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PRESS RELEASE

LAGOS, NIGERIA

March 19, 2012

“The basic problem is that the Nigerian economic system is flawed. The Arab spring was started by someone who was ready to stick his neck out. You all just gathered here as children of the rich to take over from your fathers,” - Governor Amaechi says to youth at The Future Awards Leadership Symposium ... Obiageli Ezekwesili, Pat Utomi, Kayode Fayemi, others also speak

On March 19, the groundbreaking Symposium for Young and Emerging Leaders organized by The Future Project took place at The Shell Hall, MUSON Centre. The event which kicked off 9am prompt which had as headline speaker World Bank Vice President, Mrs. Oby Ezekwesili, also had Governors Rotimi Amaechi of Rivers State, Kayode Fayemi of Ekiti State as lead in speakers. The minister of Youth and Development Mallam Bolaji Abdullahi was the Chief Host of the event. CNN African Journalist of the Year 2009, Tolu Ogunlesi and E News South Africa correspondent Adaure Achumba hosted the event.

Organiser and Director of The Future Project Chude Jideonwo, kicked off the discussion with an engaging call to action from all the participants in the symposium. He advised, “This is no time for dead clichés. This is not a gathering of politicians gaming for a piece of the pie; this is a hall pulsating with energy. Let us talk sincerely to ourselves about our own challenges, let us start a discussion that will not end.” he added.

Expressing her delight in the level of engagement from the young people in attendance Oby Ezekwesili stated, "This generation is optimistic, they are no longer prepared to be spectators, they want to be players, they want to get their hands dirty to make a difference. I am excited about this topic as it presumes that past generations have failed to meet the pass mark expected of them of them by the young generation." She admonished that once there was an agreement that the old generation had failed, the next step would be to address the problem of governance.

From Governor Amaechi's perspective, the young people are placing the blame on the wrong people. "The basic problem is that the Nigerian economic system is flawed. The Arab spring was started by someone who was ready to stick his neck out. You all just gathered here as children of the rich to take over from your fathers," he said.

The young people in the audience participated fully in the interactive TED talks format styled session, exchanging ideas with the panellists and offering suggestions of their own. "I have had an unbelievable experience at this symposium, Chinedu Okafor, a medical student said. I was able to get exactly what the government thought of us. I did not accept everything I heard, but I learnt an amazing lot", he added.

Other speakers included players in the media, private and development sector including Ovation publisher, Dele Momodu, LEAP founder Ndidi Nwuneli, Entertainment guru Obi Asika and many others.

This Symposium is the first of a planned set of symposium set to take different states in Nigeria by storm. The event will be broadcast on Channels Television this week. It is presented by The Future Project and First Bank, in association with EnoughisEnough Nigeria and the International Republican Institute.