BEING ADDRESS BY MR. FRED OHWAHWA, PRESIDENT OF JUST FRIENDS CLUB OF NIGERIA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE 5TH ANNUAL PUBLIC LECTURE AND 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CLUB IN ABUJA ON WEDNESAY 2ND AUGUST, 2023

The Chairman of the occasion,

Our respected Guest Speaker,

Our distinguished Panelists

Members of Just Friends Club of Nigeria,

Members of the Press,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you all to the 2023 Annual Lecture of our esteemed club, Just Friends Club of Nigeria. Today’s event marks the beginning of a series of events to commemorate the 10th anniversary of our esteemed club. In the next few months we shall be carrying out a lot of activities in this regard.

Our club has been growing in leaps and bounds, especially in the current year. For the first time, we now have women as members. We have also expanded in terms of the ages of members and their geographical places of origin.

This is the fifth annual lecture by our club. We began holding our lectures in 2014, a year after the formation of the club. Mr. Benjamin Dikki, the then Director General of the Bureau of Public Enterprises was our guest speaker. He spoke on the “Federal Government Privatization and Economic Reform Programme”. Since then, we have had the President of the Abuja Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Tony Ejinkeonye, speak on business opportunities and challenges in the Federal Capital Territory; the former Director General of the Debt Management Office, Dr. Abraham Nwankwo in 2019 delivered a paper on Nigeria’s debt burden and the challenge of infrastructural deficit in the country. Last year, 2022, the highly cerebral Reverend Father George Ehusani delivered a lecture on: “Beyond the 2023 Elections: That Nigeria May Be Saved”.

The elections have come and gone. And depending on which side of the political divide you are in, you can either breathe a sigh of relief that Nigeria has been saved or be despondent on the present state of the country.

Our Guest Lecturer today, Professor Chidi Odinkalu, is a man of formidable intellect. Add that to his boundless energy and undiluted patriotism, and you have before you a complete human being. Yesterday, I told him that he is an intellectual nomad. In the past two weeks, he has been in four countries. We thank him most sincerely for making out time to be with us today. The moderator will do justice to him when he reads his profile in the course of today’s event.

For us in Just Friends Club in Nigeria, apart from the Public Lecture Series, we place a lot of emphasis on reaching out to the needy in the society. We have made it a duty that every year, sometimes multiple times in a year, to reach out to them. We have visited Old Peoples Home in Kado, Orphanages in Gwarinpa, Karu, Kuje; children with disabilities in Kubwa and Anawim Home in Gwagwalada run by Catholic nuns.

In 2021, we paid the exam fees for indigent students in Government Secondary School, Jabi. Lat year March, we had a Career Talk Day with senior students of Government Secondary School, Life Camp here in Abuja.

The topic of today’s lecture, “Resetting Nigeria” is most appropriate for the present time. From whatever angle you look at it, Nigeria requires resetting. Be it in infrastructural development, educational sector, health, internal security, the economy, our politics, our value systems, etc. We need to reset ourselves at the individual, communal, corporate and government levels. We need a rebirth as a people. Otherwise, we will keep wallowing in the doldrums.

There are new governments in place at the Federal and State levels. They have a historical opportunity to seize the initiative and make a positive difference in the lives of the people. Will they rise to the demands of these times? Time will tell.

We have assembled here patriotic and knowledgeable citizens, from the Guest Speaker to the Chairman to the panelists, who will give diverse perspectives on how to make Nigeria better again and a reference point for Africa and Africans.

I am sure you will all leave here enriched with new knowledge and a better understanding of the dynamics of Nigeria.

Once again, you are welcome to this event.

Thank you very much.

FRED OHWAHWA

AUGUST 2ND 2023