

Remarks by Dr. Myma Belo-Osagie on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of Inoyo Toro Foundation

Distinguished participants – ladies, gentlemen, our young ones; may I stand on all existing protocols and congratulate you for your presence at this occasion. I use the word congratulate deliberately because your presence here confirms your understanding of one of the most important facts about this nation and indeed this continent – without education we cannot truly fulfill our potential; and without the teachers being honoured here today and the millions of educators they represent, that essential goal of educating our children - and indeed ourselves – to face an increasingly challenging future cannot be achieved. As we all know, or should know, education is the key to the future of our continent. Your presence here is a testament to your grasp of this absolutely fundamental fact.

I must also assume that like me everyone here is happy to be associated with success. Certainly for me, someone who was at the first award ceremony instituted by the Inoyo Toro Foundation, I am truly thrilled to be here celebrating their success. Over the last 10 years the Foundation has certainly gone a long way in fulfilling what I hoped it could achieve - first in celebrating excellence in education and equally, if not even more important, in celebrating our educators and reminding them how vitally important they are to the future of our children and this nation. These kinds of education our educators deliver, how best that education should be delivered, the focus and content of the curricula, the cost of that education and who, between the public and the private sector, should bear the greatest responsibility for ensuring delivery of the right kind of education are among the many issues that require discussion in our country, but what is not debated is that education is vital for the future of this state, this country and this continent, and that the education must be broad as well as deep, it must be about the world as well as about specific disciplines, it must be enquiring as well as instructive. My hope is that all educators here take on board the importance of their role and that all our dear children, pupils, students be continually grateful to the teachers who shape and guide their academic lives.

I congratulate all of you receiving awards today but I also congratulate all those who were up for consideration. The fact that you were considered means you set a standard the award winners had to beat so you are helping all to excel. Well done to you all.

At the time of the first award ceremony another of my hopes was that the Foundation would stay the course (because as we all know we live in an environment where it is not easy to keep anything going for 10 years). I am therefore also incredibly pleased to see that not only has the Foundation done so, it has also expanded and grown and deepened

its support for the educational sector of Nigeria. As was previously mentioned the early award ceremonies took place in a small hall down the corridor. I am so impressed to return 10 years later and see that the Foundation Award Ceremony has almost literally taken over the Meridien Hotel, that the award categories have increased from 5 to 8, that almost 200 teachers have been honoured, that the Foundation has developed a mentorship programme for over 90 schools, that a Principals Award has been instituted and that all this has been done without any compromise in standards.

Beyond this, however, I am also very proud that the Foundation sets the standard for the kind of philanthropic effort we need to see in our country – one where philanthropically minded individuals have identified a need and are supporting the effort to meet that need in a focused and sustainable manner devoid of ego, devoid of unnecessary razzmatazz and with measurable results to show for the work and effort put in. It is truly a joy to be associated with that kind of success and I must congratulate and commend Mr and Mrs Inoyo the founders of the Inoyo Toro Foundation for their vision, their determination and their foresight while also thanking all those who have supported that vision by giving their treasure – that is to say their money – or giving their time or their talent in mentoring, in identifying educators that excel, in managing and supervising the award process and all the accompanying activities, processes and programmes. Thank you.

Finally, before I say an additional thank you for a number of other things I would like to register a very small complaint. Is there a reason why we have not had a lady Guest Speaker at this event? I must thank God for keeping me alive and in sufficiently good health to be at this 10th award ceremony although I have to say that 10 years ago I was able to climb the stairs of the plane while wearing high heels. That is no longer so easy!! I must thank the Inoyo Toro Foundation for inviting me back to see what has been achieved, I must thank the Foundation for making me proud to have been one of their early supporters, and I must thank them for giving me the opportunity to congratulate them on the achievements of the Foundation over the last ten years while I look forward to hearing about their achievements and successes in the years to come. My congratulations to you all. God's blessings on each and every one of you.