Text of the Address Delivered by

His Excellency

Dr. Kayode Fayemi, CON

Governor, Ekiti State, Nigeria

on the occasion of the

PUBLIC PRESENTATION OF A BOOK – UNFINISHED GREATNESS: ENVISIONING A NEW NIGERIA

at

NAF Centre, Federal Capital Territory, Albuja, Nigeria.

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Protocols

1. It is not easy not to be overwhelmed by the outpouring of good will and encouragement that has been so generously extended to me at home and abroad on the occasion of the public presentation of Unfinished Greatness: Envisioning a New Nigeria. In part, your presence here today in numbers and from all walks of life, and the online participation by numerous other compatriots and friends is a direct testament to the fact that despite the difficulties we face as a country, the Nigerian idea and ideal remain strong and indestructible. And that is really the essence of what I have devoted a good part of my life and career to: an unshakable faith in the fact that we are better off together and in unity than in fragments and pieces.

2. State- and nation-building all over the world have been and remain a permanent work in progress. Although some countries may enjoy a long

span of relative tranquility, the historical fact also needs always to be remembered and restated that stability and progress require the deployment of deliberate effort by citizens and those entrusted with leadership to advance the national agenda regardless of challenges. Even at that, there are no pre-ordained guarantees of success at all times; every country goes through high and low moments in their historical journey.

3. When countries experience their high moments, it is incumbent on leaders to capture the opportunities that are offered to advance the frontiers of the national agenda. When, as is inevitable, bad days come, leadership must assume the responsibility for keeping the ideals of the national agenda high on the radar, provide citizens with a genuine basis for hope that better days lie ahead, and courageously undertake whatever reforms that are required by the times and for the achievement of the better days.

4. Over the last few years, as our beloved country has been buffeted on all sides by a myriad of problems, I have, like many of you here present and online, experienced discomfort at the ease with which cheap and populist options which, yesterday, may have been laughed off as fringe ideas have gained in influence as to become mainstream. In the meantime, those who have held on to the goal of Nigerian oneness and unity have found themselves pushed to the margins and placed on the defensive.

5. Matters have not been helped by the inflammatory partisanship which many in leadership positions have adopted in part to score points against opponents but also in order to be recognised by their communities as truly representing their concerns. Too many seem to have forgotten that leaders should lead and not simply reproduce the base sentiments and narrow perspectives they encounter on the hustings. Leading means understanding the local concerns that are exercising the minds of our constituents, placing these in a wider context which as leaders we are uniquely positioned to see, and formulate approaches that provide a meaningful and responsible way forward.

6. I want to be clear. We are faced with a conjuncture of complex and uncommon challenges which must be confronted openly, head-on, and purposefully, rather than being denied, swept under the carpet, or simply wished away. In courageously admitting to and seeking ways to redress the challenges however, it is important to remember that we come from somewhere, and in the journey we embarked upon as a country, we have scored some wins, and a web of interdependencies bind us ever closely together. This reality should serve to condition and modulate our responses to the real challenges we face not with a view to throwing the baby out with the bath water but in a determined effort to filter the bath water so that it is purged of the impurities that could discomfort the baby.

7. It is this approach of seeking to build on our many gains as a country and a people whilst recognising and engaging our contemporary difficulties that underpins this book. We have had moments of greatness in all spheres of our national life and human endeavour. We have also seen many difficult days in our forward march to even greater heights. Problems must be understood to be part of our unfinished quest for greatness. And greatness has to be our permanent watchword as the only destiny that is acceptable to us and to Global Africa which earnestly looks up to us for leadership. Nigeria will surely fulfill destiny and do so as a united country built on justice, freedom, equity and the rule of law. This is the national agenda of our times. I invite each and everyone of us to partake in it for the national rebirth we must deliver.

8. I wish at this point to sincerely thank you all for coming to grace this occasion or joining the proceedings online. Without preempting the colleague who will deliver the vote of thanks, please permit me to say a special thank you to the Chair of the occasion, our esteemed elder statesman and former Head of State, His Excellency, General Yakubu Gowon. General is the embodiment of that indomitable Nigerian spirit and we all must, like him, be ready to go on with one Nigeria. My sincere appreciation also goes to our President and my leader, His Excellency President Muhammadu Buhari for his unalloyed support and his kindness

to me always and particularly in asking his Chief of Staff, our highly respected teacher and distinguished Professor Ibrahim Gambari to represent him. My gratitude also goes to the Vice President who is also ably represented here. To my leaders who have come to grace this occasion, I'm immensely grateful. To my fellow brother Governors here present and/or represented, Ministers of the Federal Republic, National Assembly leaders, our esteemed and revered traditional and faith leaders - brothers, sisters, fathers,mothers, and fellow travellers - please accept my sincere appreciation. My family, especially my wife has been a life long pillar of support in my journey through life and I owe them a debt of gratitude. Finally, I thank the keynote speaker, my brother and friend, Professor Bayo Olukoshi, the book reviewer, Dr Joe Abah and the panelists for enlivening our proceedings with their brilliant insights.

9. Thank you for your attention. God bless our beloved country.

Dr. Kayode Fayemi, CON
Governor