

SPEECH AT THE SAVANNAH CENTRE FOR DEMOCRACY, DIPLOMACY AND DEVELOPMENT

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INDIA-NIGERIA BILATERAL RELATIONS

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Representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nigeria and Savannah Centre,

Distinguished guests,

My colleagues from the High Commission of India,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I warmly welcome you all to the High Commission of India on this special occasion. I thank the Savannah Centre for Diplomacy, Democracy and Development for organizing this event to commemorate the 76th Independence Day of India, which falls on 15th August 2022. This would be my first public presentation after joining the High Commission in Abuja and I am thankful to SCDDD for the opportunity. Many of you here have long experiences in diplomacy and in public life. Your knowledge of diplomacy and Nigeria's relations with India, among other countries, should be deep and wide, and I am grateful for taking your time off to attend this event.

It gives me immense pleasure to present before you an overview of India-Nigeria relations and how our two countries propose to take the relationship forward. I want to structure this presentation into three parts. The second part

would focus on what India and Nigeria have achieved since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1958. In the third and final part I wish to outline our priorities and possible new areas of cooperation in strengthening the relationship between our two countries.

Where is India now?

We are now celebrating the 76th anniversary of our Independence on 15th August 2022. After becoming independent in 1947, in the past 75 years, India has come a long way. The road to here has not been easy. It needed concerted effort over the decades to improve the living conditions of our citizens and to carve out a place for India amongst the comity of the nations. Initial periods after independence, with a depleted economy and multiple problems faced by the country, many foreign nations had extended assistance in setting up institutions, industries etc. This was followed by a period of consolidation. Then when the era of globalisation had started, the reform process in India had also begun, fast tracking many of the growth parameters and propelling India into a fast-developing economy and a country with growing aspirations and capabilities. We partnered with leading countries in developing the manufacturing sector in the country, in addition to the indigenously developed technologies. Be it production of vehicles, industrial machinery, petrochemicals, and everything else. We invested in technology in traditional fields from agriculture to textiles and health to capacity building.

From 33 million population at the time of independence, we are now a country of 1.3 billion. From an importer of food items, we have now become not only self-sufficient in food security, but have also become a net exporter of food products. The total food production, which stood at 54.92 million tonnes in 1950, rose to 305.44 million tonnes in 2020-21. Poverty at the time of independence was at 70%. We have managed to reduce it to around 25% in spite of the increase in population by nearly 4 times.

From roughly USD 81 billion GDP (INR 2.7 lakh crores) in 1947, today the current GDP stands at USD 3.12 trillion (nominal, 2022) making it the fifth largest economy of the world. In 1991, India embarked on the path of reforms in the economy and opening up, and to align itself with the globalisation process. There has been a 10- fold increase in the GDP (at constant prices) since the reform process began in 1991. The average growth of economy has been around 8% since the liberalisation. Three decades since the reform process began, India's forex reserves now stand at USD 573.875 billion - the world's fifth-largest. Since the 1991 liberalisation, FDI has become the buzzword of India's economic story. In 2020-21, India received a record

US\$ 81.72 billion in Foreign Direct Investment. Manufacturing industry accounts for 26% of the GDP and employs about 22% of the workforce.

Computer Software and Hardware became the top recipient sector of FDI Equity inflow with a share of around 25% which indicates that India figures prominently for the investors as the AI driven Industrial Revolution 4.0 moves to a higher orbit. India also boasts of a fast growth in billionaire Unicorns globally. As a result of umpteen initiatives by the present government, hundreds of archaic laws have been dispensed with. India's global ranking for DBI (Doing Business with India) has moved up significantly even as more needs to be done. Likewise, for the first time Indian exports of goods and services reached over \$600 billion in 2021-22.

The length and breadth of the country is connected with more than 68,000 km of railway lines and 6.4 million kilometres of road network. According to the Ministry of Power, only 3,061 villages had access to electricity in 1950. In 2018, the Indian government announced that all of India's villages – 5,97,464 in total – had been electrified. Complete electrification is one of the priorities of the Government. The Central Electricity Authority has reported that the total installed capacity of electricity generation is above 403 GW as of June 2022. Education has been a priority of the government. The literacy rate currently stands at 79.1%. Right to Education has been made as a Fundamental right.

