

Your Excellency, Distinguished Guests,

I am very grateful to the Government of Nigeria for an invitation which gave me the opportunity to make my first official visit to Africa in Lagos, the capital of your country. The most stimulating discussions we had this morning, Dr. Arikpo, as well as at my meeting later in the afternoon with your colleague, the Commissioner for Mines and Power, Alhaji S. Ali Monguno, have very much met the goals we had set for ourselves before coming here.

I believe we have laid the foundation for much closer co-operation between Nigeria and Canada in the United Nations and other international arenas, where our governments pursue very similar objectives. You also confirmed that the Government of Nigeria is as convinced as we are that we must expand and intensify bilateral relations in all fields between our two countries; trade, technical and industrial co-operation, of course, but also human contacts and cultural exchanges, for our two peoples have much to learn from each other. I was gratified to learn that you share our feeling that political consultations between our two governments must become more regular and cover a wider range of international issues and mutual interests.

I hope that our discussions have opened a further phase in the relationship between Nigeria and Canada. This relationship started very soon after your country's accession to independence. It has been a warm and a close relationship, both exemplified and strengthened by the personal friendship between your distinguished Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon, and Prime Minister Trudeau. During those years we have discovered that, although separated by climate, culture and the Atlantic Ocean, Nigeria and Canada have much more in common than appears at first glance. A few days before I left Ottawa, a spring storm brought down ten inches of snow to prolong our interminable winter; so that indeed the balmy clime and luxuriant vegetation that we found in Lagos is a welcome change. But underneath this exotic environment, we have found in Nigeria a remarkable social experience to which Canadians can readily relate because it is very close to their own.

You are a very old people with a glorious past and timeless traditions; but you are also a young country, striving to build a solid national framework for the social and economic betterment of all Nigerians. The people of Canada are much younger and, although their national state has been in existence for somewhat longer than yours, they are still adapting their political system to their varied needs. Canadians have forged, over the years, a motto to describe their own social experience: Unity in Diversity. I understand that the Nigerian motto is very similar: One Nation.