



WMO FEATURE

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THE WORLD OF WEATHER AND WATER

Point of View

ELEVENTH CONGRESS WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION

Interview with H.E. Mr. Alabo Toye Graham-Douglas,
Minister of Aviation of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

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Interview with H.E. Mr. Alabo Toye Graham-Douglas, Minister of
Aviation of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

by Dr. Sylvia Moore
Public Information and Press Officer (WMO)

Dr. Moore: Today we are at the International Conference Centre of Geneva at the 11th Congress of the World Meteorological Organization. We are very honoured indeed to have at the Congress the Minister of Aviation of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, His Excellency Mr. Alabo Toye Graham-Douglas. This is a momentous day as your compatriot, a son of Nigeria has been reappointed for the third time as Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization. What does this mean for Nigeria?

H.E. Mr. Alabo T. Graham-Douglas: It is indeed a great honour for Nigeria. First of all I must thank the World Meteorological Organization, its Executive Council and all the distinguished delegates who have come from Member countries for reposing this wonderful confidence in Professor Obasi. This honour and privilege are also shared by my country, the Federal Republic of Nigeria and because as you know, the present administration believes in rewarding excellence, believes in using the best human resources for the best job. Being given this opportunity is indeed a great recognition for the country, of which we are quite appreciative.

I am very certain that my President, President Ibrahim Badamsi Babangida will welcome this day with happiness and for that matter so does the citizenry in Nigeria. Its one thing to be appointed to such high offices; another thing to perform. We have reposed great confidence in Professor Obasi - hence, the Government endorsed his candidature and we are quite confident that as he had performed in his previous tenure, he is going to perform equally well during the next financial period. For Nigeria it is a great day and I can assure you we are all very delighted. The news has already reached home.

Dr. Moore: My feeling is that his performance to date has been splendid and I'd like to quote a former President of yours, President Obasanjo. Some 15 years ago he said that developing countries should enter into modernity by remaining their very selves. Professor Obasi epitomizes that saying because he is a man who bridges many worlds.

He studied in Canada at McGill University and at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA, where he won the Carl Rossby Award for his doctorate thesis. He has worked in a national situation in Kenya and in Nigeria and has been moving across the world. Yet, he has not remained a stranger to his people in Nigeria. So he epitomizes President Obasanjo's saying, would you agree?

H.E. Mr. Alabo T. Graham-Douglas: Oh certainly yes. You would appreciate that no government, and for that matter the Government of Nigeria, would recommend to such a world body a mediocre person. The excellence, the ability, the resourcefulness of Professor Obasi has been recognized, and this was why the Government did not hesitate whatsoever to promote his continuity in office.

Dr. Moore: So he remains close to your people in Kwara at Ogori, Nigeria and at the same time he is well known internationally.

H.E. Mr. Alabo T. Graham-Douglas: I would like to say please that at this point in time, number one - he is a Nigerian, but largely he is an international figure who belongs to the rest of the world.

Dr. Moore: So going on from that you are attending this Congress, with the Nigerian delegation. Do you feel that this is a turning point in meteorology and hydrology and in the international organization World Meteorological Organization?

H.E. Mr. Alabo T. Graham-Douglas: The answer is obviously yes. For the past several decades, the subjects of meteorology and hydrology were very little known to the developing countries. I was privileged to attend the Second World Climate Conference. I vividly recall that the technical and scientific input of the IPCC document is the bedrock on which many countries can build their future meteorological and hydrological infrastructures.

Dr. Moore: So what do you feel the World Meteorological Organization can do for developing countries now?

H.E. Mr. Alabo T. Graham-Douglas: Well a lot because through these two subject matters there will be the opportunity to develop the socio-economic aspects. Meteorology and hydrology are very important subject areas. Not just for the field of weather forecasting, but it goes beyond agriculture, it goes beyond shipping, it goes beyond aviation and a number of other areas. I believe that for the developing countries, this turning point we are experiencing in meteorology and hydrology is possibly the best era.

