

Sussex University Confers Honorary Degree on Professor Takyiwaa Manuh, Former President of CODESRIA' Scientific Committee

Prof. Takyiwaa Manuh, former Chair of the CODESRIA Scientific Committee (2009-2011), had an Honorary Doctor of Laws (LLD) conferred on her by the University of Sussex. Below is her acceptance speech:

Chancellor of the University of Sussex, Sanjeev Bhaskar,

The Vice Chancellor, Professor Richard Farthing,

Madam Mayor of Brighton and Hove,

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Pro-Vice Chancellors,

Members of Convocation,

Graduands,

Parents,

Members of Family and friends who are here,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have been delighted and honoured to join all of you at this graduation ceremony at the University of Sussex, and I am truly humbled by the honour done me by the university in conferring upon me an honorary doctor of laws degree in recognition (quote) 'of my contributions to the fields of law, gender and politics'.

Distinguished guests, inevitably on occasions such as this, one calls to mind the different individuals and groups who have contributed to one's progress over the years- family members, teachers, mentors, colleagues and friends and one's networks, both professional and social- and to thank them for their support, encouragement and belief in one's abilities to succeed.

In particular, I would like to thank my late parents, one self-educated, the other unlettered, but both utterly committed to educating all their many children, female and male. I recall my mother, rebuffing her father, an educated man, who complained about the seemingly never-ending levels of education that some of us daughters were entering- 'what would marriage do for them,' she parried? I also recall my father's pride as I left to pursue graduate education in Tanzania, and the support my parents afforded me when I left my young children behind, after



I became a single parent, to go, first to the US, and then to Colombia, on a United Nations University Fellowship. How I wish they could be here with us today, to watch me receive this honour, and to swell with pride!

Ladies and Gentlemen, in the part of the world where I was born, it was not at all a certainty some fifty-odd years ago when I attained school-going age that I would actually be enrolled in school, or

remain in school and progress all the way to tertiary education and beyond. It is a testament to the progress that has occurred almost everywhere now that the right of girls to an education, skills and training, is almost uncontested and actually promoted, as we saw with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that are now ending, and reiterated in the successor and more ambitious Sustainable Development Goals that are set to come into place later this year.

But it is not only in the area of girls' education and women's rights that some progress has occurred, but also in the area of politics in Africa. There is now a general commitment to democratization and the rule of law to the extent that even autocratic governments which wish to remain in power want the veneer of democracy and try to extend their rule through elections, however stacked these may be.

And Africa has largely moved beyond 'the basket case' scenario described by the Economist magazine some years ago. It is recognized that several African countries are among the fastest growing economies in the world. However the challenge remains of translating these impressive growth rates into decent jobs and skills for the teeming populations of young people, of bridging the rising inequalities, and stemming the tide of some of the desperate migrations that we read about in the news almost every day.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, all these issues and more are currently being discussed at the Third International

Conference on Financing for Development (FfD), that opened yesterday in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the city where I now live and work. That Conference has gathered over 7,000 delegates to deliberate on actions, strategies and commitments for financing sustainable development, protecting the environment, and promoting social inclusion for a fairer and more just world. But I am happier to be here with you all this week than in that conference with the heads of state and all the important personalities!

Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, I cannot end my address without mentioning what the University of Sussex has meant to me over the years. Sussex calls to mind high teas- scones, clotted cream, strawberry jam, and tea- fish dinners, stimulating intellectual discussions with friends and colleagues, social justice and internationalism. I recall in particular, Anne Whitehead and her many years of field work in Ghana, and the work of Kate Young and her colleagues.

The IDS was one of the places I visited with British Council sponsorship as we were planning to establish our Women's Studies programme at the University of Ghana in the late 1980s, and more recently the IDS was the location for our Pathways of Women's Empowerment Research Project Consortium that grouped colleagues from Latin America, the Middle East, Asia, Europe and Africa, under the leadership of Andrea Cornwall, that has done exciting and comparative work on so many aspects of women's lives in our respective continents. The findings about the necessary and contingent conditions for women's

empowerment including both the agency of women themselves and their movements as well as the policy actions and resources that states need to commit, remain to be taken up, particularly in the post-2015 agenda.

Finally, I turn to you, graduands of today. You are entering a fast-changing and turbulent world. There are several uncertainties and challenges and you can take nothing for granted. But the world you are entering has also experienced significant progress, including in the areas I've described today.

So graduands, this is what I want for you:

- That today, you will use the technology available to you to post selfies of yourselves and your family and friends who have helped you achieve this milestone;
- That throughout your lives, technology can help you to engage with the world and build on the progress I've described today in women's rights, the rule of law, and democracy;
- That you continue to learn and seek knowledge after you leave Sussex.
- And that you take what you have learned here and what you learn since to make a difference.

Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, Distinguished Guests, I thank you all once again for the honour bestowed on me, and I look forward to my new association and status with the University of Sussex!