India focused on developing the fundamental science sectors. It has carved out a space for itself through indigenous development of nuclear technology and space technology. Currently there is an installed capacity of 6600 MW of nuclear energy. In the space sector, with the home-grown technology of Polar Satellite Launch Vehicles, India has entered this domain creditably and has sent its probes to Moon and Mars. We have also achieved success in commercial launch of satellites. The strength of Indian technology, as one of my ambassadors had commented earlier, is in frugal engineering. The cost effectiveness of Indian technology has been one of its most attractive areas. We do a lot with less resources, as against comparable peers. To give an example, the cost of Mangalyaan Mission, or the Mars Mission was USD 74 million. Compare it with the cost of producing the Hollywood movie – Gravity, which was USD 100 million.

India has the largest young aspirational population and the fastest growing market economy. An estimated 30% of the population constitute the middle class. Nearly 65% of our population are of 35 years or below. This demography provides us with both an opportunity and challenge. Opportunity in that there is a large, young and trained work force available for employment and to participate in the economic story of the country. Challenge because the

government has to constantly cater to the aspirations and requirements of this group to channelise their energy to productive areas.

On this path of development, not only India concentrated on itself, but had also opened it up for global good and extended assistance to her neighbours and to friends across the world, to be part of the growth story. Its foreign policy prerogatives can be summarized in the concept of “Vasudeva Kutumbakam” - the whole world is one family. India not only stood and helped in the emancipation of large number of colonized countries but also created a third way with a more equitable force in the form of NAM (Non-Aligned Movement) to serve national interest and cause of peace and development especially for the developing and underdeveloped world. It became a champion for the rights of oppressed people at the international fora while discharging its obligations as a responsible international actor and a voice of reason.

India's foreign policy is driven by strategic autonomy to subserve her own national interests which are aligned with the global welfare and has emerged as a voice of reason at the global stage. India continues to play the global leadership role as a voice of the developing and underdeveloped countries be it for the waiver of Intellectual Property Rights for Vaccines or at the WTO negotiations on fishing and agriculture and on the reforms for the multilateral institutions.

India is also on the forefront of fight against Climate Change. The International Solar Alliance (ISA), Coalition of Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) and 'One Planet One Health' are the initiatives which India has launched with and for the global community as it has emerged as a first responder in the crisis situations from natural disasters to the pandemic. With a clear focus on multilateralism and primacy of the UN Charter, India navigates her foreign and security policy with dignity and confidence as she engages with diverse partners across various groupings. Her Neighbourhood First, Act East and Link West and Africa for Africans policies provide her the effective fulcrum for mutually beneficial partnerships.

India's capacity building assistance under the ITEC/e-ITEC (Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation) to over 160 countries, supplied essential medicines, medical supplies and had deputed professionals and paramedics during the pandemic to many countries. India has emerged as a first responder during the crises with the 'Share and Care' attitude.

What have we achieved bilaterally?

Dear friends, I think I have painted the picture of India's growth and its position today. Now let me turn to what India and Nigeria have achieved bilaterally in the past 65 years.

Our journey started in 1958, when India established its representative office in Lagos, two years before the independence of Nigeria. In September 1962, our first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had visited Nigeria. This was a historical visit which paved way for intensification of the relationship. Establishment of the Nigerian Defence Academy in Kaduna and the Naval War College at Port Hartcourt was the immediate outcome of the visit. Also cooperation in the field of education was consolidated through deployment of Indian teachers to schools and colleges in Nigeria.

The leadership of the two countries has been interacting with each other regularly. In the recent years, President Buhari visited New Delhi to attend the Third India-Africa Forum Summit in October 2015. Our then Vice President Mr. Hamid Ansari visited Nigeria in 2016. Earlier, Nigerian Presidents Shehu Shagari (Jan 1983), Gen Sani Abacha (March 1994), Gen Obasanjo (April 1999, Jan 2000 and Nov 2004) have visited India. Vice President Goodluck Jonathan had visited in November 2007. From India, after Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's visit in September 1962, Prime Ministers Atal Bihari Vajpayee (Dec 2003) and Dr. Manmohan Singh (Oct 2007) have visited Nigeria. Apart from these high-level visits, there have been several Ministerial visits – from External Affairs and Petroleum, to Nigeria. Similarly, Nigerian Ministers of Aviation, Special Envoys, Industry & Trade, Power, and Foreign Affairs have visited India. The latest being the visits of Foreign Minister Geoffrey Oneyama to attend the Raisina Dialogue in April 2022 and Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment Mr. Otunba Adeniyi Adebayo in July 2022 to attend the CII-EXIM Bank India-Africa Conclave.

