

**SPEAKING NOTES
THE HONOURABLE NOËL A. KINSELLA
SPEAKER OF THE SENATE**

**INTRODUCING HIS EMINENCE
CARDINAL ONAIYEKAN**

**160-S CENTRE BLOCK
FEBRUARY 4, 2013**

Your Eminence Cardinal Onaiyekan,
Mr. Pierre Lemieux, MP,
Honourable Senators and Members of the House of Commons,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is an honour and a privilege to introduce His Eminence John Olorunfemi Cardinal Onaiyekan, Archbishop of Abuja, Nigeria.

Your Eminence, the fact that you have picked the middle of winter to travel to Canada makes your visit even more special. You have spent a few days in Toronto and I hope you had a pleasant flight to Ottawa this morning.

We are delighted that you have taken the time to meet with us at this round table and to share your thoughts and experiences. Since your ordination as a priest in 1969, you have been involved in parish work, served as the rector of two seminaries and taught theology. In 1992, you became Bishop of Abuja – which, incidentally, is the capital of Nigeria – and two years later Archbishop. In November of last year, you were created a Cardinal.

Along the way, you have held important posts and taken on numerous assignments, many of which involved inter-faith dialogue. Much of your work has involved co-operation with Muslims in Nigeria. In acknowledgement of your work, you were a nominee for the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize.

Nigeria is a huge and diverse country. Its 170 million people are divided not only along religious lines, but also into 250 ethnic groups. Your work to help bridge these divides is of crucial importance.

Although Nigeria is a great distance from here, bilateral ties between us remain as strong as ever, with Nigeria being one of Canada's strategic partners in sub-Saharan Africa. We are both multicultural countries, have federal political structures, and are members of the Commonwealth. Through immigration, more and more Canadians have personal ties with Nigeria and other African countries. As Africa comes to play a greater role on the world stage, the ties between our countries can only increase.

It is therefore important that we understand each other's challenges and aspirations. Aboriginal peoples were Canada's first inhabitants, and this room is a testament to their enduring heritage. European settlement began over 400 years ago, and today Canada continues to evolve as a bilingual and multicultural society that welcomes people from around the world. Although challenges remain, we have been generally successful in accommodating people of different languages and faiths.

Like any relationship, however, living harmoniously requires continuous work to understand and respect other points of view. By meeting like this we can assist each other in these efforts.

It has been my privilege to support efforts to increase understanding between people, whether through international education or through meetings with parliamentarians and dignitaries.

This round table represents another example of people from different countries coming together to exchange ideas. While modern communications allow us to be informed of events as they happen anywhere in the world, nothing can

replace face-to-face interactions such as this to gain a real understanding of the situation.

Cardinal Onaiyekan, allow me to thank you once again for coming to visit us and I look forward to the discussion.