

# **INAUGURATION OF GEIFON AND 1<sup>ST</sup> PUBLIC LECTURE**

## **April 27, 2006**

### **A Speech by Dr. Amos Adamu, Chairman, Board of Trustees, GEIFON**

It gives me great pleasure, on behalf of the Board of Trustees, to welcome you all to the inauguration and the 1<sup>st</sup> public lecture of GLOBAL EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVE FOR NIGERIA (GEIFON) – a non-governmental organization that is committed to the advancement of Nigeria’s higher education. The objectives of GEIFON include the following:

- ◆ To promote active global networking of Nigerian academics and professionals
- ◆ To encourage access to sharing and dissemination of information, experiences and human and material resources among Nigerian Institutions of higher learning
- ◆ To promote Scientific and technological collaborations between industry and universities, for enhancement of academic experiences of lecturers and students and facilitate national economic growth.
- ◆ To limit the effect of brain drain by soliciting local and International funding for short-term academic and professional visits by Nigerian scholars in Diaspora for the purpose (amongst others) of participating in lectures, seminars, workshops and training programmes as well as making recommendations on policy issues.
- ◆ To promote the transfer of technology from developed countries to Nigeria through Nigerian experts working abroad.

The concept for the founding of GEIFON was developed by Professor Tony Ebeigbe, the Executive Director, in partnership with a number of Nigerian experts in the USA, Canada and Europe. Indeed, GEIFON is now registered in the USA, as a non-profit organization (GEIFON-USA Inc.), with Professor Nosa Egiebor (a Professor of Environmental Engineering) as its President. Another affiliate (GEIFON-Canada) is currently undergoing the legal process of registration.

Two reasons make me particularly pleased that today’s event is taking place at the University of Benin, commonly referred to as UNIBEST:

- UNIBEN is the first University of choice in Nigeria, by candidates seeking admission
- In a recent webometric world ranking of Universities, UNIBEN placed 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Nigerian ladder – a great achievement, considering that there are now, over 75 Universities in Nigeria!

The negative side of the ranking just mentioned, is the fact that the best-ranked Nigerian University placed a dismal 6,304<sup>th</sup> position!! The organizers of this survey cautioned that since this ranking is based on the perceived internet image of universities, it should not be used by candidates to make their choice of universities; however, it is common

knowledge that the implication of a low ranking could further reduce the image and status of such universities.

Concerted efforts geared towards meeting international standards, are required to reverse the poor performance of our higher education system. One basic principle that is currently recognized as catalyst for quality higher education is “Internationalization” of academic programmes and activities. Reputable universities, worldwide, apply international (globalization) strategies into teaching, research, and community service - in order to enhance their academic excellence and the relevance of their contribution to societies, through cooperation with their counterparts around the world.

In a developing country such as ours, globalization can be expected to strengthen our capacity to improve accessibility to quality higher education, especially at a time when the gap in resources and access to knowledge between the industrialized and developing world is growing very rapidly. Some of the qualities of internationalization of higher education include the followings:

- Enhancement of the social, economic, and cultural well-being of communities and creation of responsible citizenship at the local, national, and global levels.
- Through bi-directional exchanges, it should strengthen Nigeria’s higher education capacity, in order to promote global equity.
- It must be accessible not only to students who can afford to pay but also to qualified students with financial need.
- It should meet the same high standards of academic and organizational quality, no matter where it is delivered.
- It should expand the opportunities for international mobility of staff and students.

To achieve these objectives, GEIFON will cooperate with relevant stakeholder organizations including NGOs, higher education institutions, government agencies and volunteer organizations. The location of GEIFON in Benin City will provide unique benefits to the several higher institutions in the environs: Federal, State and private Universities, Polytechnics and colleges of education in Edo and Delta States.

I feel highly elated that the inaugural Public Lecture of GEIFON is to be delivered by a distinguished Professor, administrator and diplomat: Professor Noureini Tidjani-Serpos, who is currently a Deputy Director-General at UNESCO, in Paris. I understand that Professor Tidjani-Serpos was a Professor and Head of Department of Foreign languages at UNIBEN, in the 70s and 80s. I am confident that his lecture on FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES will impact very positively on everyone present.

As is the case with any new organization, critical funding is required for take-off as well as for immediate and long-term stability. During the course of today’s events, we will call on you to support GEIFON generously, in cash or kind!

I wish to acknowledge, in a very special way, the support of the vice-Chancellor, Professor E.A.C. Nwanze, who is a strong advocate of International Education and the

Chairman of the occasion, Dr. (Brigadier-General) Samuel Osaigbovo Ogbemudia, the Founder of the University of Benin.

Thank you.

Dr. (Chief) Amos Adamu  
*Chairman, Board of Trustees, GEIFON*