

**Welcome Address at the 40th International
Conference of the Counselling Association of
Nigeria**

Abuja 2015 (August 17th-21st).

By

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President Counselling Association of Nigeria**

At

**The Opening Ceremony, 18th August 2015
Sandralia Luxury Hotel
Solomon Lar Way, Jabi, Abuja**

Protocols,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome our distinguished members, our highly esteemed Key Note Speaker, the Registrar and Chief Executive of Joint Admission Matriculation Board (JAMB), Professor Dibu Ojerinde; Representatives of the Federal Ministry of Education, Representative of Federal Capital Territory Administration FCT, Representatives of other stake holder organizations, and invited guests to the 40th International Conference of the Counselling Association of Nigeria.

This year's conference tagged Abuja 2015 is a very significant one in the sense that this conference marks the 40th anniversary of CASSON conference since inception. The first conference of the association took place on the 15th November 1975. You will all agree with me that 40 years in the life of any organization is a whole lot of time. CASSON has indeed come a long way. From a small association with less than 50 members in 1975 the association has grown over the years with a national membership of close to 5000 members spread across the thirty-six states and the FCT. The association can boast of strong and virile chapters in almost all the thirty-six states of Nigeria and the FCT today. Members of this association are not only found working in school settings, our members are spread across both public and private sectors (NEMA, NDLE, Prisons, immigrations, the Military and other armed forces, hospital settings etc. The Counselling Association of Nigeria therefore has a very strong reason to roll out the drums and celebrate at 40.

As part of our celebration to mark this 40th anniversary of CASSON, we will be inducting one of our most illustrious members Prof. Frank Carew as an Icon of the Counselling Association of Nigeria. Prof. Carew has distinguished himself in many ways as the most committed and dedicated member of CASSON alive today, and we are very proud of him. Along side Prof. Carew are 11 members who applied to be Fellows of CASSON and have been duly screened by the Board of Fellows for their commitment

and service to the association will also be inducted today as Fellows. Fellows are awarded in recognition of significant contributions of members to the development of Counselling either at state or the national level. In the past however, we have had fellows who after their induction have disappeared in to the thin air. We intend to change this trend. We shall be extracting a very strong commitment from fellows who will be inducted today and hopefully they will keep to their promise to remain committed to the association.

The past year has been very eventful for us. Our courtesy visit to the then Honorable Minister of Education Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau on the 10th of October 2014 gave us the opportunity to highlight once again the importance of Counselling services in our educational system. One of the outcomes of the meeting is the creation of a budget head for CASSON under the Federal Ministry of Education in the 2015 budget. The bill for an act to professionalize Counselling in Nigeria is still before the National assembly. We intend to pursue the passage of this bill under the 8th National Assembly with renewed zeal and vigor.

The theme for this year's conference "Counselling for National stability" is coming at a most opportune time when a new administration is at the helm of affairs in this country. There is a strong yearning among the populace for a new direction and a new lease of life. The mantra appears to be that of change, but real change can only come only when there is a change in our attitude. Nigerians need cognitive restructuring. The mind-set of leaders in this country must change. Our leaders at every level must come to office with an attitude to serve not to amass wealth. Our young people need a paradigm shift. Government must create an enabling environment and the much-needed psychological support for the teeming population of young people in our country.

We implore the present administration in Nigeria to support the development of the Counselling profession in this country. The present

government under the leadership of President Mohamadu Buhari must support our effort to professionalize Counselling by ensuring that the bill to create the Counselors' Practitioners Council of Nigeria is promulgated into law. Government must make the provision of Counselling service part of our national life. When a nation is populated with people who are well adjusted and healthy in their minds that nation is on its way to greatness. Our leaders are this corrupt because they are sick in their minds. Our young people are susceptible in the hands of misguided clerics and extremists who radicalize and turn them into heartless human beings because they have no access to proper counselling. The security challenges that Nigeria is facing at the moment particularly in the North Eastern part of the country is being fuelled by the army of unemployed youths who are readily available to be recruited and used as cannon fodders in the hands of religious extremist and corrupt politicians. Huge numbers of young people drop out of school today because our schools do not have enough guidance counselors. Drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, cult activities are becoming rampant among youths in this country largely because they have no access to the services of professional counselors and no one really cares about them. The Counselling Association of Nigeria is poised to make a difference in this direction.

We urge the Nigerian Universities Commission NUC to streamline the curriculum of Counsellor training programs in Nigerian Universities such that Counsellors can be trained fully as Counselors at the first-degree level without offering teaching subjects. This will enable the graduates from any counselor education program to be well grounded in the theory and practice of counselling and also increase the numbers of well-trained counselors in the country. The nomenclatures of counselor training programs across the country also need to be streamlined so as to pave the way for a more uniform one.

Finally, there is no way I can end this address without mentioning the passage of our great Icon, the founding President of the Counselling Association of Nigeria Professor Isaac Oludaisi Makinde who died at the ripe age of 81 years on the 31st December 2014. He was buried in his hometown Igbajo, Osun State on the 7th of February 2015. CASSON was well represented at the burial ceremony. I should also inform this august gathering that this Association lost another illustrious son in the person of Professor M.S. Olayinka who retired from the University of Lagos on the 5th of July 2015. He also died at the ripe age of 88 years.

Let me conclude this address by welcoming you once again to Abuja 2015, and to thank the LOC for hosting this very important conference. I wish you all a very fruitful deliberation during this conference.

Thank you.

President