

Speech of High Commissioner H.E. Mr. B.N. Reddy
at the Inaugural Session of the Business Event
'India-Nigeria Cooperation in Agriculture and Allied Sectors-Opportunities
and Way Forward'

[5 December 2017: Lagos Hall, Transcorp Hilton Hotel]

His Excellency Chief Audu Ogbeh, Hon'ble Federal Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development,

His Excellency Alhaji Muhammad Musa Bello, Hon'ble FCT Minister,

Mr. Edwin Devakumar, Group Executive Director, Dangote Group & Representing also ASSOCHAM Nigeria Chapter,

Ms. Ilyalode Alaba, National President, NACCIMA,

Mr. Biju Koshy, President, ASSOCHAM Nigeria Chapter,

Distinguished Speakers at the Event,

Ladies & Gentleman,

It gives me immense pleasure to welcome Hon'ble Federal Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development His Excellency Chief Audu Ogbeh and Hon'ble FCT Minister His Excellency Alhaji Muhammad Musa Bello to the inaugural session of today's Business Event, which is seeking to explore the opportunities and to look at the way forward in promoting India-Nigeria cooperation in the field of agriculture and allied sectors.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Agriculture and allied sector is taking the centre stage among non-oil sectors in India-Nigeria economic relations. It is because of vast complementarities that exist between India and Nigeria in this sector.

The launch of 'The Green Alternative: Agriculture Promotion Policy 2016-2020' in August last year by the Federal Government of Nigeria is a landmark development. The Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) for

2017-2020 announced in May this year identified agriculture as one of the main priority areas for achieving the targets set out in it. The high priority accorded by His Excellency the President of Nigeria to transform Nigeria into an agricultural hub is self-evident in numerous innovative schemes and programs set in motion during the last one year. It heartening that these initiatives have taken a mission-mode approach under the leadership of Hon'ble Federal Minister of Agriculture.

As Nigeria seeks to achieve self-sufficiency in agriculture, sustainable food security as well as promote agro-exports, India is ready to share its experience gained over the last few decades in these sectors. In fact, a lot of it is already happening on the ground.

Our attempt through this event is to bring together the relevant stakeholders - policy makers, resource persons and private sector representatives from India and Nigeria, and equally important the financial institutions from both the countries, to identify the way forward in our bilateral cooperation in this important sector. The Managing Director of EXIM Bank of India is represented in this Business Meet to address the funding options available with them for private sector.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The adoption in India of a series of initiatives in the 1960s and 70s covering modern farming technologies, introduction of high-yield varieties of seeds, increased use of fertilizers, expansion of irrigation systems, extension of credit and educational services to farmers, led to a Green Revolution. Not only India became self-sufficient in food in 1980s but also an exporter of agricultural produce by the turn of the last century. Today, India is producing 275 million tonnes of food grains; second largest producer of fruits and vegetables; it is among the 15 leading exporters of agricultural products in the world, with export earnings expected to touch US \$ 40 billion this year contributing 10% of country's overall exports.

These achievements have been made possible by proactive mobilization of resources, creating infrastructure, facilitating easy availability

of inputs, organizing research and technology development, institutional support services and crop insurance.

Recently, the Government of India has launched the *Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana* (PMKSY) with an investment of US\$ 7.7 billion aimed at development of irrigation sources for providing a permanent solution from drought. The Government also plans to triple the capacity of food processing sector in India from the current 10 per cent of agriculture produce and has US\$ 936 million as investments for mega food parks in the country, as a part of the Scheme for Agro-Marine Processing and Development of Agro-Processing Clusters (SAMPADA).

The Allied sectors of agriculture also developed parallelly thus complementing development of agriculture. White Revolution in India started with Operation Flood in 1970, through a cooperative movement enabling India to emerge as world's largest producer of milk. Dr. Verghese Kurien, Father of India's White Revolution, who in his book 'I too had a dream', describes how with every crisis comes an opportunity. The success story of Amul in Gujarat inspired many such movements within India. The largest number of beneficiaries of the White revolution are the small and marginal farmers.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

India is not only a major producer of food grains but also an import market from time to time for an array of agricultural products. For example, edible oil, pulses, soybean, cashew kernels, cocoa, dry ginger, among others, are imported, though the demand remains dynamic and cyclical. This is where Nigeria can step-in in the months and years ahead.

Indian companies' presence in agriculture sector in Nigeria is gradually taking roots - both as quality and cost-effective suppliers of agricultural machinery and implements, as well as investors and providers of technology. Apart from offering farm to market solutions, Indian companies are ready to work with Nigerian Federal and State Government agencies as well as entrepreneurs to expand the scope of engagement including capacity building in rural areas.

I am happy to note that several Indian agri-experts have been working in Nigeria contributing towards innovative technologies in diverse ways. Some areas include tissue culture planting, bio-fertilizers developed using microbes and bacteria from Nigerian soil, organic farm inputs, sprinkler irrigation systems, integrated irrigation automation systems, poultry and aqua-culture. We will have the benefit of hearing their experiences with a view to further advance cooperation between India and Nigeria.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Indian High Commission is working with the Federal Ministry of Agriculture to develop a Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in agriculture. The leading agricultural research institution i.e., Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) is in the process of finalizing an MoU with its Nigerian counterpart. As part of the capacity building programmes under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) and India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS), 30 Nigerian agri-experts have been trained in leading agricultural institutions in India this year. Another 15 agri-experts are expected to attend these programmes before March next year.

India and Nigeria can mutually benefit by extensive cooperation in the diverse spectrum of activities associated with agriculture and allied activities. I am confident that the event today will add a new feather to the growing economic engagement between our two countries.

As I conclude, I wish to place on record our deep appreciation to National President of NACCIMA for joining as partner in hosting this Business Event.

I also wish to convey our deep gratitude to the Hon'ble Federal Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, and Hon'ble FCT Minister for taking out their valuable time and joining us to Address at this Business Event.

Thank you.
