

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

by

Mr. Chidi Onyeukwu Ajaegbu, ACS, MBF, Dip in Polygraph(USA), FCA

on his

INVESTITURE

as the

50th & Golden Jubilee President

of

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria

at the

Council Chamber of the Institute

on

Tuesday, June 3, 2014

**The Immediate Past President,
Alh. Kabir Alkali Mohammed, mni, FCIS, CGMA, FCA**

**The Doyen of the Accountancy Profession in Africa,
Mr. Akintola Williams, CBE, CFR, B.COM, FCA**

**The Special Guest of Honour the Executive Governor of
Abia State, His Excellency, Chief T. A. Orji (Ochendo)**

**Chief Emeka Wogu,
Honourable Minister for Labour and Productivity**

**Distinguished Senators and Honourable Members of the Federal House of
Representatives here present**

**The Accountant - General of the Federation,
Mr. Otunla Olaniyi, FCA**

**The Auditor – General for the Federation,
Mr. Samuel Ukura, FCA**

**Rt. Hon. Sir Ude Oko Chukwu, FCA
The Speaker, Abia State House of Assembly,**

**Dr. Ed. Olowookere, FCA, Director, Core Operations African Region, The
World Bank**

Representatives of Federal, State and other Government Agencies

Your Royal Highnesses, My Lords Spiritual and Temporal

**Balogun J. O. O. Omidiora, BSc, FCA
Chairman, Body of Past Presidents**

Our Revered Past Presidents

The 1st Deputy Vice President, Otunba Samuel Olufemi Deru, FCA

The 2nd Deputy Vice President, Deacon Titus Alao Soetan, FCA

Members of Council

**Dame Gladys Nne Nwafor,
INEC Coordinating Commissioner for South/South and**

South-Eastern States

Registrar/Chief Executive, Mr. Rotimi A. Omotoso, FCA

Elder Emmanuel Adaelu

Prince Sunny Aku

Members of Ngwa Social Club here present

My Colleagues from the City

Presidents/Representatives of Other Professional Bodies here present

My Professional Colleagues

Members of my Immediate and Extended Family,

Especially, my pillar Mrs. Josephine Ajaegbu, my darling wife

Distinguished Guests

Members of the Press

Ladies and Gentlemen

Preamble

Today marks a significant milestone in the Accountancy Profession as its foremost institute on the African continent, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria bestows on me with the mantle of leadership as its 50th and Golden Jubilee President. I am greatly honoured by your esteemed presence at this unique and seamless transition ceremony specially organised to formally present to me the insignia of office following my unanimous election by the ICAN Governing Council at a special meeting held on Thursday, May 22, 2014.

The tradition of civility and enduring legacy of resilient and rancor-free succession process which you have just witnessed bears eloquent testimony to the foresight, brilliance and ingenuity of the founding fathers of this leading pioneer accountancy body, the great Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria, many of whom are present here today. As virtuous men and women, these heroes and heroines of our time, gave their all for successive generations of professionals amongst whom I am a proud beneficiary. They suffered denial for our today to flourish. I can declare, without equivocation, that the creative dedication of this special breed has made our career, our aspiration, our dream fulfilled and above all, our world a better place. - **Can you imagine a society without Accountancy and Chartered Accountants?**

While saluting their courage, dedication and cumulative contributions that have given us this enviable and glorious heritage, I dare say, that the best tribute we can pay to them is to continue in that noble path of truth, integrity, selfless service and commitment to the common good which they charted. We must align our today's objectives with theirs in order to create a unity of purpose and a sustained march towards their glorious vision of fifty years ago. As Helen Keller noted, ***"the world is moved along, not only by the mighty shoves of its heroes, but also by the aggregate of tiny pushes of each honest worker"***. As honest leaders and apostles of your values, we irrevocably commit to build on the solid foundation you have graciously laid. My God will continue to bless you all with long life and abundant good health. Amen.

