

A REPORT ON THE MAIDEN DIPLOMATIC DEBATE

The department of History and Diplomatic Studies of the Koladaisi University held its maiden edition of *diplomatic debate* on Thursday, 12th of February, 2020. The event took place at the Faculty of Law building, otherwise known as school 2 in the school premises.

The diplomatic issue, upon which the debate was centered, was the border closure between Nigeria and the Republic of Benin, which was initiated by the Nigerian government in its quest to among other things, look inward towards revamping her economy and address its security challenges.

The participants were mainly the students of the department in the school, although some students from other departments also attended. The debaters were drawn from the 200 and 300 levels of the departments. Group A was in support of the Nigerian government in closing the border while Group B who represented the government of the Republic of Benin opposed the closure and solicited the understanding of the Nigerian government in reopening the border.

Various reasons were tendered by each side to back up their positions. Group A stated that the closure of the border was a timely intervention by the Nigerian government in its desire to look inwards toward revamping its economy. The closure to importation of foreign and contraband goods like rice, print materials otherwise known as Ankara, vegetable oil etc., is an honest attempt to encourage the growth of cottage industries in Nigeria and the purchase of made in Nigeria products. They stated that when we produce what we consume and consume what we produce, our industries will grow and we will be able to perfect our products to world standard fit for export. They also made a case for the Nigerian petroleum which is being siphoned across the border to Benin and other neighbouring countries through the same route as being destructive to the Nigerian economy.

On the other hand, Group B representing the Republic of Benin in the debate opposed the closure of the border by the Nigerian government on the grounds that among other reasons, it contradicted the *raison d'être* of the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS) whose main goal is the promotion of economic integration among its members. They argued that this can only be achieved if there was free movement of goods and services in the sub-region and this is what the closure of the border by Nigeria was impeding. Most importantly, Group B entreated the understanding of the government of Nigeria towards the untold suffering which the border closure has caused the people of Benin, especially the business community who have suffered heavy losses due to the inability to get their imported goods to Nigeria which is their target market.

The lecturers who served as the panel of judges, Dr. Yetunde Ayobolu of the department of Mass Communication and Dr. M. O. Ojelade of the department of Business Administration, both of Koladaisi University, Ibadan, took turns to advise the debaters and other students in the audience. The advice bordered on the use of grammar, comportment, dressing and logical

presentation, geared toward making the students perform better at subsequent debates. Commending the department on the novelty, Dr, Ayobolu remarked that the event was indeed a welcome idea.

The Head of Department of History and Diplomatic Studies, Dr. Sekinat Kola-Aderoju in her closing remarks thanked the panel of judges for their time and contribution and congratulated lecturers and students of the department for their cooperation towards the reality of the debate. She promised that henceforth, the event which promises to take in-depth and diplomatic look at topical issues will be held at least once every semester.

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