

**ACCEPTANCE SPEECH DELIVERED BY DR. AKINWUMI A. ADESINA,
PRESIDENT OF THE AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK, AT THE FIFTH
SESSION OF THE 71ST GRADUATION CEREMONY AND AWARD OF
THE HONRARY DOCTOR OF LETTERS (HONORIS CAUSA) OF
MAKERERE UNIVERSITY KAMPALA, UGANDA**

FRIDAY, MAY 21, 2021

The Chancellor, the Chairperson of the University Council, Mr, Vice Chancellor, Officers of the University, Faculty members, staff and students of Makerere University, the graduating class of 2021, families, and friends.

Good morning to you all!

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the University Council, the Vice Chancellor, and officers of the University for this great honor of receiving an Honorary Doctorate degree from the prestigious Makerere University.

The name Makerere translates in my local Yoruba language in Nigeria into: **Ma-ke-re-re** or “**megaphone of good news**”.

You are indeed a megaphone of good news!

It is such good news to join the roster of your distinguished honorary graduates of Makerere!

Makerere is close to my heart. My association with Makerere goes back over 20 years.

As an Associate Director of the Rockefeller Foundation then, I had the privilege of working with, and supporting several faculty members and students of the university.

Makerere is known for innovations!

My mind goes back 20 years to how I worked to support the university as we launched an effort to turn bananas into shelf-stable flour that can be reconstituted into **Matoke** — to remove the drag on women for mashing and preparing it by pounding.

I remember a survey we did then, where we asked some female students whether they'd like to prepare Matoke for their husbands on Fridays. They said “no, we would have just made our nails”!

I remember telling President Museveni that “Your Excellency, Mr. President, you risk having an increase in divorce rates in Uganda unless we can figure out how to make Matoke from reconstituted flour”.

We supported scientists here in the Food Technology Department to come up with shelf-stable flour which is easily prepared into Matoke! They succeeded. I suppose that work must have saved many marriages around here!

I remember the work we supported to provide access of farmers to tissue culture banana across the country, through a financing program that I set up then, to leverage financing for farmers at scale with the Centenary Rural Development Bank. The program was very successful, the farmers did not default, and the Bank lent millions of dollars to farmers.

I remember the investments we made in developing the collaborative Masters program in agriculture and applied economics, which I helped to lead.

The program has now grown into world-class programs, including here at Makerere. Professor Bernard Bashaasha, the Principal of the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, was one of the major collaborators then, and continues to be an outstanding leader for the advancement of the program across Africa.

I remember our support to the RUFORUM, an initiative to build capacity for PhD training across agricultural faculties in Africa, so ably led by Professor Adiplala.

I am delighted that today, we are seeing some of the fruits. Makerere is ranked number 8 in Africa and the highest ranked in Sub-Saharan Africa, outside of South Africa. That is incredible! Congratulations!

The African Development Bank is proud to have invested \$96 million in the Higher Education and Science and Technology (HEST) project which ended in 2019. Our support of \$26 million to Makerere University helped to construct two central teaching facilities, a four-story building with fully equipped lecture and seminar rooms and a 5-story building with an auditorium with capacity for 1,000 seats at a time.

We also supported the construction of modern diagnostic laboratory equipment, a biotechnology laboratory worth a \$1 million, a Geographic Information Systems laboratory and a computer laboratory.

I am very proud of Makerere University. I am very proud of Makerere University graduates, who are known in the labor market to be top notch.

And today I see that you pay great attention to female students: 51% of your 12,550 graduating students this year are female, compared to 49% for male. Wow! Let's applaud our female students!

But you need to do more to get more women into masters and PhD programs. No bird flies with one wing. Africa will progress faster when there is equality between men and women.

I will cherish this Honorary Doctorate from Makerere University, as it will always bring back for me great memories of my work and partnership with the University. Makerere University will always remain dear to my heart.

Once again, many thanks to the University Council, the Vice Chancellor, Professor Barnabas Nawangwe and Professor Bernard Bashaasha, Principal of the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, for nominating me, and for conferring on me this great honor.

I wish you all the graduates of the Class of 2021, a very bright future ahead. Go out there and let your light shine brightly for Africa. Go out and make Africa proud; for Africa deserves only the best from each of us.

May your families, who have invested so much in you, have every reason to be happy for the good news of your graduation today!

Go out there and **“Ma-ke-re-re”**! Go out there and be the megaphone of good news to Africa!

Thank you very much and God bless you all.