

**Welcome Remarks by High Commissioner H.E. Mr. B.N. Reddy**

**'Launch of the *Namaste Nigeria*'**

[5 May 2018]

Thank you Monisha.

**Mr. Otunba Olusegun Runseme, Director General, National Council for Arts and Culture**

**Princess Ginika Nwafor-Orizu, Chief Cultural Officer, representing H.E. Mr. Lai Mohammed, Hon'ble Minister of Information and Culture,**

**Excellencies and Members of the Diplomatic Corps,**

**Mr. Sudarshan Reddy, President of ICA**

**Mrs. Meets Saxena, President of the Indian Women's Association,**

**Friends from media**

**Ladies & Gentlemen**

*NAMASTE NIGERIA.*

I extend a very warm welcome to you all to this inaugural edition of the *Namaste Nigeria* or *Greetings Nigeria*.

India, like Nigeria, is bestowed with rich traditions at all levels -be it at the level of communities, States and regions. Today, we attempt to showcase the strength of diversity – both of India and Nigeria, through the medium of arts and culture. It is this unity in diversity that will single out Nigeria and India, among the comity of nations, for a vibrant future. The largest democracy in Africa, Nigeria, and the largest in the world, India, have so many facets of their national life to celebrate individually and together.

**Friends,**

We bring for the first time to Abuja, and for that matter in Nigeria, this initiative -*Namaste* Nigeria -to celebrate the diversity and richness of Indian culture, as manifested in dances and costumes of different States of India. It is also a tribute to the people and the Government of Nigeria for playing a good host for large number of Indians living in Nigeria.

This event is also held to usher in 60 Years of Diplomatic Engagement between India and Nigeria and also as part of the celebrations marking 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of India's Independence and NCAC's Year of Breakthrough Culture. I am confident that *Namaste* Nigeria will continue to showcase the cultural affinity between two countries, and convey a message of friendship at the people-to-people level.

I take this opportunity to convey my deep appreciation to the Federal Ministry of Information and Culture and in particular Director General of National Council of Arts and Culture of Nigeria Mr. Runseme for their readiness to join initiatives to foster cultural cooperation between our two countries. Indian High Commission is ready to join the cultural programmes held under the auspices of NCAC in November this year.

Before we head to the cultural programme, I would like to thank Patron of IWA Mrs. Lalita Devi, Presidents of ICA and IWA Mr. Sudharshan and Mrs. Meeta Saxena; Cultural Secretaries of ICA Mr. Rajendran - Raj, Mr. Avadesh; Vice Presidents of ICA and IWA Mrs. Pragya Rathore and Mrs. Dimple Alimchandani and all other Executive Members of ICA and IWA for their tireless efforts over the last few months in making this event possible. I also thank my colleagues in the High Commission -the Deputy High Commissioner Subhash and Cultural Attaché Vinod Kumar, and other for coordinating the event.

I thank you. '*Namaste* Nigeria'.

\*\*\*\*\*