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Okamuta Innocent A. Eleazu

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WELCOME ADDRESS BY THE INTERIM PROVOST OF ALVAN IKOKU
FEDERAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, OWERRI, BARR. H.C. AMADI
AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 2-DAY INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE ORGANIZED BY KRINO ECONOMIC CONSULTANTS
INTERNATIONAL IN COLLABORATION WITH ALVAN IKOKU FEDERAL
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION (THE DEPT. OF NIGERIAN LANGUAGES)
AND SUWAKWA IGBO ON 17TH JULY, 2009 AT THE COLLEGE AUDITORIUM

- His Excellency, The President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. (P17)
- The Hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism
- His Excellency, The Governor of Imo State
- Her Excellency, The Deputy Governor of Imo State
- The Hon. Commissioner of Culture/Tourism, Imo State.
- Other Distinguished Government Functionaries
- Ndi Eze, and Other Title Holders
- Principal Officers of the College
- Gentlemen of the Press
- Staff and Students of this great College
- Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is with deep pleasure that I welcome you all to Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri on this significant event which affords academics, Igbo sons and daughters at home and in diaspora an opportunity to come together and brainstorm on the threat of Extinction of Igbo Language. It is expected that at the end of this conference, a communique containing sound resolutions on how to move the use of Igbo Language to greater heights will be published.

"The problem of Extinction of Igbo Language: real or imaginary" is timely and well chosen. We all know that the most important tool that man is endowed with for effective communication and exploitation of his environment is language. We are also aware of the United Nations Organization's predictions that some languages will go

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extinct within the next twenty five years. Igbo Language, unfortunately, is one of those languages listed. What this implies is that if nothing is done immediately to reverse this ugly trend, the Igbo race will soon disappear from the face of the earth. This is so because language is the key element for which a people is known and identified. (P18)

We have noticed the recent trend where our children no longer speak Igbo language. They and their parents would rather prefer speaking bastardized English to Igbo language. Some parents even pride themselves by telling their visitors to "please speak English to them (their kids), they don't understand Igbo". This ugly trend, is observed even in the most interior parts of Igbo land.

The roles and functions of language cannot be over emphasized. Being a universal medium of instruction, mass communication and vehicle for peace and social change, language can therefore be employed as essential ingredient for development in all areas of human endeavour. It can be deployed to energize and motivate people, it can be used to reduce tension, remove misgivings, expel rumours and fears and encourage people to engage in productive ventures. Why won't the Igbo language survive considering all its usefulness?

We pray that this conference will bring solutions to the numerous challenges facing the Igbo language, culture and the generality of Igbo race. May I congratulate the organizers of this conference, the