

WELCOME ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT AND CHARMAN OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL OF THE INSTITUTE OF CHARTERED SECRETARIES AND ADMINISTRATORS OF NIGERIA (ICSAN), MR. TAIWO ‘GBENGA OWOKALADE, FCIS, AT THE INSTITUTE’S ANNUAL DINNER/AWARD NIGHT HELD ON FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2021 AT THE MUSON CENTRE ONIKAN, LAGOS.

- The Vice-President, Mrs. Funmi Ekundayo, FCIS
- His Excellency, Governor of Lagos State, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu
- Distinguished Honourary awardees of today
- The Hon. Treasurer, Mr. Francis Olawale, FCIS
- Past Presidents of our great Institute
- Council members of ICSAN
- Presidents of other Professional Bodies
- Fellow Chartered Secretaries and Administrators
- Fellowship Inductees of today
- Distinguished Guests
- Gentlemen of the Press
- Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

I am very pleased to welcome you all to this year Annual Fellowship Induction and Dinner/Award Night.

As the name of these event suggests, we are here for two major things today. The first is the Induction of our members into the elevated cadre of the Fellowship of the Institute.

The second, of course, is the bestowing of prestigious awards of the Institute to some deserving individuals and corporate organisation who contributed positively to the socioeconomic development of Nigeria through proven track record in exemplary leadership.

Before I go on, permit to briefly say one or two things about our Institute for the sake of our guests and visitors who may not know what ICSAN stands for.

ICSAN is a leading, statutorily established professional body, dedicated to enhancing the status and practice of Corporate Governance and Public Administration. It is the only professional body authorized in Nigeria to conduct the examinations leading to the qualification as Chartered Secretaries and Administrators.

Although ICSAN started in Nigeria in 1944 as an associate of the international body based in Britain, it elected its first president in 1966, that was about 55 years ago. ICSAN became Chartered by Decree 19 of 1991 (Now Act CAP I13 LFN 2004).

ICSAN is a member of the Corporate Secretaries International Association (CSIA), a global organization originally registered in Geneva, but now in Hong Kong, and dedicated to developing the study / practice of Secretaryship and Administration to improve professional standards, the quality of governance practice and organizational performance. The Association is the global voice of Corporate Secretaries and Governance Professionals.

Over the years, we have consistently promoted the ideals of Corporate Governance through periodic issuance of policy papers and Guidance materials on Corporate and Public Administration.

For the past 55 years that we have been in existence, we have regularly produced seasoned professionals who had contributed their quota to the nation's economic advancement. Many of our members are at present occupying various responsible and enviable positions across the whole gamut of Nigeria's socio-economic life.

Now back to our main issues. A few years ago, the Institute started giving annual awards in different categories to individuals and corporations who posted superlative performance in the field of governance and public administration. We have not only sustained this noble practice but have also earned accolades for the credibility and integrity of the awards especially in relation to the merits of individuals organisation (s) we choose every year for the awards.

This year is certainly not an exception. For example, this year's ICSAN Award for Excellence in Corporate Governance (Individual Category) goes to His Excellency, Executive Governor of Lagos State, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu.

The Honourary Fellowship of the Institute is conferred today on two eminent Nigerians, that is the Director General, Nigeria Law School, Abuja, Professor Isa Hayatu Ciroma, SAN, and the Vice-Chancellor Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State Prof. Ademola S. Tayo.

The ICSAN Award for Excellence in Corporate Governance (Corporate Category) is given to the GT Bank Plc while the Distinguished Chartered Secretary Award, goes to a vastly experienced Corporate Governance Specialist and Fellow of the Institute, Sir Leo. Okafor, who is Group Company Secretary/Legal Counsel, UBA Capital Plc.

You would agree with me that we have done our homework in choosing all these people and organisation as they are credible entities who have posted stellar performances worthy of recognition and emulation.

Before I go on, I crave your indulgence to make a special appeal.

Special Appeal to the Governor of Lagos

I want to use this opportunity to make a special appeal to the Lagos State Governor, His Excellency, Mr. Babatunde Sanwo-Olu. The great strides made by the Government of Lagos State on developmental issues which have made the state a symbol of excellence in leadership is well recognised by our Institute.

We duly attribute the achievements by the State to good governance by the governor, Mr. Babatunde Sanwo-Olu. Our Institute has traditionally promoted good leadership in all ramifications.

We have consistently promoted the ideals of Corporate Governance through representations made into the various statutes, governance codes, regulations and laws, throughwide dissemination of communiqués issues at our annual functions, as well as through periodic issuance of policy papers and Guidance materials on Corporate and Public Administration

Given this pedigree, it is obvious we are stakeholders with all institutions and entities saddled with governance responsibilities. As such, we see Lagos State Government, under the able leadership of Governor Babatunde Sanwo-Olu as our strategic partner.

Now, I want to make a special appeal to the Governing on some few points concerning our Institute and its role in the public affairs of this nation.