ACCEPTANCE

It is therefore with great humility and all sense of responsibility that I accept my election and investiture as the 50th and Golden Jubilee President and indeed, the flag-bearer of the Institute in the 2014 and 2015 Presidential year. I give God the glory for giving me the grace to attain this height which, undoubtedly, is the zenith of my professional career which commenced in 1984 when I was employed as an audit trainee and subsequently qualified as a Chartered Accountant in the renowned accounting firm of Binder Balogun & Co (BDO). I heartily dedicate this, to my parents who bore the burden of my birth, socialization and taught me the most.

TRIBUTE

As we savour the joy of this accomplishment and fulfillment of one of my lifelong dreams, I would like to specially recognize and acknowledge some of the legion of great and sound minds who positively impacted my professional life with the ideals of scholarship, diligence, determination, courage, focus, service and integrity. In no particular order, I salute His Excellency, Chief Ugochukwu S. Nwankwo, FCA, Chief Adeboye O. Badejo, FCA, Chief (Dr.) A. A. Ani, MON, FCA, Prince J.A.A. Adebayo, FCA, Mr. Ayo Oni, FCA, Maj-Gen. Sebastian A. Owuama, (rtd), FCA, Otunba Abdul Lateef Owoyemi, FCA, Chief Olusola Faleye, FCA, Alhaji Idris Sulaimon, FCA, Princess Adenike Adeniran, FCA, Sir Ike Nwokolo, KSC, FCA, Dr.(Mrs.) Catherine G. Okpareke, mni, FCA, Bashorun Jaiye K. Randle, FCA, Chief Mrs. Elizabeth O. Adegite, FCA, Mr. Emmanuel I. Ijewere, FCA, Senator(Chief) Felix K. Bajomo, mni, FCA and Chief Mrs. I.M Osiyemi FCA. In the words of Helen Keller, again, ***“the most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched, they must be felt with the heart”***. Your generosity of spirit, tutelage and commitment to service, inspired me profoundly. It helped shape who I am today. You are all worthy of celebration and I owe you all a debt of immense gratitude.

This appreciation will certainly not be complete if I do not acknowledge the invaluable contributions made by my friend and big brother, Alhaji Kabir Alkali Mohammed, mni, FCA, the Immediate Past President to the growth of the Institute in the last twelve months and to this investiture ceremony. As his Vice, he taught me the ropes. Dear Alhaji, you are a rare gem and a model of exemplary statesmanship. Thank you, your kindness and leadership is well appreciated.

I will also like to specially appreciate lady Onome Joy Olaolu, FCA for the beautiful rendition of my citation. The eloquence, confidence and brilliance with which it was delivered speak volume not only of her person but also the quality of members of the ICAN Governing Council. I am truly humbled.

Ladies and gentlemen, the ICAN Act of 1965 stipulates inter alia Council's responsibilities at:

'Determining what standards of knowledge and skill are to be attained by persons seeking to become members of the accountancy profession and raising those standards, from time to time, as circumstances may permit' (section 1(1))

And to

'Encourage research into accountancy and accountancy methods and allied subjects to the extent that the Council may, from time to time, consider necessary' (section 16 (b))

These, in my opinion are to protect the public interest and underscores,

the 2014 and 2015 Golden Jubilee Presidential Theme which is Promoting Public Interest; Enhancing Professionalism.

CALL TO SERVICE

As *primus inter pares*, the challenge of leadership is not lost on me. I am aware that the demand for greater and better service delivery in the midst of a fierce competitive marketplace is the minimum value proposition expected by our stakeholders. I am, aware of the increasing quest by students for internationalization of any accountancy certification worth its salt and indeed, pained by the recent findings of our dwindling examination candidature and of the increasing diminution of our roles in the governance of this great nation, now Africa's number one economy. The decay in the nation's value system, the increasing but avoidable misery index of our people in the midst of plenty, give cause for concern. I am aware of the huge expectations for the Council under my leadership to restore the declining relevance of the Institute and the Accountancy Profession and move ICAN to the next higher level. Indeed therefore, this investiture is a clarion call to service. I therefore make a solemn declaration that; I will not disappoint you, God helping me irrespective of the challenges. I will defend the ICAN ideal at all times.

