central theme for this symposium, the topic:- **"Participatory Democracy and Good Governance As Fundamental Tools for sustainable Development"**. The choice of the subject has been dictated by recent events and happenings. The political horizon is unclear and with the dawn of each day, wrong signals are being sent by political gladiators. Stories of assassination and attacks on

political opponents have been giving great cause for concern. The political terrain is daily being overheated. The wave of impeachments, leading to declaration of a state of emergency in at least one state, send frightful messages of uncertainty and instability in the polity. The democratic environment is being assaulted and threatened.

It is our belief in MAF that the situation has to be arrested. We owe it a duty to ourselves and our nation to do whatever we can, be it ever so little, to stem the tide and bring some sanity into the polity.

Ladies and Gentlemen, It seems to me axiomatic to say that democracy thrives better in a free, calm, stable and tensionless environment. As a corollary, it is true to say that the rule of law fares better and flourishes more in a society which has a long history of democratic culture and values nurtured by experience.

This symposium on Participatory democracy and good governance as fundamental tools for sustainable development in Nigeria could not have come at a better time than now that as we are approaching the 2007 election-year. This is because as usual with most developing democracies, tension is already reaching feverish point amongst the various political stakeholders. If the tension is not well managed, it is bound to affect the peace and security of our dear nation. And as Milton the poet said: “where peace and rest can never dwell hope never comes to all”.

Furthermore, the coming elections of 2007 provide the electorate the opportunity of taking stock of the activities of their elected leaders while in government. Questions are bound to be asked as regards whether our representatives in government have in the last couple of years given us good governance.

This symposium therefore aims at:-

1. Sensitizing stakeholders in the current democratic dispensation to the importance of embracing the culture of genuine and participatory democracy.
2. Drawing attention to the need for elected government officials to deliver good governance to the electorate.
3. Identifying and examining factors affecting the enthronement of participatory democracy and good governance in Nigeria.
4. Sensitizing the relevant bodies on the techniques and strategies for combating electoral frauds, violence and bad governance.

It is for the above reasons and more that MAF decided to draw on the experiences of four (4) distinguished Nigerians, our guest speakers of today, who will place at our disposal the benefit of their learning and experience on the four identified sub-themes.

1. Professor Olu Obafemi, a distinguished professor of English at the University of Ilorin, a playwright, poet and a two term National President of Association of Nigerian authors. His discourse will center on **“The Role of Stake-Holders in Participatory democracy”**.
2. Hon Justice E.O. Ayoola CON, a jurist of high repute, known nationally and internationally. He was for ten (10) years, the chief Justice of the Gambia. He served a number of years on Court of Appeal Bench (Nigeria) before his elevation to the Supreme Court Bench from where he retired. He is currently the Chairman of the I.C.P.C. he is pre-eminently qualified to speak on the assigned topic which is: **“The Role, strategies and**

techniques of the judiciary in the speedy resolution of election cases and the promotion of the Rule of Law in ensuring political stability”.

3. The third paper will be delivered by the one and only (Chief) Sunday Ehindero CFR, NPM, fcw- Inspector General of Police, Chief Law Enforcer and the first lawyer to head the Police Force in this country. He is known to have appeared in various Courts of the realm right up to the Supreme Court. As expected, his assigned topic is: **“The Role of Law Enforcement Agencies in the Promotion and sustainability of Participatory Democracy and Rule of Law”.**
4. Last but not the least, is the workers representative Comrade Adams Oshiomole, President of the Nigeria Labour Congress – a courageous and fearless leader- ho is today being represented by our own Comrade Issa Aremu, a redoubtable and equally fearless unionist whose abiding faith in the future of our country is unrivalled. The sub-theme to be discussed in his paper is **“Problems and Challenges of Electoral Bodies in the Enthronement of a fair, just and viable Democracy”**

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, all of you here present are stakeholders in the Nigeria project. You all have a duty to ensure that our present democracy succeeds. For as **Abrahma Lincoln** opined, ‘democracy is the government of the people by the people and for the people’, then no one should be left out in our effort to sustain the tent of democracy and the rule of law. Our democracy must be all-inclusive and pervading. Our leaders must learn to give and take. For democracy to be participatory, every one must be given a sense of belonging and policies must be people oriented. Let us have passionate faith in democracy and be true democrats in our thoughts, ideas and actions: for that is the only way we can produce the likes of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Woodrow Wilson etc of the United State of America, Wiston Churchill, Harold Mac Millan, Harold Wilson and Aneurin Bevin of Great Britain. Let us borrow a leaf from the Great Mahauma Ghandi of India who lived by example and percepts and his protégé Pandit Nehru who throughout demonstrated an abiding faith in democracy and promoted the cause of humanity, justice and rule of law as the Prime Minister of India. Nehru indeed it was, who said **“Democracy means tolerance, tolerance not merely of those who agree with us, but also of those who do not agree with us”**. This is the lesson from one of the leaders of the older democracies, which we must imbibe.

That said, I believe that after listening to the paper presenters, the comments and questions from contributors, all of us will go home better educated, better informed, and more knowledgeable on what goes into the building of a great democratic nation.

Let me finally end this opening speech on a poetic note:

Be a Mover

**If you cannot move the World move your continent
If you cannot move your continent move your country
If you cannot move Country move your town or city
If you cannot move your city or town
Pray move your village
If you cannot move your village move your home
Otherwise you could be a man without a name and a life without honour**

In conclusion, I thank you all once again. I welcome you most warmly to this occasion. Enjoy your time with us.