

## **An Address by Dr. Shamsuddeen Usman, OFR, CON, at the Abuja LSE Talks**

British High Commissioner's Residence, Maitama, Abuja.

*5:30pm - 8pm, Friday 2 July, 2021*

### **To Serve with Knowledge, Integrity and Humility**

#### **1. Introduction**

1.1 If your alma mater has recorded the following achievements:

- it is 126 years old and was founded by five members of the Fabian Society, including George Bernard Shaw
- has over 155,000 Alumni that are change makers, influencers and leaders that are making profound impact on their societies
- has Alumni from virtually all regions of the globe who are active in virtually all sectors of the economy and society.
- has Alumni that include 55 past and current Heads of State (including J. F. Kennedy) and 18 Nobel Prize winners
- is, out of all European universities, the one that has produced most billionaires, including George Soros
- has produced several Central Bank Governors, including Janet Yellen, Stanley Fischer, Mervin King and Paul Volker
- as once reported by the U.K Guardian, is a school whose political clout is “closely wired into parliament, Whitehall and the Bank of England”
- that, coming closer home, is one that has produced:
  - 2 Kenyan Presidents, including Jomo Kenyatta
  - 3 Ghanaian Presidents, including Kwame Nkrumah
  - Notable Nigerians, including statesmen and public figures like Obafemi Awolowo, Augustus Akinloye, Ibrahim Gambari and our

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current Vice President Yemi Osinbajo; Bankers like Subomi Balogun, Pascal Dozie, Atedo Peterside, Aig Imoukhuede, Bolaji Balogun and Ubadigbo Okonkwo, and other notable alumni, such as Bayo Kuku, Tunde Folawiyo, Salamatu Sulaiman, Kingsley Moghalu, Garba Donli, etc.

### **Serving with Knowledge, Integrity and Humility**

2. If you are an Alumnus of the above school, you may feel entitled and carry a chip on your shoulders. But you shouldn't and you mustn't.

That's my **first advice** today. If you look at the lives of virtually all of the famous LSE Alumni outlined above, they dedicated their lives to service, with humility

3. If you carefully go through the list of the famous and even not so famous LSE Alumni, a distinguishing feature you will find in all of them is a life dedicated to service to the society.

As for humility, we all had a dose of it in the School. The first dose of humility the School gives you is that you go there from your previous school, where you were among the top performers, only to be met, at the LSE, by your student colleagues who were equally, if not better, top performers, in their previous schools. That immediately acts as a sobering dose.

4. As to integrity, again you will find that the vast majority of LSE Alumni have served, or are serving with integrity. A few LSE Alumni have generated some controversy, including Saif al-Islam, the son of Muammar Gaddafi with the

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controversy around his Ph.D thesis and the Lybian government's donation to LSE, which led to the resignation of LSE's Director, Sir Howard Davies in 2011. Other negatively famous Alumni are Monica Lewinsky and her affair with Bill Clinton, and Omar Saeed Sheikh, who was found guilty and convicted of terrorism. My **second advice** today is therefore: *Serve with integrity* as, I am sure you do not want to join this small list of infamous LSE Alumni. The reward for behaving with integrity is manifold.

5. The key objective of why we all went to the LSE, was to acquire knowledge. LSE is, of course, a leading light in this regard, as defined by its motto "**Rerum cognoscere causas**" - 'to learn the causes of things'.

What therefore one expects of Alumni that have gone through LSE and have had LSE go through them, is a persistent and lifelong quest to learn the causes of things; a persistent and lifelong quest for knowledge.

6. To reinforce the School's quest for knowledge, its Beaver Mascot signifies foresight, constructiveness and industry; important attributes that you would expect of any LSE Alumnus.

My **third advice** today is therefore: *Have a life-long quest to know the causes of things, and*

My **fourth advice** is: *Have a life-long quest to solve any challenges as arising therefrom*

7. A key aspect of knowledge and learning in the LSE is also that, while always at the

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frontier and leading edge, there is also a culture of willingness to accommodate and engage, at the intellectual level, with alternative views. Thus, while LSE is regarded by some as a radical institution, others regard it, at the same time, as a conservative one. This is demonstrated by the existence, at the same time, of people at the LSE, especially faculty, that are at the vanguard of either side of the debate. Thus my **fifth advice** today is: *Be open-minded, especially, hear the other side.*

Among my own teachers at the LSE in the late 70s, for example, you had left-wing leaning people, like Professors Desai and Amartya Sen, juxtaposed with more right-wing leaning Professors, such as Alan Prest and Richard Layard.

What is amazing is to hear, several years after, that both Professors Desai and Richard Layard ended up as members of the U.K. House of Lords.

8. Finally, as LSE is dedicated to lifelong learning, so I hope our members have made this a critical part of their ethos. This is very important as lifelong learning has been associated not only with mental alertness, but also generally with healthy well-being. I am sure that the platform of the Abuja LSE Talks that we are inaugurating today, will provide such an opportunity for continuous and lifelong learning, not only to the LSE Alumni, but to the wider society as well.

It is in this regard that I congratulate the LSE Alumni (both National and Abuja Chapters) for initiating the *Abuja LSE Talks* and giving me the opportunity to kick start them.

I also thank H. E. Catriona Laing, the British High Commissioner to Nigeria, for agreeing

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to host this the first, in what we hope will be a long series of the Abuja LSE talks.

Thanks also to Dapo Oyewole for his persistence, both in being the key organiser of the event and for bringing me here.

I thank you all for being such a receptive audience.

**Shamsuddeen Usman**