

**SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY, UMARU MUSA YAR'ADUA GCFR.**  
**PRESIDENT, COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA,**  
**AT THE 2008 INVESTITURE CEREMONY HELD AT THE COUNCIL**  
**CHAMBERS, PRESIDENTIAL VILLA, ABUJA,**  
**ON FRIDAY 19<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 2008.**

**PROTOCOL**

**I am highly honoured and delighted to be part of this epoch-making event which marks the convening of the 2008 Investiture Ceremony for the conferment of the Nigerian National Order of Merit (NNOM) on three (3) distinguished Nigerian Scholars and Intellectuals.**

**The Nigerian National Merit Award (NNMA) which was established by Act No. 53 of 1979, and amended by Act 96 of 1992, is primarily charged with the responsibility of conferring the Nigerian National Order of Merit (NNOM) Award, on deserving Nigerian citizens who, through dint of hard-work, intellectual and academic attainments, have contributed to national and global development, in any of the four broad areas, viz:**

- (i) Science;**
- (ii) Medicine**
- (iii) Engineering/Technology and**
- (iv) The Humanities, Arts and Culture and any other fields of human endeavour.**

**Act No. 96 of 1992 recognized the NNMA as an “Order of Dignity” that entitles the recipient to use the designation “Nigerian National Order of Merit” (NNOM) after his or her name and to also**

enjoy “such other privileges as are enjoyed by recipients of high levels of National Honours”.

It is heart-warming to note that, since its inception over twenty-nine (29) years ago, the Nigerian National Merit Award, through the meticulous work of its successive Governing Boards and its four Specialized Committees of Assessors, has successfully identified and selected for the award, 54 distinguished Nigerians, all of who have been publicly acknowledged as men and women of great diligence and integrity. I am made to understand that the Award has, today, attained such a level of regional and global recognition, that it is now keenly contested for by Nigerian citizens, at home and in diaspora. The pursuit of excellence is the best guarantee of greatness and, as a Government, we are fully aware of the implication of protecting and projecting our brightest and best. This year’s event is indeed unique in the sense that today, we are witnessing the conferment of this prestigious Award on three distinguished Nigerians- namely:

- (i) Prof. Wole A. Soyinka - Humanities
- (ii) Prof. Vincent Chukwuemeka  
Ike, OFR - Humanities
- (iii) Prof. Oyewusi Gureje - Medicine

I heartily congratulate all of you, the worthy recipients of this highly coveted national award for intellectual and academic excellence. By your achievements, you have continued to be a beacon of hope that Nigeria will one day regain its position as a global leader in research and development. It is also my hope that

**you will, from now on, actively reach out to and collaborate with other Nigerian public and private sector researchers. This way we can develop the critical mass of researchers needed to propel our dear nation into the league of twenty most developed and industrialized nations by the year 2020.**

**In this regard, I urge the Governing Board of the NNMA to continue the dialogue and cooperation which you have initiated with some relevant Federal Ministries and Parastatals, the Universities, National Academies and the Private Sector. It is also expected, as provided for in the Act setting up the NNMA, that you liaise with all the research institutions in the country for the purpose of promoting academic and intellectual excellence. Government, on its part is committed to promoting excellence and I want to assure our distinguished NNOM laureates that we will not lower our guard in this regard.**

**This year's Forum of the Laureates of the Nigerian National Order of Merit will no doubt, play a crucial role in actualizing the *Seven Point Agenda* of the present administration especially when one takes cognizance of theme titled, "Developing a Road Map for the Rapid Technological and Industrial Development of Nigeria". The theme is very appropriate and the results and recommendations will assist the Government to articulate viable and cost-effective solutions to critical national issues and problems.**

**The Communiqué of the Forum recently submitted to the Government through the SGF is being studied and will no doubt proffer solutions to some of the critical infrastructural and**

**developmental issues that are articulated in my administration's 7-point agenda.**

**I have also been briefed by the SGF on the challenges thrown to the body of Laureates to proffer practical solutions to three major natural problems, namely:**

- (i) Oil and Gas;**
- (ii) Energy and power;**
- (iii) and Security, with particular reference to the Niger Delta.**

**My Administration is eagerly waiting to receive far-reaching recommendations on these national issues.**

**I wish to assure you that Government will continue to give full support to your intellectual endeavours and assist you with the facilities and funds needed to make the forum an annual platform for bringing together Nigerian intellectuals, government functionaries, as well as Captains of Industry from the private sector. I wish to use this opportunity to call on the private sector to partner with Government in its effort towards harnessing the wealth of experience of these noble and talented Nigerians in our determination to solve the socio-economic and political problems confronting us as a nation. The private sector can do this by way of contributing generously towards the endowment needs of the NNMA, which is expected to be launched next year.**

**Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish to state that, in view of the success story so far recorded by the Board**

**of the NNMA, as enumerated by the Chairman, it is my pleasure to state unequivocally that:**

- (i) the Forum of Laureates has come to stay, and will be treated as an instrument for generating technical ideas to help the Government;**
- (ii) Sequel to your recommendation at last year's forum, a Presidential Committee headed by the NNMA Board Chairman, was put in place to plan for the "Actualization of establishing a National Research Fund". The Committee has completed its work and its report is being studied by the Government.**

**Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, it is my singular honour and privilege to welcome these three sons of Nigeria into the league of intellectuals of our land. I congratulate them, their families and friends.**

**I wish them outstanding success as they strive to uplift the nation.**

**I thank you for your attention.**