AN ADDRESS BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF UYO, PROFESSOR (MRS) COMFORT M. EKPO ON THE OCCASION OF PRESS BRIEFING IN RESPECT OF THE 21ST CONVOCATION, TODAY, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2015.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration) and Chairman, 21st Convocation Planning Committee,  
The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic),  
The Registrar, Bursar and the Vice Chancellor designate,  
Other principal officers of the University,  
My Very beloved members of the Fourth Estate,  
Ladies and gentlemen.

I am most pleased to welcome you to the University of Uyo, the only Federal University in Akwa Ibom State. You are here at our instance and for the usual exercise of briefing the media on the flagship at this University event – the convocation; the 21st in the series for this great University. This is the 10th most preferred University in Nigeria for admission, as it attracted over 40,000 candidates for the 2015 Unified Tertiary matriculation Examination (UTME), with a quota of 6,659 for admission.

The 21st Convocation is remarkable in several ways. Apart from being my last major event as the fourth substantive Vice-Chancellor of the University, is auspicious event would witness the installation of the fourth Chancellor of this University in the person of the Emir of Hadejia and Chairman, Jigawa State Council of Chiefs, His Royal Highness, Alhaji Abubakar Adamu Maje, CON.

A total of 4,186 students are to be graduated at this 21st convocation ceremony. A further breakdown shows thus:- Postgraduate Diploma - 347, Masters Degree- 899, Ph.D - 82,

I wish to note that in this convocation, I have for the first time in the history of the University of Uyo harvested a female as the overall best graduating student in the person of Miss Nsidibe Solomon Etuk of the Department of Music, with a Cumulative Grade point Average of 4.65. It is noteworthy that the overall best graduating student in Medicine and Pharmacy are females. They are: (a) Dr. Imaobong Ubom (Medicine) and Pharmacist Grace Monday Williams (Pharmacy).

Honorary Degrees of the University would be conferred on three eminent Nigerians. They are:

(a) Senator Ita Solomon Enang: a celebrated former Senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, legislator par excellence, whose legislative services are traced from Local Government, State House of Assembly, the Green and Red Chambers of the National Assembly, and presently (but not lastly) the Special Adviser to the President on Senate matters. This decision was taken long before his most recent appointment by the President. He is to be conferred with the Honorary Doctor of Laws of the University of Uyo.

(b) Mrs. Folorunsho Alakija: a frontline industrialist, passionate philanthropist, entrepreneur who has touched the lives of widows and orphans across the globe. She is to be conferred with the Honorary Doctor of Humanities.

(c) Chief Uko Akpan Umanah: the legendary music maestro, octogenarian and composer of African musical classics. His music has educated, admonished, entertained local and global audiences for about seventy years. He is to be conferred with the Honorary Doctor of Music.

Apart from the convocation, may I use this medium to notify the media on some milestones recorded in this great University during my administration:
ACCREDITATION

University of Uyo has continued to maintain a high academic standard that makes her products highly sought after in the labour market. Over 98%, of our academic programmes have been accredited by the National Universities Commission (NUC) with most of them at Full Accreditation Status. It is gratifying to note that the Pharmacy programme which had always been on Interim Accreditation since its commencement 21 years ago has now earned Full Accreditation Status. The only academic programme with denied status is the Efik/Ibibio programme, which is being repackaged for the next accreditation visit. On the whole, the University of Uyo, with its highest number of presented programmes (71) sailed through the accreditation exercise, and emerged as 3rd position in the country in the national accreditation exercise. All professional programmes in the University have similarly obtained full accreditation from their respective professional bodies.

In addition, the University presented 7 postgraduate academic programmes for the NUC accreditation in 2014. I am happy to announce that all the 7 programmes have been found worthy of full accreditation. Above all, University of Uyo has earned a FULL Institutional Accreditation: this is in regard of its present facilities and academic content.

INAUGURAL AND PUBLIC LECTURES

The University of Uyo has played host to various national and international conferences. The institution has also continued to support mind bugging inaugural and public lectures that have attracted resource persons across the globe. Of note are Professor Maarten Bosland from the University of Illinois, United States of America, Professor Daffyd Gibbon from Germany and others. Our Professors in the University have presented inaugural lectures on various matters of national and global relevance.

STUDENTS WELFARE:

The present University administration has kept faith with the promise to support brilliant but indigent students in the University. For such purpose, the Student Support Scheme Project (known as the Hope Project), was inaugurated in October 2013. From the Work
Study component of the project, financial assistance and other packages, 41 students have benefitted so far. We have not relented in identifying, promoting and supporting exceptional students in the University through the introduction of the University Honours Roll to celebrate academic excellence.

