

**Welcome Address By The National Ameerah at the 26thFOMWAN
Annual National Conference held in Yobe from September 8-11 2011**

In the name of Allah, the most Gracious, the most Merciful. All praise and gratitude are due to Allah (SubhanahuWaTa'ala). May Allah's peace and abundant blessings be upon His messenger, Prophet Muhammad (salallahualaihiwasalam), his entire household, companions and all those who follow the guidance until the last day.

PROTOCOLS

All protocols duly and respectfully observed.

Your Excellencies, distinguished guests, our founding mothers, fellow members and members of the press Assalamu Alaikum.

The Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria was born out of a vision of somewomen twenty-six years ago. The association celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary last year. Today, the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN) is a household name from North to South, East to West. It is present in the six geo-political zones of the country and functional in 35 states and the federal Capital Territory. FOMWAN is in six hundred out of the seven hundred and seventy four constitutionally recognized local governments in Nigeria. The association has over two thousand five hundred registered affiliate groups.

Focus

FOMWAN programs and interventions are in education, health, advocacy, and community development, humanitarian services and to some extent capacity building and training.

Impact

Activities of FOMWAN and its various programs and projects alone or in partnership with Federal, state governments, NGOs and multilateral organizations have made considerable impact throughout the country. Our partnerships with World Health Organisation, DFID, USAID, United Nations agencies, Population Council, National Programme on Immunisation, Federal Ministry of Health, National Agency for the Control of AIDS, National Democratic Institute (NDI), INEC etc, have made considerable impact in malaria control, maternal health, HIV/AIDS, children's

immunization, child retention in schools, girl child education, women empowerment and enlightenment, etc in communities all over Nigeria.

FOMWAN schools, orphanages, clinics, adult education centers, clinics and full-fledged hospitals in the various zones of the country have ensured tremendous grass root impact and support throughout Nigeria. This has ensured that many government and donor funded interventions become achievable or realizable only in collaboration with FOMWAN in order to exploit our vast network and enormous good will.

We are eternally grateful to Allah (SubhanahuwaTa'ala) for these milestones. These would not have been achievable without the deep sense of commitment and purpose exhibited by successive leaders and members of our great organization. The never-ending support from successive state governments all over the country, religious and traditional leaders, our husbands and fathers gave us the strength to forge ahead and break new grounds. It is worthy of note that the huge financial support and moral boost received from the Yobe State Government ensured FOMWAN Yobe chapter's ability to successfully host this conference and ensured success in all components of the conference. We acknowledge this support and pray Allah (SWT) to reward the state government and guide it towards continued fulfillment of its obligations to its citizens.

Conference Theme

This year's theme "Education; A Tool for National Development" as with all others before it, was a result of extensive brainstorming and meticulous selection. The centrality and availability of qualitative education towards ensuring national development and solving problems of poverty and disease is not in doubt. It is also a fact that the education statistics of the country place the North at a great disadvantage, while states like Yobe, Zamfara and Jigawa maintain positions at the bottom. Deliberations on these challenges, peculiar local circumstances and re-invigoration of centuries old systems of imparting knowledge will surely proffer solutions on avenues of forging ahead and creating an educational and scientific rebirth in such societies. The integration of a large percentage of children and young adults hitherto excluded from the present formal education system will surely ensure sustainable development and security free from the present state of massive and deteriorating insecurity. Islamization of knowledge in communities with predominantly Muslim populations will enhance acceptability and reintegration. We urge government to put more

muscle in the actualization of the integration of almajirai system of education into the formal system of education all over the country. It is imperative that government at all levels realize that the achievement of societal cohesion, harmony and security lies not in massive security votes and deployment, rather the magic solution lies in the provision of education and more education- functional, qualitative and accessible. FOMWAN has continued to mobilize the populace, especially the Muslim Ummah to pay attention to education, through the inauguration of its Annual Education Lecture Series.

The Task Ahead

FOMWAN's long voyage towards uplifting the status of the Nigerian woman, her family and community has borne indelible fruit. There is no gainsaying however, that the ship is far from berthing at the harbor. The need for further commitment and dedication by members is key to our continued relevance. The imperative of a mechanism for timely generational transmission of values and responsibility should not be overlooked. The need for a systematic census and documentation of our extensive network of projects and activities is very evident. However, I wish to state that the realization of these objectives is only possible through the support of our community leaders who see the impact of our presence in their various communities, through support from our religious leaders who are our partners in progress, through the support and goodwill of governments at all levels who collaborate with us for service delivery and through support from the various donor organizations who utilize our strength and goodwill in the implementation of their target projects. In this regard, I urge all these supporters and partners of FOMWAN to contribute generously towards FOMWAN's march to sustainability in its effort to complete outstanding components of its national headquarters project. The two storey revenue generating women's lodge needs finishing and furnishing, the two-storey conference hall complex is still only on paper and the mosque and Islamic centre has only N2m in its account out of the required N32m.

Your excellencies, distinguished guests, partners and supporters of FOMWAN I urge you to make this occasion the last time any FOMWAN national Ameerah will stand before you soliciting your support and contribution towards the completion of these components of its national headquarters project. I urge you to make a loud and resounding statement and stand up to be counted for the benefit of posterity. The launching of our

annual magazine- “Muslim Woman” is an attempt to meet these demands. All proceeds of the launch will go to the coffers of the national headquarters project.

Appreciation

Finally, I cannot end this address without expressing genuine and profound appreciation to first our founding mothers for their great foresight. To our long list of supporters and partners, but most especially to you our distinguished guests, your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen who deemed it necessary to be physically present at this occasion. I pray that Allah (SubhanahuWaTaala) reward you all abundantly.

I reiterate our special appreciation to the Yobe State governor, Alhaji Ibrahim Geidam for his benevolence and massive financial contribution to the Yobe State chapter, which made all this possible.

To FOMWAN members all over the country, I say keep the flag flying and may Allah strengthen you to keep the tempo.

I pray for journey mercies for all our guests and delegates, may we all reach our homes and stations safely.

Assalamu Alaikum

Maryam Idris Othman
National Ameerah