

**BEING SPEECH BY PASTOR ‘TUNDE BAKARE
AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY OF CITADEL
SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT (CSG)**

AND

**ONBOARDING OF THE PIONEER CLASS OF THE
ADVANCED DIPLOMA IN PUBLIC LEADERSHIP AND
STATECRAFT PROGRAMME**

**OFFERED BY CSG IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE
UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS BUSINESS SCHOOL (ULBS)**

**VENUE: THE CITADEL MULTIPURPOSE HALL,
30, KUDIRAT ABIOLA WAY, OREGUN, IKEJA,**

DATE: SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2025

TIME: 10 AM

Protocols.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the Official Opening of the Citadel School of Government. This is a momentous occasion, the significance of which words cannot quantify. Without a doubt, the seed we are planting here today will blossom into a mighty forest, whose roots will take hold in our nation and whose branches will stretch across the earth, bearing in its fruit the fragrance of transformative governance.

It is no coincidence that the official inauguration of this institution, Citadel School of Government, also marks the induction of the Pioneer Class of our flagship programme, the Advanced Diploma in Public Leadership and Statecraft, which we are offering in partnership with Nigeria's foremost university, the University of Lagos, and specifically, Nigeria's business school of repute, the University of Lagos Business School.

Let me, at this juncture, offer a heartfelt Founder's Congratulations to the seventy who have made history by becoming the first set of participants for the Advanced Diploma in Public Leadership and Statecraft. With your admission into this programme, I am confident that Nigeria is about to experience a new wave of transformative leadership across sectors. With your induction into this programme, I have no doubt that a new breed without greed, a radical opposition to corruption, and a cohort of changemakers is about to be equipped for high visibility and maximum impact. With the strategic deployment that will result from your participation in and conclusion of this programme, I am convinced that the first fruit of a unique breed is about to emerge to begin to lead the change Nigeria needs at all levels, from the local to the subnational to the national to the continental to the global.

Expectedly, this initiative has elicited curiosity among several stakeholders in the Nigerian state, with many inquiring of me the

rationale behind it. Some have asked if this is geared towards a political objective. Some have asked if we are about to start a university. Some, for want of a suitable categorisation box, simply ask, “What is Bakare up to again?”

While I am glad that those who are in doubt are asking questions, I am conscious of the fact that not everyone has access to me or my staff to seek answers to these and other questions. I am also mindful that though aspects of the answers to these questions are in the public space, from the website of the Citadel School of Government to speeches I have made in recent times, including at the just concluded Facilitators Workshop held on Thursday, August 28, 2025, at the Lecture Hall of the Citadel School of Government, this occasion provides an added opportunity to write the vision and make it plain that he may run who reads it.

My life has unfolded in phases, and most epochs of my journey have been marked by life-transforming encounters. From the death of my father when I was barely two years old—an event that left me in the sole care of my mother, a resilient and industrious woman who became both mother and father to me—to my formative meeting as a nine-year-old with the brilliant lawyer, Mr. Olusoji Odunjo, which planted in me the aspiration to become a lawyer; to the two landmark dreams I experienced at ages 10 and 13, which respectively shaped my spiritual journey and charted my nation-

building trajectory; to my relocation from Abeokuta to Hughes Avenue, Alago meji, Yaba, Lagos, at age 18 in search of the Golden Fleece; to my encounter with Jesus, the Light of the world, as a 19-year-old Muslim photographer covering the baptismal service of a Christian friend—an encounter that set me on an unprecedented lifelong journey of faith; to my meeting with Tayo Willoughby, then a student of the University of Lagos, who jolted me out of complacency and reawakened my dream of attending the university with his bold claim of being “a high-level manpower in training” destined to surpass me, while I was then only an O-levels clerk at First Bank; to my adventurous years of tertiary education at the University of Lagos and my legal training at the Nigerian Law School; to cutting my teeth under some of the doyens of the Nigerian legal system, including Chief Gani Fawehinmi and Chief Rotimi Alade Williams; to establishing my own law firm in 1984 against all odds; to 1989, when my heart began to indict a good matter concerning the King, and I received the divine call to full commitment to ministry – these epochs and their preceding encounters proved definitive in shaping my life’s journey and the impact that God has enabled me to make.

In line with this, the journey toward what has now become the Citadel School of Government began in June 1998, nine years into ministry and five years after an era of prophetic interventions in

Nigeria, Africa and in nations beyond Africa. It began in the immediate aftermath of the passing of General Sani Abacha, an event which I had foreseen by prophetic unction and foretold as God's mouthpiece despite the dangers of such utterances.

At that historic turning point, which occurred while I was away in Chicago, U.S.A. I discerned that Nigeria's future could not be secured by the spiritual community containing itself within the comfort zone of "Church." Instead, we needed to engage the broader society with clear strategies to transform governance and national life. Upon my return to Nigeria, I declared to the congregation at the then-Latter Rain Assembly that the next phase of our nation's rebuilding required the activation of three pivotal sectors: the Public Sector, the Private Sector, and the Social Sector.

It would take nearly a decade before this vision began to crystallise. Its crystallisation began in 2007 at a conference in Atlanta, U.S.A., when I conceived the framework of an institutional vehicle for providing solutions to Nigeria's developmental problems. The promptings for such an intervention vehicle came strongly to me at the same frequency as that of my call to ministry 18 years earlier in 1989.