Therefore, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, since the complexion of the Accountancy Profession has been profoundly changed by information technology and globalization; and since the societal value system has been impacted negatively by poverty and non-inclusive public policies, we must, as professionals, nay, chartered accountants, inevitably evolve ingenious and strategic solutions to the huge challenges

currently facing the Accountancy Profession and indeed, the larger Nigerian society. Accordingly, in line with our public interest mandate, we will continue to provide thought leadership on business, finance and economic issues to enhance the leading edge of the Chartered Accountant. As part of its increased strategic advocacy role, the Institute will partner with and support the government in its quest to build a progressive and caring society by contributing to public policy discourse. In other words, we will play leadership role in influencing public policy, standards and regulations in the public interest.

As the conscience of the nation, our Institute will be at the forefront of the crusade to curb sharp practices in the society, by promoting compliance to global best practices and proactively raising the bar of accountability and transparency in governance. We will continue to provide technical support to government to ensure that the on-going transition to International Public Sector Accounting Standards, as the new financial reporting framework, is pursued to its logical conclusion and sensitize the public and private sectors about the irreversible march towards accrual accounting (IPSAS) and IFRS respectively.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, giving the prime position of knowledge in today's world, ICAN will invest in, and build Centres of Excellence and encourage academic and professional scholarship through its members and intellectuals on our sabbatical programme. As professionals and wealth creators, we will continue to hone our competences and skills to reposition and sustain the Institute's leadership position in the market place. We will leverage on our relationship with our international partners (the World Bank and the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales) to drive our capacity building and intellectual material development initiatives. In this respect, the Council will build on the impressive achievements of the last Presidential year ably championed by the 49th President, Alh. Kabir Mohammed who recognized and pursued with great and unparalleled vigour the implementation of the World Bank-sponsored twinning agreement between our Institute and ICAEW designed to strengthen our certification processes.

The Council will support key players in its certification processes, through but not limited to the construction of lecture halls in tertiary institutions and grants to selected accredited tuition houses from soon to be launched Tuition House Support Fund. In order to sustain the preference for ICAN products by employers and users of accounting services, our examiners, assessors, tuition providers and teachers of accounting students in tertiary institutions, etc, will be technically supported to enhance their capacity to continue to deliver qualitative training to our students. Indeed, to enhance the learning environment of our students, tuition providers will be re-assessed, re-accredited and ranked based on set parameters before they can access the Tuition House grant. In line with our on-going initiatives, our learning materials will continue to be benchmarked on global standards while the processes for acquiring and sustaining practical training experience will be strengthened. In particular, the log-book system will be resuscitated and strictly monitored for members wishing to go into practice. We are persuaded that only the best and brightest deserve to be admitted into the associate membership of our institute.

In order to raise the quality of financial reporting in Nigeria, the Council, in line with its statutory mandate, will provide support to small and medium practitioners (SMPs) by encouraging joint audits, alliances as well as strengthen, its on-going Practice Monitoring Initiatives. Similarly, we will sanction any infraction without fear or favour in line with our enabling Act. Our goal of enhancing and sustaining the confidence of stakeholders in our attestation obligation is non-negotiable. Indeed, the driving philosophy for this year shall be the conscientious defence of the public interest essentially a strong advocacy disposition.