We have set up various **Institutional Dialogues**. Foreign Office Consultations were instituted in 2003 at the level of Secretary/Permanent Secretary. We are planning to have the next round of these Consultations in September 2022. Joint Commission Meeting at the level of Foreign Ministers have been set up in 1979. So far 5 meetings of the JCM have been held and we are planning to hold the next round of the JCM in Abuja in October/November 2022. These two mechanisms provide a platform for both the countries to take stock of the relationship in its whole gamut and recommend actions to further strengthen it. India has found them to be extremely useful.

A Joint Trade Committee (JTC) has also been set up at the level of Permanent Secretary in charge of Trade/Commerce on both sides. The first meeting of this forum has been held in December 2019 in New Delhi. This Committee assumes great importance in view of the strong trade and economic

cooperation between the two countries and works towards resolving issues that come up in its further strengthening, including the foundational Agreements like the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement and the Bilateral Investment Treaty.

A Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC) at the level of Permanent Secretary in charge of Defence has been set up and they have met five times till now, the last meeting being in January 2019 in New Delhi. We expect to organize its next round in Abuja early. In the current scenario, with India increasing its indigenous defence capabilities and developing its own affordable technologies, which she is ready to share, assumes importance.

Consular Dialogue is another mechanism at the level of Permanent Secretary from both Ministries of Foreign Affairs have been set up. The first edition of this Dialogue was held in New Delhi in September 2019. This mechanism enables both sides to voice and resolve the Consular issues including negotiation of the foundational Agreements on Consular side like the Extradition Treaty, Transfer of Sentenced Persons, Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty in Criminal Matters etc.

We have started a Strategic and Counter-Terrorism Dialogue at the level of NSA. NSA of Nigeria visited India in March 2021 for this Dialogue. They discussed threats and challenges faced by democratic societies from terrorism, extremism, radicalization, international crime, arms and drug smuggling and piracy. The second dialogue is to take place in October 2022 in Abuja.

Education and capacity building have been the focus areas of the relationship. The importance of human resources in our relationship cannot be overstated. We are committed to enhancing capacity building & skill development among Nigerian youth. In this context, you would recall that India had announced 50,000 scholarships to Africa during IAFS-III in 2015, out of which more than 32,000 scholarship slots have already been utilized. It is a matter of pride for us that several high-ranking leaders, ministers, officials from Nigeria have studied in Indian universities and other institutions. This august audience is well aware of this. Apart from these, a number of students and officials from Nigeria have also been trained under the ITEC program. To provide high quality virtual education and medical services India and Nigeria have also signed a e-VidyaBharti and e-ArogyaBharti Agreements for tele-education and tele-medicine respectively. A large number of Nigerian students have sought admission under this scheme in the Indian institutions, which the Indian government would support. One of the Indian Universities – MEWAR University has set up their Centre just outside Abuja in Nasarawa State since 2021. Many Universities have institutional linkages and a large number of Nigerian students have made India as their destination for education.

Under the aegis of the ITEC programme run by the Ministry of External Affairs, on the Civil Side 250 slots are offered annually. However, the uptake of these have not been fully satisfactory with only 188 Nigerians availing of it in 2019-20 (we calculate the year not calendar-wise but based on our financial year which begins in April every year and ends in March next year), 102 in 2020-21 and last year only 94.

On the ITEC defence side, we are now offering 150 slots. This is also under subscribed with only 94 being utilized in the last financial year.

In addition, India offers IAFS-II scholarships and have trained 31 from Nigeria. ICCR Africa Scholarship Scheme offers admission in premier Universities in India. A total of 34 Nigerian students have utilized this scheme. Another Scheme – Study in India Programme saw more than 1500 Nigerian students getting admission in Indian Universities in 2021-22 alone.