When I received these promptings in 2007, I shared them with my friend and destiny partner, Dr. Jonathan David. That same year, the

International Centre for Reconstruction and Development (ICRD), a nongovernmental organisation, was registered, and on that platform, we sustained dialogue with stakeholders on restructuring Nigeria for effectiveness and equity. By 2010, the urgency of Nigeria's governance crisis demanded direct civic intervention, leading to the creation of the Save Nigeria Group. That coalition played a defining role in restoring constitutional order during a time of great uncertainty, demonstrating the power of informed citizens and organised civil society to change the course of a nation.

These experiences – from strategic dialogue to civic mobilisation, from education sector intervention to local governance and grassroots involvement, from thought leadership to governance capacity building, and from active political participation to high-level political mediation – became laboratories for knowledge mining, needs assessment and solution incubation. Our findings from these engagements only corroborated the plethora of evidence that points to the governance gaps in Nigeria. They reiterated the fact that the central challenge of our country is the crisis of leadership.

Nevertheless, we choose not to become armchair critics, faultfinders with no applicable solutions to our national problems. We choose to train rather than blame, to equip rather than just

quip, to empower rather than cower in the face of the mounting challenges of our nation and the continent. It is therefore out of these convictions that a compelling vision emerged: Nigeria, Africa, and the wider world need structured, practitioner-driven institutions that can identify, prepare, and empower leaders to rise to the demands of governance in the 21st century. It is this conviction that has ultimately given rise to the Citadel School of Government.

At the Citadel School of Government, we have a bold and clear vision to become a globally renowned institution facilitating the emergence of cutting-edge nations, beginning with Nigeria. These are nations with agile and responsive governments whose impact is closely felt by the people; nations that adopt, adapt and author technological innovations; nations where knowledge and wisdom guide decisions, and where service is at the heart of leadership; nations whose leaders and people think globally while acting locally.

By taking this initial step, we are on course to bridge the leadership gap in public sector governance in Nigeria, Africa and, by extension, across the globe. We will do this by providing current public sector leaders with exposure to cutting-edge tools for continuous development, and by facilitating the mobility of quality leadership from the private to the public sector.

Furthermore, by partnering with our nation's foremost university, the University of Lagos, we hope to bridge the gap between the ivory tower and the policy roundtable through the unhindered flow of ideas, policies, strategies and solutions across both sectors.

The pioneer class of the Advanced Diploma in Public Leadership and Statecraft are an integral part of this vision. Our mission is to raise nation builders like you—leaders grounded in values and equipped with the competencies to champion the cutting-edge philosophy of governance across diverse spheres of public leadership.

Some of you already have public sector governance experience. Some of you seek to transition from the private sector to the public sector. Some of you have even undergone governance training in the past. Whatever state you are in, I am confident that this is the bridge between your past exposures, your present competencies, and your future aspirations.

Therefore, brace yourself for the rigorous nine months that lie ahead; brace yourself for the public governance opportunities that will present themselves to you during and after your training; brace yourself for the call of destiny that you have just accepted by becoming a member of the pioneer cohort of this unique programme.

While the University of Lagos Business School offers you access to the highest cadre of academic competencies, we at Citadel School of Government bring you access to our rich public governance networks as well as our think tank operations, which have facilitated our nation-building engagements through the years.

For those in Nigeria and the diaspora who desired to, but could not make it to this cohort, do not despair. As soon as we stabilise the pioneer class, we will begin engagements with our partners, including technical and academic, towards the Massive Open Online Course (MOOC). The MOOC will grant online access to the course starting from September 2026. Also, for those who already hold senior positions in government and in the private sector, who do not have the time for the nine-month-long programme, as from March 2026, we will be launching several week-long short courses specifically designed for you.

Let me at this point express my gratitude to the Senate of the University of Lagos, Chaired by the Vice Chancellor, Professor Folasade Ogunsola, and to the Advisory Board as well as the Management and Staff of the University of Lagos Business School under the leadership of its Executive Director, Professor Michael Adebamowo, for the immense confidence reposed in us in accepting to partner with us towards achieving these objectives. I

am confident that, together, we will change the face of governance in Nigeria by building a strategic cohort of nation builders equipped to lead.

In closing, let me leave you with enduring quotes from three statesmen, words which, I believe, should propel you as you navigate the next nine months. The first of these is John F. Kennedy, who said, “Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other.”

Then I am reminded of Abraham Lincoln, who said, “The philosophy of the schoolroom in one generation will be the philosophy of government in the next.”

Finally, especially in response to those who wonder what we are doing, what our motivation is and why we do what we do, as I have said publicly, we are not in this for what we can get. We are not motivated by pecuniary profit or by any ambitious quest for power. “What then,” you may ask, “motivates you?” In response to this, I leave you with the words of Chief Obafemi Awolowo,

“I would like to be remembered for helping to build a strong and united multi-ethnic state. I want to be remembered for creating the basis for an irreversible revolution in education, in the provision of social justice in Nigeria. I have not yet succeeded in all these. But I have set a pattern which no other Nigerian can ignore.”

Like the late Sage, all I want is a nation that works; a Nigeria that works for every Nigerian. By reason of the seed planted here today, I am confident that such a nation will emerge in my lifetime.

Thank you for listening. God bless you. And God bless our beloved nation, Nigeria.

Dr Tunde Bakare,

Founder & Board Chairman,

Citadel School of Government