



ADDRESS

BY

**DR DALHATU SARKI TAFIDA, OFR
HIGH COMMISSIONER OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED KINGDOM**

**AT THE LAUNCH OF THE NIGERIAN-BRITISH CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE UK-NETWORK AT THE ROYAL OVERSEAS LEAGUE,
PARK PLACE, LONDON, 2ND JULY 2009**

**The Chairman, NBCC, Mr Akinola Akintunde,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am pleased to address the distinguished members of the Nigeria-British Chamber of Commerce today on the occasion of the launching of the Nigeria-British Chamber of Commerce (NBCC) UK Network. I would like to start by acknowledging the humble and steady growth and development of the NBCC from 1975 when the idea of the formation of this Chamber was first mooted.

I understand that in 1975, discussions that led to the formation of NBCC were initiated by Dr. Henry Fajemirokun (CON) and Sir Adam Thomson, both of blessed memory. Late Sir Adam Thomson was then the Chairman of British Caledonian Airways. In 1977, exactly two years after the idea was initiated, the Chamber was inaugurated with Dr. Fajemirokun as its pioneering Chairman. The main aim of the Chamber then, as now, was to promote, exclusively, bilateral business and investment activities between the private sectors of Nigeria and the United Kingdom. The NBCC is on record as one of the first bilateral Chambers of Commerce linking Africa and the United Kingdom.

I also wish, at this juncture, to commend the Chamber for the phenomenal expansion of its membership from about just 20 founding members to around 350 corporate members today. I would like to add that the frequent Seminars workshops, Trade fairs, Trade Missions and other activities which your Chamber undertakes annually has further brought the two Chambers closer over the period.

Apart from annual Trade Missions, the Chamber added “**Opportunity Nigeria**” as a focal point in the annual Trade Delegations to the United Kingdom. This forum, which I understand, provides a platform for top government officials to brief UK investors about opportunities that abound in Nigeria became part of the annual programme of the Chambers. I urge you to keep it up.

I wish to observe that, in recent times, the Chamber’s Trade Missions to the United Kingdom had undertaken visits to local Chambers such as the 4,000 strong Nottingham/Derbyshire Chamber. I consider this contact very significant, taking into cognisance the fact that Nottingham is the heart of the United Kingdom railway industry. I encourage you to forge closer ties with this Chamber, especially as railway development is a key element of the 7-point Agenda of the present Administration.

I also understand that your delegation recently visited and interacted with the Oxford Chambers of Commerce. I urge you to take the opportunity of such contacts to draw attention of your counterpart Chambers in the United Kingdom to the fact that investment opportunities abound in other sectors of the Nigerian economy, apart from the traditional oil and gas sectors. These include agriculture, solid minerals, power sector, banking and finance, information and communication technology, the service sector and basic infrastructure such as roads and railways, to mention just a few.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

The launching of the NBCC-UK Network today marks another milestone in the growth and development of the Nigeria-British Chamber of Commerce. I am delighted to know that the network will enable the NBCC establish linkages with UK based Nigerian organisations such as United Bank for Africa, First Bank of Nigeria, Union Bank, GT Bank, Intercontinental Bank and Bank PHB as well as Ben-TV, among others. I wish to congratulate you on this initiative and applaud your continued contribution to the promotion of trade and investments between Nigeria and the United Kingdom.

One major challenge that needs to be addressed is the relatively low level of trade between Nigeria and the UK. There is the need to raise Nigeria's economic relations with the UK to the same level of political relations.

Given the historically long and growing bilateral ties between the two countries, the UK must resume its pride of place as Nigeria's biggest trading partner with diversified exports and imports flowing in both directions. It should also seek to be the country with the largest investments in the Nigerian economy. These were part of the main objectives of the Official Visit of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua to the UK in July 2008. It was also the aim of the visit of Vice President Goodluck Jonathan that took place on two separate occasions this year alone.

I have no doubt in my mind that we can, together, realise these economic objectives. On the part of the High Commission, I wish to assure that we are here to serve and support you. The High Commission is being steadily repositioned to adopt a more proactive strategy for trade and investment promotion and to ensure a more effective response to the needs of commerce and industry, including trade facilitation, information dissemination, visas and immigration matters.

I wish your organisation, greater success in the new vision and structure of economic and trade partnership that we have charted. I am confident that, with the launching of the NBCC-UK Network, a new chapter has been opened for the enhancement of trade and economic cooperation between the UK and Nigeria.

With these few remarks, it is now my pleasure and privilege to formally launch the Nigerian – UK Chamber of Commerce UK Network.

I thank you for your attention.