As mentioned earlier, the e-Vidya Bharati and e-Argogya Bharati initiative are schemes that proposes to enhance the educational cooperation multiple times. The Federal Ministry of Education, Nigeria and Telecommunications Consultants India Limited (TCIL) signed an MOU for this cooperation in September 2021. Under this MOU, India has offered free tele-education on online. Nearly 500 students have already enrolled.

These are schemes of the Government of India, and are in addition to the private studies being undertaken directly by Nigerian Students.

Defence Cooperation: I mentioned about the setting up of the National Defence College in Kaduna and the Naval War College at Port Harcourt in early Sixties. High level visits take place regularly. Chief of Naval Staff visited India in January 2019 and the Chief of Air Staff of Nigeria visited in November 2019.

In its fight against Boko Haram, India has supported Nigeria through training and capacity building of Nigerian Forces. Nigerian Air Force underwent a Counter-Intelligence/Counter Terrorism training. We had also deployed an Indian Army Mobile Training Team (IAMTT) for this training from Jan-April 2021, which trained about 200 Nigerian Army personnel. Happy with the experience and training, on Nigerian request, we have again deployed another IAMTT that is currently imparting training at NASI, Jaji till December 2022.

We have signed an MoU on 'Exchange of White Shipping Information' in July 2018. In 2021, an Indian Navy Training Team imparted Gunnery and IT training to Nigerian Naval personnel. Naval talks were held in December 2019. On the Air Force side, we are training Pilots in India, subsequent to the signing of an MOU between Hindustan Aeronautics Limited and Nigerian Army. You may

note that this is the first ever training being conducted by HAL for any foreign country.

Expanding the cooperation to Intelligence Exchange, Chief of Defence Intelligence of Nigeria visited India in September 2019. Cooperation in Military medicine has also begun.

We have offered some Lines of Credit for purchase of defence equipment and await Nigerian acceptance. India's Defence Research and Development Organization is collaborating with the DRDB of Nigeria for development of an IED detector to aid in its counter-terrorism operations.

Apart from Nigerian officers attending the National Defence College in India, we also depute officers to NDC, Nigeria. The last trainee just passed out last Friday from here.

Currently, we are having a 12-member delegation from the NYSC of Nigeria in India under a cultural exchange programme with the Army.

Trade and Investment:

India is one of the largest trading partners of Nigeria and Nigeria is India's largest trading partner in Africa with the bilateral trade touching US \$ 14.95 billion in the 2021-22. Indian owned/operated companies are the 2nd largest employer in Nigeria after the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

More than 135 Indian companies are currently operating in Nigeria in diverse fields such as pharmaceuticals, engineering goods, electrical machinery and equipment, plastics, chemicals, etc. Some of the major companies include Bharti Airtel, Tata, Bajaj Auto, Birla Group, Kirloskar, Mahindra, Ashok Leyland, Skipper, Godrej, Simba Group, NIIT, Aptech, New India Assurance, Bhushan Steel, KEC, Dabur, etc. The combined investment is approximately USD 19.3 billion.

Despite understandable fall in Crude Oil imports by India last year due to Covid-19 pandemic, bilateral trade has again risen strongly by 36% from USD 8.8 billion in 2020-21 to USD 14.95 billion in the year 2021-22. This reflects the resilience of our mutually beneficial economic linkages. During this period, Indian ex-ports have risen by 48.75% to touch USD 4.6 billion while Indian imports of mostly Crude Oil-increased by 81.43% to reach 10.29 billion. Nigeria has emerged as the fifth largest supplier of crude oil and second largest supplier of LNG to India in 2021.

India's principal exports to Nigeria include mineral oils, pharmaceuticals, vehicles and textiles. In 2020, after the COVID-19 pandemic struck, India had

gifted essential medicines worth USD 250,000 to Nigeria. In 2021, India was the largest supplier of human vaccines to Nigeria.

More than 70 online B2Bs were held in 2020 and 2021. We have signed several MoUs which include Trade Agreement signed in 1983, MOU on Sugar Institutes, MOU on Startup Ecosystem. We are working on signing the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement and the Bilateral Investment Treaty.

