THE HEART OF GIVING: A KEYNOTE SPEECH BY PROF YUSUF ALI SAN, FCIArb, THE 1ST KUIYAN GARI OF ILORIN EMIRATE AT THE UNILORIN AMBASSADORS' INVESTITURE, DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AND AWARD OF EXCELLENCE CEREMONY ON THE 16TH DAY OF JULY, 2025.

Courtesies.

It is both an honour and a privilege to stand before you today to speak on a subject that is not only timely but deeply rooted in our collective conscience **The Heart of Giving**. Under the profound theme, **"The Essence of Giving Back to the University: A Charge to Do More,"** we gather not just to celebrate generosity, but to reflect on the sacred responsibility we carry to invest, contribute to the legacy in the very institutions that helped shape who we are.

Giving back is not merely about donations or material contributions. It is about showing gratitude, demonstrating responsibility, and building legacies. It is the recognition that we are all beneficiaries of sacrifices made by those who came before us and that we, too, must plant seeds for future generations. It is important for me to add that, Universities, as temples of learning and innovation, thrive not only on Government subvention or grant, but on the goodwill, generosity, and vision of those who have benefited from their existence

Both major religions represented in our societyChristianity and Islam place immense value on giving.

In Christianity, giving is at the core of the faith. The Bible teaches in **Acts 20:35** that

"It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Tithes, offerings, almsgiving, these are not just acts of kindness but spiritual duties. According to the Christian believes, Jesus Christ himself gave everything including his life to redeem others. **Corinthians 9:7 state that, "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."** Giving back to one's alma mater is an act of gratitude to God for opportunities received.

In Islam, the concept of giving is equally paramount. One of the five pillars of Islam is Zakat,is obligatory on all who meet the threshold to give a portion of

one's wealth to those in need. Beyond zakat, Sadaqah (voluntary charity) is highly encouraged as a means of purifying one's wealth and soul. **The Prophet Muhammad (SAW)** said in his Hadiths that:

"The upper hand is better than the lower hand. The upper hand is the one that gives."

"Charity does not decrease wealth, but rather increases it."

These spiritual mandates remind us that we do not own what we possess, we are custodians, trustees of Allah's blessings. Giving back, especially to education, is one of the highest expressions of faith.

Both religions agree that giving is not optional, it is essential. It is a duty, an act of worship, a moral imperative. It also goes to show that true giving is not measured by volume but by heart. Throughout history, we have seen how individuals have transformed societies through giving, some of such individuals are:

John D. Rockefeller, born in 1839, was not only America's first billionaire but one of the greatest philanthropists in history. His belief in structured giving led to the establishment of the Rockefeller Foundation, which transformed public health, advanced medical research, and supported countless educational institutions, including the University of Chicago, he founded the Rockefeller University and funded the establishment of Central Philippine University in the Philippines. His philosophy was simple yet profound: **"Think of giving not as a duty, but as a privilege."** He demonstrated that the wealth of a life is not in what we accumulate, but in what we distribute.

Equally remarkable is **Alfred Nobel,** born in 1833, the Swedish chemist, inventor and industrialist, whose legacy lives through the Nobel Prize. Nobel, heis known for inventing dynamite, and bequeathed his fortune to establish the Noble prizes toward celebrating those who benefit humanity. He established the Nobel Foundation in his will, today, the Nobel Prizes reward excellence in science, literature, and peace.

Coming back to Nigeria, **Chief MKO Abiola,** the celebrated philanthropist and statesman, was a man who gave not only to political causes but to the cause of

education. He sponsored thousands of Nigerian youths through school and donated generously to universities and research institutions.

Aliko Dangote, through the Dangote Foundation, has invested heavily in education, health, and economic development, from building hostels in ABU Zaria to funding scholarships for indigent students.

Tony Elumelu, with the Tony Elumelu Foundation, is planting seeds of entrepreneurship in thousands of young Africans ensuring that prosperity circulates.

And among us today, we must honour **Chief (Dr.) Abdul Raheem Oladimeji Igbaja (OFR)** the founder and proprietor of Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin. In a nation where private investment in education is scarce and risky, Chief Oladimeji chose to give back by building an institution grounded in moral and academic excellence. His vision was not driven by profit, but by purpose to provide quality education in a faith-conscious environment. Today, Al-Hikmah University stands as a beacon of what a single heart of giving can accomplish. Others like the **Sarakis**, the **Folawiyos,** the **Gani Fawehimis,** the **Shagayas** the **Dantatas** e.t.c.