Dr. Moore: Do you have any specific ideas about what the World Meteorological Organization should do?

H.E. Mr. Alabo T. Graham-Douglas: To be more generous in its assistance to developing countries. This is a high tech industry. The requirements, the equipment and what have you. It's so technical that it needs manpower to be trained to operate the equipment. The equipment is expensive so obviously a body like the World Meteorological Organization should be generous in providing some of this equipment for the developing countries because obviously we wouldn't like the hazards that have been experienced by the developed countries of yesteryears to be experienced by the developing countries; especially not with the type of sophisticated equipment we have today.

Dr. Moore: What kind of hazards are you talking about?

H.E. Mr. Alabo T. Graham-Douglas: Weather related erosion, drought, floods, heavy rainfall, general destruction of the ecology.

Dr. Moore: So in other words, ecological development is the best economic development?

H.E. Mr. Alabo T. Graham-Douglas: Certainly yes.

Dr. Moore: One of the problems we now have in international politics is that developing countries must still develop, but at the same time most of the accepted development models are no longer applicable because ecological factors must be taken into account.

H.E. Mr. Alabo T. Graham-Douglas: Fine, this is where we must get to the mid-point. We must meet somewhere. For example during the Second World Climate Conference, the statistics we were given, showed the countries that produce the largest energy; energy production in its various ramifications in the developed world, is more advanced than energy production in the developing countries.

Whereas we are still using firewood in some of the developing countries as a source of energy, which means felling trees and using the trees, the developed countries would not agree to this. Now, how would they convince us to abandon the traditional system of energy production and accept the sophisticated one? Here lies the problem.

Dr. Moore: Some of the leading industrialists today are saying that the winners are those who recognize the very trend you are talking about, that one must find ways of producing clean energy, while the losers will be those who do not recognize this trend. How do you see this in relation to your country?

H.E. Mr. Alabo T. Graham-Douglas: My country perhaps would be the wrong example to use because, we may be in that bracket of developing countries, but as an oil-producing country with all the sophistication it has derived, we may not fall into that bracket we are talking about when we talk about disadvantaged developing countries. We use the same energy base as the developed countries, but it cannot be as expansive as in the developed countries.

Dr. Moore: When we talked about environment and development and the contributions of the World Meteorological Organization, you called for more generosity and provision of the right kind of equipment especially for better monitoring and more widely spread monitoring. What other ways would you suggest?

H.E. Mr. Alabo T. Graham-Douglas: I think there is need for the World Meteorological Organization to set up a body which should be able to identify the requirements on the regional level and in turn attends to the requirements of such regions. Now the basic equipment that we are talking about is known to the World Meteorological Organization. It is not strange. If you want weather forecasting, weather monitoring, weather analysing equipment and what have you, the satellites system you want to use, they are all known. It's for the regions, assisted by the World Meteorological Organization, to establish such facilities in a standardized fashion so that the results can be interpreted with confidence.

Dr. Moore: So the crucial role that the World Meteorological Organization has to play is linked to climate change, environment, energy conservation. Would you say this is its main thrust for the future?

H.E. Mr. Alabo T. Graham-Douglas: I believe so yes. I feel the last conference brought about this awareness and the calibre of people, the representation, the governments that attended would indicate to you the seriousness of it. I think that this is the time to have the main thrust in the World Meteorological Organization's future development.

Dr. Moore: So now we see the direction in which we should be moving and we have the right man to lead that movement, am I right?

H.E. Mr. Alabo T. Graham-Douglas: Well the choice of Professor Obasi, as Secretary-General cannot be a mistake.

Dr. Moore: I would say not. Thank you very much Sir. You have been listening to the Minister of Aviation of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, His Excellency Mr. Toye Alabo T. Graham-Douglas speaking to me, Sylvia Moore from the studio at Geneva. I am the Public Information and Press Officer of the World Meteorological Organization.