We will enhance the global profile of the ICAN brand by strengthening our network of professional and technical relationships with PAFA and IFAC. As foundation and active member of these bodies, ICAN will remain innovative and a voice in the global accountancy family to be cherished by many and envied by competitors. We will not be discouraged by the trend towards proliferation of mushroom institutes, but will continue with our mentoring programme expanding it to include other West African-based institutes. Since the hood does not make the monk, we intend to consolidate on the

gains of the last fifty years, sustain our standards such that our institute remains the preferred brand.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, as you would all appreciate the above laudable initiatives, require adequate funds and resources to be actualized. Therefore, we intend to embark on aggressive debt recovery, cost reduction and waste elimination measures even as we strive to fully automate all the Institute's operations. We will build a strong physical infrastructure base and spread, strive to achieve further diversification of our revenue stream. We shall pay greater attention on effective budgeting and budgetary control.

The Secretariat

At the heart of this dream is the Institute's work force. Over the years, the staff have made appreciable contributions to the growth and development of our Institute. Accordingly, the Council will press forward with on-going measures to professionalize its 200-strong work force by creating a conducive, work-friendly and enabling environment as well as increase current capacity building efforts at all cadres. In order to provide further motivation to cushion the effects of the current harsh economic conditions, the current reward system will be comprehensively reviewed in line with extant Council policy and the relevant laws. We shall pursue an affordable mortgage and car loan policies in this presidential year.

Conclusion

Distinguished guests, professional colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, our Institute is at another milestone in which we must chart new paths that will lead to the advancement of the noble and disciplined profession of Accountancy. For me, the events of today will be more historic and rewarding if within the next twelve months, the goals I have passionately articulated above and outlined in the scorecard in the attached Appendix are fully accomplished. With the Council working as a team, I am confident that we can achieve these goals. However, we will require great courage to take certain decisions that will reinforce not only our dominance of the business environment and move the

Institute to sustained prosperity but also promote advocacy and champion the cause of professionalism. As to be expected, the stakes are high but notwithstanding, we shall not shy away from taking and adopting those critical strategies that will significantly and positively impact our integrity and ability to add value.

As a tenure that will be driven by accountability, there shall be Quarterly Performance Review of the Institute; the first one would hold in the quarter ending 30th September 2014. In this respect, I earnestly solicit the support, cooperation and understanding of members of the Presidency, the Council and all my professional colleagues in this difficult but achievable task. Today, the fate of our 39,000-strong members is inextricably hinged on what we do or fail to do as a Council. At the end, in my view, we must be seen to have left the Institute better than we met it. We must therefore walk the talk this time around. My eminent professional colleagues, this is my solemn pledge. I am persuaded that as a team, we can overcome all odds and build a profession whose fountain of service will remain persuasive and value-laden.

This acceptance speech will not be complete if I do not publicly acknowledge the role of my pillar, my best friend, my roommate, my confidant, my darling wife Josephine and my wonderful children Amaka , Tochi and Ekene, played in my life to get me to this level of my career. I owe my ability to take on corporate challenges effortlessly to God Almighty and the peace and understanding provided by my family at home. My endless travels and late night meetings outside the home were accommodated by my family members. I say a big thank you to you Josephine and my children for the support you have given me all these years. I cherish you all deeply. God bless and reward you.
AMEN

Finally, let me thank most sincerely all my friends present here today, distinguished guests and members of the Press for being part of this Institute's historic Golden Jubilee Presidential Investiture ceremony.

May the Almighty God bless and grant you journey mercies back to your respective locations.

Thank you.

Long live ICAN

Long live the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Mr. Chidi Onyeukwu Ajaegbu, ACS, MBF, Diploma in Polygraph (Atlanta GA),FCA

50th and Golden Jubilee

President

Lagos.Tuesday, June 3, 2014

**APPENDIX TO THE INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF
THE 50TH AND GOLDEN JUBILEE PRESIDENT**

The Scorecard So Far, Targets and Strategies:

