

Mediocre leaders subject Nigerians to harsh economy, – *Obasanjo*

Former President Olusegun Obasanjo has said that the country has plenty of experienced technocrats to run the economy, adding that there's a need to call on them to help improve and build a robust economy. He noted that he could not understand why the country has to hang on to the mediocre who have subjected Nigerians to harsh economic situations. The former president expressed this view at a valedictory programme organised by Chrisland University, Abeokuta, for its outgoing Vice-Chancellor, Prof Chinedum Babalola, after seven years in office. He stated that Nigeria has men and women of substance who can lead the country to where it ought to be, adding that all hands must be on deck for the country to move forward. Obasanjo said "Nobody will do it for us, we have to do it for ourselves and I believe there are people everywhere and we just have to look for them. "Two major development banks in Africa are headed by Nigerians and the international trading organisation (WTO) is also headed by a Nigerian, Ngozi Okonjo-iweala. "The number two woman in the United Nations, Aminat Muhammed, they are Nigerians, why are we hanging on to mediocre and then languishing in a harsh economy?" He urged Nigerians to look inward and diversify the economy through agriculture, tourism, industry as well as education.



He said, "When I was the head of state, the country shipping line had five ships and 19 brand new ones were being ordered by my government which could have made it a total of 24. We took delivery of some and when President Shagari came, he took the delivery of others and I left in 1979. "Coming back as a democratically-elected president in 1999, 20 years after, the 19 brand new ships have gone. "Let me tell you the story of one of them, it was sold for half a million dollars. When they wanted a ship for training, they went ahead and bought the same ship they sold half a million dollars for two million dollars, nothing was done to it and they also spent one and half million dollars to make it sea-worthy. "The week I took over as the elected president, they had just gone out on the first voyage and it was arrested for

not being sea-worthy and they asked me to pay one million dollars to rescue it. "When they told me the story, I said leave it with them, the people who arrested it will leave it the following day without a dime paid because it is a scrap and it will be a problem for them and that's Nigeria." According to him, "If you go through the story of Nigeria Airways you will weep for Nigeria. Most of the people who did this got away with it because there were no consequences." He added, "Someone called my attention to an online publication and he said the man who was in charge of the police pension scheme stole a huge amount of money and was sentenced to two years imprisonment and paid a very ridiculous amount of money not to go to jail. Now what do you do? Why would anybody tomorrow not go and steal