One of the major requirements for developing relations between two countries is direct connectivity to ease the movement of people and goods. I am happy to note that Air Peace is planning to start direct flights to Mumbai from Abuja. I am sure this would give a new impetus to our relationship and increase the people to people contact.

Development Partnership has been one of the most important pillars of our relationship. India has had excellent experience with many of the African countries through concessional loans of over US\$ 12.3 billion for various projects. Jointly we have completed 197 important projects improving infrastructure needed for the countries, and, currently, we are executing 65 projects. It is heartening to note that these projects are bringing positive changes in the lives of people of Africa. In Nigeria also, EXIM Bank of India is financing a solar power plant and street lighting project in Kaduna State and a Gas based power plant in Cross Rivers State at a combined cost of nearly USD 60 million. However, this is way below our potential and we urge Nigeria to strongly consider availing of the several other Line of Credit projects being offered by India in the areas of Rural Broadband, Solar Energy and Defence equipment.

Science and Technology:

An MOU on cooperation in Outer Space was signed between India and Nigeria in August 2020. This envisages cooperation in applications in agriculture, environment and mining, micro and mini satellites and capacity building. We propose to build on this MoU for mutually beneficial cooperation.

An MOU on Cooperation in Cyber Security was signed in Oct 2021 between CERT-In, MeitY, on the Indian Side and ngCERT on the Nigerian Side.

Cultural Cooperation:

With a large Indian diaspora in Nigeria, it is but natural for both the countries to have strong cultural relations. The Indian community has lived here for generations and have been warmly welcomed by Nigeria. They have made

Nigeria their home and have been contributing effectively for better understanding between the two people of the the countries.

Institutionally, we have a Cultural Exchange Programme and we are in the process of extending it. Bollywood is popular and I have personally seen so many Nigerians speaking Hindi, having basically learnt through watching films. I have seen that Indian channels, dubbed in English, are broadcast regularly.

I now come to the final part of my presentation. **What can we do together** to take this relationship to the next level.

Prime Minister Modi has declared Africa as top priority in our foreign and economic policy. Articulating our Africa policy in 10 broad guiding principles during his visit to Uganda, he stated that our development partnership will be guided by African priorities. It will be on terms that will liberate African potential and not constrain African future. To paraphrase what Prime Minister Narendra Modi said so eloquently in his speech to the Ugandan Parliament in 2019, India's priority is not just Africa; India's priority is Africans – every man, woman and child in Africa. This is most aptly applicable to India – Nigeria relations as is evident from our relations since 1958.

India has always been a very reliable partner for its friends in Africa and is committed to the socio-economic development of Africa in accordance with its own pace and development priorities. We understand your hesitation in entering into debt commitments for financing infrastructure projects and that you prefer investment partners instead. Your priorities are our guiding principles for economic cooperation and our assistance in this area has always been keeping in the best interest of the receiving country.

On the political front, organising the visit of President of Nigeria to India and the visit of Prime Minister of India to Nigeria are priorities. The Joint Commission Meeting and the Joint Trade Committee are important mechanisms that have not met for quite some time. I intend to push their early meetings. The Foreign Office Consultations is the platform that provides both the countries to take stock of the relationship and propose timely corrective measures if necessary. This we propose to hold in September 2022. Although the Foreign Office in Nigeria had proposed middle of August, owing to prior commitments, we are constrained to postpone this to next month.

We need to open new vistas in our trade and economic relationship. While there is a tendency to follow the known path and traditional methods of doing business, Nigerian companies should look at the strengths of India in various futuristic fields like Fintech, AI, health- including vaccine manufacturing, digital

and green growth and adapt them to the needs and requirements of Nigeria. India's experience in innovative technology-based solutions to the different problems, spurt of growth in Unicorns and Startups, adaptation of new technologies including drones are some of the areas that could lead to increase in interaction between our two economies. More participation in each other's exhibitions should be given priority.