**STAFF WELFARE:**

The financial assistance to children of deceased colleagues have continued to be appreciated by both junior and senior staff members. The Staff Development Programme is another impactful staff welfare package. It is important to mention here that one of the outcomes of the rigorous pursuit of the University Staff Development Programme has been that over 80% of our academic staff members are either holders of doctoral or higher degrees and equivalent professional qualifications. Many are undergoing studies leading to the award of PhDs in various fields within and outside the country.

**COLLABORATION:**

The University has collaborated with other Universities and corporate organizations locally and globally for mutual benefit. In this Convocation, a three-man team from the Universite Omar Bongo (UOB), Libreville, Gabon led by their Vice-Chancellor, Professor Marc-Louis Ropivia, would be in Uyo for our convocation. Our list of collaborations are long, but, suffice it to note that from the collaboration with Nigerian Export Promotion Council, Friesland Campina (WAMCO) Nig. PLC, West African Agricultural Productivity Programme (WAAPP) Nigeria, the UNIUYO – Songhai Integrated Farm Project, etc major benefits have been obtained. This convocation would feature the Ground Breaking of the International Centre for Energy and Environmental sustainability Research (ICEESR). This Centre has strong linkages with the Strategic Energy Institute of the Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, USA, International Environmental Research Centre of the Gwanju Institute of Science and Technology, South Korea, Lancaster Environment Centre of the Lancaster University, United Kingdom and the New England Bio Lab in Boston, USA.

During this convocation, the ground breaking ceremony of Alumni Conference Centre will be performed. Thirdly, the Friends of the former Vice Chancellor of this University, Prof. Akpan H. Ekpo will perform the ground breaking ceremony of the Centre for Policy and
Strategic Studies. Other features of the 21st convocation will be inauguration of some projects, new and renovated projects.

HONOURS:
The University of Uyo is a force to be reckoned with at the national and international levels. We have the distinction of being ranked as the 12th in Nigeria and 55th in the continent in the 2015 African Universities and Higher Institutions Ranking Report. Our students and staff members have consistently harvested honours to the University. These include the Faculty of Law Students who emerged the overall best in the 2015 Inter-University Moot Court and Mock Trial Competition hosted by University of Ibadan. A similar competition was also sponsored by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and hosted by the University of Uyo with 13 Universities in attendance. During the event, the University won the overall best price and will therefore represent the country in Harusha, Tanzania.
The UNIUYO Chapter of the Society of Petroleum Engineers (SPE) won the highly prestigious Gold Standard Chapter Awards for three consecutive years (2013, 2014 and 2015). For this feat, our students were invited to Houston, Texas, USA for the grand finale.
Prof. Isidore Obot of the Department of Psychology has been appointed to serve in two international panels on Global Drug Policy Programme. Professor Aniedi Ette and a team in the Faculty of Engineering have developed and patented a Cassava Peeling Machine which is to be commercialized soon amongst several others.

SUCCESSION:
In keeping with the extant laws governing the running of Universities in Nigeria, especially as they provide for the tenure of a Vice-Chancellor in Nigerian Universities, Professor Enefiok Essien, a Professor of Law, has been appointed as my successor with effect from December 01, 2015. As I step out, I implore us all to give the new Vice-Chancellor all the support he needs to move the University forward for our corporate good.
CHALLENGES & PROSPECTS:
The challenges of security, funding, encroachment on University land, undue interference in policy implementation are challenging issues for the media to orchestrate to the relevant state and Federal authorities for attention and redress.

The University of Uyo would continue to strive for excellence in spite of the challenges to reclaim the “exiled brains” and past glory, given our current ranking and feats in several areas.

CONCLUSION
I must not fail to express my sincere appreciation to the two Governing Councils I have worked with in the course of my tenure. The Council led by His Excellency, Dr. Shem Zagbayi Nuhu, OFR and the present one led by Professor Kimse Okoko, OFR, deserves great commendation for their contributions to the success of my tenure and the University. Not forgetting the Principal Officers who have worked with me, staff, students the entire University of Uyo Community, the media, clergy, parents, friends, associates and other stakeholders who have supported my tenure in several ways. May God bless you all.

Finally, let me appreciate the press, especially Akwa Ibom State Branch of Nigeria Union of Journalist. In most instances, the press has projected UNIUYO in good light before and during my 5-year tenure. However, I should urge executive body in Akwa Ibom State to closely watch and caution very few of their members to painstakingly verify information given to them bearing in mind the high degree of impact they may create in the public as the fourth realm of government.

I thank you all for honouring us at the 21st convocation ceremony.

PROFESSOR (MRS.) COMFORT EKPO
Vice-Chancellor