

ADDRESS BY THE VISITOR, HIS EXCELLENCY, GOVERNOR YAHAYA BELLO OF KOGI STATE
AT THE 1ST COMBINED CONVOCATION AND AWARD CEREMONY OF THE COLLEGE OF
HEALTH SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY, IDAH ON SATURDAY 27TH NOVEMBER, 2021

All glory to the Almighty God Who spared our lives to see this day. I welcome all of us to this 1st Convocation Ceremony of the College of Health Sciences and Technology, Idah. This event is of particular interest to me because it is coming after 45 years of the establishment of this institution. In other words, this is the first time since this school was founded in 1976 that it is sending forth graduates with a formal Convocation Ceremony to signify that they are perfectly finished products in all the ramifications of their respective disciplines. I cannot commend the staff and students enough for having the vision to take this significant symbolic step.

I visited this institution first in January of 2017, then again on 10th July 2017 and I was here in 2019 with some of my colleague Governors to commission some of our projects and here I am again today. Four times. Before me, not one Governor has ever set foot in this school in all of her 46 years.

My entourage and myself were shocked by the parlous state of this school during our first visit. Critical infrastructure was generally missing and if it existed, it was dead or in utter decay. This included the various laboratories, equipment and other learning aids. It was very easy to see then why this school had gone for over 4 decades without being licensed to produce health professionals who could be enrolled with their peers in the books of such bodies as the Medical Laboratory Science Council of Nigeria. No respectable authority would ever grant accreditation to courses offered in such substandard settings. Morale was low and we met a school community in despair from decades of crushing neglect. It broke my heart and I promised myself that I would come to their rescue. As it is, I am a man who loves challenges. Problems make me combative for solutions, and confronted with the state of the school I determined that my Administration would give it whatever it took to change the physical and academic look for the better while transforming the professional outlook for the students. Today, behold, we are holding the first Convocation ever. To God be the Glory.

We worked on the road network within the school, remodelled and equipped the laboratories, gave attention to other physical infrastructure, built a beautiful College Clinic which you graciously named after my wife, Her Excellency, Hajiya Rashidat Bello, the First Lady of Kogi State. We recruited more staff and improved the security of lives and properties on campus. We also released funds for all the accreditation exercises.

Our efforts paid off as the school received accreditation for old and new courses. Talking about your teachers, we have been looking into enhanced remuneration for them. The provost appealed to me a while ago and we approved the migration to CONHESS for them during one of our visits to the institution. That means they will no longer be paid like secondary school teachers but along the scale applicable to those

who lecture in tertiary institutions. I believe what is remaining now is implementation. Let me assure them that it won't be long now.

Of course, without your cooperation, my Government could not have done it, at least not so quickly. Staff and students alike worked very hard alongside us to satisfy the requirements for full accreditation of all your courses and you put in the effort to succeed in academics in order for this event to be possible today. Good job indeed. I am proud of you for achieving this great milestone. Let it be known that everything we have done here is our duty and we did it because we believe very strongly in the brightness of your future - both as a school and as individual students and professionals.

I believe that quality and affordable education is the birthright of every Kogi, indeed, Nigerian child. This is why Education is the first plank of my New Direction Blueprint, the roadmap for accelerated and proportional development of Kogi State in all her constituencies which guides us as a Government. This emphasis on education is even more imperative in Northern Nigeria where there is a fundamental problem of insecurity and poverty occasioned mainly by illiteracy. I want to break that vicious cycle of ignorance and the retribution that follows it in the loss of quality lives for our populace in the North and across the country in general.

I assure you that we will continue to take long strides to meet the challenges of giving our people quality education, in this college and in all our schools from basic education to postgraduate tertiary. We are paying closer attention to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education such as you have here at C.H.S.T Idah because we see that they are invaluable to the future of scientific advancement and accelerated development that we desire.

To further boost our capacities in these areas of study, we set up the Confluence University of Science and Technology (CUSTECH), Osara last year. Two days ago, on Thursday this week to be precise, we conducted their first Matriculation ceremony. This will underscore for you our desire to provide as many opportunities for study as possible for young Kogites, and of course, Nigerians from other parts of the country who qualify for admission into any of our institutions. It is my determination that no Kogite who has the brains to study for a science or other course will be unable to do so simply because he or she cannot find a school to admit them.

I thank the entire school administration under the visionary leadership of the Provost, Comrade Dr. Nuhu Solomon Achegwu for a job well done. Keep it up. I felicitate with the graduands. Go and conquer your world, represent us well but above all to your own self, be true!

Thank you and God bless.

YAHAYA BELLO

Governor of Kogi State.