The International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (**ICRISAT**) which is headquartered in India already has collaboration with Nigeria and has a centre in Kano State where scientific research and experience sharing takes place in various products including millets. Nigeria has significant land to offer for production of various products, and Indian companies should explore the opportunity to invest produce crops, while creating large scale employment, generating income, and even allow the economy to move up the value chain through creation of agro-processing facilities. Indian could bring in her expertise and experience in achieving food security to her population and replicate it here in Nigeria.

On the health sector, closer cooperation in healthcare including through providing quality medical treatment both in Nigeria and specialised treatment and procedures in India would be encouraged. I have spoken to some of the Indian hospitals to see the possibility of setting up centres for primary treatment in Nigeria and hope to progress on this issue. Vaccine manufacturing is another major area that should be explored. Bharat Biotech and Serum Institute of India have been approached and have shown some interest.

The next edition of DEFEXPO is scheduled to be held in end October 2022. There is a huge scope for cooperation between Indian and Nigerian industries in this area. I think there is ample scope in the sphere of technology, and with our emphasis on trust and transparency, India and Nigeria make natural partners. Many Indian companies are already in talks with the Nigerian authorities in setting up manufacturing and assembly centres in Nigeria for their platforms and equipment.

We envisage our Nigerian partners as critical to two important international initiatives spearheaded by India: International Solar Alliance and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure. Both these areas not only provide excellent opportunities for cooperation, but would also meet the urgent needs of Nigeria. Through the ISA, India could provide solar energy solutions to Nigeria. India has already earmarked concessional LOCs worth US \$ 2 billion for solar projects in Africa, largely off-grid. India has partnered with the African Development Bank Group to develop 10,000 MW of solar power systems across the Sahel region, aimed at improving electricity access for Africans.

Given the abundant availability of sunshine and the urgent requirement to augment the installed capacity of electricity production in the country, I would urge that Nigeria looks positively at this proposal and enter into a mutually beneficial agreement in this field.

In my interaction with Indian businessmen, while they are optimistic about doing business in Nigeria looking at the successes of their predecessors, they have certain concerns, which I thought of conveying here. I am confident that the business-friendly environment in Nigeria would only be further strengthened if these concerns could be addressed. Some of these, which I am aware that the Nigerian government is already addressing in a major way, are reliable power supply, security, ease of conversion of foreign exchange and its repatriation, cheaper CERPAC or yearly resident permits and availability of qualified manpower.

Given the global crisis that the world is facing, we have to open new vistas to facilitate businesses. Recently Reserve Bank of India had announced an arrangement for domestic traders to settle imports and exports in Indian Rupees. This move is to promote global trade growth by encouraging other countries to open up of Vostro accounts. We should explore this option to move forward with regards to trade with Nigeria by entering into bilateral agreement on trade in local currencies or currency swap Agreement. This would help both the countries to save on foreign currency. India could formally propose this arrangement to Nigeria to help our businesses.

During the visit of H.E. Mr. Oneyama, Foreign Minister of Nigeria to India in April 2022, he mentioned about the collaboration between Nollywood and Bollywood. There is already a production – Namaste Wahala, that has received great reviews. As we speak, there are efforts underway to shoot more such ventures. An Agreement for joint productions is also under negotiations. I am happy to see that representatives of this field are also participating in this meeting. This is another new area for positive cooperation.

Another area of cooperation could be in the conduct of elections. The Election Commission of India, like the INEC in Nigeria is a Constitutional body. Indian elections, as you may all know, is actually a celebration. The largest democracy of the world has matured fully and we have gained vast experience in the conduct of elections. Last General elections saw a voter registration of 912 million people. While the elections are strongly contested, when the people have spoken through their votes, the changeover of government has always been smooth and fast. We would be happy to share our experiences and also, if Nigeria desires, extend capacity building in the conduct of elections.

Last, but not the least, there are some foundational agreements that are pending for quite some time between our two countries and they need to be finalized early. These include the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement, Bilateral Investment Treaty, Extradition Treaty, Transfer of Sentenced Prisoners, Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty etc. I intend to work closely with my colleagues in Nigeria to achieve these at the earliest.

Let me conclude by quoting my External Affairs Minister when he said that, as Africa marches in its journey towards security, renewal and prosperity, India will remain a trusted partner, working closely with Africa for the economic and social empowerment of its people. **I confirm the same for Nigeria.**

Thank you
