

**TOWARDS RADICAL IMPROVEMRNT IN THE HEALTH AND  
WELL-BEING OF NIGERIANS**

**BY**

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FMAN, FASI, OON, NNOM**

**BEING**

**CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS**

**AT THE 2018 FOUNDER'S DAY CELEBRATION AT THE  
DEVELOPMENT POLICY CENTRE (DPC) IN MEMORY OF  
PROFESSOR OJETUNJI ABOYADE**

**PROTOCOL**

**The Chairman (Professor Bimpe Aboyade ) and Members of the Board of Directors of DPC, The Royal Fathers of the Day: HRH, Oba Olufemi Olutoye and HRH Oba Abiola Taiwo, FCCA, FCA, The Special Guest of Honour, Professor A. B. O Desalu, The Lead Speakers: Professor A. O. Kunle-Olowu, Otunba Kayode Oduntan, and Dr. Bola Ofi Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen. All Protocols observed.**

**It is my great honour and privilege to chair this auspicious celebration in honour of the Late Professor Ojetunji Aboyade, the founder of DPC, a highly Distinguished Scholar, erudite and foremost Professor of Development Economics, Professor of Professors, Seasoned Administrator, a towering national and International Figure. It is my singular pleasure to welcome all of you here today. In doing so, I specially salute the Chairman of DPC, Professor Bimpe Aboyade for holding the fort creditably and efficiently since the demise of her husband.**

**The Founders day colloquium has always assembled eminent scholars, researches and leaders of thought at all levels of the economy to deliberate on crucial Nigerian Developmental issues and following the launching by UN**

**General Assembly of the seventeen sustainable development goals in 2015, the DPC Board decided to focus attention at every founder's Day colloquium on these goals as they affect Nigeria. Today, we shall be discussing how to achieve radical improvements in the Health and Well-being of Nigerians.**

**Professor Ojetunji Aboyade has laboured over the years spearheading many activities including organization of so many conferences to sensitize successive corrupt Nigerian Governments towards socio-economic growth and development as well as creating conducive environment for Nigeria to become a united , strong ,self reliant nation and a great dynamic economy --but alas, the Government never implemented his ideas. In 1968, I moved from the University of Ife to University of Ibadan as a lecturer and immediately recognized Professor Aboyade as one of the academic giants on Ibadan campus. I was also in time to witness the historic National Economic Planning Conference he organized in 1969 whose list of participants included such eminent personalities as Chief Obafemi Awolowo. This was about fifty years ago when Nigeria was at par or even better off in terms of socio-economic development than South Korea which has today been reclassified as a developed country.**

**The truth of the matter was that while Nigeria was being inflicted with a series of corrupt Military Governments, South Korea was meanwhile being ruled by a purposeful and progressive Military government that succeeded in transforming the country into a developed Economy through three five-year development plans. The lesson here is obvious--that Nigeria is in dire need of good leadership that will propel us to the promised land. As the largest concentration of black people in the world, the fate of the black race is intimately tied to the fate of Nigeria and I feel optimistic that we can still make it.**

**I will now offer some general comments on some diseases prevalent in our country and Africa, some efforts being made to combat them and what success is being achieved. This is without prejudice to more incisive views to**

be presented by the experts who are giving the lead talks –Professor A. O. Kunle-Olowu, Otunba Kayode Oduntan and Dr. Bola Ofi.

**1) SOME MAJOR DISEASES AND THEIR BURDEN.**

**a) Out of an African population of 1.2 billion in 54 countries(2016), Nigeria alone has 181, 125,000. So, Nigeria’s disease burden is intimately connected with Africa’s disease burden. Nigerians suffer from all sorts of diseases including Malaria , Measles, Tetanus, Polio, Yellow fever, TB, HIV, Diabetes and hypertension (which could lead to sudden heart-attacks,, stroke, brain haemorrhage) and malnutrition (which invariably results in ill-health) Some of these diseases are associated with early childhood which have been responsible for infant mortality which happily has continued to reduce —to 69/1000 2010-2015 with improved life expectancy of 56 years in Africa, South of Sahara Africa. It is note-worthy that the future of our country depends on our children population who survive to adulthood and are able to eventually contribute in various ways to the socio-economic, scientific and technological development of our country. Now, effective solution the problem of early childhood ailments needs the co-operation of parents and family, community , local Government, state government, National Government and global community—in a rather intertwined way in order to prepare young children cognitively, physically, socially and emotionally for the future. While Nigeria has some measure of integrated policies based on some inter-sectorial collaboration of various sectors, we should borrow a leaf from Kenya which has the most comprehensive policy in Africa based on collaboration between at least ten sectors—parents and other care givers; community; Ministries of Education, Home Affairs, Finance, Local government, culture, sports and social welfare; faith based organizations etc.**

**b) Climate change has many negative health consequences—stress, leading to cadio-vascular and respiratory diseases. Also extreme weather conditions often result in flooding, diseases, shortage of food,**

and drought with associated ill-health. Moreover, human health is endangered due to cross-infection from animals and plants.

- c) In Nigeria and other developing countries, health is grossly underfunded in terms of prevention, healthcare delivery, and research. Health insurance is not available to most citizens. However, through international co-operation from all concerned—WHO, Universities, Research Institutes, Academies, Professional Associations, Pharmaceutical Industries, and various Foundations, some of the diseases are being effectively contained or gradually eradicated. I will give below in 2), a comprehensive example of such co-operation spearheaded by the African Academy of Sciences (AAS) towards solving many of the health challenges in Africa. However, no achievements in this direction can be sustainable until our government demonstrates political will to invest heavily in health and well-being of their citizens the way the developed countries have done.

## **2) CONTRIBUTION OF THE AFRICAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES (AAS) TOWARDS ALLEVIATING THE DISEASE BURDEN IN AFRICA.**

As Immediate Past President of the African Academy of Sciences (AAS), 2014 -2017, I like to share with you the giant strides taken by our Academy in the last few years to propel and spearhead activities-African based, African- centred—with the co-operation of several international funding Agencies towards solving quite a number of the African health challenges. AAS has several health platforms:

- a) AESA (The Alliance for Excellence in Science in Africa) is an agenda setting and funding Health platform meant to foster sustainable developmental research capabilities and promote scientific excellence through open calls for proposals with transparent review process. The platform is generously supported by Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Wellcome Trust, and United

**Kingdom DFID (Department of International Development) . It was established in 2014 jointly with NEPAD (New Partnerships for Africa's Development)**

**In January 2015, the African Union Heads of State endorsed the establishment of AESA whose goals are in line with STISA-2024(Science and Technology Innovation Strategy for Africa) and part of Africa's long term Agenda 2063 strategy.**

- b) DELTAS Africa ( Developing Excellence in Leadership Training and Science). This is a scheme also supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and UK DFID , and has been awarding grants –up to eleven worth 100 million dollars—to Research Leaders in Africa for various purposes and in various fields such as mental health, virus research, malaria, TB, HIV, H(3)—Human , heredity, and health.**
  
- c) GCA (Grand Challenges for Africa) aims at addressing and managing Africa-specific challenges for scientific innovation and complements global challenges in India, Brazil, South Africa, and Canada.**

**In conclusion, I congratulate once again Professor Bimpe Aboyade and the DPC for the past and current efforts to influence our Government towards the sustainable social and economic development of Nigeria and I do hope that after this colloquium, our government will be further sensitized to invest heavily in achieving good health and well-being of all Nigerians in order to achieve the much needed sustainable development.**