First, I hereby appeal to the Lagos State Government to make ICSAN qualification to be appropriately listed in the state civil/public service scheme by advancing it two (2) grades above (i.e. grade level 10) the entry point (i.e. grade level 08), for the first degree holder (who also holds ICSAN qualification) under the administrative career progress.

With every sense of responsibility, the yearning is not based on sentiment but pure merit and logic. The basic entry requirement for ICSAN studentship into the Professional Stages includes any of the following qualifications: a Higher National Diploma; a First Degree; or membership of any other recognized profession, such as ICAN, ANAN, *et cetera*. This means our students are mostly well-educated in other fields before they even join the professional qualifying Scheme of the Institute. As a matter of fact, majority of them are already lawyers, chartered accountants or business administrators.

Our education curriculum is expansive and has been acclaimed as one of the best in the professional education scheme in Africa if not in the world. Our aspiring members are trained in law, finance, accounting, administration, strategy development and corporate governance. Our graduates are thoroughly-baked, competent and well-equipped with requisite skills to excel not only in our core areas of specialisation but indeed in any sphere of human endeavours they may find themselves in.

This make our request in this regard a worthy and deserving one.

The second request I want to make to collaboration of Lagos State in fulfilling one of our objectives in boosting human capital development in Nigeria. To this end, we want to partner the Lagos State Government in providing specialised training on diverse areas of governance and public administration to the state government workers.

We are champion of Corporate Governance, sounding board on due process and ethical integrity. We have on our faculty highly skilled and experienced professionals and academics, as well as authorities on governance matters who can be relied upon at anytime for quality training on any topic on Corporate Governance and Public Administration.

We have collaborated with a number of states in Nigeria (including Lagos State itself) in the past in developing the capacity of their civil service through such well-conceived, tailor-made trainings. Our request here is that we want our relationship on the score to be on a more regular and sustained basis.

The last but not the least request is the issue of our befitting National Headquarters which have been planning to build for some time. The project is conceived as modest four-story building, albeit with modern and state-of-the-art facilities. It will be built on our present secretariat site.

We have been stalling on this project for some time because the Development levy we are getting from our members have not been substantial to pull off the project because we have a modest membership size at the moment.

It is for this reason we are appealing to our strategic partners like Lagos State Government to help us with donation for the actualisation of this important project.

The prototype of this building is here for display, we believe it is a dream possible, especially with the goodwill and support of our stakeholders.

Now, back to the issue of our Fellowship Induction of today. The responsibility of conducting an induction is conferred on the Institute by the enabling statute, ICSAN Act Cap. I13 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004, which empowers the Institute to admit various candidates, after rigorous training and practical experiences, into various cadres of membership of the Institute.

Induction by a professional body is a formal admission of aspiring members of the professions into the membership fold, with all its inherent benefits and privileges, usually after a prescribed length of training and fulfilment of some other stipulated criteria as the case may be; It also connotes admission of qualified existing Members of a professionals body into higher grade (s) of Membership, with its equally attendant benefits and prerogatives and of course, a corresponding higher devolution of responsibilities.

It is this second leg of the definition of Induction we are doing today, that is inducting existing members into higher grade of leadership, as we have already inducted new entrants into the ICSAN membership earlier in the year.

My advice for all the Fellowship Inductees today is that, although Fellowship is the highest cadre of membership of the Institute, this does not mean once you get the Fellowship you have got to your destination; it does not mean you have known everything you have to know or learn everything you have to learn.

The journey to excellence in our profession, and indeed any profession for that matter, in today's world is continuum. You must continue to learn and strive for excellence.

Having said that I hereby congratulate all our new Fellows It is not an easy feat to become a Fellow of our Institute – several years of experience gathering on the job with unblemished record as well as proven dedication to the cause of the Institute must have been expended. So we welcome you into the exclusive club of ICSAN Fellowship.

It is hoped that you will continue to exhibit the passion, dedication, commitment and allegiance to the Institute and in the process contribute your quota not only to the development of the Institute but also to the nation's socio-economic advancement.

I enjoin you not to rest on your oars but continue with active participation in all our programmes.

Those who of you who have amassed requisite experience and want to be independent can also apply for Licence for Public Practice which enables anyone so licenced to set up a

Public Practice firm and operate as an independent Corporate Secretarial and Governance Professional in Public Practice.

It is a measure that promises ample door of opportunities for those who exploit the option. Finally, I thank all our guests for honouring us with your presence. I also hereby thank the Members of the Conference and AGM Committee (ably headed by our Vice-President, Mrs. Funmi Ekundayo, FCIS) for the remarkable efforts they have expended to make both this year's Annual Conference which was held yesterday and today's Fellowship Induction/Award Dinner a huge success.

Ladies and Gentlemen, you are welcome to the 2021 Fellowship Induction and Dinner/Award Night of our reputable Institute, the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators of Nigeria.

Thank you.

Mr. Taiwo 'Gbenga Owokalade, FCIS
PRESIDENT/CHAIRMAN OF COUNCIL, ICSAN.