OPENING CEREMONY: FIRST INDIAN FILM FESTIVAL AT ABUJA

1. The opening ceremony of the planned first ever Indian film Festival at Abuja was held on March 31, 2014 at the Silverbird Cinema complex. Her Excellency Dame Patience Jonathan, the first lady of Nigeria was the chief guest at the occasion. The opening ceremony was attended by about 250 invited dignitaries and among them were senior politicians, diplomats, members associated with Nigerian film industry- *Nollywood*, eminent personalities and selected members of the Indian community.

2. In his address by the High Commissioner, while welcoming the Chief Guest and other dignitaries, he conveyed that from conceptualization to implementation, the first Indian film festival in Abuja took less than four weeks thanks to the commendable cooperation and contribution of a large number of Nigerian and Indian stakeholders. After a brief background on the making of the movie “Gandhi” the inaugural film of the festival, he expressed the hope that this festival will ultimately lead to a Nigerian Film Festival in New Delhi preferably inaugurated with the latest Hollywood movie “Half of a Yellow Sun” based on the book of the same name by Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngoziei Adichie. High Commissioner also mentioned about the vast scope for mutually beneficial cooperation between our two countries in the area of film making by virtue of complementing comparative advantages and experiences the two countries enjoy in the area.

3. Chief Guest, Her Excellency Dame Patience Jonathan, thanked the High Commission of India for organizing the event. She conveyed the best wishes of His Excellency Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, President of Nigeria for the event. She also conveyed that Hollywood movies were no match to Bollywood movies and that Bollywood had influenced the countries world over. The full address of the first lady of Nigeria is enclosed. The formal ceremony was followed by hosting of dinner for all the invitees and screening of the movie “Gandhi”. The first lady enjoyed her stay during and after the inaugural at the *Silverbird*. The event was covered extensively by the electronic and print media including government media. The event was appreciated by all the invitees. The film festival continues for another 6 days and will conclude with closing ceremony on April 06, 2014. Some photographs of the event are also enclosed.

High Commission of India, Abuja
PROTOCOL

Let me start by expressing how delighted I am to be in your midst today at this special event of the Opening Ceremony of the Indian Film Festival, Abuja.

First of all, I wish to thank the High Commissioner of India to Nigeria, His Excellency A.R. Ghanashyam for inviting me as Special Guest of Honour at this occasion.

Before I proceed any further, may I also convey to you the special greetings of His Excellency, Dr Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Today’s event, I must say is quite significant because it marks a milestone in the Film Industry in India, as it records 100 years of its existence.

I wish to note that India and Nigeria share a lot in common and both countries have enjoyed a very friendly relationship in many aspects, over the years.
One of such important aspects of our national life of which we have strong similarities with India is the very enterprising Film Culture, or what we commonly refer to as the Movie Industry.

This relationship has not only brought about significant progress in very many areas of human development, it has also enhanced the prospects of the bonds of friendship between the citizens of the two countries.

As we are all aware, the Film Industry is one of the most viable channels through which a people’s culture is portrayed and messages transmitted, apart from serving as a medium of entertainment and social interaction.

Most importantly, movies and films have always had tremendous effect on our Societies. It is true that the films and movies we watch often times reflect what obtains in real life, which is why they have been used as instruments of positive change in the society.

On this occasion, memories of popular Indian Films such as “Burning Train” and “Sholey” come to mind; with actors like Amitar Bashar, Shashi Kapor, and so on.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, the Film Industry today is a very big enterprise providing employment to a great percentage of people around the world.
Apart from the stage actors and actresses, we know that there are a lot more others who are usually engaged backstage in one role or the other, in the process of movie making.

The turnover impact of this Industry therefore in terms of wealth creation and revenue generation to the economy of any nation need not be overemphasized.

I must say that just like Nigeria with a population of over 160 million people, India is equally blessed with a huge population of over 1.2 Billion people. We can therefore imagine what this translates to in economic terms.

I believe that the Film Industry in India which is a century old this year has come a long way and has always played a leading role in global Movie entertainment.

It is also important to note that the Film Industry in India which is popularly referred to as Bollywood is one of the most vibrant in the world, comparing favourably with the likes of Hollywood.

I want to therefore congratulate Bollywood for having come this far.

In Nigeria, the Film Industry which we refer to as Nollywood is also making significant impact worldwide as our local movies are now gaining global acceptance
because of their standards, professionalism and high quality.

Our actors and actresses such as Pete Edochie, Patience Ozokwor (mama Gee), Genevie Nnaji, Omotola Jalade-Ekeinde, Zack Orji, Aki and Paw-paw and a lot more others, are making waves in the global film arena.

We look forward to the possibility of stakeholders in the Film Industry from Bollywood and Nollywood engaging in partnerships or exchange programmes that will yield mutual benefits and promote better understanding between our two countries.

Having said that distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the Indian Film Festival which is a celebration of 100 years of Cinema in your country is quite remarkable.

This event will no doubt provide a platform for people to appreciate the essence of the Indian Culture through the Cinema, and of course afford us a unique opportunity of re-appraising our cross-cultural values.

May I therefore commend the organizers of this event and the High Commission of India in Nigeria for putting this Film Festival together as a way of showcasing the Indian Culture in the next seven days.
I am happy that this Film festival is bringing together citizens of the two sister countries in a special atmosphere of celebration.

It is also pleasing to observe that nationals and friends from other countries as well are here to celebrate with India on this happy occasion.

On this note, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to now declare the 100 Years of India Film Festival open; and I wish you a memorable celebration.

Thank you for your attention.