Scorecard	Strategies
<p>(1) Regulation and Certification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have over 120,000 student members of which approximately 39,000 are active: • We have a weak Educational base and environmental constraints; • We have low examination pass and completion rate; • We have flat-growth rate in students' enrolment 	<p>We intend to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise accreditation standards and support for the Tuition houses • Produce and deliver learning resources; • Evaluate the new syllabus in November 2014 with all the Study Resources delivered; • Develop a Research Centre for accounting excellence • Re-enforce practice monitoring by co-opting acclaimed practitioners into the scheme; • Actively pursue brand-enhancement, especially in tertiary institutions. • Liaise with tertiary institutions to maintain the ICAN standards. • Aggressively pursue the “catch them young” scheme.
<p>(2) Representation and Advocacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate public advocacy and representation 	<p>We will among other measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take a lead role in influencing public policy, standards and regulations • Demonstrate leadership of the profession • Encourage ‘whistle-blowing’ by setting up a Fund • Engage active sabbatical participants for periodical studies and contribution to national and international debates. • Be a vital commentator and reliable source of trusted information for our members and the society relying largely on the studies by a sabbatical team.

<p>(3) Membership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have over 39,000 registered members of which approximately 17,500 are financial members; • ICAN is a dominant local brand and aspiring international professional voice • There is unemployment and under-employment among members; • Lack of adequate support for our small-medium practitioners (SMP); • We face strong local and international competition • Review of our disciplinary processes 	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restructure our Employment Bureau practices for benchmarked and ascertainable results. • Encourage the up-skilling of members to embrace information technology as distinct from Technology Certification Initiative; • Reintroduce practice and experience log-book; • Provide support for the small and medium practitioners by way of encouraging joint audits, alliance, mergers and acquisitions; • Re-invent our Strategic Partners' Initiative with top brands focusing on discounted office set-up assets to encourage entrepreneurship amongst our members, especially, SMPs; • Encourage rotational audits especially for public interest companies; • Increase the sum assured for the group-life assurance policy for financial members; • Review the Investigation and Tribunal Process to enhance speed and fairness within the provisions of the Act and law. • Install a functional Call Centre for membership relationship management.
<p>(4) Competition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local and international competition • Proliferation of accountancy bodies locally 	<p>We will work towards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the quality of our learning resources by constantly up-dating study resources and aggressively supporting Tuition houses and tertiary institutions; • Continuing our partnership with ICAEW to deliver on the objectives of the

	<p>twining collaboration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining the ICAN brand as a qualification of choice by creating awareness in tertiary institutions • Constructing approved Lecture Halls in the designated universities.
<p>(5) Financial Sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have the ability to meet our financial obligations as and when due but requires urgent actions to ensure sustainability; • Effective budgeting and budgeting control; • Strong physical infrastructure base but there is a need to enhance diversification and spread. 	<p>We intend to implement policies that will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aggressively pursue recovery of outstanding subscription to boost our financial health; • Cut back on recurrent expenditure • Deliver an exceptional Conference with a 25% growth in retention rate • Spread the location of physical assets (facilitate the acquisition of land for the proposed Abuja International Conference Centre) • Work towards acquiring a multi-purpose building in London; • Resolve the on-going gratuity and pension issues; • Introduce Quarterly Performance Review, the first one would hold on the quarter ending 30th September 2014
<p>(6) Secretariat</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Institute has over 200 people on its payroll • A motivated, committed and loyal workforce; • And an Information, Computing & Technology (ICT) driven workforce and place. 	<p>We intend to achieve this through the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in costs; • Encourage a professional work environment; • Introduce mortgage scheme for middle-level members of staff; • Improvement of Staff car loan policy • Sustained relevant training for all cadre of the institute’s workforce • Professionalization of the institute’s work force • Full automation of the Institute’s processes in this Presidential Year.

<p>(7) International Affiliation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued active participation in IFAC, PAFA and ABWA and their programs 	<p>We plan on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tapping into available resources through international network; Enhancing global visibility; Extend our mentoring to other needy West African based Institutes;
<p>(8) Standards and Professional contemporary issues</p>	<p>We will aim at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating awareness of the need and benefits of Integrated Reporting Ensuring the consolidation of the adoption of IFRS Creating an enabling environment for the implementation of IPSAS in our public sector.

END