These individuals did not give because they had too much, they gave because they understood that with success comes responsibility.

Today, our focus is specifically on giving back to the university, the institutions that sow the seeds of knowledge, discipline, and character

. **Why should we give back?**

- **Gratitude:** As a Muslim, once you are endowed by Allah (SWT) you are expected to give as a means of showing gratitude to your maker for the wealth he bestowed on you. Also, because someone else paid the price for us to learn. Buildings, scholarships, books, someone made those possible. Giving back is saying “Thank You.”
- **Good Neighbourliness:** Good neighbourliness is rooted in the belief that we are all connected in a social fabric where the well-being of one affects the well-being of all. Gliving, especially to institutions like universities, reflects a commitment to building stronger communities.

When we support education, we are not just helping individuals, we are uplifting families, neighbourhoods, and entire society. By giving back, we act like good neighbours, we ensure that others enjoy the opportunities we once had, and we foster a spirit of cooperation, care, and shared progress. Good neighbourliness calls us to look beyond ourselves and contribute to the collective good. **"A society thrives when neighbours care enough to lift one another."**

- Empathy: Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of others. It is a powerful driver for giving because it allows us to see ourselves in the shoes of someone who is struggling, disadvantaged, or less privileged. When we give out of empathy, we do so not out of pity, but out of deep understanding that, we could have been the one in need, that our success is not just the result of our efforts, but also of the opportunities and support we received. Giving back to the university with empathy means recognizing the student who walks the path we once walked, and choosing to make their journey easier. **"Empathy turns giving into a human connection and a bridge between hearts."**
- **Promotion of Goodness in Society:** Giving promotes and multiplies goodness. When people give whether resources, time, knowledge, or opportunities, they create a culture of generosity. This culture becomes infectious; it inspires others to act, support, and serve Supporting education is one of the most impactful ways to promote societal good. An educated society is a more informed, just, and peaceful society. By giving to the university, we are not only helping individuals succeed, we are investing in teachers, doctors, leaders, and innovators who will carry forward that goodness into every part of society. **"Every act of giving, plants a seed of goodness that grows far beyond what the giver may ever see."**
- **Legacy:** Our names may not be remembered forever, but the impact we make can echo across generations. An endowed scholarship, a donated lab, a refurbished hostel or library or a funded program can transform lives for years to come.

- **Sustainability:** Government funding alone is never enough. Alumni and friends must partner with the university to provide what the government cannot.
- **Equity:** Through giving, we level the playing field. We make it possible for the brilliant but underprivileged student to dream big and achieve more.
- **Nation Building:** Universities are the nurseries of national leadership and innovation. When we strengthen them, we strengthen the future of our country.

A Charge to Do More

So today, I challenge us all:

To alumni: Your journey started here. Now help someone else begin theirs. Come back, not just to visit, but to build. Sponsor a student. Fund a program. Equip a lab, find out from the University on how you can come in to do great things.

To students: Start now, Learn now. But prepare to return. Start small volunteer, mentor, inspire, give your time, your ideas, your energy. Philanthropy is not about how much money you have, but how much heart you give.

Corporate bodies: Partner with Universities. When Universities thrive, industries flourish. To

All: Do not wait to have too much. The value of your gift is not in its size but in its sincerity. Let us not just talk about change let us fund it, support it, and sustain it.

Let us, with one heart, rekindle the fire of service and generosity.

Finally, the heart of giving is the heartbeat of humanity. Those who give back, give forward. They write their names not in marble or gates but in minds and in generations. Let us give back to our universities with our resources, our time, our talents, and our hearts not out of obligation, but out of gratitude and vision.

Let us leave this gathering determined not just to succeed, but to support. Not just to rise, but to raise others, as they saying goes" we rise by lifting others". May our universities flourish because we gave, and may our names be remembered not for what we had, but for what we gave away. I pray that, may our giving back build stronger Institutions, may our Institutions raise greater leaders and may those leaders create a better world.

Thank you for listening and God bless you all as you give.