

Welcome Address by President Casa Foundation for International Development (CFID) at the Friends of Africa Economic Development Conference, 2013.

Your Excellency Governor of Ekiti, Dr. Kayode Fayemi
PA Monte Kwinter, Member of Provincial Parliament, Deputy Parliamentary Assistant, Chair, Ontario Trade and Investment Council, representing the Premier of Ontario,
Your Excellency High Commissioner and Consul General of Cameroon, Uganda, and Ghana.
Hon Jim Karygiannis, Member of Parliament, House of Commons, Canada.
Navin Chandaria, The President of Conros Corporation,
Lucien Bradet, The President, Canadian Council on Africa
Our esteemed professionals, business owners, CEOs and participants who continue to shape the future of Africa at Friend of Africa (FOA) Economic Development Conferences.

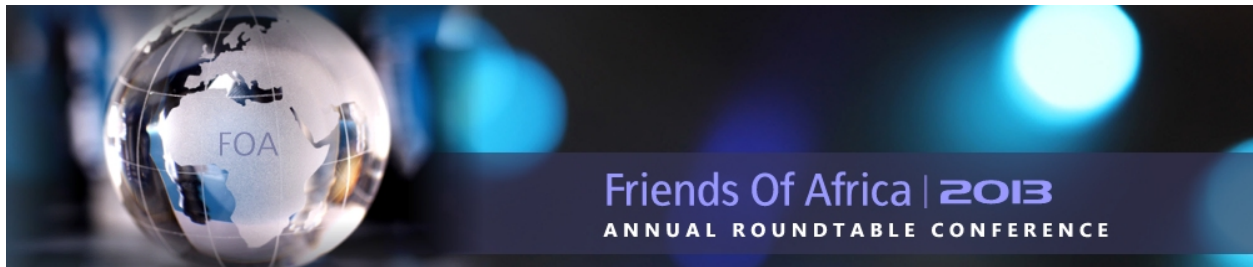
We give God our creator the glory for keepings us through the past year to see another Friends of Africa Conference. Let me welcome you all on behalf of the board of Governors and council of Casa Foundation to the 3rd Annual Friends of Africa Economic Development conference themed **Transforming Africa: The future is now**. As participants at previous conferences observed, these conferences have come to represent the very essence of developmental initiatives for leaders and business owners in Africa and parts of North America in the various segments of their expansion, and strategic planning.

Casa Foundation feels highly honored to be a part of this process. We are privileged to provide a platform for continuous robust debates on how to address the infrastructure gaps in our fatherland. Without boring you with history, the challenges of Africa are well known and its far-reaching implications actively discussed across various fora. Permit me to say that I have never seen a more vibrant, intelligent, focused, hardworking people than the Africans that I meet in any part of the world. Their zest for life, single-minded commitment and loyalty to Nationhood are values that can be leveraged for growth in Africa.

Let me reiterate (and this is my own opinion) that the dilemma that Africa and its teaming countries face in becoming relevant amongst the comity of nations, can only be resolved by its people. It is an African challenge, created by Africans, for Africans and must be resolved by Africans. We can appeal for aid, we can present ourselves for investments to other nations and hold all the Jamborees we can, in form of the trade shows, road shows. We can also flaunt the opulence of our wealthy shores and natural resources. However, this amounts to nothing until we ourselves take action to replicate the lessons on the developmental initiatives we have learnt -from the places we go, replicate the amenities we see, incorporate the solid systems and structures that we see and imbibe the positive attitudes from the people we meet. If we can pause to dream, visualize and plan for these things with the right people, they become possible to implement. While we learn from the story of Japan, China and the philosophy of the “good of all”-largely Confucianism that drove the visionaries that liberated the people in these climes, it is no longer enough to set up panels of enquiries and committees or theorize about our economic pains.

My findings within my stay in Canada, shows that in the GTA alone are groups that have impacted lives within their communities by building schools such as the Esan/ Edo groups, those that have started clinics to cater for the needs of new immigrants who have no access to medical care. In other parts of the world are ordinary people that have chosen to make a difference in their assigned vocations such as Nigeria’s Rotimi Babatunde, Tope Folarin recognized at the Caine’s awards in the Literature, the Orange book award winner like Chimamanda and Jason Anjoku of Iroko TV.

As a result of the giant strides of such impactful people, Casa Foundation introduced the FOA Awards to recognize other individuals or Institutions that are committed to facilitating development in the area of health, education, infrastructure or an initiative that provides jobs for the people of AFRICA. It gives us joy to



note that most of our previous nominees and members of our Hall of fame are present here today from various parts of North America. Today, another “Friend of Africa” chosen by you will join the FOA Hall of Fame.

Casa Foundation History:

CASA Foundation for International Development is a Canadian registered non-profit organization that promotes developmental initiatives through an empowerment of business leaders mentoring for youths, entrepreneurs and emerging leaders. We build social wealth and facilitate international development through the annual Friends of Africa Economic Development Conference at which Leaders in the Public and Private sectors across countries share their perspectives on key economic and infrastructure development initiatives with a goal to collaborate on the execution of these ideas for better communities.

Casa Foundation in Action:

As part of our efforts to assist the less privileged communities, CASA Foundation, at its Annual Donation events supports various Charity Organizations in Canada to meet basic domestic needs including Food, Clothing, Books, and Educational materials. The following are organizations that Casa Foundation supports on an annual basis within the GTA:

- Family Life Resource Center- Salvation Army
- Dress For Success, Toronto

In Africa, Casa Foundation continues to impact the health and education sector through donation of Medical Equipment to Teaching hospitals and Book donation to Colleges. This year our support goes to the following beneficiaries in Africa:

- Equipment Donation- Ultra sound scanning machines to Osun Teaching Hospital.
- Book Donation to Ekiti State University, Nigeria
- Book Donation to Achimota/ Accra Senior College in Accra, Ghana
- Immunization Program for Children aged 0-5, Ikorodu local Government, Lagos Nigeria

We count on you to join us on the journey to positively impact more lives in Africa and our communities.

Conclusion

Africa has danced enough and played to the gallery. The elephant must now begin to ‘run’. It is time to act. The theme of this Conference is “ Transforming Africa- the future is now”. Our hope is that the insights shared today by our esteemed speakers and participants will expand our thinking and cause us to take the decisive steps that we need to move our businesses and our continent forward. Our expectation is that there will be active interactions during the networking sessions between our participants from vertical sectors and industries. For those who have booked appointments for presentations, there will also be B2B meetings. For those showcasing their products, the networking sessions provide you ample opportunities to discuss your products and reserve time for more robust discussions at other platforms to be introduced to you by our networking teams.

By transcending all our differences and sidetracking the adversities that we face daily, Africa can transform into ‘the’ world power that it is meant to be. We can begin afresh and conceptualize our very own- “Afridevelopment”- Our own brand of rapid infrastructure development, growth and empowerment by Africans for Africans, and enjoyed by the world. There is no other time to make a mark than this, you are the change you have been waiting for, and the time to leave an indelible mark for the future is NOW.

Ladies and gentlemen, I welcome you all to the Friends of Africa Economic Development Conference 2013. Thank you for listening and enjoy the conference.

Olutoyin Oyelade