



REMARKS BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AMBASSADOR SOLA ENIKANOLAIYE, Member of National Defence College, SPECIAL GUEST OF HONOUR AT THE INTERNATIONAL DAY AND CUISINE FOR PARTICIPANTS OF NATIONAL DEFENCE COLLEGE COURSE 34

Represented by the Director of Administration of the Ministry and a Fellow of the College Ambassador Bukar Kalambe

Let me start by saying that, as a Fellow of the National Defence College, I am deeply honoured to stand before you to read the remarks of the Honourable Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Sola Enikanolaiye, who regrettably could not attend this event due to the exigencies of duty. However, I have been mandated by the Honourable Minister and Special Guest of Honour to share these remarks with you:

2. It gives me great pleasure to identify with the National Defence College on the occasion of the International Day and Cuisine of Course 34.
3. Permit me to begin by commending the Commandant, Directing Staff and Participants of Course 34 for organizing this important event, which has become one of the most colourful and anticipated activities in the College's calendar. I thank him for inviting me to attend as a Special Guest of Honour.
4. The International Day and Cuisine is much more than a cultural exhibition; it is a celebration of diversity, friendship, mutual respect and international understanding.
5. For me personally, the National Defence College will always occupy a special place. Between 2019 and 2023 when I was appointed the Senior Special Assistant on Foreign Affairs and International Relations to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, I had the privilege of serving as Director of the National and Geo-Political Affairs Department of this prestigious institution. Those years afforded me the opportunity to engage closely with participants from Nigeria and several friendly countries, and to contribute, in my own modest ways, to the intellectual and strategic development of future leaders.

6. In my capacity as the Special Adviser to the Commandant on International Relations, I recall requesting the College authorities to allow the expansion of the event to the entire diplomatic community in Nigeria beyond countries with participants on the Course. It was also agreed that the event be held on Saturdays, to make for a more robust and engaging Day. I am pleased to note that these recommendations are being implemented as has been demonstrated here today. It is therefore particularly gratifying for me to be associated with this event today and with a deep sense of nostalgia.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. The National Defence College remains one of Nigeria's most important strategic institutions. Over the years, it has distinguished itself as a centre of excellence dedicated to preparing senior military officers, diplomats, intelligence personnel, public servants and other strategic leaders for the complex realities of contemporary governance, defence and security management.

8. The College's huge contributions to national development and international cooperation cannot be overstated. Beyond academic instructions, it provides participants with the strategic outlook, analytical capacity and leadership skills required to navigate an increasingly interconnected and challenging global environment. More importantly, it creates opportunities for officers and officials from different countries to learn from one another and build enduring professional relationships.

9. The presence of international participants at the College is particularly noteworthy. It reflects the confidence that friendly nations continue to repose in the institution and reinforces its status as a platform for fostering international cooperation and understanding. Many of the friendships established within the College endure long after graduation and often evolve into valuable channels of diplomatic, military, defence and strategic collaboration between nations.

10. It is against this backdrop that today's event assumes special significance. The International Day and Cuisine provides a unique opportunity for participants to share aspects of their national heritage, traditions and customs. It allows us to celebrate our differences while appreciating the common values that unite us as members of the global community and common humanity.

11. Indeed, culture remains one of the most effective instruments of diplomacy. While governments engage through formal channels and institutions, cultural interactions have a remarkable ability to connect people at a more personal level. A shared meal, traditional music, national attire or cultural performance can often foster goodwill and understanding in ways that formal engagements cannot. It is a projection of soft power as a diplomatic mean that seeks to touch the minds and hearts of citizens in our countries thereby promoting a deeper and enduring love, friendship, and collaboration on the basis mutual respect.

12. At a time that the world is facing numerous security, political and economic challenges; a world that has become increasingly Vulnerable, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous, events such as this serve as a reminder that lasting peace and cooperation can built ultimately on mutual understanding and respect. They encourage us to look beyond borders, languages and cultural differences and focus instead, on our shared aspirations for peace, prosperity and human progress.

13. To the international participants of Course 34, I wish to express Nigeria's appreciation for your continued confidence in the National Defence College. Your presence enriches the learning experience and strengthens the bonds of friendship between your respective countries and the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

14. To all participants, I encourage you to continue nurturing the relationships you have established during your time at the College. The networks you build today will undoubtedly prove valuable in addressing the complex challenges that our nations and regions will face in the years ahead.

15. As I conclude, permit me once again to commend the Commandant, Directing Staff and Participants of Course 34 for organizing this commendable event. May the friendships forged here continue to flourish, and may the spirit of cooperation, mutual respect and international understanding that this occasion embodies remain with you throughout your careers.

16. I wish you all a successful and memorable International Day and Cuisine.

17. God bless you all!